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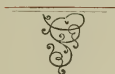


C. A. F. Waters

DIANA TEMPEST.

Diana
Tempest.

By
Mary Cholmondeley,
Author of
"The Danvers Jewels,"
"Sir Charles Danvers," etc.



In Three Volumes.

Vol. I.

London:
Richard Bentley & Son,
Publishers in Ordinary to Her Majesty the Queen.

1893.

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“ The lawyer’s deed
Ran sure,
In tail,
To them, and to their heirs
Who shall succeed,
Without fail,
For evermore.

“ Here is the land,
Shaggy with wood,
With its old valley,
Mound and flood.
But the heritors?” . . .

EMERSON, *Earth-song*.



DIANA TEMPEST.

CHAPTER I.

l
“La pire des mésalliances est celle du cœur.”

COLONEL TEMPEST and his miniature ten-year-old replica of himself had made themselves as comfortable as circumstances would permit in opposite corners of the smoking carriage. It was a chilly morning in April, and the boy had wrapped himself in his travelling rug, and turned up his little collar, and drawn his soft little travelling cap over his eyes in exact, though unconscious, imitation of his father.

Colonel Tempest looked at him now and then with paternal complacency. It is certainly a satisfaction to see ourselves repeated in our children. We feel that the type will not be lost. Each new edition of ourselves lessens a natural fear lest a work of value and importance should lapse out of print.

Colonel Tempest at forty was still very handsome ; and must, as a young man, have possessed great beauty before the character had had time to assert itself in the face ; before selfishness had learned to look out of the clear grey eyes, and a weak self-indulgence and irresolution had loosened the well-cut lips.

Colonel Tempest, as a rule, took life very easily. If he had fits of uncontrolled passion now and then, they were quickly over. If his feelings were touched, that was quickly over too. But to-day his face was clouded. He had tried the usual antidotes for an

impending attack of what he would have called "the blues," by which he meant any species of reflection calculated to give him that passing annoyance which was the deepest form of emotion of which he was capable. But *Punch* and the *Sporting Times*, and even the comic French paper which Archie might not look at, were powerless to distract him to-day. At last he tossed the latter out of the window to corrupt the morals of trespassers on the line, and, as it was, after all, less trouble to yield than to resist, settled himself in his corner, and gave way to a series of gloomy and anxious reflections.

He was bent on a mission of importance to his old home, to see his brother who was dying. His mind always recoiled instinctively from the thought of death, and turned quickly to something else. It was fourteen years since he had been at Over-

leigh, fourteen years since that event had taken place which had left a deadly enmity of silence and estrangement between his brother and himself ever since. And it had all been about a woman. It seemed extraordinary to Colonel Tempest, as he looked back, that a quarrel which had led to such serious consequences—which had, as he remembered, spoilt his own life—should have come from so slight a cause. It was like losing the sight of an eye because a fly had committed trespass in it. A man's mental rank may generally be determined by his estimate of woman. If he stands low he considers her—heaven help her—such an one as himself. If he climbs high he takes his ideal of her along with him, and, to keep it safe, places it above himself.

Colonel Tempest pursued the reflections suggested by an untaxed intellect of ave-

rage calibre which he believed to be profound. A mere girl! How men threw up everything for women! What fools men were when they were young! After all, when he came to think of it, there had been some excuse for him. (There generally was.) How beautiful she had been with her pale exquisite face, and her innocent eyes, and a certain shy dignity and pride of bearing peculiar to herself. Yes, any other man would have done the same in his place. The latter argument had had great weight with Colonel Tempest through life. He could not help it if she were engaged to his brother. It was as much her fault as his own if they fell in love with each other. She was seventeen and he was seven and twenty, but it is always the woman who "has the greater sin."

He remembered, with something like com-

placency, the violent love-making of the fortnight that followed, her shy adoration of her beautiful eager lover. Then came the scruples, the flight, the white cottage by the Thames, the marriage at the local register office. What a fool he had been, he reflected, and how he had worshipped her at first, before he had been disappointed in her; disappointed in her as the boy is in the butterfly when he has it safe—and crushed—in his hand. She might have made anything of him, he reflected. But somehow there had been a hitch in her character. She had not taken him the right way. She had been unable to effect a radical change in him, to convert weakness and irresolution into strength and decision; and he had been quite ready to have anything of that sort done for him. During all those early weeks of married life, until she caught a heavy cold on her chest, he had believed

existence had been easily and delightfully transformed for him. He was susceptible. His feelings were always easily touched. Everything influenced him, for a time; beautiful music, or a pathetic story for half an hour; his young wife for—nearly six months.

A play usually ends with the wedding, but there is generally an after-piece, ignored by lovers but expected by an experienced audience. The after-piece in Colonel Tempest's domestic drama began with tears, caused, I believe, in the first instance by a difference of opinion as to who was responsible for the earwigs in his bath sponge. In the white cottage there were many earwigs. But even after the earwig difficulty was settled by a move to London, other occasions seemed to crop up for the shedding of those tears which are known to be the common resource of women for obtain-

ing their own way when other means fail ; and others, many others, suggested by youth and inexperience and a devoted love had failed. If they are silent tears, or worse still, if the eyelids betray that they have been shed in secret, a man may with reason become much annoyed at what looks like a tacit reproach. Colonel Tempest became annoyed. It is the good fortune of shallow men so thoroughly to understand women, that they can see through even the noblest of them ; though of course that deeper insight into the hypocrisy practised by the whole sex about their fancied ailments, and inconveniently wounded feelings for their own petty objects, is reserved for selfish men alone.

Matters have become very wrong indeed, when a caress is not enough to set all right at once ; but things came to that shocking pass between Colonel and Mrs. Tempest,

and went in the course of the next few years several steps further still, till they reached, on her part, that dreary dead level of emaciated semi-maternal tenderness, which is the only feeling some husbands allow their wives to entertain permanently for them ; the only kind of love which some men believe a virtuous woman is capable of.

How he had suffered, he reflected, he who needed love so much. Even the advent of the child had only drawn them together for a time. He remembered how deeply touched he had been when it was first laid in his arms, how drawn towards its mother. But his smoking-room fire had been neglected during the following week, and he could not find any large envelopes, and the nurse made absurd restrictions about his seeing his wife at his own hours, and Di herself was feeble and languid, and made no attempt to enter into his feelings, or show him any sympathy, and—

Colonel Tempest sighed as he made this mournful retrospect of his married life. He had never cared to be much at home, he reflected. His home had not been made very pleasant to him ; the poor meagre home in a dingy street, the wrong side of Oxford Street, which was all that a young man in the Guards, with expensive tastes, who had quarrelled with his elder brother, could afford. The last evening he had spent in that house came back to him with a feeling of bitter resentment at the recollection of his wife's unreasonable distress when a tradesman called after dinner for payment of a long-standing account which she had understood was settled. It was not a large bill he remembered wrathfully, and he had intended to keep his promise of paying it directly his money came in, but when it came he had needed it, and more, for his share of the spring fishing he had taken cheap with a

friend. Naturally he would not see the man whose loud voice, asking repeatedly for him, could be heard in the hall, and who refused to go away. Colonel Tempest had a dislike to rows with tradespeople. At last his wife, prostrate, and in feeble health, rose languidly from her sofa, and went down to meet the recriminations of the unfortunate tradesman, who, after a long interval, retired, slamming the door. Colonel Tempest heard her slow step come up the stair again, and then, instead of stopping at the drawing-room door, it had gone toiling upwards to the room above. He was incensed by so distinct an evidence of temper. Surely, he said to himself with exasperation, she knew when she married him that she was marrying a poor man.

She did not return: and at last he blew out the lamp, and lighting the candle put ready for him, went upstairs, and opening

the door of his wife's room, peered in. She was sitting in the dark by the black fireplace with her head in her hands. A great deal of darkness and cold seemed to have been compressed into that little room. She raised her head as he came in. Her wide eyes had a look in them of a dumb unreasoning animal distress which took him aback. There was no pride nor anger in her face. In his ignorance he supposed she would reproach him. He had not yet realized that the day of reproaches and appeals, very bitter while it lasted, was long past, years past. The silence of those who have loved us is sometimes eloquent as a tombstone of that which has been buried beneath it.

The room was very cold. A faint smell of warm india-rubber and a molehill in the middle of the bed showed that a hot bottle was found more economical than coal.

“Why on earth don’t you have a fire?” he asked, still standing in the doorway, personally aggrieved at her economies. Di’s economies had often been the subject of sore annoyance to him. An anxious housekeeper in her teens sometimes retrenches in the wrong place, namely where it is unpalatable to the husband. Di had cured herself of this fault of late years, but it cropped up now and again, especially when he returned home unexpectedly as to-day, and found only mutton chops for dinner.

“It was the coal bill that the man came about this evening,” she said, apathetically, and then the peculiar distressed look giving place to a more human expression, as she suddenly became aware of the reproach her words implied, she added quickly, “but I am not the least cold, thanks.”

Still he lingered; a sense of ill-usage generally needs expression.

“Why did not you come back to the drawing-room again?”

There was no answer.

“I must say you have a knack of making a man’s home uncommonly pleasant for him.”

Still no answer. Perhaps there were none left. One may come to an end of answers sometimes, like other things—money, for instance.

“Is my breakfast ordered for half-past seven, sharp?”

“Yes.”

“Poached eggs?”

“Yes, and stewed kidneys. I hope they will be right this time. And I’ve told Martha to call you at seven punctually.”

“All right. Good night.”

“Good night.”

That had been their parting in this world, Colonel Tempest remembered bitterly, for

he had been too much hurried next morning to run up to say good-bye before starting for Scotland. Those had been the last words his wife had spoken to him, the woman for whom he had given up his liberty. So much for woman's love and tenderness.

And as the train went heavily on its way, he recalled, in spite of himself, the last home-coming after that month's fishing, and the fog that he shot into as he neared King's Cross on that dull April morning six years ago. He remembered his arrival at the house, and letting himself in and going upstairs. The house seemed strangely quiet. In the drawing-room a woman was sitting motionless in the gaslight. She looked up as he came in, and he recognized the drawn, haggard face of Mrs. Courtenay, his wife's mother, whom he had never seen in his house before, and who now spoke to him for the first time since her daughter's marriage.

“Is that you?” she said, quietly, her face twitching. “I did not know where you were. You have a daughter, Colonel Tempest, of a few hours old.”

He raised his eyebrows.

“And Di?” he asked. “Pretty comfortable?”

The question was a concession to custom on Colonel Tempest’s part, for, like others of his enlightened views, he was of course aware that the pains of childbirth are as nothing compared to the twinge of gout in the masculine toe.

“Diana,” said the elder woman, with concentrated passion, as she passed him to leave the room—“Diana, thank God, is dead!”

He had never forgiven Mrs. Courtenay for that speech. He remembered even now with a shudder of acute self-pity all he had gone through during the days that followed, and the silent reproach of the face that even

in death wore a look not of rest, but of a weariness stern and patient, and a courage that has looked to the end and can wait.

And when Mrs. Courtenay had written to offer to take the little Diana off his hands altogether provided he would lay no claim to her later on, he had refused with indignation. He would not be parted from his children. But the child was delicate and wailed perpetually, and he wanted to get rid of the house, and of all that reminded him of a past that it was distinctly uncomfortable to recall. He put the little yellow-haired boy to school, and, when Mrs. Courtenay repeated her offer, he accepted it; and Di, with her bassinette and the minute feather-stitched wardrobe that her mother had made for her packed inside her little tin bath, drove away one day in a four-wheeler straight out of Colonel Tempest's existence and very soon out of his memory.

His marriage had been the ruin of him, he said to himself, reviewing the last few years. It had done for him with his brother. He had been a fool to sacrifice so much for a pretty face, and she had not had a shilling. He had chucked away all his chances in marrying her. He might have married anybody ; but he had never seen a woman before or since with a turn of the neck and shoulder to equal hers. Poor Di ! She had spoilt his life, no doubt, but she had had her good points after all.

Poor Di ! Perhaps she too had had her dark hours. Perhaps she had given love to a man capable only of a passing passion. Perhaps she had sold her woman's birthright for red pottage, and had borne the penalty, not with an exceeding bitter cry, but in an exceeding bitter silence. Perhaps she had struggled against the disillusion and desecra-

tion of life, the despair and the self-loathing that go to make up an unhappy marriage. Perhaps in the deepening shadows of death she had heard her new-born child cry to her through the darkness, and had yearned over it, and yet—and yet had been glad to go.

However these things may have been, at any rate, she had a turn of the neck and shoulder which lived in her husband's memory. Poor Di!

Colonel Tempest shook himself free from a train of reflections which had led him to a death-bed, and suddenly remembered with a shudder of repugnance that he was on his way to another at this moment.

His brother had not sent for him. Colonel Tempest was hazarding an unsolicited visit. He had announced his intention of coming, but he had received no permission to do so. Nevertheless he

had actually screwed up his weak and vacillating nature to the sticking point of putting himself and his son into the train when the morning arrived that he had fixed on for going to Overleigh.

“For the sake of the old name, and for the sake of the boy,” he said to himself, looking at the delicate regular profile silhouetted against the window-pane. If Archie had had a pair of wings folded underneath his little great-coat, he would have made a perfect model for an angel, with his fair hair and face, and the sweet serious eyes that contemplated, without any change of expression, his choir book at chapel, or the last grappling contortions of a cockroach, ingeniously transfixed to the book-ledge with a pin, to relieve the monotony of the sermon.

“Overleigh ! Overleigh ! Overleigh !” called out a porter, as the train stopped.

Colonel Tempest started. There already! How long it was since he had got out at that station! There was a new station-master, and the station itself had been altered. He looked at the little red tin shelter erected on the off-side with an alien eye. It had not been there in *his* time. There was no carriage to meet him, although he had mentioned the train by which he intended to arrive. His heart sank a little as he took Archie by the hand and set out to walk. The distance was nothing, for the station had been made specially for the convenience of the Tempests, and lay within a few hundred yards of the castle gates. But the omen was a bad one. Would his mission fail?

How unchanged everything was! He seemed to remember every stone upon the road. There was the turn up to the village, and the low tower of the church peering

through the haze of the April trees. They passed through the old Italian gates—there was a new woman at the lodge to open them—and entered the park. Archie drew in his breath. He had never seen deer at large before. He supposed his uncle must keep a private zoological gardens on a large scale, and his awe of him increased.

“Are the lions and the tigers loose too?” he inquired, with grave interest, but without anxiety, as his eyes followed a little band of fallow deer skimming across the turf.

“There are no lions and tigers, Archie,” said his father, tightening his clasp on the little hand. If Colonel Tempest had ever loved anything, it was his son.

They had come to a turn in the broad white road which he knew well. He stopped and looked. High on a rocky crag, looking out over its hanging woods and gardens, the

old grey castle stood, its long walls and solemn towers outlined against the sky. The flag was flying.

“He is still alive,” said Colonel Tempest, remembering a certain home-coming long ago, when, as he galloped up the steep winding drive, even as he rode, the flag dropped half-mast high before his eyes, and he knew his father was dead.

They had reached the ascent to the castle, and Colonel Tempest turned from the broad road, and struck into a little path that clambered upwards towards the gardens through the hanging woods. It was a short cut to the house. It was here he had first seen Diana, and he pondered over the fidelity of mind which, after fourteen years, could remember the exact spot. There was the wooden bridge over the stream where she had stood, her white gown reflected in the water below her, the heart of the

summer woods enfolding her like the setting of a jewel. The seringa and the laburnum were out. The air was faint with perfume. She stood looking at him with lovely surprised eyes, in her exceeding youth and beauty. Involuntarily his mind turned from that first meeting to the last parting seven years later. The cold, dark, London bedroom, the bowed figure in the low chair, the fatigued smell of tepid indiarubber. What a gulf between the radiant young girl and the woman with the white exhausted face! Alas! for the many parts a woman may have to play in her time to one and the same man. Colonel Tempest laughed harshly to himself, and his powerful mind reverted to the old refrain, "What fools men are to marry."

It had been summer when he had seen her first, but now it was early spring. The woods were very silent. God was making

a special revelation in their heart, was turning over one more page of His New Testament. He had walked once again in His garden, and at the touch of His feet, all young sheaths and spears of growing things were stirring and pressing up to do His will. The larch had hastened to hang out his pink tassels. The primroses had been the first among the flowers to receive the Divine message, and were repeating it already in their own language to those that had ears to hear it. The folded buds of the anemones had heard the whisper *Ephphatha*, and were opening one after another their pure shy eyes. The arched neck of the young bracken was showing among the brown ancestors of last year. The marsh marigolds thronged the water's edge. Every battered dyke and rocky scar was transfigured. God was once again making all things new.

Only a mole, high on its funeral twig, held out tiny human hands, worn with honest toil, to its Maker, in mute protest against a steel death "that nature never made" for little agriculturists. Death was still in the world apparently, side by side with the resurrection of the flowers. Archie paused to glance contemptuously and shy a stick at the corpse as he passed. It looked as if it had not afforded much sport before it died. Colonel Tempest puffed a little, for the ascent was steep, and he was not so slim as he had once been. He sat down on a circular wooden seat round a yew tree by the path. He began to dislike the idea of going on. And, perhaps, after all, he would be told by the servants that his brother would not see him. Jack was quite capable of making himself disagreeable to the last. Really, on the whole, perhaps the best course would be to go down the hill

again. It is always so much 'easier to go down than to go up; so much pleasanter at the moment to avoid what may be distasteful to a sensitive mind.

"Archie," said Colonel Tempest.

The boy did not hear him. He was looking intently at a little patch of ground near the garden-seat, which had evidently been carefully laid out by a landscape-gardener of about his own age. Every hair of grass or weed had been scratched up within the irregular wall of fir cones that bounded the enclosure. Grey sand imported from a distance, possibly from the brook, marked winding paths therein, in course of completion. A sunk bucket with a squirt in it, indicated an intention, as yet unmatured, to add a fountain to the natural beauties of the site.

"You go in this way, father," said Archie, grasping the situation with becoming gravity,

and pointing out the two oyster shells that flanked the main entrance, "then you walk round the lake. Look; he has got a duck ready. Oh, dear! and see, father, here is his name. I would have done it all in white stones if it had been me. J. O. H. N. John. Father, who is John?"

Colonel Tempest's temper was like a curate's gun. You could never tell when it might not go off, or in what direction. It went off now with an explosion. It had been at full cock all the morning.

"Who is John?" he repeated, fiercely kicking the letters on the ground to right and left. "You may well ask that. John is a confounded interloper. He has no right here. Damn John!"

Archie was following the parental boot with anxious eyes. The tin duck was dented in on one side, and bulged out on the other in a manner painful to behold. It would

certainly never swim again. The turn of the squirt might come any moment. But when his father began to say damn, Archie had always found it better not to interfere.

"Come along, Archie," said Colonel Tempest, furiously, "don't stand fooling there," and he began to mount the path with redoubled energy. All thought of turning back was forgotten.

Archie looked back ruefully at the devastated pleasure-grounds. The fir cone boundary was knocked over at one corner. All privacy was lost; anything might get in now, and the duck, if she recovered, could get out. It was much to be regretted.

"Poor damn John," said Archie, slipping his hand into that of the grown-up child whom he had for a father.

"Poor John!" echoed Colonel Tempest, his temper evaporating a little, "I only wish it *were* poor John; and not poor Archie.

That was *your* garden, Archie, do you hear, my boy—yours, not his. And you shall have it, too, if I can get it for you.”

“I don’t want it now,” said Archie, gravely ; “you’ve spoilt it.”





CHAPTER II.

“And another dieth in the bitterness of his soul.”—
JOB xxi. 25.

A PROFOUND knowledge of human nature enunciated the decree, “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s *house*,” and relegated the neighbour’s wife to a back seat among the servants and live stock.

The intense love of a house, passing the love even of prohibited women, is a passion which those who “nightly pitch their moving tents” in villas and hired dwellings, and look upon heaven as their home, can hardly imagine, and frequently regard with the amused contempt of ignorance. But where

pride is a leading power the affections will be generally found immediately in its wake. In these days it is the fashion, especially of the vulgar-minded well-born, to decry birth as being of no account. Those who do so, apparently fail to perceive that, by the very fact of decrying it, they proclaim their own innate lack of appreciation of those very advantages of refinement, manners, and a certain distinction and freemasonry of feeling, which birth has evidently withheld from them personally, but which, nevertheless, birth alone can bestow. The strong hereditary pride of race which is as natural a result of time and fixed habitat as the forest oak—which is bred in the bone and comes out in the flesh from generation to generation—is accompanied, as a rule, by a passionate love, not of houses, but of *the* house, the home, the eyrie, the one sacred spot from which the race sprang.

Among the Tempests devotion to Overleigh had been an hereditary instinct from time immemorial. Other possessions, gifts of royalty, or dowers of heiresses came and went. Overleigh remained from generation to generation. Scapegrace Tempests squandered the family fortune, and mortgaged the family properties, but others rose up in their place, who, whatever else was lost, kept fast hold on Overleigh. The old castle on the crag had passed through many vicissitudes. It had been originally built in Edward II.'s time, and the remains of fortification, and the immense thickness of the outer walls, showed how fierce had been the inroads of Scot and Borderer which such strength was needed to repel. The massive arched doorway through which the yelling hordes of the Tempests and their retainers swooped down, with black lion on pennant flying, upon the enemy, was walled up in the

time of the Tudors, and the vaulted basement with its acutely pointed chamfered arches became the dungeons of the later portion of the building ; the cellars of the present day.

Overleigh had entertained royalty royally in its time, and had sheltered royalty more royally still. Cromwell's cannon had not prevailed against it. It had been partially burnt, it had been partially rebuilt. There it still stood, a glory, and a princely possession on the lands that had been meted in the Domesday book to a certain Norman knight Ivo de Tempête, the founder of an iron race. And in the nineteenth century a Tempest held it still. Tempest had become a great name. Gradually wealth had gathered round Overleigh, as the lichen had gathered round its grey stones. There were coal-mines now among the marsh-lands of William the Conqueror's favourite, harbours and towns along the sea-coast. Tempest of

Overleigh was a power, a name that might be felt, that had been felt. The name ranked high among the great commoners of England. Titles and honours of various kinds had been offered it from time to time. But for a Tempest, to be a Tempest was enough. And Overleigh Castle had remained their solitary dwelling-place. Houses were built for younger sons, but the head of the family made his home invariably at Overleigh itself. There were town houses in London and York, but country seats were not multiplied. To be a Tempest was enough. To live and die at Overleigh was enough.

Some one was dying at Overleigh now. Mr. Tempest had come to that pass, and was taking it very quietly, as he had taken everything so far, from the elopement of his betrothed with his brother fourteen years ago, to the death of his poor, pretty faithless wife in the room where he was now lying ;

the round oak-panelled room, which followed the outer wall of the western tower; the room in which he had been born, where Tempests had arrived and departed, and lain in state. And now after a solitary life he was dying, as he had lived, alone.

He had gone too far down the steep path which leads no man knows whither, to care much for anything that he was leaving behind. He had not read his brother's letter announcing his coming. It lay with a pile of others for some one hereafter to sort or burn. Mr. Tempest had done with letters, had done with everything except Death. The pressure of Death's hand was heavy on him, upon his eyes, upon his heart. He had been a punctual man all his life. He hoped he should not be kept waiting long.

Colonel Tempest followed the servant

with inward trepidation across the white stone hall. He had been at once admitted, for it was known that Mr. Tempest was dying, and the only wonder in the minds of nurse and doctor and servants was that his only brother had not arrived before. The servant led the way along the picture-gallery. A child was playing at the further end of it under the Velasquez; or, to speak more correctly, was looking earnestly out of one of the low mullioned windows. The voice of the young year was calling him from without, as the spring calls only the young. But he might not go out to-day, though there were nests waiting for him, and holiday glories in wood and meadow that his soul longed after. He had been told he must stay in, in case that stern silent father who was dying should ask for him. John did not think he would want him, for when had he ever wanted him yet? but he

remained at his post at the window, breathing his silent longing into a little mist on the pane.

He looked round as Colonel Tempest and Archie approached, and then came gravely forward, and put out a strong little brown hand.

Colonel Tempest just touched it without speaking, and turned his eyes away. He could not trust himself to look again at the erect dignified little figure with its square dark face. When had there ever been a dark Tempest?

The two boys, near of an age, looked each other straight in the eyes. Archie was the younger and the taller of the two.

“Are you John?” he asked at once.

“Yes.”

“John what?”

“No. John Amyas Tempest.”

“Archie,” said Colonel Tempest, who had

grown rather pale, "you can stay here with ——, until I send for you." And with one backward glance at them, he followed the servant to an ante-room, where the doctor presently came to him.

"I am his only brother," said Colonel Tempest hoarsely. "Can I see him?"

"Certainly, my dear sir, certainly; but at the same time all agitation, all tendency to excitement, must be rigorously avoided."

"Is he really dying?" interrupted Colonel Tempest.

"He is."

"How long has he?" Colonel Tempest felt as if a hand were tightening round his throat. The doctor shrugged his shoulders.

"Three hours. Five hours. He might live through the night. I cannot say."

"There would be time," said Colonel Tempest to himself; and, not without a shuddering foreboding that his brother might

die in his actual presence, without giving him time to bolt, he entered the sick-room, from which the doctor had beckoned the nurse, and closed the door.

The room was full of light, for the dying man had been oppressed by the darkness in which he lay, and a vain attempt had been made to alleviate it by the flood of April sunshine which had been let into the room. Through the open window came the rapture of the birds.

Mr. Tempest lay perfectly motionless with his eyes half closed. His worn face had a strong family resemblance to his brother's, with the beauty left out.

“Jack!” said Colonel Tempest.

Mr. Tempest heard from an immense distance, and came painfully back across long wastes and desert places of confused memories, came slowly back to the room, and the dim sunshine, and himself; and

stopped short with a jarred sense as he saw his own long feeble hands laid upon the counterpane. He had forgotten them, though he recognized them now he saw them again. Why had he returned?

“Jack,” said the voice again.

Mr. Tempest opened his eyes suddenly, and looked full at his brother—at the false, weak, handsome face of the man who had injured him.

It all came back, the passion and the despair; the intolerable agony of jealousy and baffled love; and the deadly, deadly hatred. Fourteen years ago was it since Diana had been taken from him? It returned upon him as though it were yesterday. A light flamed up in the dying eyes before which Colonel Tempest quailed.

All the sentences he had prepared beforehand seemed to fail him, as prepared sentences have a way of doing, being made to

fit imaginary circumstances, and being consequently unsuited to any others. Mr. Tempest, who had not prepared anything, had the advantage.

“Curse you,” he said, in his low, difficult whisper. “You damned scoundrel!”

Colonel Tempest was shocked. To bear a grudge after all these years! Jack had always been vindictive! And what an unchristian state of mind for one on the brink of that nightmare of horror, the grave! He was unable to articulate.

“What are you here for?” said Mr. Tempest, after a pause. “Who let you in? Why can’t I be allowed to die in peace?”

“Oh, don’t talk like that, Jack!” gasped Colonel Tempest, speaking extempore, after fumbling in all the empty pockets of his mind for something appropriate to say. “I am sure I am very sorry for——” A look warned him that even his tactful reference

to a certain subject would be resented. "But, it's all past and gone now, and—it's a long time ago, and you're——"

"Dying," suggested Mr. Tempest.

". . . and," hurried on Colonel Tempest, glad of the lift, "it's not for my own sake I've come. But I've got a boy, Jack; he is here now. I have brought him with me. Such a fine, handsome boy—every inch a Tempest, and the image of our father. I don't want to speak for myself, but for the sake of the boy, and the place, and the old name."

Colonel Tempest hid his quivering face in his hands. He was really moved.

The sick man's mouth twitched; he evidently understood his brother's incoherent words.

"John succeeds," he said.

The two men looked away from each other.

"John is not a Tempest," said Colonel

Tempest, in a choked voice. "You know it—everybody knows it!"

"He was born in wedlock."

"Yes; but he is not your son. You would have divorced her if she had lived. He is the legal heir, of course, if you countenance him; but something might be done still—it is not too late. I know the estate goes, failing you and your children, to me and mine. Don't bear a grudge, Jack. You can't have any feeling for the child—it's against nature. Remember the old name and the old place, that has never been out of the hands of a Tempest yet. Don't drag our honour in the dust and put it to open shame! Think how it would have grieved our father. Let me call in the doctor and the nurse, and disown him now before witnesses. Such things have been done before, and may be again. I can contest his claim then; I shall have something to go on. And

you *must* have proofs of his illegitimacy if you will only give them. But there will be *no* chance if you uphold him to the last, and if—and if you—die—without speaking.”

Mr. Tempest made no answer except to look his brother steadily in the face. The look was sufficient. It said plainly enough, “That is what I mean to do.”

Colonel Tempest lost all hope, but despair made one final clutch—a last desperate appeal to his brother’s feelings. It is one of the misfortunes of self-centred people that their otherwise convenient habit of disregarding what is passing in the minds of others, leads them to trample on their feelings at the very moment when most desirous of turning them to their own account. Colonel Tempest, with the best intentions of a pure self-interest, trampled heavily.

“Pass me over—cut me out,” he said, with a vague inappreciation of points of law.

“I’ll sign anything you please ; but let the little chap have it—let Archie have it—*Di’s son.*”

There was a silence that might be felt. Approaching death seemed to make a stride in those few breathless seconds ; but it seemed also as if a determined will were holding him momentarily at arm’s length. Mr. Tempest turned his fading face towards his brother. His eyes were unflinching, but his voice was almost inaudible.

“Leave me,” he said. “John succeeds.”

The blood rushed to Colonel Tempest’s head, and then seemed to ebb away from his heart. A sudden horror took him of some subtle change that was going forward in the room, and, seeing all was lost, he hastily left it.

The two boys had fraternized meanwhile. Each, it appeared, was collecting coins, and Archie gave a glowing account of the cabinet

his father had given him to put them in. John kept his in an old sock, which he solemnly produced, and the time was happily passed in licking the most important coins, to give them a momentary brightness, and in comparing notes upon them. John was sorry when Colonel Tempest came hurriedly down the gallery and carried Archie off before he had time to say good-bye, or to offer him his best coin, which he had hot in his hand with a view to presentation.

Before he had time to gather up his collection, the old doctor came to him, and told him, very gravely and kindly, that his father wished to see him.

John nodded, and put down the sock at once. He was a person of few words, and, though he longed to ask a question now, he asked it with his eyes only. John's deep-set eyes were very dark and melancholy. Could it be that his mother's remorse had left its

trace in the young unconscious eyes of her child? Their beauty somewhat redeemed the square ugliness of the rest of his face.

The doctor patted him on the head, and led him gently to Mr. Tempest's door.

"Go in and speak to him," he said. "Do not be afraid. I shall be in the next room all the time."

"I am not afraid," said John, drawing himself up, and he went quietly across the great oak-panelled room and stood at the bedside.

There was a look of tension in Mr. Tempest's face and hands, as if he were holding on tightly to something which, did he once let go, he would never be able to regain.

"John," he said, in an acute whisper.

"Yes, father." The child's face was pale and his eyes looked awed, but they met Mr. Tempest's bravely.

"Try and listen to what I am going to

say, and remember it. You are a very little boy now, but you will hold a great position some day—when you are a man. You will be the head of the family. Tempest is one of the oldest names in England. Remember what I say”—the whisper seemed to break and ravel down under the intense strain put on it to a single quivering strand—“remember—you will understand it when you are older. It is a great trust put into your hands. When you grow into a man, much will be expected of you. Never disgrace your name; it stands high. Keep it up—keep it up.” The whisper seemed to die altogether, but an iron will forced it momentarily back to the grey toiling lips. “You are the head of the family; do your duty by it. You will have no one much to help you. I shall not—be there. You must learn to be an upright, honourable gentleman by yourself. Do you understand?”

“Yes, father.”

“And you will—*remember?*”

“Yes, father.” If the lip quivered, the answer came nevertheless.

“That is all; you can go.”

The child hesitated.

“Good night,” he said gravely, advancing a step nearer. The sun was still streaming across the room, but it seemed to him, as he looked at the familiar, unfamiliar face, that it was night already.

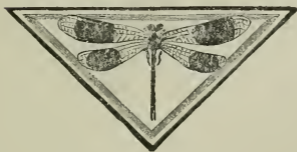
“Don’t kiss me,” said the dying man. “Good night.”

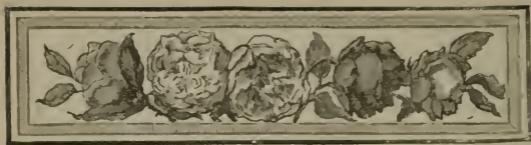
And the child went.

Mr. Tempest sighed heavily, and relaxed his hold on the consciousness that was ready to slip away from him, and wander feebly out he knew not whither. Hours and voices came and went. His own voice had gone down into silence before him. It was still broad daylight, but the casement was slowly

growing "a glimmering square," and he observed it.

Presently it flickered — glimmered — and went out.





CHAPTER III.

“As the foolish moth returning
To its Moloch, and its burning,
Wheeling nigh, and ever nigher,
Falls at last into the fire,
Flame in flame ;
So the soul that doth begin
Making orbits round a sin,
Ends the same.”

T was a sultry night in June rather more than a year after Mr. Tempest's death. An action had been brought by Colonel Tempest directly after his brother's death, when the will was proved in which Mr. Tempest bequeathed everything in his power to bequeath to his “son John.” The action failed ; no one except Colonel

Tempest had ever been sanguine that it would succeed. Colonel Tempest was unable to support an assertion of which few did not recognize the probable truth. No proof of John's suspected illegitimacy was forthcoming. His mother had died when he was born ; it was eleven years ago. The fact that Mr. Tempest had mentioned him by name as his son in his will was overwhelming evidence to the contrary. The long-delayed blow fell at last. A verdict was given in favour of the little schoolboy.

"I'm sorry for you, I am, indeed," said Mr. Swayne, composedly watching Colonel Tempest flinging himself about his little room, into which the latter had just rushed, nearly beside himself at the decision of a bribed and perjured court.

Mr. Swayne was a stout, florid-looking man between forty and fifty, with a heavy face like a grimace that some one else had

made, who laboured under the delusion, unshared by any of his fellow-creatures, that he was a gentleman. In what class he had been born no one knew. What he was now any one could see for himself. He was generally considered by the men with whom he associated a good fellow for an ally in a disreputable pinch, and a blackguard when the pinch was over. Every one regarded Dandy Swayne with contempt, but for all that "The Snowdrop," as he was playfully called, might be seen in the chambers and at the dinners of men far above him in the social scale, who probably for very good reasons tolerated his presence, and for even better reviled him behind his back. He had a certain shrewdness and knowledge of the seamy side of human nature which stood him in good stead. He was a noted billiard player—a little too noted, perhaps. His short, thick ringed hands did not mind much.

what they fastened on. He was not troubled by conscientious scruples. The charm of Dandy Swayne's character was that he stuck at nothing. He would go down any sewer provided there was money in it, and money there always was somewhere in everything he took in hand. Dandy Swayne's career had had strange ups and downs. No one knew how he lived. The private fortune on which he was wont to enlarge of course existed only in his own imagination. Sometimes he disappeared entirely for longer or shorter periods — generally after money transactions of a nature that required privacy and foreign travel. But the same Providence which tempers the wind to the shorn lamb watches over the shearer also, and he always reappeared again, sooner or later, with his creased white waistcoat and yesterday's gardenia, and the old swagger that endeared him to his fellow-creatures.

He was up in the world just now, living "in style" in smart chambers strewn with photographs of actresses, and littered with cheap expensive furniture, and plush hangings redolent of smoke and stale scent, among which Colonel Tempest was knocking about in his disordered evening dress.

"I'm sorry for you, Colonel," repeated Mr. Swayne, slowly; "but I wish to —— you'd sit down and not rush up and down like that. It's not a bit of good taking on in that way, though it's —— —— luck all the same."

Mr. Swayne's conversation was devoid of that severe simplicity which society demands; indeed, it was so encrusted and enriched with ornamental gems of expression of a surprising and dubious character, that to present his conversation to the reader without the personal peculiarities of his choice of language is to do him an injustice which,

however unavoidable, is much to be regretted. Mr. Swayne's conversation without his oaths might be compared to a bird without its feathers; the body is there, but all individuality and beauty of contour is gone.

Mr. Swayne filled his glass, and pushed the bottle across to his friend, whose flushed face and shaking hand showed that he had had enough already. Colonel Tempest sat down impatiently and filled his glass, too.

"It's the will that did it, I suppose," suggested Mr. Swayne; "that tipped it over."

"Yes," said Colonel Tempest, striking his clenched hand on the table. "*My son John* he called him in his will; there was no getting over that. He knew it when he put those words in. He knew I should contest the succession, and he hated me so that he perjured himself to keep me out of my own, and stuck to it even on his death-bed. John

is no more his son than you are. A little dark Fane, that is what he is. They say he takes after his mother's family ; he well may do, —— him !”

Mr. Swayne sympathetically echoed the sentiment in a varied but not less forcible form of speech.

“And my son,” continued Colonel Tempest, his fair weak face whitening with passion—“you know my boy ; look at him—a Tempest to the backbone, down to his finger-nails. You can't look at him among the pictures in the gallery and not see he is bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh. He is as like the Vandyke of Amyas Tempest the cavalier as he can be. It drives me mad to think of him, cut out by a bastard !”

Mr. Swayne appeared to be in a meditative turn of mind. He watched the smoke of his cigar curl upwards from the unshaved crater of his lip into the air.

“You’re in the tail, I suppose?” he remarked at last.

“Of course I am. If my brother John died without children, everything was to come to me and my heirs. My brother had only a life interest in the place.”

“Then I don’t see how he was to blame, doing as he did, if it was entailed all along on his son.” Mr. Swayne spoke with a certain cautious interest.

“He never *had* a son. If he had disowned his wife’s child, everything would have come to me.”

“Lor!” said Mr. Swayne, “I did not understand it was so near as that. Then this little chap, this John, he’s all that stands between you and the property, is he? Failing him, it still comes to you?”

Mr. Swayne’s small tightly-wedged eyes, with the expression of dissipated boot-buttons, were beginning to show a gleam of professional interest.

“Yes, it would ; but John won’t fail,” said Colonel Tempest, savagely. “He will keep us out. We shall be as poor as rats as long as we live, and shall see him chucking our money right and left !” and Colonel Tempest, who was by this time hardly responsible for what he said, ground his teeth and cursed his enemy in a paroxysm of rage and drink. Mr. Swayne observed him attentively.

“Don’t take on so, Colonel,” he remarked soothingly. “Dear me, what’s a little boy ?—What’s a little boy here or there,” he continued, meditatively, “one more or one less ? There’s a sight of little kids in the world ; some wanted, some not. I’ve known cases, Colonel”—here he fixed his eyes on the ceiling—“cases with parents, maybe, singing up in heaven and takin’ no notice, when little chaps that weren’t wanted, that nobody took to, seemed to—meet with an accident, get snuffed out by mistake.”

“John won’t meet with an accident,” said Colonel Tempest passionately. “I wish to —— he would!”

“I look at it this way,” said Mr. Swayne, philosophically. “There’s things gentlemen can do, and there’s things they can’t. A gentleman is a party that can’t do his dirty work for himself, though as often as not he has a deal on his hands that must be shoved through somehow. The thing is to find parties who’ll take what I call a personal interest, if it’s made worth their while. Now about this little boy, that no one wants, and is a comfort to nobody. It’s quite curious the things little boys will do ; out in boats alone, outriggers now, as dangerous as can be, or leaning out of railway carriages in tunnels. Lor! you never know what they won’t be up to, little rascals. They’re made of mischief. Forty thousand a year, is it, he is keeping you out of, and yours by right?”

Well, I don't say anything about that; but all I say is, I have friends I can find that are open to a bet. What's the harm of betting a thousand pounds to one sovereign that you never come into the property? It ain't likely, as you say. What's the harm of a bet, provided you don't mind risking your money? Let's say, just for the sake of—of argument, that there *was* ten bets—ten bets at a thousand to one that you never come in. Ten thousand pounds to pay, if you come in after all. What's ten thousand pounds to a man with forty thousand a year?" Mr. Swayne snapped his fingers. "And no trouble to nobody. Nothing to do but to pay up quietly when the time comes. It don't concern you who takes up the bets, and you don't know either. You know nothing at all about it. You lay your money, and, look here, Colonel, you mark my words, some way or somehow, some time or other, *that boy will disappear.*"

The two men looked steadily at each other. Colonel Tempest's eyes were blood-shot, but Mr. Swayne had all his wits about him; he never became intoxicated, even at the expense of others, if there was money in keeping sober.

"Curse him!" said Colonel Tempest in a hoarse whisper. "He should not get in my light."

The child was to blame, naturally.

Mr. Swayne did not answer, but went to a side table, on which were pens, ink, and paper. Some things, if done at all, are best done quickly.





CHAPTER IV.

“After the red pottage comes the exceeding bitter cry.”

FIFTEEN years is a long time. What companies of trite reflections crowd the mind as it looks back across the marshes and the fens, and the highlands and the lowlands, and the weary desert places, to some point that catches the eye in the middle distance! We stood there once. Perhaps we go back in memory—all the way back—to that little town and spire in the green country, and pray once again in the cool vision-haunted church, and peer up once again at the window in the narrow

street where Love lived and looked out, where patience and affection dwell together now. They were always friends, those two.

Or perhaps we look back to a parting of the ways which did not seem to be a parting at the time, and recall a "Good-bye" that was lightly uttered because it was only thought to be *Au revoir*. We see now, from where we stand, the point where the paths diverged.

Fifteen years !

They have not passed very smoothly over the head of Colonel Tempest. Whenever he looked back across the breezy uplands of his well-spent life, his eye avoided and yet was inevitably attracted with a loathing allurements to one dark spot in the middle distance, where——

Fifteen years ago or yesterday was it ?

The old nightmare, with the shuddering horror of yesterday mingled with the heavy

pressure of years, might come back at any moment—was always coming back.

That sultry night in June!

Everything was disjointed and fragmentary in his memory the morning after it; he could not see the whole. He had a confused recollection of an intense passionate hatred that was like a physical pain, and of Swayne's voice saying, "What's a little boy?" And then there were slips of paper. Swayne said a bet was a bet. He, Colonel Tempest, had had something to do with those slips of paper—*What?*—One had fallen on the floor, and Swayne had blotted it carefully. There was Swayne's voice again, "Your handwriting ain't up to much, Colonel." He had written something then. What was it? His own name? Memory failed. Who was that devil in the room, with Swayne's face and blurred watch-chain—two watch-chains—and the thick busy hands? And

then it was night, and he was in the streets again in the hot darkness, among the blinking lamps and stars that looked like eyes, and Swayne was seeing him home. And there was a horror over everything ; horror leant over him at night, horror woke him in the morning and pursued him throughout the day, and the next day, and the next. What had he done ? He tried to piece together the broken fragments that his groping memory could glean ; but nothing came of it—at least, nothing he could believe. But Swayne knew. On the third day he could bear it no longer, and he went to find him ; but Swayne had disappeared. Colonel Tempest went up to his chambers on the pretence of a letter—of something ; he knew not what. They were swept and garnished in readiness for new arrivals, for if one choice spirit disappears, a good landlady knows what to expect.

Colonel Tempest looked once round the room, and then sat feebly down. It was as if for days he had been staring at a blank sheet, and now a dark slide had been suddenly taken from the magic lantern. The picture was before him in all its tawdry distinctness. *He knew what he had done.*

Colonel Tempest was not a radically bad man. Who is? But there was in him a kind of weakness of fibre which consists in being subservient to the impulse of the moment. The effects of a feeble yielding to impulse are sometimes hardly to be distinguished from those of the most deliberate and thorough-paced sin.

He was conscious of good in himself, of a refined dislike to coarseness and vice even when he dabbled in it, of vague longings after better things, of amiable, even chivalrous, inclinations towards others, especially towards women not of his own family. In

his own family, where there had always been, even in his mother's time, some feminine weakness or imperfection for a manly nature to point out and ridicule, of course courtesy and tenderness could not be expected of him.

Thus at each juncture of his life he was obliged to justify what he would have called his failings, what some would have called sins, by laying the blame on others, and by this means to account for the glaring discrepancy between the inward and spiritual gracefulness of his feelings and the outward and visible signs of his actions.

A man with such good impulses, such an affectionate nature, cannot be a sinner. If there was one thing more than another that Colonel Tempest thoroughly believed in, it was in his affectionate nature. He might have his faults, he was wont to say, but his heart was in the right place. If things went

amiss, the fault was in the circumstance, in the temptation, in the unfortunate character of those with whom his life was knit. Weakness has its superstition, and superstition its scapegoat. His father had spoilt him. His wife had not understood him. His brother had played him false. Swayne had tempted him.

What have not those to answer for who teach us in language, however spiritual, however orthodox, to lay our sins on others—on *any other* except ourselves!

After the first shock of panic, of terror lest he had done something for which he might eventually have to suffer, Colonel Tempest struggled back to the well-worn position, now clutched with both hands, that he had been betrayed in a moment of passion by a fiend in human shape, and that, if—anything happened, Swayne was the most to blame.

Still they were dreadful days at first—dreadful weeks in which he suffered for Swayne's sin. And Swayne seemed to have disappeared for good—or perhaps for evil.

And then—gradually—inasmuch as nothing had power to affect him for long together, the horror lightened.

The sun rose and set. The world went on. A year passed. Archie wrote for money from school. Things took their usual course. Colonel Tempest had his hair cut as usual; he observed with keen regret that it was thinning at the top. Life settled back into its old groove.

Nothing happened.

To persons gifted with imagination, what is more solemn, or more appalling, than the pause which follows on any decisive action which is perceived to have within it the seed of a result—a result which even now is germinating in darkness, is growing towards

the light, foreseen, but unknown? With what body will they come, we ask ourselves—these slow results that spring from the dust of our spent actions? Faith sows and waits. Sin sows and trembles. The fool sows and forgets. Colonel Tempest was practically an Atheist. He did not believe in cause and effect; he believed in chance. He had sown, but perhaps nothing would come up. He had seen the lightning, but perhaps the thunder might not follow after all.

Suddenly, one winter morning, without warning, it growled on the horizon.

“That inconvenient little nephew of yours has precious nearly hooked it,” said a man in the club to him as he came in. “His tutor must be a plucky chap. I should owe him a grudge if I were you.”

The man held out the paper to him, and, turning away with a laugh, went out whis-

ting. He meant no harm ; but the smallest arrow of a refined pleasantry can prick if it happens to come between the joints of the harness.

Colonel Tempest felt sea-sick. The room was empty except for the waiter, who was arranging his breakfast on one of the tables by the window. The fire leapt and blazed ; everything swayed. He sat down mechanically in his accustomed place, still clutching the paper. He tried to read it, to find the place, but he could see nothing. At last he poured out a cup of coffee and drank it, and then tried again. There it was : Narrow escape of Mr. Goodwin and Mr. Tempest on the Metropolitan Railway. Mr. Goodwin and his charge, Mr. Tempest, were returning by the last train from the Crystal Palace. Tremendous crowd on the platform. Struggle for the train as it came in. Mr. Tempest

pushed down between the still moving train and the platform. Heroic devotion of Mr. Goodwin. Rescue of Mr. Tempest uninjured. Serious injuries of Mr. Goodwin.

Colonel Tempest read no more. He wiped his forehead.

Swayne's men were at their devil's work, then! Perhaps they had tried before and failed, and he had not heard of it? They would try again—presently. Perhaps next time they would succeed.

The old horror woke up again with an acuteness that for the moment seemed greater than he could bear. Weak men should abstain from wrong-doing. They cannot stand the brunt of their own actions; the kick of the gun is too much for them.

And from that time to this the horror never wholly left him; if it slumbered, it was only to reawaken. At long intervals incidents happened, sometimes of the most

trifling description, and some of which he did not even hear of at the time, which roused it afresh. There seemed to be a fate against John at Eton which followed him to Oxford. Archie, who was at Eton and Oxford with him, occasionally let things drop by chance which made Colonel Tempest's blood run cold.

"They have failed so far," he would say to himself; "but they will do it yet. I know they will do it in the end!"

At last he made a desperate attempt to find Swayne, and cancel the bet; but perhaps Swayne knew the man he had to deal with, and had foreseen a movement of that kind. At any rate, he was not to be discovered. Colonel Tempest found himself helpless.

Was there no anodyne for this recurring agony? He dared not drown it in drink. What might he not say under its influence?

The consolations of religion, or rather of the Church, which he had always understood to be a sort of mental chloroform for uneasy consciences, did not seem to meet his case. The thought of John's danger never troubled him—John's possible death. The superstitious terror was for himself alone. He wanted a religion which would adhere to him of its own accord, and be in the way when needed; and he tried various kinds recommended for the purpose, but—without effect.

Perhaps a religion for self-centred people remains to be invented. Even religiosity (the patent medicine of the spiritual life of the age—the universal pain-killer)—even religiosity, though it meets almost all requirements, does not quite fill that gap.

Colonel Tempest became subject to long attacks of nervous irritation and depression. He ceased to be a good, and consequently a popular, companion. His health, never

strong, always abused, began to waver. At fifty-five he looked thin and aged. He had come before his time to the evil days and the years which have no pleasure in them.

As he turned out of St. George's Church, Hanover Square, on this particular spring afternoon, whither he had gone to assist at a certain fashionable wedding at which his daughter Diana had officiated as bridesmaid, he looked broken down and feeble beyond his years.

A broad-shouldered, dark man elbowed his way through the throng of footmen and spectators, and came up with him.

"Are not you going back to the house?" he asked.

"No," said Colonel Tempest—"I hate weddings! I hate the whole thing. I only went to have a look at my child, who was bridesmaid. Di is my only daughter, but I

don't see much of her ; others take care of that." His tone was pathetic. He had gradually come to believe that his child had been wrested from him by Mrs. Courtenay, and that he was a defrauded parent.

"I am not going to the house, either," said John Tempest, for it was he. "I don't hate weddings, but I detest that one. Do you mind coming down to my club? I have not seen you really to speak to since I came back. I want to have a talk with you about Archie; he seems to have been improving the shining hours during these three years I have been away."

Colonel Tempest winced jealously. He knew John had paid the considerable debts that Archie had contrived to amass, not only during the short time he was at Oxford, before he left to cram for the army, but also at Sandhurst. But Colonel Tempest had felt no gratitude on that score.

Was not all John's wealth Archie's by right? and John must know it. Men do not grow up in ignorance of such a fact as a slur on their parentage. What was a dole of a few hundred pounds now and again, when a man was wrongfully keeping possession of many thousands?

"Young men are all alike," said Colonel Tempest, testily. "Archie is no worse than the rest. Poor fellow, it's very little I can do for him! It's deuced expensive living in the Guards; I found it so myself."

John might have asked, except that these are precisely the questions that make enmity between relations, why Colonel Tempest had put him in the Guards, considering that it was an idle life, and Archie was absolutely without expectations of any description. He and his sister Di had not even the modest fortune of a younger son eventually to divide between them. One of the beauties

of Colonel Tempest's romantic clandestine marriage had been the lack of settlements, which, though it had prevented his wife bringing him anything owing to the rupture with her family, had at any rate enabled him to whittle away his own private fortune at will, and to inveigh at the same time against the miserliness of the Courtenays, who ought, of course, to have provided for his children.

How Colonel Tempest kept going at all no one knew. How Archie was kept going most people knew, or rather guessed without difficulty. John and Archie had held firmly together at Eton, and afterwards at Oxford. John had untied a very uncomfortable knot that had arranged itself round the innocent Archibald at Sandhurst. It could hardly be said that there was friendship between the two, but John, though only one year his cousin's senior, had taken the position of

elder brother from the first, and had stood by Archie on occasions when that choice, but expensive, spirit needed a good deal of standing by. Archie had inherited other things from his father besides his perfect profile, and knew as well as most men which side his bread was buttered. They were friends in the ordinary acceptance of that misused term. John had just returned from three years' absence at the Russian and Austrian Courts, and Archie, who had begun to feel his absence irksome in the extreme, had welcomed him back with effusion.

“Come into the Carlton and let us talk things over,” said John.

In spite of himself, Colonel Tempest occasionally almost liked John, even while he kicked against the pricks of a certain respect which he could not entirely smother for this grave quiet man of few words. When he was not for the moment jealous of him—and

there were such moments—he could afford to indulge a sentiment almost of regret for him. At times he still hated him with the perfect hatred of the injurer for the injured ; but nothing to stir that latent superstitious horror, and consequent detestation of the cause of the horror, had occurred of late years. They had walked slowly down Bond Street and St. James's Street, and had reached the Carlton. Close by the steps a man was lounging. Colonel Tempest saw him look attentively at John as they came up, and the blood left his heart. It was Swayne.

In a moment the horror was awake again—wide awake, hydra-headed, close at hand, insupportable.

Swayne stared for a moment full at Colonel Tempest, and then turned away and sauntered slowly along Pall Mall.

“Won't you come in?” said John, as his companion hesitated.

“Not to-day. Another time,” said Colonel Tempest, and incoherently making he knew not what excuse, he left John to join another man who was entering at that moment, and hurried after Swayne. He overtook him as he passed through the gates into St. James’s Park. It was a dull, foggy afternoon, and there were not many people about.

Swayne nodded carelessly to him as he joined him. He evidently did not mind being overtaken.

“Well, Colonel,” he said, in the half insolent manner that in men like Swayne implies a knowledge that they have got the whip hand. Swayne was not to be outshone in the art of grovelling by any of his own species of fellow-worm, but he did not grovel unnecessarily. His higher nature was that of a bully.

“—— you, Swayne, where have you been all these years?” said Colonel Tempest,

hurriedly. "I've tried to find you over and over again."

"I've been busy, Colonel," returned Mr. Swayne, swaying himself on tight light-checked legs, and pushing back his grey high hat. "Business before pleasure. That's my motto. And I've been mortal sick, too. Thought I should have gone up this time last year. I did indeed. You look the worse for wear too; but I must not be standing talking here, pleasant as it is to meet old friends."

"Look here, Swayne," said Colonel Tempest, in great agitation, laying a spasmodic clutch on Swayne's arm, "I can't stand it any longer. I can't indeed. It's wearing me into my grave. I want you—to cancel the bet. You must cancel it. I won't bear it. If you won't cancel it, I won't pay up when the—if the time comes."

"Won't you?" said Swayne, with contempt. "I know better."

“I must get out of it. It’s killing me,” repeated Colonel Tempest, ignoring Swayne’s last remark.

“Pay up, then,” said Swayne. “If you won’t bear it, pay up.”

Colonel Tempest was staggered.

“I have not a thousand pounds I could lay my hands on,” he said hoarsely, “much less ten. I’ve been broke these last five years. You know that.”

“Raise it,” said Swayne. “I ain’t against that; quite the reverse. There’s been a deal of time and money wasted already. All the parties will be glad to have the money down. He’s in England again now, thank the Lord. That’s a saving of expense. I was waiting to have a look at him myself when you came up. I’ve never set eyes on him before.”

“I can’t raise it,” said Colonel Tempest with the despairing remembrance of repeated

failures in that direction. "I can't give security for five hundred."

"If you can't pay it, and you can't raise it," said Swayne, shaking off Colonel Tempest's hand, and thrusting his own into his pockets, "what's the good of talking? Sorry not to part friends, Colonel; but what's done is done. You can't send back shoes to the maker that have come to pinch on wearing 'em. You should have thought of that before. Business is business, and a bet's a bet."





CHAPTER V.

“Alas ! the love of women ! It is known
To be a lovely and a fearful thing.”

BYRON.

ROOMS seldom represent their inmates faithfully, any more than photographs their originals, and a poorly-furnished room, like a bad photograph, is, as a rule, a caricature. But there are fortunate persons who can weave for themselves out of apparently incongruous odds and ends of *bric-à-brac*, and china, and cretonne, a habitation which is as peculiar to them as the moss cocoon is to the long-tailed tit, or as the spillikins, in which she coldly cherishes the domestic affections, are to the water-hen.

Madeleine Thesinger's little boudoir looking over Park Lane was as like her as a translation is to the original. Madeleine was one of the many young souls who mistake eccentricity for originality. It was therefore to be expected that a life-sized china monkey should be suspended from the ceiling by a gilt chain, not even holding a lamp as an excuse for its presence. Her artistic tendencies required that scarlet pampas grass should stand in a high yellow jar on the piano, and that the piano itself should be festooned with terra-cotta Liberty silk. A little palm near had its one slender leg draped in an *impromptu* Turkish trouser, made out of an amber handkerchief. Even the flowers are leaving their garden of Eden now. They require clothing, just as chrysanthemums must have their hair curled. We shall put the lily into corsets next!

There was a faint scent of incense in the

room. A low couch, covered with striped Oriental rugs and cushions, was drawn near the fire. Beside it was a small carved table—everything was small—with a few devotional books upon it, an open Bible, and a hyacinth in water. A frame, on which some elaborate Church embroidery was stretched, kept the Bible in countenance. The walls were draped as only young ladies, defiant of all laws of taste or common sense, but determined on originality, can drape them. The *portière* alone fell all its length to the ground. The other curtains were caught up or tweaked across, or furled like flags against the walls above chromos and engravings, over which it was quite unnecessary that they should ever be lowered. The pictures themselves were mostly sentimental or religious. Leighton's "Wedded" hung as a pendant to "The Light of the World." The small room was crowded with tiny orna-

ments and brittle conceits, and mirrors placed at convenient angles. There was no room to put anything down anywhere.

Sir Henry Verelst, when he was ushered in, large and stout and expectant, instantly knocked over a white china mandarin whose tongue dropped out on the carpet as he picked it up. He replaced it with awe, tongue and all, and then, taking refuge on the hearthrug, promenaded his pale prawn-like eyes round the apartment to see where he could put down his hat. But apparently there was no vacant place, for he continued to clutch it in a tightly-gloved hand, and to stare absently in front of him, sniffing the unmodulated sniff of solitary nervousness.

Sir Henry had a vacant face. The only change of which it was capable was a change of colour. Under the influence of great emotion he could become very red, instead of red, but that was all. He was a stout

man, and his feelings never got as far as the surface; they probably gave up the attempt half way. He was feeling a great deal—for him—at this moment, but his face was as stolid as a doll's. He had fallen suddenly and desperately in love, bald head over red ears in love, with Madeleine, after his own fashion, since she had shown him so decidedly that he was dear to her on that evening a fortnight ago when he had hovered round her in his usual "fancy free" and easy manner, merely because she was the prettiest girl in the room. He now thought her the most wonderful and beautiful and religious person in the world. He had been counting the hours till he should see her again. He did not know how to bear being kept waiting in this way; but he did not turn a hair, possibly because there were not many to turn. He stood as if he were stuffed. At last, after a long interval,

there was a step in the passage. He sighed copiously through his nose, and changed legs; his dull eyes turned to the *portière*.

A French maid entered, who in broken English explained that mademoiselle could not see monsieur. Mademoiselle had a headache. Would monsieur call again at five o'clock?

Sir Henry started, and became his reddest, face, and ears, and neck; but, after a momentary pause, he merely nodded to the woman and went out, knocking over the same china figure from the same table as he did so, but this time without perceiving it.

As soon as he was gone, the maid replaced the piece of china now permanently tongueless, and then raised her eyes and hands.

“Mon Dieu!” she said below her breath, as she left the room. “Quel fiancé!”

A few moments later Madeleine came in.

her headache appeared to be sufficiently relieved to allow of her coming down now that her betrothed had departed. She pulled down the rose-coloured blinds, and then flung herself with a little shiver on to the couch beside the fire. She was very pretty, very fair, very small, very feminine in dress and manner. That she was seven and twenty it would have been impossible to believe, except by daylight, but for a certain tinge of laboured youthfulness in her demeanour.

She put up two of the dearest little hands to her small curled head, and then held them to the fire with a gesture of annoyance. Her eyes—they were pretty appealing eyes, with delicately-bistred eyelashes—fell upon her diamond engagement-ring as she did so, and she turned her left hand from side to side to make the stones catch the light.

She was still looking at her ring when the

door opened, and "Miss Tempest" was announced.

"Well, Madeleine?" said a fresh clear voice.

"*Dear Di!*" said Madeleine, rising and throwing herself into her friend's arms. "How good of you to come, and so early, too! I have been so longing to see you, so longing to tell you about everything!" She drew her visitor down beside her on the couch, and took possession of her hand.

"I am very anxious to hear," said Di, disengaging her hand after a moment, and pulling off her furred gloves and boa.

"Let me help you, you dear thing," said Madeleine, unfastening her friend's coat, in which action the engagement-ring took a good deal of exercise. "Is it very cold out? What a colour you have! I never saw you looking so well."

"Really?" said Di, remembering how

Madeleine had made the same remark on her return last year from fishing in Scotland with her face burnt brick red. "One does not generally look one's best after being out in a wind like a knife; but I am glad you think so. And now tell me all about *it*."

Di's long, rather large, white hand was taken into both Madeleine's small ones again, and fondled in silence for a few moments.

Di looked at her with an expression half puzzled, half benevolent, as a Newfoundland might look at a toy terrier. She was in reality five or six years younger than Madeleine, but her height and a certain natural dignity of carriage and manner gave her the appearance of being much older—by a rose-coloured light.

"It was very sudden," said Madeleine in a shy whisper, evidently enjoying the situation.

“How sudden? Do you mean it was a sudden idea on his part?”

“No, you tiresome thing, of course not; but it came upon *me* very suddenly.”

“Oh!”

After all a bite may with truth be called sudden by the angler who has long and persistently cast over that and every other rise within reach.

“You see,” said Madeline, “I had not seen him for a long time, and somehow his being so much older and—and everything, and——”

Di recalled the outward presentment of Sir Henry—elderly, gouty, the worse for town wear.

“I see,” she said gravely.

There was a pause.

“I knew you would feel with me about it,” said Madeleine, affectionately. “I always think you are so sympathetic.”

“ But you *did* think it over—it did occur to you before he asked you ? ” said the sympathizer in rather a low voice.

“ Oh yes ! The night before I thought of it.”

“ The night before ? ” echoed Di.

“ Yes, that last evening at Narbury. I don't know how it was ; there were some much prettier girls there than me, but I was quite monopolized by the men—Lord Algy and Captain Graham in particular ; it was really most embarrassing. I have such a dislike to being made conspicuous. One on each side of the piano, you know ; and, as I told them, they ought not to leave the other girls in the way they were doing. There were two girls who had no one to speak to all the evening. I begged them to go and talk to them, but they would not listen ; and Sir Henry stood about near, and would insist on turning over, and somehow

suddenly I thought he meant something, but I never thought it would be so quick. Men are so strange. I sometimes think they look at things *quite* differently from a woman. It's such a solemn thought to me that we have got to influence them, and draw them up."

"Or draw them on," said Di gravely—"one or the other, or both at the same time. Yes, it's very solemn. When did you say Sir Henry became sudden?"

"Next morning—the very next morning, after breakfast, in the orchid-house. I just wandered in there to read my letters. It took me entirely by surprise. It is such a comfort to talk to you, dear Di. I know you do enter into it all so."

"Not into the orchid-house," said Di, looking straight in front of her.

"You naughty thing!" said Madeleine, delightedly. "I shall shake you if you tease like that."

To threaten to shake any one was Madeleine's sheet-anchor in the form of repartee. Di knit her white brows.

"And though the idea had never so much as crossed your mind till a few hours before, still you accepted him?" she asked.

"No," said Madeleine, withdrawing her hand with dignity; "of course I did not. I don't know what other girls feel about it, but with me there is something too solemn, too sacred, in an engagement of that kind to rush into it all in a moment. I told him so, and that I must think it over, and that I could not answer him anything at once."

"And how long did you think it over?"

"All that morning. I stayed by myself in my own room. I did not go out, though the others all went to a steeplechase on Lord Algy's drag, and I had a new gown on purpose. I suppose most girls would have gone, but I felt I could not. I can't

take things lightly like some people. I dare say it is a mistake, but I always have felt anything of that kind very deeply."

"I suppose he did not go either?"

"N—no, he didn't."

"That would have been awkward if you had not intended to accept him."

Madeleine looked into the fire.

"It was a very painful time," she went on, after a pause. "And it was so embarrassing at luncheon—only him and me, and that old General Hanbury. Every one else had gone."

"Even your mother?"

"Yes; she was the chaperone of the party, as Mrs. Mildmay had a headache. But I did not want her to stay. She did not know till it was all settled. I could not have talked about it to her; mamma and I feel so differently. You know she always remembers how much she cared for poor

papa. I was dreadfully perplexed what I ought to do, but"—in a lowered voice—"I took it where I take all my troubles, Di. I prayed over it ; I laid it all before——"

Madeleine stopped short as Di suddenly hid her face in her hands. The white nape of her neck was crimson.

"And then?" she asked, after a moment's silence, with her face still hidden.

"Then it all seemed to become clear," murmured Madeleine, gratified by Di's evident envy. "And I saw it was *meant*. You know, Di, I believe those things are decided for one. And I felt quite peaceful, and I went out for a little bit in the garden, and the sun was setting—I always care so much for sunsets, they mean so much to me, and it was all so beautiful and calm ; and—I suppose he had seen me go out—and——"

Di uttered a sound between a laugh and

a sob, which resulted in something like a croak. Her fair face was red with—*was* it envy?—as she raised her head. Two large tears stood in her indignant wistful eyes. She looked hard at Madeleine, and the latter avoided her direct glance.

“Madeleine,” she said, “do you care for this man?”

Madeleine gave a little pout which would have appealed to a masculine heart, but which had no effect on Di.

“I was very much surprised when you wrote to tell me,” continued Di, rather hurriedly. “I never should have thought—when I remember what he is—I can’t believe that you can really care about him.”

“I have a great influence over him—an influence for good,” said Madeleine. “He would promise anything I asked; he has already about smoking. I know he has not been always—— But you know a woman’s

influence. I always mention him in my prayers, Di."

Madeleine had been long in the habit of presenting the names of her most eligible acquaintances of the opposite sex to the favourable consideration of the Almighty, without whose co-operation she was aware that nothing matrimonially advantageous could be effected, and in whose powers as a chaperon she placed more confidence than in the feeble finite efforts of a kind but unworldly mother. She had never so far felt impelled to draw His attention to the spiritual needs of younger sons.

"Every woman has an enormous influence for the time over a man who is in love with her," said Di, who seemed to have frozen perceptibly. "It is nothing peculiar. It is one of the common stock feelings on such occasions. The question is, Do you really care for him?"

Madeleine shivered a little, and then suddenly burst into uncontrollable weeping. Di was touched to the quick. Loss of self-control sometimes moves reserved people profoundly. They know that only an overwhelming onslaught of emotion would be able to wrest their own self-control from them; and when they witness the loss of it in another, they think that it must have been caused by the same amount of suffering.

“I think you are very unkind, Di,” Madeleine said, between her sobs. “And I always thought you would be the one to sympathize with me when I was engaged. And I have chosen the bridesmaids’ gowns on purpose to suit you, though I know Sir Henry’s niece, that little fat Dalrymple with her waist under her arms, will look simply hideous in it. And I wrote to you the *very* first! I think you are very unkind!”

“Am I?” said Di, gently, as if she were

speaking to a child ; and she knelt down by the little sobbing figure and put her arms round her. “ Never mind about the bridesmaids’ gowns, dear. It was very nice of you to think how they would suit me. Never mind about anything but just this one thing : Do you think you will be happy if you marry Sir Henry Verelst ? ”

“ Others do it,” sobbed Madeleine. “ Look at Maud Lister, and she hated Lord Lenthams—and he was such a dreadful little man, with a mole, worse than—— But she got not to mind. And I’ve been out nine years. You are only twenty-one, Di. It’s all very well for you to talk like that ; I felt just the same when I was your age. But I shall be twenty-eight this year ; and you don’t know what it feels like to be getting on, and one’s fringe not what it was ; and always having to pretend to be glad when one is bridesmaid to girls younger than one’s self, and

seeing other girls have *trousseaux*, and thinking, perhaps, one will never have one at all. I don't know how I could bear to live if I was thirty and was not married!"

Di was silent for a moment from sheer astonishment at a real declaration of feeling from one who felt, and lived, and talked, and dressed according to a social code fixed as the laws of the Medes and Persians.

Her low voice had a certain tremor of repressed emotion in it as she said: "But think of Sir Henry. The bridegroom is part of the wedding, after all; think of what he is. What can you care for in him? Nothing. I don't see how you could. And he is twice your age. Be a brave girl, and break it off."

Di felt as she said the last words that the courage of being able to break off the engagement was as nothing to that of continuing to keep it. She did not realize that

an entire lack of imagination wears, under certain circumstances, the appearance of the most stoical fortitude.

The brave girl sobbed again, and pressed a little frilled square of cambric to her eyes.

“No,” she gasped; “I can’t—I can’t! It has been in all the papers. Half my things are ordered; I have asked the bridesmaids. I can’t go back now. It is wicked to break off an engagement. God would be very angry with me.”

It is difficult to argue with any one who can make a Jorkins of the Almighty. Every word Madeleine spoke showed her friend how unavailing any further remonstrance would be. Di saw that she had gone through that common phase of imagination which a shallow nature feels to be prophetic. Madeleine had, in what stood proxy for her imagination, already regarded herself as a bride, as the recipient, not of diamonds in

general, but of the Verelst diamonds in particular. Already in maiden meditation she had seen herself arrive at certain houses on bridal visits—had contemplated herself opening a county hunt ball as the bride of the year—until she looked upon the wedding as a settled event, the husband as a necessary adjunct, the *trousseau* as a certainty.

“And you must see my under-things when they come, because we have always been such friends,” continued Madeleine, as Di remained silent. She dried her eyes with little dabs, for even in emotion she remembered the danger of wiping them, while she favoured Di with minute details respecting those complete sets of under-clothing which so mysteriously enhance and dignify the holy estate of matrimony in the feminine mind. But Di was not listening. The image of Sir Henry, who had besought herself to marry him a year ago, reverted to her mind with a re-

membrance of her own repulsion towards the Moloch to which Madeleine was preparing to offer herself up.

“Madeleine,” she said suddenly, “I am sure from what I have seen that marriage is too difficult if you don’t care for your husband. The married people who did not marry for love tell one so by their faces. I am sure there are some hard times to be lived through even when you care very much. Nothing but a great love, granny says, will float one over some of the rocks ahead. But to marry without love is like undertaking to sew without a needle, or dig without a spade—attempting difficult work without the tool provided for it. Oh, Madeleine, don’t do it! Break it off—break it off!”

Madeleine clung closer to the girl kneeling beside her. It almost seemed as if the urgent eager voice were not speaking in vain.

A tap came at the door.

Di, always shy of betraying emotion, was on her feet in a moment. Madeleine drew the screen hastily between herself and the light as she said, "Come in."

It was the French maid, who explained that the dressmaker had sent the two rolls of brocade as she had promised, so that mademoiselle might judge of them in the piece. She brought them in with her, and spread them in artistic folds on two chairs.

Madeleine sat up and gave a little sigh.

"If she gives them up, she will give him up, too," thought Di. "This is the turning-point."

"Di," she said earnestly, "which would you advise, the mauve or the white and gold? I always think you have such taste."

Di started and turned a shade pale. She saw by that one sentence that the die had been thrown, though Madeleine was not

herself aware of it. The moments of our most important decisions are often precisely those in which nothing seems to have been decided ; and only long afterwards, when we perceive with astonishment that the Rubicon has been crossed, do we realize that in that half-forgotten instant of hesitation as to some apparently unimportant side issue, in that unconscious movement that betrayed a feeling of which we were not aware, our choice was made. The crises of life come, like the Kingdom of Heaven, without observation. Our characters, and not our deliberate actions, decide for us ; and even when the moment of crisis is apprehended at the time by the troubling of the water, action is generally a little late. Character, as a rule, steps down first. It was so with Madeleine.

Sir Henry owed his bride to the exactly timed appearance of a mauve brocade sprinkled with silver *fleur-de-lys*. The maid

turned it lightly, and the silver threads gleamed through the rich pale material.

“It is perfect,” said Madeleine in a hushed voice; “absolutely perfect. Don’t you think so, Di? And she says she will do it for forty guineas, as she is making me other things. The front is to be a silver gauze over plain mauve satin to match, and the train of the brocade. The white and gold is nothing to it.”

“It is very beautiful,” said Di, looking at it with a kind of horror. It seemed to her at the moment as if every one had their price.

Madeleine smiled faintly. She felt that Di must envy her. It was of course only natural that she should do so. A thought strayed across her mind that in the future many gowns of this description, hitherto unobtainable and unsuitable, might sweeten existence; and she would be kind to Di.

She would press an old one, before it was really old, on her occasionally.

Madeleine gave the sigh that accompanies relaxation from intense mental strain.

“I will decide on the mauve,” she said.





CHAPTER VI.

“Ready money of affection
Pay, whoever drew the bill.”

CLOUGH.

“**P**UT not your trust in brothers,” said Di, coming in from a balcony after the departure of the bride and bridegroom, and looking round the crowded drawing-room, where the fictitious gaiety of a wedding was more or less dismally stamped on every face. “I do believe Archie has deserted me.”

“I know he has,” said her companion. “He told me half an hour ago that he was going to bolt.”

“Did he? The deceiver! He gave me a solemn promise that he would see me home. I believe young men are the root of all evil. Don't pin your faith to them, Lord Hemsworth, or you will live to rue it, like me.”

“I won't.”

“And why, pray, did not you mention the fact that he was going when I was laboriously explaining all the presents to you, and exhausting myself in pointing out watches in bracelets or concealed in the handles of umbrellas, which you were quite unable to see for yourself? One good turn deserves another. Ah! now the people are really beginning to go. Is not that Lady Breakwater in the inner drawing-room? Poor woman—I mean, happy mother! I will try and get near her to say good-bye. Look at her smiling; I think I should know a wedding smile anywhere.”

“No, you need not see me home,” she added a few minutes later, as she stood in the hall. “Have I not a hired brougham? One throws expense to the winds on an occasion of this kind. There comes your hansom behind it. What a lovely chestnut! How I do envy you it! The blessings of this world are very unevenly distributed. Good-bye.”

“I am going to see you home,” said Lord Hemsworth, with decision. “It is the duty of the best man to make himself generally useful to the chief bridesmaid. I’ve read it in my little etiquette book; and, however painful my duty may be made to me, I shall perform it.”

“You have performed it thoroughly already. No, you are not coming in. Don’t shut the door on my gown, please. Thanks. Home, coachman.”

“Are you going to the Speaker’s to-

night?" said Lord Hemsworth, with his arms on the carriage-door, perfectly regardless of the string of carriages behind him.

"I am."

"Good luck; so am I."

"That's not in the etiquette book," said Di, with mischief in her eyes. "In the meantime you are stopping the whole procession. We have shaken hands once already. Good-bye again."

Mrs. Courtenay was sitting in her arm-chair with her back to the light in the long sunny drawing-room of her little house in Kensington, waiting for the return of her granddaughter from the wedding to which at the last moment she had been unable to escort her herself. Her headache was better now, and she had taken up her work, the fine elaborate lace work in imitation of

an old design which she had copied in some Italian church.

Mrs. Courtenay had been one of the four beautiful Miss Digbys of Ebberstone about whom society had gone wild fifty years ago ; and in her old age she was beautiful still, with the dignified and gracious manner of one who has been worshipped in her day. Her calm keen face bore the marks of much suffering, but of suffering that had been outlived. Perhaps next to the death of her husband, who had left her in her early youth to struggle with life alone, the blow which she had felt most keenly had been the clandestine and most miserable marriage of her only daughter with Colonel Tempest ; but it was all past now. People while they are undergoing the strain of the ordinary ills that flesh is heir to, the bitterness of inadequately returned love, the loss or alienation of children, the grind of poverty

or the hydra-headed wants of insufficient wealth, are not as a rule pleasant or sympathetic companions. The lessons of life are coming too quickly upon them to allow of it. They are preoccupied. But *tout passe*. Mrs. Courtenay had loved and had suffered, and had presented a brave front to the world, and had known wealth, as she now knew poverty. The pain was past; the experience remained; therein lay the secret of her power and her popularity, for she had both. She seemed to have reached a little quiet backwater in the river of life where the pressure of the current could no longer reach her, would never reach her again. She sometimes said that nothing could affect her very deeply now, except, perhaps, what affected her granddaughter. But that was a large exception. Mrs. Courtenay loved her granddaughter with some of the stern tender affection which she had once lavished on her

own daughter—which she had buried in her grave. The elder Diana had taken two hearts down to the grave with her—her mother's and Mr. Tempest's.

Mrs. Courtenay had that rarest gift—

“A heart at leisure from itself
To soothe and sympathize.”

To that little house in Kensington many came, long before her beautiful granddaughter was of an age to be its principal attraction, as she had now become. Mrs. Courtenay's house had gained the magic name of being agreeable, possibly because she made it so to one and all alike. None but the pushing and the dictatorial were ever overlooked. Country relations with the loud voices and the abusive political views peculiar to rural life were her worst bugbears, but even they had a pleasing suspicion that they had distinguished themselves in conversation, and departed with

the gratified feeling akin to that depicted on a plain woman's face when she has come out well in a photograph.

In talking with the young Mrs. Courtenay remembered her own far-away youth, its romantic passions, its watchful nights, its splendour of sunrise illusions. She remembered, too, its great ignorance, and was not, like so many elders, exasperated with the young for having omitted to learn, before they came into the world, what they themselves only learned by living half a century in it.

She had sympathy with old and young alike, but perhaps she felt most deeply for those who were struggling in the meshes of middle age, no longer interesting to others or even to themselves. Many came to Mrs. Courtenay for comfort and sympathy in the servitude with hard labour of middle age, and none came in vain.

Mrs. Courtenay lifted her calm clear eyes to the Louis Quatorze clock on the old Venetian cabinet near her.

“Di is late,” she said half aloud.

The low sun was thinking better of it, and was shining in through the tracery of the bare branches of the trees outside. If there was ever a ray of sunshine anywhere, it was in that little Kensington drawing-room. The sun never forgot to seek it out, to come and have a look at the little possessions which in spite of her narrow means Mrs. Courtenay had gradually gathered round her. It came now, and touched the white *Capo di Monte* figures on the mantel-piece, and brought into momentary prominence the inlaid ivory dolphins on the ebony cabinet; those dolphins with curly tails which two Dianas had loved at the age when permission to drive dolphins and sit on waves was not a final impossibility

though denied for the moment. It lighted up the groups of Lowestoft china, and the tall Oriental jars which Mrs. Courtenay suffered no one to dust but herself. The little bits of old silver and enamel on the black polished table caught the light. So did the daffodils in the green Vallauris tripod. They blazed against the shadowed pictured wall. The quiet room was full of light.

Presently a carriage stopped at the door, the bell rang, and a moment later a swift light step mounted the stair, and Di came in, tall and radiant in her flowing white and yellow draperies, her bouquet of mimosa in her hand.

She was beautiful, with the beauty that is recognized at once. Beauty is so rare nowadays and prettiness so common, that the terms are often confused and misapplied, and the most ordinary good looks usurp

the name of beauty. But between prettiness and beauty there is nevertheless a great gulf fixed. No one had ever called Di a pretty girl. At one and twenty she was a beautiful woman, with that nameless air of distinction which can ennoble the plainest face and figure.

She had a right to beauty from both parents, and resembled both of them to a certain degree. She had the tall splendid figure of the Tempests with their fair skin and pale golden hair, waving back thick and burnished from her low white forehead. But she had her mother's dark unfathomable eyes with the long dark eyelashes, and her mother's features with their inherent nobility and strength, which were so entirely lacking in the Tempests—at least, in the present generation of them. Some people, women mostly, said there was too much contrast between her dark eyes and eyebrows and the

extreme fairness of her complexion and hair. Men, however, did not think so. They saw that she was beautiful, and that was enough. Indeed, it was too much for some of them. Women said, also, that her features were too large, that she was on too large a scale altogether. No doubt that accounted for the fact that she was seldom overlooked.

“Well, Granny, and how is the headache?” she asked gaily, pulling off her long gloves and instantly beginning to unwire the mimosa in her bouquet with rapid, capable white hands.

“Oh! the headache is gone,” said Mrs. Courtenay, watching her granddaughter. “And how did it all go off?”

“Perfectly,” said Di, in her clear gay voice. “Madeleine looked beautiful, and often as I have been bridesmaid I never stood behind a bride with a better fitting back. I suppose the survival of the best

fitted is what we are coming to in these days. Anyhow, Madeleine attained to it. It was a well done thing altogether. The altar one mass of white peonies! White peonies at Easter! Sir Henry was the only red one there. And eight of us all youth and innocence in white and amber to bear her company. We bridesmaids were all waiting for her for some time before she arrived or he either; but Lord Hemsworth marched him in at last, just when I was beginning to hope he would not turn up. I have seen him look worse, Granny. He did not look so very bald until he knelt down, and I have known his nose redder. To a friend I dare say it only looked like a blush that had lost its way. He is a stout man to outline himself in a white waistcoat, but I thought on the whole he looked well."

"Di," said Mrs. Courtenay, with her little

inward laugh, "you should not say such things."

"Oh yes, I can say anything I like to you," said Di. "Dear me, I am sitting on my new amber sash! What extravagance! It will be long enough before I have another. It was really good of Lady Breakwater to give me the whole turn-out. We never could have afforded it."

"Did Madeleine look unhappy?"

"No; she was pale, but perfectly collected, and she walked quite firmly to the chancel steps where the security for fifteen thousand a year and two diamond tiaras and a pendant was awaiting her. The security looked a little nervous."

"Di," said Mrs. Courtenay, with an effort after severity, "never again let me hear you laugh at the man who once did you the honour to ask you to marry him. You show great want of feeling."

Di's face changed. It became several degrees sterner than her grandmother's. That peculiar concentrated light came into her soft lovely eyes which is a life-long puzzle to those who can see only one aspect of a character, and whose ideas are consequently thrown into the wildest confusion by a change of expression. There was at times an appearance of intensity of feeling about Di which sometimes gleamed up into her eyes and gave a certain tremor to her low voice, that surprised and almost frightened those who regarded her only as a charming but somewhat eccentric woman. Di's best friends said they did not understand her. The little foot-rule by which they measured others did not seem to apply to her. She was grave or gay, cynical or tender, frivolous or sympathetic, according to the mood of the hour, or according as her quick intuition and sense of mischief showed her the

exact opposite was expected of her. But behind the various moods which naturally high spirits led her into for the moment, keener eyes could see that there was always something kept back—something not suffered to be discussed and commented on by the crowd—namely, herself. Her frank, cordial manner might deceive the many, but others who knew her better were conscious of a great reserve—of a barrier beyond which they might not pass; of locked rooms in that sunny, hospitable house into which no one was invited, into which she had, perhaps, as yet rarely penetrated herself.

Mrs. Courtenay possibly understood her better than any one, but Di took her by surprise now. She laid down her flowers and came and stood before her grandmother.

“Do I show want of feeling?” she said, in her low, even voice. “I know I have none for that man; but why should I have

any? If he wanted to marry me, why did he want it? He knew I did not like him—I made that sufficiently plain. Did he care one single straw for anything about me except my looks? If he had liked me ever so little, it would have been different; but why am I to be grateful because he wanted me to sit at the head of his table, and wear his diamonds?”

“You talk as young and silly girls with romantic ideas do talk,” replied Mrs. Courtenay, piqued into making assertions exactly contrary to her real opinions. “I fancied you had more sense! Madeleine did a wise thing in accepting him. She has made a very prudent marriage.”

“Yes,” said Di, moving slowly away and sitting down by the window—“that is just it. I wonder if there is anything in the whole wide world so recklessly imprudent as a prudent marriage? But what am I talking

about?" she added, lightly. "It is not a marriage; it is merely a social contract. I can't see why they went to church myself, or what the peonies and that nice little newly-ironed Bishop were for. They were quite unnecessary. A register-office and a clerk would have done just as well, and have been more in keeping. But how silly it is of me to be wasting my time in holding forth when your cap is not even trimmed for this evening. The price of a virtuous woman is above rubies nowadays. Nothing but diamonds and settlements will secure a first-rate article. And now, to come back to more serious subjects, will you wear your diamond stars, G" —("G" was the irreverent pet name by which Di sometimes called her grandmother) —"or shall I fasten that little marabou feather with your pearl clasp into the point-lace cap? It wants something at the side."

"I think I will wear the diamonds," said

Mrs. Courtenay, thoughtfully. "People are beginning to wear their jewels again now. Only sew them in firmly, Di."

"You should have seen the array of jewellery to-day," said Di, still in the same tone, arranging the mimosa in clusters about the room. "Other people's diamonds seem to take all the starch out of me. A kind of limpness comes over me when I look at tiaras. And there was such a *rivière* and pendant! And a little hansom cab and horse in diamonds as a brooch. I should like to be tempted by a brooch like that. Sir Henry has his good points, after all. I see it now that it is too late. And why do people sprinkle themselves all over with watches nowadays, Granny, in unexpected places? Lord Hemsworth counted five—was it, or six?—set in different presents. There were two, I think, in bracelets, one in a fan, and one in the handle of an umbrella.

What can be the use of a watch in the handle of an umbrella? Then there was a very little one in—what was it?—a paper-knife, set round with large diamonds. It made me feel quite unwell to look at it when I thought how what had been spent on that silly thing would have dressed you and me, Granny, for a year. That reminds me—I shall tear off this amber sash and put it on my white *miroitant* dinner-gown. You must not give me any more white gowns; they are done for directly.”

“I like to see you in white.”

“Oh! so do I—just as much as I like to see you, Granny, in brocade; but it can't be done. I won't have you spending so much on me. If I am a pauper, I don't mind looking like one.”

She looked very unlike one as she gathered up her gloves and lace handkerchief and bouquet holder, and left the room. And yet

they were very poor. No one knew on how small a number of hundreds that little home was kept together, how narrow was the margin which allowed of those occasional little dinner-parties of eight to which people were so glad to come. Who was likely to divine that the two black satin chairs had been covered by Di's strong hands—that the pale Oriental coverings on the settees and sofas that harmonized so well with the subdued colouring of the room were the result of her powers of upholstery—that it was Di who mounted boldly on high steps and painted her own room and her grandmother's an elegant pink distemper, inciting the servants to go and do likewise for themselves?

It was easy to see they were poor, but it was generally supposed that they had the species of limited means which wealth is so often kind enough to envy, with its old formula that the truly rich are those who

have nothing to keep up. This is true if the narrow means have not caused the wants to become so circumscribed that nothing further remains that can *be put down*. The rich, one would imagine, are those who, whatever their income may be, have it in their power to put down an unnecessary expense. But probably all expenses are essentially necessary to the wealthy.

Mrs. Courtenay and her granddaughter lived very quietly, and went without effort, and, indeed, as a matter of course, into that society which is labelled, whether rightly or wrongly, as "good."

Persons of narrow means too often slip out of the class to which they naturally belong, because they can give nothing in return for what they receive. They may have a thousand virtues, and be far superior in their domestic relations to those who forget them, but they *are* forgotten, all the

same. Society is rigorous, and gives nothing for nothing.

But others there are whose poverty makes no difference to them, who are welcomed with cordiality, and have reserved seats everywhere because, though they cannot pay in kind, they have other means at their disposal. Their very presence is an overpayment. Every one who goes into society must, in some form or other, as Mrs. Lynn Linton expresses it, "pay their shot." All the doors were open to Mrs. Courtenay and her granddaughter, not because they were handsomer than other people, not because they belonged by birth to "good" society, and were only to be seen at the "best" houses, but because, wherever they went, they were felt to be an acquisition, and one not invariably to be obtained.

Madeleine had been glad to book Di at once as one of her bridesmaids. Indeed, she had long professed a great affection for the

younger girl, with whom she had nothing in common, but whose beauty rendered it probable that she might eventually make a brilliant match.

As the bridesmaid sat down rather wearily in her own room, and unfastened the diamond monogram brooch—"the gift of the bridegroom"—the tears that had been in her heart all day came into her eyes; Di's slow, difficult tears.

What a mass of illusions are torn from us by the first applauded mercenary marriage that comes very near to us in our youth! Death, when he draws nigh for the first time, at least leaves us our illusions; but this voluntary death in life, from which there is no resurrection, filled Di's soul with loathing compassion. She bowed her fair head on her hands and wept over the girl who had never been her friend, but whose fate might at one time have been her own.



CHAPTER VII.

“Broad his shoulders are and strong ;
And his eye is scornful,
Threatening and young.”

EMERSON.

THERE was the usual crush at the Speaker's, the usual sprinkling of stars and orders, and splendid uniforms. If it made Di feel limp to look at other people's diamonds, she would be very limp to-night.

Two men with their backs to the wall, somewhat withdrawn from the moving pressure of the crowd, were commenting in the absolute privacy of a large gathering on the stream of arrivals.

“Who is that old parchment face and the

eyeglass?" asked the younger man, whose bleached eyes and moustache betokened foreign service.

"Which?"

"Coming in now; looks as if he had seen a thing or two. There—he is talking to one of the Arden twins."

"That man? That is Lord Frederick Fane, an old reprobate. See, he has button-holed Hemsworth. I should like to hear what he is saying to him. Look how his eye twinkles. He is one of our instructors of youth."

"Hemsworth has been standing there for the last half-hour."

"He is waiting; anybody can see that. So am I, though not for the same person."

"Whom are you looking out for?"

"Do you see that dark man with the high nose, talking to the Post Office? There—the Duchess of Southark has just

spoken to him, and is introducing her daughter."

"Do you mean that ugly beggar with the clean-shaved face and heavy jaw?"

"I don't see that he is so ugly. He has got a head on his shoulders, and his face means something, which is more than you can say of many. There is no lack of ability there. He is one of the men of the future, and people are beginning to find it out. He has not taken any line in politics yet, but he is bound to soon. Both sides want him, of course. He is one of our most promising Commoners, Tempest of Overleigh."

The younger man glanced at the square-shouldered erect figure and strong dark face with deep interest.

"Is he the man about whom there was a lawsuit when his father died?"

"Yes; Colonel Tempest brought an action, but he lost it. There was no evidence

forthcoming, though there was very little doubt how matters really stood."

"He is not like the Tempests."

"No; if you want a Tempest pure and simple, look at the man with tow-coloured hair in the further doorway, making running with the little soda-water heiress. That is the regular Tempest style."

"He is too beautiful; he has overdone it," said the other. "If he were less handsome, he would be better looking, and his hair looks like a wig. He has the face of a fool on him."

"The last two generations have had no grit in them. Jack Tempest, the last man, might have done something, but he never came to the fore. He was a trustworthy Conservative, but not an energetic man like his father, the old minister, who lies in Westminster Abbey."

"Perhaps the present man will come to the fore."

“ Perhaps! I know he will ; you can see it in his face, and he has the *prestige* of his name and wealth to back him. But I don’t know which side he will take. I know that he voted right at the last election, but so did half the Liberals. I incline to think he has Liberal leanings, but he refused to stand three years ago for the family constituency, which is an absolute certainty whatever he professes himself, and he has been secretary to the Embassy at St. Petersburg for the last three years.”

“ He is very like his mother’s family, except that the Fanes are not so ugly.”

“ Of course he is like his mother’s family ; it’s an open secret. Look at him now ; he is speaking to Lord Frederick Fane, his mother’s—first cousin. There’s a family resemblance for you ! I wonder they stand together.”

His companion drew in his breath. The

likeness between the elder man and the young one was unmistakable.

“Does he know, do you think?” he asked after a moment.

“Of course he must know that there is a ‘but’ about himself. People don’t grow up in ignorance of such things; but I should think he does *not* know that it is more than a suspicion, that it is a moral certainty, and that Lord Frederick—— But it is seven and twenty years ago, and it is half forgotten now. He is not the only heir with a doubt about him. He will be a credit to the Tempests, anyhow. If the property had fallen into the hands of those two sieves, Colonel Tempest and his son, there would not have been much left of it for the next generation.”

“It’s frightfully hot!” said the younger man. “I shall bolt.”

“Just home from Africa, and find it hot!”

said the other. "Ah!"—with sudden interest, looking back to the doorway—"I thought so. Hemsworth was not waiting for nothing. By —— she *is* handsome, and what a figure! She is the tallest woman in the room except Lady Delmour's two yards of unmarriageable maypole. Look how she moves, and the way her head is set on her shoulders. If I had not a wife and seven children, I should make a fool of myself. I remember her mother, just as handsome twenty years ago, but not so brilliant, and with an unhappy look about her. Hang Tempest! I won't wait any longer for him. I must go and speak to her before Hemsworth takes possession of her."

"You take my advice, John," said Lord Frederick Fane confidentially to his kinsman; "don't tie yourself to a party any more than you would to a woman. Leave that for

fools like Hemsworth. Just go your own way, and give no one a claim on you."

"I intend to go my own way when I have decided where I want to go."

"Well, in the meanwhile don't commit yourself. Always leave yourself a loop-hole."

"I don't see the use of worrying about loop-holes if I don't want to back out of anything. I shall never consciously put myself anywhere where it might be necessary to wriggle out on all fours."

"Oh! I dare say. I thought all that in my salad days, but you'll grow out of it as you get older. You'll chip your shell, John, like the rest of us, he! he! and not be above a shift. There's not a man who won't stoop to a shift on a pinch, provided the pinch is sharp enough, any more than there is a woman, bespoke or otherwise, who does not like being made love to, provided it

is done the right way. That is my experience."

Lord Frederick's experience was that of most men of his stamp, the crown of whose maturer years, earned by a youth of strenuous self-indulgence, is a disbelief in human nature. Secret contempt of women, coupled with a smooth and adulatory manner towards them, show only too plainly the school in which these opinions have been formed.

"Look at Hemsworth," continued Lord Frederick, as Mrs. Courtenay and Di, and Lord Hemsworth in close attendance, were being gradually drifted towards the room in which they were standing. "If Hemsworth goes on giving that girl a hold over him, he will find himself deuced uncomfortable one of these days. He had better hold hard while he can. Discretion is the better part of valour. I've been telling him so."

"Why should he hold hard?" said John,

rather absently. "After all, none but the brave deserve the fair."

"And none but the brave can live with some of them. He, he!" said Lord Frederick, chuckling. "There are cheaper ways of getting out of love than by marriage ; but she is a fine woman. Hemsworth has got eyes in his head, I must own. I remember being dreadfully in love with her mother, nearly thirty years ago, and she with me. She had that sort of stand-off manner which takes some men more than anything ; it did me. I wonder more women don't adopt it. I very nearly married her. He, he ! But Tempest, your uncle, made a fool of himself while I hesitated, and was wretched with her, poor devil ! I have never had such a shave since. Upon my word" putting up his eyeglass—"if I were a young man, I think I'd marry Di Tempest. Those large women wear well, John ; they

don't shrivel up to nothing like Mrs. Graham, or expand like Lady Torrington, that emblem of plenty without waist. He, he! Look at Mrs. Courtenay, too. There's a fine old pelican with an eye to the main chance. Always look at the mother and the grandmother if you can. But she is on too large a scale for you."

"Not in the least," said John, calmly. "I cherish thoughts of Miss Delmour, who is quite three inches taller."

"Don't marry a Delmour! They are too thin. Those girls have neither mind, body, nor estate. I have seen two generations of them. They have a sort of prettiness when they are quite new; but look at her married sisters. They all look as if they had shrunk in the wash."

"I must go and speak to Mrs. Courtenay," said John, from whose impenetrable face it would have been difficult to judge whether

his companion's style of conversation amused or disgusted him. "Three years' absence blunts the recollection of one's friends." And he moved away towards the next room. The recollection of a good many people, however, had apparently not become blunted, and it was some time before he could make his way to Mrs. Courtenay, who was talking with a Turkish Ambassador and revolutionizing his ideas of English women.

She was genuinely glad to see John, having known him from a boy.

"You know your cousin Diana, of course?" she said, as Di came towards them.

"Indeed I do not," said John. "I asked who she was at the Thesinger wedding to-day, and found myself in the ludicrous position of not knowing my own first cousin."

"Not recognizing her, you mean?" said Mrs. Courtenay. "Surely you must have seen her often in my house before you went

abroad ; but I suppose she was in a chrysalis school-room state then, and has emerged into young ladyhood since. Here is your cousin saying he does not know you," continued Mrs. Courtenay, turning to Di. "John, this is Di. Di, this is your first cousin, John Tempest."

Both bowed, and then thought better of it and shook hands. Their eyes met on the exact level of equal height, and the steady keen glance that passed between was like the meeting of two formidable powers. Each was taken by surprise. It was as if, instead of shaking hands, they had suddenly measured swords.

"If you don't know each other you ought to," continued Mrs. Courtenay. "Lord Hemsworth, what is that unwholesome-looking compound you have got hold of?"

"Lemonade for Miss Tempest."

"Kindly fetch me some too." And Mrs.

Courtenay turned away to continue her conversation with the Turk, who was still hovering near, and whose bead-like eyes under his red fez showed a decided envy of John.

He and Di were standing in the doorway that led into the last room where the refreshments were, and a stream of people beginning at that moment to press out again, pressed them back into the room they had just been leaving.

“I shall upset this down some one’s back in another minute and make an enemy for life,” said Di, holding her glass as best she could. She would have given anything at that instant to say something unusually frivolous in order to shake off the impression of the moment before ; but her frivolity had temporarily departed with Lord Hemsworth.

“Don’t oppose the stream ; subside into this backwater,” said John, placing his square shoulders between the throng and

herself, and nodding to a recess by one of the high arched windows.

Having reached it, Di sipped the high-water mark off her lemonade.

“It’s safe now,” she said. “I don’t know why I took it; I don’t want it now I’ve got it. Have you seen Archie since you came back? You know *him*, of course? He often talks about you.”

“Yes, I saw him at the Thesinger wedding to-day.”

“Were you there?”

“Yes, but only at the church. I did not go on to the house; I disliked the whole affair too much. Many marriages, half the marriages one sees, are only irrevocable flirtations; but the ceremony of to-day was not even that.”

Di looked away through the mullioned window out across the river and its gliding shimmer to the lights beyond. She did

not know how long it was before she spoke.

“ I think it was a great sin,” she said, at last, in a low voice, unconscious of a pause that to her companion was full of meaning.

“ Or a great mistake,” he said, gently.

“ No, not a mistake,” said Di, still looking out. “ The others, the irrevocable flirtations, are the mistakes. There was no mistake to-day. But it was a dull wedding,” she added, with sudden self-recollection and a change of manner. “ Not like one I was at last autumn in the country. I was staying in the same house as the bridegroom, and he and the best man, a Mr. Lumley, got up at an early hour, woke some of the other men, and paraded the house with an *impromptu* band of music. I remember the bridegroom performed piercingly upon the comb. I wonder people ever play the comb ; it is so plaintive. But perhaps it is your favourite

instrument, perfected in the course of foreign travel, and I am trampling on your feelings unawares."

"I used to play upon it," said John, "but not of late years. I left it off because it tickled and increased the natural melancholy of my disposition. What were the other instruments?"

"Let me see, Lord Hemsworth murmured upon a gong, and Mr. Lumley uttered his dark speech upon a tray. The whole was very effective. He told me afterwards that it was a relief to his feelings, which had been much lacerated by the misplaced affections of the bride."

Di's laughing mischievous eyes met John's fixed upon her with a grave attention that took her aback. She had an uncomfortable sense that he was regarding her with secret amusement. A moment before she had been sorry that she had inadvertently spoken

with a force that was unusual to her. Now she was equally vexed that she had been flippant.

“Here you are,” said Lord Hemsworth, elbowing his way up to them. “I have been looking for you everywhere. Mrs. Courtenay is going, and is asking for you.”





CHAPTER VIII.

“ Psyché-papillon, un jour
Puisses-tu trouver l’amour
Et perdre tes ailes ! ”

“ **D**I,” said Mrs. Courtenay, as they drove away at last, after the usual half-hour’s waiting for the carriage, the tedium of which Lord Hemsworth had exerted himself to relieve, “ do you usually talk quite so much nonsense to Lord Hemsworth as you did to-night ? ”

“ Generally, granny. Yes, I think it was about the usual quantity. Sometimes it is rather more, a good deal more, when you are not there.”

Mrs. Courtenay was silent for a few minutes.

"You are making a mistake, Di," she said at last.

"How, granny?"

"In your manner to Lord Hemsworth. You make yourself cheap to him. A woman should never do that!"

Di did not answer.

"When I was young," said Mrs. Courtenay, "I should have been proud to have been admired by a man of his stamp."

"So should I," said Di, quietly, "if I did not like him so much."

"You do like him, then?"

"I do, and I mean to act on the square by him!"

"I don't know what you mean."

"Yes, you do, granny, perfectly! I have known him too long to alter my manner to him. I know him by heart. If I once

begin to be serious and reserved with him, if I once fail to keep him at arm's length, which talking nonsense does, his feeling towards me, which only amuses him now, will become serious too. Lord Hemsworth is not so superficial as he seems. He would have been in earnest before now if I would have let him, and he is the kind of man who could be very much in earnest. I can't help his playing with edged tools, but I *can* prevent his cutting himself."

"My dear, he is in love with you now, and has been for the last six months."

"Yes," said Di, "he is in a way; but he would be much worse if he had had encouragement."

"And what do you call allowing him to talk to you for half an hour on the stairs, if it is not encouragement? You may be certain there was not a creature there who did not think you were encouraging him."

“ I don't mind what creatures think, as long as I don't *do* the thing. And he knows well enough I don't ! ”

“ Why *not* do it, if you like him ? ”

“ Well, granny,” said Di, after a pause, “ the way I look at it is this. I don't mean only about Lord Hemsworth, but about any one who, well, who is interested in me—really interested in me, I mean ; not one of the sham ones who want to pass the time. I never consider them. I say something like this to myself. ‘ Di, do you observe that man ? ’ ‘ Yes,’ I say, ‘ my eye is upon him.’ ‘ Are you aware that he will come and speak to you the first instant he can ? ’ ‘ Yes, I know that.’ ‘ Look at him well.’ Then I look at him. ‘ What do you think of him ? ’ ‘ He is rather nice-looking,’ I say, ‘ and he is pleasant to talk to, and he has the right kind of collars. I like him.’ ‘ Di,’ I say to myself very solemnly—you have no

idea how solemn I am on these occasions—
‘are you willing to prefer him to the rest of the whole universe, to listen to his conversation for the remainder of your natural life, to knock under to him entirely; in short, to take him and his collars for better for worse?’
‘No, of course not,’ I say indignantly; ‘I should not think of such a thing!’ ‘Then,’ I reply, ‘you have no earthly right to let him think you might be persuaded to; or to allow him to take a single one of the preliminary steps in that direction, however gratifying it may be to your vanity to see him do it, or however sorry you may be to lose him. He is paying you the highest compliment a man can pay a woman. One good turn deserves another. He has seen you looking at him. Here he comes to try the first rung of the ladder. Stop him at once, before he has climbed high enough for a fall. He will soon go away if he thinks

you are heartless and frivolous. Well, then, he is a good fellow. He deserves it at your hands. Let him think you heartless, and send him away none the worse.' That is something of what I feel about men—I mean the nice ones, granny."

Mrs. Courtenay raised her eyes to the ceiling of the carriage, and her two hands made a simultaneous upheaval under her voluminous wraps. Her hopes for Lord Hemsworth had suffered a severe shock during the last few minutes, and words were a relief.

"Of all the egregious folly I have heard in the course of a long life," she remarked, "I think that takes the palm. How do you suppose any woman in the whole world, or man either, would marry if they looked at marriage like that? Things come gradually."

"Not with me, granny," said Di, promptly.

“Either I see them or I don't see them; and at the beginning I always look on to the end, just as one does in a novel to see whether it is worth reading. I can't pretend to myself when I walk in the direction of church bells that I don't know I shall arrive at the church in the end, however pleasant the walk may be.”

“You will never marry, so you may as well make up your mind to it,” said Mrs. Courtenay, who was already revolving an entirely new idea in her mind, which cast Lord Hemsworth completely into the shade. “If you are so fond of looking at the future, you had better amuse yourself by picturing yourself as a penniless old maid.”

“I wish there was something one could be between an old maid and a married woman,” said Di. “I think if I had my choice I would be a widow.”

Mrs. Courtenay, somewhat propitiated

by her new idea, gave her silent but visible laugh, and Di went on—

“What do you think of John Tempest, granny? He is so black that talking of widows reminded me of him.”

Mrs. Courtenay sustained a slight nervous shock.

“I had not much conversation with him,” she said, stifling a slight yawn. “I am glad to see him back in England. Remind me to ask him next time we have a dinner-party.”

“He looks clever,” said Di. “Ugly men sometimes do. It is a way they have.”

“It does not matter how ugly a man is if he looks like a gentleman.”

“Not a bit,” said Di. “I am only sorry he looks as if he had been cut out with a blunt pair of scissors because he is a Tempest, and Tempests ought to be handsome to keep up the family traditions. Look at the

old man in Westminster Abbey. I am proud of his nose whenever I look at it. I wish the present head of the family had kept a firmer hold on that feature, that is all; and, it being a hook, I should have thought he might easily have done so. I think it is a want of good taste to bring the Fane features so prominently to Overleigh, don't you? Archie represents the looks of the family certainly, and so do I, granny, though I believe you fondly imagine I am not aware of it. But it does not matter so much what we look like, as it does with the head of the family."

"The family has got a head to it for the first time for two generations," remarked Mrs. Courtenay, closing the conversation by putting on her respirator.

As Lord Hemsworth turned away from putting Mrs. Courtenay and Di into their

carriage he saw John coming down the steps.

“Still here?” he said. “I thought you had gone hours ago.”

“It is a fine night,” said John, who did not think it necessary to say that he *was* still there; “I think I shall walk.”

“So will I,” replied Lord Hemsworth, and they went out together.

John and Lord Hemsworth had known each other since the Eton days, and had that sort of quiet liking for each other which has the germ of friendship in it, which circumstances may eventually quicken or destroy.

As they turned into Whitehall a hansom, one of many, passed them at a foot's pace, with its usual civil interrogatory, “Cab, sir?”

“That cab horse with the white stocking reminds me,” said Lord Hemsworth, “that I was looking at a bay mare at Tattersall's to-day for my team. I wish you would

come and see her, Tempest. I like her looks, and she is a good match to the other bay, but she has a white stocking."

"I don't see any harm in one," said John, with interest; "but it rather depends on the rest of the team."

"That is just it," said Lord Hemsworth. "I drive a scratch team this year, two greys and two bays with black points. She is right height, good action, not too high, and has been driven as a wheeler, which is what I want her for; but I don't like the idea of a white stocking among them."

And talking of one of the subjects that most Englishmen have in common, they proceeded slowly past the Horse Guards and into Trafalgar Square.

"Tempest," said Lord Hemsworth, after a time, "do you know it strikes me very forcibly that we are being followed?"

"Not likely," said John.

“Not at all likely, but the fact all the same. Look there, that is the same hansom waiting at the corner that hailed us as we came out of the gates. I know him by the white stocking.”

“I should imagine there might be about five hundred and one cab horses with white stockings in London.”

“I dare say, but I know a horse again when I see him just as much as I know a face. I bet you anything you like that is the same horse.”

“I dare say it is,” said John absently.

Lord Hemsworth said nothing more. They walked up St. James’s Street in silence.

“I have taken rooms here for the moment,” said John, stopping at the corner of King Street. “I will come round to Tattersall’s about two to-morrow. Good night.”

Lord Hemsworth bade him good night, and then walked on up St. James’s Street,

There were a few hansoms on the stand. The last, which was in the act of drawing up behind the others, had a horse with a white stocking.

“Now,” said Lord Hemsworth to himself, “we will see whether it is Tempest or me he is after, for I am certain it is one of us.”

He stopped short near the cab-stand, and, striking a light, lit a cigarette, holding the match so that his face was plainly visible. Then he proceeded leisurely on his way and turned down Piccadilly. There were a good many people in the street and a certain number of carriages.

Presently he stopped under a somewhat dark archway, and threw away his cigarette.

“No,” he said, after carefully watching for some time the cabs and carriages which passed; “nothing more to be seen of our friend. I wonder what’s up! It’s Tempest he was after, not me.”



CHAPTER IX.

“Is it well with the child?”—2 KINGS iv. 26.

A HAPPY childhood is one of the best gifts that parents have it in their power to bestow ; second only to implanting the habit of obedience, which puts the child in training for the habit of obeying himself later on.

A happy childhood is like a welcome into the world. This welcome John never had. No one had been glad to see him when he arrived. No little ring of downy hair had been cut off and treasured. No one came to look at him when he was asleep. No wedded hands were clasped the closer

for his coming. The love and awe and pride which sometimes meet over the cradle of a first child were absent from his nursery. The old nurse who had been his mother's nurse took him and loved him, and gave herself for him, as is the marvellous way of some women with other people's children. I believe the under-housemaid occasionally came to see him in his bath, and I think the butler, who was a family man himself, gave him a woolly lamb on his first birthday. But excepting the servants and the village people, no one took much notice of John. It is not even on record whether he ever crept, or what the first word he could say was. It was all chronicled on Mitty's faithful heart, but nowhere else. Mitty was proud when he began to sway and reel on unsteady legs. Mitty walked up and down with him in her arms night after night when teeth were coming, crooning little sympa-

thetic songs. Mitty dressed him every afternoon in his best frock with blue sash and ribboned socks, just like the other children who go downstairs. But John never went downstairs at teatime ; never gnawed a lump of sugar with solemn glutinous joy under a parent's eye ; or sucked the stiffness out of a rusk before admiring friends. No one sent for John ; he was never wanted.

Mitty had had troubles. She had buried Mr. Mitty many years ago, and, after keeping a cow of her own, had returned to the service of the Fanes, with whom she had lived before her marriage. But I do not think she ever felt anything so acutely as the neglect of her "lamb."

When Mr. Tempest was expected home John was put through tearful and elaborate toilets. His hair, dark and straight, the despair of Mitty's heart, was worked up till it rose like a crest on the top of his

head ; his bronze shoes (which succeeded the knitted socks) were put on. But after these great efforts Mitty always cried bitterly, and kissed John till he cried too for company, and then his smart things would be torn off, and they would go down to tea together in the housekeeper's room. That was a treat. There was society in the housekeeper's room. Mrs. Alcock was very large, spread over with black silk which had a rich aroma of desserts and sweet biscuits. There were in her keeping certain macaroons John knew of, for she was a person of vast responsibilities. He sat on her knee sometimes, but not often, for she breathed and rose and fell all over, and creaked underneath her buttons. She was kind, but she was billowy, and the geography of her figure was uncertain, and she could never think of anything to interest him but macaroons, and she was enigmatical as to

how the almond was fastened into the top. The butler, Mr. Parker, was estimable, but Mr. Parker, like Mrs. Alcock, was averse to answering questions, even when John inquired, "Why his head was coming through his hair?" Charles the footman was more amusing, but he never came into the house-keeper's room. It was difficult to see as much of Charles as could be wished. He was really funny when Mitty was not there. He could dance a hornpipe in the pantry. John had seen him do it; and Charles was always ready to pull off his coat and give John a ride. What kickings and neighings and prancings there were going upstairs on these occasions. How John clutched round his horse's neck urging him not to spare himself, till he pressed his charger's shirt-stud into his throat. Once on a wet day they went out hunting in the garret gallery, but only once, when Mitty was out: and the

housemaid with the red cheeks was the fox. Ah! what an afternoon that was. But it came to an end all too soon. Charles wiped his forehead at last, and said the fox was "gone to ground," though John knew she was only in the housemaid's closet, giggling among the brooms. That was an afternoon not to be forgotten, not even to be spoilt by the fact that when Mitty and a bag of bull's-eyes came home she was very angry, and called the fox an "impudent hussy." Perhaps that event was the first that remained distinctly in his memory. Certainly afterwards people and incidents detached themselves more clearly from the haze of confused memories that preceded it.

The following day as it seemed to John—perhaps, in reality many weeks later—he had a vague recollection of a stir in the house, and of seeing various kinds of candles laid out on a table near the storeroom; and then

he was in a new black velvet suit with a collar that tickled, and they were in the picture-gallery, he and Mitty, and there were lamps, and all the white sheets were gone from the furniture, and it was all very solemn ; and Mitty held his hand tight and told him to be a good boy, and blew his nose for him with a handkerchief of her own that had crumbs in it, and then wiped her eyes and gave him a flower to hold, telling him to be very careful of it ; and John was *very* careful. Years later he could see that flower still. It was a white orchis with maidenhair ; and then suddenly a door at the further end of the gallery opened, and a tall man, whom John had seen before, came out.

Mitty loosed John's hand and gave him a little push, whispering, "Go and speak to your papa, and give him the pretty flower." But John stood stock still and looked at the advancing figure.

And the tall gentleman came down the gallery, and stopped short rather suddenly when he saw them, and said, "Well, nurse, all flourishing, I hope? Well, John," and passed on.

And Mitty and John were much depressed, and went upstairs again the back way; and Mrs. Alcock met them at the swing door and said *she never did*, and Mitty cried all the time she undressed him, and he pulled the orchis to pieces, and found on investigation that it had wire inside; and experienced the same difficulty in putting it together again next morning that he had previously found in readjusting the toilet of a dead robin after he had carefully undressed it the night before. After that "Papa" became not a familiar but a distinct figure in John's recollection. "Papa" was seen from the nursery windows to walk up and down the bowling-green on the wide plateau in front of the castle, where

the fountain was, with Neptune reining in his dolphins in the middle. John was taught by Mitty to kiss his hand to papa, but papa, who seldom looked up, was apparently unconscious of these blandishments. He was seen to arrive and to depart. Sometimes other men came back with him who met John in the gardens and made delightful jokes, and were almost equal to Charles, only they did not wear livery.

One event followed close upon another.

A lady came to Overleigh. Mitty and Mrs. Alcock agreed that no lady had ever stayed at Overleigh since—and then they stopped: and that very evening John was actually sent for to come down to dessert. Charles, who had run up to the nursery during dinner to say so, remarked with a prefatory “Lawks” that wonders would never cease. John was quite ready at the time the message came, sitting in his black

velvet suit and his silk stockings and his buckled shoes in his own chair by the fire. He had grown out of several suits whilst he waited. It was one of the many inexplicable things that he took in wondering silence at the time, that when he wore those particular garments a certain red cushion was always put on the seat of his little cane-bottomed chair. Mitty told him when he inquired into it that was because of the pattern coming off on his velvets, "blesh" him, and John did not understand, but turned it over in his mind together with everything he heard, and pondered long beside the nursery fire over many things, and was a very solemn, richly-dressed, lonely little boy.

He had always been ready, always waiting when Mr. Tempest was at home. Now at last he was sent for. He took it with a stoic calm. Mitty and Charles were much more excited than he was. Even Mrs. Alcock,

who had seen too much of the ways of scullery and dairymaids to be capable of being surprised at anything in this world—even she was taken aback. Mitty and he went together down the grand staircase; and the carved figures on the banisters had lamps in their hands, so many lamps that they made him wink, and in the great stone hall there was a blazing log fire, and among the statues there were tall palms and growing things.

John was still looking at the white fur rugs upon the stone floor, and counting the claws of the outstretched bear's paws when Charles came to tell them that dinner was over. The moment had come. Mitty took him to the door, opened it, and pushed him gently in.

The dining-hall looked very large and very empty. John had never been in it at night before. A long way off at a little

table in the bay window two people were sitting. A glow of shaded light fell on the table. Mr. Parker was not there. Even Charles, whom John had always considered indispensable in the highest circles, was absent. John walked very slowly across the room and stopped short in the middle, his strong little hands tightly clasped behind his back on the clean folded pocket handkerchief that Mitty had thrust into them at the last moment. He was not afraid, but he did not know what was going to happen next.

The lady turned and looked towards him.

She was pale, with white hair, and a sad, beautiful face as if she had often been very, very sorry. She was older than Mitty and Mrs. Alcock, and Mrs. Evans of the shop, and quite different, very awful to look upon.

John wondered whether she was Queen

Victoria, and whether he ought to kneel down.

“Come here, John,” said Mr. Tempest, but John did not stir.

• “So this is John,” said the lady, and she put out her wonderful jewelled hand with a very gentle smile, and John went straight up to her at once and stood close beside her, on her gown, in fact ; and it was not Queen Victoria. It was Mrs. Courtenay.

After that night a change came over John's life. He was not forgotten any more. Mrs. Courtenay during the few days that she remained at Overleigh came up several times to the nursery, and had long conversations with Mitty. John, arrayed in the stiffest of white sailor suits with anchors at the corners, came down to see her in the sunny morning-room where his mother's picture hung, and showed her at her request his Noah's Ark which Mitty

had given him, and afterwards conversed with her on many topics. He repeated to her the hymn Mitty had taught him,

“When little Samiwell awoke,”

and mentioned Charles to her with high esteem. She was very gentle with him, very courteous. She gave him her whole attention, looking at him with a certain pained compassion. Gradually John unfolded his mind to her. He confided to her his intention of marrying Mitty at a future date, and of presenting Charles at the same time with a set of studs like Mr. Parker's. He was very grave and sedate, and every morning shrank back afresh from going to see her, and then forgot his fears in the kind feminine presence and the welcome that was so new and strange and sweet. Once she took him in her arms and held him closely to her. Her eyes were stern through her tears.

“Poor little fatherless, motherless child!” she said, half to herself, and she put him down and went to the window and looked out—looked out across the forest to the valley and over the stretching woods to the long lines of the moors against the sky. Perhaps she was thinking that it would all belong to that little child some day; the home where she had once hoped to see her own daughter live happily with children growing up about her.

Mr. Tempest came into the room at that moment.

“What, John here?” he said.

“Yes,” she replied, and was silent. There was a great indignation in her face.

“Mr. Tempest,” she said at last, “evil has been done to you, not once, but twice. You have suffered heavily at the hands of others. Be careful that some one does not suffer at *your* hands!”

“ Who ? ”

“ Your,” Mrs. Courtenay hesitated, “ your *heir*.”

“ He *is* my heir,” said Mr. Tempest, sternly ; “ that is enough ! ”

“ Then do your duty by him,” said Mrs. Courtenay. “ You do it to others ; do it also to him.” And thenceforward, and until the day of his death, Mr. Tempest did his duty as he conceived it ! never a fraction more, but never a fraction less.

John was put early to school. No one went down to see the place before he came to it. No one wrote anxiously about him beforehand, describing his health and his attainments in the Latin grammar. Mr. Goodwin, who was afterwards his tutor, long remembered the arrival of the little, square, bullet-headed boy with a servant, with whom he gravely shook hands on the

platform. Mr. Goodwin had come to meet him, and Charles, the last link to home, was parted from in silence. The small luggage was handed over. Once as they left the station, John looked back, and Mr. Goodwin saw the little brown hands clench tightly. John had a trick of clenching his hands as a child, which clung to him throughout life, but he walked on in silence. He was seven years old, and in trousers. *Pantalon oblige.* Mr. Goodwin, a good-natured under-master fresh from college, with small brothers at home, respected his silence. Perhaps he divined something of the struggle that was going on under that brand new little great-coat of many pockets. Presently John swallowed ominously several times.

Mr. Goodwin supposed the usual tears were coming.

“Those are very large puddles,” said John suddenly, with a quaver in his voice,

“larger than——” The voice, though not the courage, failed.

“They are, Tempest,” said Mr. Goodwin, “uncommonly large!”

And that was the beginning of a lasting friendship between the two. That friendship took a long time to grow. John was reserved with the reticence that in a child speaks volumes of what the home-life had been. He had not the habit of talking to any one. He listened and obeyed. At first he held aloof from the other boys. Mr. Goodwin advised him to make friends, and John listened in silence. He had never been with boys before. He did not know how. The first half he was very lonely. He would have been bullied more than he actually was had he not been so strong and so impossible to convince of defeat. As it was, he took his share with a sort of doggedness, and would have started on the

high road to unpopularity in his new little world if he had not turned out good at games. That saved him, and before many weeks were over long blotted accounts of football and cricket and racquets were written to Mitty and Charles. Mr. Goodwin noticed that the weekly letter to his father never contained any particulars of this kind.

There had been a difficulty at first about his correspondence, which — after long pondering upon the same — John had brought to Mr. Goodwin for advice.

“I want to send a letter to some one,” he said one day, when Mr. Goodwin had asked him into his study. “Not father.”

“To whom, then?”

“To Mitty. I said I would write; I promised.” And he produced a very much blotted paper and spread it before Mr. Goodwin.

“It’s a long letter.” It was indeed; the

writing had been so severe and the paper so thin, that it had worked through to the other side.

“For Mitty,” said John. “That is the person it’s for ; and another for Charles, with a picture in it.” And a second sheet, suggestive of severe manual labour, was produced.

“I see,” said Mr. Goodwin, his hand laid carelessly over his mouth, “but—yes, I see. This for Charles, and this for—ahem!—Mitty. And you want them to go to-day?”

“Yes.” John was evidently relieved. He extracted from his trousers pocket two envelopes, not much the worse for seclusion, and laid one by each letter. One envelope was stamped. “I had two stamps,” he explained ; “one I put on, and the other I ate in a mistake. I licked it, and then I could not find it.”

“Well, we will put on another,” said Mr.

Goodwin, who was a person of resources. "Now, what next? Shall we put them into their envelopes?"

John cautiously assented.

"And perhaps you would like me to direct them for you?"

"Yes." John certainly had a nice smile.

"Well, here goes; we will do Charles first. Who is Charles?"

"He lives with us. He brought me in the train."

"Really! Well, what is his name? Charles what?"

"He is not Charles anything," said John, anxiously. "That's just it; he's only Charles."

Mr. Goodwin laid down the pen. He saw the difficulty.

"He must have another name, Tempest," he said. "Try and think."

"I *have* thought," said John. "Before I

came to you I thought. I thought in bed last night."

"And don't you know Mitty's name either?"

"No." John's voice was almost inaudible.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Goodwin, smiling, and not realizing the gravity of the situation. "We can't put 'Mitty' on one letter, and 'Charles' on the other. That would never do, would it?"

There was a moment's silence, in which hope went straight out of John's heart. If Mr. Goodwin could not see his way out of the difficulty, who could? He turned red, and then white. His harsh-featured, little face took an ugly look of acute distress.

"I said I would write," he said, in a strangled voice. "I promised Charles in the pantry; it was a faithful promise."

Mr. Goodwin looked up in surprise, and his manner changed.

“Wait a minute,” he said, eagerly; “the letters shall go. We will manage it somehow. Is Charles the butler at home?”

“No; that is Mr. Parker.”

“What is he, then?”

“He does things for Mr. Parker. Mr. Parker points, and Charles hands the plates.”

“Footman, perhaps?”

“Yes,” said John, with relief, “that’s Charles.”

“Now,” said Mr. Goodwin, with interest, “shall we put, ‘The footman, Overleigh Castle,’ on the envelope? Then it will be sure to reach him.”

“There’s Francis; he’s a footman, too,” suggested John, but with dawning hope. “Francis might get it then. He took a kidney once!”

“We will put ‘Charles, the footman,’ then,” said Mr. Goodwin, writing it. “‘Overleigh Castle,’ Yorkshire. Now then, for the other.”

“When I write to father, what do I put at the end?” said John, his eyes still riveted on the envelope. “‘J. Tempest,’ and then something else.”

“Esquire?” suggested Mr. Goodwin.

“Yes,” said John. “I think I should like Charles to be the same as father, please.”

Mr. Goodwin added a large esquire after the word footman.

“Now for Mitty,” he said. “I suppose Mitty is the housekeeper?”

“Why, the housekeeper is Mrs. Alcock!” said John, with a smile at Mr. Goodwin’s ignorance.

“There seem to be a good many servants at Overleigh.”

“Yes,” replied John, “it is a nice party. We are company to each other. You see, father is always away almost, and he does not play anything when he is at home. Now, Charles always does his concertina in

the evenings, and Francis is learning the flute."

After the direction of the second letter had been finally settled, John licked them carefully up, and looked at them with triumph.

"You must go now," said Mr. Goodwin. "I'm busy."

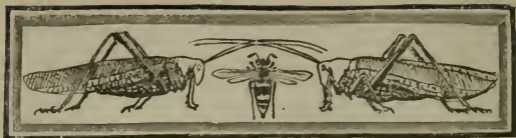
John retreated to the door, and then paused.

"Me and Mitty and Charles are much obliged," he said, with dignity.

"Don't mention it," said Mr. Goodwin.

But the incident remained in his mind.





CHAPTER X.

“Whoso would be a man must be a Nonconformist.”
—EMERSON.

JOHAN was eleven years old when, during a memorable Easter holidays, his father died, and lay in state in the round room in the western tower, and was buried at midnight by torchlight in the little Norman church at Overleigh, as had been the custom of the Tempests from time immemorial.

His father's death made very little difference to John, except that his holidays were spent with Miss Fane, an aunt in London: and Charles left to become a butler with a footman under him; and the other servants,

too, seemed to melt away, leaving only Mitty, and Mr. Parker, and Mrs. Alcock, in the old shuttered home. Mr. Goodwin was John's tutor during the holidays. It was he who saved John's life at the railway station, at the risk of his own.

No one had been aware, till the accident happened, that John had been particularly attached to his tutor. He evidently got on with him, and was conveniently pleased with his society, but he had, to a peculiar degree, the stolid indifferent manner of most school-boys. He was absolutely undemonstrative, and he tacitly resented his aunt's occasional demonstrative affection to himself. When will unmarried elder people learn that children are not to be deceived? John was very courteous, even as a boy, but his best friends could not say of him, at that or at any later period of his life, that he was engaging. He had, through life, a cold manner. No

one had supposed, what really was the case, namely, that he would have given his body to be burned for the sake of the kind, cheerful young man who had taken an easy fancy to him on his arrival at school, and had subsequently become sufficiently fond of him to prefer being his tutor to that of any one else. He guessed John's absolute devotion to himself as little as any one. John's boyish thoughts, and feelings, and affections, were of that shy yet fierce kind, which shrink equally from expression and detection. No one had so far found them hard to deal with, because no one had thought of dealing with them.

Yet John sat for two days on the stairs outside the sick man's room, after the accident, unnoticed and unreprimanded. He was never seen to cry, but he was, nevertheless, almost unable to see out of his eyes. His aunt, Miss Fane, at whose house in London he was spending his Christmas holidays, had

gone down to the country to nurse a sister, and the house was empty, but for the servants and the trained nurse. The doctor, who came several times a day, always found him sitting on the stairs, or appearing stealthily from an upper landing, working himself down by the balusters. He said very little, but the doctor seemed to understand the situation, and always had a kind and encouraging word for him, and gave him Mr. Goodwin's love, and took messages and offers of his best books from John to the invalid. But during those two long days, he always had some excellent reason for John's not visiting his tutor. He was invariably, at that moment, tired, or asleep, or resting, or—— A deep anxiety settled on John's mind. Something was being kept from him.

Christmas Day came and passed. Mitty's present, and a Christmas card from a friend, the Latin master's youngest daughter,

came for John, but they were unopened. The next day brought three doctors who stayed a long time in the drawing-room after they had been in the sick-room.

John sat on the stairs with clenched hands. At last he got up deliberately and went into the drawing-room. Two of the doctors were sitting down. One was standing on the hearth-rug looking into the fire.

“It can’t be done,” he was saying emphatically. “Both must go.”

All three men turned in surprise as John entered the room. He came up to the fire, unaware of the enormity of the crime he was committing in interrupting a consultation. He tried to speak. He had got ready what he wished to ask. But his lips only moved; no words came out.

The consultation was evidently finished, for the man on the hearth-rug, who seemed anxious to get away, was buttoning his fur

coat, and holding his hands to the fire for a last warm. They were very kind. They were not jocose with him, as is the horrible way of some elder persons with childhood's troubles. The old doctor who came daily put his hand on his shoulder and told him Mr. Goodwin had been very ill, but that he was going to get better, going to be quite well and strong again presently.

John said nothing. He was convinced there was something in the background.

"Twelve o'clock to-morrow, then," said the man who was in a hurry, and he took up his hat and went out.

"I have two boys about the same age as you," said the old doctor, patting John's shoulder. "Tom and Edward. They are making a little model steam-engine. I expect you are fond of engines, aren't you?"

"Not just now, thank you," said John. "I am sometimes."

“I wish you would come and see it to-morrow,” continued the doctor. “They would like to show it you, I know. I could send you back in the carriage when it has set me down here about—shall we say twelve? Do come and see it.”

“Thank you,” said John almost inaudibly, “you are very kind, but—I am engaged.”

Miss Fane always said she was engaged when she did not want to accept an invitation, and John supposed it was a polite way of saying he would rather not go. The other doctor laughed, but not unkindly, and the father of Tom and Edward absently drew on his gloves, as if turning over something in his mind.

“Have you seen the new lion, and the birds that fly under water at the Zoo?” he inquired slowly, “and the snakes being fed?”

“No,” said John.

“Ah! That’s the thing to see,” he said

thoughtfully. "Tom and Edward have been. Dear me! How they enjoyed it! They went at feeding time, mid-day. And my nephew, Harry Austin, who is twenty-one and at college, went with them, and said he would not have missed it for anything. You go and see that, with that nice man who answers the bell. I will send you two tickets to-night."

"Thank you," said John.

The two doctors shook hands with him and departed.

"You may as well keep your tickets," said the younger one as they went downstairs. "He does not mean going."

"He is a queer little devil," said Tom's and Edward's father. "But I like him. There's grit in him, and he watches outside that room like a dog. I wish I could have got him out of the house to-morrow, poor little beggar."

John stood quite still in the middle of the long, empty drawing-room when they were gone. A nameless foreboding of some horrible calamity was upon him. And yet—and yet—they had said he was going to get better, to be quite strong again. He waylaid the trained nurse for the twentieth time, and she said the same.

He suffered himself to be taken out for a walk, after hearing from her that Mr. Goodwin wished it; and in the afternoon he consented to go with George, Miss Fane's cheerful, good-natured young footman, to the "Christian Minstrels." But he lay awake all night, and in the morning after breakfast he crept noiselessly back to the stairs. It was a foggy morning, and the gas was lit. Jessie, the stout, silly housemaid, always in a perspiration or tears, was sweeping the landing just above him, sniffing audibly as she did so.

“Poor young gentleman,” she was saying below her breath to her colleague. “I can’t a-bear the thought of the operation. It seems to turn my inside clean upside down.”

John clutched hold of the banisters. His heart gave one throb, and then stood quite still.

“Coleman says as both ’is ’ands must go,” said the other maid also in a whisper. “She told me herself. She says she’s never seen such a case all her born days. They’ve been trying all along to save one, but they can’t. They’re to be took hoff to-day.”

John understood at last.

He slipped downstairs again, and stood a moment in hesitation where to go: not to the little back-room on the ground-floor, which had been set apart for his use by his aunt. He might be found there. George might come in to see if he would fancy a game of battledore and shuttle-cock, or the

cook might step up with a little cake, or the butler himself might bring him a comic paper. The servants were always kind. But he felt that he could not bear any kindness just now. He must be somewhere alone by himself.

The drawing-room door was locked, but the key was on the outside. He turned it cautiously and went in. The room was dark and fiercely cold. Bands of yellow fog peered in over the tops of the shutters. The room had been prepared the day before for the consultation, but now it had returned to its former shuttered, muffled state. John took the key from the outside and locked himself in.

Then he flung himself on his face on to one of the muffled settees and stuffed the dust-sheet into his mouth. Anything not to scream—a low strangled cry was wrenched out of him; another and another, and

another, but the dust sheet told no tales. He dragged it down with him on to the floor and bit into the wet, cobwebby material. And by degrees the paroxysm passed. The power to keep silence returned. At last John sat up and looked round him, breathing hard. A clock ticked in the darkness, and presently struck a single chime. Half - past something—half - past eleven it must be—and they were coming at twelve.

Was there no help ?

“God,” said John suddenly, in a low, distinct voice in the darkness. “Do something. If you don’t stop it nobody else will. You know you can if you like. You divided the Red Sea. Remember all your plagues. Oh, God! God! make something happen. There’s half an hour still. Think of him. Both hands. And all the clever books he was going to write, and all the things he

was going to do. Oh, God! God! and *such* a cricketer!"

There was a short silence. John felt absolutely certain God would answer. He waited a long time, but no one spoke. The fog deepened outside. The quarter struck faintly from the church in the next street.

"I give up one hand," said John, stretching out both of his. "I only ask for one now. Let him keep one—the other one. He is so clever, he could soon learn to write with his left, and perhaps hooks don't hurt after the first. Oh, God! I dare say he could manage with one, but not both, not both."

John repeated the last words over and over again in an agony of supplication. He would *make* God hear.

It was growing very dark. The link-boys were crying in the streets: a carriage stopped at the door.

“Oh, God! They’re coming. Not both; not both!” gasped John, and the sweat broke from his forehead.

Two more carriages—lowered voices in the passage, and quiet footfalls going upstairs. John prayed without ceasing. The house had become very silent. At last the silence awed him, and an overmastering longing to know seized upon him. He stole out of the drawing-room, and sped swiftly upstairs. On the landing opposite Mr. Goodwin’s room the butler was standing listening. Everything was quite still. John could hear the gas burning. There was a can of hot water just outside the door. The steam curled upwards out of the spout. As he reached the landing the door was softly opened, and the nurse raised the heavy can and lifted it into the room.

Through the open door came a hoarse

inarticulate sound, which seemed to pierce into John's brain.

"Courage," said a gentle voice, and the door was closed again. The butler breathed heavily, and there was a whimper from the upper landing. Trembling from head to foot John fled down the stairs again unperceived into the drawing-room, and crouched down on the floor near the open door, turning his face to the wall. Every now and then a strong shudder passed over him, and he beat his little black head dumbly against the wall. But he did not move until at last the doctors came down. He let the first two pass, he could not speak to them; and it was a long time before the father of Tom and Edward appeared. John came suddenly out upon him at the turn of the stairs.

"Is it both?" he said, clutching his coat.

"Both what, my boy?" said the doctor, puzzled by the sudden onslaught, and look-

ing down at the blackened convulsed face and shaggy hair.

“Both *hands*.”

The doctor hesitated.

“Yes,” he said gravely. “I am grieved to say it is.” John flung up his arms.

“I will never pray to God again as long as I live,” he said passionately.

“John,” said the doctor sternly, and then suddenly putting out his hand to catch him as he reeled backwards. “What? Good gracious! The child has fainted.”

John went back to school before the holidays were over, for Miss Fane on her return found it difficult to know what to do with him. Mr. Goodwin came back no more. He slowly regained a certain degree of health, a ruined man, without private means, at seven and twenty. John wrote constantly to him, and wrote also long urgent letters

in a large cramped hand to his trustees. And something inadequate was done. When he came of age his first action was to alter that something, and to induce Mr. Goodwin and the sister who lived with him to take up their abode in the chaplain's house, in the park at Overleigh, where they had now been established nearly seven years. Whether John's was an affectionate nature or not it would be hard to say, for affection had so far intermeddled little with his life; but he had a kind of faithfulness, and a memory of the heart as well as of the head. John never forgot a kindness, never wholly forgot an injury. He might forgive one, for he showed as he grew towards man's estate, and passed through the various vicissitudes of school and college life, a certain stern generosity of temper, and contempt for small retaliations. He was certainly not revengeful, but—he remembered.

His mind was as tenacious of impression as engraved steel. That very tenacity of impression had given Mr. Goodwin an unbounded influence over him in his early youth. John had believed absolutely in Mr. Goodwin; and Mr. Goodwin, hurried by a bitter short cut of suffering from youth to responsible middle age, had devoted himself with the religious fervour of entire self-abnegation to the boy for whom he had risked his life. John's intense attachment to him had after his recovery come as a surprise to him, yoked with a sense of responsibility; for to be loved in any fashion is to incur a great responsibility.

Mr. Goodwin acted according to his lights. But the good intentions of others cannot pave the way to heaven for us. In the manner of many well-meaning teachers, Mr. Goodwin used his influence over John to impress upon him the stamp of his own

narrow religious convictions. He honestly believed it was the best thing he could do for the young, strong, earnest nature which sat at his feet. But John did not sit long. Mr. Goodwin was aghast at the way in which the little chains and check-strings of his scheme of salvation were snapped like thread when John began to rise to his feet. An influence misused, if once shaken, is lost for ever. John went away like a young Samson, taking the poor weaver's inadequate beam with him ; and never came back. Mr. Goodwin's teaching had done its work. John never leaned again "on one mind over-much." Mr. Goodwin pushed him early into scepticism, into which narrow teaching pushes all independent natures, and regarded his success with bitter disappointment. John left him, and Mr. Goodwin's office others took. Mr. Goodwin suffered horribly.

John had not, of course, reached seven

and twenty without passing through many phases, each more painful to Mr. Goodwin than the last. He had spoken fiercely at Oxford on one occasion in favour of community of goods, to the surprise and amusement of his friends ; and on one other single occasion in support of the philosophy of Kant, with which he did not agree, but whose side he could not bear to see inefficiently taken up only for the sake of refutation. When the spirit moved him John could be suddenly eloquent, but the spirit very seldom did. As a rule he saw both sides with equal clearness, and could be forced into partisanship on neither. Those who expected he would make a brilliant speaker in the House of Commons would probably be disappointed in him. It was remarkable, considering he had apparently no special talent or aptitude for any one line of study, and had never particularly

distinguished himself either at school or college, that nevertheless he had unconsciously raised in the minds of those who knew him best, and many who knew him not at all, a more or less vague expectation that he would make his mark, that in some fashion or other he would come to the fore.

The abilities of persons with square jaws are usually taken for granted by the crowd, and certainly John's was square enough to suggest any amount of reserved force. But general expectation rarely falls on those who have sufficient strength not only to resist its baneful influence, but also to realize its hopes. The effect of the expectation of others on many minds is to draw into greater activity that personal conceit which, once indulged, saps the roots of individual life, and gradually vitiates the powers. Conceit is only mediocrity in the bud. Like a blight in Spring it stunts the autumn fruit.

On some natures again the expectation of others acts as a stimulus, the force of which is quite incalculable. It spurs a natural humility into fixed resolution and self-reliance ; turns sloth into energy, earnestness into action, and goads diffidence up the hill of achievement. It has been truly said, that "those who trust us educate us." Perhaps it might be added that those who believe in us make or destroy us.

If John, who was perfectly aware of the enthusiastic or grudging expectations that others had formed of him, had not as yet fallen into either of these two extremes, it was probably because what others might happen to think or not think concerning him was of little moment to him, and had no power to sway him either way.

The thing of all others that puzzled John's staunchest adherents was their inability to fix him in any one set of opinions, social,

political, or religious. Many after Mr. Goodwin tried and failed. For John's great wealth and position, besides the native force of character of which even as a very young man he gave signs, and an openness of mind which encouraged while it ought to have disheartened proselytism, all these attributes had made him an object of interest and importance, which would have ruined a more self-conscious man. As it was, he listened, got to the bottom of the subject, whatever it might be, never left it till he had probed it to the uttermost, and then went his way. He marched out of every mental prison he could be temporarily lured into. He would go boldly into any that interested him, but locks and bars would not hold him directly he did not wish to stay there any longer.

Mr. Goodwin hoped against hope that John would see the error of his ways, and

“come back”; that, according to his mode of expressing himself, the pride of the intellect might be broken, and John might one day be moved to return from the desert and husks and the sw—— philosophy of free thought to his father’s home. He said something of the kind one day to John, and was astonished at the sudden flame that leapt into the young man’s eyes as he silently took up his hat and went out.

The one thing of all others which the Mr. Goodwins of this world are incapable of discerning, is that to leave an outgrown form of faith is in itself an act of faith almost beyond the strength of shrinking human frailty. To bury a dead belief is hard. They regard it invariably as a voluntary desertion, not of their form of religion, but of religion itself for private ends, or from a sense of irksomeness. Mr. Goodwin had reproachfully suggested that John had got into “a

bad set" at Oxford, and was in the habit of mixing in "doubtful society" in London. Those whose surroundings have moulded them attribute all mental changes in others to a superficial and generally an entirely inadequate influence such as would have had power to affect themselves.

John left the house white with anger. He had been anxious and humble half an hour before. He had listened sadly enough to Mr. Goodwin's counsels, the old, old counsels that fortunately always come too late—that are worse than none, because they appeal to motives of self-interest, safety, peace of mind, etc. ; the pharisaical reasoning that what has been good enough for our fathers is good enough for us.

But now his anger was fierce against his teacher, who was so quick to believe evil of any development not of his own fostering.

“He calls good evil, and evil good,” he said to himself. “It seems to me I have only got to lose hold of the best in me, and lead a cheap goody-goody sort of life, and I should please everybody all round, Mr. Goodwin included. He wants me to remain a child always. He would break my mind to pieces now if he could, and would offer up the little bits to God. He thinks the voice of God in the heart is a temptation of the devil. I will not silence it and crush it down, as he wants me to do. I will love, honour, and cherish it from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health.”

There seems to be in life a call which comes to a few only who, like the young man in the Gospel, have great possessions. From youth up the life may have been carefully lived in certain well-worn grooves traced by

the finger of God—grooves in which many are allowed to pass their whole existence. But to some among those many, to some few with great mental possessions, the voice comes sooner or later: “Forsake all, leave all, and follow Me.” How many turn away sorrowful? They cannot believe in the New Testament of the present day. They ponder instead what God whispered eighteen hundred years ago in the ear of a listening Son, but they shrink from recognizing the same voice speaking in their hearts now, completing all that has gone before. And so the point of life is missed. The individual life, namely, the life of Christ—obedient not to Scripture, but to the Giver of the Scripture—is not lived. The life Christ led—at variance with the recognized faiths and fashionable opinions of the day, at variance just because it did not conform to a dead ritual, just because it was obedient throughout

to a personal prompting—that life is not more tolerated to-day than it was eighteen hundred years ago. The Church will have none of it—treats the first spark of it as an infidelity to Christ Himself. Against every young and ardent listening and questioning soul the Church and the world combine, as in Our Lord's day, to crucify once again the Christ—life which is not of their kindling, which is indeed an infidelity, but an infidelity only to them. So the crucifix is raised high. The sign of our great rejection of Him is deified; the Mediator, the Saviour, the Redeemer is honoured. The instrument of His death is honoured; but the thought for the sake of which He was content to stretch His nailed hands upon it, His thought is without honour.

Poor Mr. Goodwin! Poor John! Affection had to struggle on as best it could as

the years widened the gulf between them, and was reduced to find a meagre subsistence in cordial words and sympathy for neuralgia on John's part, and interest in John's shooting and hunting on Mr. Goodwin's. Affectionate and easy terms were gradually re-established between them, and a guarded sympathy on general subjects returned; but Mr. Goodwin knew that, from being "the friend of the inner, he had become only the companion of the outer life" of the person he cared for most in the world, and the ways of Providence appeared to him inscrutable. And now Mr. Goodwin understood John even less at seven and twenty than at twenty-one. The conception of the possibility of a mind that after being strongly influenced by a succession of the most "dangerous" teachers and books, gives final allegiance to none, and can at last elect to stand alone, was impossible to Mr. Goodwin. And yet John arrived at that

simple and natural result at which those who have sincerely and humbly searched for a law and an authority outside themselves do arrive. An external authority is soon seen to be too good to be true. There is no court of appeal against the verdict of the inexorable judge who dwells within.

How many rush hither and thither and wear down the patience of earnest counsellors, and whittle away all the best years of their lives to nothingness, in fretting and scratching among ruins for the law by which they may live! They look for it in Bibles, in the minds of anxious friends who turn over everything to help them, in the face of Nature, who betrays the knowledge of the secret in her eyes, but who utters it not. And last of all a remnant of the many look in their own hearts, where the great law of life has been hidden from the beginning.

David says : " Yea, Thy law is within my heart." A greater than David said the same. But it is buried deep, and few there be that find it.





CHAPTER XI.

“Still as of old
Man by himself is priced.
For thirty pieces Judas sold
Himself, not Christ.”

H. C. C.

LENT gave way to Easter, and Easter melted into the season, and Mrs. Courtenay gave a little dinner-party, at which John was one of the guests; and Madeleine was presented on her marriage; and Di had two new gowns, and renovated an old one, and nearly broke Lord Hemsworth's heart by refusing the box-seat on his drag at the meeting of the Four-in-hand; and Lord Hemsworth did not invest in the

bay mare with the white stocking, but turned heaven and earth to find another with black points, and succeeded, only to drive in lonely bitterness to the meet. And John was to have been there also, but he had been so severely injured in a fire which broke out at his lodgings, in the room below his, three weeks before, that he was still lying helpless at the house in Park Lane, which he had lent to his aunt, Miss Fane, and whither he was at once taken, after the accident, to struggle slowly back to life and painful convalescence.

For the last three weeks, since the fire, hardly any one had seen Colonel Tempest. The old horror had laid hold upon him like a mortal sickness. Sleep had left him. Remorse looked at him out of the eyes of the passers in the street. There was no refuge. He avoided his club. What might he not hear there! What might not have happened in the night! He could trust himself to go

nowhere for fear of his face betraying him. He wandered aimlessly out in the evenings in the lonelier portions of the Park. Sometimes he would stop his loitering, to follow with momentary interest the children sailing their boats on the Round Pond, and then look up and see the veiled London sunset watching him from behind Kensington Palace, and turn away with a guilty sense of detection. The aimless days and waking ghosts of nights came and went, came and went, until his misery became greater than he could bear. The resolutions of the weak are as much the result of the period of feeble, apathetic inertia that precedes them, as the resolutions of the strong are the outcome of earnest reflection and mental travail.

“It will kill me if it goes on,” he said to himself. There was one way, and one only, by means of which this intolerable weight might be shifted from his shoulders. He

hung back many days. He said he could not do *that*, anything but *that*—and then he did it.

His heart beat painfully as he turned his steps towards Park Lane, and he hesitated many minutes before he mounted the steps and rang the bell at the familiar door of the Tempest town-house, where his father had lived during the session, where his mother had spent the last years of her life after his death.

It was an old-fashioned house. The iron rings into which the links used to be thrust still flanked the ponderous doorway, together with the massive extinguisher.

The servant informed him that Mr. Tempest had been out of danger for some days, but was not seeing any one at present.

“Ask if he will see me,” said Colonel Tempest, hoarsely. “Say I am waiting.”

The man left him in the white stone hall

where he and his brother Jack had played as boys. The dappled rocking-horse used to stand under the staircase, but it was no longer there: given away, no doubt, or broken up for firewood. John might have kept the poor old rocking-horse. Recollections that took the form of personal grievances were never far from Colonel Tempest's mind.

In a few minutes the man returned, and said that Mr. Tempest would see him, and led the way upstairs. A solemn, melancholy-looking valet was waiting for him, who respectfully informed him that the doctor's orders were that his master should be kept very quiet, and should not be excited in any way. Colonel Tempest nodded unheeding, and was conscious of a door being opened, and his name announced.

He went forward hesitatingly into a half-darkened room.

“Pull up the further blind, Marshall,” said John’s voice. The servant did so, and noiselessly left the room.

Colonel Tempest’s heart smote him.

The young man lay quite motionless, his dark head hardly raised, his swathed hands stretched out beside him. His unshaved face had the tension of protracted suffering, and the grave steady eyes which met Colonel Tempest’s were bright with suppressed pain. The eyes were the only things that moved. It seemed to Colonel Tempest that if they were closed—. He shuddered involuntarily. In his morbid fancy the prostrate figure seemed to have already taken the rigid lines of death, the winding-sheet to be even now drawn up round the young haggard face.

Colonel Tempest was not gifted with imagination where he himself was not concerned. He was under the impression that the influenza, from which he occasionally

suffered, was the most excruciating form of mortal illness known to mankind. He never believed people were really ill until they were dead. Now he realized for the first time that John had been at death's door ; that is to say, he realized what being at death's door was like, and he was fairly staggered !

“Good God, John !” he said with a sort of groan. “I did not know it had been as bad as this.”

“Sit down,” said John, as the nurse brought forward a chair to the bedside, and then withdrew, eyeing the new-comer suspiciously. “It is much better now. I receive callers. Hemsworth was here yesterday. I can shake hands a little ; only be very gentle with me. I cry like a girl if I am more than touched.”

John feebly raised and held out a bandaged hand, of which the end of three fingers only

were visible. Colonel Tempest, whose own feelings were invariably too deep to admit of his remembering those of others, pressed it spasmodically in his.

“It goes to my heart to see you like this, John,” he said with a break in his voice.

John withdrew his hand. His face twitched a little, and he bit his lip, but in a few moments he spoke again firmly enough.

“It is very good of you to come. Now that I have got round the corner, I shall be about again in no time.”

“Yes, yes,” said Colonel Tempest, as if reassuring himself. “You will be all right again soon.”

“You look knocked up,” said John, considering him attentively with his dark earnest gaze.

“Do I?” said Colonel Tempest. “I dare say I do. Yes, people may not notice it as

a rule. I keep things to myself, always have done all my life, but—it will drag me into my grave if it goes on much longer, I know that.”

“If what goes on?”

It is all very well for a nervous rider to look boldly at a hedge two fields away, but when he comes up with it, and feels his horse quicken his pace under him, he begins to wonder what the landing on the invisible other side will be like. There was a long silence, broken only by Lindo, John's Spanish poodle, who, ensconced in an arm-chair by the bedside, was putting an aristocratic and extended hind leg through an afternoon toilet by means of searching and sustained suction.

“I don't suppose there is a more wretched man in the world than I am, John,” said Colonel Tempest at last.

“There is something on your mind, perhaps.”

“Night and day,” said Colonel Tempest, wishing John would not watch him so closely. “I have not a moment’s peace.”

“You are in money difficulties,” said John, justly divining the only cause that was likely to permanently interfere with his uncle’s peace of mind.

“Yes,” said Colonel Tempest. “I am at my wit’s end, and that is the truth.”

John’s lips tightened a little, and he remained silent. That was why his uncle had come to see him then. His pride revolted against Colonel Tempest’s want of it, against Archie’s sponge-like absorption of all John would give him. He felt (and it was no idle fancy of a wealthy man) that he would have died rather than have asked for a shilling. A Tempest should be above begging, should scorn to run in debt. John’s pride of race resented what was in his eyes a want of honour in the other

members of the family of which he was the head.

Colonel Tempest was in a position of too much delicacy not to feel hurt by John's silence. He reflected on the invariable meanness of rich men, with a momentary retrospect of how open-handed he had been himself in his youth, and even after his crippling marriage.

"I do not know the circumstances," said John at last.

"No one does," said Colonel Tempest.

"Neither have I any wish to know them," said John, with a touch of haughtiness, "except in so far as I can be of use to you."

Colonel Tempest found himself very disagreeably placed. He would have instantly lost his temper if he had been a few weeks younger, but the memory of those last few weeks recurred to him like a douche of cold water. Self-interest would not allow him

to throw away his last chance of escaping out of Swayne's clutches, and he had a secret conviction that no storming or passion of any kind would have any effect on that prostrate figure, with the stern feeble voice, and intense fixity of gaze.

John had always felt a secret repulsion towards his uncle, though he invariably met him with grave, if distant civility. He had borne in a proud silence the gradual realization, as he grew old enough to understand it, that there was a slur upon his name, a shadow on his mother's memory. He believed, as did some others, that his uncle had originated the slanders, impossible to substantiate, in order to wrest his inheritance from him. How could this man, after trying to strip him of everything, even of his name, come to him now for money?

John had a certain rigidity and tenacity

of mind, an uprightness and severity, which come of an intense love of justice and rectitude, but which in an extreme degree, if not counterbalanced by other qualities, make a hard and unlovable character.

His clear-eyed judgment made him look at Colonel Tempest with secret indignation and contempt. But with the harshness of youth other qualities, rarely joined, went hand in hand. A little knowledge of others is a dangerous thing. It shows itself in sweeping condemnations and severe judgments, and a complacent holding up to the light of the poor foibles and peccadilloes of humanity, which all who will can find. A greater knowledge shows itself in a greater tenderness towards others, the tenderness, as some suppose, of wilful ignorance of evil. When or how John had learnt it I know not, but certainly he had a rapid intuition of the feelings of others ; he could put him-

self in their place, and to do that is to be not harsh.

He looked again at Colonel Tempest, and was ashamed of his passing, though righteous, anger. He realized how hard it must be for an older man to be obliged to ask a young one for money, and he had no wish to make it any harder. He looked at the weak, wretched face, with its tortured selfishness, and understood a little; perhaps only in part, but enough to make him speak again in a different tone.

“Do not tell me anything you do not wish; but I see something is troubling you very much. Sometimes things don't look so black when one has talked them over.”

“I can't talk it over, John,” said Colonel Tempest, with incontestable veracity, softened by the kindness of his tone, “but the truth is,” nervousness was shutting its

eyes and making a rush, "I want—*ten thousand pounds and no questions asked.*"

John was startled. Colonel Tempest clutched his hat, and stared out of the window. He felt benumbed. He had actually done it, actually brought himself to ask for it. As his faculties slowly returned to him in the long silence which followed, he became conscious, that if John was too niggardly to pay his own ransom, he, Colonel Tempest, would not be the most to blame, if any casualty should hereafter occur.

At last John spoke.

"You say you don't want any questions asked, but I *must* ask one or two. You want this money secretly. Would the want of it bring disgrace upon your—children?" He had nearly said your "daughter."

"If it was found out it would," said Colonel Tempest, in a choked voice. The

detection, which he always told himself was an impossibility, had, nevertheless, a horrible way of masquerading before him at intervals as an accomplished fact.

John knit his brows.

“I can't pretend not to know what it is,” he said. “It is a debt of honour. You have been betting.”

“Yes,” said Colonel Tempest, faintly.

“I suppose you can't touch your capital. That is settled on your children.”

“No,” said Colonel Tempest. “There were no settlements when I married. I had to do the best I could. I had twenty thousand pounds from my father, and my wife brought me a few thousands after her uncle's death; a very few, which her relations could not prevent her having. But there were the children, and one thing with another, and women are extravagant, and must have everything to their liking; and

by the time I had settled up and sold everything after the break-up, it was all I could do to put Archie to school."

(Oh! Di, Di, cold in your grave these two and twenty years! Do you remember the little pile of account books that you wound up, and put in your writing-table drawer, that last morning in April, thinking that if anything happened, he would find them there—afterwards. He had always inveighed against the meanness of your economy before the servants, and against your extravagance in private. Do you remember the butcher's book, with thin blotting paper, that blotted tears as badly as ink sometimes, for meat was dear; and the milk bills? You were always proud of the milk bills, with the space for cream left blank, except when he was there. And the little book of sundries, where those quarter pounds of fresh butter and French

rolls, were entered, which Anne ran out to get if he came home suddenly, because he did not like the cheap butter from the Stores. Do you remember these things? He never knew, he never looked at the dumb reproach of that little row of books: but I cannot think, wherever you are, that you have quite forgotten them.)

John was silent again. How could he deal with this man who roused in him such a vehement indignation? For several minutes he could not trust himself to speak.

"I think I had better go," said Colonel Tempest at last.

John started violently.

"No, no," he said. "Wait. Let me think."

The nurse and his aunt came into the room at that moment.

"Are not you feeling tired, sir?" the nurse inquired, warningly.

“Yes, John,” said Miss Fane, grunting as her manner was. “Mustn’t get tired.”

“I am not,” he replied. “Colonel Tempest and I are discussing business matters which won’t wait—which it would trouble me to leave unsettled. We have not quite finished, but he is more tired than I am. It is the hottest day we have had. Will you give him a cup of tea, Aunt Flo, and bring him back in half an hour.”

When he was left alone John turned his head painfully on the pillow, and slowly opened and shut one of the bandaged hands. This not altogether satisfactory form of exercise was the only substitute he had within his power for the old habit of pacing up and down while he thought.

Ought he to give the money? He had no right to make a bad use of anything because he happened to have a good deal of it. This ten thousand would follow the

previous twenty thousand, as a matter of course.

Giving it did not affect himself, inasmuch as he would hardly miss it. It was a generous action only in appearance, for he was very wealthy; even among the rich he was very rich. His long minority, and various legacies of younger branches, which had shown the Tempest peculiarity of dying out, and leaving their substance to the head of the family, had added to an already imposing income. In his present mode of life he did not spend a third of it.

The thought flashed across his mind that if he had died three weeks ago, if the hinges of the door had held as firmly as the shot lock, and he had perished in that room in King Street like a rat in a trap, Colonel Tempest would at this very moment have been in possession of everything. He looked at his own death, and all it would have entailed, dispassionately.

That improvident selfish man had been within an ace of immense wealth. And yet—John's heart smote him—his uncle had been genuinely grieved to see him so ill: had been really thankful to think he was out of danger. He had almost immediately afterwards reverted to himself and his own affairs; but that was natural to the man. He had nevertheless been unaffectedly overcome the moment before. The emotion had been genuine.

John struggled hard against his strong personal dislike.

Perhaps Colonel Tempest had become entangled in the money difficulty at the very time his—John's—life hung in the balance, when he took for granted he was about to inherit all. The speculation was heartless, perhaps, but pardonable. John saw no reason why Colonel Tempest should not have counted on his death. For ten days

it had been more than probable; and now he might live to a hundred. Perhaps the probability of his reaching old age was slenderer than he supposed.

He lay a little while longer and then rang the bell near his hand, and directed his servant to bring him a locked feminine elegancy from a side-table which, until he could replace his burnt possessions, had evidently been lent him by his aunt to use as a despatch-box. He got out a cheque-book, and with clumsy fingers filled in and signed a cheque. Then he lay back panting and exhausted. The will was strong in him, but the suffering body was desperately weak.

When Colonel Tempest returned, John held the cheque towards him in silence with a feeble smile.

Colonel Tempest took it without speaking. His lips shook. He was more moved than he had been for years.

“God bless you, John,” he said at last. “You are a good fellow, and I don’t deserve it from you.”

“Good-bye,” said John, in a more natural tone of voice than he had yet used towards him. “If you are at the polo match on Thursday, will you look in and tell me how it has gone? It would be a kindness to me. I know Archie and Hemsworth are playing.” Colonel Tempest murmured something unintelligible, and went out.

He did not go back at once to his rooms in Brook Street. Almost involuntarily his steps turned towards the Park. The world was changed for him. The weary ceaseless beat of the horses’ hoofs on the wood pavement had a cheerful exhilarating ring. All the people looked glad. There was a confused rejoicing in the rustle of the trees, in the flying voices of the children playing and rolling in the grass. He wandered down

towards the Serpentine. Dogs were rushing in and out of the water. An elastic cock-eared retriever, undepressed by its doubtful ancestry, was leaping and waving a wet tail at its master, giving the short sharp barks of youth and a light heart. An aristocratic pug in a belled collar was delicately sniffing the evening breeze across the water, watching the antics of the lower orders with protruding eyes like pieces of toffy rounded and glazed by suction. An equally aristocratic black poodle—Lindo out for a stroll with the valet—with more social tendencies, was hurrying up and down on the extreme verge, beckoning rapidly with its short tufted tail to the athletes in the water. The ducks bobbed on the ripples. The children sprawled and shouted and clambered. The low sun had laid a dancing, glancing pathway across the water. How glad it all was, how exceeding glad! Colonel Tempest patted

one of the children on the head and felt benevolent.

As he turned away at last and sauntered homewards, he passed a little knot of people gathered round a gesticulating open-air preacher. Two girls, arm in arm, just in front of him, were lounging near, talking earnestly together.

“Sin no more lest a worse thing come unto thee,” bawled the strident fanatic voice.

“I shall have mine trimmed with tulle, and a flower on the crown,” said one of the girls.

Colonel Tempest walked slowly on. Yes, yes; that was it. *Sin no more lest a worse thing come unto thee.* He had always dreaded that worse thing, and now that fear was all over. He translated the cry of the preacher into a message to himself, his first personal transaction with the Almighty. He felt awed. It was like a voice from another

world. Religion was becoming a reality to him at last. There are still persons for whom the Law and the Prophets are not enough—who require that one should rise from the dead to galvanize their superstition into momentary activity. Sin no more. No—never any more. He had done with sin. He would make a fresh start from to-day, and life would become easy and unembarrassed and enjoyable once again; no more nightmares and wakeful nights and nervous haunting terrors. They were all finished and put away. The tears came into his eyes. He regretted that he had not enjoyed these comfortable feelings earlier in life. The load was lifted from his heart, and the removal of the pain was like a solemn joy.



CHAPTER XII.

“On entre, on crie,
C'est la vie.
On crie, on sort,
C'est la mort.”

IN the paths of self-interest the grass is seldom allowed to grow under the feet. Colonel Tempest hurried. It would be tedious to follow the various steps feverishly taken which led to his finally unearthing the home address of Mr. Swayne. He procured it at last, not without expense, from an impoverished client of that gentleman who had lately been in correspondence with him. Mr. Swayne had always shown a decided reticence with regard to the locality

of his domestic roof. Colonel Tempest was of course in possession of several addresses where letters would find him, but his experience of such addresses had been that, unless strictly connected with pecuniary advantage to Mr. Swayne, the letters did not seem to reach their destination. But now, even when Colonel Tempest wrote to say he would pay up, no answer came. Swayne did not rise even to that bait. Colonel Tempest, who was aware that Mr. Swayne's faith in human nature had in the course of his career sustained several severe shocks, came to the conclusion that Mr. Swayne did not attach importance to his statement—that indeed he regarded it only as a “blind” in order to obtain another interview.

It was on a burning day in June that Colonel Tempest set forth to search out his tempter at Rosemont Villa, Iron Ferry, in the manufacturing town of Bilgewater. The

dirty smudged address was in his pocket-book, as was also the notice of his banker that ten thousand pounds had been placed to his credit a few days before.

The London train took him to Worcester, and from thence the local line, after meandering through a desert of grime and chimneys, and after innumerable stoppages at one hideous nigger station after another, finally deposited him on the platform of Bilgewater Junction. Colonel Tempest got out and looked about him. It was not a rural scene. Heaps of refuse and slag lay upon the blistered land thick as the good resolutions that pave a certain road. Low cottages crowded each other in knots near the high smoking factories. Black wheels turned slowly against the grey of the sky, which whitened upwards towards the ghost of the midsummer sun high in heaven. We are told that the sun shines equally on the just

and on the unjust; but that was said before the first factory was built. At Bilgewater it is no longer so.

Colonel Tempest inquired his way to Iron Ferry, and, vaguely surprised at Mr. Swayne's choice of locality for his country residence, set out along the baked wrinkles of the black high-road, winding between wastes of cottages, some inhabited and showing dreary signs of life, some empty and decrepit, some fallen down dead. The heat was intense. The steam and the smoke rose together into the air like some evil sacrifice. The pulses of the factories throbbed feverishly as he passed. The steam curled upwards from the surface of the livid pools and canals at their base. The very water seemed to sweat.

Colonel Tempest reached Iron Ferry, being guided thither by the spire of the little tin church, which pointed unheeded towards

the low steel sky, shut down over the battered convulsed country like a coffin lid over one who has died in torment.

At Iron Ferry, which had a bridge and a wharf and a canal, and was everything except a ferry, he inquired again concerning Rosemont Villa, and was presently picking his way across a little patch of common towards a string of what had once been red brick houses, but which had long since embraced the universal colour of their surroundings. They were rather better looking houses if a sort of shabby gentility can be called anything except the worst. They were semi-detached. From out of one of them the strains were issuing faintly and continuously of the inevitable accordion, which for some occult reason is always found to consort with poverty and oyster-shells.

At the open door of another a girl was

standing tearing pieces with her teeth out of a chunk of something she held in her hand. She was surrounded by a meagre family of poultry who fought and pecked and trod each other down with almost human eagerness for the occasional morsels she threw to them. Something in her appearance and in the way she seemed to enjoy the greed and mutual revilings of her little dependents reminded Colonel Tempest—he hardly knew why—of Mr. Swayne.

Another glance made the supposition a certainty. There were the small boot-buttons of eyes, the heavy mottled expressionless face, which Colonel Tempest had until now considered to be the exclusive property of Mr. Swayne. This slouching, tawdry down-at-heel arrow was no doubt one of that gentleman's quiverful.

Mr. Swayne had always worn such very unmarried waistcoats and button holes that it

was a shock to Colonel Tempest to regard him as a domestic character.

“Is Mr. Swayne at home?” he asked, amid the cackling and flouncing of the poultry.

The “arrow,” her cheek “bulged with the unchewed piece,” looked at him doubtfully for a moment, and then called over her shoulder—

“Mother!”

The voice as of a female who had never been held in subjection answered shrilly from within—“Well?”

“Here’s a gent as wants to see father.”

There was a sound of some heavy vessel being set down, and a woman, large and swarthy, came to the door. She might have been good-looking once. She might perhaps have been “a fine figure of a woman” in the days when Swayne wooed and won her, and no doubt her savings, for his own. But

possibly the society of Mr. Swayne may not in the long run have exerted an ennobling or even a soothing influence upon her. Her complexion was a fiery red, and her whole appearance bespoke a temperament to which the artificial stimulus of alcohol, though evidently unnecessary, was evidently not denied.

“Swayne’s sick,” she said, eyeing Colonel Tempest with distrust. “He can’t see no one, and if he could, there’s not a shilling in the house if you was to scrape the walls with a knife—so that’s all about it. It’s no manner of use coming pestering here for money.”

“I don’t want money,” said Colonel Tempest. “I want to pay, not to be paid.”

The woman shook her head incredulously, and put out her under lip, uttering the mystic word, “Walker!” It did not seem to bear upon the subject, but somebody, probably the accordion next door, laughed.

“ I must see him ! ” said Colonel Tempest, vehemently. “ I’ve had dealings with him which I want to settle and have done with. It’s my own interest to pay up. He would see me directly if he knew I was here.”

The woman hesitated.

“ Swayne is uncommon sick,” she said, slowly. “ If it’s business I doubt he could scarce fettle at it now.”

“ Do you mean he is not sober ? ”

“ He’s sober enough, poor fellow,” said Mrs. Swayne, with momentary sympathy ; “ but he’s mortal bad. He hasn’t done nobbut but dithered with a bit of toast since Tuesday, and taking it out of hisself all the time with flouncing and swearing like a brute beast.”

“ Is he—do you mean to say he is *dying* ? ” demanded Colonel Tempest in sudden panic.

“ Doctor says he won’t hang on above a

day or two," said the girl nonchalantly. "Doctor says his works is clean wore out."

"Let me go to him at once," said Colonel Tempest. "It is of great importance; I must see him at once."

The women stared at each other undecidedly, and the girl nudged her mother.

"Lor, mother, what does it signify? If the gentleman 'ull make it worth while, show him up."

Colonel Tempest hastily produced a sovereign, and in a few minutes was stumbling up the rickety stairs behind Mrs. Swayne. She pushed open a half-closed door, and noisily pulled back a bit of curtain which shaded the light—what poor dim light there was—from the bed, knocking over as she did so a tallow candle in the window-sill bent double by the heat.

Colonel Tempest had followed her into the room and into an atmosphere resembling

that of the monkey-house at the Zoo, stiffened with brandy.

“Oh, good gracious!” he ejaculated, as Mrs. Swayne drew back the curtain. “Oh dear, Mrs. Swayne! I ought to have been prepared. I had no idea—— What’s the matter with him? What is he writing on the wall?”

For Mr. Swayne was changed. He was within a measurable distance of being unrecognizable. That evidently would be the next alteration not for the better in him. Already he was slow to recognize others. He was sitting up in bed, swearing and scratching tearfully at the wall-paper. He looked stouter than ever, but as if he might collapse altogether at a pin prick, and shrivel down to a wrinkled nothing among the creases of his tumbled bedding.

Mrs. Swayne regarded her prostrate lord with arms akimbo. Possibly she considered

that her part of the agreement, to love and to cherish Mr. Swayne, and honour and obey Mr. Swayne, was now at an end, as death was so plainly about to part them. At any rate, she appeared indisposed to add any finishing touches to her part of the contract. Mr. Swayne had, in all probability, put in his finishing touches with such vigour, that possibly a remembrance of them accounted for a certain absence of solicitude on the part of his helpmeet.

“Who’s this? Who’s this? Who’s this?” said Mr. Swayne in a rapid whisper, perceiving his visitor, and peering out of the gloom with a bloodshot furtive eye. “Dear, dear, dear! . . . Mary . . . I’m busy . . . I’m pressed for time. Take him away. Quite away; quite away.”

Mr. Swayne had been a man of few and evil words when in health. His recording angel would now need a knowledge of short-

hand. This sudden flow of language fairly staggered Colonel Tempest.

“I must have out those bonds,” he went on, forgetting his visitor again instantly. “I can’t lay my hand on ’em, but I’ve got ’em somewhere. Top left-hand drawer of the walnut escritoire. I know I have ’em. I’ll make him bleed. Top left-hand. No, no, no. Where was it, then? Lock’s stiff; — the lock. Break it. I say I will have ’em.”

As he spoke he tore from under the pillow a little footstool, having the remnant of a frayed dog, in blue beads, worked upon it, a conjugal attention no doubt on the part of Mrs. Swayne, to raise the sick man’s head.

And Mr. Swayne, after endeavouring to unlock the dog’s tail, smote savagely upon it, and sank back with chattering teeth.

“That’s the way he goes on,” said Mrs. Swayne. “Mornin’, noon, and night. Never a bit of peace, except when he gets into his

prayin' fits. I expect he'll go off in one of them tantrums."

It did not appear unlikely that he would "go off" then and there, but after a few moments a sort of ghastly life seemed to return. Even death did not appear to take to him. He opened his eyes, and looked round bewildered. Then his head fell forward.

"Now's yer time," said the woman. "Before he gets up steam for another of them rages. Parson comes and twitters a bit when he's in this way; and he'll pray very heavy while he recollects hisself, until he goes off again. He'll be better now for a spell," and she left the room, and creaked ponderously downstairs again. Colonel Tempest advanced a step nearer the lair on which poor Swayne was taking his last rest but one, and said faintly :

"Swayne. I say, Swayne. Rouse up."

The only things that roused up were Swayne's eyelids. These certainly trembled a little.

In the next house the accordion was beginning a new tune, was designating Jerusalem as its ha-appy home.

Apprehensive terror for himself as usual overcame other feelings. It overcame in this instance the unspeakable repugnance Colonel Tempest felt to approaching any nearer. He touched the prostrate man on the shoulder with the slender white hand which had served him so exclusively from boyhood upwards, which had never wavered in its fidelity to him to do a hand's turn for others, which shrinkingly did his bidding now.

"Wake up, Swayne," repeated Colonel Tempest, actually stooping over him. "Wake up, for ——," he was going to add "heaven's sake;" but the thought of heaven

in connection with Swayne seemed inappropriate; and he altered it to "for mercy's sake," which sounded just as well.

"Is it the parson?" asked Swayne feebly, in a more natural voice.

"No, no," said Colonel Tempest reassuringly. "It's only me, a friend. It's Colonel Tempest."

"I wish it *was* the parson," repeated Swayne, seeming to emerge somewhat from his torpor. "He might have come and let off a few more prayers for me. He says it's all right if I repent, and I suppose he knows; but it don't seem likely. Don't seem as if God *could* be greened quite as easy as parson makes out. I should have liked to throw off a few more prayers so as to be on the safe side," and he began to mutter incoherently.

As a man lives so, it is said, he generally dies. Swayne seemed to remain true to his

own interests, only his aspect of those interests had altered. He felt the awkwardness of going into court absolutely unprepared. Prayer was cheap if it could do what he wanted, and he had had professional advice as to its efficacy, A man who all his life can grovel before his fellow-creatures, may as well do a little grovelling before his Creator at the last, if anything is to be got by it.

It is to the credit of human nature that, as a rule, men even of the lowest type feel the uselessness, the degradation, of trying to annul their past on their deathbeds. But to Swayne, who had never shone as a credit to human nature, a chance remained a chance. He was a gambler and a swindler, a man who had risked long odds, and had been made rich and poor by the drugging of a horse, or the forcing of a card. If, in his strict attention to never losing a chance, he

had inadvertently mislaid his soul, he was not likely to be aware of it. But a *chance* was a thing he had never so far failed to take advantage of. He was taking his last now.

Colonel Tempest looked at him in horror. The interests of the two men clashed, and at a vital moment.

“For God’s sake don’t pray now, Swayne,” said Colonel Tempest, appealingly, as Swayne began to mutter something more. “I’ve come to set wrong right, and that will be a great deal better than any prayers; do you more good in the end.”

Swayne did not seem to understand. He looked in a perplexed manner at Colonel Tempest.

“I don’t appear to fetch it out right,” he said. “But it’s in the Prayer-book on the mantelpiece. That’s what our parson reads out of. You get it, colonel; just get it quick,

and pray 'em off one after another. It don't matter much which. They're all good."

"Swayne," said Colonel Tempest, in utter desperation, "I'll do anything; I'll—pray as much as you like afterwards, if you will only give me up those papers you have against me—those bets."

"What?" said Swayne, a gleam of the old professional interest flickering into his face. "You han't got the money?"

"Yes. Here, here!" and Colonel Tempest tore the banker's note out of his pocket-book, and held it before Swayne's eyes.

"I was to have had twenty-five per cent. commission," said Swayne, rallying perceptibly at the thought. "Twenty-five per cent. on each. I wouldn't let 'em go at less. Two thousand five hundred I should have made. But"—with a sudden restless relapse—"it's no use thinking of that now. Get down the book, colonel."

But for once Colonel Tempest was firm.

Perhaps his indignation against Swayne's egotism enabled him to be so. He made Swayne understand that business must in this instance come first, and prayers afterwards. It was a compact; not the first between the two.

"The papers," he repeated over and over again, frantic at the speed with which the last links of Swayne's memory seemed falling from him. "Where are they? You have them with you, of course? Tell me where they are?" and he grasped the dying man by the shoulder.

Swayne was frightened back to some semblance of effort.

"I haven't got 'em," he gasped. "The—the—the chaps engaged in the business have 'em."

"But you know who have got them?"

"Yes, of course. It's all written down somewhere."

“Where?”

But Swayne “did not rightly know.” He had the addresses in cipher somewhere, but he could not put his hand upon them. Half wild with fear, Colonel Tempest searched the pockets of the clothes that lay about the room, holding up their contents for Swayne to look at. It was like some hideous game of hide-and-seek. But the latter only shook his head.

“I have 'em somewhere,” he repeated, “and there was a change not so long ago. When was it? May. There's one of 'em written down in cipher in my pocket-book in May, I know that.”

“Here. This one?” said Colonel Tempest, holding out a greasy pocket-book.

“That's it,” said Swayne. “Some time in May.”

Colonel Tempest turned to the month, and actually found a page with a faint pencil scrawl in cipher across it.

“That’s him,” said Swayne. “James Larkin,” and he read out a complicated address without difficulty.

“Will that find him?” asked Colonel Tempest, his hand shaking so much that he could hardly write down Swayne’s words.

“If it’s to his advantage it will.”

“For certain?”

“Certain.”

“And the others?”

“There’s one dead,” said Swayne, his voice waxing feebler and feebler as the momentary galvanism of Colonel Tempest’s terror lost its effect. “And there’s two I had back the papers from; they were sick of it, and they said he had a charmed life. And one of ’em went to America, and married, and set up respectable. I have his paper too. And one of ’em’s in quod, but he’ll be out soon, I reckon, and he’s good for another try. He precious near brought it off last

time. There's a few left that's still biding their time! There! And now I won't hear nothin' more about it. Get to the prayers, Colonel, and be quick. Parson might have come again, damn him."

"Stop a minute. Can I get at the others through Larkin?"

Swayne had sunk back spent and livid. He looked at Colonel Tempest with fixed and glassy eyes.

"Yes," he said, with the ghost of an oath; "get to the prayers."

Colonel Tempest was still trembling with the relief from that horrible nightmare of suspense as he opened the shiny new Prayer-book which the clergyman had left. He held the first link. He had now only to draw the whole chain through his hand, and break it to atoms; the chain that was dragging him down to hell. He hastily began to read.

God has heard many prayers, but, perhaps, not many like those which ascended from that hideous tumbled deathbed, where kneeling self-interest halted through the supplication, and prostrate self-interest gasped out Amen.

Oh! did He who first taught us how to pray, did He, raised high upon the cross of an apparent failure, look down the ages that were yet to come, and see how we should abuse that gift of prayer? Was that bitter cry which has echoed through eighteen hundred years wrung from Him even for our sakes also as well as those who stood around Him—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"?

Colonel Tempest was still on his knees when the door was softly opened, and a young, a very young, clergyman came in and knelt down beside him, clasping his thin hands over the collapsed felt *soufflée* which

did duty for a hat. After stumbling to the end of the prayer he was reading, Colonel Tempest put the book into his hand and escaped.

He stole down the stairs and past the little sitting-room unobserved. He was out again in the open air, the live free air, which seemed freshness itself after the atmosphere of that sick-room. He held the clue. He had it, he held it, he was safe. God was on his side now, and was helping him to make restitution. At one despairing moment when he had been tearing even the linings out of the pockets of Swayne's check trousers he had feared that Providence had deserted him. Now that he had the pocket-book he regretted his want of faith. I do not think his mind reverted once to Swayne, for Swayne was no longer of any interest to him now that he was out of Swayne's power. Colonel Tempest did not exactly forget people, but

his mind was so constituted that everything with which it came in contact was wiped out the moment it had ceased to affect or group itself round himself. His imagination did not follow his colleague's last faltering steps upon that steep brink where each must one day stand. His mind turned instinctively to the most frivolous subjects, was back in London wondering what he would have had for dinner if he had dined with Archie as he had intended; was anxious to know how many cigarettes of that new brand he had put into his case before he left London that morning. Colonel Tempest stopped, and got out his cigarette-case and counted them.

Those who had known Colonel Tempest best, those few who had misunderstood and loved him, had often pondered with grave anxiety, or with the wistful perplexity of wounded affection, as to what it was in him that being so impressionable was yet incapable

of any real impression. His wife may or may not have mastered that expensive secret. At any rate, she had had opportunities of studying it. When first, a few weeks after her marriage, she had fallen ill, she, poor fool, had suffered agonies from the fear that because he hardly came into her sick-room after the first day, he had ceased to care for her. But when after a few days more she was feeling better and was pretty and interesting again in a pink wrapper on the sofa, she had found that he was as devoted to her as ever, and had confided her foolish dread to him with happy tears. Possibly she discovered at last that the secret lay not so much in the selfishness and self-indulgence of a character moth-eaten by idleness, as in the instant and invariable recoil of the mind from any subject that threatened to prove disagreeable, the determination to avoid everything irksome, wearisome, or reproach-

ful. For a moment, while it was quite new, a sentiment might be indulged in. But as soon as a certain novelty and pleasure in emotion ceased the feeling itself was shirked, at whatever expense to others. Those who shirk are ill to live with, and lay up for themselves an increasing loneliness as life goes on.

Colonel Tempest found it unpleasant to think about Swayne, so he thought of something else. He could always do that unless he himself was concerned. Then, indeed, as we have seen, it was a different thing. He was annoyed when, after slowly picking his way back to the station, he found the last passenger train had just gone; that even if he drove fifteen miles in to Worcester he should be too late to catch the last express to London; in fact, that there was nothing for it but a bed at the station inn. He found, however, that by making a very early start

from Bilgewater the following morning he could reach London by noon, and so resigned himself to his lot with composure. He had hardly expected he should be able to go and return in one day.

It was indeed early when he walked across to the station next morning, so early that there was a suspicion of freshness in the air, of colour in the eastern sky.

On a heap of slag a motionless figure was sitting, black against the sky line, looking towards the east. It was the curate, who when he perceived Colonel Tempest, came crunching and flapping in his long coat tails down to the road below, raised his hat from a meagre clerical brow, and held out his hand. His face was thin and poor, suggestive of a starved mind and cold mutton and Pearson on the Creed, but the smile redeemed it.

“It is all over,” he said; “half an hour

ago. Quite quietly at the last. I stayed with him through the night. I never left him. We prayed together without ceasing."

Colonel Tempest did not know what to say.

"It was too late to go to bed," continued the young man impulsively, his face working. "So I came here. I often come and sit on that ash heap to see the sun rise. I'm so glad just to have seen you again. I longed to thank you for those prayers by poor Mr. Crosbie's bed. You know the Scripture: 'Where two or three are gathered together.' I felt it was so true. I have lost heart so of late. No one seems to care or think about these things down here. But your coming and praying like that has been such a help, such a reproach to me for my want of faith when I think that the seed falls on the rock. I shall take courage again now. Ah! you are going by this train? Good-bye, God bless you! Thank you again."



CHAPTER XIII.

“Every man’s progress is through a succession of teachers.”—EMERSON.

AS John slowly climbed the hill of convalescence many visitors came to relieve his solitude, and one of those who came the oftenest was Lord Frederick Fane.

Lord Frederick was a square-shouldered, well-preserved, well set up, carefully-padded man of close on sixty, with a thin-lipped, bloodless face, and faded eyes, divided by a high nose.

“Do you like that man?” said Lord Hemsworth to John one day when he was sitting with him, and Lord Frederick sent

up to know whether the latter would see him.

“No,” said John.

“But you seem to see a good deal of him.”

“He is civil to me, and I am not rude to him. He is a relation, you know.”

“I can’t stand him,” said Lord Hemsworth. “If he is coming up I shall bolt;” and Lord Frederick entering at that moment, Lord Hemsworth took his departure.

“You’re better, John,” said Lord Frederick, looking at him through his half-closed eyes, and settling himself gently in a high chair, his hat and one glove and crutch-handled stick held before him in his broad lean hand.

“I feel more human,” said John, “now that I’m shaved and dressed. When I saw myself in the glass yesterday for the first time, I thought I was Darwin’s missing link.”

“You look more human,” said Lord

Frederick, crossing one leg over the other, and then contemplating his white spats for a change. "Able to attend to business again yet?"

"Not yet. I have tried, but I am as weak as a worm that can't turn."

"Pity," said Lord Frederick, glancing at a sheaf of letters and some opened telegrams on the table at John's elbow. "Things always happen at inconvenient times," he went on. "Old Charlesworth might have chosen a more opportune moment to die and leave Marchamley vacant again."

"He is not dead yet."

"I suppose both sides have been at you already to stand for it yourself," hazarded Lord Frederick.

"Yes."

"I thought so."

Silence.

"Are you going to stand?"

“What is your opinion on the subject? I see you have one.”

“Well,” said Lord Frederick, “I look at it this way. I have often said ‘Don’t tie yourself.’ I am all for young men keeping their hands free, and seeing the ins and outs of life, before they settle down. But you are not so very young, and a time comes when a sort of annoyance attaches to freedom itself. It’s a bore. Now as to this seat. Indecision is all very well for a time; it enhances a man’s value. You were quite right not to stand three years ago; it has made you of more importance. But that won’t do much longer. You are bound to come to a decision for your own advantage. Neutral ground is sometimes between two fires. I should say ‘stand,’ if you ask me. Throw in your lot with the side on which you are most likely to come to the front, and stand.’

“And private opinions? How about them if they don't happen to fit? Throw them overboard?”

“Yes,” said Lord Frederick. “It has got to be done sooner or later. Why not sooner? A free-lance is no manner of use. There's a hitch somewhere in you, John, that if you don't look out will damn your career as a public man. I don't know what your politics are. My own opinion, between ourselves, is that you have not got any, but you are bound to have some, and you may as well join forces with what will bring you forward most, and start young. That's my advice.”

“Thanks.”

“There is not a man in the world with an ounce of brains who has not high-flown ideas at your age,” continued Lord Frederick. “I have had them. Everybody has them. You buy them with your first razors. People

generally sicken with them just when they could make a push for themselves, and while they are getting better, youth and opportunity pass and don't come back. I've seen it over and over again. Every young fool with a ginger moustache, when he first starts in public life, is going to be a patriot, and do his d—d thinking for himself. He might as well make his own clothes, and expect society to receive him in them. By the time he is bald he has learnt better, and he's a party man, but he has lost time in the meanwhile. You may depend upon it, a strong party man is what is wanted. The country doesn't want individuals with brains; they are mostly kicked out in the end. If you don't want to go with the crowd, don't go against it, but throw yourself into it heart and soul, and get in front of it on its own road. It's no good coming to the fore unless you have a following."

“Thanks,” said John again. His face was as expressionless as a mask. He looked, as he lay back in his low couch, a strange mixture of feebleness and power. It was as if a strong man armed kept watch within a house tottering to its fall.

He put out his muscular, powerless hand, and took up one of the telegrams.

“Charlesworth is not dead yet,” he said.

Lord Frederick could take a hint.

“His death will put the Moretons in mourning again,” he remarked. “Mrs. Moreton’s ball is doomed. I am sorry for that woman. She is cumbered with much time-serving, and her ball fell through last year; this is the second time it has happened. I have been asking her young men for her. I put down your cousin in the Guards, the Apollo with the tow wig. What’s-his-name, Tempest?”

“Archibald.”

“Yes. That would be a dangerous man, if he were not such a fool, but the same placard that says he is to let says he is unfurnished, and it’s poor work taking an empty house, when it comes to living in it. Women know that. He has let the soda water heiress slip through his fingers. She is going to marry young Topham. I thought Apollo seemed rather down on his luck when it was first given out, but he has consoled himself since. Apparently he has a mission to married women. He is always with Lady Verelst now; I saw him riding with her again this morning. I don’t know who mounts him, but he was on the best horse I’ve seen this season. You are not such a f—, such a philanthropist as to lend him horses, are you?”

“When I can’t use them myself I have that amount of generosity.”

“H’m! Well, he makes good use of his

opportunities to cheer up Lady Verelst. I wish you would flirt more with married women, John. You would find your account in it. I did at your age. You see you are too eligible to go on much with girls, and that's the truth. You would be watched. But you don't pay enough attention to women, and three-quarters of the world is made up of them. You are too much of a Puritan, but you may remember human nature is like a short-footed stocking. If you darn it up at the heel it will come out at the toe. It's no manner of use to ignore women. People who do always come the worst croppers in the end. A flirtation with a fast, married woman would peel your illusions off you like the skin off an orange. All young men believe in women—till they know them. He! He! If I were a rabbit I should take a personal interest in the habits of birds of prey. I told Hemsworth

something of the kind the other day, but he is bent on making a fool of himself."

"He knows his own affairs best."

"I fancy I know them better than he does. Miss Di is young, but she is uncommonly well aware of her own value, and she is looking higher. I should not wonder if she tried to marry you. She'll take him in five years' time, if he is still willing, and she outstands her market: but in the mean time she keeps him dangling. I told him so, and that I admired her for it. She holds her head high, but she is a splendid creature, and no mistake. She has not that expectant anxious look about her that you see in other girls, and she is not made up. It's sterling good looks in her case. If you are interested in that quarter, you may take my word for it, it is all genuine, even to her hair. That is why her frank manner is so telling; it's of a piece with the rest.

She knows how to play her cards. The old woman has taught her a thing or two."

"What a knowledge you have of—human nature."

"I have looked about," said Lord Frederick, rising as gently as he had sat down, and pulling up his shirt collar. "I had my eyes opened pretty young, and I have kept them open ever since. Glad you're better. That black devil in tights of a poodle wants shaving as much as you did last time I saw you. No, don't ring for that melancholy valet. I will let myself out. I dare say I shall be in again in the course of a day or two. Ta, ta."

John crushed the telegram he was still holding into a hard ball as soon as his self-constituted guide, philosopher, and friend had left the room.

Cynicism was not new to him. It is cheap enough to be universally appropriated by

the poor in spirit, for whom generosity and tolerance are commodities too expensive to be indulged in. Our belief in human nature is a foot rule, by which we may be accurately measured ourselves. There are those in whose enlightened eyes, purity herself is only a courtesan in fancy dress. John had already had many teachers, for he was a man who was being educated regardless of expense ; but perhaps to no two persons did he owe so much as to Mr. Goodwin and Lord Frederick Fane. Our elders act as danger-signals oftener than they know.

John's room looked out across the Park. His couch had been drawn near the open window, and to lie and watch the passing crowd of carriages and pedestrians was almost as much excitement as he could bear after the darkened rooms and enforced quiet of the last few weeks. John, with Lindo erect on the vacant chair beside him, saw

Lord Frederick's hansom, with his pale profile inside it, turn down Park Lane below his windows. Pain had burned all John's energy out of him for the time, and he had soon forgotten his annoyance in watching the people attempting to cross the thoroughfare, and in counting the omnibuses that passed. It was all he was up to. It was about five in the afternoon, and carriage after carriage turned into the Park at the gates opposite his window. There went Lady Delmour with her brand new daughter, a sweet, wild rose from the country, that must be perfected by London smuts and gaslight. John pointed her out to Lindo, but he only yawned and looked the other way. There was Mrs. Barker walking with her husband. Those two white parasols he had danced with somewhere, but he could not put a name to them. Neither could Lindo when asked. Another red omnibus

That was the tenth red one within the last half-hour. Royalty went flashing by, bowing and bowed to. John obliged Lindo, whom he suspected of democratic tendencies, to make a bow also. He hoped his nurse would not come in and send him back to bed yet. It was really very interesting watching the passers-by. Was that—no, it was not—yes, it was Lady Verelst with red parasol and husband to match, in the victoria with the greys. There was actually Duchess, his old polo pony whom he had not seen since he sold her three years ago, looking as spry as ever. John craned his neck to see the last of the bob-tail of his old favourite whisk round the corner. A moment later Mrs. Courtenay and Di, erect and fair beside her, spun past in the opposite direction. Before he had time to realize that he had seen her, almost before he had recognized her, the momentary glimpse struck him like

a blow. His head swam, his heart, so languid the moment before, leapt up and struggled like a maddened caged animal. She had passed some time before he was conscious of anything but the one fact that he had seen her.

He stumbled to his feet and walked unsteadily across the room, clutching at the furniture. He seemed to have left his legs behind.

“What am I doing?” he said to himself half aloud, holding on to and swaying against a table. “What has happened? Why did I get up?”

He dragged himself back to his couch again, and sank down exhausted. The excursion had been too much for him. He had not walked so far before. He was bewildered.

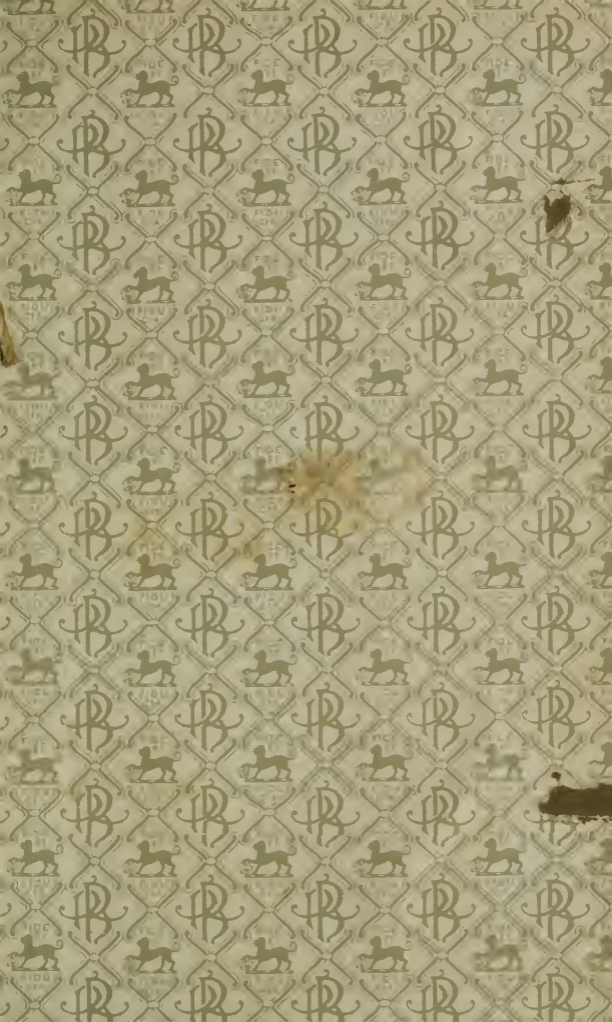
Through the open window came the jingle, and the “clip-clop” and the hum. Another

red omnibus passed. But there was a loud knocking at the door of John's heart that deafened him to all beside; the peremptory knocking as of one armed with a claim, who stood without and would not be denied.

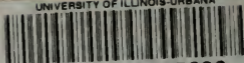
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