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THE
AUTHOR'S DAUGHTER.

BY
CATHERINE ELLEN SPENCE,
AUTHOR OF
"MR. HOGARTH'S WILL," "TENDER AND TRUE," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.
VOL. I.



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THE AUTHOR'S DAUGHTER.

CHAPTER I.

A SAD WELCOME TO THE COLONY.

It was drawing towards evening in the later summer, when a young man was riding slowly and steadily homewards on a rather tired horse, along a rough district-road, which led—I will not say in what direction, or to what locality—in the colony of South Australia. Suffice it to say, that it was somewhere on the borderland where agricultural farming ceases and the great sheep-runs begin, and that it was as beautiful a country as could be seen in all the colony. Even at the season of the year when Australian scenery looks its worst, when the grass is burnt almost to the colour of the earth it covers, an experienced eye could tell, by the length and closeness of the herbage, by the lay of the country and the look of the soil, and more especially by the numbers of

fine gum-trees that enlivened the sombre colouring of the landscape with their great white stems and luxuriance of green foliage, that it was a well-watered region, and land that in ordinary seasons would grow anything.

Allan Lindsay rode slowly, for two reasons: the first and best was that his horse was tired, and had been frightened by a violent storm of thunder and lightning, which had rolled and flashed all the afternoon; and the second was, that he was taking that leisurely and critical survey of the country which is natural when a man returns from a land-sale through the property which he has just bought. Though he had not been a purchaser on his own account, as he was not yet twenty years of age, he had been entrusted by his father to bid for him, and he had even gone a little beyond the limit which the old experienced colonist had set. But as he looked affectionately on the open, slightly undulating country, he felt that his father would have been more disappointed if he had let their neighbour, Mr. Hammond, outbid him, than he could possibly be at the little extra price that was to be paid.

"Yes," said Allan half aloud, "this land is worth more to us than to Mr. Hammond; and if we have early rains, as I thought we should have with this storm, it will look first-rate in a month

or two. But it is strange that this season of the year we have so much thunder and lightning, with scarce a drop of rain. Steady, Charlie, my man," said he, affectionately addressing his horse, whom a more vivid flash than usual right across the eyes had terrified afresh—"you've gone far enough to-day to sober you, so you needn't plunge like that," and he patted and soothed the frightened animal.

He had not ridden half a mile farther when he heard voices apparently of some people in distress, where voices were not usually heard, and a loud "cooey" directed him to the spot, which was at some distance off the road. There he found his was not the only horse made restive by the lightning, for Mr. Hammond's spring-cart had been overturned; the horse having dragged it till the wheel had caught in a charred stump, when it had tilted over, and thrown out the three occupants of the vehicle, while the horse had got loose from his traces and had run off. One of the party he knew well—Tom Cross, Mr. Hammond's groom—who now limped sadly towards him with a badly sprained ankle; but the other two—a gentleman who lay on the ground dead or insensible, and a girl apparently about thirteen, who hung over him in an agony of grief and terror—were absolute strangers to Allan.

"What is all this, Tom Cross?" said Allan. "How did you get this terrible upset?"

"Rattler took fright and dashed off with us," said Tom; and lowering his voice, "I think it is all over with the poor gentleman. Neither me nor the girl there can make him speak, and it's a quarter of an hour since we had the spill. It was on his head, d'ye see, and that's bad."

"Oh! papa, dearest papa, do speak to me!" said the child. "Oh! please do try to revive him!" and she turned to the stranger, as if he must be able to do something, when such unlooked-for assistance had come to aid her own and the groom's inadequate efforts. "He is only fainting; mamma used to faint often if she was a little too tired, and this was a terrible fall. Oh! if I had any drops to give him!"

The young bushman took a flask out of his pocket, and tried to get a few drops out of it into the mouth of the stranger, but it was of no avail. He had been pitched on his head with great violence, and a concussion of the brain had caused instant death.

"Will he never speak?" said the child again. "Can we not send for a doctor, and get him taken to a house?"

"You cannot go so far as Mr. Hammond's, but Branhholm is not far off, and you can take him

there. My mother would do all in her power for you—and for him,” said Allan with an effort, for he knew nothing could be done. “If the cart could be trusted to go as far as Branhholm, Charlie will go in harness even if you cannot catch Rattler.”

“I’m of as little as no use,” said Tom, “but I don’t think there’s much the matter with the cart; one of the shafts is broke, but you can splice it, I’ll be bound, and you’ll drive softly, as is most fitting, leastways, at any rate.”

Allan took his knife and a piece of strong whipcord from his pocket, and began to splice the broken shaft in a most workmanlike manner. “This is a terrible business, Tom,” said he. “Do you know who this gentleman is?”

“He was coming to be tutor to them big boys, and to keep the store and accounts, it is likely too, and I was sent to the township with the trap to meet them. A very pleasant-spoken gentleman he was, too, and him and the girl asked such heaps of questions about the trees, and flowers, and such like, and the birds that we saw hopping about. They were all new to them apparently, for they are new chums. But what is to be done with her now? In course she must go to Mr. Hammond’s and be took care on till her friends is wrote to, but it’s a poor welcome this to South

Australia. There, Allan, don't you see Rattler ? After doing all this mischief he comes back penitent, and it is as well, for though you say Charlie will go in harness, the harness is all on Rattler's back. You catch hold of him, he's like a lamb now."

It was the work of some little time to catch the horse, to mend the traces roughly, and to put Rattler in his old position between the shafts. Allan next bound up Tom's leg as well as he could with pocket-handkerchiefs, and helped him up into the spring-cart. He next lifted the body of the lifeless stranger, placed it gently on the floor of the cart, removing the seat, and resting the head on a carpet-bag ; and then took the girl in his arms, and laid her so that she might be near her father, but where she could not feel the weight press on her to convince her that all hope was over. She looked surprised at the manner in which she was lifted, and perhaps a little offended, but a glance at Allan's kind face, with the honest blue eyes full of a moisture very unusual to them, made the little lady forgive the liberty. He next fastened Charlie to the spring-cart, as Tom had declined to drive so sad a load with his lame foot. Under any other circumstances, Tom would have thought nothing of driving with a sprained ankle, for, as he said, his feet had nothing to do with the business ;

but though the storm was over and the horizon clear, he would not venture to handle the reins.

"Are we not going to Mr. Hammond's?" asked the little girl.

"No, we are going to my father's at Branxholm, for it is nearer," said Allan Lindsay.

"And you will send for a surgeon? For you know he must be bled or something done to make him speak."

"If it had not been for this foot I'd have mounted Charlie and gone to the township, but I suppose there's some one to be found at Branxholm to go there for Dr. Burton, and somebody must go across to Aralewin. Mr. Hammond is sure to be home by this time, though he was not when I left it to-day. I know he won't be pleased at our putting Rattler in the spring-cart, which he ain't used to, but Mrs. Hammond she said as how there would likely be a lot of luggage, and the spring-cart is the roomiest. But you see we have had to leave the boxes after all. We're heavy enough without them. There's nobody will run away with them, I suppose, till we can send down for them, and they're all marked plain enough, 'G. Staunton,' for us all to swear to if they are stole."

"You have not been long in the colony?" said Allan to the girl.

"Only a fortnight in Adelaide, but we were in Melbourne for more than a month."

"And your papa was going to be tutor at the Hammonds'?"

"Yes, when he is better he must go there, for Mr. Hammond says that I may stay there too, and I promised mamma, that I never would leave dear papa."

"Is your mamma in England?" asked Allan.

"No, no! mamma is in heaven. But I cannot spare papa to her yet. Mamma must wait a little longer. There are saints and angels in heaven, and my little brothers are there; but if I lose papa, I have nobody—nobody."

"Have you any shipmates that you liked?" said Allan, thinking of that only resource of friendless strangers in the colonies.

"Our shipmates are all in Melbourne, for we came over in a steamer to Adelaide; but we did not care much about our fellow-passengers. The captain was very unkind, and the people on board were not like papa. Papa is Gerald Staunton, you know."

Allan did not know anything about Gerald Staunton, but he had a reverence for learning, and he had envied the young Hammonds the succession of private tutors they had had, and had wondered why they did not profit more by

their advantages. And there was something in the countenance of the dead man so refined, so intellectual, and so gentlemanly, that he was sure he was superior to any Mr. Hammond had previously engaged.

"I suppose your papa—Mr. Staunton, I mean—knew everything that boys should know; languages, and figures, and geography, and spelling, and all that sort of thing," said Allan.

"Papa never was a tutor in his life. I don't quite know how he will like it. He was an author in London, and a critic for the *Palladium*."

Allan's reverence for the dead man rose still higher. What treasures were to be buried with him, that Allan would give up his fair worldly prospects to possess! No doubt he was a genius, and his want of success in life perhaps was rather a proof of it than otherwise.

"He's an Oxford man, I heard Mrs. Hammond saying to Mr. Louis," said Tom Cross; "and she seemed mightily taken up with the notion that he had got some sort of a degree, though I am sure I don't know what it is; but of course she knows. She's uppish, and always was; but she's kind too, and this poor young lady will find that out, never fear."

In spite of the well-worn black frock and the

plain straw hat, dusty with the long journey from Adelaide, even Tom Cross had seen that she was a little lady, and Allan had still more observation. He could not call her pretty; she was too pale and thin, and angular for beauty at this particular time, but she gave promise of being very lovely ere long. The face was expressive, her eyes perhaps too large at present, but dark and full of varied light; her head was beautifully set on her shoulders, and her feet and hands finely formed. Her fine accent, or rather the absence of any provincial accent, contrasted with Allan's Scotch, and Tom's Midland English; and they both felt that, whatever might be her circumstances, their unhappy fellow-traveller was something quite out of the common.

"When you get home will your mother try to make papa speak? Oh! papa, will you not speak to your own poor Amy?" and the girl kissed the lifeless face, and now for the first time she was aware of the chill that had come over it, and the horrible thought pressed itself on her that he was dead. Allan saw by the expression on her face that she now apprehended the truth, though she was too much horrified to speak of it. He endeavoured to soothe her as if she had been his own sister; he patted her gently on the back, saying—"Poor dear! poor dear! it is the will of

God, and we cannot gainsay it. May He help you to bear it." The familiarity of the action the child shrank from instinctively, but only for a moment, for Allan's face was so full of sympathy, his lips quivered with suppressed emotion, his eyes could not keep back the drops that rose to them, and his voice trembled as he spoke. She drew closer to him, allowed him to take her hand, and wept with a quiet, intense sorrow, speechless and noiseless. Now and then a deep shaking sob went to the hearts of her two living companions, but, alas! nothing could now awaken the sympathy or call forth an effort from one who had been all the world to Amy Staunton.

CHAPTER II

BRANXHOLM AND ARALEWIN.

ALLAN was relieved when he came within sight of home. His mother and his sister Jessie were better able to comfort the poor little orphan than he could be: and then Mr. Hammond might be sent for, and he and his wife might be able to suggest something that could be done to send her to her friends, though in that case, of course, he would see her no more, nor have any opportunity of asking a thousand questions, which the daughter of an Oxford student and author might be able to answer, about things which in his bush life he had had no opportunity of hearing.

Branxholm was an irregular-looking building. It had been put up at different times upon no sort of plan. As an addition had been needed, it had been placed somewhere, without any consideration as to symmetry, and often with

mistakes as to convenience. As Allan had grown older he had seen that this patchwork was rather unwise, and he had now notions in his head about the next alteration, which was to be a more thorough and systematic piece of work than had been before attempted. The farm-offices and stock-yards were on a level with the house, and much too near it, while the garden, which was really beautiful and well kept, lay back from the house, and was not much seen as you approached it. A never-failing creek ran through the garden, and was crossed by several rustic bridges and bordered by magnificent willows; and the ingenuity which Allan had shown since he was fourteen years old in irrigating the whole large garden from the creek, made its progress and its fertility something wonderful in the district. But from its position Amy could have seen little of the garden even if she had looked through her tears.

As the spring-cart drove up to the front door, which, however, lay at the side of the house, Allan called for his mother and sister in a voice so strange, that they hurried from the kitchen and the garden with alarm, and brought with them the master of the household, too, to find out what could be the matter. A few sad words told the tale. The body of the poor gentleman

was lifted gently from the spring-cart, and laid on the bed in the spare room. Amy followed the remains of all that was dear to her in the world, and shrinkingly took the cold hand that would never press hers more, while Mrs. Lindsay and Jessie tried to comfort her.

They tried to coax her out of the room while they did the last sad offices for her father, but she would not leave it.

"This should be yours, now, my dear," said Mrs. Lindsay, as she began to take off the wedding-ring from the little finger.

"No, no," said Amy. "Papa never would part with that; he should carry that to the grave with him. I will not take it. But is he—is he really dead? They said they would send for a doctor."

"Oh, my dear," said Mrs. Lindsay, "he is past all doctor's skill now; but we'll send for Dr. Burton to satisfy you that no skill could have saved him from the first. Allan will go at once if it would be any comfort to you. And I suppose George Copeland is in the house, Jessie; he maun ride to Aralewin as fast as he can, to tell Mr. Hammond of this awfu' dispensation."

"George is gone already. Tom Cross gave him the letters, and he was off in five minutes;

and I think my father has sent Pat for the doctor," said Jessie. "Allan thought, as the poor lassie was better acquainted with him, he would not leave the house for so long a time. It is not that Allan grudged the trouble, but his heart is sore for the poor bairn."

Mrs. Lindsay found all was done as Jessie had said, and now for the first time found an opportunity of asking who the poor gentleman was, and what was his connection with Mr. Hammond.

"It is a sudden and awfu' providence, Allan," said she.

"If it is awful to us, mother; what is it to that poor orphan, fatherless and motherless in a strange land? What can we do for her?"

"No doubt Mrs. Hammond will see to her, as is weel her part, and she seems a genty bit body, though no that very weel put on, and bonnie too, if it was not for the greeting."

"I forgot to ask you, Allan," said Mr. Lindsay, "in all this trouble, if you have got the land."

"Yes, father, over Mr. Hammond's head too; for his agent was bidding against me, and made me give five shillings more the acre for it than you set as my price."

"Mr. Hammond won't be over pleased at that, Allan, and he behoves to come here to-night about this unfortunate business, but it cannot be

helped. I am not sorry that you have got it, nevertheless," said Hugh Lindsay.

It was a five miles' ride for George Copeland to the Hammonds' home-station. It was one of the perversities of fate that had planted the Hammonds so that their nearest neighbours were people who could not be visited, though they might be very worthy people in their way. The Lindsays, though Hugh Lindsay (or rather his wife for him, for she was more skilled in genealogical lore) could count kin with the Balcarras family, had begun their colonial career in a humble way, and indeed for many generations had been poor plain people. But Hugh Lindsay had brought to the colony habits of industry and frugality, and a useful though limited education. He was shrewd and clear-headed; he had a sensible and active wife, and a family of children whom he made useful to him; so that from his original position of a shepherd for another in the early days of the colony, he had risen to be a considerable stockholder and landowner. He was, of course, a very much poorer man than Mr. Hammond, who had begun life with some capital, while Hugh Lindsay had his capital to create, and who had been equally fortunate in his opportunities and pretty nearly as shrewd in business. 3

Hugh was aware that his social position was far inferior to that of his neighbour, but he was not at all disposed to put himself forward. Only in the matter of land buying he had once or twice come into collision with Mr. Hammond, and this was not the only occasion in which he had bought land over his head. He could not help regretting that Jessie, who was so useful and such a treasure to her mother, and Allan his own right hand, whose judgment and skill he relied on in all matters of business, should have missed the advantages of the position they had helped to attain; and that while the younger members of the family were at school in Adelaide, the two cleverest and best of them all should be so backward in school attainments. It was of less consequence for Jessie, but for Allan it was indeed a loss, that by the time his father could spare him he was too big and too manly to send to school. Louis and Fred Hammond used to report to their mother that Allan was the handiest fellow in the district, and had wonderful knowledge of stock and horses, and was a famous shot; but Mrs. Hammond discouraged the lad's visits to Branxholm, for she could not bear her boys to associate with such unpolished boorish clodpoles as the Lindsays must be. She was ambitious for her children, and especially for her sons, and she had

ness between the very limited monarchy of the tutors in the Aralewin school-room, and she could not help feeling that they were very backward, and that they could not expect to make any figure in England, where she hoped to be able to take them ere long.

She was delighted a day or two before my story opens, at the receipt of a letter from her husband, saying that he had been so fortunate as to secure for his boys the services of a gentleman of higher attainments and of more agreeable manners than any who had ever been at Aralewin. Mr. Hammond had been favourably impressed by his Oxford degree of Master of Arts, and by his credentials from the editors of various journals and periodicals to which he had been a contributor; he almost feared that the situation was not good enough for him. When he had seen the little girl, who must be considered in the light of an incumbrance, he had been equally taken with her, and thought she would be an excellent companion for his bush girls, as her acquirements appeared to him to be astonishing. He offered

that she should be treated in every way as a child of the family, and that no deduction should be made from the salary he was prepared to give on her account. Mr. Staunton closed at once with the offer, and Mr. Hammond was overjoyed at the result. He had written a hasty note to his wife on the subject, saying, that as he might not be at home on Wednesday, he would like her to send to the township for the new tutor and his little daughter. He had gone home by another route because he wanted to be present at ——— races, and he had just got home half an hour before the Lindsays' man, George, came with his bad news.

"So you did not stay for the land sale," said Mrs. Hammond; "the races were too attractive."

"I wish I had stayed; I never thought of Hugh Lindsay going so high, I left my limit with my agent, and he of course would not take the liberty of going beyond it, and writes me that he's sorry, and all that nonsense."

"Was Lindsay at the sale himself?"

"No. Allan was there bidding for his father. The old man puts great trust in that boy."

"These low people can afford to pay more for land than you. Look at your expenses for labour that Lindsay gets his own family to do."

"His family are some expense to him now. It costs something to keep four boys and girls at school in Adelaide. But are you not pleased about the tutor, Mr. Staunton?"

"Staunton?" said Mrs. Hammond. "I thought you wrote the name Stratton."

"Not Stratton; I wrote the name as plain as possible. It is a remarkably fine name—Gerald Staunton. You ought to be able to read my handwriting by this time."

"Gerald Staunton!" echoed the lady, "Gerald Staunton!"

"Yes, the author. You may have heard of him, as you are more bookishly inclined than I am."

"I really think, George, that you have been much too hasty in this matter. You ought to have consulted me before you definitely arranged to have not only one person, but two additional persons as inmates of my house."

"I have always engaged the tutors hitherto, Clarissa."

"Yes; but what torments they have been; and this is a double risk. Does this Mr. Staunton know anything about teaching?"

"There's his degree; there's no mistake about that."

"His degree will not make him a good tutor,

if he has not been accustomed to teach, and besides, I look rather suspiciously on his degree. According to all I can make out, he is a man who ought to have got on, and who has not done so. Talents I dare say he may have, but if there is anything morally deficient, that is far worse. And to bring a strange girl to be a companion to my daughters! Who knows what habits and what principles she may communicate? You have not acted with discretion in this matter, Mr. Hammond."

"Why, my dear, you seemed as pleased as Punch at the idea, and now you turn round all at once. If the man has not been successful, is he the first clever good man who has not made money? And it was because his health gave way after his wife's death that he threw up his literary appointments in London, and tries the milder climate. He has been some years on the African Coast—Sierra Leone, I think—in his younger days, and that has told on him."

"Then we are to have an invalid to nurse," said Mrs. Hammond.

"No, not an invalid," said Mr. Hammond, testily.

"The voyage and the climate have done wonders for him, and he seems as sound as you

or I; and as for the girl, she is the nicest behaved and the cleverest little thing I ever saw. You are sure to like both of them."

"If you had come home at once instead of writing me such an indistinct message to send Tom to the township for them, this might have been altered. If I had only known sooner—but you never can withstand anything in the shape of amusement or horseflesh. I am sure these races were worth nothing."

"The best country match I ever saw. I should have tried Highflyer there, though. He would have beaten Zoe and Mazeppa all to pieces. I would not have missed the sight for ten pounds. I like these country races; they keep up the English love of sport. Williams has a filly rising three; I must have it; it is the most complete little thing I ever saw, and would be the very thing for you."

"Is that by way of a sugar-plum?" said Mrs. Hammond. "Well, here I sit day after day; I see nobody—I go nowhere; I devote myself to your family; and I must say that I do not think the step you have just taken is an advantageous one."

"I wish I heard the sound of wheels. It is more than time they were home; but Tom is a

safe hand. I dare say it is all right. But here comes Lindsay's man in a great hurry. What can be the matter? Send the man in here directly, Ann," said Mr. Hammond.

CHAPTER III.

BUSH HOSPITALITY.

"THERE is bad news for you, sir," said George Copeland to Mr. Hammond. "There has been an accident with the spring-cart."

"What! nothing happened to Rattler?"

"No; Rattler is all right, but he took fright and dashed off the road wildly till he came against a stump, and the gentleman that was coming here has been thrown out."

"Is he hurt?" said Mrs. Hammond.

"He is dead, ma'am, quite dead. Tom Cross says he never gave a movement after he had the fall, and when Allan came up to them he was quite dead."

"Good God!" said Mr. Hammond; "how unfortunate! What a terrible business this is. Killed on the spot! What was Tom thinking of to let Rattler play such a trick? I never knew that horse shy before. It was lightning,

and very near, I know, but my horse was like a lamb. I put such confidence in Rattler and in Tom."

"Tom has got a bad sprained ankle, or he would have brought his own bad news, sir," said Copeland.

"And the girl—the poor girl, is she hurt?" said Mr. Hammond.

"She may be bruised, but nothing serious, sir; but, poor thing, she takes on terribly about her father, and she has no mother either, they tell me, and not a friend or acquaintance in the colony."

"We must see to her," said Mr. Hammond; "I'll ride across directly. Be good enough to tell Smith to saddle Harkaway for me as fast as possible, Copeland; let us not lose a moment."

"No, my dear; let Smith put the horse into the dog-cart; I am going with you," said Mrs. Hammond; "I'll not keep you back a minute, but I must go."

"Well," said Mr. Hammond to himself, as his wife left the room to prepare for the journey, "women are good creatures, though unreasonable sometimes. There is my wife, so cross and suspicious about my having anything to do with this man or his little girl, without knowing much about him; and now, when she hears he

is dead, poor man, she is so sorry for the poor child that she will go at this time of night to a house she never meant to enter, to fetch her home and try and comfort her. She has a soft heart if you can only get to the right side of it. But this is a bad job, a very bad job; to think of Rattler serving me so."

Not many minutes elapsed before Mr. and Mrs. Hammond were on their way to Branhholm, for Smith was expeditious, and so was the lady. She was very silent during the journey, and indeed her husband could say little, but only gave vent to his feelings now and then by a remark and a regret as to the sad accident of the day.

Mrs. Lindsay and Jessie had tried in vain to comfort the poor orphan, or to get her to take any food, but Allan had persuaded her to swallow a cup of tea, and had wheeled in his mother's easy chair for her to sit in by the side of the bed. She was not noisy in her grief, but she looked so thoroughly heart-broken and crushed that it seemed vain to talk the kindest commonplaces to her. The Lindsays were glad to see that Mrs. Hammond accompanied her husband, for that looked kind. They knew very little about the lady; she might be a very good person among her own people, but she was reckoned very

high—much more so than her husband. It was with some embarrassment that Mrs. Lindsay greeted the great lady, wondering how she ought to behave to her, but she was very soon relieved from her dilemma. Mrs. Hammond gave her distinctly to understand that she had come to see the remains of the unfortunate gentleman who had been prevented by this fatal accident from fulfilling his engagement to Mr. Hammond, and also to see the child who had escaped; but that she ignored altogether the fact that she was in any way the guest or visitor of the Lindsays. She appeared quite unconscious of their presence, and spoke only to her husband, who, however, had something to say on the subject of the accident to Allan and his father, and who thanked Mrs. Lindsay very cordially for the trouble she had taken.

"I should like to see the body of this Mr. Staunton, George," said Mrs. Hammond.

"He is laid out on the bed in the spare room," said Mrs. Lindsay, "and Jessie and me have done the best we can for him, but it's no like a man dying quiet in his bed, an' the bit lassie is sitting beside him. We canna wile her away for a minute."

Mrs. Lindsay conducted Mr. and Mrs. Hammond into the room, and went out immediately, think-

ing that these might be fine manners, but they were not gracious manners, for the lady looked at her as if she was an intruder in her own house.

"He is greatly changed from when I saw him," said Mr. Hammond.

"Yes, changed, no doubt," said Mrs. Hammond. "These sudden accidents, I suppose, do change people." She looked at him attentively, and then turned to the child and gave a slight involuntary start when she met the beseeching expression of the sad eyes. "How like," said she, half aloud, "what a likeness!"

"I do not see any likeness at all," said Mr. Hammond. "My dear," continued he, taking Amy's hand kindly, "we are very sorry, very sorry indeed. But you know that your poor papa has gone where there is neither trouble, nor pain, nor sickness, and you must try to be comforted. And your mamma is dead, too?" and he looked at her black frock.

"Yes, a year ago," sobbed the child. "And now I have nobody, nobody. Oh! I cannot live to bear it."

"Yes, my dear, you must live, and there are happy days for you yet. You must come home with us. You know our house was the house your papa was taking you to."

"Home without papa! There is no home anywhere for me. Don't ask me to leave him while he is here, for you know I cannot do it."

"She is quite right," said Mrs. Hammond coldly. "You must not think of taking her from the good people here till after the inquest and the funeral." At the word funeral Amy's tears burst out afresh. She would soon not even have her father's body to be near her.

"My dear Amy—I think your poor papa called you Amy," said Mr. Hammond, "I suppose you have no friends in the colony but ourselves. But though I will do all I can for you, it is only right that your relations at home should be written to."

"I have no relations to write to," said Amy.

"No relations?" said Mrs. Hammond.

"None that care for me. I have a half-brother and sister, but—but——"

"But you have quarrelled with them," said Mr. Hammond.

"I never saw them," said Amy.

"Are they not rich?" asked Mrs. Hammond.

"Yes, but I know nothing about them, and they know nothing about me."

"But if they are rich, they ought to be made

to know about you," said Mr. Hammond; "certainly they ought."

"And have you no uncles, nor aunts, nor grandparents?" asked Mrs. Hammond.

It was very trying to the child in her grief to be questioned in this way by strangers. "I wish you would not speak about it," said she. "It used to be papa, and mamma, and me, and that was enough. Then it was papa and me, and now it is only me. I have one aunt, but I never saw her but once."

"Your half-brother and sister live with their father's relatives, I suppose," said Mrs. Hammond.

"Yes," said Amy.

"Had your mother never any letters from them?"

"No, I don't think so," said the child, growing still more distressed. Mr. Hammond interposed. He whispered something in his wife's ear and received a sort of assent. Mrs. Hammond looked for a few seconds at the dead man and the living daughter with a cold scrutiny that might have convinced her husband that in this instance they had not got to the soft side of her heart. Amy felt the gaze unspeakably painful. At first, when Mrs. Hammond entered the room, the dress, the air, the voice of a lady had given her some hope that she might throw herself into her arms and weep

out her tears there, but she soon found out that plain Mrs. Lindsay, or Jessie with her kind tearful face, or Allan with his glistening blue eyes, were more sympathising friends and safer confidants than this handsome, well-dressed, lady-like woman, and she felt a shrinking repugnance to Mr. Hammond's reiterated proposal to take her home with him, if not to-night, at some early day.

After a quarter of an hour spent in a very constrained and uncomfortable manner in the chamber of death, Mrs. Hammond and her husband went again into the family sitting-room. Without apparently looking at anything, Mrs. Hammond's eye took in everything and everybody in the room, from the gaudy paper of the walls, and the tastelessly arranged common-looking ornaments on the chimney-piece, and the unharmonious colouring of curtains and carpet, to Jessie's freckles and Mrs. Lindsay's cap.

"Now, Mr. Hammond," said Hugh Lindsay, "I'm thinking there maun be an inquest the morn, and we'll have Dr. Burton's evidence as to the cause of his death. As for the funeral, will you have it at your place or at ours? or as it's like he belonged to your church, there will be a long journey before ye can get to what ye call consecrated ground. There's a bonnie bit of land at the end of the garden, where our Patrick is

laid, and where we all mean to lie beside him when our appointed time comes, that if the bit lassie had no objection, he might be laid there, for it's thirty miles and mair to St. Bartholomew's as I think ye call it."

"Nothing could be better, George, than this arrangement," said Mrs. Hammond, "and the expense of the funeral of course we will bear, as it is not likely this unfortunate man had much money."

"Very little of that, I am thinking," said Mr. Lindsay, "but what is to be done about the poor lassie?"

"Oh! of course," said Mr. Hammond, "we must—"

"I could not think of taking her home with us till I know more about her," said Mrs. Hammond, interrupting her husband, "and at present she cannot bear to leave the body, as is very natural. Her friends must be written to, and she will in time be sent to them, but in the meantime I should like to see what sort of temper and principles she has before I brought her to stay with Madeline and Clara; they are such impressible girls, as you know."

"But my dear," said Mr. Hammond, "you must have had this poor Amy if this unfortunate gentleman had lived. I engaged expressly

that she was to have her home with us, and to be the companion of our girls."

"You engaged very rashly, as I told you ; and besides, if the child had her father with her, the case would be very different."

"She looks very sweet-tempered, and I know she is a most intelligent child," said the astonished Mr. Hammond, who could not conceive any cause for his wife's unreasonable prejudice against one who had particularly attracted his liking.

"'Deed does she," said Mrs. Lindsay, whose warm Scotch blood fired up at the grudging way in which Mrs. Hammond spoke about the bereaved and desolate orphan. "If you think it a burden to have the charge, I'm sure she's heartily welcome to bide at Branhholm till she can hear from her friends in England, and for longer too. The pot that boils for eight may weel boil for nine, and the Almighty has prospered us, so that we would never miss the orphan's meal of meat, or her bits of claes. I thought she was owre genty for the like of us, but if so be as she'd be satisfied to take up her dwelling with us, there's none of us that would think twice of the burden or the trouble. And I dare say the lassie might take up to be of some service in the house. We're no to send the bairn that has by sic a sudden and awsome providence

been brought to our door, to sic a place as the Destitute Asylum."

"Don't speak of such a thing as the Destitute Asylum," said Mrs. Hammond, with a curious expression on her face that her husband could not read. "There may be some insurance money or something coming that would defray the girl's passage to England."

"Insurance? That might be forfeited by a man's going abroad," said Mr. Hammond. "I know he is poor, for he told me so, and he was particularly anxious about this child, that he might continue her education himself, because she was not provided for."

"Well," said Hugh Lindsay, "as the good wife says, the bairn is welcome to stop at Branhholm, if ye dinna think she has mair claims on ye, for it was on your business and in your employment, as one may say, that her father came to his end."

"True enough," said Mrs. Hammond, taking the words out of her husband's mouth, "we should be bound to make you some compensation if you were good enough to keep the child. It is neither the expense nor the trouble that I think of, but I am so careful of my children, that I must know whom they associate with. But we would pay a reasonable board."

"That's fair enough," said Hugh Lindsay.

"But the good man will not take a penny from you for the bairn," said Mrs. Lindsay hastily. "We keep nae boarding-school; if we did, we would not need to send our ain sae far from us. We dinna want to be paid for common Christian charity. Our bairns are no owre find to associate wi' the daughter of a gentleman that ye all thought fit to give instructions to your sons. If ye hae na the heart to offer a home to the orphan, please God she'll find one here, and we'll look for nae compensation at your hands."

Mr. Hammond was naturally a liberal and kind man, and he had never felt so small in his life as he did on this occasion. Mrs. Lindsay's warmth and indignation he felt to be well deserved, and he was surprised that it did not kindle some more generous feeling in the heart of his wife. He had never known Mrs. Hammond behave so very strangely. He knew her to be a woman tenacious of her position, prudent in money matters, and careful in engaging in anything involving expense or trouble, without well weighing beforehand whether she could carry it out properly; but her meanness, her coldness, her discourtesy to this poor orphan and to this worthy family were not characteristic of her. His own opinion of Amy Staunton was so favourable, he was so convinced that she would

be a valuable companion to his indulged and sometimes overbearing girls, that he was disappointed as well as greatly mortified at his wife's prejudice. He knew her prejudices to be things that there was no chance of reasoning away ; it was a good thing that she had not many of them. He had a great reverence for his wife, who in all great matters governed him, his children, and his household with a generally comfortable but occasionally inconvenient sway. She saved Mr. Hammond a great deal of trouble by her decided views and her managing ways ; she was generally very attentive to his personal comforts and indulgent to his tastes, so he knew he must submit to be thwarted now and then. But to be evidently thwarted by the wife of his bosom before the family of the Lindsays, to be outdone in liberality on ground especially his own, was humiliating. If Hugh Lindsay's wife was rather hasty in forestalling her husband's more cautious proffers, she took the right ground, and her husband acquiesced in her views more cheerfully than Mr. Hammond could submit to the low position occupied by his wife.

The matter, however, was settled ; the inquest was to be held on the morrow, and the orphan was to remain at Branhholm.

"Somebody must write to the friends, though,"

said Mr. Lindsay. "It would be better for you, that's a lady and a scholar, to write to them than for the like of us."

"As I have not taken the girl, or any responsibility with regard to her," said Mrs. Hammond, "the communication certainly ought not to come from me. Your son or daughter could surely write a simple statement of facts. And your son having been present at, or near, the time of the accident, is the most fit person to give information as to this very sad affair."

Allan's face had changed colour many times during the conversation which he had listened to. It had glowed at his mother's warmth but very lately, but another tinge passed over it at the proposal that he should write to the friends of a scholar and an author.

"Indeed Allan's no very clever with the pen, though there's nothing on the farm or the station that he's backward with; and as for contriving, there never was his match seen, but his hands have been aye so full of work that there's been no time for learning. I'm sure Isabel and Phemie will never be the lassies that Jessie has been to me, nor will Jamie or Hughie ever fill Allan's shoes, but the younger ones are getting the lair. But surely the lassie is old enough to write to her friends herself, and nae doot has the

skill, so ye needna be at the fash of writing neither, Mrs. Hammond," said Mrs. Lindsay.

Mrs. Hammond was not accustomed to be looked on with scorn. It is probable that she did not even go to say good-bye to the girl, but Mr. Hammond could not leave without having another look at the orphan. He wanted to say that he was glad she had met with some kind friends in the Lindsays, and to advise her to try to be happy with them, but the words stuck in his throat. He felt it was a very different kind of society from what she had been accustomed to, and he felt that he had no right to offer any advice. He might do something for her yet if he only could bring Mrs. Hammond to reason, so he only said good night and left her.

When the Hammonds had driven off in the moonlight, Mrs. Lindsay broke forth—

"Well, if I ever in my life saw such an upsetting, cold-blooded, hard-hearted woman! Is that what they all call manners? I dare say she was feared that if she was civil we might claim acquaintance with her. Visit her indeed! I'd rather die on the high road than beg at her house for a bit of bread."

"You're hasty, good wife," said Mr. Lindsay, "I'll no deny that her ways are most aggravating, and most uncivil, and the way she turned up her

nose at that bit lassie as no fit to come in contact with her girls was far from Christian charity, but it was fair enough to offer to pay us for the keep of the lassie. No that I'd demean myself by taking it any more than you would. We have enough for ourselves, and a thought to spare besides. And as you say we'll never miss it."

"I think mother was quite right to be angry," said Allan. "If she had not spoken I am sure I would, and if you had felt it a burden, I would have worked double that you need not take a penny from the Hammonds. But this young lady has been brought up differently from us, and I doubt she will find us very strange in our ways."

"Our ways are weel enough," said Mrs. Lindsay. "If we are na fine, at least we're kind-hearted and honest, and I count the conduct of thae visitors we've just had as far frae kind, and somewhat beside being honest. It makes one sick of the very name of gentlefolk to see sic goings on. If these are the sort of ways the lassie has learnt, the sooner she forgets them, all the better."

"Oh! mother, that is not what I mean," said Allan.

"But it's what I mean, Allan, and rough as we are, she must just put up with us and be thankful, at least till she can better herself,"

said Mrs. Lindsay. "If Phemie and Isabel had been at home, no doubt it would be more cheerful for her, for she's but a bairn compared to you and Jessie, but we'll do our best. You maun take her to your room, Jessie, and let her sleep in the little green bed. I would na put her in a room by hersel, for it would be eerie with a corpse lying in the house."

It needed all Jessie's persuasion to induce Amy to leave her father's body for the night, and indeed a little of Mrs. Lindsay's authority in addition. She submitted to go to bed and let Jessie put out the light, but the kind-hearted girl was distressed to hear the heavy sobs every time she woke, which showed that poor Amy could not sleep for her grief. She would not allow the orphan to get up when she herself did, and carefully darkened the room in hopes she might sleep a little in the cool of the morning, but when she crept as quietly as she could to the door about breakfast time, she found Amy ready dressed in the worn black frock, and led her into the large kitchen, where the family had assembled for breakfast. Although Branhholm possessed some good rooms, it was convenient to take breakfast and dinner in the kitchen, and the old custom had been kept up when there was little necessity for it. Amy timidly went up to Mrs. Lindsay, shook hands

with her, and said good morning, and then went to the master of the house with the same salutation. The ceremony was new to him, and at first he thought she meant to go away.

"Ye're no to leave us, my dear," said he. "Ye behove to bide at Branxholm for a bit. We're no going to part with you on a sudden. That is no the way we entertain strangers in the bush."

When Amy took the seat beside Allan which was left vacant for her, and wished him good morning without meeting with the expected response, she began to fear that she had made some blunder. "Have I done anything wrong?" said she in a low voice; "are you not pleased with me?"

"Oh aye, pleased enough," said Mrs. Lindsay, whose quick ear no whisper could escape, "but we are na used to thae fashions. They seem to me to be just an off-put of time. Sit down, my dear, and have your breakfast. I hope we'll find something that you can eat, for not a bit passed your mouth that I saw yestere'en."

The large violet-coloured eyes filled with tears. There was no father now to wish good morning to, no morning kiss to receive from him. She was among strangers in a strange land, who had strange and unknown ways.


Allan knew what she was thinking of, and

felt for her. He half-whispered to her, "Don't think us unkind because we don't understand the fashions you were brought up to. As you come to know us better, you will find out that we wish each other well without saying much about it. Now have a cup of tea from Jessie, or will I make it for you as I did last night? or, as you are just off the ship maybe you will like milk best."

"There's some grand kirn milk," said Mrs. Lindsay, "for Jessie made the butter this morning when you were sleeping or should have been. Maybe you would like that best."

"No, I thank you, I should prefer tea to anything," said Amy, who looked round the breakfast-table, which was spread with liberal though somewhat inelegant profusion. There were fried bacon and eggs, and mutton chops, and boiled eggs, and cold corned beef, with fresh butter and beautifully white home-made bread and soda-scones, which Mrs. Lindsay herself had made as a treat for the stranger. Jessie Lindsay presided over a large half-gallon tin teapot, with a handle in front as an auxiliary to the handle in common use. The best china was never taken into use in the kitchen, and the earthenware was of various shapes and patterns, for there was a great deal of breakage, and commonware could not be matched,

so that the cups and saucers were of three different patterns, the plates of another, the butter served up in a saucer, and the chops displayed in a tin dish. Jessie was liberal in her administration of a plentiful supply of new milk, with a jug of cream for her father and Allan and the stranger, and also dealt out the sugar with a bountiful hand. The fire was at her back, which was not comfortable in such hot weather, but Allan had arranged a screen, so that it protected her. The fountain, filled with boiling water to replenish the vast teapot, bubbled on the fire, and the frying-pan which stood on the hob was occasionally visited by a large gray cat, who was as often driven away by Mrs. Lindsay, while three dogs stood round the table, and ate the bones which were thrown to them from time to time. One would think that this was a great breakfast to set before a small family, but it was not only the four Lindsays and their young guest who were assembled to eat it. At the lower end of the table sat the servants of the household. George Copeland, a good-looking Englishman, who had gone to Mr. Hammond's on the previous evening; Pat Murphy, who had been sent for the doctor, but had found him absent on a long journey to a distant patient; and Donald McClure, a thickset highland shepherd very recently imported from the North country.



There were besides Tom Cross, who, with his leg well bandaged up, ate a good meal off a colonial sofa which stood at one end of the kitchen, and two travellers looking for work, who had got lodgings for the night and a morning meal before setting out again on their quest. All but our poor orphan brought hearty appetites with them ; but Mrs. Lindsay's hospitable entreaties and offers of anything and every thing on the table could not induce Amy to eat more than would feed a mavis. Allan went out and fetched a few bunches of ripe grapes, a dozen of rosy peaches, and a little basket of figs from the garden. " Perhaps you could eat some of these," said he. " They are all cool, for the sun has not been on them ; try something more than that poor cup of tea."

" Thir 'ill be the figs that's spoke of in Scripture," said Donald McClure. " A' the figs that e'er I saw in the city of Glasgow was sauted wi' sugar, but thir's the green figs I'se warrant, and they grow in the garden here. It's a wonderful country this."

" Taste them, Donald," said Allan, and he handed him the basket. But the taste of figs to a novice is generally disappointing, and Donald expressed his opinion that though the green figs might make a good plaster for King Hezekiah, them that was sauted with sugar was better to

the taste, and could not be induced to try another.

"We have got some olives in the garden at your service, Donald," said Hugh Lindsay. "That's another Scripture fruit, ye ken. Oil that makes a man's face to shine comes from the olive."

"Na, na," said Donald, "I'll try nae experiments in things I'm not acquaint wi'. The apples and pears I ken weel, and as for the grapes they're just a sort of grozets, but I have nae broo o' figs and olives an' what ye ca' pomegranates; though there's Scripture warrant they were good enough for Hebrews, that's na reason why they should agree wi' Christians."

"I suppose the figs are as new to you," said Allan, addressing Amy, "and I suppose you do not like them."

"Oh! I like them very much, but I cannot eat anything. I used to eat figs in Madeira," said Amy.

"Did you stop there on the voyage?" asked Allan.

"No; I was there two years ago for some time," said Amy.

"They make first-rate wine there," said Hugh Lindsay; "did you see the vineyards or how the wine was made?"

"I saw the vineyards, but I don't know anything about the making of wine. It was two years ago. I was a little girl then."

"And ye're no very big now," said Mrs. Lindsay, "but the good man thinks everybody, big and little, should be as much taken up about flocks and herds, and land and crops, and vines and wine-making as he is himself. But if you're no going to eat any more we'd better clear away the breakfast, and let us all get to our work, for it's a busy day for more reasons than one."

It was altogether a strange scene to Amy. She had been brought up in comparative poverty, but it had been poverty accompanied by elegance and refinement. This rough plenty, this mixing up of masters and servants, these homely jokes and strong provincial accents, were all as different from her guarded and secluded life as the only child of cultivated and literary people, as could well be imagined. She must take her old place in the spare room; that was the only place for her. She rose to go, but a voice from the sofa interrupted her.

CHAPTER IV.

AMY'S NEW HOME.

"I AM afraid, Miss," said Tom Cross, for the voice was his, "that there are some of your boxes broke in the fall. Allan went off this morning early to fetch them here, and he says he is afraid there is some mischief done. You had better look and see, because if there is any little accident, Allan, who is the cleverest fellow with his hands of any one in the colony that has not been bred to the trade, will mend it for you. He has got a workshop and a forge, and many a pound he's saved his father and his neighbours too." Tom thought that unpacking and examining her boxes would give the poor girl something to do, and something to think of besides her irreparable loss.

"What is the use of unpacking my things, when I do not know where I am to go or what I am to do? Oh! dear, dear papa, what is to become of me?"

"You may stop with us, and welcome," said Mrs. Lindsay, "till ye can hear from your friends, or for all your life, if it would be agreeable to yoursel'."

"If I had only been a little older," said Amy, "I might have been of some use. I could have done something, but I can do nothing."

"Oh, but you can learn," said Mrs. Lindsay. "Rome was not built in a day. No doubt in time you may come to be as handy as our Jessie."

Amy looked at the large, pleasant young woman of twenty-three, who, with an apron on, and her sleeves tucked up to her elbows, was busily engaged in making up bread—a thing too important to be trusted to Judy—with her fair hair tanned and her comely features freckled by exposure to all sorts of weathers under an Australian sun, and she wondered if she ever could by Mrs. Lindsay's training grow to resemble her. It was so different a prospect from all that the author's daughter had thought of becoming, that what was meant for encouragement only saddened her. What would her papa have thought of her being domesticated with such a household?

Allan had more observation than his mother, and understood more of Amy's feelings. He led her out of the house to have a look at the weather, which had changed from extreme heat

to cold. A heavy shower or two had fallen through the night, and though it had not much effect in refreshing the pastures, the garden looked revived, and he took her through it.

"If anything ever vexes or troubles me," said he, "I always get best out of it when I am out of doors, and on horseback, so you must get Phemie's riding-skirt, and I'll mount you on Brownie, and show you the country. I don't know how it may look to your travelled eyes, but I think it a very fine country hereabouts."

"Yes, I like it very well. Dear papa said yesterday that every mile after we left the township brought us into prettier scenery, but—but—but—" and here the poor weary heart broke out afresh, "what is scenery to me now?"

"I wanted to ask you if you would like your poor father to be laid here," said Allan. "It is thirty miles to the nearest churchyard, and that is a strange place to you. And if he was laid beside our poor Patrick, under that sheaoak and the three willows, this place would seem more like home to you. But it's for you to choose. We will do just as you like."

"Then I think I would like him to rest here, for it is not so much like taking him from me."

"But is there really nothing better for you to do than to stop with us, where we would make

you welcome and do for you all that we can ?
But have you no friends ?

"No friends that care about me at all, and no money to take me to them if I had them," said Amy. "But I was going to learn; papa meant to train me to be a governess, so that I could make my own living; that is, after he found he was not strong, and I was getting on nicely; all the voyage out I read and studied with him every day; for he said he might not have so much time to give me afterwards; but it is all at an end now."

"You have been at good schools, I suppose," said Allan.

"No, very little at school. Mamma taught me while she was able, and then papa gave me lessons, but I am only thirteen, and so little; no one would think I could teach till I grow bigger, and have forgotten half of what I have learned."

"You are only thirteen, and I suppose you know hundreds of things that I don't?" said Allan, "and I am nearly twenty, too old to go to school, and that is worse than being too young, for that gets better every day."

"Do your father and mother really offer to keep me here altogether?" said Amy, doubtfully.

"Yes, really, and only too glad if you will accept the offer. Mrs. Hammond ought to have

done it. It is the meanest and coldest thing I ever heard of a lady doing, to throw off the care of you, as she did, but never doubt your welcome at Branzholm."

"It is very good of your father and mother, it is very good of you, but—"

"I know it quite well," interrupted Allan, "our living is too rough; we are not fit people to associate with such a little lady as you are. Perhaps my father and mother are too old to change their ways, but for the rest of us, if you see anything that vexes or annoys you, just tell us. We would do better if we only knew how. And what you cannot amend, you must try to put up with."

"I will try," said Amy, "for you are all very good. Then I may unpack my things and see what is broken? for I am pretty sure there is something wrong. And as for the large case of books that was left in Adelaide to be fetched out by Mr. Hammond's drays, will you give them room here? Some of the books might be useful to you."

"I don't think you know how ignorant I am," said Allan blushing. "I mean of books. I am afraid that your books would be too far on for me."

"Oh! surely not," said Amy, "you could teach yourself a great deal if you would take

the trouble, and perhaps I could"—and she hesitated.

"Could you teach me?" said the young man, eagerly. "You cannot think how anxious I am to learn, but my father could not spare me, and with poor Patrick dying so young, I was doubly needed to help him. You don't think I am too old to begin at the beginning? I can read, of course, and write a little, but I am afraid that is about all I can do."

Allan did not speak or behave in any way like an uneducated man, as such a one is seen in England. He had been educated by circumstances, and had naturally first-rate abilities, so that Amy was surprised at such a frank confession of ignorance.

"I am afraid I am only fit to help one who begins at the beginning," said she, "and if you will do your best to learn I will do all I can for you. I should be so happy if I thought I was of some use to anybody in the house. Then I may unpack my boxes and see if it is dear papa's desk that is broken?"

On looking into the trunk Amy discovered that the old desk was uninjured, but that her work-box had come off its hinges. "I know I did not pack things well, but I had no idea of the roads, and every thing seems out of place.

Can you mend this ?" and she brought the work-box to Allan.

He wondered at the exceedingly handsome though not new workbox. It was of rosewood beautifully inlaid and most thoroughly finished. In the centre was a silver name-plate with the initials E. D. curiously interwoven and surmounted by a small coronet.

"This is a splendid piece of workmanship," said Allan, "only the screws of the hinges have never been strong enough. I can mend it easily if I can get small enough screws, and I think I have some; if not, I will send to Adelaide for them. I hope this handsome box will stand the climate; it is very severe on such things."

"It has been to Madeira and back already," said Amy. "It was mamma's, and I love it for her sake."

"Then I must take great pains with it. Would you mind coming into my workshop with me to see if I have screws that will suit?" said Allan, who knew that Dr. Burton had arrived, and who wished to keep Amy a short time longer out of the chamber of death. "You look like a city girl; I suppose you never saw anything like this before. Here is my forge and anvil, and the bellows I made myself; not very handsome, but they answer the purpose—they

get up the heat. And here is my carpenter's bench and tools; I am going to get a turning lathe, for it is a capital thing for many purposes. It is very useful to be able to shoe the horses, and do rough carpentering when we are so far from any township."

"I never saw anything at all like this," said Amy, looking with interest on the rough shed, which Allan had put up with his own hands, and which was hung round with old horseshoes and odd apparently useless pieces of iron, and piled up at one end with timber of various shapes and sizes.

"I dare say it looks very confused to you, but I could put my hand on anything that is here in the dark. Oh! here are the screws, I think they will do. But you would see nothing like this in London, and that was your home always I suppose."

"I was born in London, and except for the voyage to Madeira and back again, and the voyage to Melbourne, and after that to Adelaide, I have never been out of London. Oh! by-the-bye, we went to the seaside when the children were ill, and with mamma, too."

"But had you no country cousins, or uncles, or aunts, or grandparents, to visit," said Allan, who could not understand the fact of a person having no relatives, near or distant.

"No," said Amy with a sigh; "you see mamma married twice, and all her friends were so displeased at her marrying papa, that they never spoke to her again. They took away her children from her, so that I never saw my brother and sister."

"You have a brother and sister, then," said Allan eagerly. "If they only knew you they would be glad to take care of you now that your poor father is gone. Blood is thicker than water, as we Scotch folk say."

"No," said Amy, "I don't think that they would. Papa wrote to them that mamma was ill, and then afterwards that mamma was dead, and they took no notice of the letter—not the slightest notice. I cannot write to them. I cannot ask anything from them. I would rather stay with you and your father and mother, who speak so kindly to me. Oh! I so often dream of that brother and sister, and try to make them like me and to be sorry about dear mamma, but it always fails—it always fails. Never even in my dreams have they given me a kind word. But don't speak about this to anybody. I tell you now because I cannot help it, and because my heart is full—too full," and the girl leaned on Allan's bench and wept.

The inquest resulted in a verdict of "Acci-


dental death." Gerald Staunton was buried at the end of Hugh Lindsay's garden, and Amy settled herself as an inmate of that plain but hospitable home, and matters improved so much at Branhholm after her arrival, and Amy became such a favourite with every one, that all the people of the district could never leave off wondering at Mrs. Hammond's extraordinary conduct and extraordinary blunder.

CHAPTER V.

RETROSPECTIVE.

BUT to account for Mrs. Hammond's conduct in some measure, we must go back in her history some twenty years. Though she was not a very genial or benevolent woman she had many excellent qualities, and would never have thrown the burden of little Amy Staunton on her despised neighbours if she had not had a special reason of her own for disliking and suspecting her.

Although Mrs. Hammond had always held her head very high in Australia, and spoke of society in England as if she had always mixed on equal terms with the very best county people; though she dreaded and opposed the intrusion of parvenus and self-made men into the charmed circle of colonial aristocracy, and was especially exclusive with regard to her children, she had at one period of her life been on her promotion, and



had begun her career as governess in the family of the wealthy Mr. Derrick, who had made an immense fortune as a cotton manufacturer. She had been educated with great care by a mother who had been left in straitened circumstances, and who had staked her all on that one chance, for she felt sure that if Clarissa Hope once was placed with great people on any footing she was sure to make her way. So Miss Hope had been turned out perfectly competent for a first-class situation according to the requirements of twenty years ago, and had been engaged by Mr. Derrick at a very handsome salary as finishing governess to two young ladies of sixteen and fourteen years of age. Mr. Derrick had bought Stanmore, a fine estate in ——shire, and was ambitious that his children should take a good place in county society. The only son of the family had been at Oxford and was travelling on the continent when Miss Hope began her educational duties; but before his return she had succeeded in making herself agreeable and almost necessary to the parents and in ingratiating herself also with her pupils; and he had not been long at home before she believed she had made a conquest of John Derrick also. In the last process she lost her own heart more completely than she ever did before or after, for she thought him both

handsome and agreeable. To a girl who has been educated to teach, whose whole girlish life has been spent in what is to be useful to her in after life in the seclusion of a boarding-school, who has never been initiated in all the light playful talk, half flirtation, half raillery, that breaks the boundary line between jest and earnest, the first attentions of a disengaged and eligible young gentleman are very likely to be successful. Miss Hope could not detect in the son who was to inherit the fortune the tone of underbreeding too apparent in the father who had acquired it. An Oxford course and a continental tour were correctives that in her opinion could not fail to make him a perfect gentleman; and as he had not hitherto been much in ladies' society, Miss Hope's liveliness, Miss Hope's perfect knowledge of her position, Miss Hope's tact in falling into everybody's ways and never offending or displeasing any one, Miss Hope's playing and singing, especially to the harp, Miss Hope's very handsome face and figure and good style of dress, were working wonders. John Derrick thought her a famous girl with plenty of life, or as he called it of *go* in her, and he flirted with her on every convenient opportunity, but still with discretion, for his father and mother never suspected anything of it.

But on one unlucky holiday time Miss Hope reluctantly left her delightful situation to spend six weeks with her mother ; for in spite of all John Derrick's hints and planning, and Miss Hope's declaration that she did not care for holidays, Mrs. Derrick would not invite her to go to the sea-side with the family. She had the satisfaction of seeing that her admirer was quite as much disappointed as she was herself, and the few parting words he said she felt amounted almost to a declaration of attachment ; so she bore the separation as she best could, and charmed her mother and her mother's circle with her accounts of the thorough appreciation she had met with from the whole family at Stanmore.

Unfortunately for Miss Hope's expectations, the Derricks became acquainted at the fashionable watering-place to which they had gone with a family as much superior to them in birth and position as they were beneath them in fortune.

The Earl of Darlington was a poor peer originally, but his extravagant habits had lessened, as far as entails would allow of it, the family property which he had inherited from his father.

The title and the estates descended to a second cousin, and as every encumbrance that could possibly be borne by the property was already

heaped on it for the Earl's own expenses, it was likely that his only daughter Lady Eveline would be left penniless at his death. The Earl had married rather late in life, and prudently so far, for he had married an heiress, but as he had imprudently managed that her money should be completely at his own disposal, he had spent it, and was quite capable of spending another fortune like it; for though not young, he had as extravagant tastes and habits as ever. Lady Darlington chafed and fretted and reproached her husband when the money was gone, and bewailed the injustice that had robbed her daughter. On these occasions the Earl used to say—

“No fear of Eveline. She'll marry Herbert and be countess when you are dowager. Have I not kept friends with my heir for the very purpose? And he's a careful fellow; he'll nurse the property a bit. I see he can't bear a stick of timber to be cut down; he is just a little too ready with his advice, and if it were not for Eveline I'd fire up. You suppose I have no command of my temper, Lady Darlington, but the curb I put on it in that fellow's presence for Eveline's sake is a tight one, and you reproach me with not caring about my daughter.”

“It is only a chance you speak of, Lord

Darlington. Eveline is a child yet, and though a pretty one, people do not care about beauty now-a-days. And Herbert Darlington's means are very small just now."

"Small or great, he will be able to live within his means, which is what I never could do," said the Earl laughing, "so he is a richer man than me now, and he has a rich uncle besides. Oh! I should feel quite easy if Eveline was married to him; and depend upon it, when Lady Gower brings her out, that she will be the rage. She has the Darlington countenance, and the family has been noted for beauty for three centuries."

But before Lady Eveline's countenance had come to its full beauty, in fact when she was not sixteen, Mr. Herbert Darlington and his expectations were transferred elsewhere.

He married a Miss Pennithorne, the only child of a wealthy city-man, and reputed the richest heiress of her time. Lord Darlington was furious in his rage, but he could not have the satisfaction of cutting off his heir with a shilling. He could only cut him in society, and cut down a very little more timber, and Lady Eveline's penniless condition became as great a grief to him as to his lady. The only thing that could be done under the circumstances was, to take a leaf out of Herbert's book, and ally his

daughter to wealth, if not to birth ; so that when the gout drove Lord Darlington to Brighton, and he found himself placed in the next house to Mr. Anthony Derrick the cotton lord, he determined to cultivate the acquaintance, very much to the satisfaction of Lady Darlington and to the delight of the whole family of Derricks.

Lady Eveline was just sixteen when she met with John Derrick, and though she was in a very different style from Miss Hope, there was no doubt she was a very pretty and elegant girl. The Countess was very courteous to him ; the Earl, though of a hasty, irritable temper, was always glad to see him, and the young man was flattered by this introduction into aristocratic society. His father and mother were full of the praises of the Lady Eveline, and his sisters struck up a violent friendship for her. Charlotte and Anne Derrick used to accompany Lady Eveline, with their brother's escort, for walks and rides on the beach, and John was delighted to show his acquaintance that he had a lady of title under his care. He brought forward his stock of small talk, which had been so irresistible to Miss Hope, and Lady Eveline did not seem to dislike it. She had never been in society, or been much with people of her own age. She had missed Herbert Darlington's frequent visits, for they

were the only things that had brought any change to her life at home, for her father was very irritable and her mother querulous, and both of them were a great deal older than herself. Her pleasures had been in reading and music, and her education had been but imperfect, at least so far as judgment and principles were concerned. She was a great novel-reader and built many castles in the air of a very romantic kind. She had intense pleasure in out-of-door life, which in the beautiful country about Darlington Castle was always attractive; and as all her pursuits and amusements had been solitary, she enjoyed the change to the bustle and life of a crowded watering-place, and felt the society of companions of her own age pleasant. Still she looked down on her friends too. She had heard the indignation with which her father and mother had spoken of Herbert's mesalliance with Miss Pennithorne, and wondered at their civility to this Manchester family.

After about a month's acquaintance, a convenient opportunity having presented itself, Mr. John Derrick made a formal proposal to the young lady. Lady Eveline was taken by surprise; she had never dreamt of such a thing as that this plebeian young man would fall in love with her; her heart was indifferent and

more than indifferent to John Derrick, but she disliked to give pain, and so she listened. It was not at all unpleasant to listen; she had always liked the love passages in her favourite novels and romances better than any other passages in the books, and had often wondered if that was the way in which declarations were made in real life. So she listened much longer than she ought to have done, not as if it were her own concern, but wondering what other people would think of it if they only knew; how amused her mamma would be, and how indignant her papa at the young man's presumption. She was not old enough or thoughtful enough to feel the pain which a fruitless declaration ought to give to a woman. Her lover interpreted her silence as encouragement; he took her hand and was raising it to his lips when Eveline started, and woke to the consciousness that this was really her own affair, and that Mr. John Derrick was entitled to an answer.

"Oh, no!" said she, "I cannot allow of such a thing. What would papa say?"

"But I have your permission, Lady Eveline, to speak to the Earl on this subject?" said John Derrick.

Eveline did not know what her consent to this

implied ;—she only saw that it would save her from saying anything painful to his feelings, and she felt very certain that her papa would be decided in his answer.

“ Oh ! yes ; I suppose you may speak to him,” said she.

“ And if I win his consent I may hope for yours ?” said the young man eagerly.

“ You have not got his consent yet,” said she, half seriously, half archly, and she ran out of the room, leaving him in the seventh heaven at the favourable reception she had given to his addresses, while she herself was flattered, amused, and excited, but never dreaming of the possibility of marrying him.

John told his father the result of his interview ; indeed he had not made his proposal until Mr. Derrick had both sanctioned and urged it, and the old gentleman went with the lover to the Earl with offers of most liberal settlements, to strengthen his claims to so distinguished an alliance.

They found the Earl in very good humour and by no means unprepared for the overtures they made. Lady Darlington was called into council, and she too looked with favour on a marriage that would secure her poor girl from the poverty she had dreaded for her. She was too young at present, far too young ; but if Mr. John Derrick

would wait for two or three years they would make no objection. This was acceded to; the old gentleman said they were both young enough, and he thought it would be well for them to wait.

When Lady Eveline was summoned into her father's study, or the room which went by that name in the Brighton establishment, she was astonished and confounded to discover that everyone took it for granted that she had promised to marry Mr. John Derrick, provided he obtained the Earl's consent. Her mother clasped her to her heart, wept over her, and said she knew she should be happy; her father declared that he had no wish but to please her, and that if she had set her heart on this young fellow, he would make no objection on the score of birth or position. Young people would be young people and take fancies to each other to the end of time, and he, the Earl, did not see any good in thwarting them. He had thought she would wait till she had been presented before she made conquests, but after all there was no time like the present. Then old Mr. Derrick gravely said that he was most happy that everything had been so pleasantly and amicably arranged, and declared his intention of welcoming Lady Eveline into his family ere long.

"But I am so young," said Eveline, shrinking back from all this congratulation, and feeling, that, through everything that was said by others, John Derrick's eye was fixed on her with an expression of confident success that embarrassed and mortified her. "I am so very young," she repeated.

"So we all say," said the Earl, "but if you are both of the same mind two years hence you will not be too young then."

"But—but—but—" said Eveline and then words failed her. Perhaps John Derrick would change his mind in two years' time. It was a distant prospect; a good deal might happen in two years.

"A two years' engagement is not an unreasonably long one," said Mr. Derrick, "so you must wait with patience, my boy."

"But mamma," said Eveline, "don't let it be spoken about."

"Oh, no!" said Lady Darlington, "I think that as you are so young, and as your education is not completed, it would be well that no one knew that you are engaged, particularly if you do not like it mentioned."

Engaged—was she really engaged? It was very strange to be so misunderstood and hemmed in by the parents whom she had trusted to, to

get her out of her dilemma without giving her any trouble about it. But she would get out of it somehow. It was a good thing that everybody agreed that it should not be mentioned, not even to Anne or Charlotte—Mr. Derrick promised her that—and then she could talk quietly about it to her mother. She would explain that the marriage was out of the question.

“As to visiting and correspondence,” said Lady Darlington, “if the affair is to be kept quiet, it would not be advisable to permit very much of either, but still in moderation we can allow of it. Eveline will pay her promised visit to her aunt, Lady Gower, at Christmas.”

“Oh! I had hoped she might have come to Stanmore then,” said Mr. Derrick.

“No, that cannot be. It was an old promise that she should go to her aunt’s when she was seventeen, for Lady Gower cannot be troubled with chits of children, and Eveline has looked forward to it for years. If you mean to keep this affair unknown, it would be very foolish to have much correspondence or intercourse when she is at Gower’s Court,” said the Earl.

John Derrick did not altogether like these arrangements, but you cannot say “no” to an Earl whose daughter you wish to marry. He had wished at once to step into the circle of

aristocratic society, and to be kept in the background while Lady Eveline was enjoying herself in the gay and fashionable world was losing the best half of the triumph of his success. Eveline was pleased with the provision that her parents made. She did not want to see much of John Derrick, even if it ever came to anything, and as for correspondence, she wondered what in all the world they could find to say to each other. She caught a glance at his face timidly enough; he looked annoyed; she was sure he had not a good temper. He had not the courage to appeal against the hardship of restricted opportunities of lovemaking, but yet he did not like it.

On the whole both father and son were quite satisfied with the result of the interview, and when they were gone Eveline tried to explain to her mother that all this had been taken for granted, and that she had no idea of accepting John Derrick's proposal when she allowed him to speak to her father; but before she began her mother clasped her in her arms and wept over her again, and said she could bear to give her up for her own good and her own happiness, as this undoubtedly was. She had always known she must give her up, but this had come upon her rather soon.


"A great deal too soon, mamma; I cannot

understand it at all. After all you and papa said about poor Herbert's marriage to the granddaughter of a—cobbler—how could you think of my marrying Mr. John Derrick, whose grandfather was—”

“Never mind his grandfather, my dear; it is not his grandfather, or father either, that you are to marry. I had not much of a grandfather, but yet Lord Darlington was only too glad to marry me, and, to tell the truth, if you do not make a good marriage I do not know what is to become of us, for he has made away with all I had. The reason why we were so displeased at Herbert's marriage was that there was a sort of understanding that he was to marry you when you were old enough.”

“Oh! that would have been very different,” said Lady Eveline.

“Indeed, on the whole I think this is much better for you, because Herbert was poor, at least during his uncle's life-time, and now I hear that old Mr. Herbert has left him his whole fortune, he was so pleased with his prudent marriage. But this Mr. Derrick should have half-a-million, if report speaks true of his father's wealth, and the old gentleman seems as desirous of the alliance with our family as his son is, so that everything will be easy——”



"But mamma," said Lady Eveline, "I am sure I don't like him well enough to marry him."

"Oh! I dare say not; he does not ask you to marry him to-day or to-morrow. I am sure you will like him sufficiently well before there is any call on you to do so, and the young man is really wonderfully well, considering," said the Countess.

"But I ought to tell him how I feel, surely."

"Oh no, dear, there is not the slightest necessity to say any thing about it. He ought to know that a well-brought-up girl does not fall in love with a man before he asks her or at the moment of a proposal. You have given only a little negative encouragement."

"But I did not mean to give him any encouragement at all."

"You are a little goose not to know that referring him to your father was very decided encouragement," said the Countess.

"But I was so sure that he would not approve."

"If he had not been a desirable *parti* your papa would have put a stop to it at once, but as it is, really, everything that could be wished for you, the Earl sees it as I do, and there was no harm done by your blunder."

So it was settled, and Lady Eveline tried to

think it was as well settled as the Earl and Countess said it was, and faintly tried to foster anything she could feel like a prepossession for John Derrick.


CHAPTER VI.

STILL RETROSPECTIVE : LADY EVELINE'S MARRIAGE.

It was under very different circumstances from those before the holidays that Miss Hope resumed her flirtation with John Derrick. If he had not the éclat of a declared engagement with Lady Eveline Darlington, he had the pleasure of a secret one, and he had never enjoyed flirting so much as now, when he felt sure nothing could come of it. Miss Hope was more agreeable than ever, and to his proposal to take lessons in singing and in music from her, his parents made no objection, so he was thrown into her company still more than before. Lady Eveline was very fond of music, and it was with some ulterior view of making himself agreeable to her by-and-by, while at the same time the process was exceedingly pleasant to himself, that he had proposed to cultivate his naturally good voice. Miss Hope felt, if Mr. and Mrs. Derrick sus-

pected, as they could scarcely help doing, the growth of Mr. John's attachment to herself, that they approved of it. His pleasure in the governess's society was greater and more unmixed than that of his noble betrothed. Miss Hope was older, more experienced, and had more tact. Lady Eveline was timid and sensitive; she did not love him well enough to be confiding and affectionate, and though they were engaged, he had always stood a little in awe of her. Under a very commonplace character, John Derrick concealed an enormous amount of vanity, and a disposition to take deep offence if he was slighted, so that Miss Hope, who really loved him, and to whom he was the most important person in the world, was sure to be a pleasanter companion than the inexperienced girl who had been persuaded into an engagement with him for family and worldly reasons, and whose parents underrated all but the wealth of her suitor.

When Lady Eveline's name was mentioned in conversation between pupil and teacher, John Derrick thought it rather good fun to speak slightly of her beauty and other attractions. His promise to keep the engagement secret allowed of this latitude, and as Charlotte and Anne were always praising the Lady Eveline, he thought it necessary to say something dif-



ferent in order to throw Miss Hope off the scent. He had discovered Miss Hope's wishes, and had been flattered and amused by them. He knew that he was a very eligible person; his reception from the Earl and Countess had strengthened his opinion of his importance; but the idea that even the governess's obscure position had not protected her heart from his powers of fascination was rather amusing; so he played the game, with nothing staked on his part and everything on Miss Hope's, with considerable skill and success.

In the mean time, Lady Eveline's negative amount of affection for him had no food but a few short and far from ardent or romantic letters. Indeed, even if he had been a good correspondent, which he was not, a man of average capacity can scarcely write good love-letters to one woman when he is deep in a flirtation with another. His whole powers in that way are forestalled, and even at the best it was Lady Eveline's rank and position that he had been most attached to. Miss Hope's person and manners were far more to his taste, and if her other qualifications had been equally attractive there was no doubt as to whom he should have preferred. He fancied that the style of beauty which Lady Eveline possessed, which was a

complete contrast to his own, was that which he admired, and that her ethereal elegance, her transparently fair complexion, her deep blue eyes, and sunny hair with its rippling curls, was his type of beauty; whereas he really in his heart preferred Miss Hope's, which was more like his own, but with softened expression and more regular features. He was not ill-looking, but his face was rather heavy and clumsy, whereas Miss Hope was really a fine woman, large and well made, whose dark eyes, fine straight black hair, strongly defined eyebrows, and short black eyelashes, clear brown complexion with a warm glow through it, rather large mouth, with white and regular teeth, made her altogether somewhat like himself, but considerably handsomer. She would have won him if she had not been his sister's governess, but even with that disadvantage he could not help being fascinated.

The only mark of attention he ventured on to remind Lady Eveline of his engagement was suggested by his father, and consisted in a magnificent set of jewels to appear in at a large party at Gower's Court. They were given through the Countess of Darlington, and arrived at a time when Eveline was disposed to forget all about her engagement. She had entreated that her aunt should know nothing of the matter, and

days who was heir to a marquisate, and as Lady Gower was satisfied that Eveline was prettier than she promised to be, if she had any chance there the less that was said about the Manchester family the better. But Lord Martingale knew his own value too well to throw himself away on the daughter of the spendthrift Darlington, and Eveline's style was not at all to his taste, so that he baffled his hostess's attempts to throw them together. Though Lady Gower was a leader of fashion, and very exclusive in many of her ideas, she had a pride in getting up agreeable parties, and this could not be made up entirely of eligibles. It was necessary for the success even of parties in town to have a large sprinkling of detrimentals, in the shape of younger sons, clever young professional men, officers with very little beyond their pay, and even of a few litterateurs, now that literature was becoming so much the rage. If for parties in town, how much more valuable were such people for a six weeks' campaign at Christmas, when the neighbours were slow, and when there were possibi-

lities of frost setting in and putting a stop to field sports.

It was therefore a lively circle into which Lady Eveline Darlington was introduced as a fresh face and a fresh nature; and she felt the attentions, the badinage, the smart conversation, the careless gaiety of that pleasure-loving and pleasure-seeking coterie something as delightful as it was new. Her father had been of the old school of self-indulgence, and she had had no brothers, so that it was a great deal more to her than to other young ladies of rank to come out. The Derricks had been very slow and stupid compared to this gay assembly, and she could not help contrasting John Derrick unfavourably with several of the young gentlemen whose compliments were much better turned, and whose attentions were much less clumsy. She received her fair share of admiration, if not from Lord Martingale or Sir Henry Overton, from one or two others whom she thought much more agreeable; and especially from Mr. Gerald Staunton, a young barrister who was toiling up the many slow steps that lead in one case out of ten thousand to the woolsack, and which that remote chance tempts so many adventurous spirits to climb.

He had never seen anything out of his dreams so fresh and innocent as Lady Eveline Darling-

ton, and sunned himself in the presence of one so unconsciously charming. Her enthusiasm about books, and pictures, and landscapes, her ignorance of the ways of the world, her frankness in asking information, her evident pleasure in every thing he said to her, were dangerous to the peace of mind of a briefless barrister with all the world certainly before him, but still a long way off.

Lady Gower had thought she had given her niece sufficient warning when she had said to her a day or two after her arrival:—"Lady Darlington trusts that I will not put any nonsense into your head or let any one else do it, so I need only tell you that, with the exception of Lord Martingale, and Sir Harry Overton, and Mr. Seymour, there is not an eligible person at Gower's Court. As for the others, whatever they may say, you know it means nothing. Mr. Staunton, for instance, is well enough to pass an hour with, but he has nothing and neither have you, and he knows it. I only speak to you because you are so utterly inexperienced; a year hence you will see these things for yourself."

"Oh! I am safe enough, dear aunt," said Eveline with a laugh and a little sigh, "you need not tell me to take care of my heart." She thought her engagement, uncomfortable as it was, was defensive armour sufficient for all her requirements.

"My dear Eveline," said Lady Gower, a fortnight after this warning, "I told you to take care of your heart, and you said you were quite safe, but you ought to take care of poor Gerald Staunton's too. You are not sufficiently distant with him. I really should blame you if he has the presumption to fall in love with you, absurd and preposterous as it would be. We cannot do without these creatures, and yet they are a world of trouble to us; silly moths fluttering around dangerous candles. I think I overheard you saying you wished he could go to Darlington Castle to see some view or another, but there is one comfort, Darlington will not invite him."

Eveline heard this warning with a little feeling of shame, but not altogether without pleasure. The idea that Gerald Staunton was falling in love with her most imprudently and hopelessly, was far more romantic and interesting to her, than John Derrick's proposal to make an exchange between rank and money; it was far more like books, and unfortunately Eveline knew nothing of life but from books, and neither her querulous mother nor her fashionable aunt tried to guide her heart or judgment in any other but the most worldly way.

There was an additional glow on Lady Eveline's cheek when Gerald again sat beside her and

resumed the sparkling but still occasionally serious conversation, which they always took up just where they had left off. Each recollected so distinctly the other's last words, each had been thinking over the subject in the interval, and was ready to throw or to receive any new light on it. Lady Gower's eye was upon them, and she could hear all that they said, but there was not a word that she could take exception to. It was simply that they were interested in subjects that did not interest her that she was suspicious, Lady Eveline flattered herself;—but it was the amount of interest, and the looks and tones in which the conversation was conducted, that alarmed that clever woman of the world.

Gerald Staunton was one of her best talkers; she had always liked to place him where he could enliven a dull corner, but she did not like that her niece should appreciate his lively humour, his apt quotations, his fluent narrative so keenly. Nothing he said or did ever jarred on Eveline, his taste was so good, his opinions so just, his criticisms so keen. She was a little ashamed of her omnivorous capacity for novel reading, and her indiscriminating taste for poetry, and was now determined to like and dislike with better judgment, that is to say, with Gerald Staunton's judgment.

In the course of conversation one day the name of John Derrick happened to be mentioned, and Eveline heard with secret emotion that he had been a fellow-student with Staunton at Harrow and Oxford. As he did not know that she had any intimate knowledge of the family, or any connection with John Derrick in particular, Staunton could not guess how she was pained to hear anecdotes of his sensitive vanity, of his deficient scholarship, of his want of gentlemanly feeling, of his desire to fasten himself on great people, and of the rebuffs he had met with. Lady Gower acknowledged that it took several generations of wealth to get the tradesman's spirit out of the blood of these money magnates, and laughed at Mr. Staunton's description as heartily as the others, lamenting that so fine a property as Stannore should have fallen into such hands, and bringing in a disparaging allusion to the Pennithorne alliance which Herbert Darlington had contracted. "Nothing can be done with her, Eveline. I made an effort and went to her, but she is hopeless, absolutely hopeless. And Manchester is several degrees lower than London of course."

All this must be true—quite true, for Eveline believed implicitly in Staunton, and how much more distressing was her engagement to her. Her indifference was fast changing into positive

dislike, when the packet with the handsome ornaments arrived.

Lady Eveline took them to her aunt, determining to confide in her, and to implore her assistance to get free.

At first Lady Gower was astonished at the idea of her brother embarrassing himself to get such expensive ornaments for Eveline, especially as she had written that Lord Martingale had left Gower's Court; but when she heard the girl's confused and hesitating confession of where they came from, and what right Mr. John Derrick had to send them, her countenance cleared, and she took a very cheerful view of the whole proceeding. It was astonishing how differently Lady Gower looked on the Derricks when she heard of the formal proposal accepted by her brother on Eveline's behalf.

"I never heard of Darlington doing a wiser thing," said she. "Upon my word, Eveline, I am delighted to hear this, though it was not fair to keep me in the dark so long."

"But you laugh at them all," said Eveline.

"I laugh at everything and everybody, as you know very well; and besides, I did not know at the time of the connection likely to be formed, and that was your fault. You sly thing, coming to me so young and innocent, to be introduced

into the world, and with your cards all played beforehand and played so well too. And I might have saved myself all that trouble about Lord Martingale. Oh! I can scarcely forgive you for not telling me. We must bring them forward; I suppose they are improveable. Harrow and Oxford and the Continent—they have done their best for him, and you must not mind what a flippant fellow like Staunton says, who would give his ears for such a position. John Derrick does not sound very aristocratic, but Lady Eveline Derrick will do."

"But my dearest aunt, I am sure I do not like him well enough. I really was taken by surprise at his offer, and they all said that I had engaged myself when I had no intention of doing so. Oh! do, dear aunt, help me out of this terrible entanglement," and Eveline burst into tears.

"Nonsense, my dear child; it is the best thing that could possibly happen. I would have done the best I could for you, but I don't think you are likely to take in the set I mix with, and you know the Derricks are immensely rich. One is sure of property that is newly acquired, whereas no one can tell the incumbrances that are on old estates, and I am very glad that Darlington and your mamma exerted a little parental authority to reassure you."

"But I think I shall be miserable ; I know I do not love him."

"Your head is so full of romances that you have no idea of what is really required as love from a young lady of rank."

"And besides, I am pretty sure he does not care much for me," said Lady Eveline sullenly.

"Oh ! yes, I am convinced that he does. I am sure these are most striking proofs of attachment. But I see how it is. It was the greatest folly not to tell me of this affair before you came to Gower's Court. If you had not been here, and seen a number of idle flattering creatures that appear to you to be more lively and agreeable than the excellent young man to whom you are engaged, you would have been quite satisfied with your chains. Never mind, these are really beautiful, and you may wear them with an easier mind than I thought you could have, for you know that they were paid for."

"Paid for—yes—" said Lady Eveline with a sigh, "but I would give them all and a great deal more to be able to return them and feel that I was free."

"My dear child, that cannot be. It is very wrong to trifle with a young man's feelings in this way, and very disgraceful to break off an engagement. If Mr. Derrick broke it off, every one would cry shame on him, and you should feel

your own responsibilities too. It would be very dishonorable conduct, considering that has given you no cause of complaint, and has as you say been as silent as to his success as you could wish. As for any attentions you may have met with here, I assure you that they mean nothing, absolutely nothing. You are known to be the daughter of the poorest and most extravagant peer in Great Britain, who has no political influence whatever, and no man in his senses would think of falling in love with you unless it was some one circumstanced like Mr. Derrick."

"Why did you tell me to take care, then, if there was no danger of anyone being insane enough to care about me?" said Eveline indignantly.

"Oh! these are words of course which I address to every young girl under my care whom I see flirting with such people. Gerald Staunton does not really care about you any more than you do about him; but I am really very glad to hear of this engagement."

Eveline was hurt at her aunt's supposing that she had given more affection than was felt for her; her pride was roused at the humiliating idea, and her manners to Gerald changed. He thought she had had a lesson from her aunt and was acting upon it. It was very proper certainly that she should grow cold to him, and much

better for them both, for he knew it was the most imprudent of all possible attachments, but yet it had been her frankness and girlish simplicity that had so much won upon his heart. His apparent disappointment at her more distant manner awoke a delightful though agitated consciousness that her aunt had been mistaken, and that he really loved her; her old fascination returned, and one day out of doors, with a clear frosty sky above and a carpet of snow under their feet, her desire to know that she really held a high place in his regard led him on so far as to confess that he loved her.

How differently this declaration was received from that of John Derrick! How quickly it was apprehended, and even in spite of the miserableness of her pre-engagement, how proud she felt for the love of such a man!

It could not be accepted—of course not—“I am already engaged,” she faltered out.

Gerald Staunton's countenance changed. He was horror-struck at her heartless conduct in leading him on to make a rash and mad proposal, while all the time she had no intention or power of returning his affection.

“Forgive me, Lady Eveline, my presumptuous folly,” he said coldly. “If I had known of this before, I should have been saved a great deal of

pain. I wish you all happiness." He was turning to go when he observed the white face of the girl, and her remorseful expression as she moved her lips as if to speak. He stopped to hear what she had to say.

"It is I who ought to ask forgiveness. I see that concealment is wrong; but I have been in the wrong about it altogether. Try to forgive me for the pain I have given you."

"I know it was the height of presumption on my part," said he; "I never intended to breathe a word of my feelings towards you, but I was foolish enough to misunderstand your manner, or your words, or something."

He had only understood her too well, but how useless and vain to say so.

"Mr. Staunton," said she slowly, "this engagement of mine was not of my seeking, but papa and mamma have set their hearts upon it, and so has Lady Gower, and things have gone so far that it would be dishonourable to break it off, and I will never think of doing such a thing; but—but I am not very happy, and when I think that I have made you unhappy too, I feel as if my heart would break."

Mr. Staunton could not help trying to comfort her a little; he guessed that if things had been brighter and more promising with him, Lady

Eveline would not object to break off her engagement, but what had he to offer? His birth was by no means equal to hers, and his fortune was all to make, and an engagement for an indefinite period to a struggling man was what her noble relatives would never consent to, but her remorse and her grief only made the consciousness of his position more painful.

At this point in their conversation they were interrupted by Lady Gower, who guessed there had been something serious passing between them. She looked angrily at her niece, and ordered her to go in, and stay in her own room till she could speak with her. She then turned to the presumptuous lover.

"This will never do, Mr. Staunton," said she.

"So it appears," replied Staunton.

"We cannot allow of such things in our society. Lady Eveline is my niece, and under my care. She is young and inexperienced, and does not know the world."

"I hope she never may."

"But young as she is, she is engaged," said Lady Gower.

"So Lady Eveline has just told me, and astonished me very much by the information."

"She is engaged to John Derrick, your college friend."

"Engaged to John Derrick, and I have been speaking so thoughtlessly about him! She is a great deal too good for him."

"No, no, the young man is well enough, and will make her an excellent husband; but you will understand that for your own happiness, it will be better to see as little as possible of her for the future, so I do not expect to see much of you in town when I return, and for the present I think you had better go back to your chambers."

"Has not Lady Eveline been coerced into this engagement?" asked Gerald.

"Oh! no, nothing of the kind. Indeed, Mr. Derrick asked her in the first place, and she very properly referred him to Lord Darlington, and so the matter was settled. There is no such thing as coercion or compulsion now-a-day. It is altogether a most delightful arrangement, and I am quite sure that Lady Eveline has no desire to break it off. Your attentions might make her uncomfortable and unhappy, but they can do nothing further, and I am quite sure that as an honourable man you must feel what you ought to do under the circumstances."

Gerald Staunton took the advice of his hostess, and left Gower's Court at once, and Eveline knew that he had given up all hope of her, but

believed that he loved her still. People who have once loved must love for ever, and though nothing would happen to break off her engagement, her dislike to it was as strong as ever. Lady Gower had determined on declaring it, and invited John Derrick to Gower's Court, where he had the pleasure of seeing his present worn, and his choice justified ; for after she was known to be engaged, Eveline met with more general admiration than before. His friends and acquaintances congratulated him on having won the young beauty before she had come out, and he was favourably introduced by Lady Gower to the society he had longed for. He accompanied Lady Eveline to Darlington Castle, and if the kindest reception possible from the Earl and Countess could have made up for the coldness and timidity of his bride-elect, he might have been satisfied. To a certain extent he was satisfied ; Eveline would of course grow very fond of him when she was married to him, and in the mean time she was not teasing or exacting ; he had more liberty in his state of engagement than any young fellow of his acquaintance.

Miss Hope had wondered at John Derrick's being invited to Gower's Court, and after that to Darlington Castle, but as he had parted from

her with regret, and as his letters to his sister always contained a message to Miss Hope, and as he had once written her a note on his own account, requesting the words of one of her favourite songs, she felt sure that she was not forgotten. Still the visit to Darlington Castle was alarming.

"We are all so fond of Lady Eveline; we saw so much of her when we were at Brighton. Is it not delightful that we are going to have her for a sister, Miss Hope?" said Charlotte Derrick to her governess one day.

Miss Hope was leaning over Charlotte's drawing board pointing out a defect in the perspective, when she heard this astounding piece of news. She drew back with a slight exclamation, which, however, was nothing more than such intelligence deserved.

"And to think how sly they have both been about it," continued Charlotte. "They have been engaged since August, and never let Anne or me know, though papa and mamma knew all about it. I hoped that it might happen some time or other John was asked to Gower's Court, but as it turns out they had settled it long ago."

"She is so lovely and so distinguished looking," said Anne; "and only seventeen. Is it not delightful, Miss Hope?"

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Miss Hope bit her lip at the thought of how she had been duped and blinded. John Derrick had really given her cause to think he loved her, and more unmistakeably after he was bound to Lady Eveline than before.

"Of course with John's prospects it is an excellent match for Lady Eveline," said Charlotte; "for though she is an Earl's daughter, she is as poor as—as poor as you are, Miss Hope. John gave her her diamonds to be presented at Court in, and papa will not say how much they cost. If he had not she must have appeared in old things of her great grandmother's. I like new things. When I go to Court I shall coax papa to get me as handsome a set. If they had not made so mighty a secret of it, I might have had a look at it. Don't you think I should have as handsome things as John's wife?"

"Oh! yes, of course, yes," said the governess.

"Lady Eveline is coming here on a visit soon and you will see her. I am sure you will think her lovely, and she has such an exquisite voice, and is so fond of music. That is the reason why John has been so anxious to learn from you lately. You know it was after we returned to Stanmore from Brighton that he became so enthusiastic."

Miss Hope remembered the time and the circumstances, and did not feel at all soothed by

the recollection. It was some time before John Derrick returned to Stanmore, and by that time she had schooled herself to hide the deep offence which she had felt at his conduct. He was disposed to be as friendly with her as ever, and as every one spoke openly to him of his relations to Lady Eveline, he thought it was perhaps due to Miss Hope to explain the matter to her. To her he made light of his attachment, did not praise the beauty or the elegance of his betrothed, said she was rather young and shy, but would probably acquire confidence by-and-bye, and gave it to be understood that the young lady and her family had rather sought him out than been sought by him, for of course it was a capital chance for them, and the governor had taken up the idea very cordially, and they had settled the matter very summarily in the room which the Earl called most inappropriately his study. Miss Hope drew the conclusion that his attachment was not very profound, and she was prepared to dislike Lady Eveline and all the family unseen and unheard.

The promised visit to Stanmore was not paid so soon as expected; Lady Eveline had shrunk from it, and John did not press it. He enjoyed showing her to his friends and being congratulated on his choice, and receiving compli-

ments on her beauty and accomplishments, but he disliked the trouble of trying to win the heart he took for granted would be sufficiently his own for domestic comfort. Miss Hope disliked Lady Eveline still more when she saw her. Her pupils were never weary of praising her, and the old people liked her modest unassuming manners, and her acquiescence in all the arrangements they made or proposed for her future home; but Miss Hope saw the truth with the quickness of perception which her own wrongs and her own indignation had sharpened; the girl gave no heart to John Derrick; she was making a worldly marriage of convenience. She had ousted her, Miss Hope, without any excuse or palliation of the offence; she was mercenary, she was deceitful. She could discover the lack of affection in all she said and did, and in all she did not say and did not do. There was no lingering with him in quiet corners of the room, no separating from the party for a quiet tête-à-tête during a walk or excursion, no brightening of her eye as he entered the room in which she sat. She would sit down to the piano to avoid conversation with John Derrick, she would suggest any arrangement that would prevent him from being her only escort to or from a place. The girls thought she was ex-

tremely fond of them, but Miss Hope saw a different cause for her desire for their company wherever she was.

And yet this pair were to be married; there appeared to be no help for it. How terribly quickly the weeks and months flew past for both Lady Eveline and Miss Hope. It seemed as if nothing could break the charmed net that entangled them, but Miss Hope once made the attempt.

"How very happy you must be, Lady Eveline," said she to her one day.

"Happy!" echoed the girl with a sigh and a start.

"It is so seldom when young people make a marriage of *affection* that the parents on both sides are so reasonable as they have been in your case," said Miss Hope with a slight accent on the word *affection*.

"Yes, I suppose so," said Lady Eveline. "I believe it is very rare."

"Mr. John Derrick is so agreeable, quite the life of our society at Stanmore," said Miss Hope.

"Is he? Do you think so? I have seen so little of the world. You know I am very young."

Miss Hope thought Eveline was boastful of

her youth, whereas in fact she wished she was older and had more determination.

"Old enough, however, to choose for yourself. It is astonishing how soon young ladies learn to do that," said Miss Hope.

"To choose for myself?" said Eveline with a bewildered air. "No, I did not do that."

"Then you had happiness thrust upon you by affectionate friends. No matter how it comes, if you are quite sure it *is* happiness," said Miss Hope.

"I don't know why you should speak in such a way to me, for even though I am so young I am not your pupil."

"Certainly you are not," said Miss Hope, "and as everything appears to be so satisfactory, there is very little occasion for you to take a hint from any one," and the matter dropped.

Lady Eveline did not know and could not guess that Miss Hope had found the man irresistible to whom she was herself so indifferent; she had considered her insinuations very impertinent, and had answered her with a hauteur which was not at all usual or natural to her. She had felt Miss Hope's eyes often on her, and they had made her feel uncomfortable. Her conscience was uneasy; she knew

she was in the wrong; but all her authorized advisers had persuaded her that she was irrevocably committed, and that an engagement ought to be held as sacred as a marriage, so that she could see no way out of it.

Old Mr. Derrick behaved very handsomely; he took a house for the young people in London, and furnished it splendidly. He made most handsome presents to the bride, and thought she was charmingly conscious in her embarrassed gratitude, but unfortunately she did not take to him or to the old lady, and in the long weary months of her engagement she even tired of the society of Charlotte and Anne.

The two years specified came to an end, and the marriage took place. The trousseau was superb, and the ceremony was performed at a most fashionable church by a fashionable clergyman. The *Morning Post* gave a full and particular description of the dress of the bride and of the bridesmaids, and announced to the world that the happy couple had gone to make their wedding tour in Scotland. Both families received the congratulations of their friends on the happy event, and the Earl and Countess felt very glad that it was so well over.

CHAPTER VII.

LADY EVELINE'S SECOND MARRIAGE.

LADY Eveline's parents and her aunt Lady Gower flattered themselves that, now she was fairly married, the love of a wife would naturally waken to a man who had no vices and few faults that they could see—who was disposed to be indulgent to her and proud of her. But people want a great deal of love or a great deal of prudence to begin matrimony upon, and poor Eveline had neither. The more closely she was brought to her husband, the more she was thrown upon his society alone, the less she found she liked him. If they had taken up house-keeping, and received and returned their wedding visits from the first day of their marriage, they might have done better; but that long honeymoon in Scotland was to both of them rather tiresome, and to Lady Eveline almost unendurable. His conversation wearied his wife, his vanity made

her despise him; all the points in his character which Gerald Staunton had shown up for her own and her aunt's amusement at Gower's Court came out strongly during that disappointing tour. He had little appreciation of natural beauty, and except in the solitary case of music there was no sympathy of taste between them; and even in music his taste was in his wife's opinion rather low and meretricious. His temper, which was not quick, but slow and unforgiving, was roused to see that his wife neither gave him the love nor the deference which he deserved, and it was a relief to John Derrick too when they began to mix with the world.

It was in company alone that he felt any pleasure in Lady Eveline's society; she was a charming hostess; her timidity wore off; she was declared to be the most beautiful woman of the season, and he was proud of her. He liked to watch the homage she received, provided she was not herself very much pleased with it, and when they were in crowds there were no visible jars or incongruities of taste between them. So John Derrick filled his house with company, and he and Lady Eveline accepted every invitation they received. They often met with Gerald Staunton, and as he was considered very clever, and altogether a rising man, John Derrick was disposed to

cultivate the acquaintance of his old college companion. Eveline had never dared to tell her husband of what had passed between herself and Staunton, and made faint and few objections to his wish to have him at her parties. She had no reason to give but the true one, and she felt so much pleasure in Staunton's conversation and society that she was almost glad she dared not give it. Gerald Staunton fancied it would be absurd and foolish to decline the invitations he received.

She was a married woman, not apparently unhappy, and of course she had made up her mind to her fate. It was a pity, however, that she saw so much of him, for the contrast between Staunton's talents and Derrick's mediocrity; between Staunton's dignified self-respect and Derrick's sensitive vanity; and between Staunton's earnestness and Derrick's flippancy—struck every day with stronger force on the heart of the unloving wife.

Lady Gower was the only person who seemed to be alive to the dangerous position her niece was in. She was disappointed that Lady Eveline, who had been such a gentle and tractable girl, now made such an unaccommodating wife. Indeed Lady Eveline might have been happier, and ought to have been happier; for though she had made a sad mistake, and indeed done a wrong thing, she might have made the best of it, and

tried to draw out what was good and tolerable in her husband. But though she had had the courage to sacrifice herself to please her parents through a mistaken sense of duty, she had not the patience to bear what she had brought on herself.

It was dangerous to hint to John Derrick any suspicions with regard to Gerald Staunton, but Lady Gower ventured to remonstrate with her niece on the subject of his visits.

"I did not want him to come, aunt," said Eveline sharply, "but Mr. Derrick insisted on it. It was his doing, not mine."

"You never told him of his imprudent and absurd conduct at Gower's Court?"

"No, indeed," said Lady Eveline, "he is quite disposed enough to be jealous without any cause. He cannot live without society and he finds Mr. Staunton agreeable. You know I only have him here on my public days—not like the Beresfords and Mr. Hollingworth, who are here on all occasions. I did remonstrate with Mr. Derrick at first, but of course whatever I appear to wish he is sure to go against. Besides, whatever Mr. Staunton may have felt, or I may have felt, our position is very different now. If you and mamma and papa amongst you have made me very miserable, all for my own good, I think you may let me alone now."

"Well, I can drop a hint to Staunton," said Lady Gower.

"No, no," said Eveline, turning as pale as death.

"Don't let him think so meanly of me as that he needs be afraid of me, or that you have no confidence in me. Oh! aunt, you ought to consider *me* a little."

But Lady Gower was determined, and managed to give Staunton to understand that he had better discontinue his visits to —— street. About the same time he received the offer of a lucrative appointment at Sierra Leone, which Lady Gower had exerted all her influence to procure. He was getting on but slowly in his profession, and was a little embarrassed in his circumstances, so that the offer was opportune. He had also felt that it was not safe to see so much of Lady Eveline Derrick, whom he knew now to be unhappy, so he closed with the offer hastily, and busied himself with preparations for his departure. His only sister regretted the step he took, but as he had behaved very liberally to her in making over all the slender patrimony he had inherited to add to her fortune, she was able to marry a young curate to whom she was engaged, and he felt satisfied that he had left her under the best of protection.

It was necessary to take leave of his London

friends, and to receive their congratulations and regrets. Among others he must take leave of Lady Eveline, and then keep out of her way for ever.

A few weeks before he called to say farewell, Lady Eveline became the mother of her eldest child—a boy. Her mother and aunt hoped this new element would sweeten her life, and that she would grow contented and happy; but she was one of those women who would love her children through her husband, and for his sake. She had no love for children as children; she had no turn for amusing them, and she had never had any experience with them. This boy was exceedingly like his father, and that, where the father is not loved, is no recommendation to the mother's heart. She had hosts of servants to take all the trouble of the child, and returned to her rounds of gaiety with undiminished zeal. She could not endure her life without the change and excitement of society.

To bid Gerald Staunton good-by for years certainly, and probably for ever, was a thing exceedingly bitter and bewildering to her. She knew that her aunt had moved heaven and earth to procure this appointment, and that it was on her account that he was banished from his own proper sphere, and had his fair prospects of professional success blighted. She showed more emotion than was proper or prudent, and unfortunately she

betrayed to her husband a partiality that was to him in the highest degree offensive.

He had now discovered, as he thought, the cause of her indifference, and he felt that he had been deceived and duped. The vague jealousy he had felt of everyone whom Lady Eveline seemed to like, had now a definite object, and she could no longer parry or deny his reproaches. John Derrick now left his wife more than he had done, lived very fast, and neglected her. This did not distress her so much as it ought to have done; she was much happier in his absence; and the knowledge of that only increased his dislike to her going anywhere, or seeing anyone at home, though he would not take the trouble to accompany her or to help her to entertain her guests.

Three children were born to this mis-matched pair; and one of the three, the youngest, died. This was a legitimate cause of grief to both, and ought to have drawn them to each other; but neither John Derrick nor his wife loved their children so intensely as to grieve for them long, and they both seemed to think that their natural regret was a thing to be dissipated and diverted by amusement and society, rather than to be soothed and sanctified by mutual sympathy. What might have resulted in the course of many years—whether they might have learned to bear their

chains more lightly in middle age when companionable children grew up beside them—no one can tell ; but during the few years in which they lived together, their unhappiness and their want of congeniality increased rather than diminished ; and when John Derrick took an inflammatory fever and died after a short illness, after the shock was over, it was a sensation of relief rather than anything else that was felt by his widow.

The Earl of Darlington had died two years before his son-in-law, and Herbert reigned in his stead ; and the two fortunes he had acquired by marriage and inheritance from more plebeian families made him a more wealthy and more useful Earl than had been among the Darlingtones for generations. All encumbrances were cleared off and contiguous estates purchased. Improvements were made and timber planted, and the Dowager-Countess was rather sorry that the breach had been so decided that she could never hope to see Darlington Castle again. She did not regret John Derrick's death, for he had never appreciated Lady Eveline, and after his marriage had been very discourteous to herself ; she could now live with Eveline and the dear children. The handsome jointure settled on the younger widow would help the slender provision of the Dowager-

Countess. Eveline had been a dear good girl to sacrifice her own inclinations as she had done, and if she had suffered a little, her troubles were now at an end, and a life of freedom and independence begun at twenty-three was a compensation for her filial obedience.

And so all appeared to go very smoothly for a few months after Eveline's widowhood. She grew fonder of her children and took some pains with them; and her husband's relations, who thought John had been but poorly treated by his aristocratic wife, could now find no fault with her exemplary conduct. She lived in a quiet and retired way; she occupied herself as she ought to do, and did not pine after gaiety and excitement, the love for which had driven poor John from his home. The old gentleman had felt the premature death of his only son a heavy blow, but he fixed his hopes all the more intensely on his two grandchildren, Anthony and Edith.

Miss Hope had left the Derrick family some years before. Indeed she was in town making arrangements for going into another situation, with the highest recommendations from her former employers, at the time when Gerald Staunton was going to Sierra Leone. Mr. John Derrick, who always liked her society, had asked her to make his house her home for a week or two, all the

more pressingly because he knew that Lady Eveline did not wish it. She was so agreeable and so sympathising, that he confided in her his discovery of Lady Eveline's previous attachment, and she said nothing to mitigate his wrath. It was a relief to have a person to talk to who took such a right view of a woman's duty to her husband. He could not help thinking that he might have done better if he had been less ambitiously matched, but now in the hazy distance of the past, he forgot that the offer had been his own voluntary act, and only recollected how anxious the Darlington family had been to secure him. Miss Hope was too willing to believe that he had been entrapped, and to give Lady Eveline credit for duplicity; and perhaps Lady Eveline had as much right to be offended at the manner in which they spoke of her, and at the tender reminiscences they called up of old days at Stanmore, as John had at her emotion in parting with Gerald Staunton. But Miss Hope was prudent; she shortened her visit and went to Hastings, where her mother had recently taken up her abode, although it was not nearly so convenient for the business she had to do, and then entered on her new situation with a determination to be very careful of her heart.

It was not so good a situation in any respect

as the one she had left, but she gave perfect satisfaction. Here she met with Mr. Hammond, who was going out to Australia, with what was a small capital in England, but which in the infant days of Adelaide was a very handsome sum to begin upon. He had not very much idea of colonial life, and had a notion that there were few women and no ladies there. He admired Miss Hope's beauty, her style, and her accomplishments; and he thought her a very clever, clear-headed sensible woman, who would make a good wife for a colonist; so he proposed and was accepted. He had at first fancied that he had demeaned himself a little by offering his hand to a governess, and expected she should feel very grateful and a little surprised; but no sooner was he engaged than she made him feel her superiority, though not uncomfortably, and after his marriage he rested in the conviction that Mrs. Hammond was the cleverest woman in the world, and was capable of taking any place in society that she chose. She talked of aristocratic circles in which she had mixed with confidence and fluency, and in the remote regions of South Australia her really well-acquired accomplishments, her excellent style of dress, her accurate language, her clever well-written notes, and her perfect self-possession, fixed her at once as *la crème de la*

crème, at the very top rank of colonial aristocracy.

The term squatter, which has so low and mean a sound to English ears, is quite euphonious and aristocratic in Australia; and when Mr. Hammond invested his capital in sheep and settled on the crown lands of South Australia, he took a position equal to that of the best professional men or leading merchants in the colony, and one more likely to lead to fortune, in those days at least. There are exceptions, as in the case of self-made men like Hugh Lindsay, but the bulk of our sheepfarmers consist of people who brought capital into the colony, and they hold up their heads accordingly.

In all Mr. Hammond's transactions, great and small, he always asked his wife's advice, and always took it; and as her judgment was excellent she really helped him on. Everything prospered with them; his runs were in the choicest localities, his sheep improved rapidly in wool-bearing qualities, his overseers were always trustworthy, his expenses were moderate. When he was forced to buy land it always happened that he had the means of paying for it, and that it was the best thing possible for him to purchase and enclose at that particular time; though every time the hundreds were declared he felt aggrieved

and said the Government did not do justice to the squatters. Mr. Hammond certainly was a little extravagant about horses, but his wife allowed it, because she thought he could afford it, and gentlemen must have some hobby or other. It was the only matter in which his judgment was superior to hers, and as he had got a name for keeping excellent stock he did not lose much even on that.

Mrs. Hammond was therefore going steadily up. If she married her husband without any absorbing attachment, she had a large stock of prudence, and she made the very best of all the elements of her life. She was passionately fond of her children, and so was Mr. Hammond; indeed they were fonder of their children than they were of each other. It was the strongest tie between them—much stronger than the tie of mutual interest. Miss Hope had not told her lover of her first attachment; it could do no good and was quite unnecessary. There were so many mortifying circumstances connected with it that she preferred to keep silence on the whole affair, and begin her new life in a new country with every advantage. She might have been happier, and of course she would have been of more importance as Mrs. Derrick than as Mrs. Hammond, but on the whole she was very comfortable and had much in her power. She had been able to assist her

mother materially through Mr. Hammond's liberality, and in due time she would take her children to England and give them all the advantages that money could obtain.

Although the Derricks and Lady Eveline had lost sight of Miss Hope, only hearing that she had married and gone to one of the colonies, she had been kept, for a few years at least, well informed as to the affairs of the family by her mother, who had formed an acquaintance with a poor relation of the Derricks, who was a neighbour of hers at Hastings. Mrs. Hammond still felt a keen interest in the most important and wealthiest people whom she had known, and from whom she had hoped and suffered so much. She therefore heard that John Derrick died at the age of thirty, leaving a widow and two children. She was sure that if Gerald Staunton returned from Sierra Leone alive, in spite of the most stringent marriage settlements by which her fortune would be reduced to a mere nothing if she married again, Lady Eveline would give her hand to the old love; but Mrs. Hammond was nearly as much surprised as other people to hear that this union took place eight or nine months after John Derrick's death. She had looked for some idea of decorum and propriety from a lady of rank; some regard to her position,

to her reputation, and some consideration for her poor children whom she left to the care of their father's relatives ; some pity for her mother, whose prospects were so materially altered by the second marriage ; but Lady Eveline had shown none ; she had married Gerald Staunton with this indecent haste, and had also injured most materially the prospects of the man she loved by the folly and impropriety of which she had been guilty.

But Lady Eveline, with her ill-regulated conscience, had one remorse hanging heavy upon her. She felt deep compunction for having married one man when she so entirely loved another. This is the greatest sin a woman can commit, but it is the man whom she marries without love who is most wronged, and not the man she gives up. The latter may find some compensation in a new attachment ; his grief may be bitter at the time, but it is susceptible of various consolations ; whereas the former is chained for life, and cannot go elsewhere for domestic happiness. But Eveline did not see that she had been guilty with regard to her husband ; she thought he might have known how little affection she felt, and might have withdrawn ; she had never told him that he had her heart ; and as all he wanted was a noble

alliance, he had no right to be disappointed and angry because he got nothing more. It was his own vanity and jealousy and selfishness that had wrought his own unhappiness. She did not think he could have appreciated her love if she had given it to him ; but Gerald Staunton—who deserved everything and had received nothing—whom she thought of so constantly, who had been banished from England, and sent to die in that pestiferous climate, all on her account ; his prospects blighted, his usefulness destroyed, his talents wasted, all because she had not had the courage and the honesty to break through her detested engagement and betroth herself to him for any length of time, or live with him in the humblest circumstances ;—Gerald Staunton she had grievously wronged. It appeared to her now, looking back on the past, as if it had been the easiest thing in the world to do—so much easier than the miserable life she had endured so long. The one thing she had not had—love—assumed an importance in her eyes greater than it deserved ; all her reading and all her thinking fostered the idea that it was the only thing worth living for, and that without it all pleasures were like apples of Sodom that turned to dust and ashes between the teeth.

When on a visit to her aunt, Lady Gower, she

heard one day from an acquaintance that Gerald Staunton had returned from Sierra Leone dying, as might have been expected after so many years of that deadly climate. She could not control her emotion till her informant withdrew. She ordered her carriage without delay, and hastened to his lodgings to see him before he died and to implore his forgiveness. Very pale she looked in her widow's weeds; very agitated and tearful. Gerald, who was not actually dying but very dangerously ill, was very nearly frightened into his grave by the sudden apparition, which implored his forgiveness for all the mischief and injury she had caused him. So far as he could understand the wrong he had suffered, he forgave the suppliant; but his mind wandered often, and he could scarcely recognise her, and when he did, it was as Lady Eveline of Gower's Court, and not Lady Eveline Derrick. She would not leave him in this critical state; she was determined to remain as his nurse till he died or till he recovered. What were mother or children or even reputation to her now compared to him? She was his now, if he would accept of her, or his if he would wait for her if he survived; if he died, she would die with him. Everything was forgotten except that she loved him and that he loved her.

Under these circumstances, Gerald Staunton only waited till he was out of danger to marry Lady Eveline Derrick. The Dowager Countess was hotly angry, her husband's relations coldly and implacably indignant, and her children were told never to speak of the mother whom they never saw again. None of her friends or acquaintances could countenance Lady Eveline after the terrible indecorum of which she had been guilty, and Gerald Staunton's only sister was as angry at what had taken place as Lady Gower was. Her brother might have done so much better; the connection would ruin him, and so in a pecuniary point of view it did.

He obtained employment at some drudging literary work. Lady Eveline dropped her title, and dropped very soon out of the remembrance of society. As her father was no longer the Earl, the book of the peerage was cleared of her name, and she lived obscurely in a quiet street in London, and tried the reverse of the picture, where there was little but love to brighten her life.

Gerald might have regretted the relinquishment of his ambitious hopes and the nameless career that circumstances had hurried him into, but he was too generous ever to reproach his wife with it.

He felt the charm of the devoted love, the simple child-like confidence of that impulsive nature; he reposed in it and resolved to be satisfied with it. They very rarely spoke of the time that had passed between their parting and their meeting, and Eveline tried to forget that she had had another husband, or that she had other children than those of Gerald Staunton. How differently did maternity, with its pains, its pleasures, and its duties, appear to Eveline now! What solicitude and watchfulness, and love, and pride, did her children call forth! Amy was the eldest of their four children, and was always strong and healthy, but the three boys born subsequently were very delicate.

Years of watchful care and all the best advice that could be procured could not save them; they all died at about the same age. After the death of her boys, Eveline's face assumed that strange far-looking expression peculiar to bereaved mothers; her health too began to give way, and her husband grew alarmed about her. When her medical attendant prescribed a voyage to Madeira and a winter's residence there, Gerald threw up his employment and accompanied her and his little girl.

His family had been a very expensive one, but he would neglect nothing that would give

Eveline a chance of life, and a change of climate without him could do no good.

But the sacrifice was unavailing ;— Lady Eveline did not get better, and she longed to return to England, to be buried beside her boys. That desire was gratified ; she lived through the voyage, and a month or two afterwards. Her anxiety about her little girl and her husband was very great ; she spoke a little to the girl of her past life, gave her some advice which the child could scarcely understand, but the words of which she begged her to recollect ; and enjoined her especially to take good care of her poor papa when she was gone. This advice Amy could comprehend, and she resolved to act on it ; but she scarcely understood the far-looking intense way in which her mother gazed on her father. Did she suspect what was unknown to Gerald himself, that he was so soon to follow her to the Silent Land ?

It was not many months after Eveline's death that Gerald Staunton, not feeling very well, but by no means alarmed about himself, went to consult the excellent physician who had attended his wife, and from him received that terrible sentence of death which is so appalling when dear ones are dependent on your exertions.

There was no hope, but there might be delay.

A warmer climate, an easier life, and great care might prolong his life for several years. He now regretted the great seclusion in which they had lived, for in case of his death Amy would be friendless. The non-acknowledgment of his letters, announcing Lady Eveline's death to Mr. Derrick and her children, which he had felt at the time to be a discourtesy, was now a serious misfortune. The Countess-Dowager was dead; the Derricks were all estranged; his sister, Mrs. Evans, had never visited him during his wife's lifetime, and had come to see him once after her death to shew him that she had no quarrel with him, but that she had decidedly objected to have any intercourse with her. She had a large family and no great income, and she did not seem to take to Amy at all, so that she was not to be depended upon. With his publisher he had had only business relations, and his little work on Madeira, which he had tried to persuade Eveline would pay all their expenses, had not taken and did not sell. Gerald hesitated a long time as to which of two courses to pursue:—whether to make submission for Amy's sake to the Derricks, or to try, as his last chance to prolong his life, to leave England for Australia, where he was to act very differently from heretofore: where he must be sociable, brilliant, and

agreeable, where above all things he must endeavour to win friends for his child, who might be kind to her in case of his death. He was at the same time to try and complete her education, so that she might be able to earn her own livelihood. She was an intelligent, a docile, and a pretty child, and the idea of taking her with him to the antipodes was pleasanter than that of begging the Derricks to have compassion on her.

His residence at Sierra Leone had made life assurance impossible but at a rate so enormous that it was a very bad investment, and now of course his life was absolutely worth nothing in that way ; but Dr. Hudson had assured him that at his age and with his habits he might live very probably for six or eight years in Australia, and he had no doubt that in one of the thriving capitals of the colonies he could easily get a situation of light work sufficient for the necessities of his now small family. Amy had no objection to make ; the place she lived in was quite indifferent to her, provided only her father was with her, and he got so much stronger on the voyage that his spirits were better than they had been since Eveline's death.

But he did not make friends among the passengers, who were not numerous and were not pleasant. There is no place where disagreeable

people can make themselves so obnoxious as on a long voyage. When they arrived at Melbourne he found that it was rather overdone at the time with educated gentlemen, and that obtaining the sort of employment he wanted was no easy matter.

A ready writer is always sure to be able to make a living in England, though it may not be a luxurious one. But it is putting the round man into the square hole to bring a man with a special literary talent, like Gerald Staunton's, for careful criticism, and light essays, and philological research, into a bustling city like that of Melbourne. It is only on the staff of a newspaper that any one can gain a certain income, great or small, as the case may be, by literary work. Dr. Hudson had absolutely prohibited any night-work, and besides Gerald was totally ignorant of colonial politics and colonial life, and it would take him months to learn. He grew nervous as week after week his slender resources diminished, and there was no nearer prospect of success. The very youth, and life, and hurry of Melbourne dispirited and stunned the old *Palladium* critic, and when he was told that Adelaide was a quieter and slower place, it occurred to him that he might be more easily suited there. When he had arrived the literary world was still more

hopeless for him than that of Melbourne, and he returned from vain enquiries more dispirited than ever.

Amy suggested that if he could not get employment as a writer he might as a teacher, because he knew so much, and was so pleasant to learn from. The idea was new to him and he acted upon it at once. His advertisement in the *Adelaide* newspapers attracted Mr. Hammond's eye, and the engagement had been made without delay. Mr. Hammond had been so prepossessed with Amy's manners and appearance that it had determined Staunton to accept a situation where he might make friends for his darling child. But it so happened that no friend was made in that quarter. Mrs. Hammond's heart had been hardened to her by a long course of events and feelings in her own life, and Amy's strong resemblance to her mother awoke the old dislike and jealousy;—so that Amy Staunton, the granddaughter of an Earl, the sister of the heir to a splendid fortune, was left in the bush of South Australia with no better or more powerful friends than worthy Hugh Lindsay and his wife and family, who were very much disposed to be kind to her, and to train her to be of some use to them.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE YOUNG TEACHER.

ALTHOUGH Allan Lindsay had been fully aware of his own ignorance, he had little or no idea of the extent and ramifications of the knowledge which he desired so much to acquire; and if he had been left at sea with the books alone which poor Gerald Staunton had brought from England, and for which he put up shelves lovingly as if they had been living things, he might in his ambition to learn everything have missed his aim, and at all events have learned nothing thoroughly or methodically. But young and inexperienced as his little teacher was, she gave good advice and good assistance to her friend Allan, whose remarkable powers surprised Amy as much as his remarkable ignorance. It was not at first she perceived his genius, for it was not a brilliant one; it was not quick or ready like her father's; his verbal memory was deficient, and that in the

outset of education is the first quality that strikes a teacher ; but as Allan began to feel his way and get holding ground, when he had once seen why a rule was given, or a principle laid down, his clear logical mind led him further in its application than his teacher could follow him. There was of course for a long time, along with this comprehensive view of the bearings of a subject, great ignorance of its details, but Amy felt that her education had not stopped abruptly as she had feared, for this constant reference to her opinion and authority of a mind older and more powerful than her own, carried her back to old lessons which she might have forgotten, and at the same time forward in a direction into which few school girls are ever led, and towards subjects to which her father might not have called her attention. Jessie Lindsay, too, was desirous of learning something, but a little would satisfy her ; she knew she was too old to be made a scholar of, and besides she had not time to give to books.

It was at first only an hour or two in the evening, after the day's work was over, that Allan could devote to make up for lost time, and he was so necessary to his father that if he did try to snatch a little leisure during the day, the old man would call for him and make him leave off. The

more he sounded the depths of his ignorance and the greater the heights which Allan had a glimpse of far above him, the sadder were his regrets at the lost years, and the poor scraps and edges of his days that he could now give. At first his progress was slow, and he felt depressed rather than exhilarated.

"Dear me ! Allan, my man," said his mother to him one day, " I thought all this work wi' books was to make ye as happy as a king, but for a' the lot that ye've got, and a' the pains and patience Amy takes wi' ye, there seems to be mair gloom on your brow than I e'er saw wi' the hardest day's work ye ever did. It's no behaving weel to Amy, poor thing, that's doing the best she can for you, to be so dissatisfied. If the Almighty has na given you the capacity for books that he has for other things, it behoves you to be satisfied with your gifts, an no to try to gar water run up hill."

"But I can't be satisfied, mother," said Allan ; "not till I try harder, at any rate. I *ought* to understand this."

"Deed, Allan, I think ye are just trying to learn owre muckle, and what gangs in at ae lug just gangs out at the other. It was all very weel for Mr. Staunton, poor man, that had his bread to get by it, and poor bread I doubt it was, to learn this, that, and the other, but for you who'll have

a bonnie bit of property, and ken weel how to make the best o't, I see no occasion for ye to fash your thumb with by-ordinar learning. If ye can read your Bible and the papers, and have a good hand o' write, and can cast accounts so as to keep you from either cheating or being cheated, it is just as much as can be expected o' you wi' your opportunities."

"But, Mrs. Lindsay," said Amy, who entered the room at the moment, "why should Allan be inferior in these things to his brothers who are now at school?"

"He'll never be inferior," said the mother. "No, Allan has the best headpiece of the lot of them, and is no to be left behind the hand; but I was just saying, that it does not need much book learning to farm the land and mind the stock and sheep, and there's a hantle things that were very befitting to a gentleman and real scholar like your father, that it would be mair fash than profit for Allan to learn, wi' his father needing him at every turn for his help and his counsel."

"But, mother, will not my help and my counsel be of more worth to my father the more I know?" said Allan.

"No doubt, no doubt," said the mother, but she said it doubtfully, "that would depend on whatna' kind of things they are, but there seems

to me to be some things that further a man, and some things that hinder a man, and whether Jessie's in the right o' the matter or no, she looks blither and mair contented than you."

"Well, mother, I am not discontented either, but I cannot be quite contented to have the headpiece without the furniture inside, and I fancy that all sorts of knowledge would further me."

"May be you're right, Allan, but I would not have you educated above your station."

"But what is my station, and what may not my station be ten years hence, that you fear my knowing too much?" said Allan.

"That's very true, Allan, there's no saying what you may attain to. But all I was saying is, that you're no such good company in the evenings as you used to be, and your father was saying ye were no' sae helpful to him, which is a pity, and I thought that if ye aimed at less ye might prosper better."

"I thought your proverb was 'If ye mint [aim] at a gown o' gowd ye'll aye get a sleeve o't,'" said Allan rather sadly, and the conversation dropped.

Although the old people were exceedingly anxious in theory that Allan should have a chance of making up his lee-way, he had been so long

the most useful person at home, and his services in various ways were so indispensable, that practically he was hindered by them, and it was from trying to do too much in too little time that the disappointment arose. Amy felt sure that if her father had been the teacher, he could have succeeded better; and probably he would, for he would have had more authority with the parents, and would have perceived the difficulty. There was one in the household, however, who perceived it, and who endeavoured to remedy it to the best of his powers. This was George Copeland, who had not been much longer at Branhholm than Amy, but who was a man of a superior order to any about the place. At first he had been rather careless and indifferent as to whether he pleased Hugh Lindsay or not, but he was naturally good-natured and good-tempered, and had a pleasant manner. But after the arrival of little Amy Staunton, and the kindness shown to her by the family, George seemed, as Hugh Lindsay said, to take hold of his place, and to work with more than eye-service. He was clever too, and handy, and in a roving life of ten years over the colonies, the intelligent young Englishman had learned things which neither the versatile Pat nor the stolid Donald were ever likely to learn in all their lives; and instead of sending him out with

he was offering advice, he contrived to impress the master with the idea that he must give Allan his head, and neither fret nor curb him. The object for which Allan was working now was a good one, and he had sense enough to be trusted to view it in his own way.

Allan was grateful to George Copeland for his timely and judicious aid, and when light began to shine out of darkness, when he too began to take hold of the work now before him, and he felt the thread that would lead him through the labyrinth of words and phrases to the facts, and the ideas, and the principles beyond, his face grew cheerful and he was as social and pleasant as before.

It was at the time of the midwinter holidays; the girls and the boys at school had petitioned to spend them at home, for it was miserable being at school from Christmas to Christmas, and they were all eager to see the girl whom their father and mother had taken home; so they were allowed to come

home, in spite of the bad roads and the broken weather. There was more to come than the young people, for the girls had persuaded their father to get a piano to set in the best parlour, and to commission their music teacher to choose it, because they had gone so far back in their music last holiday that it had taken them all the first quarter to make it up; and besides, as Amy was fond of music, Allan had urged the purchase on her account. He was anxious to make her new life as pleasant for her as he could, and owed her something for her patience with him.

When Isabel and Phemie, fresh from boarding-school, questioned Amy as to what she had learned and what she could do, they were astonished to find that she was, as they said, "further on," than any girl at the school, and indeed might be further on than Miss Effingham herself. They looked at her books with wonder and awe, and listened to her performances on the new piano with delight. And as the time drew nearer for their return to school, a bright thought struck Isabel, that since Amy was so clever, why should they go to Adelaide at all? Could she not teach them at home? And they plied their mother to make their father agree to this delightful arrangement, which would leave them at

liberty to ride about the country and enjoy all the pleasures of home while they were learning.

"Nae doot," said Mrs. Lindsay, "she's got the skill and the wit, and as for the piano, the way she makes the lifeless thing speak is just astonishing; but I misdoot ye'll no mind a wee body like her that Isabel could mak' twa o' after the first novelty o' the thing is worn off."

"But Allan is bigger than we are, and he minds what she says, mother," said Isabel.

"Oh! but ye hae na Allan's sense or discretion," said Mrs. Lindsay, "and there's none of ye sae keen for learning as he is, an' it would be hard on Amy, poor lassie, to gie her sic a pair o' gilpies to manage."

"Oh! but we've asked her, and she said she would like it, and I am sure it costs father a lot of money to keep us at the school."

"That's true, but we didna tak' Amy to Branxholm to mak' a profit of her. Na, that might befit the like of Mrs. Hammond, but it's no our fashion."

"But we don't like the school, mother," said Phemie.

"I'm thinking that's the plain English of it," said Mrs. Lindsay.

"I'm sure there's no need for us being kept so strict and never allowed to go out anywhere but

for a walk with the governess, and then we know nobody in the town but uncle Robert and our cousins, and Miss Effingham won't allow us to go there half as often as we like, because she says we come home with more vulgar ways than before we went."

"Vulgar indeed!" said Mrs. Lindsay. "It doesna do to try to make gentlefolks of the like of you, if you're to be taught to look down on them as ought you. He's no more vulgar than your father, and that Miss Effingham kent richt weel when she took the both of you."

"Oh! but Uncle Robert lives in Adelaide, and you live out in the country ever so far, and that makes a difference. Oh! yes, we are bush girls, and of course we are set among the little ones in the classes, and we are sneered at if we speak about our father and mother, for it's papa and mamma with all the others. Oh, mother!" continued Isabel with a sigh, "it is hard work trying to be a lady. You're no to do this, and you're no to say that, and you're no to sit in this fashion, and no to walk that gait. Phemie and me have a constant 'Don't do that, Miss Lindsay,' 'Don't express yourself thus, Miss Euphemia,' and so on from morning to night."

"And what the better will we be of it all?" remonstrated Phemie, "not a bit. I'd like to

“speak better nor I do, and to know the meaning of words and how to spell them, and to have some notion about places, and to play on the piano ; but as for the airs, and graces, and carriage that Miss Effingham is always dinning into our ears, I see no good in them.”

“Airs and graces for you to ride in a carriage in !” exclaimed Mrs. Lindsay. “Indeed its sma’ thanks Miss Effingham will get from me if that is what she airts at. I’ll speak to your father about it this very day, and if he thinks weel o’ your notion, and Amy is willing to try, we might have you learnt something without the airs and graces. But I’ll see what Allan says first, before I break it to the good man,” said Mrs. Lindsay, with her instinctive respect for the judgment of her eldest son, who, besides, was most likely to know Amy’s real feelings on the subject.

Allan hesitated ; he thought, like his mother, that it was taking advantage of Amy to give her so many pupils. But he now saw his way and hoped to be less troublesome to her, and there was no doubt she could teach them, as well as they had hitherto been taught, and he knew she wished to make the attempt.

Hugh Lindsay was willing to do what his wife and Allan thought feasible, and it was settled that Amy was to be asked to undertake the duties.

"I am so young," said she; "I wonder you can trust me; but as I want to learn to teach so that I may be independent, I am very glad you will try me."

"And it will be a great saving to me if you succeed wi' the lassies," said Hugh Lindsay, "an' a pleasure to them besides. And if ye can give them your skill at the piano or the half o't, its more than we ever expected of the schoolmistress in the town."

"There's mony things that it seems to behove young folk to learn now-a-days, that was never thocht of when their father and me were at the schule. There was the reading and the writing, and a sma' matter o' counting, and the *questions* we learned;—but what wi' the piano, and the geography, and the grammar, and a wheen things they call *roots*, that are a sair fash to the brains to learn a' on the top o' the plain branches, I'm thinking ye'll have your hands full, Amy, my woman. They're no to call downright stupid, but they are no sae quick in the uptak as Allan," said Mrs. Lindsay.

"I should really like to try," said Amy. "It will be a beginning for that work my poor father thought I might in time be able to do."

"And if they're fashious and dinna mind ye, you maun just call in Allan, for they'll aye mind

him," said Mrs. Lindsay. "And as for what ye say about learning to teach and being independent, you're no to think that when we took you, we didna tak' you for good an a'. As I said to Mrs. Hammond, the pot that boils for eight may weel boil for nine, and if it boils owre, as our pot does, for as the Psalmist says, our cup of prosperity overflows, it will be for your behoof as weel as for Jessie's, and Isabel's, and Phemie's. Ye shall have your dwelling with us and your providing just as if you were ane of our ain, when ye see fit to leave us for a house of your ain, but let there be nae seeking o' service among fremmet folk. When your aunt—Mrs. Evans do they call her?—wrote that she was glad you had met wi' sick kindness in a foreign country, and never made the offer to tak' you hame, the goodman and me felt that you were given up fairly to us, and we will deal fairly by you. So if you find the lassies owre troublesome a'thegither, just say so, an' ye'll no be burdened wi' them ony longer, and they'll go back to the schule."

This threat had its effect; the girls knew their mother would act on it, and they worked very fairly under their young teacher.

It was easier, however, for Mr. and Mrs. Lindsay to do large and generous things than to change family arrangements or old habits out of considera-

tion for their young guest. It was many months before Allan could prevail on them to have their meals in the second parlour, which was certainly the proper dining-room, but which was made the sitting-parlour in order that the best room might be always kept in order. He suggested that Amy had not been used to associate with such people as themselves, and still less with such as their servants, and the girls from town seconded his request that there should be a separation ; but as Mrs. Lindsay and Jessie said, they did not take any of the trouble, and it was a convenience to have all the confusion of the meals in the kitchen—Jessie in particular objected to any innovation ; she felt like the ladies of old Saxon time, and liked to be the dispenser of food to the establishment ; and though her father did not make so much objection to the change, she was sure that he would miss the opportunity of talking over what had been done and planning what was to be done next, with both Allan and George.

It was on one occasion when Amy had observed George's thoughtfulness and consideration for Allan that he asked her if she would mind including Copeland with the family, for certainly he was superior in every way to the other servants and chance travellers, and it might remove some of the difficulties. Amy liked George and

agreed to that modification of the plan, so Allan brought forward his proposal again with this difference, and found that there was no objection raised by any one. George took his place naturally where he could be most useful, and in little things he was more attentive than Allan, and had more of the forms of politeness.

The Hammonds heard a good deal from various sources about the guest they had rejected. Their friend, Mr. Lufton, who lived about thirty miles beyond Aralewin, used sometimes to call at the Lindsays', and was enthusiastic about the prettiness and the cleverness of the young stranger. Mr. Troubridge, whose wife was a great reader, and who, knowing something of the name and reputation of Gerald Staunton, was very sorry indeed that she had not had the chance of befriending his orphan, used to prose in Mrs. Hammond's own drawing-room about the mistake she had made, and wonder why she did not try to retrieve it by going to the girl and offering her a home now, for no doubt she would be very glad to escape from those rough, unpolished people, to a more refined society. What was worse, Mrs. Hammond's own boys, who had always liked to go to Branhholm when they had a chance, were still fonder of going now, and her eldest, Louis, was constantly regretting the untimely death of

Mr. Staunton, the more especially as Amy was such a dear little creature, and it would have been so delightful to have had her at home.

Mrs. Hammond knew that Amy had written to her father's sister, and she buoyed herself up with the conviction that Mrs. Evans *must* send for her, and then there would be an end of all this; so as soon as there was the needful time allowed for the receipt of an answer, she reminded Mr. Hammond that it was probable the child would be written for, and he very willingly rode across to enquire. He, too, was desirous that Amy should be removed from the immediate neighbourhood, and felt convinced by his wife's strong impression, that, whatever Amy's mother might have been, her father's sister, whom he knew to be the wife of an English rector in the country, would see it to be her duty to take care of his orphan.

But the letter was as unsatisfactory as possible. Even though the family of Lindsays were pleased to think that Amy was not going away, they were very indignant at the spirit and tone of the letter. After expressing her sorrow at her brother's sudden death, and her cautious hopes that he was prepared for the momentous change, Mrs. Evans glanced at the unfeeling conduct of the family, on whom her brother had some claim, and then praised in the most glowing terms the gene-

rous conduct of the Lindsays. She had never in her life heard of such goodness to an absolute stranger ; she hoped Amy would be grateful to those who had thus made a home for her and spread a table for her in the wilderness, and would also thank a Higher Power which had inspired such kindness, for without Him there is no good thing done or even thought. Mrs. Evans was also glad to hear that these excellent people were in easy circumstances, and hoped and prayed that their kindness might be returned to them fourfold ; she trusted that Amy would accommodate herself to her new circumstances, and not give way to selfish sorrow for those who were beyond her aid or her prayers, but would diligently try to do her duty in this world, and to prepare her heart for the next. She then went into some family details with regard to her husband and her children, mentioned them all by name, and told their ages, as if to show that she felt like an aunt ; and to make up for all omissions of interest in Amy's affairs by trying to interest Amy in her own ; sent kindest regards to the Lindsays, and especially to that dear Mrs. Lindsay, who had been so like a mother to her orphan niece, and ended her letter with a sort of prayer.

Amy had hoped for something from her aunt,

after she had written to her. She recollected that her father was Mrs. Evans's only brother, and that it was with her mother that there was the quarrel, if any; that she had seemed grieved at parting from her father, and had cried a good deal; but this letter, so cold and pharisaical, was a disappointment to her. Allan, who had brought it, had looked earnestly at her while she read. He feared some evil, and held his breath.

"Read it, Allan," said she, when she had come to the end of it, "and give your mother Mrs. Evans's message." All that she had lost came up before her. The old wound of the death of the best loved one was ripped up afresh, after months, by this cold letter of condolence; the half-hopes she had formed that she might be taken back to English civilization, to the society of those who were allied to her in blood, and probably also of congenial tastes and manners, were rudely snapped; there was really no life for her but this; she must bend her nature to it, and be very grateful, as Mrs. Evans said.

"Amy," said Allan, indignantly, "if she is such a woman, how thankful you should be that you are here! Don't distress yourself about such empty rubbish, such contemptible hypocritical twaddle as this. Will you let me read it to my mother? She will not appreciate the message

unless she understands something of the kind of woman that sends it. You will let me read it to her."

Feelings of kinship were strong with the Lindsays, and there had been a rather uneasy fear in Allan's mind that his little teacher would leave him; for her father's sister—a minister's wife—would be bound to send for her.

When Allan went into the garden (where his mother was giving George some directions about the vegetable beds that he was laying out) with Amy's open letter in his hand, she stopped short in a most important sentence, and turned to meet him.

"She's no to gang, I hope," said she, eagerly.

"No, it's good news for us, mother, but Amy's a little downcast. She says I may read you the letter. It's a good plain hand, and that's the best that can be said of it. Now don't say a word till I come to the end, for there's a message for you," and Allan read it right through.

"*Dear Mrs. Lindsay!*—that *dear Mrs. Lindsay*. Well, that beats a' I ever heard in my life. I think Amy, poor thing, has been the means of showing us the hollowness of things we are used to hold in high esteem, for if Mrs. Hammond made me sick of gentility, this is like to make one ashamed of a profession o' religion. No a

word o' kindness to the bit desolate orphan ; no an offer that if she was na comfortable wi' the like o' us, that she would do a kinswoman's part by her ; no a question aboot what sort o' life she led, or if she saw her way to anything better ; but exhortations to her to be grateful, and a lang story aboot her ain bairns and her ain goodman. Grateful to us for what ? 'Deed it's us that should be grateful, and so I would like to tell baith her and Mrs. Hammond. But ye say that Amy's downcast aboot it. Nae wonder ; sic professions and sic self-seeking are nae cheerful subjects to consider. But I'll tell her that we canna but rejoice that there's nane to take her away, for I'm sure it's nae empty words I mak use o' when I say she is like a bairn o' my ain, and your father is o' the same mind, though he says less aboot it."

Amy had other letters by the mail ; one from the proprietor of the *Palladium*, regretting the untimely death of her father, his good friend Gerald Staunton, praising his talents, and saying that the journal had missed him, and could see no one to supply his place satisfactorily. From him Amy had expected nothing, and the well-turned phrases of regret and sympathy soothed her and comforted her. There was a longer letter from an old friend, an artist, into whose studio

Amy had been often taken by her father—full of surprise, full of grief, full of wishes that he could do anything for her; but he was poor, often in difficulties, and generally imprudent. If the bereavement had happened in England, Amy might have been asked to share his scrambling life, and divide his crust with him, but the distance was an insuperable bar, and he could only express regretful pleasure that others were so much more able than himself to help her. She had not written to Mr. Hubbard, but Mr. Loder of the *Palladium* had told him of the sad catastrophe, and though the artist hated writing, he could not help expressing his feelings and his sympathy with his dear friend Staunton's orphan. To the Derricks Amy had made no communication; there was a short postscript to her aunt's letter, which Amy had kept back, saying that perhaps it was as well she had not applied to them, as she had no claim on the old gentleman whatever, and it was likely that her brother and sister did not know of her existence.

Mr. Hammond, therefore, was doomed to disappointment; there had been no offer from England to give Amy a home. She was still to remain within five miles of them, a thorn in his wife's side, and a mortification to himself. Mrs. Hammond was sorry, and she said so, but yet

she did not wish she had acted otherwise. She could not have offered Amy a home when she felt such intense dislike and suspicion of her; when the tones of her voice, the changes of her countenance, the air and manners, all reminded her of one whom she had good reason to dislike and despise. She could not have done her duty by her. Amy Staunton was better situated with the Lindsays, and since her aunt would not take her, let her stay at Branhholm, whatever it might cost Mrs. Hammond, for the time could not be long now that the family would be kept in South Australia. Mr. Hammond was seeing his way now to returning to England himself for some years at least, and, as Mrs. Hammond fondly hoped, for life.

She disliked the colony more now that she had lost prestige in the neighbourhood, and she directed all her influence with her husband towards such arrangements of his affairs as would enable him to leave the colony.

CHAPTER IX.

JESSIE LINDSAY'S DECLARATION AND ITS RECEPTION.

THE prospect of going home to England was also agreeable to Mrs. Hammond, because it would put a stop to Louis' and Fred's frequent rides to Branxholm, and prevent her making herself odious by laying her commands on them that they were to discontinue the practice. She disliked giving orders that she could not enforce, and she was very anxious to retain the love and confidence of her boys, so she put a constraint on herself and listened to what they said on their return from their visits without making much objection, lest they should get into the habit of going there and not telling her. But Amy Staunton was still a mere child, and no positive harm could be done yet. It had been one of the contingencies that the mother had dreaded in case of receiving Amy as an inmate that one of

her sons might become attached to her ; and the likelihood pressed itself more strongly on her, when she saw that Louis in particular was very full of her praises.

One day when the boys had ridden across after school hours to ask Allan to show them how to shoe a horse, they were as usual invited to take tea. The coldness felt towards Mrs. Hammond was not extended to her sons, who were nice lads and had no airs, Mrs. Lindsay said. Amy was busy making a pretty net for Jessie's hair after the pattern of one of her own, which had been greatly admired, and Louis, wishing to show that he could do some things, though he was not quite so clever as Allan, said that he would like to help Miss Staunton with her work, as he had made fishing nets, and could do the stitch ever so fast. Amy's netting-needle, however, being of slender carved ivory was slighter than any that Louis had ever worked at, and the thread finer and more apt to go into knots, and in giving his work a hasty tug he snapped the needle into three pieces. He was sorry that his display of skill had turned out so ill, and profuse in apologies for his awkwardness, and in explanations of how he came to give the thread such a jerk ; but he would send to Adelaide for a netting-needle, and it should come out the very first opportunity. Allan saw

how disappointed Amy looked and Jessie too, so he said he knew he could make another, not so fine or so pretty, but which might answer the purpose. He looked at the broken implement attentively, and went to get a piece of hard wood, for he had nothing else to make it of; and Amy put the fragments of her netting-needle and her work into the little case which she had for such things. It was one of her mother's, somewhat like the work-box, but instead of the coronet it had a coat of arms on the centre plate. Louis Hammond, who was at an awkward age and felt awkward after his performance with the netting-needle, began to admire the box.

"Don't break that too," said she pleadingly.

"It is so curious, is it not, George?" said Louis to George Copeland, who had just come in for supper.

George looked at it attentively. "How strange, Miss Staunton, that you should have these arms on your box. Where in all the world did you pick it up? I know that crest as well as I know the lion and the unicorn—Lord Darlington's, it is."

Amy coloured. How had George Copeland any knowledge of her mother's family, and how did he recognize the crest? This was the only thing in her possession that was marked with the Darlington arms.

"It was my mother's," said she quickly; "I don't exactly know how she came by it, but I know she was some connection of the Darlington's. You know that you claim relationship with Lord Lindsay of Balcarras, Jessie," continued Amy laughing.

"I can't count it nor follow my mother when she counts it," said Jessie. "But what do you know about this Lord Darlington, George?"

"My father's landlord had a son married to a daughter of the Earl of Darlington, and that's how I came to know the family and the crest. Mr. Anthony Derrick, that's Lord Darlington's grandson, is the heir to old Mr. Derrick, for Mr. John he died young, and it's likely he'll soon come in for the property; for the old squire, is as old as my grandfather, and he died an old man of seventy-six, years ago."

"Derrick?" said Louis Hammond; "I should know that name. They were surely friends of mamma's. I have heard mamma speak of them."

"Oh! Mr. Derrick, the old squire, was well known far and near; they called him the cotton lord, but that was before my father went to Stanmore estate that Mr. Derrick bought. The money was all made with spinning-jennies, and this lad, young Mr. Anthony, will get the most of

it, for Mr. John was the only son. His grandfather sets great store by the boy."

"I hope he is a good lad then," said Amy, in a low eager tone.

"Good enough, I dare say, and quite able to spend a fortune. He's proud and high of course, seeing what he is born to; but his grandfather thinks nothing too good for him. It is a pity when old people set their hearts too much on boys. If my grandfather had seen what I've come to, every hair on his grey head would have stood on end. Ne'er-do-wells are best at a distance, as Mrs. Lindsay would say. Tom and Charlie have turned out better than me, that's one comfort," said George, with something between a sigh and a laugh.

"You've not turned out ill," said Jessie Lindsay gravely. "My father is much pleased with you and so are we all. Why don't you write to your friends, you that can write so well? I don't believe you have written once since you came here."

"Oh! I am a rolling stone," said Copeland. "I'll stay out my year here, where, as you say, I have got a good character; and then I'll be off to get another, perhaps not so good. Does your father want a hand, Master Louis?"

"Yes, to go up the Darling to one of his

stations there. I am very sure he would like you, for he was wondering who to send. I wish he would send me, instead of poking me with Mr. Prince over those detestable Latin and Greek lessons, and those beastly problems. Fred and I hate them like poison, and after a year of that we're to go to England, and Fred will be sent to Harrow, or Rugby, or Eton to be flogged; and I to Oxford or Cambridge to be plucked. The whole business is a complete sell; and my father and mother have set their hearts on it, and it must be gone through. I know I'll be running away and going to sea or something of that sort, and then what will their feelings be? What is the use of all that rubbish? If a man can back a horse, and hunt up cattle, he may live like a gentleman in the bush. I don't mind learning to shoe a horse, or carpentering like Allan, and if my father would only trust me on the Darling I'm sure I'd give him satisfaction; but that brutal lingo that Mr. Prince is hammering into us is fit for nothing but monkeys to jabber. And I am sure the governor knows nothing about it himself, though he looks so wise when Prince tells him what book of Virgil we are at, and quotes a line or two of the gibberish, as if he understood every word of it. The girls actually say they like their lessons, but it must be all pretence;

they can't do it, or if they really do, what can you expect from a parcel of girls? but they bother Prince as much as Fred and me do. But as the governor won't hear of me going up the Darling, it's very likely he would give you the billet, Copeland," said Louis.

"My father has no wish to part with you, George," said Jessie.

"Nor have I," said Allan, who had returned with the piece of wood he wanted. "We might make it as well worth your while as Mr. Hammond. You know my father is buying a new station at Gundabook, and he says he would like to send you to it, as Jamie can come home from school to be of some use at home. He would have sent me, but now that I am really learning I don't want to leave my little schoolmistress. But my father has such trust in you."

"But our station on the Darling is a far bigger one, and carries four times the sheep that Mr. Lindsay can put on Gundabook," said Louis; "and with my father going away a man would have more charge. George asked me if my father wanted a hand, Allan; I did not put it into his head."

"You see what it is to get a good character. It is new to me to be in such demand," said George.

"You said you liked the place and the work, George," said Jessie.

"So I do, and I'll like the next place I'll go to as well, I suppose. I am a rover; there is no dependence to be put on me."

"Your year's up next month," said Allan; "but I never thought of your leaving us. My father does not easily part with his men. I hope he will be able to persuade you to stay."

"I think not," said George, and it appeared as if no persuasion could have any effect with him. He had never stayed more than a year at any place all the years he had been in the colonies, and though the entreaties of the family made him uncomfortable they did not make him change his mind. Allan, who thought nobody could withstand Amy, begged her to try her powers of persuasion. The purchase of Gundabook appeared so desirable, that Hugh Lindsay was determined to go through with it even though he feared that he must send Allan there, and so lose his society and check his studies, which were now going on so satisfactorily to himself that he was again cheerful and helpful, and almost indispensable.

Hugh Lindsay was a man who had never lost an opportunity of making money. He never had capital lying idle or a man in his employment who had not full work. His own run was now

fully stocked, and it appeared to him that Gundabook might be supplied from it and the sheep never missed. The contingency of sending Allan would be a necessity if George could not go, that must be taken along with other business necessities. The mother, on the other hand, thought that if George could not go Gundabook must be given up; and that another station would cast up by the time Jamie was fit to be trusted. She did not grasp so eagerly at the opportunities as her husband, and rested more complacently in the thought of the comfort she had attained to.

"I wonder," said Amy to George, a day or two after his first intimation that he was likely to leave the Lindsays, "that you can wish to change your employment when everyone here is so kind to you and treats you as an equal, to take service with the Hammonds who hold themselves so high."

"It seems very absurd, but one likes to serve, if one has to serve, amongst gentlefolks, you know," said George.

"There are different ways of discovering gentlefolks," said Amy. "I only know that the gentlefolks had no kindness for me while these good people here have been so different."

"The chances on the Darling station are better than at Gundabook," said George.

"I don't know that; Mr. Lindsay is very sanguine about Gundabook."

"O yes, for him no doubt, but for the manager Mr. Hammond's offer will be the best."

"Then Allan must go," said Amy. "You have been so remarkably good in contriving that Allan should have more time than I scarcely expected you would put a stop to his book-work altogether."

"Oh! no fear of Allan," said George. "Set Allan anywhere now and he is sure to learn. But he, and indeed all the family, think too well of me. Any other man would suit them as well."

"It will be a great change at Branzholm," said Amy, "without Allan and without you."

"I believe it was the sight of that box of yours with the coat of arms on it that unsettled me. If I could stay more than a year at one place I think I might have stayed here, but there seems a fate against it."

Amy shook her wise little head; it seemed to her that George gave the name of fate to his own inclinations. Her fate was more definite; she was hemmed in to the life she led, and could not blame herself for having missed any opportunity

of bettering it. It was well that she had been some months at Branhholm before the younger girls came home, for by that means she had learned more of Allan and of Jessie, and had contracted for them something more like friendship than she could have expected, considering the difference of their years.

Allan was her chief friend, and the person over whom she had most influence; he had always been a gentleman in mind, and he was disposed to be a gentleman in manner, if he knew how to become so. He looked best in his own house, where he was most at his ease and where he had been the master spirit since he was sixteen; for he had good judgment and a determined will, but at the same time he was so good-natured that his authority was not felt to be a tyranny. In him were developed those qualities and talents for which early colonial life is the best training—the readiness, the promptitude, the quickness of resource, the capacity for judging rightly and for acting effectively in new and untried circumstances, the quick eye and the skilful hand. There was a natural dignity about him that made nothing he did appear mean or trivial labour. None of the family had so much of this natural dignity, but they all had it more or less; and it was singular that Jessie and Allan, who

had had least of the advantages of education, possessed it in the highest degree. The deference with which Allan was treated in his own family had a tendency to make him a little opinionative and obstinate, but the arrival of Amy Staunton, with so many points of superiority that he was obliged to yield to, had been an excellent corrective, and he was more convinceable than he used to be, as Mrs. Lindsay put it.

Allan was not long in making Amy's new netting-needle; it was rather thick, but she could work with it, and soon finished the net. Jessie thanked her for it, and said it was very pretty. Amy arranged the thick curls of fair hair under it and was satisfied with the effect, but Jessie looked anxious and distraught. She had not her wits about her as usual, her mother said, and indeed the anticipation of Allan's going away had unsettled everybody in the house; but no one guessed what Jessie had on her mind as an especial cause of disturbance.

It was the day before George Copeland's departure. He had not finally agreed with Mr. Hammond, but it was an understood thing that he was to go to the Darling, and on this Sunday afternoon the family at Branzholm were dull enough, and George feeling that he had been the cause of it all looked miserable. Judy had cut

her finger very badly, so Jessie was obliged to go to milk instead of her, and George offered to go and bail up the cows for her and carry home the pails. He could not milk, or he would have offered to do that last good-natured office for her. There was not much said on either side till Jessie had milked her last cow. George untied the leg-ropes, and was taking up the pails when she stopped him.

"Stay a few minutes, I have something to say to you before you go—just a few words. Have you nothing to say to me?"

Copeland looked embarrassed, but said nothing.

"We have been very good friends this twelve-months back," she said slowly.

"Very good friends," said George.

"I have thought whiles that we might be more than friends, but maybe you could not bring your mind to make up to my father's daughter. So, George Copeland, I'll just say this; I'm willing to be your wife if you can like me well enough to wish to be my husband." The girl's cheek crimsoned as she made this singular offer. Copeland did not speak.

"I've been mistaken, George," said she, "but it is better for me to have it all out like this than to have you going away not knowing how you thought of me, or whether you were minding

or forgetting me. This last fortnight's doubt has been terrible. It is well it is at an end, only don't think the worse of me for what I have said."

"No, certainly not," said George, who could answer that question satisfactorily.

"When I made up my mind to say these words I was prepared for the consequences, and I ran the risk. Only be honourable and tell no one. If you or any man had asked me to be your wife, and I felt that I could not give you my heart, I would never have breathed word of it to a living creature."

"I am sorry, very sorry," said George, "but I never thought of you in that way. As you say, you were my master's daughter, but as for telling, you can trust to my honour not to say a word that would give you pain, although it is what I might well be proud of."

"Proud of?" said Jessie. "But I'll get over this all the better when nobody knows about it but you and me and the God above us. I'll not break my heart, though I have been strangely mistaken. You looked so unsettled and yet so sorry to leave us that I thought you fancied you would get on faster with the Hammonds and so be sooner your own master and have a right to speak for yourself. If I had not thought that you liked me in that way I'd have never said what I have said and what I never can unsay. But,

George, maybe it is not a fair question—if it is not tell me so—is there any other girl living that you like better ?”

“No,” said George, “I cannot say there is. I never thought that I was either rich enough or good enough to marry, and would not have a girl depend on such a broken reed as I am.”

“Then maybe you will change your mind and think more of me when you are far away ; if so I can only say that you will find me the same.”

“You said you were going to get over it,” said George.

“So I will ; I’ll get over that senseless way of thinking about you and wondering what you think about me that makes me forget my work and lose my head, as my mother says ; but that was the doubt and the fear and the difficulty of finding out your real feelings. That doubt is over and that difficulty overcome, and I’ll go back to my work with a mind at rest ; but as for getting over what I feel for you altogether, that will take a while, I’m thinking.”

“Your father looks higher for you than such as me,” said George.

“I think not,” said Jessie. “What was he, what were we all but plain working people ? If he’s worth ten thousand pounds, or maybe nearer twenty thousand, we helped to earn it, and should have a right to please ourselves. I took a flock

of sheep when I was eleven years old, and Allan even younger than that; and even after I was set free of the sheep the butter and cheese and bacon that I helped mother to make went far to keep the house, and let my father save money for land and stock. He never would like us to marry out of our degree to be looked down on by our husband's kin."

"I may be below your degree here," said Copeland, "but my relatives at home are different. If I had not been a scapegrace and idle and fond of adventure, and gone off to sea when I should have stuck by my father, I might have been your equal in means; but I have never settled in my life, and have always spent my money as fast as I earned it. What will become of the wages I am to get from your father to-morrow, God knows—I don't. I used to say that I would begin to save next year, but lately I have given over even that salve to my conscience."

"George," said Jessie, earnestly, "there's good in you or you never could have taken such a hold of my heart. It is not for my own sake I say it, but for the sake of the father and mother that weary for you, and for the sake of the wife you will one day have, and of the God that gave you talents and opportunities that you have no right to throw away, make a beginning now.

Save this money that is due to you; go to Mr. Hammond's with the determination to stick to your work; write to your father and mother; strengthen your resolution every way in your power. Look at my father who began the world with nothing and who has earned for himself comfort and abundance, and sees his children ready to work for him when he gets past hard work. This is the country for the honest industrious man, and you cannot fail to get on if you are only steady and resolved. For you are so honest and straightforward; my father says no one he ever paid wages to had his interest so much at heart. Oh! George, though I have been so mistaken in your thoughts of me, let me not be mistaken in this, that you deserve my good thoughts of you."

Jessie Lindsay was not pretty, but she was very comely, and as she now stood leaning with her back to the milking shed facing George, he for the first time saw into her soul and was touched by its strength and its weakness. She looked so earnest, so self-forgetful; she had no thought of herself, but she took the only opportunity that was given to her to arouse his better feelings and to restore him to self-respect.

This was the wife for him of all the world if he only knew it, and he began to have a conscious-

ness of the fact. If such a woman as Jessie Lindsay, with her intuitive sense of right, her sound judgment, and her affectionate heart, could be brought to love an unsettled somewhat impressible man like him, the whole course of his life would be changed. He would infallibly rise in the world if he submitted to the affectionate influence she was capable of exerting. But such men as George Copeland do not readily attach themselves to such women, and but for her surprising frankness he would have left Branhholm on the morrow with no other memory of Jessie Lindsay than that she was a good active girl who was somewhat reserved in her manner. He might have told the wife whom at a future period he might have married, and who would be a very different person, that he wished she had a lesson from Jessie Lindsay in managing a house, or a dairy, or a poultry-yard, or her quiet effective activity when there was any emergency, or her steady even temper. These things were all good in their way, but they were not charming. However, now when George knew that this large reserved nature had given all her heart to him and believed him to be worthy of it, things were changed. It was not pity that he felt for her. After the first few embarrassed words had been said and her mistake as to his feelings discovered, Jessie Lindsay

had never looked more dignified than she did in this interview. She would get over it as she said. She was likely to make a far better marriage in every point of view than one with him could ever be. But George felt restored to self-respect and to honourable ambition when this woman expressed such hopes of him —when she had seen through the outer crust of levity the good true soul within him, and when she urged him for the sake of the parents he had left, and of the happy home he had scarcely thought attainable, to begin life anew on a new plan and in a better spirit.

"Jessie," said he, "you put new life into me. I'll take your advice; I'll write to my father and mother this very night; I'll leave my wages in your father's hands, where I know it will be as safe as in the bank; and I'll go either to the Darling or to Gundabook just as you think best."

"I think you had better go up the Darling. After what I have said to you I think it would be better for me if you go right away."

"Are you so sure of that? But we part friends, I hope," said he, taking her hand.

"The best of friends," said Jessie. "I'll always wish you well wherever you may be, and I know you will not think the worse of me for

what I have said, and I hope you'll mind some of it."

"I'll mind it all," said George, "but we cannot part like this." Jessie looked almost beautiful as she looked at him, and she loved him, so he thought there could be no harm in snatching a kiss. Without being at all in love with her, only having leadings in that direction, and having been long removed from that rural English society where he had spent his boyhood, where kisses were as plenty as blackberries and were given and taken without much being thought of them, the temptation to give a warmer farewell than mere hand-shaking was irresistible at the moment. But to Jessie Lindsay a kiss was a solemn thing—the seal of true love and of nothing else—to be given to the man she was to marry, but not until the troth was plighted. She drew back with an indignant blush and extended her free arm, for George held the other fast, to show how physical could support moral force, but Copeland understood the colour and escaped the threatened blow.

"Has anything I have said to you made you think that I'd allow of such a liberty?" said she. "It is little you know Jessie Lindsay if you think she would have such goings on from a man that does not care for her, at

least does not care for her in the way that alone can make it right and fitting to touch lip with lip. Although I have not had much learning I know my own place and yours. Let go my hand, if you please, this minute."

"I beg your pardon, Miss Lindsay," said Copeland, dropping the hand he held and feeling a little cowed by her grand manner. "I did not think you would take it up so seriously. I used to kiss my sisters and cousins and the girls about, and nobody thought anything of it."

"I'm neither your sister nor your cousin, and I don't feel like one, nor do you feel like a brother to me, and besides I'm not used to kiss anybody and I won't have it. Write your letter and go your way to-morrow, George. We part friends if you do not offend me again," and Jessie lifted her milk pails and walked slowly to the house, leaving George Copeland in a state of bewildered admiration at her spirit and her sincerity.

CHAPTER X.

GEORGE COPELAND'S PROBATION.

IF Jessie Lindsay had undergone a great disappointment and a great mortification she did not retire to mourn over it in secret. No excuse of headache or of other ailment was offered to prevent her taking her place at the tea-table as usual, or joining in the family conversation. Perhaps she talked a little more than her wont, for the others were rather silent, for all were sorry at George Copeland's intention of going away, and old Mr. Lindsay was somewhat offended.

"You said you were going to write, George," said Jessie, after the tea-things had been taken away. "Will I get you some paper and pen and ink, or have you got them? I suppose you'll write in your own room."

"No; if you've no objection I'll write here," said George. He wanted an occasional glance at

Jessie to help his resolution. He sat awhile with the paper before him after she brought it, and the old home feelings and memories crowded upon him. The old-fashioned roomy farmhouse; the jolly, good-natured, but yet sometimes imperious father; the careful affectionate mother; the teasing but pleasant brothers and sisters; the old church with the elms round it; the good-humoured rector, with his stately lady; the young curate whom all the girls worshipped; the village ale-house, where the smock-frocked peasants resorted on Sundays and holidays; the old pear-trees in the garden; the old horses in the stable; the middle-class school to which he had been sent as a boarder and where he had learned very little for the money it had cost, but where he had first entertained the notion of going to sea.

"No wonder it is hard for George Copeland to begin his letter, the first he's written since he came here," said Hugh Lindsay rather bitterly; "for he has only to acquaint his friends that he is as changeable after ten years in the colonies as he was when he went from his father's house."

But when George fairly began his letter he wrote quickly and evidently a good clear flowing hand. Jessie sat down with a book where she could not see him, but George changed his position and she would not change hers.

He had nearly finished his letter when Jessie came up to him and said her father was going to read a sermon as usual on Sunday evening; would he take his letter away and finish it, or would he stay and listen with the rest of the household? George preferred to stay.

"You had better stop and hearken," said Mr. Lindsay. "It's no mony sermons you're like to hear up the Darling, and I hope this one will do you good. Pass me my spectacles, Amy, and find me out my place. I've read the book through so often, that I'm no clear about where I left off, but you may keep mind of it better."

George had always felt something wanting in the little religious service which marked the difference between *Sabbath* and *ilkaday* in the Scottish household of Hugh Lindsay, and this evening he felt it more than ever. In such country situations as this of Branhholm there seems a want of some simple and familiar liturgy to express the thanksgivings and the supplications of the household; but the Scottish system of extempore, or at least original and unwritten, prayer, allows of no set form of worship, where there is no minister to conduct it. There is certainly latitude given to private persons, but Hugh Lindsay had no gift in prayer, being a man rather slow of speech and indisposed to make any extra-

ordinary profession of religion. Books of family prayer no doubt abound, fitted for families in full possession of all the ordinances and inhabiting Great Britain; but for persons living in the far bush, who never hear a church bell, the omissions that ought to be made and the passages that ought to be supplied, would have required a quicker eye and a more ready tongue than Mr. Lindsay's.

So he contented himself with seeing that no unnecessary work was done on Sundays, and with reading a sermon in a somewhat broad accent to his household in the evenings. He occasionally bought a new volume, but his favourite book was a collection of sermons which had been given to him by his brother on leaving, which had been written by a minister whom he had heard often preach on sacramental occasions; for he belonged to the same presbytery as Hugh Lindsay's own minister, and was considered the most able man of them all. Fifty-two sermons a year had been read for many a year in that household, and this particular book was so familiar to Jessie and Allan that they knew the turn of every sentence in it. The sermon to Scottish minds is the most important part of the religious service at church, so that it is natural that it should be offered as a

substitute for the whole at sea in a Scottish vessel or in the bush in a Scottish family.

Copeland felt that night as if he needed prayer more than a set discourse. He was beginning a new life and he would fain have had some living devotional thoughts and feelings suggested to him. Jessie sat for a quarter of an hour after the conclusion of the sermon in silent thought, perhaps in silent prayer, and George resumed his letter and finished it. By that time the family were retiring to bed, for though Sunday was hailed as a day of rest, the limitation of employments—where there was no church to go to, no Sunday-school to teach or learn in, no neighbours to visit, and very few to see—made one and all of the household willing to abridge a little at both ends. Jessie was going with the others when George stopped her.

“I’d be glad if you would stay and see what I have been writing, Miss Lindsay, as it is according to your advice I am taking up the pen.”

She accordingly stayed, and George put his letter into her hand. She was not much of a scholar; as she had said herself, she had taken care of a flock of sheep when she was eleven years old, and when she was relieved of that work there had been always a great deal of domestic and dairy work to occupy her hands and her

mind ; her own writing was a slow and painful process, and she could not read written hand with any degree of fluency. She had had no idea that George was such an expert penman, and blushed when she returned him his letter.

“ You had better read to me what you wish me to hear,” said she. “ It does not seem to be my business, but as I urged you to write and as I wish that we should part friends I'll listen to it.”

George's letter was to this effect :

“ My dear Father and Mother—I have been too much ashamed of my long silence and of the unsatisfactory nature of anything I ever had to say to you since I came to Australia to write till now, but you must not think that I forget you, or cease to think of you with love and self-reproach. As I am resolving to act differently for the future, I am going to try to confirm my resolution by beginning a regular correspondence.

“ It is now I think eighteen months since I wrote to you from Boorundara. I have since been on the South Australian side, and have been twelve months here doing miscellaneous farm and station work, and have got such a character for being a good hand that I am begged to stay by my present master and pressed to leave by one of his neighbours, and in both in-

stances to take a better situation than my present. I think I will stay in my present employment, for I appear to have been too fond of change. What between the sea and the diggings and the quart-crushing company and the brewery I have always had tempting offers for bettering myself, and the consequence is that those who have stuck to the worst employment have distanced me in the race. And it is this desire for change that has made me so averse to return to you when you urged it so strongly; if I could not stay at home when I got there I should only disappoint you doubly.

"But I think I have come to a turning point in my life, and that I may yet become worthy of your affection. Something has come across my path just at this time in the shape of a good woman, and whether I may ever see my way to marry her or not, whether I may ever grow to deserve her or not, I shall always feel indebted to her for the advice she has given and the resolution she has inspired. If I am ever a comfort or a pride to you in my life, it will be greatly owing to her.

"I have a year's wages almost untouched and mean to keep it sacred, and when I have saved of my own earnings as much as will take me home and bring me back again, if I cannot settle

in England, I may go to see you, but I will not take your money for such a purpose, however willingly and anxiously you may offer it; and I think that after these years of knocking about I am better cut out for life in a new country than in the old. Write to me all of you; I do not say write kindly, for you have always written so kindly that it cuts me to the heart. I'd rather have a box on the ear any day than such expressions of affection when I feel I do not deserve them; but write all about yourselves. I want to know everything that goes on at home, and what Tom and Charlie, and Lizzie and Jane are about. Tell me if there is any change in the house, if the old mossy apple trees are still bearing, if the elms where we used to go after the rooks have been cut down, as was threatened to make nests for older friends still. Tell me how the old squire keeps his health, and if he ever goes to Millmount to praise mother's poultry-yard and dairy now-a-days, and if Mr. Anthony has left Cambridge and come to Stanmore to live.

"I saw the Darlington crest the other day, where I had no idea of expecting to see it, and it brought old times to my mind. I would like to know how the young squire is thought of in the county and by the tenantry, and if his grandfather has better reason to be proud of

him than mine had of a runagate like me. Ten years away from home, and no further on in the world, seems a very poor account to give of myself, but ten years hence—I have some hopes now.

“With kindest love to all my brothers and sisters, believe me always your affectionate and dutiful son,

“GEORGE COPELAND.”

“You see what you have done, Jessie,” said George. “May I apologise to your father for my shabby treatment of him, and beg to be allowed to go to Gundabook?”

“As you please,” said Jessie, and she thought for awhile. “I have been wondering what made me so deceived about your heart. That unsettledness, you say, is natural to you, so I had no right to judge by that; but I see it is because you have been amongst gentlefolk like Amy that your ways are different from those of any man we ever had about the place—gentler, kinder, and more polite. I thought it was because you liked me, that you were so mindful, and the way you used to circumvent my father to let Allan have some quiet time for his books was what he’ll never forget, nor me either. But it is what you would have done in any house and for any

master, for it was a pleasure to you, and you had the wit as well as the will to do it."

"I have been brought up as differently from Miss Staunton as you have been," said George. "Father is only a tenant-farmer of old Mr. Derrick, a jolly, beer-drinking farmer, who rides a good horse, keeps a good table, pays his rent, growls at the game laws, and laughs at the doctor. He has had more schooling than your worthy father, but is not so long-headed or so prudent. I never saw such natural business talents as your father has except perhaps Allan's. No; I would not have done as much for any other master, though I confess I might have done as much for any other woman as for you, because I was blind and did not see how much better you were than any I had seen in my wandering life. I am not really far ahead of you in my bringing up, though desperately behind you in purse. But, Jessie, for all that I am going to try to deserve you, and when you have made a man of me I'll see how my better self feels towards you and then how your good father feels towards me."

"He takes your leaving him very much to heart," said Jessie. "I never saw him so much put out with anything."

"Well, if he'll forgive me I'll work at Gunda-

book as I never worked before ; and if all Mr. Lindsay says is true, it is likely to be a first-rate speculation."

"My father's speculations are almost always successful, but I have gone against this one, for there is such a thing as having one's head too full of business ! but if you are willing to take the charge it will be a relief to us all, for Allan would be sorely missed at Branhholm."

"And will *you* not miss *me*?" said George, who felt desirous to awaken again the tenderness she had acknowledged to.

"I think you have said all that is necessary, so I will wish you good-night," said Jessie. "You'll put out the lamp before you go."

"Good-night, Miss Lindsay," said George, not even venturing to take the hand, far less to touch the cheek of the girl whom he determined should be his wife. While she wondered over the events of the day with thoughts rather bitter than sweet, for the recollection of George's blank face and hesitating disavowal of any reciprocal affection overpowered all the kindlier speeches and more hopeful suggestions of the second interview, he resolved to try as much as he could to attach himself to her. His vague wishes took the form of a definite plan ; he was going to offer to manage the station at Gundabook on shares, if

Mr. Lindsay would agree to it, or for wages, if he would not. In the former alternative he would be able to prove that he could be his own master; and if he did well for a year he would speak to Mr. Lindsay, and if he then could trust him with Jessie they might be married. By that time he believed he would be as fond of Jessie as she herself could wish.

Hugh Lindsay was satisfied with George's handsome apology, and more than satisfied with it. If he had had any difference with any one he was always very strongly convinced that he was in the right, only it was seldom the other party had the grace to own it. It was scarcely in human nature—at least it was not in Hugh Lindsay's nature—to help chuckling over Mr. Hammond's disappointment when his arrangement with Copeland fell through; so when George proposed to take the station on shares he agreed to it readily, and offered more liberal terms than Copeland thought he deserved.

"Writing to your friends and listening to that capital sermon of Mr. McCroskey's has done you good, George, and brought you to reason; and now I'll hear the end of the good wife's lamentations about Gundabook. Clever woman as she is and sensible in most things, Mrs. Lindsay hasn't the enterprising spirit that a man needs to

get on in the world. It will no be very solitary for you, for there's Dugald McLachlan and his wife for company. So let us see about drafting the sheep, and you may have what horse you like; I'll no be beat by Mr. Hammond; ye'll get as good a beast to carry you from Branxholm as from Aralewin."

All these matters being settled, George Copeland went to his new duties in a very few days. Jessie missed him, but then everybody in the house, even the phlegmatic old Highland shepherd, regretted Chorche, as he called him, and half wished that he had gone to Gundabook instead of Dugald McLachlan. The new man who was engaged to fill Copeland's place was not to be compared to him in any way, and Jessie liked to hear the disparaging parallel drawn. It showed that she had had some excuse for her regard for him, and that she was only reasonably affected by his absence.

Mr. and Mrs. Hammond, who had reckoned with certainty on engaging Copeland after what had been said, were naturally disappointed and annoyed when he changed his mind, and the lady thought it was just that vulgar family's luck, and another instance of the unscrupulousness of the lower orders in this country with regard to breaking engagements.

Mr. Hammond could not say there had been any regular engagement, but certainly there was an understanding.

"But, mamma," said Louis, "why did not you take Amy Staunton home when her father was killed? Surely there should have been an understanding that it was your business."

Mrs. Hammond winced—she could bear reflections from her husband and her neighbours, but that her son should think her in the wrong was worse than anything else.

"Oh! the Lindsays took a great fancy to her, and she to them; it is much better as it is."

"But she is not like the Lindsays; you never saw such a girl, she is so pretty and so lady-like. I am certain from something she said that she has great connections. And to think of her being governess there; but of course she'll marry Allan or James, or one of the Lindsays," and Louis sighed. Louis was nearly eighteen, and his mother congratulated herself that in six months he would be in England.

"Copeland says that his father was a tenant of old Mr. Derrick's that I have surely heard you speak of," said Louis.

"Oh! is he?" said Mrs. Hammond. "Mr. Derrick is a very wealthy man; at least he used to

be when I visited the family ; he had a beautiful estate in ——shire."

"He made money cotton-spinning," said Louis, turning up his nose, with a squatter's pride, at such base mechanical ways of getting money. Strange that cotton-growing and wool-growing should be the aristocratic employments in America and Australia, while the conversion of these raw materials into useful articles, though requiring more intelligence and more capital, is never considered at all aristocratic in England or elsewhere.

"Copeland must be of a better class than his employers if his father was one of Mr. Derrick's tenants," said Mr. Hammond.

"No doubt he is. I liked his appearance and manner very much when we accompanied him to Mr. Lindsay's on that unfortunate evening, and that makes it more provoking that we should lose him after what he said to Louis. But these low people can always outbid us ; they can afford to pay more wages than we can, for they do so much of their own work."

"I wish you would let me do some of your work instead of keeping me grinding away at these lessons," said Louis. "I'm sure I have no objection to go up the Darling, or if you would

only let me take care of the home station when you are away I show you how I'd manage."

"I daresay you would," said Mr. Hammond. "I'm sure if your mother was not so set on your education being properly completed I should be only too glad to leave you some charge here; for I can trust you, my boy, and you really have a talent for country life and stock."

"Mr. Lufton could advise me a little, and I could always get a hint from Allan Lindsay," said Louis, eagerly. "Do, mamma, let me stay?"

"It is absolutely impossible that I should consent to such an arrangement," said Mrs. Hammond. "When I go to England I take with me all that is dear to me in South Australia."

"I begin to hate the name of England," said Louis.

"And so do I," said Fred.

This sentiment was echoed by all the young people who were seated at table.

"Poor ignorant children," said Mrs. Hammond; "you little know what you despise."

It was not altogether smooth work for George Copeland in this attempt at settling down and trying to make and to save money in this outstation of Gundabook. The restlessness and roving habits of ten years' growth were not to be calmed down all at once. It was not nearly

so pretty a country as that surrounding Branhholm; and George was always susceptible to beauties of scenery. It was flat, and there were no trees; the sheep fed chiefly off scrub and saltbush. There was very hard work for him and Dugald sinking wells, and yard after yard of solid rock to drive through before there was a drop of water to be got. It was a dry season, and if they failed to get water the run must be abandoned and the sheep driven back to the home station, for the surface water had absolutely failed as it had never done during the two years in which Mr. Lufton had occupied it, and by which Mr. Lindsay had been led to buy it. But George had worked heroically and Dugald steadily, and in the very nick of time water was found. The want of companionship weighed on George's spirits; the only other residents on the station were the old Highlander and his wife, who spoke as little English as one could believe possible after seven years of colonial life. The old woman certainly could not speak more than twenty-five words, while Dugald himself had been driven by necessity into the knowledge of about a hundred; but it is very difficult to hold connected conversation with so limited a vocabulary, even if George and his assistants had had many ideas in common. If Allan had

gone George knew that he would have stayed through everything, but then Allan knew a little Gaelic, and George despised the guttural high-pitched scolding language too much to learn it, and would have been laughed at if he had attempted it. Besides, Allan could make a companion of a book at any time, and George liked human voices and human faces. He had not known how much he had grown attached to the family of Lindsays—how much his meals had been sweetened by their company till now, when Mrs. McLachlan was the only substitute for Mrs. Lindsay and Jessie and Amy and the girls, and Dugald's ignorance for Mr. Lindsay's shrewd common sense and Allan's fine intelligence. It was a pity that Jessie was no correspondent; he longed for a letter from her or a sight of her. But first came the well-sinking, that could not be left; then the daily drawing of water which was too much to leave for Dugald; then Mr. Lindsay had suggested that some fencing should be done, and his suggestions had the force of commands with George. Even the roughest bush-fence, if round a large area, takes a long time; then came on shearing time, and the year of probation had expired before George could spare time to go to Branzholm.

Allan had written to him now and then with his father's wishes and orders, and everybody desired to be kindly remembered to him. Amy Staunton sometimes had a message—indeed Allan was fond of bringing her name into his letters at all times; but there was no special mention of Jessie or any message or letter from her though George had written to her twice.

Had he not been rash and foolish in thus in a measure binding himself without any particular affection for her; nothing stronger than esteem and a wish to feel love? Was she not forgetting him in his absence?

It was when he was puzzling himself vainly over this matter that he received a letter from both of his parents that did him good, and inspired him with fresh courage. The joy that his mother expressed on hearing that he had been brought under the influence of a good woman reminded him of what Jessie had said and how she had looked on that memorable Sunday; and the hope she entertained that one day he might bring his wife home where she would be received as a daughter, helped George to weather that long year at Gundabook. And when he took a retrospective view of what had been done for the station during the year he felt

that Hugh Lindsay had cause to be satisfied with the place, and George Copeland to be satisfied with himself.

There had been some changes at Branxholm during his absence. Amy Staunton had sprung up into an elegant girl of fifteen. Isabel Lindsay, a year older and a head taller and very much larger in the frame, had nearly given up lessons, and was beginning to be of some use in the house. Phemie was still learning something from her young governess, and Allan did not see any prospect of ever completing his education; everything he learned only showed him how much more there was to be known.

The Hammonds had gone to England with no intention of returning, leaving their home station under the care of a Scotchman named McCallum, and this overseer, was a more frequent visitor at Branxholm than any neighbour the Lindsays ever had. As George travelled towards the station, feeling more of the old home longing than he had done since he had left England, he heard from an acquaintance that Mr. McCallum was looking after Jessie Lindsay, and that her father was greatly pleased to see it. "She's the best of the whole lot of Lindsays," said his informant; "and McCallum knows what he is about when he makes up to her."

How grave Jessie looked when George first met her eyes; they were not what a casual observer would call fine eyes, though they were well shaped and of a very clear blue colour, for they were neither flashing nor sparkling nor melting; but they had a steady light in them that one could depend on, and if they were well looked into they repaid the trouble. She looked older than when George had parted from her—not unpleasantly older—there were no lines on her cheek or brow or round the corners of her mouth, but her face looked calm and more thoughtful, and her movements were a little more deliberate.

George could get no opportunity of speaking to her for hours. Allan and his father were full of questions as to how matters were going on at Gundabook; Isabel laid hold of him to see her new pony; Jamie wanted to see if he could come up to George with the rifle after a year's hard practice, and kept him an hour before he was satisfied that George was still greatly his superior; but Jessie was shy and silent, and would give him no chance to speak to her. A chance observation of Isabel's about McCallum's visits called up the colour to her cheek, but George thought it was indignation and not consciousness—he

had seen both, and fancied he knew the difference.

"I suppose you are not going to milk this afternoon," said he; "I would go and bail up the cows for you if you were—I wonder if the poor beasts will know me again."

"I'll milk if you would like it," said Jessie in a low voice, "and Biddy (for Judy is married and gone from Branhholm) will see to the things in the house and get the tea with some looking after from Isabel."

"The cows have not forgotten me," said George, as he bailed up the very strawberry cow whose leg he had released from the rope a year ago before Jessie had changed his life for him. "And I want to know whether you have forgotten me, or what passed between us here."

"I have forgotten none of it. There are few things that I forget. It humbles me much to recollect all that passed here. I think you might have spared me that pain, but I deserved it," said Jessie.

"Jessie," said he, "I did not mean you to take it like this. I only thought that if you would call to mind how you felt then, and would only feel to me in the same way now, I would be happy—happier than I ever thought to be in my life, for now I do really love you. I'd be glad,

very glad to be your husband, if you can love me well enough to be your wife. I think I can be trusted to be steady now, and with God's blessing, I'll do my very best to make you happy."

Jessie's large frame shook with the emotion which George's words and looks called forth. "My heart is yours now as it was then; at least I know of no change, except that I know you have proved yourself more worthy of what I feel for you."

"Then why did you not write when I wrote to you? It cast me down to get no answer."

"I could not trust myself to write. I had done too much in speaking, and I could not make out by your letters exactly what you meant, so I was afraid I could not tell you just what I meant by mine. Besides I was ashamed of my writing, though it is better now, thanks to Amy. But I was ashamed whenever I thought of my mistake and your surprise; and besides I wanted you to right yourself because you felt you ought to do it, and not for my sake, for that would show you deserved my love. It is only when a man is unworthy that love can be a misery. Even if you had not told me that you feel that love for me that makes me so happy I can scarce see you through my tears, I would never have mourned

if you had proved yourself good and I had won you to your father and mother. Now you'll have to speak to my father, and I doubt you will have some trouble there, for he is set on my marrying McCallum, and to me he is the most wearisome company I ever was in. So that I'll never do, George; whatever my father may wish or may command I can obey him so far as to give you up, but not to marry another man."

"You'll not give me up, Jessie," said George earnestly, for he now felt as much like a lover as a girl could wish.

"Well, I think not," said Jessie. "Marriage is a thing that so much concerns the two persons that enter into it that I scarce see what even parents have to do with it, except in advising or delaying or such like. But I must mind Strawberry; she's surprised at being bailed up and not milked."

"I'm willing enough to wait till I have got further forward to satisfy your father. I think my own father would help me a bit if he knew what a good sensible girl I have won in the wilds of Australia. Perhaps if I show my letters and tell him my father's circumstances Mr. Lindsay would be more favourable."

"If you win Allan's good will you may make pretty sure of my father's, and I don't think

Allan is so much taken up with this overseer of Mr. Hammond's as the rest of them are."

"And to win Allan you should have Miss Staunton for your friend. That is a match coming on in time as sure as fate."

"I think it very likely," said Jessie. "It will be a great pleasure to me and to all of us, for she is the winsomest little creature that ever crept into a household, and the cleverest. She has been very serviceable to me in many ways. I never cared to learn much before, because I did not wish to raise myself above you, but when I found that you were so far ahead of me in schooling and the like, I have worked, and Amy says that I am the most patient of the lot of them, though Allan's more persevering. I see the end of my learning, but he does not."

"Will you write to my mother, Jessie?" said George eagerly; "it would gladden her heart to get a letter from you."

"If you wish it very much, George, I will," said Jessie. "Did you get any news about the young Squire Derrick that Amy wanted to hear about?"

"He was not at Stanmore when my mother wrote last. The old gentleman is failing fast and he had gone to the south of England for a change, and Mr. Anthony and Miss Derrick and

young Miss Edith were with him. Father says he is well enough spoken of—that is to say he hears no ill of him—and that is more than can be said of half the heirs to large estates in England.”

CHAPTER XI.

A WEDDING AT BRANXHOLM.

GEORGE's eyes were full of suppressed fun and triumph when Mr. McCallum met him at the door as he carried in the milk-pails for Jessie. He knew by intuition who the visitor was.

"Well, Miss Lindsay," said the tall, raw-boned Scotchman, extending his hand to her, "I hope ye're nae waur." This was his customary salutation to young ladies, combining, as he thought, a little facetiousness with the simple wish for health.

"I'm very well, I thank you," said she, "but I must put past the milk before I go ben the house. You'll find my father there, and he'll be glad to see you."

"Aye, aye, careful and managing as ever. The milk maun be looked to first. I wish my old woman at Aralewin had half your skill. But

whose this swankie that's making himself so helpful?"

"It's George Copeland, that's come from my father's station at Gundabook. He was at Branhholm for twelvemonths before he went up the country, but that is before you came to these parts."

"Oh! it's George Copeland, is it? I've heard Mr. Hammond speak of him," said McCallum, looking at the middle-sized, well-made Englishman, with his quick eye and his thick curly dark brown hair, not altogether with benevolence. "And how are things looking at Gundabook?"

"Somewhat better since I went up," said George.

"It's a poor place," said McCallum. "I wonder at Mr. Lindsay having anything to do with it. In a dry season like this what can you do for water?"

"We've sunk for it and got it."

"Is it good water, though, when you *have* got it?" said McCallum.

"Yes, very good water."

"You never get the wool there off the sheep that you can hereabouts, not the half of the quantity, and the quality is very indifferent," urged the overseer.

"Mr. Lindsay is satisfied, however," said George, "and you can judge for yourself. I have brought the wool down to-day, and it looks very respectable."

"I know the place well by Mr. Lufton's description. He would not have parted with it if it had been worth keeping."

"It did not suit him to keep it, but it suited Mr. Lindsay to buy," said George. "I'll not say that it is a garden of Eden, but an industrious man can make a living on it."

Although George had succeeded in gaining the ear of the daughter, he felt eclipsed in the eyes of the old people by this rather dictatorial Scotchman, who "cracked of horses, craps, and kye," and sheep too, to the goodman, and spoke to Mrs. Lindsay of his aged mother in Scotland, of whom he had been for many years the stay and the pride—a fact of which he was rather boastful.

Now and then a speech was addressed to Jessie herself, which was meant to be insinuating, but which Jessie only laughed at and turned off. George had wished to go over the accounts of the station (which he had kept as methodically as he could) with Mr. Lindsay and Allan; but McCallum wished to audit the accounts, and to assist the Lindsays with his

superior knowledge and experience ; and though Mr. Lindsay would not have minded, for he wanted to prove that his speculation had been a good one, George and Allan disliked showing their affairs to a third party. Everything that George said he had done McCallum suggested might have been done differently or done better, and instanced many cases in which other people had made blunders which he had pointed out to them, and that all his own plans and methods had been invariably crowned with success.

"Are ye no thinking of ploughing, George, now that you have done sic a bit o' fencing?" said Mrs. Lindsay.

"No ; the fencing is only to keep the sheep in and save a man's wages ; but it would be a great pleasure to me to see a bit of land fit to plough. I'd very soon have some wheat in ; but the land is poor, and there's too little rain."

"No ; the good man says that though it may carry sheep well enough, it is no sic a bonnie bit as Branhholm, where we have sic a garden for vegetables and fruits o' every kind under heaven, I think. Did ye notice the orange-trees, how they've grown since ye gaed awa, George ? I'm sure it often goes to my heart to see the peaches and the plums and the pears going to waste, for we've far mair than sic a family can destroy

[consume], and you would be glad of our leavings at Gundabook if we could send them. But that's impossible, though we can send you the flour, for Allan has had a braw crop this year off the old bit. We're feeding the sheep off the stubble," said Mrs. Lindsay.

"I don't think it pays mixing up wheat with sheep," said McCallum. "I never saw it done in the North, and it has never been attempted at Mr. Hammond's station neither. It's no the way of doing that has been followed by the men that has made their fortunes in this colony."

"Weel, it may no answer for them that's got all their labour to hire," said Mrs. Lindsay, "but Allan is a famous hand at the plough, and Jamie is coming on to be serviceable too, and it's a great saving to hae nae flour to buy, but rather wheat to sell; and then there's green wheat for the ewes and the young lambs, and hay for the beasts in the summer."

"What would they say in Scotland to feeding lambs with young wheat, or cutting down a crop of growing corn for hay?" said McCallum.

"Every land has its ain lauch," said Mrs. Lindsay; "we wouldna maybe cut down corn for hay if we could grow as much rye-grass and clover, or have such crops of turnips for feeding, as they have in the old country. But it's

boughten land that Allan ploughs, and I think the wheat-field makes the place heartsome."

"I'm sure my eyes were glad to see the green corn as I came near the place. I think Branhholm has more of an English look than any station I ever saw, either on this side or in Victoria, and I've seen some hundreds," said George. "I had rather be a farmer than a shepherd any day."

"So should I," said Allan. "I am glad I was not sent to Gundabook."

"And yet you know well that farmers are the most grumbling, discontented set of folk on the face of the earth," said McCallum. "God Almighty can never send weather to please them, and it's nò in the power of man to satisfy them with the prices."

"And are the sheep and cattle farmers aye satisfied?" said Mrs. Lindsay.

"They make much more money," said McCallum.

"They whiles lose it too," said Mrs. Lindsay. "I'm no saying anything against the sheep, for no doot the goodman has done weel wi' them; but I ken less aboot them than the farm. But it has aye seemed to me that there is great waistrìe at they big stations, sic waistrìe as we hae nane o' here, except in the matter o' the fruit, and

that the pigs get. Talk o' lambs feeding on green wheat, they'd open their eyes in Teviotdale to hear o' feeding pigs on peaches and apricots. But what wi' the sheep and the bit farm and the dairy, there's full work for all of us the whole year round, and a full house and abundance, and something put into the stocking every year from all hands. And as for Allan's wheat and Jessie's butter and cheese, they'd tak the prize at the Show if it was na owre muckle fash to send them sae far."

"There's nae doot o' Jessie's skill and her eydant hand. I heard a' about what she could do lang or I came to this district," said McCallum, who talked his broadest Scotch to Mrs. Lindsay by way of making himself agreeable.

"And who told you that?" said the mother, who was fond of Jessie, and eager to know who had spread her fame.

"Deed it was a shepherd on Blackwood station, where I came from last, that had been awhile at Branxholm, Bill Rooney by name, that told me about Jessie's cleverness."

"He had very little to do," said Jessie, nettled at the familiar use of her Christian name. "He was the idlest man we ever had in the house; if he had minded his own business better it would have been better for him."

"Maybe so, but folk canna a' mind their ain business when they once get alongside of you, Jessie; but that minds me it's getting late and I must be jogging. Will ye see to my beast, George, and bring him round?" George was rising with no very good grace, when Allan offered to do it; and in a few minutes McCallum took leave of the family.

"A very douce man he is, and a good neighbour; he must be a great comfort to his old mother, poor body. It's a great odds to us having him at Aralewin, from thae upsetting Hammonds," said Mrs. Lindsay.

"He is rather upsetting himself, mother," said Jessie; "so ready with his advice, as if we didn't know how to manage our own affairs, and after all the years that my father has been in the colony too."

"He has great skill in sheep-managing on large stations, no doubt; but I never had any opinion of that new fangled way of dressing that he recommends. Our own fashion has served our turn, though he makes light of it," said Mr. Lindsay.

"He's a regular sawny," said Isabel. "I wonder, Jessie, that you can put up with a slow Scotchman like that."

"Who says I can put up with him?" said Jessie, impatiently.

"What for do you say that o' the Scotch, Isabel?" said her mother.

"It's no that he's a Scotchman, only but because he is a slow, solemn Scotchman, that seems to take his words out and look at them awhile before he says them, that I can't be bothered with him," said Isabel. "I begin to yawn when I see him coming over the hill, and I never stop till he goes away."

"There's nothing like the Scotch for sense," said Mrs. Lindsay, gravely.

"Oh! Scotchmen stand so much on their sense," said Jessie, impatiently.

"Weel, lassie, and it's a very guid thing to stand by; not but what I daresay your father kens his ain business as well as maist folk, and though it might be weel meant, it was scarce necessar to be advising him."

"I am thinking," said Allan, "that Amy and George are wondering where is the great difference between us. English people cannot distinguish between North Country and South Country, and East Country and West Country accent, and lump us all together, and I suppose they look on us all as slow, solemn Scotch people."

"No, indeed ; there is a great difference between Scotchmen and Scotchmen," said Amy.

"Who would compare such a man as McCallum with Allan ?" said George.

"Who, indeed ?" echoed Amy.

"Oh ! my Allan's no that far behind McCallum, though he is young yet," said Mrs. Lindsay.

"Behind him !" said George, "he's ahead of McCallum, any way you reckon the two men ; but now that Isabel's slow Scotchman has gone, and she has waked up, I fear she will become sleepy again, for we have nothing lively to amuse her with. We have these accounts to look over, and I should like it done to-night."

Everything was satisfactory, and more than satisfactory, to Mr. Lindsay ; George had done more for the station than had been expected ; but when he explained what was his great object in sticking to Gundabook, and said that he had won Jessie's consent to marry him, the old man was disappointed. He had wished his children to do better, and McCallum, who had a handsome salary and good perquisites from a wealthy absentee proprietor, and who had, besides, saved money, was, in all worldly points of view, a much better match than George. He liked the young Englishman, and Allan liked him still more than his father did ; but the idea

of an attachment between him and Jessie had never entered either of their heads.

A little impatient exclamation at his presumption was the first reception of his proposal by Mr. Lindsay, and then an enquiry as to how he expected to keep a wife whom he wanted to take from a home of comfort and plenty. George replied that he hoped to take her to Gundabook, and they would work up together, as her father and mother had done before them. He asked for no money with his wife, but he earnestly desired the consent of Jessie's parents. He had no doubt that he would make his way with her by his side, for the thought of her had helped him well through the year.

"And you have done well. I'm no denying that you have done very well, my lad ; but I'm thinking that the notion of what you might get with Jessie has been an object ; but I'm no going to disinherit myself for my bairns to take up with any man that comes about the place. It is a bad example. Isabel, that sneers at a good, sensible man like McCallum, will be taking up with Harry Weir that came in your place, if her sister Jessie, that we expected better sense from, cannot look higher than the like of you."

"I don't think there's much to be apprehended from Harry Weir, father," said Allan ; "a sham-

bling awkward fellow, no more like George than a cart-horse is like a racer. But you must hear what Jessie herself says. People cannot always be equal in means when God has fitted them otherwise for each other."

Although Hugh Lindsay was vexed and annoyed at the affair, he was a just and upright man; and when Jessie told him how strong her attachment was, and that she never could marry the man of her father's choice, or anybody but George, he felt that she must not be thwarted. Old memories of a courtship among the braes of bonnie Teviotdale, where there was far less chance of worldly prosperity for the pair of lovers than now opened for George and Jessie, came over him. Jessie had never looked so like her mother as when she declared the state of her heart. George's account of the circumstances of his family in England carried some weight. A Scotchman always appreciates the fact of having come of respectable people, and the letters George showed bore strong evidence of that.

So that when Hugh Lindsay broke the news to his wife he was disposed to soften matters, and to be a little impatient with her for making the very objections he had offered, and which had been overruled.

The parents loved and respected their daugh-

ter, and gave in to her wishes handsomely, so that within three months after they had been consulted there was a merry wedding at Branhholm. During the interval George had worked very hard to make the house better and more comfortable, and when Jessie took possession of it she was surprised at his ingenuity. She had determined to work for her husband even more than for her father; but she found that there was not so much to do, for she had no dairy, and the household was very small.

She found George a most thoughtful and affectionate husband, who appreciated the happy home she made for him as none but a wanderer could do, and who never by word or look ever hinted to anybody that his wife had taken the initiative; even when Hugh Lindsay had spoken of his presumption he had not defended himself by pleading her declaration.

On the day that Allan Lindsay had completed his twenty-first year, which happened while George was serving his year's probation, his father spoke to him about family matters, and told him how much he felt beholden to him for all he had done, both with hands and with head for the general prosperity. He proposed that Allan should now take a definite position, and have a share in the home station, and in the

farm of which he had been such a successful manager. Although Allan had appeared quite contented to work at home for his father, the old man wished to deal fairly by him, and to allow him to have a share of the profits of the increasing property at his own disposal. He had never seen any good come in the long run from keeping young men in the position of children, however useful they might be ; and he knew that Allan would meet with many temptations to leave him both by being offered wages, and by the prospect of more adventure and change. Allan was greatly pleased with the handsome way in which his father put the new arrangement.

“ And there's another thing I wanted to speak to you about, Allan, and that is about Amy. You well know that she is like a daughter in the house, and that whatever she wants she may have it, just like Jessie or Isabel or Phemie ; but she does not just belong to us, and I'm thinking that when she grows older and bigger she'll want to go to push her own fortune, which by all accounts she's well fitted to do. McCallum was saying that the governess at Mr. Braddin's station where he was at the North was not fit to hold the candle to Amy for the Scotch tunes and the Irish tunes she plays ; and in other things,

too, she's had a by ordinary education, as no doubt her father was the man to give it. Your mother has said, and I mean to stand to it, that she should have share and share alike with your sisters; but yet I fancy she would feel more independent, and there would be less chance of her being wiled away from Branhholm if she had a regular sum by the year for her services. It's a great saving to me to be able to keep Isabel and Phemie at home, and I think the house is blither with them too; so if you and Amy could settle what it was fair for such a young thing as her to get, I would like it better than the way things are going on now."

"I think that of all the family I am most indebted to Amy," said Allan.

"That's true, and I keep that in mind too; but now you are working on your own account you may be able to pay her back somehow or other. You're both young, but wait a bit; and in the meantime you'll speak to Amy and tell her what I mean."

"It is just like your honest straightforward self that you'll take no advantage of my work, nor of that of the stranger who was thrown upon your charity," said Allan.

Amy was astonished to hear that Mr. Lindsay thought her services worth money; but

when the point was insisted on, she, with Allan's help, fixed a very moderate sum as sufficient remuneration, and she felt rather important at the idea of earning her own livelihood at fifteen. She had sometimes difficulty in maintaining discipline with the tall girls who were her ostensible pupils; but Allan and Jessie supported her well and they learned more than the younger ones. Jessie had had a new light thrown on the subject, and worked with a steadiness that surprised Amy for all the year that George Copeland was absent. Indeed up to a certain point her success was greater than Allan's; her work was less faulty, though less brilliant and less ambitious. It certainly satisfied George Copeland, and the letters she wrote to his father and mother first on the engagement between them being ratified by her parents' consent, and afterwards at Gundabook, were so well written and so admirably expressed, that no one could have supposed that they came from a girl whose childhood and youth had been spent in the far bush, and her whole life in constant unintellectual labour. George's mother got her letters by heart; she wrote the most affectionate answers to the beloved daughter-in-law, who had won back her son to hope and self-respect, and every month both

Mr. and Mrs. Copeland urged more strongly the propriety of George's return to help his father with the farm, for neither of his brothers had ever liked it, and indeed neither of them could get on with their father. Charles Copeland had gone into business as a seed merchant in a neighbouring town, and had married a rather showy young woman, who, however, had no money. Tom had married better with regard to means; but his wife was sickly and a great care to him, and he was settled at a great distance as a jeweller in a large manufacturing town. It had cost a lot of money to set up both sons in business; indeed George had cost them less than any son they had. The three daughters were all married; the Copelands were (apparently) a marrying family. They had hoped that the eldest daughter might have remained with them, for she was the last to go off; but her fate came upon her in the shape of a fair-spoken commercial traveller, a friend of Tom's, whom he had introduced to his parents to lead to this sad result. So that the old people who had brought up six children saw themselves deserted now in their failing years, and they turned longingly towards their eldest son and the unknown daughter-in-law, of whom they had a strong conviction that she would prove the best of all those introduced by marriage into the

family. They recollected that George, though he had his faults, had the best temper of the three lads; and now that Mr. Copeland was getting past his best, an active son, who had learned wisdom from experience, would be invaluable at Millmount.

While the husband and wife were debating as to what answer should be given to the last urgent appeal, they had visitors—expected and welcome visitors—at Gundabook.

It was leisure time at Branhholm, and Allan had offered to take Isabel and Amy for a long ride and a fortnight's visit to George and Jessie, for Amy was now a good and fearless rider, and Isabel had ridden on every sort of animal and in any sort of fashion from the time she was six years old. The very first money Allan Lindsay had that he could call his own he had devoted to the purchase of the handsomest side-saddle, riding-habit, and hat that could be got in South Australia as a present to Amy. She had accompanied Jessie and Mrs. Lindsay to Adelaide when they were buying Jessie's wedding clothes, and what to Mrs. Lindsay was of more consequence than the clothes, the *providing*, which it behoves every bride to take home with her to her husband's house. The worthy old lady had not been in Adelaide for ten

years back, and nothing of less consequence could have made her take the fatigue of the journey. But she did not think Jessie was a judge of house linen, or napery (as she called it), and Mrs. Robert Lindsay was an English-woman, and could not be expected to know anything of what was needed, so that department of the business she must see to herself. And certainly she did it very thoroughly, only she bought twice as much as Jessie thought she needed. "Things are made so much flimsier now-a-days," Mrs. Lindsay would say, giving the linen an impatient tweak, "so ye behove to have the larger stock in the house."

Amy went in partly to give Jessie the advantage of her taste in choosing, and partly to get her riding habit properly fitted on. It was handsomer than Isabel's or Phemie's; but the girls were not jealous of her superior equipment; they were very fond of her, and besides, whatever Allan did he had a good right to do, and after all the pains she had taken with him, it was a pleasure to him to give her something. She looked better in the riding habit and on horseback than in any other dress or in any other circumstances. She was still slight and probably would always be so, but her figure was finely proportioned, and her slenderness did not betoken any delicacy of

constitution. Her eyes did not appear so large now that her cheeks had rounded out and looked rosy. She did not take on the large broad freckles so common with fair-complexioned people in so hot a climate, but she had a little of the natural browning which a healthy girl cannot escape who lives much in the open air in Australia, and a curious eye might perceive a few dark small freckles across her nose and the upper region of her cheeks. But she was beyond question the beauty of the district, and if it had not been a thing generally understood that she was to be married to Allan Lindsay when she was old enough, she would have had a great deal of admiration in spite of her youth. Even with that understanding there were more than one or two callers who made a convenience of Branhholm hospitality in order to have a look at the handsome English girl, half daughter and half governess, whose father's death had left her no better friend than old Hughie Lindsay, as old colonists still called him, in spite of his years and his means. Mrs. Hammond's conduct had been more than a nine days' wonder in a thinly-peopled district where wonders were scarce; her name or Amy Staunton's name could never be mentioned without a reflection on her stinginess and her pride.

Mrs. Lindsay had been half amused and half sorry to see how Louis Hammond parted from Amy. "Only calf love," she observed to her husband, "but the laddie feels it mair than his mother would just like." Louis kept up a regular correspondence with Mr. Lufton, ostensibly about horses and kindred topics, but he always made particular enquiries as to the family at Branhholm, and especially about Amy Staunton; and Mr. Lufton, who felt a little tender in that quarter himself, had no objection to give any reasonable amount of information. Louis had felt too jealous of Allan Lindsay to ask him to correspond with him, but he considered Mr. Lufton an old fogey who had been refused by ever so many young ladies to Louis's certain knowledge, and therefore could be no dangerous rival. Louis was determined to return to the colony as soon as his want of success had convinced his father and mother that he was fit for nothing else, and the recollection of Amy Staunton was interwoven with all the memories of the sunny South Land which he loved and regretted so much.

CHAPTER XII.

A PEEP AT BULLETIN AND RICHLANDS.

MR. LUFTON had had some information with regard to the projected journey of Allan, Amy, and Isabel from Branhholm to Gundabook, and they had not been far on their way when they met him. He came to press them to make his house a resting-place for one night, as, though it was a little out of the direct road, a night's lodging for ladies was a thing to be manœuvred for, and he would be only too happy to return in some small measure the great hospitality he had often received from the Lindsays. Mr. Prince, the former tutor at Mr. Hammond's, was on a visit at Mr. Lufton's station at Bulletin, and he thought the young people would like to see him. The invitation was cheerfully accepted by them. Isabel in particular was very anxious to see the house that so many young ladies had declined to share with such a gentleman as Mr. Lufton. It

was a short stage of their journey, but they could make up for it afterwards.

On their arrival they found that they were not the only visitors. A party of wandering photographers had been making a bush tour, stopping at each station and taking views and portraits at every resting-place. It was the first time that the art had penetrated so far, and consequently the artists had met with the most hospitable entertainment and obtained large orders in the district. Mr. Lufton was delighted to see them; he had long wished for a faithful representation of his primitive dwelling to send home to his relatives in England, and he rode hastily forward when he saw the apparatus standing in front of his house to welcome the proprietors of it. When the photographers saw the party approaching they were greatly struck with the beauty and grace of Amy Staunton as she appeared on horseback.

"There never could be a better picture than that would make," said the elder of the two. "Let us take, at least, this young lady on horseback; the horse, too, is a pretty creature, and the *tout ensemble* will be beautiful. All bush ladies should have at least one portrait taken on horseback."

"Oh! Allan," said Isabel, "is not this a

chance? Let us be taken now all of us, and leave our likenesses with Jessie; she will be so pleased to get them."

"That is to say if they are finished in time," said Allan; "but I think it a very good opportunity."

"It must be done," said Mr. Lufton, "and done at once." So the apparatus was adjusted, and the likeness of Amy taken on the spot.

"It should have been taken at Branhholm, though," said Allan, a little disappointed, "just by the willow-tree, instead of here on this bare plain, with only two scraggy gum-trees in the distance; but oh! it is very like you, Amy. We must have more than one for Jessie now that it is so successful. I must have one for myself."

"And of course I must have one," said Mr. Lufton, "as it is on my premises that it is taken, and those two scraggy gum-trees, as you irreverently call them, are my especial landmarks."

"I wonder you don't plant," said Allan, while Isabel was settling herself for the important operation. "I'm sure you could have as fine a garden as we have, and as handsome willows too if you made use of your water privileges."

"Then you know you could always have a

willow to hang your harp on," said Isabel, saucily; "it would be so convenient."

"You've spoiled it now," said the photographer; "did not I tell you not to speak or move till I gave you leave?"

"I could not help it," said Isabel; "I'll do better next time. But, Allan, you must tryste them to come to our place, and I hope my father and mother will get taken as well as the house; only I doubt we'll not be home to urge it. Write a letter to send by them," continued Isabel. "I suppose I've spoiled this one too, but it came into my head."

A third attempt was more successful, though it was not by any means so striking a picture as Amy's. "It will do," said Allan. "I think your Prince Charlie is rather better than Amy's Brownie; but that's maybe because one does not look so much at the horse in this picture."

"As a work of art," said the photographer, "I never did anything so much to my liking as that. I quite congratulate myself on the idea, and I think I have done justice to my subject."

Mr. Lufton declared that both idea and execution were admirable; he had never seen Amy look so charming before. After all it was only brother and sister attachment between her and Allan. She spoke of the beautiful present he

had given her very frankly, and was delighted to see how well the habit and hat came out in the photograph. Indeed, she seemed more engrossed by the likeness being carried out in these things and on Brownie than by the representation of her own face, which was more interesting to her friends.

Then Allan got his portrait taken, and last of all Mr. Lufton, and as a final proceeding the whole party was photographed, with Mr. Prince standing at the door to welcome them to Bulletin Station. The derivation of the name Mr. Lufton hoped would be lost in the spelling he had given it, for he had tried hard, but ineffectually, to change it altogether; but in old time there had been a precious waterhole close to the site of the house, and some kind Christian had fastened an old soup-and-bouilli tin (which had been emptied, perhaps, in the Katherine Stewart Forbes, or some such early-dated colonial arrival) to a saplin that grew near by a strong piece of twine.

The waterhole and the bouilli-tin had been a landmark on the overland route from New South Wales when the country had been first stocked, and many a pipe had been smoked and quart-pot of tea boiled near those scraggy gum-trees by the rough-and-ready overlanders in old times.

The name, therefore, was so pertinaciously adhered to after the original cause of it had long been worn out, that all Mr. Lufton could do was to alter the spelling, and his mother and sisters at home thought it rather a euphonious and almost classical name compared to others in Australia that they had heard mentioned.

Mr. Prince, since the departure of the Hammonds, had led a wandering life among the neighbouring sheepfarmers, who were very glad of the company of an idle educated man who liked a little sport, and who could take a hand at picquet or whist in the evenings. Mr. Prince had heard a good deal about the Lindsays and their guest, but had never happened to meet them before. He was struck with the tall, handsome, powerful young Scotchman, with his capacious forehead, his gracious expression, and his great natural dignity. If Amy had improved in her appearance since her arrival at Branzholm, Allan had also gained much. As his mind had opened and his thoughts had been directed to other things than the daily work which he still did faithfully and well, his expression had softened, and his whole countenance and bearing had become less countrified. But Allan always looked best at home in his own house among his own avocations; and now when Mr. Lufton was

full of the little attentions of hospitality to his fair guests, pressing upon them every sort of refreshment, and sure that they were dreadfully tired; and when Mr. Prince, who had been captivated by that indescribable air and manner which he had seen once in his life and suffered from too, eagerly entered into conversation with Amy about her father and his writings, and books, and publishers, and particular editions, Allan sat in the background with nothing to do, and nothing to say.

He had hitherto been the only person to whom Amy had talked of her father. It had been to them a sacred subject, approached reverently and tenderly; but here was this stranger making common talk of it, quoting a passage now and then, shewing the delicate sense of humour, the playful and exquisite wit, the harmless satire that the old *Palladium* critic had been noted for, and Amy did not seem hurt or displeased, but, on the contrary, enjoyed it. Mr. Lufton grew more animated than Allan had ever seen him before. Mr. Twyford, the elder photographer, if he did not know much of books, had an extraordinary memory for personal anecdotes, chiefly about well-known colonial people. No name could be mentioned about which he had not a good story to tell, and he told it pointedly and

tersely. Amy enjoyed spending an evening with a scholar like Mr. Prince, and Mr. Lufton was very pleasant in his own house, and the photographers were new people to her. She recollected Mr. Hubbard's scorn of photography as a mere mechanical art, and was surprised to see so much love of nature and artistic feeling in those who practised it. Above all, she enjoyed the fun of her new situation, and laughed very heartily at all the jokes she heard. Wit and humour were not the specialities of the Lindsay family; they were good-humoured and clear-sighted, but they were not ready in repartee, and scarcely understood it when they heard it. Isabel had more turn for saying smart things than the others; but her wit had been looked on as rather impertinent, and was not encouraged in the family. But on the other hand there was an atmosphere of sincerity and good will in the household that many more polished homes could not boast of. After the first week Amy had no fear of offending any one—she never needed to hint at anything she wished—they did not understand hints—but the more plainly she spoke the better they liked it. Allan wished to learn to speak well, and asked her to tell him whenever he made a mistake or used an ungraceful Scotticism, and he never was offended with her for pointing out

his errors. She had lived in such immunity from censure since her father's death, her opinions were always so much deferred to and her actions always considered so right and proper, that she wondered if she had not grown brusque and awkward and abrupt in her manner, and thought she could perceive if these strangers thought so. But when do youth and beauty and high spirits fail to give perfect satisfaction to an admiring lover like Mr. Lufton, or to a listener like the unsuccessful scholar, or to artists of any sort ?

It was only on Allan's brow that there was a slight cloud. Isabel was delighted, and could put in an observation now and then, but Allan was silent. At last Mr. Prince expressed a regret that he had never seen Branhholm and the irrigation that Louis Hammond had spoken so much of, and asked Allan how he had managed to make so small a stream of such great service, and that started the young Scotchman on a theme that he understood both theoretically and practically, and he tried to show Mr. Lufton at how little cost of money he could make as fine a place of Bulletin.

"Where is the use of it?" said Mr. Lufton. "All the improvements Mr. Hammond made are thrown away, for he has left the place, and the overseer cares nothing about the look of it.

Perhaps if your sister had taken pity on him instead of on Copeland, the garden might have been kept in order, but it is now a wilderness of weeds. It is a fine place, however; don't you think so, Miss Isabel? and he's greatly in need of a housekeeper. I hear McCallum has not given up visiting at Branhholm."

"It's not me he comes to see I can tell you, Mr. Lufton. He always preaches to me that I'll never fill Jessie's shoes, and I certainly have no wish to take up with old ones that she has rejected. Mr. McCallum wearies me to death, but I'll say that for him, that he wears the willow for a decent length of time, and Jessie may feel complimented."

"Then is it Miss Staunton," said Lufton, "that is the object?"

"Can a man not come to have a chat with my father or mother but Amy or me are to have the credit of it?" said Isabel. "McCallum comes to have the pleasure of missing Jessie, and he likes to take toddy with my father besides, and that is a thing I cannot bear in him."

"Where do you mean to put up to-morrow night?" asked Mr. Lufton.

"Jessie and George went on to Gordon's the first night, but we have lost some ground coming by Bulletin, so we will likely take three days

to our journey, will we not, Allan?" said Isabel.

"What do you say to camping out in the scrub, girls?" said Allan. "You were so set on this journey that you were prepared to run all risks, and you know I have got a blanket for you in case of the worst."

"Oh! you will not think of such a thing as that. I have a great mind to go to Gundabook myself and will accompany you. So we will ask for a night's quarters at my friend's Mrs. Troubridge's."

"That is off our road," said Allan, decidedly.

"Not much, and the road is better, and Mrs. Troubridge is dying to see Miss Staunton. She told me she would be so glad if you could make a halt there when I mentioned your intended journey to her last week."

"It is very kind of her," said Amy; "but I suppose we cannot accept of it, can we, Allan?"

There was a little tone of regret in her voice. She did not very much like the idea of camping out, and she wished to see some more new people; and Mrs. Troubridge had been very much liked and much spoken of by both Louis Hammond and Mr. Lufton.

"If you wish it very much, Amy, it could be done; only Mrs. Troubridge might be very glad to

see you, and not care for the company of Isabel or me," said Allan.

"Oh! she is not at all like Mrs. Hammond—the frankest, liveliest person possible. She said she should be delighted to see you all," said Mr. Lufton, eagerly.

"Then by leaving a long stretch for the third day we can manage it," said Allan.

"But what of the work we have to do for you," said Mr. Twyford, "if you go away and leave us?"

"You know what I want done. Mr. Prince will show you the best views; but be sure not to take anything unless the weather is favourable. You can have my horses, and ride about the country, and if you like to take a run to Branhholm you can do some work there for Mr. Lindsay before I return, which will be in the course of a week," said Mr. Lufton.

"I wish we were at home to direct where the views should be taken," said Allan; "but I will note down the aspects that you think best, Amy."

"And if there is no chance of your being at home," said Mr. Twyford, "I should like to take a vignette of Miss Staunton to-morrow morning."

"Certainly," said Allan; "the face is too small

in what you took to-day, and as we are not going far, we need not start early."

So the matter was settled. Mr. Lufton was elated that he had this opportunity of introducing Miss Staunton to his best friend, and of showing the young lady the better society that he could introduce her into. Mrs. Troubridge had been an Adelaide belle some ten years before the date of this story, the liveliest of the lively, a most determined and successful flirt. Why, after five or six years of skirmishing with a dozen of hearts, she had finally married a grave middle-aged man like Mr. Troubridge, had been a wonder to all her acquaintances, and especially to all her old admirers. He was not so handsome as several of them, not so clever as most of them, and, though in comfortable circumstances, was not so rich as two or three of those who had either been refused or trifled with. Perhaps the desire to marry and settle down (*se ranger*, as the French say,) comes upon fast young women as it does upon fast young men at a particular epoch in their existence, and the man who steps in at that time is pretty sure of success, however unsuitable he may have been in other respects before the feminine mind is made up. Nothing astonishes men so much as the matrimonial choice made by their female friends and acquaintances, and particularly

in those instances where the choice has been from a wide circle of admirers; and when Miss Orme exchanged a fair amount of balls and parties, combined with frequent opportunities of shopping and familiar visiting, and a house in Adelaide where papa was in easy circumstances and hospitably inclined, and where there was a large and pleasant family of brothers and sisters, for a sheep station in a remote and almost unapproachable district where there were few comers and goers, and for the company of a good-hearted and tolerably sensible but very unromantic husband, every one had something to say about the unsuitableness of the sphere she had chosen.

The cares of a young family were exacting, still Mrs. Troubridge would have ridden about a great deal if there had been any neighbour to visit or any friend to accompany her on her rides. When she could prevail on a sister or young lady friend to come out to Richlands for a three or six months' visit she used to ride with her to great distances, and, after the fashion of the fox who had lost his tail, she used to recommend bush life to her visitor, and beg her to take compassion on poor Mr. Lufton and give her a neighbour. He was only thirty-eight, and though not rich, he was getting on; he was of very domestic habits and very fond of ladies' society.

Mr. Lufton had, however, proposed to two of Mrs. Troubridge's sisters and to three of Mrs. Troubridge's young lady visitors without receiving a favourable answer, and for a short while after each refusal the poor fellow felt as though he was doomed to a life of single blessedness. Apparently he had never come in at the critical time in any young lady's life ; indeed, the objects of his affection were generally girls in their teens, who had no idea of giving up all amusement and society for him. He was little in stature, his hair and whiskers were rather red, and he was a bad dancer. The many refusals he had met with had made him rather a butt among Mrs. Troubridge's circle of acquaintance. That lady's real dislike to the bush was seen through her affected recommendation of it ; and the wish to be a neighbour within twenty-nine or thirty miles of that lady could not compensate for the distance from every other pleasant friend and acquaintance. Still, in spite of so many refusals, Mr. Lufton was desirous of winning a young and a pretty wife, and had never proposed to any one whom he did not consider to be both.

Mrs. Troubridge had heard much of the Rose of Branzholm, and of the beauty and refinement of that singularly planted flower, and would have welcomed the whole family of the Lindsays to

her house for the sake of seeing the only person about whom she could tease Mr. Lufton since her youngest sister's marriage.

When she saw Amy she was as much charmed with her as Mr. Lufton had expected ; she received her with the most cordial hospitality, and spoke frankly and kindly to her friends. Mr. Troubridge, who, after Mr. Hammond's departure, had been very glad to call at Hugh Lindsay's on his way to or from Adelaide, was pleased that they would take advantage of his house on their long journey, and entered into a conversation with Allan about some pastoral rights he had that some one was interfering with. He knew if there were young ladies in the house there was no getting a word of sense out of Mr. Lufton, and he was glad to bring out the Government regulations and to explain the boundaries of his run to a shrewd fellow like young Lindsay, whose opinion on the subject was at any time worth twice as much as Lufton's.


When Mrs. Troubridge first saw Allan's tall figure and handsome, intelligent countenance, she thought her neighbour's chance was a small one, but again when she saw Allan absorbed in that stupid pastoral dispute of Mr. Troubridge's with that fellow Crabtree, and looking, as she thought,

clownish and awkward, while Mr. Lufton was giving out the same small talk which he had before presented to five in her hearing, but which to Amy was quite new and original, for she listened with apparent pleasure, she thought his star was at last in the ascendant. A child, to be sure!—Lufton had always liked chits in pinafores;—but a lovely child, an author's daughter, and a very charming musician. She would be a delightful neighbour as Mrs. Lufton if her old friend could win her; the children were taking to her at once. A project entered her head that it would be very nice to get Miss Staunton to come to her as a governess and companion. Though Amy was very young, Mrs. Troubridge's children were all under eight, and there could be no doubt that they could learn from her all they required to know. This would rescue the poor girl from the Vandals amongst whom she had been thrown, and also give herself a permanent and pleasant companion, and Mr. Lufton great opportunities for seeing Amy beyond what young Lindsay could have.

Amy liked Mrs. Troubridge's manner very much. It was new to her to be a little fussed over—to have a practised and tasteful hand adjusting her collar and assisting her to arrange her hair. And when Mrs. Troubridge followed

the girls to their room for the night to see that everything was comfortable for them, there was a nicety about the arrangements that was different from things at Branhholm, though they were greatly improved since Amy's first introduction there. After Isabel, who was tired and sleepy, had gone to bed, Amy, who was tired and excited, sat up a little, half undressed, while her hostess spoke to her about her father and his writings. Books were the only amusement that Mrs. Troubridge had in the bush; she certainly read the lightest and trashiest of literature; but even novel reading gives one the character of having a somewhat cultivated mind in remote country districts. She offered Amy any number of green, red, and yellow volumes to read, and Amy thankfully accepted the offer. Then she glanced, but not unkindly, in an under-tone at the uncongenial household into which Mrs. Hammond's inhospitality had thrown her. Amy gave a little sigh; old trains of thought had been awakened during the last two days, and the idea that she would never be able to lead such a life as her father had meant for her struck sadly on her heart.

Next Mrs. Troubridge made her proposal that she should live with her as a friend, but at the same time receive a salary for teaching her three



little ones. Amy started to full consciousness when she heard this—the kindness, the generosity, the forbearance, that every one at Branhholm had shown her, pressed upon her grateful heart. Did any one really love and respect her father's memory or her father's writings as Allan Lindsay did? Could she be as much loved, as useful, and as independently situated anywhere as at Branhholm? Mrs. Lindsay's motherly care might not be so demonstrative, but it was as real as Mrs. Troubridge's could be.

"I cannot leave my good friends; indeed, I have no wish to do so," said Amy.

"But you have been so differently situated, and you are completely buried there," said Mrs. Troubridge, forgetting that her home was more remote from civilization and more dull in many ways than the stirring household of the Lindsays. "My children would be so fond of you, and you would feel more independent."

"I scarcely think so," said Amy. "You cannot tell how good they all are to me; and as for salary, Mr. Lindsay insists on my taking one from him."

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Troubridge, who had not thought that the close-fisted Scotchman would have been so liberal. "That, perhaps, alters the case."

"No, it is not that; but I cannot leave my friends. You must not press me to do so ungrateful an action," said Amy.

"I shall not say another word about it; but I must have a visit from you soon. I will call on Mrs. Lindsay after you have returned, and persuade her to let you come to Richlands for six weeks; it will be a change for you, and I shall enjoy your visit of all things. You agree to that, at any rate." And Mrs. Troubridge kissed Amy affectionately, and bade her good night.

The weather on the following morning looked lowering; the air felt thick and oppressive even at the early hour they took for their start. Mrs. Troubridge thought they should delay their expedition till they saw how the day was going to turn out; but they knew they had a long stretch for the horses, and thought they had better rest at midday. A great part of this day's journey lay through a most particularly Australian and very ugly and barren tract of land. Allan knew as much about Bay of Biscay land, about various kinds of scrub, and about honeysuckle country and tea-tree swamps as Lufton did, and his surmises about the quality of the soil and the hopefulness or hopelessness of its ever being able to carry a paying number of sheep were quite as reasonable and

more scientific than those of the elder Australian. He also watched the weather warily, and looked well to the horses, and the girls felt that they depended on his care on this day, though on the former Mr. Lufton had been more full of little attentions. But when they got into the mallee scrub the dreariness of the journey and the threatening appearance of the sky depressed the party. Mile after mile they went on in a narrow track bounded on each side by a scrub too high to see over, and too dense to push through, the dull, dead-alive green of the leaves looking duller than ever against the grey sky.

"If the station Jessie and George are on is at all like this," said Amy, "I do not wonder at his rejoicing at the sight of the vineyards and wheat-fields at home."

"Oh! it is not so bad as this; no, nothing like so bad. It is opener and better watered, though not so well watered as we could wish," said Lufton.

"Is all the back country in Australia like this?" asked Amy. "Is it only near the coast that you have good land?"

"Oh! there is good and bad all through, but the interior is all too dry. A great deal can be done by stocking and well-sinking, but this can never be such a country as the United States," said Allan.

"Why not?" said Mr. Lufton, waxing patriotic. "I don't think there is better land in the world than that you have round Branhholm, or I have at Bulletin."

"Very likely," said Allan; "but with so little rain, such a want of navigable rivers and of coal, it is impossible that we can ever rival America."

"I never expected such an admission from you, Allan," said Mr. Lufton, reproachfully, "after the lecture you gave me about not making the best of Bulletin."

"Perhaps it is one of our advantages that we have this dry climate to fight with," said Allan. "Things would be too easy for us if we had twice as much rain, and perhaps the climate would be less healthy."

"But you do not deny that Australia is a very good place? I don't think you have any cause to complain of it," said Mr. Lufton.

"No, indeed," said Allan; "but what I meant was that we never could have so large a population here as in Europe or America. The great bulk of the land must be kept in pasture; some of it, such as this, is not fit for pasture at all. The English price of wool fixes the point at which sheep-farming ceases to pay, and I suppose

ere long the English price of wheat will determine how much wheat shall be grown."

"I wonder what is to determine the point of our halting-place," said Mr. Lufton. "There seems an opener piece of country right ahead, where the horses could pick up something."

"We had better stop there and have something to eat. It is well that Mrs. Troubridge supplied us with so much cold tea, for there is so much wind here, that if we attempted to light a fire, to make fresh tea, we should set the whole country in a blaze. I am sorry for you, Amy, because you dislike cold tea so much. That is one bush taste she has not acquired, Mr. Lufton."

"Can we not manage to boil a little water in the billy you are carrying, Allan, and make some tea for Miss Staunton?" said Lufton, when they had alighted, and hobbled the horses, and taken out their provisions. "See, here is a pretty clear space. You can watch on one side, and I will guard on the other. There is no risk of fire when people are looking after it."

"Don't take all that trouble for me. I can drink water. I do not really care about tea," said Amy.

"But I know you do, and we can manage it," said Mr. Lufton.

"I do not think we can; the wind is too strong, and the risk too great," said Allan.

"Nonsense, Allan. None but the brave deserve the fair; and for the sake of Miss Staunton's tea, you will see how I can encounter all risks;" and Lufton began to clear a spot for his fire, and gathered some dry brushwood to light.

"Don't," said Amy; "if Allan says it is not safe, I am sure it is not."

"If Allan has no pluck that is not to prevent me from having it," said Lufton, persisting in his intention. Now was the time to show Amy that the devotion of a lover like himself was something far beyond the brotherly and cautious kindness she met with from Allan. But when he had lighted the fire, he found that the young Scotchman had spoken truly. The wind increased in force, and shifted from one quarter to another, and it needed the exertions of the whole party to keep it from spreading; the danger grew more imminent every moment. Fortunately Isabel Lindsay was not troubled with nerves, and Amy kept hers in tolerable check; but long before the water in the tin vessel, known by the name of a billy, was near the boiling-point, even Mr. Lufton was convinced that it must be sacrificed to extinguish the fire so foolishly and rashly lighted. The precious water that had

been carried for more than twenty miles was thus wasted, and there was nothing left for any one to drink but the despised cold tea. Mr. Lufton's attempt at distinguishing himself by his gallantry had proved a failure, but Amy's good humour under the disappointment made him admire her all the more.

CHAPTER XIII.

BUSHING IT.

"If we don't get to Gundabook to-night we will be badly off for supper, and there is no water to be got that I know of," said Allan Lindsay, after they had finished the provisions they had taken with them. "I don't like the wind coming up so strong. I would fain have allowed the horses a longer spell, but I think we must push on."

"There is thunder in the air," said Amy, in a low voice.

"I hope we will get forward before it comes on," said Allan; "I know you cannot bear being out in it. So, Mr. Lufton, get Isabel's horse and I will mount Amy. Riding habits are very pretty, girls, and you both look very well in them, but they are a great encumbrance at times. Could you not tuck them up a little, so as to leave you more freedom? Keep close

to me, Amy; I know Brownie, and Mr. Lufton does not."

Amy was losing her self-possession at the idea of a thunderstorm coming on; she had never been out in one since the fatal day when she lost her father. Mr. Lufton did not think there was any chance of such a thing; but Allan quickened the pace of the party as much as he thought the horses could bear, and never took his eye off Amy and Brownie. After about twelve miles' journey through a dense scrub, the wind shifted, and the sky became suddenly black, and one distant roll of thunder was heard.

"Let us stop here—let us get down at once," said Amy. "I'll camp here all night rather than ride through the storm that is coming. If you want to go on, go without me, and come back for me to-morrow. Oh Allan, help me off Brownie."

"Why, Amy, there is nothing to be alarmed at," said Allan.

"There really is not," said Lufton; "there will be little or no thunder and it is very distant."

"But I am alarmed—unreasonably alarmed—do let me get down."

Her piteous pleading had no flinty hearts to move. Though all the rest of the party were

very anxious to reach Gundabook that night, and saw no reason why they should not, they dismounted. Amy was in general so reasonable and so accommodating that they knew her terror must be real and great, and they gave way to her and endeavoured to soothe her fears. Allan hobbled the horses so that they could not wander far from the place, and they prepared to spend the night in the scrub without supper, bed, or breakfast, and with the chance of a ducking.

"If it rains hard you will all be drenched to the skin, and there are no hollow trees to take shelter in, even if it was safe on account of the lightning," said Allan.

"And my beautiful new habit will be spoiled, and that will be a sad pity," said Amy. "I wish I was not such a coward, but I cannot venture on horseback again till this is over. There is the thunder again. Oh dear! oh dear!" and she took Allan's hand and clung close to him for protection.

They sat huddled together for an hour, in which the storm continued. There was a little rain, but not so much as might have been expected. Amy rejoiced that her habit was not ruined by the wet. But the night closed over them before she could make up her mind to

mount Brownie again, and there appeared to be nothing to be done but bushing it.

"I don't quite like the idea of the young ladies being out all night without food or shelter. We men think nothing of it, but it is different with ladies, and so near Gundabook as we are—within an hour's ride," said Mr. Lufton.

"A good hour and a half's now that it is so dark," said Allan.

"I am sure that your horse could carry you in an hour, Allan," said Mr. Lufton.

"He might perhaps, but Brownie and Prince Charlie are both tired. However, if you would venture, Amy, there is a little moonlight."

"Oh! no, don't ask me; I don't mind camping out here, but I am afraid of journeying in the dark."

"If I were not as blind as a mole in the dark," said Lufton, "I would think nothing of pushing on to Gundabook and returning with some provisions and wrappings that Mrs. Copeland would be glad to furnish me with, for it is wretched to have nothing but the damp ground to lie on. I know Copeland has a splendid wallaby rug that he would send."

"A wallaby rug ten miles off is likely to keep us very warm," said Isabel, shivering a little in the cold night air. "We will make the best of our

own blanket and dream of the rug. Why, Amy, you are colder than I am."

"I'll ride across at once," said Allan, "George will give me a fresh horse, and I will be back in two hours."

"Oh! don't go," said Amy; "you may lose the tracks, and then where shall we be?"

"You will be where I leave you," said Allan, laughing; "it is where I will be that is the question; but I am too practised a bushman to lose myself in such a track as this. Mr. Lufton, take good care of the girls for two hours, for I will not be longer than that away. I don't think there will be any more thunder or rain."

Amy remonstrated, but Isabel rather urged her brother to go, so that he took his own way, and set off for Gundabook. Here was a most interesting and romantic situation for Mr. Lufton. Two very fine girls, both under seventeen, altogether placed under his protection for two hours and probably for longer; night coming on fast, and absolute silence and seclusion for miles around. He could not have fancied anything happening so congenial to his tastes or so opportune for his hopes.

But he had not been long left in charge when he wished Allan back again. He fancied that it

was because there were *two* young ladies, and that he could have managed to entertain *one*; but it really was the solitariness and the dreariness of the situation that baffled him. Talk very suitable for a picnic party in fine weather with abundance of provisions was felt to be scarcely the kind of conversation to offer to two frightened girls in a dark night in the wilds, who had neither fire nor candle nor supper. He could only say there was no cause for alarm about Allan, which Isabel, as well as Amy, began to express as soon as he had really gone, and try to exaggerate the necessity of providing something more comfortable for them.

"I am sure I wish you had not put the notion into Allan's head, Mr. Lufton," said Isabel. "It is all very well for you to say you would have gone off, when you knew that you would have been of no use; but if anything happens to Allan, I'll blame myself for evermore that I took up your notion."

"Nothing will happen to Allan, except that he'll perhaps get his supper an hour and a half before us," said Mr. Lufton, testily.

"That's a very likely thing," said Isabel, "Allan is not the one to think about his own supper when we are waiting for ours—like an Englishman."

"Englishman or Scotchman, there could be no harm in his taking something to eat while Copeland gets him a horse ready," said Mr. Lufton.

"You may think so, but Allan will help to get the horse for himself; and I am sure I wish he was back here with it. If we had not stopped at Richlands last night, we might have easily got forward before the weather changed," said Isabel.

"Then we should have been obliged to camp out last night in all probability instead of this," urged Lufton.

"But it was a far better night, and we would never have thought of sending Allan away," said Isabel.

"It is rather hard that I should be reproached for obtaining you good quarters for one night, because the weather has prevented us from reaching our destination to-day. I appeal to you, Miss Staunton. Is not your fair friend too hard upon me?" said Lufton.

"The fault is all mine," said Amy; "I am ashamed of myself for being such a coward."

"No, it is not your fault at all, for you begged Allan to stay, and if he were only here, I'd not mind a pin for the night or the cold or anything. Do strike another match and look at the time,

Mr. Lufton. If he is coming at all he ought to be here now," said Isabel.

"I have only three or four left in my box," said Mr. Lufton. "I think you had better not make me look every five minutes. It can do no good, and it will not be safe to be without the means of striking a light in case of the worst."

It seemed a long time after Mr. Lufton had expended the last match he dared, which showed that Allan had been gone for nearly three hours, before the girls heard the tramp of hoofs in the silence, and both of them had been worked up to a great pitch of excitement and alarm.

"I hope you have been keeping up the girls' spirits, Mr. Lufton," said Allan, when he had reached the camping-place, "for I have been longer than I expected. My own horse was tired, and this one felt aggrieved at being taken out at night, and I could not get him to go half so fast as I expected."

"We thought you had missed the tracks," said Amy, "and were very much afraid about you."

"We have been very miserable," said Isabel, "and as dull as we could be."

"I am surprised at that, when I left you in such good keeping. I thought girls could not be dull in Mr. Lufton's company," said Allan.

"I am sure he has not been the least entertaining," said Isabel; "has he, Amy?"

"It has been dull for Mr. Lufton as well as for us," said Amy, apologetically. "I wish I was not so much to blame for the uncomfortable night we are likely to pass."

"Oh! the worst is over now," said Isabel. "Allan has come loaded with provisions and with that beautiful rug; I don't wonder at the horse taking it leisurely."

And under the combined feelings of relief at Allan's return and the comfortable sensations which the food and wrappings gave rise to, the party recovered their spirits. No meal was ever more heartily enjoyed than this supper, so far-fetched and wearied for, though it was groped for in the dark, and eaten in the most unsophisticated manner. Perhaps the solitude had never echoed with such laughter as that with which our young people seasoned their supper. Mr. Lufton recovered his spirits and his temper, and proposed an appropriate toast in a neat speech to their better luck next day, which was drunk in Branhholm wine out of a broken wine-glass by the whole company in succession.

The novelty of the situation kept Amy awake longer than her fatigue. The sky cleared and the dew fell heavily. She watched the moon

set in the west and the stars slowly revolving in the heavens. It was something to recollect all her life, this night in the bush, wrapped in the great wallaby rug with Isabel. It was more like being on shipboard than anything else. She recollected well falling asleep one evening in the tropics on deck, and waking to be startled by the sight of the blue sky and the shining stars; but there she had her father by her side. He had never left her for a moment while she slept. At last with the thought of him in her mind she dropped off to sleep. It was broad daylight when she awoke on hearing a sharp unusual sound. Allan stood near, and she saw he was intent on something. Isabel started up too, and asked what was the matter.

"Nothing particular, only you had better get up, and let us get as fast as we can to Gundabook," said Allan, coolly.

"But there is something particular," said Isabel. "What is it, Allan? a snake? have you killed it?"

"Yes, but not a bad one, nothing to make a fuss about; I knocked it on the head with my heavy whip-handle. I dare say it would have done you no harm, but I did not like to see it so near you. I'll take it away, and you can get up in security, for I don't think either of you like

the look of a dead snake." And Allan carried off the dead reptile.

Mr. Lufton could not help wondering at the promptitude and skill of the blow, and at the light account Allan gave of it. He did not know much of snakes, and was suspicious of all the tribe, but he believed this to be a venomous one.

The expression of thankfulness that passed over Allan's face when he turned to Mr. Lufton shewed that the creature had been really considered dangerous by him.

"I mean to manage better when we return," he said in a low voice; "there must be no camping out in that journey, Mr. Lufton."

It was a hurried breakfast that the party took before starting, more with the idea of not carrying back or wasting the provisions Allan had fetched than from hunger, for they were all eager to reach their journey's end. Now in daylight the few miles seemed no distance at all, and as they went along they saw a great improvement in the appearance of the country. Both George and Jessie had come some distance on the road to meet them, and their welcome was as hearty as they could expect. Mr. Lufton was almost sorry that he had not kept Gundabook, now it looked so promising, and complimented Mr. Copeland on his success.

The Copelands felt Mr. Lufton's visit rather an intrusion, because they wanted a quiet family conclave to discuss the invitation to return to England to help the old gentleman with the farm of Millmount, and, besides, they had a jealousy of Mr. Lufton on Allan's account. Allan had heard the subject of Mr. Copeland's letter hurriedly broached on the preceding evening, and he had himself such strong ideas on the subject of a son's duty by his father that he was disposed to think George should go, though the family at Branhholm would miss him and Jessie greatly.

When Amy had her first opportunity of speaking quietly to Jessie, she told her of Mrs. Troubridge's offer. Jessie saw how favourable such a situation at Richlands would be for Mr. Lufton's pretensions, and eagerly interrupted her by saying,

"But you refused it, though it was very well meant, no doubt. You know they cannot spare you from Branhholm. How would the girls get on without you?"

"That is what I felt, and I said to Mrs. Troubridge that I could not leave you. But yet, don't be angry with me, but tell me plainly if you think it wrong; I do sometimes wish to be among different people. I don't mean Mrs. Troubridge in particular, though she was very

kind, but when I was at Bulletin I met with Mr. Prince, who used to teach the Hammonds, and talking with him brought up so many things to remind me of dear papa. I could not help thinking that if he had lived things would have been so different for me. I do miss him so to look up to. Don't be angry, for I do respect and like your good father and mother, and Allan and you, and all of you, but——"

"Yes, Amy, it is very natural that you should think so. But if you were to go into the world and take your right place, there you might learn to despise the plain homely people you are now at home with."

"No, never to despise them, never! It is only a passing thought, perhaps. I have promised Mrs. Troubridge a visit if Mrs. Lindsay will spare me; she is going to call at Branhholm to persuade them to part with me."

"Mr. Lufton is always talking about Mrs. Troubridge; I suppose he is often at Richlands?"

"I suppose so, but you never saw such a stupid person as he is to travel with. We had such a disaster yesterday because he *would* light a fire, when any one might have seen the danger of it; and at night when we were so anxious about Allan, the only comfort he offered us was, that Allan was staying to take a good supper

with you. It seemed to us as if he never would come back. And of course it was Allan that killed the snake this morning."

"Then you were not very much taken with Bulletin, or with its owner?"

"Oh! Bulletin is not to be compared with Branhholm. I am quite sorry now I had my portrait taken there, especially as Mr. Lufton takes so much credit for it. There are to be views taken at Branhholm, and if possible portraits of your father and mother, before we return."

"Oh! I am so glad," said Jessie, "for I will prize them very much if I go to England; as I am likely to do."

"You going to England?" said Amy with a tone of regret.

"Yes, Mr. and Mrs. Copeland urge it so earnestly that I do not think I can oppose it, as George's heart seems to be for the move. I am a little feared about how I will get on with a strange father-in-law and mother-in-law, for they are set on George and me taking up our abode in the house. And my being both Scotch and colonial will put me at a disadvantage with them, for I will have to learn their ways and to unlearn my own, and you know I am not very notice-taking. But if we have to go I'll do my

best; George thinks there is no fear of me, but his opinion of my capacity is downright extravagant. I'm sure there never was a man easier to please than him, and he gives me credit for it, as if he was the most cantankerous being in the world."

"Are you then really going to the farm—to Millmount, on the Stanmore property?" said Amy eagerly.

"There's no great permanence on these English farms like what my father speaks of in Scotland. George does not think his father has got a lease, but the old Squire does not turn out the tenants so long as they pay their rent."

"But suppose the old Squire were dead, would the young Squire—this Mr. Anthony Derrick that George speaks of—make any change?"

"I don't know; I fancy Mr. Copeland thinks that now he is growing old, the squire would be more likely to keep him on if he had a young active son to help with the farm, and he cannot bear the notion of leaving Millmount."

"Then you may see that young Mr. Derrick; you will be sure to see him," said Amy.

"He does not go much amongst the tenantry, I hear; but then he has been at college, and

abroad, and down to the south of England with his grandfather."

"But you will hear about him," said Amy eagerly. "Do find out for me how he is liked, and his sister too, Edith Derrick: I wonder if she is at all like me."

"Then are you nearly related to these great people?" said Jessie.

"Very nearly; they are my mother's children."

"Your mother's children!—your brother and sister! Why did not you write to them instead of to that aunt who was so profuse in her thanks to that 'dear Mrs. Lindsay?'"

"I do not know that they ever heard of me. All mamma's friends, all Mr. Derrick's friends, and papa's friends, too, were so displeased at her marriage with papa that we never saw anything of them, or got any letters from them. But Mrs. Evans came to see papa after mamma died, and that is the reason I wrote to her."

"George says he heard no ill of young Mr. Anthony," said Jessie, thoughtfully; "but if I see him I'll tell you what I think of him."

"I wonder if I ought to have written. I do not feel as if I could do it now; but if you could in some way or other mention my name and who my father was before him, you could discover,

I think, whether he had ever heard about me."

"Oh, Amy! you are wearying of Branhholm," said Jessie.

"No, no; if he asks about me tell him I am very happy and quite independent. Don't speak as if I was in any need of anything from him. Though I said I missed something, don't think that I would prefer a life among people who, though related closely to me, are absolute strangers to me, and who might think themselves very generous and benevolent in giving me a home, to the life I have at Branhholm. But I long to get a friendly letter, though it might be a short one, from my brother or my sister; and I should like to be able to write to them, and tell them about dear mamma, and what she said about them when she died."

"And that's all you think is likely to come of it if I go home, and if the Copelands are still at Millmount, and if I see the young Squire, and if I have the chance of speaking about it," said Jessie, thoughtfully.

"A good many ifs," said Amy, "for such a small result. But you can scarcely imagine how I long after a little thing from these unknown relatives. You have your father and mother and

brothers and sisters, and friendly uncles and aunts and cousins."

"And yet all seems nothing to me in comparison with George," said Jessie; "that is to say, if he thinks it right to take me away from them I will not say a word against it, though for my own part I know I'll think long for a sight of Branhholm and of the faces there. I might never see my father or mother more in this world. I'll trust to your letters about them, Amy, to let me know how they keep in health, and how they get on without us; that is to say, if we do go, for you think it no trouble to go into particulars. I am sure George and me laughed as if we'd never stop at your account of Phemie's first baking, and the way she said if the pastry was not light it was well-tasted, and my mother's saying that with the best of flour and the best of butter she would be clever if she made it ill-tasted. And all that about Hughie's shooting, too; none of the others would think it worth while to write these things, but they carry me back to Branhholm, and I'll need them all the more if I leave the colony altogether."

Amy promised to be very minute in her epistles in such a case; and though her mind was strangely preoccupied with the idea that Jessie might soon actually see her brother and sister

she suffered herself to be taken round the place, and looked at the improvements along with the others. Fortified with Allan's opinion, George now spoke as if his going to England was a settled thing; and Isabel was full of indignation at the idea.

"I know what will be the upshot," said she. "Allan will have to come here, and Jamie will be so set up about taking his place at Branhholm that he'll be more tiresome and provoking than ever. Him and me's for ever quarrelling about something or other. Don't look at me so, Amy; I can say it better when I like; but 'he and I are for ever quarrelling' sounds just like a book, does it not, Mr. Lufton?"

"I am afraid you do not stand much in awe of your teacher, Miss Isabel. But a truce to pedantry — what do you quarrel about?" said Mr. Lufton.

"Not much, but then neither of us will give in; we are both rather dour."

"Dour! surely that is not English, Miss Staunton?" said Mr. Lufton.

"It is a capital word, English or not English," said Isabel, "and I read in one of Amy's books that when a Scotch word expresses one's meaning best you should be free to use it."

"I suppose it means stubborn," said Mr. Lufton.

"No, for that is something wicked—a stubborn and rebellious son was to be killed in the Scriptures; but my father is rather dour, and Jamie and me take after him, and Allan's near hand as dour as my father."

"I suppose, then, it means not easily convinced that you are in the wrong, Miss Isabel," said Lufton, who began to find that this young Lindsay was lively and agreeable.

"Something like that. It's not easy to get a notion into our heads, and it's far harder to drive it out of them. But the provoking thing about Jamie is that he never will get angry though he is so aggravating, and the more I speak to him the worse he grows. Allan and Jessie are the only ones that know how to manage him, and they'll both be gone from Branhholm soon, it's likely. I wish George and Jessie would consider *our* father and mother a little, and not be so much taken up with *his*."

"It is the way of the world," said Mr. Lufton; "you'll do the very same when you are married—just what your husband wishes."

"No; just catch me doing that! I mean to have every bit of my own way then," said Isabel.

"Oh! it's very fine talking beforehand, but

you know you must promise and vow to obey, Miss Isabel," said Mr. Luften.

"No, indeed! I'll get a good-natured minister like the one that married my father and mother. He always left out the word 'obey,' for, as he said, he did not know what bargain the couple had made between themselves, and he saw no good in interfering with it; and, what is more, he thought that if the wife was willing to obey, and the husband could make her do it, she'd submit to his orders whether she promised to do it or not, and if she had made up her mind to the contrary, all the vows under heaven would not make her submissive. That's what I call a sensible man! he gave plenty of good advice and cautioning at weddings and christenings, my mother said, but he neither questioned folk too hard nor made them promise more than he thought they were likely to perform."

"And the word was *really* left out in the marriage service?" said Mr. Luften, with an Englishman's incredulity as to any latitude being taken in such things by an officiating clergyman. "I shall want more evidence of such a strange exception to the rule."

"It really was," said Allan; "both my father and mother assert the fact."

"Well, with or without the vow, Mrs. Lindsay

is a model wife. I cannot think how she brought you up with such notions of matrimonial duties, Miss Isabel. But if you really want to keep Allan at home I should be very glad to take Gundabook off your father's hands rather than that it should make such a division of your family."

"Now that it is so improved!" said Isabel, who did not want for the family shrewdness; "but you'll have to convince my father, and, as I told you, that is no easy matter, for what he begins he always carries out; and if it were necessary for Gundabook that he should go there himself, he'd go and make no words about it. No; you had better try to drive George Copeland off his notions about England if you want to be a friend of the family."

"Of course if I did repurchase Gundabook I should compensate your father for his improvements; and Copeland has really done a great deal, both for the house and the station."

"He is very handy, George, I'll say that for him, though I've a very black crow to pick with him just now. But even if you offered what you thought a long price for the improvements I don't think you would come near up to my father's notion of what they are worth," said Isabel.

"You ought to think your sister very lucky to

be taken to England. It is the thing that we all aim at. You see how Mrs. Hammond's ambition could not be satisfied in Australia. I am sure, Miss Staunton, though you are saying nothing about it, that you are rather envying than pitying Mrs. Copeland."

"Not for leaving her father and mother," said Amy, roused from her reverie.

"But there are some things to be found in England that you must regret and long for," urged Mr. Lufton.

"Some things; yes, there are many things," said Amy.

"I know there are many things," said Lufton. "My visit to England has been long delayed, but I hope to accomplish it ere long. Every letter I get from home, every newspaper I read, only shows me how much one misses in these wilds."

A little sigh from Amy encouraged Mr. Lufton; there was no doubt that she regretted her native land, and he (Mr. Lufton) was much more likely to gratify her wishes than any one she knew.

The fortnight that was to be spent at Gundabook was abridged, and the stay of Allan and the girls was full of business and cares. Mr. Lufton remained only a few days, and pressed the travellers to take the same route on their return;

but time was precious, and they took the road by Grant's station, which George and Jessie had done.

Mr. and Mrs. Lindsay were greatly disconcerted by George Copeland's change of plans for life. They had hoped, by coming out to Australia, to be able to keep their children near them for their lives, and that had been one main reason for emigrating. The scatterings of Scottish families of all ranks, and especially in Hugh Lindsay's own rank, are far and wide, and often result in lifelong separations. As he had accumulated property in the colony, Mr. Lindsay had felt that there was room enough on his own land for his sons and his daughters; and he dealt fairly and kindly by them all, so that there was little inducement for them to go far from him. But here was another father and mother claiming a son to whom his eldest and his favourite daughter was irrevocably bound, and against whom he had no right to claim her. Little as the old man showed his affection in words, it was very evident that this departure of Jessie cost him a great deal—more even than it cost her mother. She, good woman, had left home and kindred to go to the ends of the earth with him, and would cheerfully do it again with or for him, and she knew that Jessie accepted this trial as one of the con-

ditions of her marriage. Not but what Mrs. Lindsay, as usual, had more to say of the hardships of parting with Jessie than her husband had, but she relieved herself in that way.

As for Allan's going to Gundabook, she had still more objections to make to that than to George's leaving it. Jamie might have a trial there. So long as he was at Branhholm he did not take his fair share of the work, but trusted too much to Allan or to Harry Weir. Besides, Allan was the most skilled with the plough, and with the reaping machine, and had most knowledge about the garden; and if things went wrong at Branhholm that would be worse than if there were losses at Gundabook. George Copeland had given the out-station a capital start, and Jamie was a year and a half older than when it was undertaken. Donald was steady enough, and his wife a quiet, civil body, though not over clean; but better men than Jamie had had no better company. Jamie himself was very willing to go, and there was no occasion why Allan should be sent from work of far more consequence.

The mother's arguments had their effect, and the younger brother went to Gundabook, while the youngest of the family, Hughie, was taken from the school, where his mother said he was

only losing his time, and employed in those departments which Jamie had taken, with a promise that if he did well, and if he wished it, he should be sent back to Adelaide in a year. But Hughie took kindly to the work, and never asked to return to any learning.

When George and Jessie had sailed for London, Amy had many hopes, and fears, and doubts as to whether she was right in trying to remind her brother and sister of her existence; but as many months passed before she could hear at all, and several more before the Derricks came to live at Stanmore, she heard little or nothing except the same indistinct rumours that had reached her before from Mr. and Mrs. Copeland's letters. Gradually she gave herself up to the idea that nothing was ever to come of it, and ceased to speak of the matter even to Allan. It had always been a very distasteful subject to him, and he was not sorry when she dropped it.

CHAPTER XIV.

NOVELS AND REAL LIFE.

MRS. TROUBRIDGE was very much disposed to cultivate the acquaintance of the interesting orphan whom Mr. Lufton had introduced to her ; and although the party from Branxholm had not taken Richlands on their homeward route, as she hoped and expected, she overlooked the slight, and called at Branxholm on her next visit to Adelaide, and accepted of Mrs. Lindsay's hospitality for the night.

She was not so much afraid of compromising herself by visiting her inferiors as Mrs. Hammond had been, and she always enjoyed being in any one's house. Different walls, and floors, and plates, and teacups, from those at Richlands had always an exhilarating effect on Mrs. Troubridge's spirits, and she found that, independent of Amy Staunton, the Lindsays were worth visiting on their own account. She had a frank, rattling

manner amongst strangers, and did not appear to condescend to her host and hostess, so that they did not feel how much she considered herself their superior.

Mrs. Lindsay had a lurking idea that this fair-spoken lady wished still to wile Amy away from Branhholm, and saw some stratagem in the friendly overtures, but it only seemed to make the good woman more original and amusing than her wont; and Mrs. Troubridge thought Mr. Lufton, who had often spoken of Mrs. Lindsay's kindness and motherly ways, had not done half justice to her cleverness and quickness of observation. Hugh Lindsay was shrewd and quiet, Isabel very lively, and Allan wonderfully intelligent, and by no means such a boor as might have been expected, and, what was more than that, he was remarkably handsome. No contemptible rival to the unlucky Mr. Lufton after all, though, true to her old friendship, she determined to further his cause as much as she could, and pressed for an early visit at Richlands from Miss Staunton, which she said had been promised to her.

Mrs. Lindsay received this invitation coldly, but said, of course Amy might please herself.

"The children have talked about you constantly since you were with us that one evening,

Miss Staunton," said Mrs. Troubridge. "I am sure that with your large household, Mrs. Lindsay, you could easily spare me Miss Staunton for a month or six weeks."

"We've had to spare Jessie for good," said Mrs. Lindsay, "and I'm sure I have no done missing her yet."

"Certainly, I quite enter into your feelings; but suppose Miss Staunton and Miss Isabel (Miss Lindsay, I should call her now) would come to keep me company at Richlands for a month, the change would do them a great deal of good. I should like the two together, because they might find it dull. We have splendid rides all round about, and I have no end of books for them to read."

"Yes, but how's the work to get on if both Amy and Isabel are away?"

"How did it get on when they went to Gundabook?" asked Mrs. Troubridge.

"That was a matter of necessity to go to see Jessie, poor thing, left all alone in that far-off region," said Mrs. Lindsay.

"And I am sure she never could be duller than I am. I'm often amused to think how little I say, and how little is said to me, week after week, at home. Nobody believes it, I know, but I am naturally quiet—very quiet, and Mr. Trou-

bridge is the same, and unless we have a friend to wake us up, we get as dull as ditch-water. It really would be very charitable in you girls to cheer us and shake us up a little, and the children would be in ecstasies if you would come. Do, Mrs. Lindsay, give your consent."

"Well, well, we'll see about it," was all the answer Mrs. Lindsay could be prevailed upon to make.

"At any rate I'll leave you the books I promised to lend you, and you can return them in person if you please. When you have finished these I can supply you with others. I have hundreds of novels at Richlands, and I like to do my best for the diffusion of useless knowledge."

"That is a poor thing to aim at," said Mrs. Lindsay.

"Not that I consider novel-reading really useless," said Mrs. Troubridge; "I only contrast it with what is called useful knowledge, which I hated at school."

"So did I," said Isabel.

"And I hate it still," continued Mrs. Troubridge, with charming frankness. "But you know that novels give you great insight into human nature, and I know I have learned more history from novels than from anything else.

Then with regard to manners, I think bush people, who have not seen much of the world, ought decidedly to go through a severe course of novels to learn how people speak and act in different spheres of society. You know we are buried out here."

"You may think you are buried at Richlands, but we dinna consider we are buried at Branhholm," said Mrs. Lindsay, drily. "What with having our bairns about us, and our hands aye full of work, we are baith living and life-like. No that I say anything against an entertaining book at an odd time, but I wou'd na like to put my dependence a'thegither on romancing novels."

"Oh! but we are not all of such a solid character as you are, Mrs. Lindsay; you do not expect old heads upon comparatively young shoulders. I know the young people will enjoy the novels," said Mrs. Troubridge.

And the young people did. Gerald Staunton's library had been very deficient in novels, though rich in poetry, and it was the first introduction of the family at Branhholm to novels on a large scale. No sooner was the first packet read than it was exchanged by Mrs. Troubridge for another, and their ideas were enlarged and their minds opened by the perusal of one work of fiction after another of all colours—green, blue, red, and

yellow—outside ; and of all qualities—good, bad, and indifferent—inside.

Allan Lindsay was at first completely carried away with his new studies, but after six months of excessive novel-reading he checked himself abruptly.

"This will not do, girls," he said to Isabel and Amy, and Phemia, who were, perhaps, as much addicted to the novels as he was, but not so much affected by them. "This is bad stuff to grow men and women upon. Your father did not write books like this, and I am glad of it, Amy ; nor did he read them, I suppose, for he had so few."

"Yes, I think he read them to review them, but he sold all the least useful part of his library before we left, and the novels were bulky, besides, for I recollect they were all in large print."

"Well, he read them as a matter of business, not for amusement ; I am glad of it," repeated Allan.

"I am sure, Allan, you have had great interest and great pleasure in these books," said Isabel.

"Yes, too much pleasure and interest. I am too apt to think that I am the hero, getting into scrapes, and getting out of them ; coming into large fortunes that I have never earned, or earn-

ing them in a rapid dash by all sorts of good luck favouring everything I do—handsome, witty, agreeable, the star of society, and the choice of some lovely heroine—and to forget that I am plain Allan Lindsay of Branhholm, that I have to plough to-morrow, and to sow next month, to prune the vines, and graft the new trees, and to go to Gundabook to lend a hand to Jamie in his busy season, before my own comes on, and to take out the reaping machine next December for the crop that has taken months to grow; everything done laboriously, and the reward following not very close on the exertion.”

“But Allan, you *do* your work, and what matter is it that while you are reading your book, you forget sometimes where you are, and what you have got to do?” said Amy.

“I don’t put so much heart in the work I do,” said Allan. “I don’t feel as if it was of so much consequence.”

“Well,” said Isabel, “I like to be the heroine in imagination. I like to fancy myself as beautiful, and as amiable, and as clever as she is; I like going through all the adventures and escaping all the dangers, and being married to the hero at last, in spite of all obstacles. Don’t you like it too, Amy?”

“Allan says what mamma used to say to me,

she was young, and when I have been laughing myself lately I have felt some compunction; but it is very pleasant. Still, though I go on with the characters, I do not feel as if I were one of them; I am not clever enough to be Jane Eyre, or handsome enough to be any other novel heroine. No; I am Amy Staunton all the time."

"That's what I ought to feel, but I do not," said Allan; "so I think they hurt me more than they hurt you."

"But do not they give you some idea of life and manners out of your own circle?" asked Amy.

"Yes," said Allan, thoughtfully, "some of them do. They carry me into the past, and into the remote as I have never been carried before; but then I have no confidence in their being true."

"And is it not better that we should take an interest in imaginary people than only in our daily work? I am speaking to account for my own feelings, and perhaps to defend them, but not to advise you, Allan," said Amy, musingly. "For instance, if I had continued to live in London

with papa and mamma, just as we used to do before mamma became so weak and ill, knowing few people and living more amongst books than in the world, and somebody had written a novel about such people as you, and described your daily life and your way of thinking, even though it was not exactly true, and things were said in it that none of you had exactly said, and things were done that you might have done if circumstances had been a little changed, it would have been very interesting to me, and to papa too. It would not have done us any harm to have gone with you to the plough, or with Jessie and George to Gundabook, or to have watched your mother's patience with Biddy, or Biddy's wonderful kindness of heart to her poor relations in Ireland, and the effort she makes to save money to fetch them here, while at the same time she can scarcely speak the truth about them or anything else, because she does not seem to know really what truth is. This would have been just as unlike my real life and as unlike the people I lived amongst then as the novels that we are reading now are unlike the life at Branzholm ; but it would have done me good, I think, and not harm."

" But these books are not written like that. Adventure after adventure, murder, bigamy, fraud, and conspiracy heaped up as they never

ain heads, and it is a marvel to me how they ever could get there. For a' it gets printed it canna mak the thing true."

"Mrs. Troubridge says she could not live in the bush without these books; they are her only amusement," said Amy.

"Weel, what does a woman with a house and a husband and bairns want wi' amusement? When a lassie marries she should say good-day to sic things. No that Mr. Troubridge is extraordinary entertaining; but she kenned that when she took him. They say she was a wild ane when he got the taming o' her; a douce sponsible man he looks, but no just the sort to tak a young lassie's e'e. And I suppose you and Isabel behove to go next week to pay your visit that she keeps craiking about in her letters to you, Amy, and you'll see for yourselves what a dull life it is when a young thing takes up wi' a man that might be her father. It's a thing that I have nae opinion o' mysel'," said Mrs. Lindsay.

"And is Mr. Lufton to escort us as he offers to do, mother?" said Isabel.

"No; Allan will go with you. With brothers o' your ain you need be beholden to no stranger for sic service, and as they are no throng wi' the wark at this time he can be the easier spared," said Mrs. Lindsay.

On the whole the result of the visit to Richlands was that both Isabel and Amy were better satisfied with their own home on their return. Mr. Troubridge was a man who never took any trouble to amuse his wife's guests; he liked a good dinner, and a liberal allowance of wine after it, and after his day's work looking after his men and his stock he was more apt to fall asleep in the evenings than to add to the liveliness of the party by conversation; and although Mrs. Troubridge wished to make the girls happy, and was kind to them and talked a great deal to them, the house was not half so cheerful as Branzholm. They heard a great deal about Mr. and Mrs. Orme, Mrs. Troubridge's father and mother; and Miss Orme's own life before she was married, with sketches of several of her admirers, and also those of her sisters, who were now married and settled too; but no amount of leading on would induce her to reveal any particulars as to Mr. Lufton's love

affairs to Isabel Lindsay. Mrs. Troubridge was upon honour there.

If it had not been for a sad event which occurred shortly after the girls had paid their visit they might have thought very little more about Mrs. Troubridge, though they liked the children and found them very smart and amusing. Mr. Troubridge had been complaining of not feeling very well when they were at Richlands, but there was not much the matter, and he was generally so strong and healthy that no one took alarm. But a neglected cold brought on violent inflammatory symptoms, and when medical aid was called in the case was critical and alarming. Within a fortnight of the day when they had last seen him they heard that he was hopelessly ill; and that Mrs. Troubridge was almost distracted with grief and worn out with fatigue. Mr. Lufton had acted like a good neighbour and a true friend, and had done everything in his power to help Mrs. Troubridge. She had no unmarried sister who could come to relieve her, and she sent to Branhelm to entreat Amy to come. It would do her so much good just to look at her. Amy could not refuse such a request, and she hastened to Richlands.

She found Mrs. Troubridge in a state of such bewildering grief that surprised her. Her im-

pression had been that she cared very little for her husband, his tastes and habits were so different from his wife's, and she had been in the habit of saying, "Oh! that is only Mr. Troubridge's opinion," as if that opinion carried no weight whatever. She complained of his not living in Adelaide, which she thought they could well afford to do, and she had a number of grievances larger or smaller, that Mr. Troubridge would never redress, and did not care to hear about.

Amy had been accustomed in her old life in England to perfect sympathy and union of mind and heart existing between her father and mother; and at Branhholm Hugh Lindsay and his wife were of one heart in all things, and he was always looked on as the head of the house, and his opinions and orders treated with respect and obedience. She had felt Mrs. Troubridge's indifferent or opposing manner jar upon her; and now she was astonished at the real grief she manifested. She tried to comfort the widow when death put an end to all cares and efforts in poor Mr. Troubridge's behalf; but she found that her words had little or no effect. Mr. Lufton had never shown himself in such good colours as he did on this occasion; he was so kind, so attentive, so thoughtful; he spared himself no fatigue and gave himself up to his friend's service. Mrs.

Troubridge could now consult her own inclinations as to living in Adelaide; but she seemed to feel a remorse for her grumbling at bush life, and preferred remaining for a time at least with her children at Richlands. And Amy returned to Branhholm a second time with much more regard for Mrs. Troubridge, and for Mr. Lufton too, than she could have thought possible a month before.

CHAPTER XV.

MILLMOUNT.

IN spite of all her husband's encouragement and her own natural fortitude Jessie Copeland's heart beat faster and more anxiously than was agreeable when on her arrival in England they took the train that was to land them at the nearest station to Millmount. They had telegraphed their safe arrival and their purposed journey before they started, so that old Mrs. Copeland was in a fever of impatience. To think of her eldest boy, her handsome George, returning to be a constant inmate in the house after twelve years' absence, was a delightful and bewildering anticipation; but would there not be a little risk in including the Australian wife?

At first the joy of seeing George swallowed up all her curiosity and anxiety with regard to the unknown daughter-in-law, and she held him in her arms for some minutes, without taking her

eyes off his face, as she traced the likeness of the fair slight lad through the changes that had converted him into the strongly-made, handsome, embrowned, and bearded man.

"Oh! the eyes are the same, but there are lines about them that I was not used to see," she exclaimed; "and I can scarce recognise the smile with all that hair about your face; but it is George, my own George. My son was lost, and he is found."

"Yes, it is him really come home in the body, Sarah, in spite of all your forebodings of shipwrecks and unknown dangers. I knew he'd turn up without fail, after he had wrote that he was coming. Ah! George, my lad, you'll see great changes in us too, and in the parish as well," said Mr. Copeland.

"No more than I ought to be prepared for," said George. "Mother looks thin, but still she is just the same in every other respect, and you are a little heavier than you were, father, but as erect as ever. With a horse up to your weight I fancy you could ride to cover as well as any one in the county yet. But let us not be altogether taken up with ourselves. Mother, this is my dear good wife. Let Jessie be a daughter to you."

He put their hands together. The mother

looked for a few moments at the stranger, and met the expression of her kind truthful eyes. She felt that Jessie was to be loved and trusted; she took her new daughter into her arms and blessed her.

Few people look their best after a long sea voyage through hot latitudes, and Mr. Copeland thought his son might have picked up a prettier wife in England. The Scotch accent, too, grated a little on his unaccustomed ears, and Mrs. George had no style with her whatever. But the mother's instinct assured her that George was a happy and a fortunate man. During all the conversation, while her ears were listening for what George had to say and how his father took the news, her eyes were resting complacently on the quiet unpretending young woman who said so little, but that little always to the point. Jessie listened with interest to all the talk of the village and parish matters and farming affairs, appearing to know something of the people, or if she did not, trusting to gather some clue from the conversation, and not interrupting the current of talk with enquiries as to the who, the when, and the whereabouts of each narration. If her opinion was required, or any question asked about Australia which she could answer, she spoke sensibly and properly, and she

charmed both the old people by her intimate and practical knowledge of all sorts of rural matters.

She arranged the pillows on the old lady's sofa (for she was now somewhat of an invalid) not exactly to perfection, for it requires some practice or a peculiar instinct which Jessie had not, amongst her many good gifts, to do that; but with goodwill and readiness to take a hint. She made tea for the family in a little old-fashioned silver teapot set in a little stand—a great contrast to the capacious vessel in use at Branhholm—and listened to the history which Mrs. Copeland gave of it as having belonged to her grandmother. There were many curious old handsome things in the house, showing that the Copelands had been comfortable people for several generations, whereas everything that was handsome at Branhholm was spick-and-span new. Jessie's mother had old stories of the greatness of the Lindsays and the Hepburns in times long past; but her own recollections of early life were of hard living, poor lodging, and little or no furniture in the wilds of Australia, and she fully appreciated the heirlooms and the anecdotes which her mother-in-law told. Mr. Copeland would rather have had the tea-service displayed that he had won in a sweepstakes

with some neighbouring farmers by having the longest-wooled sheep amongst them ; but the old lady had thought George would prefer the old-fashioned silver, without prejudice to showing off the new acquisition after tea, and to the relation of the whole story of the sweepstakes circumstantially by the old gentleman. He had never seen a woman in his life who seemed to know so much about sheep as his new daughter-in-law, or who handled his samples of wool in such a sensible and practical way.

On the following day, when Mr. Copeland took Jessie with her husband over the farmyard, the cattle-pens, and stable and poultry yard and piggeries, she expressed herself so intelligently about all these things that the old man's heart was completely won. Although George had gone a long way for his wife, and had as yet got nothing with her, he had certainly done better than if he had brought home a girl from any English town ; and very few English farmers' daughters now-a-days were, as the old man said, so knowledgable about rural affairs as Mrs. George showed herself. The old gentleman was of opinion that the young women of the present generation were brought up altogether too fine for daily use. Even his own daughters had despised or disliked what their mother had been taught as indis-

pensable parts of female education. No doubt servants had grown somewhat more skilful, so that the things were done; but with the skill had come an uppishness that the old-school farmer resented as an innovation, and the finer ways were more costly than the older and plainer manners of his youth.

He could not perhaps have put his ideas into words, but he felt that it was a pity that almost all domestic employments were dropping out of the hands of middle-class women in England, without much widening of employments of other kinds.

So that Jessie Lindsay's early training to do everything with her own hands made her the more agreeable to the Copelands, and gave her confidence that she might be useful to them. All Mr. Copeland said about Millmount, and the rent and tithes and income tax and other taxes, and the rotation of crops, and the payment of his labourers was exceedingly interesting to Jessie. She liked to hear a man not much older than her own father talk on subjects that had often been discussed at Branhholm in her hearing.

Whether she had been interested in Mr. Copeland's talk or not, she would have tried for George's sake to appear as if she was; but it cost her no effort; she liked it and she understood it; and

this genuine tribute to his conversational powers was more charming than if it had cost her a sacrifice. Elderly people in civilized communities are generally treated with courtesy; but it was a rare pleasure to Mr. Copeland to be listened to with such genuine and unflagging interest and attention.

When the brothers and sisters came to see their returned brother and his Australian wife, they were by no means so prepossessed with Jessie as their parents. She sadly wanted style and polish, her accent was distressing, and her education was limited; but as the old people were delighted with her, they contented themselves with a few hints and a somewhat lofty manner to Mrs. George. She was humble in little things, and took their advice with regard to dress and such matters very good naturedly, so that by degrees they took her into greater favour, and congratulated themselves that so suitable a person had turned up to take care of the old people.

It was, as Mr. Copeland thought, a singular coincidence that on the day when George's first child, a boy, was born, old Mr. Derrick after a long and protracted illness should die. Jessie heard this news with some excitement. Young Mr. Derrick was now the Squire, and being

released from his close attendance on his grandfather was likely to come to Stanmore to reside. But some time elapsed before this took place, and the estate was managed by an agent as before. No new arrangements were made with the tenants, and Mr. Copeland hoped to continue at Millmount for the remainder of his life.

But on one Sunday, Jessie was surprised by seeing the Squire's pew, so long empty, filled by a young gentleman and lady and a middle-aged lady. She looked eagerly for a likeness to Amy Staunton, but there was not the slightest resemblance in either of the young faces to her dear little friend. They might be strangers—she looked questioningly at George. "Mr. Anthony and Miss Edith, and their aunt, Miss Derrick," he whispered to her.

The Derricks were accustomed to be looked at when in church as the most important persons there, so they saw nothing remarkable in the repeated glances which George and Jessie Copeland directed towards them. Jessie could not ascertain whether she liked their appearance or not, there was a heavy look about the brows, and an expression round the mouth that suggested something of bad temper; but, to be sure, the faces were not animated by conversation, and the deep mourning worn by the ladies was severe

upon their style of face. In going out of church the respectful salutation of the tenantry and of the villagers was acknowledged stiffly; there was little relaxation of the countenance accompanying the slight bend of the head. "I don't think I'll like them at all," she confided to her husband. On Sunday evening the young Squire and his family were the subjects of discussion, and Jessie led Mrs. Copeland on to tell all she knew of Lady Eveline Darlington. It was not much, for the Copelands had not gone to Stanmore till after Lady Eveline's second marriage, and they had only heard that it was a low hurried match, which had given great and just offence to the family. They believed that the young Squire's mother was dead many years ago, and that the children she had so cruelly deserted never heard her name mentioned by their grandfather or their aunt who had superintended their education.

Jessie kept her knowledge in the background; only with her husband did she consult as to what would be likely to occur if she brought Amy's relationship forward. George was as doubtful as herself on the subject. He saw a happy life before Amy as Allan's wife, and he was not strongly attracted towards the young squire, and still less so towards his sister. Amy's

own last letters had been rather expressive of a greater shrinking from the disclosure than when she first confided in Jessie, and the husband and wife, after much doubt and consultation, resolved to trust to the chapter of accidents, and only to bring forward the subject if there was a very good opportunity.

CHAPTER XVI.

AN INVITATION FROM A BROTHER.

IT has been remarked by an acute observer that the children of parents who do not love each other are seldom very strongly attached ; and the natural bond between Anthony and Edith Derrick had been also weakened by the very great partiality which their grandfather had shown to his heir, and the equally strong partiality which Miss Derrick felt towards her niece. As the old gentleman had been the most important person in the household, Anthony had always had the advantage during his life-time ; and now, on Mr. Derrick's death, he felt that he was still more indisputably the master. But the old gentleman had been sufficiently liberal to Edith, and although Anthony had come in for all the landed estates unencumbered and improving, the personal property had been equally divided between his two daughters, one married and the other unmarried, and his young granddaughter Edith. His poor

John's daughter should be no worse off than her aunts, and the provision made for the aunt and niece was ample enough to allow them to keep a handsome separate establishment. So long as Anthony was unmarried, however, they considered that it would be good for him that they should live with him, and not altogether inconvenient for themselves, and accordingly, when he determined on going to Stanmore, from which he had been so long absent, his sister and aunt were quite prepared to accompany him.

Anthony, as the elder brother and the young squire, considered that his sister ought to yield to him on every point in which they differed, while Edith, backed by the authority of her aunt Anne, more self-possessed and less sensitive, felt that she was older for a woman than he was for a man, and was never at all disposed to give in.

She knew how to make her brother feel a little incisive remark quietly made; a slight allusion to his want of success at the university, a hint as to the connection of the family with trade, or any mention of a Lady Clara, whom he had met at their aunt Lady Gower's, and who was believed to have refused him, would amply revenge any of his own blunter attacks upon herself.

The Derrick's had not been kept in such ignorance as to their mother as Amy and her friends

supposed. Edith was proud of the connection with the Darlington family, and with the Gowers and Pemberleys ; but Anthony was painfully sensitive with regard to the hasty and indecorous second marriage. He had some recollection of his mother, and he had never got over the feelings of deep injury which her leaving him had awakened in his heart. This feeling had been kept alive by his grandfather, whose resentment had been strong and deep. When the announcement of Lady Eveline's death arrived Anthony Derrick was young certainly, but quite capable of judging for himself ; and he had considered his grandfather quite right in taking no notice of it, and not communicating in any way with the low fellow who had sunk his titled mother into nobody. Of course Mr. Staunton should provide for his own daughter ; it was no business of Mr. Derrick's, or of Anthony's.

Recently, indeed since his grandfather's death, he had seen some cause to modify his opinion. In looking over the papers of the deceased, he had come upon a letter or two of his mother's, enquiring as to her children, and the communication as to her death, not marked, as Mr. Derrick's other letters generally were, with the large "A" for "Answered." He wished to make some enquiries and yet shrunk from telling what connection he

had with Gerald Staunton, and was surprised one day to hear his name mentioned with admiration by one who was considered an excellent judge of literature.

"Not a great author, by any means," said this Mr. Saville; "his books did not take with the public, although they were carefully written, and very correct as works of art. They wanted less hasty reading than this nineteenth century public will give to anything. But as a critic he was unrivalled. No such subtle or exhaustive criticism or poetry, no such true and pointed judgment of fiction, has ever been seen in England since he left the *Palladium*. And his magazine articles on social questions and on philology were admirable."

"Do you know him?" asked Anthony, awkwardly.

"Not personally; he was always a retiring scholar, and did not know his own value. I do not think the *Palladium* knew it till it lost him."

"Can you tell me where this Mr. Staunton is now?" asked Anthony.

"I think he went to Australia and died there, but, as I said, I have no personal knowledge of him whatever. If you wish to know anything about him you should enquire at the *Palladium* office. They are sure to know there."

It was not without some hesitation that Anthony made up his mind to enquire at this office. He did not mean to disclose any connection that he had with the poor hack writer, but he felt as if it was his duty to make some enquiry. The editor of the journal was quite accustomed to such questions being asked, and took them as a matter of business.

"I did not know Mr. Staunton at all. It was before my time that he was on the *Palladium*, but I recollect a short obituary notice appearing in the journal about three years ago, or perhaps not quite so much. It was an accidental death—instantaneous I believe. I'll look over the files and find it for you if you wish for fuller information. It was to Mr. Loder the information was sent, and he is unfortunately out of town, on the continent, in fact; but my impression is that the little girl wrote the circumstances to Mr. Loder—our proprietor, you know."

"And what became of the little girl?" asked Anthony nervously.

"Oh, so far as I know, she fell on her feet. She was adopted by some wealthy Australians—squatters, I suppose—and treated like one of the family. Better luck for her than if she had been left in London."

"Are you sure of this?" asked Anthony.

"I'll enquire of Mr. Loder when he returns, or, if it is at all pressing, write to him—*poste restante*—and get the girl's address, if you wish to communicate with her."

"Oh! no," said Anthony, "I only enquired for my own satisfaction; it really is of no consequence." If Amy Staunton was so well provided for, there was no necessity for his ripping up old sores.

It was with a lighter heart that he left the *Palladium* office. He had got the information he wished; he had not betrayed himself, and he did not need to do anything. He did not tell Edith anything about the information he had received, because there was no saying what use she might make of it; but on one occasion, when he was at Lady Gower's, now an old woman, but as fond of society and of dress and amusement as she had ever been, he heard her mention the name of Gerald Staunton with pity, but yet with a sort of liking too. She explained to Anthony the circumstances which palliated his mother's conduct, and dwelt upon the fact that it was his apparently dying state that had made Lady Evelyn hasten to Gerald Staunton, and compromise herself so that it was necessary for her to marry him. Lady Gower, on Anthony's communicating to her the information he had received with regard to his

half-sister, was as willing as Anthony to believe in the liberality of the unknown Australians, and was perfectly satisfied to leave matters as they stood.

With some relenting thoughts with regard to his mother and his unknown sister in his heart, and with some annoyance at his aunt and Edith's willingness to accompany him to Stanmore, where he would have preferred to be at perfect liberty, Anthony determined to look into matters on the estate, and to see if more could not be made of it than his grandfather had done.

One of the first farmers whom he went to see was Mr. Copeland, and when he was introduced to George and his Australian wife, he naturally felt more interest in them than he could have done a month before. Politeness might have dictated his questions about Australian life and Australian scenery, but Anthony Derrick always spoke of what interested himself, and if his thoughts had not recently been turned in that direction, he would have asked few questions about the great south land. Old Mr. Copeland was pleased to see the kindly interest the young squire took in George and Jessie, it augured well for Millmount being left in the hands of the family. Jessie was pleased, too, to find that Mr. Derrick really was more amiable than she

had thought him. It was a pity he smiled so seldom, for his face was so completely changed when he smiled.

"Perhaps the Squire would like to see some of your views," said Mr. Copeland. "They have brought some good photographs of Australian scenery and Australian friends. Jessie, let Mr. Derrick see them."

Jessie hesitated a little, and it was with a trembling hand that she brought them out on a second and more urgent request from her father-in-law. She was half inclined to select a few and keep back the others.

"Let us see them all," said Mr. Copeland, impatiently; "they are all worth looking at. Here is Branhholm, Mr. Lindsay's head station, Mr. Derrick. We have no view of Gundabook to show you—that's the out-station that George had the management of."

Mr. Derrick turned the different views of Branhholm over and said what was proper about them. "This lady on horseback is not you, Mrs. George; your sister, I suppose?"

"No, *this* is my sister Isabel," said Jessie, pointing to another carte. "This is Amy Staunton, and this here is my brother Allan." Jessie tried to say the name "Amy Staunton" very distinctly. Anthony Derrick evidently knew the

name well ; he changed colour and was about to speak.

"She is a poor orphan whose father was accidentally killed as he was going to be tutor to one of their neighbours, and as she had no friends in the colony, or in the world either, by what I can make out, Mrs. George's father and mother took her home. You have got a much better likeness than that, Jessie, my dear ; let Mr. Derrick see what a lovely girl she is. I never saw a more beautiful photograph," said Mrs. Copeland.

"Would Mr. Derrick like to see it?" said Jessie. "Photographs are seldom interesting to folk that don't know who they are meant for."

"Oh, yes ! certainly, let me see your Australian beauty by all means," said Mr. Derrick, nervously. He could not help noticing Jessie's strong Scotch accent, and observing that she placed the accent of the word interesting on the penultimate. Was this one of the family of wealthy squatters among whom he had heard that his half-sister was so fortunately placed ?

"This is a vignette of Amy, which of course shows her face more distinctly ! but I am very fond of that one on Brownie, it gives her figure and the way she holds her head so well," said Jessie.

At home in his own private drawer Mr. Derrick

had a miniature of his mother taken before her marriage, and except that the expression on the vignette was more lively and joyous, there was almost absolute identity between the faces. Amy's eyes were rather darker, and her eyebrows more defined ; but the likeness was even more remarkable than when it had startled Mrs. Hammond and had prejudiced her against the desolate orphan. Mr. Derrick could not speak ; he looked at both likenesses long and attentively. Jessie and George knew of the relationship, and held their breath till he should say something, while the old people thought he was simply a great connoisseur who was struck with the beauty of the portraits and the excellence of the execution, which was so creditable to Australia.

"I knew you would admire them," said Mrs. Copeland. "Poor child, it is well she fell into such kind hands. Is not she a sort of governess at your father's, Jessie, my dear, getting a regular salary now ? Though she was so young, her father, who was a bookish man, had given her a first-rate education, and she was clever enough to be of great use to Jessie's young sisters."

"And to Allan and me too," said Jessie, quietly.

"When did her father meet with this sad death ?" asked Mr. Derrick.

"More than three years ago. My brother Allan happened to come up to the spring-cart that had been upset, and the body and poor Amy were taken to Branhholm. Mr. Staunton was buried at the end of our garden, and Amy has been like a sister among us ever since."

"It was a shame that the people Mr. Staunton was going to did not take her home; and the English aunt, too, should have done something for the girl," said Mrs. Copeland; "but it was only their loss and your gain."

"What is your address—I mean your father's address—this Miss Staunton's address?" said Mr. Derrick, hesitating and stammering. "I must write to her. She should have written to me when she was left thus. I feel very much hurt that she did not, I cannot understand why she did not. Now, at least, I am my own master and can do as I like. I must have her brought back to England without delay."

Jessie looked aghast at this proposal. What would become of poor Allan, whose life she could not bear to think of as separated from Amy's, if this wealthy and powerful Squire summoned her home immediately? It was so much beyond Amy's own anticipations, and ran so directly counter to Jessie's wishes, that it was impossible to acquiesce in it without some demur.

"Oh! my father and mother and all of them will never consent to part with Amy. I am very sorry indeed that I mentioned her name if you fancy you can take her from them."

"What relation is the young lady to you, Mr. Derrick?" asked Mrs. Copeland, astonished at the young Squire's eagerness and Jessie's reluctant acquiescence. "How can you claim her? I thought she had only that one aunt in England."

"She is my mother's daughter, my half-sister," said the young Squire; "so I have some authority to call her back to England, Mrs. George. Of course I can understand that your family have become attached to her, and that it will cost them some pain to part with her; but that does not lessen my desire to see and to know my sister. My claims on Miss Staunton are paramount, as you must acknowledge."

"Oh, George!" said Jessie, looking at her husband, with tears in her eyes. "What will they all say to me about this?"

"My dear Mrs. George," said Mr. Derrick, not with absolute sincerity, "it would have come to the same thing whether you had informed me on the subject or not. I heard lately through a friend, at least through an acquaintance, that Mr. Staunton had been accidentally killed, and had left one daughter in Australia. I have already

made some enquiries, and ere long would have come to the knowledge of my sister's whereabouts. The result would have been the same, only that the sight of these likenesses, and your expressions of affection and regret, give me a much more favourable impression of my unknown sister than I could have obtained from any other quarter."

"But if you had not got such a favourable impression you might have been satisfied with writing a kind friendly letter, offering help if she needed it, and not been so set upon having her home," said Jessie.

"No; I think under all circumstances I should have written for her. You say she is educated, but she must have been very young when her education was broken off." Mr. Derrick was ignorant of his sister's exact age and ashamed to confess his ignorance.

"She was only thirteen when her father died."

"And now she is sixteen or seventeen," said Anthony, who could work that little sum. "There is no time to be lost, I must write by the first opportunity. You know more about the Australian mails than I can be supposed to do."

"The Southampton mail has gone for this month, but the Marseilles mail closes the day after to-morrow," said George.

"Would it not be better to think over it and write next month," said Jessie, who thought the matter was altogether too suddenly gone into.

"I am certain that my mind is made up," said Anthony Derrick, taking out his note-book. "You will allow me to take down the address, and as a particular favour I beg that you will let me have those two photographs to show to my sister and aunt, and afterwards to get copied for myself. I wish to compare them with a miniature I have at home; the likeness is perfectly wonderful. Neither my sister Edith nor myself have any resemblance to our mother, but this is her very image. And photographs never flatter, so I suppose she is even prettier than this represents, Mrs. George."

"Oh! yes, far prettier, though it is a good likeness; but this you know is what she looks at one time—and Amy's face changes so much. She looks whiles perfectly beautiful, doesn't she, George?"

"Then I am safe not to be disappointed in her. When you write to your parents, Mrs. George, will you desire them to accept my best thanks for their kindness to one who will soon be so dear to me; and now let me have the address; the day for the mail I cannot forget."

There was no help for it, George gave the ad-

dress, Mr. Derrick shook hands warmly with Mrs. George Copeland, and again thanked her for her kindness, and, taking the photographs with him, returned to Stanmore, prepared to astonish his aunt and sister with his news. He had told them nothing about his previous enquiries, so that when he laid the portraits on the table they were as much surprised as he expected. Miss Derrick thought it must have been something taken of his mother, and was surprised at the good preservation of the photograph. The old rides taken at Brighton with Lady Eveline came back to her mind as she looked.

"I never saw Lady Eveline ride on such a horse as that, and I did not think that the habits were so long in the waist then; but it is a good likeness, and so is this. Is not the hat surprisingly modern, Edith? to think of its being worn so long ago; the old fashions come round again very quickly."

"My dear aunt, this is not my mother at all," said Anthony.

"The scenery is curious, too," said Edith, "I never saw such trees as those in my life."

"There were none such at Brighton that I ever saw," said aunt Anne. "Where did you come by these likenesses of Lady Eveline, Anthony?"

"I told you they are not likenesses of Lady

Eveline at all. This is a scene in Australia, and the girl on horseback is Amy Staunton, our half-sister, Edith. The vignette shows the likeness still better."

"Amy Staunton! Anthony, Australia!—how came they here?" asked sister and aunt almost in a breath.

"I got them at Copeland's at Millmount; you know they have a daughter-in-law from Australia, and she knows our sister, and has these portraits. Did you ever see such a likeness?"

"It is wonderful, certainly," said Aunt Anne, "but it is a likeness that does not please me. Your poor papa suffered too much in that marriage; a selfish, worldly, unprincipled thing it was in Lady Eveline to marry him when her heart was given to another, all because your papa was rich, and then so shortly after his death to marry that Gerald Staunton in such unbecoming, such indecent haste. Your poor grandpapa felt it terribly; as for you two poor dears, whom she deserted, you were too young to feel the disgrace; but I can assure you it preyed upon me. And this is her daughter and his!"

"Let me look at her again, Anthony," said Edith. "I suppose you think her pretty."

"Beautiful, Edith, and I hear she is as good as she is beautiful. I am going to write to her to-

morrow to invite her to return to England to live with us. Here is the address, 'To the care of Mr. Hugh Lindsay, Branhholm, South Australia.' She has been living with these good people, Mrs. George Copeland's relatives, for more than three years, and they are as fond of her as if she was their own daughter. I wish you had seen Mrs. George's face when I said I would send for Amy. I expect you to write to her as well as myself to unite with me in the invitation."

"Indeed! Anthony," said Edith, "I am not quite prepared for such a sudden step as this; let us think over it for a while."

"I think there is no time to be lost," said Anthony.

"After living apart all our lives what does it signify if we delay communication with this girl, whom I never heard of before, for a few weeks or months?" said Edith.

"Now that we know where she is, we must take some notice of her; and Mrs. George Copeland of course writes by this mail, so we must also communicate with her."

"Mrs. George Copeland, aunt. Is that the vulgar-looking woman who sat beside the old people at church, who Mrs. Harcourt says came from Botany Bay or some such place? I have no idea of bringing a sister from such society and intro-

ducing her everywhere, a sister whom I never saw, and who cares nothing about either of us. Why does not her father take care of her? It is no business of ours to take her from him."

"Her father is dead years ago, Edith. You might see by her face and air, if you were not blinded by prejudice, that this girl is not vulgar whatever her companions may have been. Mr. George Copeland tells me she is well educated."

"An admirable judge certainly. Mrs. Harcourt was talking about her yesterday to aunt, saying that though it appeared to be a marriage below George Copeland's rank, she seemed to be humble and discreet, and the old people were satisfied with her. And to think of fetching a girl brought up in a style inferior to that of our own tenants to take the position of my sister, to revive the old stories about our poor mother that people have quite forgotten, would be unjust to me, very painful to aunt Anne."

"But it would be unjust to her and very painful to me not to do it," said Anthony. "If I set my heart on anything you are sure to oppose it for opposition's sake. I am very certain Amy is far more amiable than you are, and very more of a sister to me. You may write or say what you please, but I certainly shall despatch her to-morrow. She is certainly very

some ; you cannot deny that. I have the best authority for believing her to be amiable. As for the people among whom she has been living, she cannot have got much harm from them in three or four years. Her father was a gentleman and a man of genius, and her mother was Lady Eveline Darlington. My mind is made up on the matter, and I shall act as I please, however disagreeable you may choose to make yourself about it. I believe it is all jealousy ; you do not like the notion of a younger and prettier sister cutting you out."

If Anthony Derrick had designed to prejudice his sister against Amy he could not have taken a more successful course of action. Her mind had not been prepared for the news, as his had been, and she was naturally surprised at Anthony's rapid proceeding upon his discovery. Her habitual opposition to her brother, too, came into play ; but when Anthony carefully pointed out that this unknown sister might be more loved and admired in society, as well as by himself, and attributed her objection to jealousy, he raised the very spirit which he decried.

" It is all very proper that you should wish to do something for her, but if she is comfortable with these Australian people, I don't see why you should take her away from them," said aunt

Anne. "Considering all the unfortunate family circumstances connected with this girl, I think a far better plan would be to enter into correspondence with her, and discover through her letters if she is amiable and affectionate. You can invite her by-and-by, if you think it advisable. I certainly do not augur well of her character from her parentage. Lady Eveline, I grieve to say, was far from truthful, and this Mr. Staunton was a very questionable person. My dear Anthony, you may be disappointed and deceived."

"My dear aunt," said Anthony, rising in determination with the opposition he met with, "do you not see that it is of the greatest consequence that my sister should be taken away from the undoubtedly vulgar people with whom she is living? At her age she cannot yet have imbibed much mischief; but every month's delay is dangerous now. You speak of conducting a correspondence with Australia, as if it were with London; you have no idea of the time it takes to send letters half round the world. The girl would be old and past improvement before we could hope to know her character in that way. No, my first plan is the best and the wisest, and as it is at my expense that she will be brought and as she will look to me solely for her comfort and happiness, for I ask neither you nor Edith to do

anything for her, but to write a civil letter and give her a civil reception, I think I have a right to take my own way in the matter."

"I don't think a civil letter would satisfy you," said Edith, "nothing less than a gushing welcome like your own could come up to your expectations, so I will let it alone. Write your own letter; perhaps by the time the young lady arrives aunt and I will grow accustomed to the idea, and be able to satisfy you with our reception of her. If not, thank goodness we too are independent and can find another residence."

"I hope you may not have cause to regret your determination," said aunt Anne.

"I am not at all afraid," said Anthony.

"I suppose you would like us to call on this Mrs. George Copeland to thank her for her kindness to our sister," said Edith.

"No," said Anthony, shortly, "*I* have thanked her, and that is quite enough. I do not care to trouble you about a matter that appears to be quite personal to myself. Besides you are not to be trusted to do a gracious thing graciously."

If Jessie Copeland had heard the conversation which was held by Amy's brother and sister and their aunt, with regard to her favourite little friend, she would have regretted still more the revelations she had made. Although Mr. Der-

come her, she would have felt guilty with regard to Amy too. In a worldly point of view, it was a great chance for Amy to be taken up in this way by her wealthy brother, and to live in the beautiful house of Stanmore; but then she would be lost to Allan. Husband and wife speculated on the chances of the young people having come to an understanding, and being either engaged or married. Jessie thought it unlikely, as she had had no hint on the subject, while George thought a great deal might be done in three months, when the liking was mutual and the young people constantly together. Old letters were taken out and read over with particular attention, but no conclusion could be come to.

It was a strange letter that Jessie penned to Amy on the following day—full of apologies, congratulations, hope, fear, surmises, recollections, anticipations. Amidst her bewilderment, she could not help looking forward with pleasure to seeing Amy again if she accepted her brother's invitation, and hearing the news from home more fully and minutely than could be done by letter, for surely, though Jessie saw more distinctly than

the Branxholm people were likely to do the great social gap that separated the Derricks from their tenants, Amy would always feel affectionately towards her, and her great relations would not be so cruel as to prevent her from visiting at Millmount.

Mr. Derrick called early on the following day, when Jessie was in the middle of her letter, and rather confused her ideas. He was colder and stiffer to herself than on the preceding day, but he was as apparently determined to send for Amy. He asked her many questions with regard to Branxholm and her parents there, and gathered from her sincere answers all he wanted to know with regard to the position and education of the family. All that he heard and saw convinced him that there should be no delay, so he wrote his letter on his return, and despatched it at once.

END OF VOL. I.



