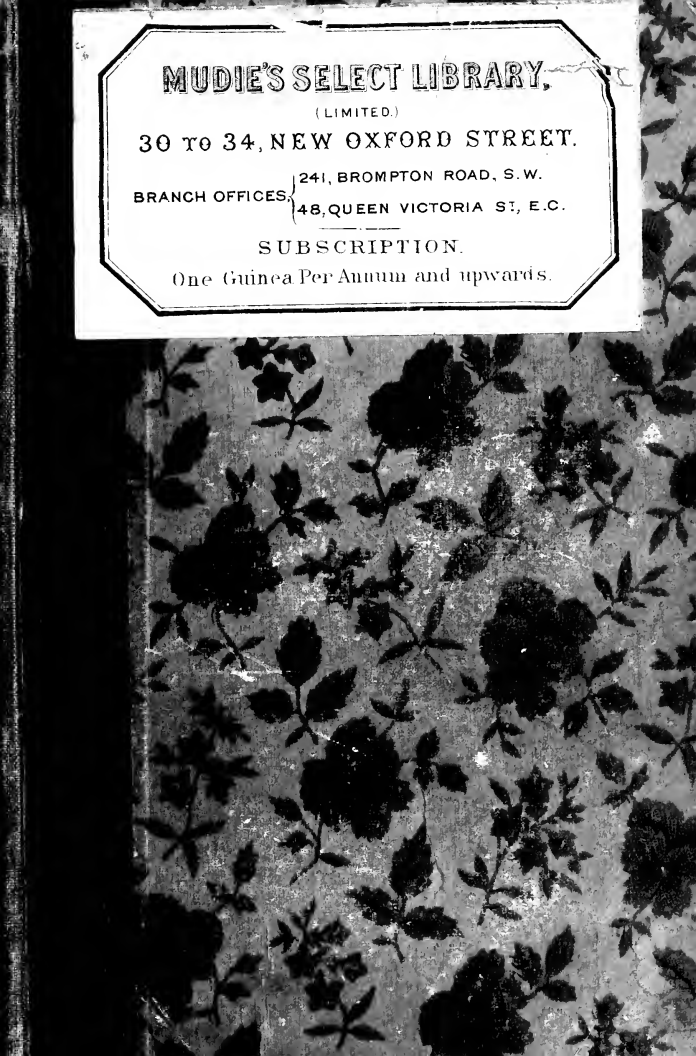

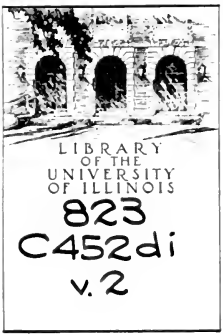

C. A. F. Waters

DIANA TEMPEST.

By

Mary Cholmondeley,

Author of

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"Sir Charles Danvers," etc.

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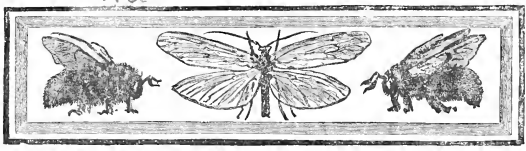


DIANA TEMPEST.

CHAPTER I.

"The fact is, I have never loved any one well enough to put myself into a noose for them. It *is* a noose, you know."—GEORGE ELIOT.

IT was the middle of July. The season had reached the climax which precedes a collapse. The heat was intense. The pace had been too great to last. The rich sane were already on their way to Scotch moor or Norwegian river; the rich insane and the poor remained, and people with daughters—assiduously entertaining the dwindling numbers of the "uncertain, coy,

and hard to please" *jeunesse dorée* of the present day. There were some great weddings fixed for the end of July, proving that marriage was not extinct,—prospective weddings which, like iron rivets, held the crumbling fabric of the season together.

If the unusual heat had driven away half the world, still the greater part of the little world mentioned in these pages remained. Not quite all, for Sir Henry and Lady Verelst had departed rather suddenly for Norway, and Lord Frederick was drinking the water at Homburg or Aix; and thriving on a beverage which never passed his lips without admixture in his own country, except in connection with the toothbrush.

But John and his aunt Miss Fane were still in the large cool house in Park Lane. Lord Hemsworth was still baking himself for no apparent reason in his rooms over his club. Mrs. Courtenay and Di were still in

town, because they could not afford to go until their country visits began.

"Oh, granny," said Di one afternoon as they sat together in the darkened drawing-room, "let us cut everything. Do be ill, and let me write round to say we have been obliged to leave town."

Mrs. Courtenay shook her head.

"We can't go till we have somewhere to go to, and we are not due at Archelot till the first of August."

"Could not we afford a week, just one week, at the sea first?"

"No, Di," said Mrs. Courtenay, "I have thought it over. Only the rich can have their cake and eat it. We had a victoria for a fortnight in June. That meant no seaside this year."

There was a pause.

"I wish I were married," said Di, looking affectionately at Mrs. Courtenay's pale face.

"I wish I had a rich, kind husband. I would not mind if he parted his hair down the middle, or even if he came down to breakfast in slippers, if only he would give me everything I wanted. And he should stay up in London, and we would run down to the seaside together, G., first-class; I am not sure I should not take a *coupé* for you; and you should go out on the sands in the donkey-chairs that your soul loves; and have ice on the butter and cream in the tea; and in the evening we would sit on a first-floor balcony (no more second-floors if I were rich) and watch a cool moon rising over a cool sea. I wish moonlight on the sea were not so expensive. The beauties of nature are very dear, granny. Sunsets cost money nowadays."

"Everything costs money," said Mrs. Courtenay.

Di was silent a little while; it was too hot to talk except at intervals.

"I don't think I mind being poor," she said at last. "For myself, I mean. I have looked at being poor in the face, and it is not half so bad as rich people seem to think. I mean our kind of poorness; of course, not the poverty of nothing a year and ten children to educate, who ought never to have been born. But some people think that the kind of means (like ours) which narrow down pleasures, and check one at every turn, and want a sharp tug to meet at the end of the year, are a dreadful misfortune. Really I don't see it. Of course it is annoying being less well off than any of our friends, and now I come to think of it, all the people we know are richer than ourselves. I wonder how it happens. But there is something rather interesting after all in combating small means. Look at that

screen I made you last year, and think of the gnawing envy it has awakened in the hearts of friends. It was a clothes-horse once, but genius was brought to bear upon it, and it is a very imposing object now. And then my dear Emersons, all eleven of them, I don't think I could have valued them so much, or have been so furious with Jane for spilling water on one of them, if they had not emerged one by one out of my glove and shoe money."

"Oh, my dear, poverty does not matter, nothing matters while you are young and strong. But it presses hard when one is growing old. Money eases everything."

"I feel that; and sometimes when I see you working a sovereign out of the neck of that horrid little woollen jug in the writing-table drawer, I simply long for money for your sake, that you may never be worried about it any more. And sometimes I should like

it for the sake of all the lovely places in the world that other people go to (people who only remember the *table d'hôte* dinners when they come back), and the books that I cannot afford, and the pictures that seem my very own, only they belong to some one else; and the kind things one could do to poor people who could not return them, which rich people don't seem to think of: rich people's kindnesses are always so expensive. Yes, I long for money sometimes, but all the time I know I don't really care about it. There seems to be no pleasure in having anything if there is no difficulty in getting it. I would rather marry a poor man with brains and do my best with his small income, and help him up, than spend a rich man's money. Any one can do that. I fear I shall never take you to the seaside, my own G., or send you pre-paid hampers of hot-house flowers, or game, after Mr. Di's

battues, for I am certain Providence intends me to be a poor man's wife, if I enter the holy estate at all, because—I should make such a good one."

"You would make a good wife, Di, but I sometimes think you will never marry," said Mrs. Courtenay, sadly. She felt the heat.

"Well, granny, I won't say I feel sure I shall never marry, because all girls say that, and it generally means nothing. But still that is what I feel without saying it. Do you remember poor old Aunt Belle when she was dying, and how nothing pleased her, and how she said at last: 'I want—I want—I don't know what I want'? Well, when I come to think of it, I really don't know what *I* want. I know what I *don't* want. I don't want a kind, indulgent husband, and a large income, and good horses, and pretty little frilled children with their mother's eyes, that one shows

to people and is proud of. It is all very nice. I am glad when I see other people happy like that. I should like to see you pleased; but for myself—really—I think I should find them rather in the way. I dare say I might make a good wife, as you say. I believe I could be rather a cheerful companion, and affectionate if it was not exacted of me. But somehow all that does not hit the mark. The men who have cared for me have never seemed to like me for myself, or to understand the something behind the chatter and the fun which is the real part of me—which, if I married one of them, would never be brought into play, and would die of starvation. The only kind of marriage I have ever had a chance of seems to me like a sort of suicide—seems as if it would be one's best self that would be killed, while the other self, the well-dressed, society-loving, ball-going, easy-going self,

would be all that was left of me, and would dance upon my grave."

Mrs. Courtenay was silent. She never ridiculed any thought, however crude and young, if it were genuine. She was one of the few people who knew whether Di was in fun or in earnest, and she knew she was in earnest now.

"There are such things as happy marriages," she said.

"Yes, granny; but I think it is the *happy* marriages I see which make me afraid of marrying. I know it is foolish to expect to meet with anything better than the ordinary happy marriage, and one ought to be thankful if one met with that, for half the world does not. But when I see what is *called* a happy marriage I always think, is that all? Somebody who believes everything I do is right, however silly it is, and knows how many lumps of sugar I take in

my tea—like Arnold and Lily—people point at that marriage as such a model, because they have been married two years and are still as silly as they were. But whenever I stay with them, and she talks nonsense, and he thinks it is all the wisdom of Solomon; and she gives him a blotting-pad, and he gives her a fan; and then they look at each other, and then run races in the garden, and each waits for the other, and they come in hand-in-hand as if they had done something clever—whenever I behold these things it all seems to me a sort of game that I should be ashamed to play at, and I feel, if that is all, at least all I ought to expect, that it is a kind of happiness I don't care to have. Must love be always a sort of pretence, granny, and such a blind, silly, unreasoning feeling when it does exist? If ever I fall in love, shall I set up an assortment of lamentable, ludicrous illusions about some

commonplace young man, as Lily does about that pink Arnold? Can't love be real, like hate? Can't people ever look at each other, and see each other as they *are*, and love each other for *what* they are?"

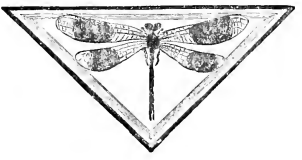
"The Lilies and the Arnolds would not marry if they saw each other as they are, my dear, and they would miss a great deal of happiness in consequence. There would be very few marriages if there were no illusions."

Di was silent.

Mrs. Courtenay stitched a resolution into her lace-work concerning a man whom no one could call commonplace, and presently spoke again.

"You are confusing 'being in love' with love itself," she said. "The one is common to vulgarity, the other rare, at least between men and women. It is the best thing life has to offer. But I have noticed that those

who believe in it, and hope for it, and refuse the commoner love for it, generally—remain unmarried. And now, my dear, send down Evans with my black lace mantilla, and my new bonnet, for Mrs. Darcy said she would lend us her carriage for the afternoon, and it comes at five. Put on a white gown, and make yourself look cool. I must call on Miss Fane, and afterwards we will go down and see the pony races at Hurlingham. Lord Hemsworth sent us tickets for to-day. He is riding, I think."



CHAPTER II.

"The little waves make the large ones, and are of the same pattern."—GEORGE ELIOT.

JOHN was dragging himself feebly across the hall to the smoking-room, after a dutiful cup of tea with his aunt, who was prostrate with a headache, when the door-bell rang, and he saw the champing profiles of a pair of horses through one of the windows. Following his masculine instincts, he hurried across the hall with all the celerity he could muster, and had just got safe under cover when the footman answered the bell. His ear caught the name of Mrs. Courtenay through the open door of the smoking-room, and presently,

though he knew Miss Fane did not consider herself well enough to see visitors, there was a slow rustling across the hall, and up the stairs, accompanied by a light firm foot-fall that could hardly belong to James, whose elephantine rush had so often disturbed him when he was ill.

As James came down again, John looked out of the smoking-room door.

"Who is with Miss Fane?"

"Mrs. Courtenay, sir."

"Any one else?"

"No, sir. Miss Fane could only see Mrs. Courtenay. Miss Tempest, as come with her, is in the gold drawing-room."

John shut the smoking-room door and went and looked out of the window. It was not a cheerful prospect, but that did not matter much, as he happened to be looking at it without seeing it. Lindo got up on a chair and looked solemnly out too, rolling the

whites of his eyes occasionally at his master from under his bushy brows, and yawning long tongue-curling yawns of sheer *ennui*. The cowls on the chimney-pots twirled. The dead plants on the leads were still dead. The cook's canary was going up and down on its two perches like a machine. John reflected that it was rather a waste of canary power; but, perhaps, there was nothing to hold back for in its bachelor existence. It would stand still enough presently when it was stuffed.

Could he get upstairs by himself? That was the question. He could come down, but that was not of much interest to him just now. Could he get up again? Only the first floor. Shallow stairs. Sit down half way. Awkward to be found sitting there, certainly. One thing was certain: that he was not going to be conveyed up in Marshall's solemn embrace as heretofore. John

reflected that he must begin to walk by himself some time. Why not now? Very slowly, of course. Why not now?

It certainly was slow. But the stairs were shallow. There were balusters. It was done at last. If that alpine summit—the upper mat—was finally reached on hands and knees, who was the wiser?

John was breathless but triumphant. His hands were a trifle black; but what of that? The door of the gold drawing-room was open. It was a historic room, the decoration of which had been left untouched since the days when the witty Mrs. Tempest, whom Gainsborough painted, held her salon there. It was a long pillared room. Curtains of some old-fashioned pale gold brocade, not made now, hung from the white pillars and windows. The gold-coloured walls were closely lined with dim pictures from the ceiling to the old Venetian leather of the dado.

Tall, gilt eastern figures, life size, meant to hold lamps, stood here and there, raising their empty hands, hideous, but peculiar to the room, with its bygone stately taste, and stiff white and gilt chairs and settees. John drew aside the curtain, and then hesitated. A family of tall white lilies in pots were gathered together in one of the further windows. Di was standing by them, turned towards him, but without perceiving him. She had evidently introduced herself to the lilies as a friend of the family, and was touching the heads of those nearest to her very gently, very tenderly with one finger. She stood in the full light, like some tall splendid lily herself, against the golden background.

John drew in his breath. It was *his* house; they were *his* lilies. The empty setting which seemed to claim her for its own, to group itself so naturally round her, was all

his. There was a tremor of prophesy in the air. His brain seemed to turn slowly round in his head. He had come upstairs too quickly. His hand clutched the curtain. He felt momentarily incapable of stirring or speaking. The old physical pain, which only loosed him at intervals, tightened its thongs. But he dreaded to see her look up and find him watching her. He went forward and held out his hand in silence.

Di looked up and her expression changed instantly. A lovely colour came into her face, and her eyes shone. She advanced quickly towards him.

"Oh, John!" she said. "Is it really you? I was afraid we should not see you before we left town. But you ought not to stand." (John's complexion was passing from white to ashen grey, to pale green.) "Sit down." She held both his passive hands in hers. She would not for worlds

have let him see that she thought he was going to faint. "This is a nice chair by the window," drawing him gently to it. "I was just admiring your lilies. You will let me ring for a cup of tea, I know. I am so thirsty." It was done in a moment, and she was back again beside him, only a voice now, a voice among the lilies, which appeared and disappeared at intervals. One tall furled lily head came and went with astonishing celerity, and the voice spoke gently and cheerfully from time to time. It was like a wonderful dream in a golden dusk. And then there was a little clink and clatter, and a cup of tea suddenly appeared close to him out of the darkness; and there was Di's voice again, and a momentary glimpse of Di's earnest eyes, which did not match her tranquil unconcerned voice.

He drank the tea mechanically without troubling to hold the cup, which seemed to

take the initiative with a precision and an independence of support, which would have surprised him at any other time. The tea, what little there was of it, was the nastiest he had ever tasted. It might have been made in a brandy bottle. But it certainly cleared the air. Gradually the room came back. The light came back. He came back himself. It was all hardly credible. There was Di sitting opposite him, evidently quite unaware that he had been momentarily overcome, and assiduously engaged in pouring out another cup of tea. She had taken off her gloves, and he watched her cool slender hands give herself a lump of sugar. (Only one *small* lump, John observed. He must remember that.) Then she filled up the teapot from the little gurgling silver kettle. What forethought. Wonderful! and yet all apparently so natural. She seemed to do it as a matter of course. He ought to be

helping her, but somehow he was not. Would she take bread and butter, or one of those little round things? She took a piece of bread and butter. Perhaps it would be as well to listen to what she was saying. He lost the first part of the sentence because she began to stir her tea at the moment, and he could not attend to two things at once. But presently he heard her say—

"Mrs. Courtenay thinks young people ought not to mind missing tea altogether. But I do mind; don't you? I think it is the pleasantest meal in the day."

John cautiously assented that it was. He felt that he must be very careful, or a slight dizziness which was now rapidly passing off might be noticed.

Di went on talking unconcernedly, bending her burnished golden head in its little white bonnet over the teacups. She seemed to take a great interest in the tea-things, and

the date of the apostle spoons. Presently she looked at him again, and a relieved smile came into her face.

"Are you ready for another cup?" she said. And it was not a dream any longer, but all quite real and true, and he was real too.

"No, thanks," said John, taking his cup with extreme deliberation from a table at his elbow, where he supposed he had set it down. "There is something wrong about the tea, I think. Do send yours away and have some more. It has a very odd taste."

"Has it?" said Di, meeting his eye firmly, but with an effort. "I don't notice it. On the contrary, I think it is rather good. Try another cup."

"Perhaps the water did not boil," suggested John feebly, reflecting that his temporary indisposition might have been the cause of his dislike, but anxious to conceal the fact.

"That is a direct reflection on my tea-

making," said Di. "You had better be more careful what you say." And she quickly pushed a stumpy little liqueur-bottle behind the silver tea-caddy.

"I beg pardon, and ask humbly for another cup," said John, smiling. The pain had left him again, as it generally did after he had remained quiet for a time, and in the relief from it he had a vague impression that the present moment was too good to last. He did not know that it was usual to wash out a cup so carefully as Di did his, but she seemed to think it the right thing, and she probably knew. Anyhow, the second cup was capital. John was not allowed to drink tea. The doctors who were knitting firmly together again the slender threads that had so far bound him to this world, believed he was imbibing an emulsion of something or other strengthening and nauseous at that moment

"Oh! There is a tea-cake," said Di, discovering another dish behind the kettle. "Why did not I see it before?"

"It is not too late, I hope," said John, anxiously. The stupidity of James in putting a tea-cake (which might have been preferred to bread and butter) out of sight behind an opaque kettle, caused him profound annoyance.

But Di could not take a personal interest in the tea-cake. She looked back at the lilies.

"Don't you long to be in the country?" she said. "I find myself dreaming about green fields and flowers gratis. I have not seen a country lane since Easter, and then it rained all the time. It is three years since I have found a hedge-sparrow's nest with eggs in it. Don't you long to get away?"

"I long to get back to Overleigh," said

John. "I went there for a few days in the spring on my return from Russia. The place was looking lovely; but," he added, as if it were a matter of course, "naturally Overleigh always looks beautiful to me."

Di did not answer.

"You know the wood below the house," he went on. "When I saw it last all the rhododendrons were out."

"I have never seen Overleigh," said Di, looking at the lilies again, and trying to speak unconcernedly. She knew Lord Hemsworth's tiresome old Border castle. She had visited at many historic houses. She and Mrs. Courtenay were going to some shortly. But her own family place, the one house of all others in the whole world which she would have cared to see, she had never seen. She had often heard about it from acquaintances, had looked wistfully at drawings of it in illustrated magazines, had

questioned Mrs. Courtenay and Archie about it, had wandered in imagination in its long gallery, and down the lichened steps from the postern in the wall, that every artist vignetted, to the stone-flagged Italian gardens below. But with her bodily eyes she had never beheld it, and the longing returned at intervals. It had returned now.

"Will you come and see it?" said John, looking away from her. It seemed to him that he was playing a game in which he had staked heavily, against some one who had staked nothing, who was not even conscious of playing, and might inadvertently knock over the board at any moment. He felt as if he had noiselessly pushed forward his piece, and as if everything depended on the withdrawal of his hand from it unobserved.

"I have wished to see Overleigh from a child," said Di, flushing a little. "Think what you feel about it, and my father, and

our grandfather. Well—I am a Tempest too."

John was vaguely relieved. He glanced from her to the Gainsborough in the feathered hat that hung behind her. There was just a touch of resemblance under the unlikeness, a look in the pose of the head, in its curled and powdered wig that had reminded him of Di before. It reminded him of her more than ever now.

"Archie has been to Overleigh so constantly that I had not realized you had never seen it," said John. "But I suppose you were not grown up in those days; and since you grew up I have been abroad."

"Shall you go abroad again?"

"No. I have given up my secretaryship. I have come back to England for good."

"I am glad of that."

"I have been away too long as it is."

"Yes," said Di. "I have often thought so."

"Why?"

There was a pause.

"We are not represented," said Di proudly. She was speaking to one of her own family, and consequently she was not careful to choose her words. She had evidently no fear of being misunderstood by John. "We have always taken a place," she went on. "Not a particularly high one, but one of some kind. There was Amyas Tempest the cavalier general, and John who was with Charles of Bourbon at the sacking of Rome; and there were judges and admirals. Not that that is much when one looks at other families, the Cecils, for instance, but still they were always among the men of the day. And then our great-grandfather who lies in Westminster Abbey really was a great man. I was reading his life over again the other

day. I suppose his son only passed muster because he was his son, and owing to his wife's ability. She amused old George IV., and made herself a power, and pushed her husband."

"My father never did anything," said John.

"No. I have always heard he had brains, but that he let things go because he was unhappy. Just the reason for holding on to them all the tighter, I should have thought, wouldn't you?"

"Not with some people. Some people can't do anything if there is no one to be glad when they have done it. I partly understand the feeling."

"I don't," said Di. "I mean, I do, but I don't understand giving in to it, and letting a little bit of personal unhappiness, which will die with one, prevent one's being a good useful link in a chain. One owes that to the chain."

"Yes," said John. "And yet I know he had a very strong feeling of responsibility from what he said to me on his death-bed. I have often thought about him since, and tried to piece together all the little fragments I can remember of him; but I think there is no one I can understand less than my own father. He seemed a hard cold man, and yet that face is neither hard nor cold."

John pointed to a picture behind her, and Di rose and turned to look at it.

It was an interesting refined face, destitute of any kind of good looks, except those of high breeding. The eyes had a certain thoughtful challenge in them. The lips were thin and firm.

Both gazed in silence for a moment.

"He looks as if he might have been one of those quiet equable people who may be pushed into a corner," said Di, "and then become rather dangerous. I can imagine

his being a harsh man, and an unforgiving one if life went wrong."

"I am afraid he did become that," said John. "As he could not find room for forgiveness, there was naturally no room for happiness either."

"Was there some one whom he could not forgive?" asked Di, turning her keen glance upon him. She evidently knew nothing of the feud of the last generation.

At this moment the rush of James the elephant-footed was heard, and he announced that Mrs. Courtenay was getting into the carriage, and had sent for Miss Tempest.

"Good-bye," said Di, cordially, gathering up her gloves and parasol. "Go to Overleigh and get strong. And—you will have so many other things to think of—try not to forget about asking us."

"I will remember," said John, as if he would make a point of burdening his memory.

He was holding aside the curtain for her to pass.

"You see," said Di, looking back, "when we are on the move we can do things, but once we get back to London we cannot go north again till next year. We can't afford it."

"I will be sure to remember," said John again. He was a little crestfallen, and yet relieved that she should think he might forget. He felt that he could trust his memory.

She smiled gratefully and was gone. She had forgotten to shake hands with him. He knew she had not been aware of the omission. She had been thinking of something else at the moment. But it remained a grievous fact all the same.

He walked back absently into the drawing-room and stopped opposite the tea-table.

"Vinegar," he said to himself. "What

can James have been about? I draw the line at vinegar at five o'clock tea. I hope she did not see it."

He took out the glass stopper.

Not vinegar. No. There is but one name for that familiar, that searching smell.

"It's brandy," said John aloud, speaking to himself, while the past unrolled itself like a map before his eyes. "Yes, look at it. Would you like to smell it again? There is no need to be so surprised. You had some of it not ten minutes ago, you poor deluded, blinded, bandaged idiot."

"Whom do you think *I* have seen?" said Di, as they drove away.

Mrs. Courtenay made no attempt to guess, which was the more remarkable because, when Miss Fane had ordered a cup of tea for Di, James had volunteered the informa-

tion that he had already taken tea to Mr. and Miss Tempest.

"Whom but John himself," continued Di.

"I thought he was still invisible."

"I am sure he ought to be. I never saw any one look so ill. We had tea together. I really thought you were never going away at all, but I was glad you were such a long time, because it was so pleasant seeing him again. I like John; don't you? I have liked him from the first."

"He is a sensible man, but I prefer people with easier manners myself."

"He is more than sensible, I think."

"We shall be too late for the pony races," said Mrs. Courtenay. "It is nearly six now, and I told Lord Hemsworth we would be at the entrance at half-past five."

"He will survive it," said Di, archly. "And, granny, John is going to ask us to Overleigh. I told him I had never seen it."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Mrs. Courtenay, and there was no doubt about her interest this time. "You did not *suggest* our going, did you?"

"I am not sure I did not," said Di, unfurling her parasol. "Look, granny, there is Mrs. Buller nodding to you, and you won't look at her. Yes, I rather think I did. I can't remember exactly what I said, but he promised he would not forget, and I told him we could only come when we were on the move. I impressed that upon him."

"Really, Di," said Mrs. Courtenay with asperity, "I wish you would prevent your parasol catching in my bonnet, and not offer visits without consulting me. It would have been quite time enough to have gone when he had asked us."

"He might not have asked us."

Mrs. Courtenay, who had seen a good deal of John in the weeks that preceded his

accident, was perhaps of a different opinion; but she did not express it. Neither did she mention her own previously fixed intention of going to Overleigh somehow or other during the course of her summer visits.

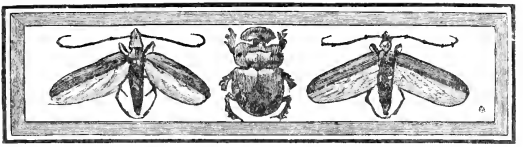
"What is the use of near relations," continued Di, "if you can't tell them anything of that kind? I believe John will be quite pleased to have us now that he knows we wish to come; if only he remembers. Come, granny, if I take you to Archelot to please you, you ought to take me to Overleigh to please me. That's fair now, isn't it?"

"It may be extremely inconvenient," said Mrs. Courtenay, still ruffled. "And I had rheumatism last time I was there."

"Think what rheumatism you always have at Archelot, which sits up to its knees in mist every night in the middle of its moat; and yet you would insist on going again. There is that nice Mr. Sinclair taking off

his hat. Won't you recognize him? You thought him so improved, you said, since his elder brother's death."

"My dear," said Mrs. Courtenay, "I am not so perpetually on the look out for young men as you appear to be. All the same, you may put up my parasol, for I can see nothing with the sun in my eyes."



CHAPTER III.

"The moving Finger writes; and having writ,
Moves on: nor all your Piety nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a line,
Nor all your tears wash out a Word of it."

OMAR KHAYYÁM.

"WHAT thou doest do quickly," has been advice which, in its melancholy sarcasm, has been followed for eighteen hundred years when any special evil has been afoot in the dark. And yet surely the words apply still more urgently when the doing that is premeditated is good. What thou doest do quickly, for even while we speak those to whom we feel tenderly grow

old and grey, and slip beyond the reach of human comfort. Even while we dream of love, those whom we love are parted from us in an early hour when we think not, without so much as a rose to take with them, out of the garden of roses that were planted and fostered for them alone. And even while we tardily forgive our friend, lo! the page is turned and we see that there was no injury, as now there is no compensation for our lack of trust.

Colonel Tempest acted with promptitude, but though he was as expeditious as he knew how to be, that was not saying much. His continual dread was that others might be beforehand with him. He had at this time a dream that recurred, or seemed to recur, over and over again—that he was running blindly at night, and that unknown adversaries were coming swiftly up behind him, were breathing close, and passing him

in the darkness, unseen, but felt. It haunted him in the daytime like a reality.

Superstition would not be superstition if it were amenable to reason. Punishment hung over him like a sword in mid-air —it might fall at any moment—what form of punishment it would be hard to say—something evil to himself. If he struck down another might not the Almighty strike him down? It seemed to him that God's hand was raised.

"Sin no more." Wipe it out. Obliterate it. Expiate it. Quick, quick.

He set to work in feverish haste to find out Larkin. But although he had a certain knowledge of how to approach gentlemen of Swayne's class, he could not at first unearth Larkin. The habitation of the wren is not more secluded than that of some of our fellow-creatures. Colonel Tempest went very quietly to work. He

never went near the address given him; he wrote anonymous letters repeatedly, suggesting a personal interview which would be found greatly to Mr. Larkin's advantage. Mr. Larkin, however, appeared to take a different view of his own advantage. It was in vain that Colonel Tempest said he should be walking on the Thames Embankment the following evening, and would be found at a given point at a certain hour. No one found him there, or at any other of the places he mentioned. He took a good deal of unnecessary exercise, or what appeared so at the time. Still he persisted. While the quarry remained in London, the hunter would probably remain there also. John had not gone yet. Colonel Tempest went on every few days making appointments for meeting, and keeping them rigorously himself.

A fortnight passed. Larkin made no sign.

At last Colonel Tempest heard that John was leaving town. He went to see him, and came away heavy at heart. John was out; and the servant informed him that Mr. Tempest was going to Overleigh the following morning. Colonel Tempest had a presentiment that a stone would be dropped between the points of the Great Northern. The train would come to grief, somehow. It would all happen in a moment. There would be one fierce thrust in the dark which he should not be able to prary. And if John got safe to Overleigh he would be followed there. The shooting season was coming on, and some one would load for him, and there would be an *accident.*

Colonel Tempest went back to his rooms in Brook Street, and stared at the carpet. He did not know how long it was before he caught sight of a batch of letters on the

table. He looked carelessly at them; the uppermost was from his tailor. The address of the next was written in printed letters; he knew in an instant that it was from Larkin, without the further confirmation of the heavy seal with its shilling impression. His hands shook so much that he opened it with difficulty. The sheet contained a somewhat guarded communication also written in laboriously printed capitals.

"*Yours of the 14th to hand. All right. Place and time you say.* "*L.*"

The writer had been so very desirous to avoid publicity that he had even taken the trouble to tear off the left inner side of the envelope on which the maker's name is printed.

That significant precaution gave Colonel Tempest a sickening qualm. It suggested networks of other precautions in the background, snares which he might not perceive

till too late, subtleties for which he was no match. He began to feel that it was physically impossible for him to meet this man; that he must get out of the interview at any cost. The maddening sense of being lured into a trap came upon him, and he flung in the opposite direction.

But the facts came and looked him in the face. He seldom allowed them to do so, but they did it now in spite of him. Eyes that have been once avoided are ever after difficult to meet. Nevertheless, he had to meet them—the cold inexorable eyes of facts come up to the surface of his mind to have justice done them, grimy but redoubtable, like miners on strike. Cost what it might, he saw that he must capitulate; that he must take this, his one—his last chance, or—hateful alternative—take instead the consequences of neglecting it.

He went over the old well-worn ground

once again. Detection was impossible. That nightmare of a murder, and of a voice that cried aloud, while all the world stood still to hear : " *Thou art the man :*" was only a nightmare after all. And this was the best way, the only way to get rid of it.

He tried to recall the time and place of meeting, but it was gone from him. There had been so many. No, he had scrawled it down on the fly-leaf of his pocket-book. Six o'clock. It was nearly five now. He had had the money in readiness for the last fortnight. He had drawn one thousand of the ten which John had placed to his credit. He got out the ten crisp hundred pound notes, and put them carefully into his breast pocket. Then he sat down and waited. When the half-hour chimed he went out.

There is a straight and quiet path behind Kensington Palace which the lovers and

nursery-maids of Kensington Gardens frequent but little. A line of low-growing knotted trees separates it from the Broad Walk at a little distance. A hedge and fence on the other side divides the Gardens from a strip of meadow not yet covered by buildings.

The public esteem this particular walk but lightly. Invalids in bath-chairs toil down it sometimes; nurses with grown-up children, who are children still, go there occasionally, where the uncouth gambols and vacant bearded laugh of forty-five will not attract attention.

But as a rule it is deserted.

Colonel Tempest had it almost to himself for the first ten minutes, except for a covey of little boys who fought and clambered and jumped on some stacked timber at one end. He had not chosen the place without forethought. It would be presumed that he

would have a large sum of money with him, and he had taken care on each occasion to select a rendezvous where foul play would not be possible. He was within reach of numbers of persons merely by raising his voice.

An old man on the arm of a young one passed him slowly, absorbed in earnest conversation. A girl in mourning sat down on one of the benches. There was privacy enough for business, and not too much for safety.

Colonel Tempest paced up and down, giving each face that passed a furtive glance. He did not know what to expect.

The three quarters struck. The girl got up and turned away. A stout, shabby-looking man, whose approach Colonel Tempest had not noticed, was sitting on one of the benches under a gnarled yew, staring vacantly in front of him. The old man and the young

one were coming down the walk again. A check suit with six depressed, amber-eyed dachshunds in a leash passed among the trees.

A few more turns.

The clock began to strike six.

Colonel Tempest's pulse quickened. As he turned once more at the end of the walk, he could see that the hunched-up figure, with the hat over the eyes, was still sitting under the yew at the further end. He walked slowly towards it. How should they recognize each other? Who would speak first?

A quietly-dressed man, walking rapidly in the opposite direction, touched his hat respectfully as he passed him. Colonel Tempest recognized John's valet, and slackened his pace, for he was approaching the bench under the yew tree, and he did not care to be addressed while any one was within earshot. He was opposite it now, and he

looked hard at the occupant. The latter stared vacantly, if not sleepily, back at him, and made no sign.

"He is shamming," said Colonel Tempest to himself. "Or else he is not sure of me." And he took yet another turn.

The man had moved a little when he came towards him again. He was leaning back in the corner of the bench, with his head on his chest, and his legs stretched out. An elderly lady, with curls, and an umbrella clutched like a defensive weapon, was passing him with evident distrust, calling to her side a fleecy little toy dog, which seemed to have left its stand and wheels at home, and to be rather at a loss without them. Colonel Tempest looked hard a second time at the figure on the bench, when he came opposite him, and then stopped short.

The man was sleeping the sleep of the just, or, to speak more correctly, of the just

inebriated. His under lip was thrust out. He breathed stertorously. If it was a sham, it was very well done.

Colonel Tempest stood a moment in perplexity, looking fixedly at him. Should he wake him? Was he, perhaps, waiting to be waked? Was he really asleep? He half put out his hand.

"I think, sir," said a respectful voice behind him, "begging your pardon, sir, the party is very intoxicated. Sometimes if woke sudden they're vicious."

Colonel Tempest wheeled round.

It was Marshall, John's valet, who had spoken to him, and who was now regarding the slumbering rough with the resigned melancholy of an undertaker.

The quarter struck.

"Sorry to have kept you waiting, sir," said Marshall, after a pause, in which Colonel Tempest wondered why he did not go.

And then, at last, Colonel Tempest understood.

He put his hand feebly to his head.

"Oh, my God!" he said below his breath, and was silent.

Marshall cleared his throat.

There are situations in which, as Johnson has observed respecting the routine of married life, little can be said, but much must be done.

The slumbering backslider slid a little further back in his seat, and gurgled something very low down about "jolly good fellows," until, his voice suddenly going upstairs in the middle, he added in a high quaver, "daylight does appear."

The musical outburst recalled Colonel Tempest somewhat to himself. He turned his eyes carefully away from Marshall, after that first long look of mutual understanding.

The man's apparent respectability, his smooth shaved face and quiet dress, from his well-brushed hat and black silk cravat to the dark dog-skin glove that held his irreproachable umbrella, set Colonel Tempest's teeth on edge.

He had not known what to expect, but—*this!*

In a flash of memory he recalled the several occasions on which he had seen Marshall in attendance on John, his attentive manner, and noiseless tread. Once before John could move he had seen Marshall lift him carefully into a more upright position. The remembrance of that helpless figure in Marshall's arms came back to him with a shudder that could not be repressed. Marshall, whose expressionless face had undergone no change whatever, cleared his throat again and looked at his watch.

"Begging your pardon, sir," he said, "it's

nearly half-past six, and Mr. Tempest dines early to-night."

"Did you receive my other letters?" said Colonel Tempest, pulling himself together, and beginning to walk slowly down the path.

"Yes, sir. I'm sorry to have put you to the inconvenience of going to so many places, 'specially as I saw for myself how regular you turned up at 'em. But I wanted to make sure you were in earnest before I showed. My character is my livelihood, sir. There was a time when I was in trouble and got into Mr. Johnson's hands, but before that I'd been in service in 'igh families, very 'igh, sir. Mr. Tempest took me on the recommendation of the Earl of Carmian. I was with him two year."

"Mr. Johnson," said Colonel Tempest, stopping short, and turning a shade whiter than he had been before. "By —— I don't

know anything about a Mr. Johnson. What do you mean?"

The two men eyed each other as if each suspected treachery.

"Did you write this?" said Marshall, producing Colonel Tempest's last letter.

"Yes."

"Then it's all right," said Marshall, who had forgotten the *sir*. "He had a sight of names. Johnson he was when he found I'd took up your—your bet. But I wrote to him, I remember, at one place as Crosbie."

Colonel Tempest recalled the curate's mention of Swayne under the name of Crosbie.

"Swayne, or Crosbie, or Johnson, it's all one," he said hastily. "I want a certain bit of paper you have in your possession, and I have ten Bank of England notes, of a hundred each, in my pocket now to give you in exchange. I suppose we understand each other. Have you got it on you?"

"Yes."

"Produce it."

"Show up the notes, too, then."

Unnoticed by either, the manner of both, as between gentleman and servant, had merged into that of perfect equality. Love is not the only leveller of disparities of rank and position.

They were walking together side by side. There was not a soul in sight. Each cautiously showed what he had brought. The dirty half-sheet of common note-paper, with Colonel Tempest's signature, seemed hardly worth the crisp notes, each one of which Colonel Tempest turned slowly over.

"Ten," said Marshall. "All right."

"Stop," said Colonel Tempest, hoarsely, the date on the ragged sheet he had just seen suggesting a new idea. "You're too young. You're not five and thirty. By —— it's nearly sixteen years ago. You

weren't in it. You couldn't have been in it. How did you come by that? Whom did you have it from?"

"From one who'll tell no tales," returned Marshall. "He was sick of it. He had tried twice, and he was near his end, and I took it off him just before he died."

"Did he die?" said Colonel Tempest. "I am not so sure of that."

"I am," said the man; "or I'd never have had nothing to do with the business."

"How long have you been with Mr. Tempest?"

"A matter of three months. He engaged me when he came back from Russia in the spring."

"You will leave at once. That, of course, is understood."

"Yes. I will give warning to-night if——" and the man glanced at the packet in Colonel Tempest's hand.

Without another word they exchanged papers. Colonel Tempest did not tear the document that had cost him so much into a thousand pieces. He looked at it, recognized that it was genuine, put it in his pocket, and buttoned his coat over it. Then he got out a note-book and pencil.

"And now," he said, "the others. How am I to get at them?"

The man stared. "The others?" he repeated. "What others?"

"You were one," said Colonel Tempest. "Now about the rest. I mean to pay them all off. There were ten in it. Where are the nine?"

Marshall stood stock still, as if he were realizing something unperceived till now. Then he shook his fist.

"That Johnson lied to me. I might have known. He took me in from first to last. I never thought but that I was the—*the*

only one. And all I've spent, and the work I've been put to, when I might just as well have let one of them others risk it. He never acted square. Damn him."

Colonel Tempest looked at him horror-struck. The man's anger was genuine.

"Do you mean to say you don't *know?*" he said, in a harsh whisper, all that was left of his voice. "Swayne, Johnson said you did. On his deathbed he said so."

"Know," retorted the man, his expressionless face having some meaning in it at last. "Do you suppose if I'd *known,* I'd have—— But that's been the line he has gone on from the first, you may depend upon it. He's let each one think he was alone at the job to bring it round quicker; a double-tongued, double-dealing devil. Each of them others is working for himself now, single-handed. I wonder they haven't brought it off before. Why *that fire!* We was both nearly done

for that night. I slept just above 'im, and it was precious near. If he had not run up hisself and woke me—that fire—— '

Marshall stopped short. His mouth fell ajar. His mind was gradually putting two and two together. There was no horror in his face, only a malignant sense of having been duped.

" By ——," he said fiercely. " I see it all."

A cold hand seemed to be laid on Colonel Tempest's heart, to press closer and closer. The sweat burst from his brow. Swayne had been an economizer of truth to the last. He had deliberately lied even on his death-bed, in order to thrust away the distasteful subject to which Colonel Tempest had so pertinaciously nailed him. The two men stood staring at each other. A governess and three little girls, evidently out for a stroll after tea, were coming towards them. The sight of the four advancing figures

seemed to shake the two men back in a moment, with a gasp, to their former relations.

Marshall drew himself up, and touched his hat.

"I ought to be going, sir," he said, almost in his usual ordered tones. "Mr. Tempest dines early to-night."

Colonel Tempest nodded. He had forgotten for the moment how to speak.

"And it's all right, sir, about—about me," rather anxiously.

Colonel Tempest perceived that Marshall had not realized the possible hold he might obtain over him by the mere fact of his knowledge of this last revelation. He had been obtuse before. He was obtuse now.

"As long as you are silent and leave at once," said Colonel Tempest, commanding his tongue to articulate, "I will be silent too. Not a moment longer."

Marshall touched his hat again, and went.

Colonel Tempest walked unsteadily to a bench under a twisted yew, a little way from the path, and sat down heavily upon it.

How cold it was, how bitterly cold! He shivered, and drew his hand across his damp forehead. The tinkling of voices reached him at intervals. Foolish birds were making choruses of small jokes in the branches above his head. Some one laughed at a little distance.

He alone was wretched beyond endurance. Perhaps he did not know what endurance meant. Panic shook him like a leaf.

And there was no refuge. He did not know how to live. Dared he die? die, and struggle up the other side only to find an angry judge waiting on the brink to strike him down to hell even while he put up supplicating hands? But his hands were red with John's blood, so that even his

prayers convicted him of sin—were turned into sin.

A feeling as near despair as his nature could approach to overwhelmed him.

One of the most fatal results of evil is that in the same measure that it exists in ourselves, we imply it in others, and not less in God Himself. Poor Colonel Tempest saw in his Creator only an omniscient detective, an avenger, an executioner who had mocked at his endeavours to propitiate Him, to escape out of His hand, who held him as in a pillory, and would presently break him upon the wheel.

Superstition has its uses, but, like most imitations, it does not wear well—not much better, perhaps, than the brown paper boots in which the English soldier goes forth to war.

A cheap faith is an expensive experience. I believe Colonel Tempest suffered horribly

as he sat alone under that yew tree; underwent all the throes which self-centred people do undergo, who, in saving their life, see it slipping through their fingers; who in clutching at their own interest and pleasure, find themselves sliding into a gulf; who in sacrificing the happiness and welfare of those that love them to their whim, their caprice, their shifting temper of the moment, find themselves at last—alone—unloved.

Are there many sorrows like this sorrow? There is perhaps only one worse—namely, to realize what onlookers have seen from the first, what has brought it about. This is hard. But Colonel Tempest was spared this pain. Those for whom others can feel least compassion are, as a rule, fortunately able to bestow most upon themselves. Colonel Tempest belonged to the self-pitying class, and with him to suffer was to begin at once to be sorry for himself. The tears ran

slowly down his cheeks and his lip quivered. Perhaps there is nothing quite so heart-breaking as the tears of middle-age for itself.

He saw himself sitting there, so lonely, so miserable, without a creature in the world to turn to for comfort; entrapped into evil as all are at times, for he was but human, he had never set up to be better than his fellows; but to have striven so hard against evil—to have tried, as not many would have done, to repair what had been wrong (and the greatest wrong had not been with him) and yet to have been repulsed by God Himself! Everybody had turned against him. And now God had turned against him too. His last hope was gone. He should never find those other men, never buy back those other bets. John would be killed sooner or later, and he himself would *suffer*.

That was the refrain, the keynote to which he always returned. *He should suffer*.

Natures like Colonel Tempest's go through the same paroxysms of blind despairing grief as do those of children. They see only the present. The maturer mind is sustained in its deeper anguish by the power of looking beyond its pain. It has bought, perhaps dear, the chill experience that all things pass, that sorrow endures but for a night, even as the joy that comes in the morning endures but for a morning. But as a child weeps and is disconsolate, and dries its eyes and forgets, so Colonel Tempest would presently forget again—for a time.

Indeed, he soon took the best means within his reach of doing so. He felt that he was too wretched to remain in England. It was therefore imperative that he should go abroad. Persons of his temperament have a delightful confidence in the benign influences of the Continent. He wrote to John, returning him £8,500 of the £10,000, saying that

the object for which it had been given had become so altered as to prevent the application of the money. He did not mention that he had found a use for one thousand, and that pressing personal expenses had obliged him to retain another five hundred, but he was vaguely conscious of doing an honourable action in returning the remainder.

John wrote back at once, saying that he had given him the money, and that as his uncle did not wish to keep it, he should invest it in his name, and settle it on his daughter, while the interest at four per cent. would be paid to Colonel Tempest during his lifetime.

"Well," said Colonel Tempest to himself, after reading this letter, "beggars can't be choosers, but if *I* had been in John's place I *hope* I should not have shown such a grudging spirit. Eight thousand five hundred! Out of all his wealth he might

have made it ten thousand for my poor penniless girl. No wonder he does not wish her to know about it."

And having a little ready money about him, Colonel Tempest took his penniless girl, much to her surprise, a lapis-lazuli necklace when he went to say good-bye to her.

On the last evening before he left England he got out the paper Marshall had given him, and having locked the door, spread it on the table before him. He had done this secretly many times a day since he had obtained possession of it.

There it was, unmistakable in black and grime that had once been white. The one thing of all others in this world that Colonel Tempest loathed was to be obliged to face anything. Like Peer Gynt, he went round, or if like Balaam he came to a narrow place where there was no turning room, he struck furiously at the nearest sentient body. But

a widower has no beast of burden at hand to strike, and there was no power of going round, no power of backing either, from before that sheet of crumpled paper. When he first looked at it he had a kind of recollection that was no recollection of having seen it before.

The words were as distinct as a death-warrant. Perhaps they were one. Colonel Tempest read them over once again.

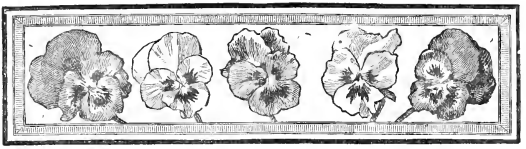
"I, Edward Tempest, lay one thousand pounds to one sovereign that I do never inherit the property of Overleigh in Yorkshire."

There was his own undeniable scrawling signature beneath Swayne's crab-like characters. There below his own was the signature of that obscure speculator, since dead, who had taken up the bet.

If anything is forced upon the notice, which yet it is distasteful to contemplate, the

only remedy for avoiding present discomfort is to close the eyes.

Colonel Tempest struck a match, lit the paper, and dropped it into the black July grate. It would not burn at first, but after a moment it flared up and turned over. He watched it writhe under the little chuckling flame. The word Overleigh came out distinctly for a second, and then the flame went out, leaving a charred curled nothing behind. One solitary spark flew swiftly up like a little soul released from an evil body. Colonel Tempest rubbed the ashes with his foot, and once again—closed his eyes.



CHAPTER IV.

"I give thee sixpence! I will see thee d—d first."
CANNING.

SOME one rejoiced exceedingly when, in those burning August days, John came back to Overleigh. Mitty loved him. She was the only woman who as yet had shown him any love at all, and his nature was not an unthankful one. Mitty was bound up with all the little meagre happiness of his childhood. She had given him his only glimpse of woman's tenderness. There had never been a time when he had not read aloud to Mitty during the holidays —when he had forgotten to write to her

periodically from school. When she had been discharged with the other servants at his father's death, he had gone in person to one of his guardians to request that she might remain, and had offered half his pocket-money annually for that purpose, and a sum down in the shape of a collection of foreign coins in a sock. Perhaps his guardian had a little boy of his own in Eton jackets who collected coins. At any rate, something was arranged. Mitty remained in the long low nurseries in the attic gallery. She was waiting for him on the steps on that sultry August evening when he returned. John saw her white cap twinkling under the stone archway as he drove along the straight wide drive between the double rows of beeches which approached the castle by the northern side.

Some houses have the soothing influence of the presence of a friend. Once established

in the cool familiar rooms and strong air of his native home, he regained his health by a succession of strides, which contrasted curiously with the stumbling ups and downs and constant relapses which in the earlier part of his recovery had puzzled his doctors.

For the first few days just to live was enough. John had no desire beyond sitting in the shadow of the castle with Mitty, and feeling the fresh heather-scented air from the moors upon his face and hands. Then came the day when he went on Mr. Goodwin's arm down the grey lichened steps to the Italian garden, and took one turn among the stone-edged beds, under the high south wall. Gradually as the languor of weakness passed he wandered further and further into the woods, and lay for hours under the trees among the ling and fern. The irritation of weakness had left him, the enforced inaction of slowly returning strength had not yet

begun to chafe. His mind urged nothing on him, required no decisions of him, but, like a dear companion instead of a task-master, rested and let him rest. He watched for hours the sunlight on the bracken, listened for hours to the tiny dissensions and confabulations of little creatures that crept in and out.

There had been days and nights in London when the lamp of life had burned exceeding low, when he had never thought to lie in his own dear woods again, to see the squirrel swinging and chiding against the sky, to hear the cry of the water-hen to its mate from the reeded pools below. He had loved these things always, but to see them again after toiling up from the gates of death is to find them transfigured. "The light that never was on sea or land" gleams for a moment on wood and wold for eyes that have looked but now into the darkness of

the grave. Almost it seems in such hours as if God had passed by that way, as if the forest had knowledge of Him, as if the awed pines kept Him ever in remembrance. Almost. Almost.

Di was never absent from John's thoughts for long together. His dawning love for her had as yet no pain in it. It wandered still in glades of hyacinth and asphodel. Truly—

"Love is bonny, a little while, while it is new."

Its feet had not yet reached the stony desert places and the lands of fierce heat and fiercer frost, through which all human love which does not die in infancy must one day travel. The strain and stress were not yet.

John was coming back one evening from a longer expedition than usual. The violet dusk had gathered over the gardens. The

massive flank and towers of the castle were hardly visible against the sky. As he came near he saw a light in the arched windows of the chapel, and through the open lattice came the sound of the organ. Some one was playing within, and the night listened from without; John stood and listened too. The organ, so long dumb, was speaking in an audible voice—was telling of many things that had lain long in its heart, and that now at last trembled into speech. Some unknown touch was bringing all its pure passionate soul to its lips. Its voice rose and fell, and the listening night sighed in the ivy.

John went noiselessly indoors by the postern, and up the short spiral staircase in the thickness of the wall, into the chapel, an arched Elizabethan chamber leading out of the dining-hall. He stopped short in the doorway.

The light of a solitary candle at the further

end gave shadows to the darkness. As by an artistic instinct, it just touched the nearest of the pipes, and passing entirely over the prosaic footman, blowing in his shirt-sleeves, lit up every feature of the fair exquisite face of the player. Beauty remains beauty, when all has been said and done to detract from it. Archie was very good to look upon. Even the footman, who had been ruthlessly torn away from his supper to blow, thought so. John thought so as he stood and looked at his cousin, who nodded to him, and went on playing. The contrast between the two was rather a cruel one, though John was unconscious of it. It was Archie who mentally made the comparison whenever they were together. Ugliness would be no disadvantage, and beauty would have no power, if they did not appear to be the outward and visible signs of the inner and spiritual man.

Archie was so fair-haired, he had such a perfect profile, such a clear complexion, and such tender faithful eyes, that it was impossible to believe that the virtues which clear complexions and lovely eyes so plainly represent were not all packed with sardine-like regularity in his heart. His very hair looked good. It was parted so beautifully, and it had a little innocent wave on the temple which carried conviction with it—to the young of the opposite sex. It was not because he was so handsome that he was the object of a tender solicitude in many young girls' hearts—at least, so they told themselves repeatedly—but because there was so much good in him, because he was so misunderstood by elders, so interesting, so unlike other young men. In short, Archie was his father over again.

Nature had been hard on John. Some ugly men look well, and their ugliness does

not matter. John's was not of that type dear to fiction. His features were irregular and rough, his deep-set eyes did not redeem the rest of his face. Nothing did. A certain gleam of nobility shining dimly through its harsh setting would make him better-looking later in life, when expression gets the mastery over features. But it was not so yet. John looked hard and cold and forbidding, and though his face awoke a certain interest by its very force, the interest itself was without attraction. It must be inferred that John had hair, as he was not bald, but no one had ever noticed it except his hair-cutter. It was short and dark. In fact, it was hair, and that was all. Mitty was the only other person who had any of it, in a lozenge-box; but who shall say in what lockets and jewel-cases one of Archie's flaxen rings might not be treasured? Archie was a collector of hair himself, and there is a give-and-take in these

things. He had a cigar-box full of locks of different colours, which were occasionally spread out before his more intimate friends, with little anecdotes respecting the acquisition of each. A vain man has no reticence except on the subject of his rebuffs. Bets were freely exchanged on the respective chances of the donors of these samples of devotion, and their probable identity commented on. "Three to one on the black." "Ten to one on the dyed amber." "Forty to one on the lank and sandy, it's an heiress."

Archie would listen in silence, and smile his small saintly smile. Archie's smile suggested anthems and summer dawns and blanc-mange all blent in one. And then he would gather up the landmarks of his affections, and put them back into the cigar-box. They were called "Tempest's scalps" in the regiment.

Archie had sat for "Sir Galahad" to one

of the principal painters of the day. He might have sat for something very spiritual and elevating now. What historic heroes and saints have played the organ? He would have done beautifully for any one of them, or Dicksee might have worked him up into a pendant to his "Harmony," with an angel blowing instead of the footman.

And just at the critical moment when the organ was arriving at a final confession, and swelling towards a dominant seventh, the footman let the wind out of her. There was a discord, and a wheeze, and a death-rattle. Archie took off his hands with a shudder, and smiled a microscopic smile at the perspiring footman. Archie never, never, never swore; not even when he was alone, and when he cut himself shaving. He differed from his father in that. He smiled instead. Sometimes, if things went very

wrong, the smile became a grin, but that was all.

"That will do, thank you!" he said, rising. "Well, John, how are you? Better? I did not wait dinner for you. I was too hungry, but I told them to keep the soup and things hot till you came in."

They had gone through the open double doors into the dining-hall. At the further end a table was laid for one.

"When did you arrive?" asked John.

"By the seven-ten. I walked up and found you were missing. It is distressing to see a man eat when one is not hungry one's self," continued Archie plaintively as the servant brought in the "hot things" which he had been recently devastating. "No, thanks, I won't sit opposite you and watch you satisfying your country appetite. You don't mind my smoking in here, I suppose? No womankind to grumble as yet."

He lit his pipe, and began wandering slowly about the room, which was lit with candles in silver sconces at intervals along the panelled walls.

John wondered how much money he wanted, and ate his cutlets in silence. He had as few illusions about his fellow-creatures as the steward of a Channel steamer, and it did not occur to him that Archie could have any reason but one for coming to Overleigh out of the shooting season.

Archie was evidently pensive.

"It is a large sum," said John to himself.

Presently he stopped short before the fireplace, and contemplated the little silver figures standing in the niches of the high-carved mantelshelf. They had always stood there in John's childhood, and when he had come back from Russia in the spring he had looked for them in the plate-room, and had put them back himself: the quaint-frilled

courtier beside the quaint-ruffed lady, and the little Cavalier in long boots beside the Abbess. The dresses were of Charles I.'s date, and there was a family legend to the effect that that victim of a progressive age had given them to his devoted adherent Amyas Tempest the night before his execution. It was extremely improbable that he had done anything of the kind, but, at any rate, there they were, each in his little niche. Archie lifted one down and examined it curiously.

"Never saw that before," he said, keeping his teeth on the pipe, which desecrated his profile.

"Everything was put away when I was not regularly living here," said John. "I dug out all the old things when I came home in the spring, and Mitty and I put them all back in their places."

"Barford had a sale the other day," con-

tinued Archie, speaking through his teeth. "He was let in for a lot of money by his training stables, and directly the old chap died he sold the library and half the pictures, and a lot of stuff out of the house. I went to see them at Christie's, and a very mouldy-looking assortment they were; but they fetched a pile of money. Barford and I looked in when the sale of the books was on, and you should have seen the roomful of Jews and the way they bid. One book, a regular old fossil, went for three hundred while we were there; it would have killed old Barford on the spot if he had been there, so it was just as well he was dead already. And there were two silver figures something like these, but not perfect. Barford said he had no use for them, and they fetched a hundred apiece. He says there's no place like home for raising a little money. Why, John, Gunningham can't hold a candle to

Overleigh. There must be a mint of money in an old barrack stuffed full of gimcracks like this."

"Yes, but they belong to the house."

"Do they? Well, if I were in your place I should say they belonged to the owner. What is the use of having anything if you can't do what you like with it? If ever I wanted a hundred or two I would trot out one of those little silver Johnnies in no time if they were mine."

John did not answer. He was wondering what would have happened to the dear old stately place if he had died a month ago, and it had fallen into the hands of those two spendthrifts, Archie and his father. He could see them in possession whittling it away to nothing, throwing its substance from them with both hands. Easy-going, self-indulgent, weakly violent, unstable as water, he saw them both in one lightning-flash of

prophetic imagination drinking in that very room, at that very table. The physical pain of certain thoughts is almost unbearable. He rose suddenly and went across to the deep bay window, on the stone sill of which Amyas Tempest and Tom Fairfax, his friend, who together had held Overleigh against the Roundheads, had cut their names. He looked out into the latticed darkness, and longed fiercely, passionately for a son.

Archie's light laugh recalled him to himself with a sense of shame. It is irritating to be goaded into violent emotion by one who is feeling nothing.

"A penny for your thoughts," said Sir Galahad.

There was something commonplace about the young warrior's manner of expressing himself in daily life which accorded ill with the refined beauty of his face.

"They would be dear at the price," said John, still looking out.

"Care killed a cat," said Archie.

He had a stock of small sayings of that calibre. Sometimes they fitted the occasion, and sometimes not.

There was a short silence.

"Quicksilver is lame," said Archie.

"What have you been doing with her?" asked John, facing round.

"Nothing in particular. I rode her in the Pierpoint steeplechase last week, and she came down at the last fence, and lost me fifty pounds. I came in third, but I should have been first to a dead certainty if she had stood up."

"Send her down here at once."

"Yes, and thanks awfully and all that sort of thing for lending her, don't you know. Very good of you, though of course you could not use her yourself when you were

laid up. I am going back to town first thing to-morrow morning; only got a day's leave to run down here; thought I ought to tell you about her. I'll send her off the day after to-morrow if you like, but the truth is——"

A good deal of circumlocution, that favourite attire of certain truths, was necessary before the simple fact could be arrived at that Quicksilver had been used as security for the modest sum of four hundred and forty-five pounds, which it had been absolutely incumbent on Archie to raise at a moment's notice. Heaven only knew what would not have been involved if he had not had reluctant recourse to this obvious means of averting dishonour. When Colonel Tempest and Archie began to talk about their honour, which was invariably mixed up with debts of a dubious nature, and an overdrawn banking account, and an unpaid tailor, John

always froze perceptibly. The Tempest honour was always having narrow escapes, according to them. It required constant support.

"I would not have done it if I could have helped it," explained Archie in an easy attitude on the window-seat. "Your mare, not mine. I knew that well enough. I felt that at the time; but I had to get the money somehow, and positively the poor old gee was the only security I had to give."

Archie was not in the least ashamed. It was always John who was ashamed on these occasions.

There was a long silence. Archie contemplated his nails.

"It's not the money I mind," said John at last, "you know that."

"I know it isn't, old chap. It's my morals you're afraid of; you said so in the spring."

"Well, I'm not going to hold forth on morals again, as it seems to have been of so little use. But look here, Archie, I've paid up a good many times, and I'm getting tired of it. I would rather build an infants' school or a home for cats, or something with a pretence of common sense, with the money in future. It does you no manner of good. You only chuck it away. You are the worse for having it, and so am I for being such a fool as to give it you. It's nonsense telling you suddenly that I won't go on paying when I've led you to expect I always shall because I always have. Of course you think, as I'm well off, that you can draw on me for ever and ever. Well, I'll pay up again this once. You promised me in April it should be the last time you would run up bills. Now it is my turn to say this is the last time I'll throw money away in paying them."

Archie raised his eyebrows. How very "close-fisted" John was becoming! And as a boy at school, and afterwards at college, he had been remarkably open-handed, even as a minor on a very moderate allowance. Archie did not understand it.

"I'll buy back my own horse," continued John, trying to swallow down a sense of intense irritation; "and if there is anything else—I suppose there is a new crop by this time—I'll settle them. You must start fair. And I'll go on allowing you three hundred a year, and when you want to marry I'll make a settlement on your wife, but, by —— I'll never pay another sixpence for your debts as long as I live."

Archie smiled faintly, and stretched out his legs. John rarely "cut up rough" like this. He had an uneasy suspicion that the present promptly afforded assistance would hardly compensate for the opening vista of

discomfort in the future. And John's tone jarred upon him. There was something fixed in it, and Archie's nebulous easy-going temperament had an invincible repugnance to anything unpliable. He had as little power to move John as a mist has to move a mountain. He had proved on many occasions how little amenable John was to persuasion, and each recurring occasion had filled him with momentary apprehension. He felt distinctly uncomfortable after the two had parted for the night, until a train of reasoning, the logic of which could not be questioned, soothed him into his usual trustful calm.

John, he said to himself, had been out of temper. He had eaten something that had disagreed with him. That was why he had flown out. How frightfully cross he himself was when he had indigestion! And he, Archie, would never have grudged John a

few pounds now and again if their positions had been reversed. Therefore, it was not likely John would either. And John had always been fond of him. He had nursed him once at college through a tedious illness, unadorned on his side by Christian patience and fortitude. Of course John was fond of him. Everybody was fond of him. It had been an unlucky business about Quicksilver. No wonder John had been annoyed. He would have been annoyed himself in his place. But (oh, all-embracing phrase!) *it would be all right.* He was eased of money difficulties for the moment, and John was not such a bad fellow after all. He would not really "turn against" him. He would be sure to come round in the future, as he had always done with clock-like regularity in the past.

Archie slept the sleep of the just, and went off in the best of spirits and the most

expensive of light overcoats next morning with a cheque in his pocket.

John went back into the dining-hall after his departure to finish his breakfast, but apparently he was not hungry, for he forgot all about it. He went and stood in the bay window, as he had a habit of doing when in thought, and looked out. He did not see the purple pageant of the thunderstorm sweeping up across the moor and valley and already vibrating among the crests of the trees in the vivid sunshine below the castle wall. He was thinking intently of those two men, his next-of-kin.

Supposing he did not marry. Supposing he died childless. Overleigh and the other vast Tempest properties were entailed, in default of himself and his children, on Colonel Tempest and his children. Colonel Tempest and Archie came next behind him; one slip, and they would be in possession.

And John had almost slipped several times, had several times touched that narrow brink where two worlds meet. He had no fear of death, but nevertheless Death had assumed larger proportions in his mind and in his calculations than is usual with the young and the strong, simply because he had seen him very near more than once, and had ceased to ignore his reality. He might die. What then?

John had an attachment which had the intensity of a passion and the unreasoning faithfulness of an instinct for certain carved and pictured rooms and lichened walls and forests and valleys and moors. He loved Overleigh. His affections had been "planted under a north wall," and like some hardy tenacious ivy they clung to that wall. Overleigh meant much to him, had always meant much, more than was in the least consistent with the rather advanced tenets which he,

in common with most young men of ability, had held at various times. Theories have fortunately little to do with the affections.

He could not bear to think of Overleigh passing out of his protecting love to the careless hands and selfish heedlessness of Colonel Tempest and Archie. There are persons for whom no income will suffice. John's nearest relations were of this time-honoured stamp. As has been well said, "In the midst of life they are in debt."

John saw Archie in imagination "trotting out the silver Johnnies." The miniatures, the pictures, the cameos, the old Tempest manuscripts, for which America made periodic bids, the older plate—all, all would go, would melt away from niche and wall and cabinet. Perhaps the books would go first of all; the library to which he in his turn was even now adding, as those who had gone before him had done.

How they had loved the place, those who had gone before! How they must have fought for it in the early days of ravages by Borderer and Scot! How Amyas the Cavalier must have sworn to avenge those Roundhead cannon-balls which crashed into his oak staircase, and had remained imbedded in the stubborn wood to this day! Had any one of them loved it, John wondered, with a greater love than his?

He turned from the blaze outside, and looked back into the great shadowed room, in the recesses of which a beautiful twilight ever lingered. The sunlight filtered richly but dimly through the time-worn splendour of its high windows of painted glass, touching here and there inlaid panel and carved wainscoting, and laying a faint mosaic of varied colour on the black polished floor.

It was a room which long association had invested with a kind of halo in John's eyes,

far removed from the appreciative or ignorant admiration of the stranger, who saw in it only an unique Elizabethan relic.

Artists worshipped it whenever they got the chance, went wild over the Tudor fan vaulting of the ceiling with its long pendants, and the quaint inlaid frets on the oak chimney-piece ; talked learnedly of the panels above the wainscot, on which a series of genealogical trees were painted representing each of the wapentakes into which Yorkshire was divided, having shields on them with armorial bearings of the gentry of the county entitled in Elizabeth's time to bear arms.

Strangers took note of these things, and spelt out the rather apocryphal marriages of the Tempests on the painted glass, or examined the date below the dial in the southern window with the name of the artist beneath it who had blazoned the arms.—*Bernard Diminckhoff fecit*, 1585.

John knew every detail by heart, and saw them never, as a man in love with a noble woman gradually ceases to see beauty or the absence of beauty in brow and lip and eyelid, in adoration of the face itself which means so much to him.

John's deep-set steady eyes absently followed the slow travelling of the coloured sunshine across the room. Overleigh had coloured his life as its painted glass was colouring the sunshine. It was bound up with his whole existence. The Tempest motto graven on the pane beside him, *Je le feray durant ma vie*, was graven on John's heart as indelibly. Mr. Tempest's dying words to him had never been forgotten. "It is an honour to be a Tempest. You are the head of the family. Do your duty by it." The words were sunk into the deep places of his mind. What the child had promised, the man was resolved to keep.

His responsibility in the great position in which God had placed him, his duty, not only as a man, but as a Tempest, were the backbone of his religion—if those can be called religious who "trust high instincts more than all the creeds." The family motto had become a part of his life. It was perhaps the only oath of allegiance which John had ever taken. He turned towards the window again, against which his dark head had been resting.

The old thoughts and resolutions so inextricably intertwined with the fibre of pride of birth, the old hopes and aspirations, matured during three years' absence, temporarily dormant during these months of illness, returned upon him with the unerring swiftness of swallows to the eaves.

He pressed his hand upon the pane.

The thunderstorm wept hard against the glass.

The sable Tempest lion rampant on a field argent surmounted the scroll on which the motto was painted, legible still after three hundred years.

John said the words aloud.

Je le feray durant ma vie.

CHAPTER V.

"There are many wonderful mixtures in the world which are all alike called love."—GEORGE ELIOT.

"THESE are troublous times, granny," said Di to Mrs. Courtenay, coming into her grandmother's room on a hot afternoon early in September. "I can't get out, so you see I am reduced to coming and sitting with you."

"And why are the times troublous, and why don't you go out-of-doors again?"

"I have been to reconnoitre," said Di, wrathfully, "and the coast is not clear. He is sitting on the stairs again, as he did yesterday."

"Lord Hemsworth?"

"No, of course not. When does he ever do such things? The Infant."

"Oh dear!"

The Infant was Lord Hemsworth's younger brother.

"And it is becoming so expensive, granny. I keep on losing things. His complaint is complicated by kleptomania. He has got my two best evening handkerchiefs and my white fan already; and I can't find one of the gloves I wore at the picnic to-day. I dare not leave anything downstairs now. It is really very inconvenient."

"Poor boy!" said Mrs. Courtenay, reflectively. "How old *is* he?"

"Oh, he is quite sixteen, I believe. What with this anxiety, and the suspense as to how my primrose cotton will wash, which I am counting on to impress John with, I find life very wearing. Oh, granny, we ought

not to have come here at all, according to my ideas; but if we ever do again, I do beg and pray it may not be in the holidays. I wish I had not been so kind to him when we first arrived. I only wanted to show Lord Hemsworth he need not be so unnecessarily elated at our coming here. I wish I had not spent so many hours in the workshop with the boy and the white rats. The white rats did it, granny. Interests in common are the really dangerous things, as you have often observed. Love me, love my rats."

"Poor boy!" said Mrs. Courtenay again. "Make it as easy as you can for him, Di. Don't wound his pride. We leave to-morrow, and the Verelsts are coming to-day. That will create a diversion. I have never known Madeleine allow any man, or boy, or creeping child attend to any one but herself if she is present. She will do her best to relieve you of him. How she will patronize you, Di,

if she is anything like what she used to be!"

And in truth when Madeleine drove up to the house half an hour later it was soon apparent that she was unaltered in essentials. Although she had been married several months she was still the bride; the bride in every fold of her pretty travelling gown, in her demure dignity and enjoyment of the situation.

It was her first visit to her cousin Lady Hemsworth since her marriage, and her eyes brightened with real pleasure when that lady mentioned that Di was in the house, whom she had not seen since her wedding day. She was conscious that she had some of her best gowns with her.

"I have always been so fond of Di," she said to Di's would-be mother-in-law. "She was one of my bridesmaids. You remember Di, Henry?" turning with a model gesture to her husband.

Sir Henry sucked his tea noisily off his moustache, and said he remembered Miss Tempest.

"Now do tell me," said Madeleine, as she unfastened her hat in her room, whither she had insisted on Di's accompanying her, "is there a large party in the house? I always hate a large party to meet a bride."

"There is really hardly any one," said Di. "I don't think you need be alarmed. The Forresters left yesterday. There are Mr. Rivers and a Captain Vivian, friends of Lord Hemsworth's, and Lord Hemsworth himself, and a Mrs. Clifford, a widow. That is all. Oh, I had forgotten Mr. Lumley, the comic man—he is here. You may remember him. He always comes into a room either polkaing or walking lame, and beats himself all over with a tambourine after dinner."

"How droll!" said Madeleine. "Henry

would like that. I must have him to stay with us some time. One is so glad of really amusing people; they make a party go off so much better. He does not black himself, does he? That nice Mr. Carnegie, who imitated the pig being killed, always did. I am glad it is a small party," she continued, reverting to the previous topic, with a very moderate appearance of satisfaction. "It is very thoughtful of Lady Hemsworth not to have a crowd to meet me. I dislike so being stared at when I am sent out first; so embarrassing, every eye upon one. And I always flush up so. And now tell me, you dear thing, all about yourself. Fancy my not having seen you since my wedding. I don't know how we missed each other in London in June. I know I called twice, but Kensington is such miles away; and—and I have often longed to ask you how you thought the wedding went off."

"Perfectly."

"And you thought I looked well—well for me, I mean?"

"You looked particularly well."

"I thought it so unkind of mother to cry. I would not let her come into my room when I was dressing, or indeed all that morning, for fear of her breaking down; but I had to go with her in the carriage, and she held my hand and cried all the way. Poor mother always is so thoughtless. I did not cry myself, but I quite feared at one time I should flush. I was not flushed when I came in, was I?"

"Not in the least. You looked your best."

"Several of the papers said so," said Madeleine. "Remarks on personal appearance are so vulgar, I think. 'The lovely bride,' one paper called me. I dare say other girls don't mind that sort of thing

being said, but it is just the kind of thing I dislike. And there was a drawing of me, in my wedding gown, in the *Lady's Pictorial.* They simply would have it. I had to stand, ready dressed, the day before, while they did it. And then my photograph was in one of the other papers. Did you see it? I don't think it is *quite* a nice idea, do you? —so public; but they wrote so urgently. They said a photograph would oblige, and I had to send one in the end. I sometimes think," she continued reflectively, "that I did not choose part of my trousseau altogether wisely. I *think*, with the summer before me, I might have ventured on rather lighter colours. But, you see, I had to decide on everything in Lent, when one's mind is turned to other things. I never wear any colour but violet in Lent. I never have since I was confirmed, and it puts one out for brighter colours. Things that look quite

suitable after Easter seem so gaudy before. I am not sure what I shall wear to-night."

"Wear that mauve and silver," said Di, suddenly, and their eyes met.

Madeleine looked away again instantly, and broke into a little laugh.

"You dear thing," she said; "I wish I had your memory for clothes. I remember now, though I had almost forgotten it, that the mauve brocade was brought in the morning you came to hear about my engagement. And do you remember, you quixotic old darling, how you wanted me to break it off. You were quite excited about it."

"I had not seen the diamonds then," interposed Di, with a faint blush at the remembrance of her own useless emotion. "I am sure I never said anything about breaking it off after I had seen the two tiaras, or even hinted at throwing over that rivière."

Madeleine looked puzzled. Whenever she did not quite understand what Di meant, she assumed the tone of gentle authority, which persons, conscious of a reserved front seat or possibly a leading part in the orchestra in the next world, naturally do assume in conversation with those whose future is less assured.

"I think marriage is too solemn a thing to make a joke of," she said softly. "And talking of marriage"—in a lowered tone—"you would hardly believe, Di, the difference it makes, the way it widens one's influence. With men now, such a responsibility. I always think a married woman can help young men so much. I find it so much easier now than before I was married to give conversation a graver turn, even at a ball. I feel I know what people really are almost at once. I have had such earnest talks in ball-rooms, Di, and at dinner parties. Haven't you?"

"No," said Di. "I distrust a man who talks seriously over a pink ice the first time I meet him. If he is genuine he is probably shallow, and the odds are he is not genuine, or he would not do it. I don't like religious flirtations, though I know they are the last new thing."

"You always take a low view, Di," said Madeleine, regretfully. "You always have, and I suppose you always will. It does not make me less fond of you; but I am often sorry, when we talk together, to notice how unrefined your ideas are. Your mind seems to run on flirtations. I see things very differently. You wanted me to throw over Henry, though I had given my solemn promise——"

"And it had been in the papers," interposed Di; "don't forget that. But"—she added, rising—"I *was* wrong. I ought never to have said a word on the subject;

and there is the dressing-bell, so I will leave you to prepare for victory. I warn you, Mrs. Clifford has one gown, a Cresser, which is bad to beat—a lemon satin, with an emerald velvet train; but she may not put it on."

"I never vie with others in dress," said Madeleine. "I think it shows such a want of good taste. Did she wear it last night?"

"She did."

"Oh! Then she won't wear it again."

But Di had departed.

"In change unchanged," Di said to herself, as she uncoiled her hair in her own room. "I don't know what I expected of Madeleine, yet I thought that somehow she would be different. But she isn't. How is it that some people can do things that one would be ashamed one's self even to think of, and yet keep a good opinion of themselves afterwards, and *feel* superior to others? It

is the feeling superior that I envy. It must make the world such an easy place to live in. People with a good opinion of themselves have such an immense pull in being able to do the most peculiar things without a qualm. It must be very pleasant to truly and honestly consider one's self better than others, and to believe that young men in white waistcoats hang upon one's words. Yes, Madeleine is not changed, and I shall be late for dinner if I moralize any longer," and Di brushed back her yellow hair, which was obliging enough to arrange itself in the most interesting little waves and ripples of its own accord, without any trouble on her part. Di's hair was perhaps the thing of all others that womankind envied her most. It had the brightness of colouring and easy fascination of a child's. Even the most wily and painstaking curling-tongs could only produce on other less-favoured

heads a laboured imitation which was seen to be an imitation. Madeleine, as she sailed into the drawing-room in mauve and silver half an hour later, felt that her own rather colourless, elaborate fringe was not redeemed from mediocrity even by the diamonds mounting guard over it. The Infant would willingly have bartered his immortal soul for one lock off Di's shining head. The hope that one small lock might be conceded to a last wild appeal, possibly upon his knees, sustained him throughout the evening, and he needed support. He had a rooted conviction that if only his mother had allowed him a new evening coat this half, if he had only been more obviously in tails, Di might have smiled upon his devotion. He had been moderately fond of his elder brother till now, but Lord Hemsworth's cable-patterned shooting stockings and fair, well-defined moustache were in

themselves enough to rouse the hatred of one whose own upper lip had only reached the stage when it suggested nothing so much as a reminiscence of treacle, and whose only pair of heather stockings tarried long at the wash. But the Infant had other grounds for nursing Cain-like sentiments towards his rival. Had not Lord Hemsworth repeatedly called him in the actual presence of the adored one by the nickname of "Trousers"! The Infant's sobriquet among those of his contemporaries who valued him was "Bags," but in ladies' society Lord Hemsworth was wont to soften the unrefinement of the name by modifying it to Trousers. The Infant writhed under the absolutely groundless suspicion that his brother already had or might at any moment confide the original to Di. And even if he did not, even if the horrible appellation never did transpire, Lord

Hemsworth's society term was almost as opprobrious. The name of Trousers was a death-blow to young romance. Sentiment withered in its presence. Years of devotion could not wipe out that odious word from her memory. He could see that it had set her against him. The mere sight of him was obviously painful to her sense of delicacy. She avoided him. She would marry Lord Hemsworth. In short, she would be the bride of another. Perhaps there was not within a radius of ten miles a more miserable creature than the Infant, as he stood that evening before dinner, with folded arms, alone, aloof, by a pillar, looking daggers at any one who spoke to Di.

After dinner things did not go much better. There were round games, in which he joined with Byronic gloom in order to sit near Di. But Mr. Lumley, the licensed buffoon of the party, dropped into his chair

when he left it for a moment to get Di a footstool, and, when sternly requested to vacate it, only replied in fluent falsetto in the French tongue, "Je voudrais si je coudrais, mais je ne cannais pas."

The Infant controlled himself. He was outwardly calm, but there was murder in his eye.

Lord Hemsworth, sitting opposite shuffling the cards, looked up, and seeing the boy's white face, said, good-naturedly—

"Come, Lumley, move up one. That is Trousers' place."

"Oh, if Trousers wants it to press his suit," said Mr. Lumley, vaulting into the next place. "Anything to oblige a fellow-sufferer."

And Sir Henry neighed suddenly as his manner was when amused, and the Infant, clenching his hands under the table, felt that there was nothing left to live for

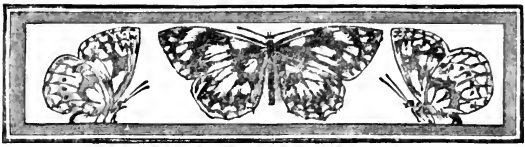
in this world or the next save only revenge.

As the last evening came to an end even Lord Hemsworth's cheerful spirits flagged a little. He let the Infant press forward to light Di's candle, and hardly touched her hand after the Infant had released his spasmodic clutch upon it. His clear honest eyes met hers with the wistful *chien soumis* look in them which she had learned to dread. She knew well enough, though she would *not* have known it had she cared for him, that he had only remained silent during the last few days because he saw it was no good to speak. He had enough perception not to strike at cold or lukewarm iron.

"Why can't I like him?" she said to herself as she sat alone in her own room. "I would rather like him than any one else. I do like him better, much better than any one I know, and yet I don't care a bit about

him. When he is not there I always think I am going to care next time I see him. I wonder if I should mind if he fell in love with some one else? I dare say I should. I wish I could feel a little jealous. I tried to when he talked the whole of one afternoon to that lovely Lady Kitty;—what a little treasure that girl is! I would marry her if I were a man. But it was no good. I knew he only did it because he was vexed with me about—I forget what.

"Well, to-morrow I shall be at Overleigh. I shall really see it at last with my own eyes. Why, it is after twelve o'clock. It is to-morrow already. It certainly does not pay to have a date in one's mind. Ever since the end of July I have been waiting for September the third, and it has not hurried up in consequence. Anyhow, here it is at last."



CHAPTER VI.

"It's a deep mystery—the way the heart of man turns to one woman out of all the rest he's seen i' the world, and makes it easier for him to work seven year for *her*, like Jacob did for Rachel, sooner than have any other woman for th' asking."—GEORGE ELIOT.

LIFE has its crystal days, its rare hours of a stainless beauty, and a joy so pure that we may dare to call in the flowers to rejoice with us, and the language of the birds ceases to be an unknown tongue. Our real life as we look back seems to have been lived in those days that memory holds so tenderly. But it is not so in reality. Fortitude, steadfastness, the makings of character, come not of rainbow-dawns and quiet even-

ings, and the facile attainment of small desires. More frequently they are the outcome of "the sleepless nights that mould youth;" of hopes not dead, but run to seed; of the inadequate loves and friendships that embitter early life, and warn off the young soul from any more mistaking husks for bread.

John had had many heavy days, and, latterly, many days and long-drawn nights, when it had been uphill work to bear in silence, or bear at all, the lessons of that expensive teacher physical pain. And now pain was past and convalescence was past, and Fate smiled, and drew from out her knotted medley of bright and sombre colours one thread of pure untarnished gold for John, and worked it into the pattern of his life.

Di was at Overleigh. Tall lilies had been ranged in the hall to welcome her on her

arrival. The dogs had been introduced to her at tea time. Lindo had allowed himself to be patted, and after sniffing her dress attentively with the air of a connoisseur, had retired with dignity to his chair. Fritz, on the contrary, the amber-eyed dachshund, all tail-wagging, and smiles, and saliva, had made himself cheap at once, and had even turned over on his back, inviting friction where he valued it most, before he had known Di five minutes.

Di was really at Overleigh. Each morning John woke up incredulous that such a thing could be, each morning listened for her light footfall on the stairs, and saw her come into the dining-hall, an active living presence, through the cedar and ebony doors. There were a few other people in the house, the sort of chance collection which poor relations, arriving with great expectations and their best clothes, consider

to be a party. There were his aunt, Miss Fane, and a young painter who was making studies for an Elizabethan interior, and some one else—no, more than one, two or three others, John never clearly remembered afterwards who, or whether they were male or female. Perhaps they were friends of his aunt's. Anyhow, Mrs. Courtenay, who had proposed herself at her own time, was apparently quite content. Di seemed content also, with the light-hearted joyous content of a life that has in it no regret, no story, no past.

John often wondered in these days whether there had ever been a time when he had known what Di was like, what she looked like to other people. He tried to recall her as he had seen her first at the Speaker's; but that photograph of memory of a tall handsome girl was not the least like Di. Di had become Di to John, not like

anything or anybody; Di in a shady hat sitting on the low wall of the bowling-green; or Di riding with him through the forest, and up and away across the opal moors; or, better still, Di singing ballads in the pictured music-room in the evening, in her low small voice, that was not considered good enough for general society, but which, in John's opinion, was good enough for heaven itself.

The painter used to leave the others in the gallery and stroll in on these occasions. He was a gentle, elegant person, with the pensive, regretful air often observable in an imaginative man who has married young. He made a little sketch of Di. He said it would not interfere, as John feared it might, with the prosecution of his larger work.

Presently a wet morning came, and John took Di on an expedition to the dungeons with torches, and afterwards over the castle. He showed her the chapel, with its rose

window and high altar, where the daughters of the house had been married, where her namesake, Diana, had been wed to Vernon of the Red Hand. He showed her the state-rooms with their tapestried walls and painted ceilings. Di extorted a plaintive music from the old spinet in the garret gallery where John's nurseries were. Mitty came out to listen, and then it was her turn. She invited Di into the nursery, which, in these later days, was resplendent with John's gifts, the pride of Mitty's heart, the envy of the elect ladies of the village. There were richly bound Bibles and church-services, and Russia leather writing-cases, and inlaid tea-caddies, and china stands and book-slides, and satin-lined workboxes bristling with cutlery, and photograph frames and tea-sets —in fact, there was everything. There, also, John's prizes were kept, for Mitty had taken charge of them for him since the first

holidays, when he had rushed up to the nursery to dazzle her with the slim red volume, which he had not thought of showing to his father; to which as time went on many others were added, and even great volumes of Stuart Mill in calf and gold during the Oxford days.

Mitty showed them to Di, showed her John's little high chair by the fire, and his Noah's ark. She gave Di full particulars of all his most unromantic illnesses, and produced photographs, taken at her own expense, of her lamb in every stage of bullet-headed childhood; from an open-mouthed face and two clutching hands set in a lather of white lace, to a sturdy, frowning little boy in a black velvet suit leaning on a bat.

"There's the last," said Mitty, pointing with pride to a large steel engraving of John in his heaviest expression, in a heavy gilt

frame. "That was done for the tenantry when Master John come of age." And Mitty, in spite of a desperate attempt on John's part to divert the conversation to other topics, went on to expatiate on that event until John fairly bolted, leaving her in delighted possession of a new and sympathetic listener.

"And all the steps was covered with red cloth," continued Mitty to her visitor, "and the crowd, Miss Dinah, you could have walked on their heads. And Mr. John come down into the hall, and Mr. Goodwin was with him, and he turns round to us, for we was all in the hall drawn up in two rows, from Mrs. Alcock to the scullery-maid, and he says, 'Where is Mrs. Emson?' Those were his very words, Miss Tempest, my dear; and I says, 'Here, sir!' for I was along of Mrs. Alcock. And he says to Parker, 'Open both the doors, Parker,' and

then he says, quite quiet, as if it was just every day, 'I have not many relations here,' for there was not a soul of his own family, miss, and he did not ask his mother's folk, 'but,' he says, 'I have my two best friends here, and that is enough. Goodwin,' he says, 'will you stand on my right, and you must stand on the other side, Mitty.'

"It took me here, miss," said Mitty, passing her hand over her waistband. "And me in my cap and everything. I was all in a tremble. I felt I could not go. But he just took me by the hand, and there we was, miss, us three on the steps, and all the servants agathered round behind, and a crowd such as never was in front. They trod down all the flower-beds to nothing. Eh dear! when we come out, you should have heard 'em cheer, and when they seed me by him, I heard 'em saying, 'Who's yon?' And they said, 'That's the old nuss as reared

him from a babby,' and they shouted till they was fit to crack, and called out, 'Three cheers for the old nuss.' And Master John, he kept smilin' at me, and I could do nothin' but roar, and there was Mrs. Alcock, I could hear her crying behind, and Parker cried too, and he's not a man to show, isn't Parker. But we'd known 'im, miss, since he was born, and there was no one else there that did; only me and Parker, and Mrs. Alcock, and Charles, as had been footman in the family, and come down special from London at Master John's expense. And such a speech as my precious lamb did make before them all, saying it was a day he should remember all his life. Those were his very words. Eh! it was beautiful. And all the presents as the deputations brought, one after another, and the cannon fired off fit to break all the glass in the winders. And then in the evening a hox roasted whole in the

courtyard, and a bonfire such as never was on Moat Hill. And when it got dark, you could see the bonfires burning at Carley and Gilling, and Wet Waste, and right away to Kenstone, all where his land is, bless him. Eh! dear me, Miss Tempest, why was not some of you there?"

"John!" said Di half an hour later, as he was showing her some miniatures in the ebony cabinet in the picture-gallery, which Cardinal Wolsey had given the Tempest of his day, "why were not some of us, Archie or father, at your coming of age?"

They were sitting in the deep window-seat, with the miniatures spread out between them.

"There was no question about their coming," said John. "Archie was going in for his examination for the army that week, and your father would not have come if he had been asked. I did invite our great-uncle,

General Hugh, but he was ill. He died soon afterwards. There was no one else to ask. You and your father, and Archie and I are the only Tempests there are."

The miniatures were covered with dust. John's and Di's pocket-handkerchiefs had an interest in common, which gradually obliterated all difference between them.

"Why would not father have come if you had asked him?" said Di presently. "You are friends, aren't you?"

"I suppose we are," said John, "if by friends one only means that we are not enemies. But there is nothing more than civility between us. You seem wonderfully well up in ancient family history, Di. Don't you know the story of the last generation?"

"No," said Di. "I don't know anything for certain. Granny hardly ever mentions my mother even now. I know she is barely on speaking terms with father. I

hardly ever see him. When she took me, it was on condition that father should have no claim on me."

"You did not know, then," said John slowly, "that your mother was engaged to my father at the very time that she ran away with his own brother, Colonel Tempest?"

Di shook her head. She coloured painfully. John looked at her in silence, and then pulled out another drawer.

"She was only seventeen," he said at last, with a gentleness that was new to Di. "She was just old enough to wreck her own life and my poor father's, but not old enough to be harshly judged. The heaviest blame was not with *her*. There is a miniature of her here. I suppose my father had it painted when she was engaged to him. I found it in the corner of his writing-table drawer, as if he had been in the habit of looking at it."

He opened the case, and put it into her hand.

Miniatures have generally a monotonous resemblance to one another in their pink-and-white complexions and red lips and pencilled eyebrows. This one possessed no marked peculiarity to distinguish it from those already lying on Di's knee and on the window-seat. It was a lovely face enough, oval, and pale and young, with dark hair, and still darker eyes. It had a look of shy innocent dignity, which gave it a certain individuality and charm. The miniature was set in diamonds, and at the top the name "Diana" followed the oval in diamonds too.

John and Di looked long at it together.

"Do you think he cared for her very deeply?" said Di at last.

"I am afraid he did."

"Always?"

"I think always. The miniature was in

the drawer he used every day. I don't think he would have kept it there unless he had cared."

Di raised the lid of the case to close it, and as she did so a piece of yellow paper which had adhered to the faded satin lining of the lid became dislodged, and fell back over the miniature on which it had evidently been originally laid. On the reverse side, now uppermost, was written in a large firm hand the one word, "False."

John started.

"I never noticed that paper before," he said.

"It stuck to the lining of the lid," she replied.

"It must have been always there."

The soft rain whispered at the lattice. In the silence, one of the plants dropped a few faint petals on the polished floor.

"Then he never forgave her," said Di at

last, turning her full deep glance upon her companion.

"He did not readily forgive."

"He must have been a hard man."

"I do not think he was hard at first. He became so."

"If he became so, he must have had it in him all the time. Trouble could not have brought it out, unless it had been in his nature to start with. Trouble only shows what spirit we are of. Even after she was dead he did not forgive her. He put the miniature where he could look at it; he must have often looked at it. And he left that bitter word always there. He might have taken it away when she died. He might have taken it away when he began to die himself."

"I am afraid," said John, "there were shadows on his life even to the very end."

"The shadow of an unforgiving spirit."

"Yes," said John gently, "but that is a deep one, Di. It numbs the heart. He took it down with him to the grave. If it is true that we can carry nothing away with us out of the world, I hope he left his bitterness of spirit behind."

Di did not answer.

"That very unforgiveness and bitterness were in him only the seamy side of constancy," said John at last. "He really loved your mother."

"If he had really loved her, he would have forgiven her."

"Not necessarily. A nobler nature would. But he had not a very noble nature. That is just the sad part of it."

There was a long silence. At last Di closed the case, and put it back in the drawer. She held the little slip of paper in her hand, and looked up at John rather wistfully.

He took it from her, and, walking down

the gallery, dropped it into the wood fire burning at the further end. He came back and stood before her, and their grave eyes met. The growing intimacy between them seemed to have made a stride within the last half-hour, which left the conversation of yesterday miles behind.

"Thank you," she said.

CHAPTER VII.

"Oh, the little more, and how much it is!
And the little less, and what worlds away!"

R. BROWNING.

MISS FANE, John's aunt, was one of those large, soft, fleecy persons who act as tea-cosies to the domestic affections, and whom the perspicacity of the nobler sex rarely allows to remain unmarried. That by some inexplicable mischance she had so remained was, of course, a blessing to her orphaned nephew which it would be hard to overrate. John was supposed to be fortunate indeed to have such an aunt. He had been told so from a child. She had certainly

been kind to him in her way, and perhaps he owed her more than he was fully aware of; for it is difficult to feel an exalted degree of gratitude and affection towards a person who journeys through life with a snort and a plush reticule, who is ever seeking to eat some new thing, and who sleeps heavily in the morning over a lapful of magenta crochet-work.

On religious topics also little real sympathy existed between the aunt and nephew. Miss Fane was one of those fortunate individuals who can derive spiritual benefit and consolation from the conviction that they belong to a lost tribe, and that John Bull was originally the Bull of Bashan.

Very wonderful are the dispensations of Providence respecting the various forms in which religion appeals to different intellects. Miss Fane derived the same peace of mind and support from her bull, and what she

called "its promises," as Madeleine did from the monster altar candles which she had just introduced into the church at her new home, candles which were really gas-burners —a pious fraud which it was to be hoped a Deity so partial to wax candles, especially in the daytime, would not detect.

Miss Fane had an uneasy feeling, as years went by, that, in spite of the floods of literature on the subject with which she kept him supplied, John appeared to make little real progress towards Anglo-Israelitism. Even the pamphlet which she had read aloud to him when he was ill, which proved beyond a doubt that the unicorn of Ezekiel was the prototype of the individual of that genus which now supports the royal arms,—even that pamphlet, all-conclusive as it was, appeared to have made no lasting impression on his mind.

But if the desire to proselytize was her

weak point, good nature was her strong one. She was always ready, as on this occasion, to go to Overleigh or to John's house in London, if her presence was required. If she slept heavily amid his guests, it was only because "it was her nature to."

She slept more heavily than usual on this particular evening, for it was chilly; and the ladies had congregated in the music-room after dinner, where there was a fire, and a fire always reduced Miss Fane to a state of coma.

Mrs. Courtenay was bored almost to extinction—had been bored all day, and all yesterday—but nevertheless her fine countenance expressed a courteous interest in the rheumatic pains and Jäger underclothing of one of the elder ladies. She asked appropriate questions from time to time, bringing Miss Goodwin, who with her brother was dining at the Castle, into the conversation whenever she could.

Miss Goodwin, a gentle, placid woman of nine and twenty, clad in the violent colours betokening small means and the want of taste of richer relations, took but little part in the great Jäger question. Her pale eyes under their white eyelashes followed Di rather wistfully as the latter rose and left the room to fetch Mrs. Courtenay some wool. Between women of the same class, and even of the same age, there is sometimes an inequality as great as that between royalty and pauperism.

Soon afterwards the men came in. Miss Fane regained a precarious consciousness. The painter dropped into a low chair by Mrs. Courtenay, some one else into a seat by Mary Goodwin; Mr. Goodwin addressed himself indiscriminately to Miss Fane and the lady of the clandestine Jägers. John, after a glance round the room, and a short sojourn on the hearthrug, which proved too

hot for him, seated himself on a strictly neutral settee away from the fire, and took up *Punch*. Immediately afterwards Di came back.

She gave Mrs. Courtenay her wool, and then, instead of returning to her former seat by the fire, gathered up her work, crossed the room, and sat down on the settee by John.

The blood rushed to his face. Her quiet unconcerned manner stung him to the quick. She spoke to him, but he did not answer. Indeed, he did not hear what she said. A moment before he had been wondering what excuse he could make for getting up and going to her. He had been about to draw her attention to the cartoon in a two-days-old *Punch*, for persons in John's state of mind lose sight of the realities of life; and in the presence of half a dozen people, she could calmly make her way to him, and seat

herself beside him, exactly as she might have done if he had been her brother. He felt himself becoming paler and paler. An entirely new idea was forcing itself upon him like a growing physical pain. But there was not time to think of it now. He wondered whether there was any noticeable difference in his face, and whether his voice would betray him to Di if he spoke. He need not have been afraid. Di did not know the meaning of a certain stolid look which John's countenance could occasionally take. She was perfectly unconscious of what was going on a couple of feet away from her, and picked up her stitches in a cheerful silence. Mary Goodwin saw that he was vexed, and, not being versed in the intricacies of love in its early stages, or, indeed, in any stages, wondered why his face fell when his beautiful cousin came to sit by him.

"Don't you sing?" she said, turning to Di.

"I whisper a little sometimes with the soft pedal down," said Di. "But not in public. There is a painful discrepancy between me and my voice. It is several sizes too small for me."

"Do whisper a little all the same," said the painter.

"John," said Di, "I am afraid you do not observe that I am being pressed to sing by two of your guests. Why don't you, in the language of the *Quiver*, conduct me to the instrument?"

The unreasoning, delighted pride with which John had until now listened to the smallest of Di's remarks, whether addressed to himself or others, had entirely left him.

"Do sing," he said, without looking at her; and he rose to light the candles on the piano.

And Di sang. John sat down by Mary,

and actually allowed the painter to turn over.

It was a very small voice, low and clear, which, while it disarmed criticism, made one feel tenderly towards the singer. John, with his hand over his eyes, watched Di intently. She seemed to have suddenly receded from him to a great and impassable distance, at the very moment when he had thought they were drawing nearer to each other. He took new note of every line of form and feature. There was a growing tumult in his mind, a glimpse of breakers ahead. The atmosphere of peace and quietude of the familiar room, and the low voice singing in the listening silence, seemed to his newly awakened consciousness to veil some stern underlying reality, the features of which he could not see.

Mary Goodwin, who had the music in her which those who possess a lesser degree of

it are often able more fluently to express, left John, and, going to the piano, began to turn over Di's music.

Presently she set up an old leather manuscript book before Di, who, after a moment's hesitation, began to sing—

"Oh, broken heart of mine,
Death lays his lips to thine ;
His draught of deadly wine
He proffereth to thee !
But listen ! low and near,
In thy close-shrouded ear,
I whisper. Dost thou hear ?
'Arise and work with me.'

"The death-weights on thine eyes
Shut out God's patient skies.
Cast off thy shroud and rise !
What dost thou mid the dead ?
Thine idle hands and cold
Once more the plough must hold,
Must labour as of old.
Come forth, and earn thy bread."

The voice ceased. The accompaniment

echoed the stern sadness of the last words, and then was suddenly silent.

What is it in a voice that so mightily stirs the fibre of emotion in us? It seemed to John that Di had taken his heart into the hollow of her slender hands.

"Thank you," said Mary Goodwin, after a pause; and one of the elder ladies felt it was an opportune moment to express her preference for cheerful songs.

Di had risen from the piano, and was gathering up her music. Involuntarily John crossed the room, and came and stood beside her. He did not know he had done so till he found himself at her side. Mary Goodwin turned to Miss Fane to say "Good night."

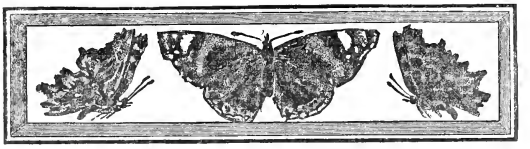
Di slowly put one piece of music on another, absently turning them right side upwards. He saw what was passing through her mind as clearly as if it had been re-

flected in a glass. He stood by her watching her bend over the piano. He was unable to speak to her or help her. Presently she looked slowly up at him. He had no conception until he tried how difficult it was to meet without flinching the quiet friendship of her eyes.

"John," she said, "my mother wrote that song. Do you remember what a happy, innocent kind of look the miniature had? She was seventeen then, and she was only four and twenty when she died. I don't know how to express it, but somehow the miniature seems a very long way off from the song. I am afraid there must have been a good deal of travelling betweenwhiles, and not over easy country."

John would have answered something, but the Goodwins were saying "Good night;" and shortly afterwards the others dispersed for the night. But John sat up late over

the smoking-room fire, turning things over in his mind, and vainly endeavouring to nail shadows to the wall. It seemed to him as if, while straining towards a goal, he had suddenly discovered, by the merest accident, that he was walking in a circle.



CHAPTER VIII.

"Vous me quittez, n'ayant pu voir
Mon âme à travers mon silence."

VICTOR HUGO.

IT was Saturday morning. The few guests had departed by an early train. The painter cast a backward glance at Overleigh and the two figures standing together in the sunshine on the grey green steps which, with their wide hospitable balustrade, he had sketched so carefully. He was returning to the chastened joys of domestic life in London lodgings; to his pretty young jaded, fluffy wife, and fluffy, delicate child; to the Irish stew, and the warm drinking-water,

and the blistered gravy of his home-life. Sordid surroundings have the sad power of making some lives sordid too. It requires a rare nobility of character to rise permanently above the dirty table-cloth, and ill-trimmed paraffin-lamp of poor circumstances. Poverty demoralizes. A smell of cooking, and, why I know not, but especially an aroma of boiled cabbage, can undermine the dignity of existence. A reminiscence of yesterday on the morning fork dims the ideals of youth.

As he drove away between the double row of beeches, with a hand on his boarded picture, the poor painter reflected that John was a fortunate kind of person. The dogcart was full of grapes and peaches and game. Perhaps the power to be generous is one of the most enviable attributes of riches.

"Poor fellow!" said John, as he and Di turned back into the cool gloom of the white stone hall.

"He has given granny the sketch of me," said Di. "He is a nice man, but after the first few days he hardly spoke to me, which I consider a bad sign in any one. It shows a want of discernment; don't you think so? Alas! we are going away this afternoon. I wish, John, you would try and look a little more moved at the prospect of losing us. It would be gratifying to think of you creeping on all-fours under a sofa after our departure, dissolved in tears."

John winced, but the reflections of the night before had led to certain conclusions, and he answered lightly—that is, lightly for him, for he had not an airy manner at the best of times—

"I am afraid I could not rise to tears. Would a shriek from the battlements do?"

"I should prefer tears," said Di, who was in a foolish mood this morning, in which high spirits take the form of nonsense, looking at

her cousin, whose sedate and rather impenetrable face stirred the latent mischief in her. "Not idle tears, John, that 'I know not what they mean,' you know, but large solemn drops, full man's size, sixty to a teaspoonful. That's the measure by granny's medicine-glass."

She looked very provoking as she stood poising herself on her slender feet on the low edge of the hearthstone, with one hand holding the stone paw of the ragged old Tempest lion carved on the chimney-piece. John looked at her with amused irritation, and wished—there is a practical form of repartee eminently satisfactory to the masculine mind which an absurd conventionality forbids—wished, but what is the good of wishing?

"I must go and pack," said Di, with a sigh; "and see how granny is getting on. She is generally down before this. You

won't go and get lost, will you, and only turn up at luncheon?"

"I will be about," said John. "If I am not in the library, look for me under the drawing-room sofa."

Di laughed, and went lightly away across the grey and white stone flags. There was a lamentable discrepancy between his feelings and hers which outraged John's sense of proportion. He went into the study and sat down there, staring at the shelves of embodied thought and speculation and aspiration with which at one time he had been content to live, which, now that he had begun to live, seemed entirely beside the mark.

Mrs. Courtenay was a person of courage and endurance, but even her powers had been sorely tried during the past week. She had been bored to the verge of distraction by the people of whom she had taken such a

cordial leave the night before. There are persons who never, when out visiting, wish to retire to their rooms to rest, who never have letters to write, who never take up a book downstairs, who work for deep-sea fishermen, and are always ready for conversation. Such had been the departed. Miss Fane herself, for whom Mrs. Courtenay professed a certain friendship, was a person with whom she would have had nothing in common, whom she would hardly have tolerated, if it had not been for her nephew. But for him she was willing to sacrifice herself even further. She had seen undemonstrative men in love before now. Their actions had the same bald significance for her as a string of molehills for a mole-catcher. She was certain he was seriously attracted, and she was determined to give him a fair field, and as much favour as possible. That Di had not as yet the remotest suspicion of

his intentions she regarded as little short of providential, considering the irritating and impracticable turn of that young lady's mind.

Di entered her grandmother's room, and found that conspirator sitting up in bed, looking with rueful interest at a boiled egg and untouched rack of toast on a tray before her. Mrs. Courtenay always breakfasted in bed, and could generally thank Providence for a very substantial meal.

"Take the tray away, Brown," said Mrs. Courtenay, with an effort.

"Why, you've not touched a single thing, ma'am," remarked Brown, reproachfully.

"I have drunk a little coffee," said Mrs. Courtenay, faintly.

"Granny, aren't you well?" asked Di.

Brown removed the tray, which Mrs. Courtenay's eyes followed regretfully from the room.

"I am not *very* well, my love," she replied,

adjusting her spectacles, "but not positively ill. I had a threatening of one of those tiresome spasms in the night. I dare say it will pass off in an hour or two."

Di scrutinized her grandmother remorsefully.

"I never noticed you were feeling ill when I came in before breakfast," she said.

"My dear, you are generally the first to observe how I am," returned Mrs. Courtenay, hurriedly. "I was feeling better just then, but—and we are due at Carmyan to-day. It is very provoking."

Di looked perturbed.

"The others are gone," she said; "even the painter has just driven off. Do you think you will be able to travel by the afternoon, granny?"

"I am afraid *not*," said Mrs. Courtenay, closing her eyes; "but I think—I feel sure I could go to-morrow."

"To-morrow is Sunday."

"Dear me! so it is," said Mrs. Courtenay, with mild surprise. "To-day is Saturday. It certainly is unfortunate. But after all," she continued, "it could not have happened at a better place. Miss Fane is a good-natured person and will quite understand, and John is a relation. Perhaps you had better tell Miss Fane I am feeling unwell, and ask her to come here; and before you go pull down the blinds half-way, and put that sheaf of her 'lost tribes' and 'unicorns' and 'stone ages' on the bed."

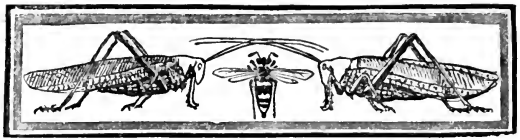
What induced John to spend the whole of Saturday afternoon and the greater part of a valuable evening at a small colliery town some twenty miles distant, it would be hard to say. The fact that some days ago he had arranged to go there after the departure of his guests did not account for it, for he had

dismissed all thought of doing so directly he heard that Di and Mrs. Courtenay were staying on. It was not important. The following Saturday would do equally well to inspect a reading-room he was building, and the new shaft of one of his mines, about the safety of which he was not satisfied. Yet somehow or other, when the afternoon came, John went. Up to the last moment after luncheon he had intended to remain. Nevertheless, he went. The actions of persons under a certain influence cannot be predicted or accounted for. They can only be chronicled.

John did not return to Overleigh till after ten o'clock. He told himself most of the way home that Miss Fane and Di would be sure not to sit up later than ten. He made up his mind that he should only arrive after they had gone to bed. As he drove up through the semi-darkness he looked eagerly

for Di's window. There was a light in it. He perceived it with sudden resentment. She *had* gone to bed, then. He should not see her till to-morrow. John had a vague impression that he was glad he had been away all day, that he had somehow done rather a clever thing. But apparently he was not much exhilarated by the achievement. It lost somewhat in its complete success.

And Mrs. Courtenay, who heard the wheels of his dogcart drive up just after Di had wished her "Good night," said aloud in the darkness the one word, "Idiot!"



CHAPTER IX.

"Love, how it sells poor bliss
For proud despair!"

SHELLEY.

IT was Sunday morning, and it was something more. There was a subtle change in the air, a mystery in the sunshine. Autumn and summer were met in tremulous wedlock. But the hand of the bride trembled in the bridegroom's. In the rapture of bridal there was a prophesy of parting and death. The birds knew it. In the songless silence the robin was practising his autumn reverie. Joy and sadness were blent together in the solemn beauty of transition.

The voice of the brook was sunk to a whisper to-day. Through the still air the tangled voices of the church bells came from the little grey church in the valley. A rival service was going on in the rookery on Moat Hill, in which the congregation joined with hoarse unanimity.

Miss Fane did not go to church in the morning, so John and Di went together down the steep path through the wood, across the park, over the village beck, and up the low hollowed steps into the churchyard. Overleigh was a primitive place.

The little congregation was sitting on the wall, or standing about among the tilted tombstones, according to custom, to see John and the clergyman come in. And then there was a general clump and clatter after them into church; the bells stopped, and the service began.

Di and John sat at a little distance from

each other in the carved Tempest pew. The Tempests were an overbearing race. The little rough stone church with its round Norman arches was a memorial of their race.

"Lord, Thou hast been our Refuge from one generation to another," was graven in the stones of the wall just before Di's eyes. Beneath was a low arch surmounting the tomb of a knight in effigy. Beyond there were more tombs and arches. The building was thronged with the sculptured dead of one family—was a mortuary chapel in itself. Tattered flags hung where pious hands, red with infidel blood, had fastened them. With a simple confidence in their own importance, and the approval of their Creator, the Tempests had raised their memorials and hung their battered swords in the house of their God. The very sun himself smote, not through the gaudy figures of Scripture story,

but through the painted arms of the Malbys; of the penniless, pious Malby who sold his land to his clutching Tempest brother-in-law in order to get out to the Crusades.

Had God really been their Refuge from all those bygone generations to this? Di wondered. In these latter days of millionaire cheesemongers who dwell *h*-less in the feudal castles of the poor, what wonder if the faith even of the strongest waxes cold?

She looked fixedly at John as he went to the reading-desk and stood up to read the First Lesson. It was difficult to believe the dead were not listening too; that the Knight Templar lying in armour, with his drawn sword beside him and broken hands joined, did not turn his head a little, pillowed so uncomfortably on his helmet, to hear John's low clear voice.

And as John read, a feeling of pride in him, not unmixed with awe, arose in Di's

mind. All he did and said, even when in his gentlest mood—and Di had not as yet seen him in any other—had a hint of power in it; power restrained, perhaps, but existent. How strong his iron hand looked touching the book! She could more easily imagine it grasping a sword-hilt. He stood before her as the head of the race, his rugged profile and heavy jaw silhouetted in all their native strength and ugliness against the uncompromising light of the eastern window.

She looked at him, and was glad.

"He will do us honour," she said to herself.

Some one else was watching John too.

"I will arise and go to my Father," John read. And Mr. Goodwin closed his eyes, and prayed the old worn prayer—our prayers for others are mainly tacit reproaches to the Almighty—that God would touch John's heart.

Humanity has many sides, but perhaps

none more incomprehensible than that represented by the patient middle-aged man leaning back in his corner and praying for John's soul; none more difficult to describe without an appearance of ridicule; for certain aspects of character, like some faces, lend themselves to caricature more readily than to a portrait.

Mr. Goodwin was one of that class of persons who belong so entirely to a class that it is difficult to individualize them; whose peculiar object in life it is to stick in clusters like limpets to existing, and especially to superseded, forms of religion. Their whole constitution and central ganglion consists of one adhesive organism. The quality of that to which they adhere does not appear to affect them, provided it is stationary. To their constitution movement is torture, uprootal is death. It would be impossible to chip Mr. Goodwin from his rock, and hold

him up to the scrutiny of the reader, without distorting him to a caricature, which is an insult to our common nature. Unless he is in the full exercise of his adhesive muscle in company with large numbers of his kind, he is nothing. And even then he is not much.

Not much? Ah, yes, he is!

His class has played an important part in all crises of religious history. It was instrumental in the crucifixion of Christ. It called a new truth blasphemy as fiercely then as now. By its law truth, if new, must ever be put to death. But when Christianity took form, this class settled on it nevertheless; adhered to it as strictly as its forbears had done to the Jewish ritual. It was this class which resisted and would have burned out the Reformation, but when the Reformation gained bulk enough for it to stick to, it spread itself upon its surface in due course. As it still does to-day.

Let who will sweat and agonize for the sake of a new truth, or a newer and purer form of an old one. There will always be those who will stand aside and coldly regard, if they cannot crush, the struggle and the heartbreak of the pioneers, and then will enter into the fruit of their labours, and complacently point in later years to the advance of thought in their time, which they have done nothing to advance, but to which, when sanctioned by time and custom and the populace, they will *adhere*.

John shut the book, and Mr. Goodwin, taken up with his own mournful reflections, heard no more of the service until he was wakened by the shriek of the village choir—

> "Before Jehovah's awful throne,
> Ye nations bow-wow-wow with sacred joy."

When the clergyman had blessed his flock, and the flock had hurried with his blessing into the open air, Di and John

remained behind to look at the nibbled old stone font, engraved with tangled signs, and unknown beasts with protruding unknown tongues, where little Tempests had whimpered and protested against a Christianity they did not understand. The aisle and chancel were paved with worn lettered stones, obliterated memorials of forgotten Tempests who had passed at midnight with flaring torches from their first home on the crag to their last in the valley. The walls bore record too. John had put up a tablet to his predecessor. It contained only the name, and date of birth and death, and underneath the single sentence—

"Until the day break, and the shadows flee away."

Di read the words in silence, and then turned the splendour of her deep glance upon him. Since when had the bare fact of meeting her eyes become so exceeding

sharp and sweet, such an epoch in the day? John writhed inwardly under their gentle scrutiny.

"You are very loyal," she said.

He felt a sudden furious irritation against her which took him by surprise, and then turned to scornful anger against himself. He led the way out of the church into the sad September sunshine, and talked of indifferent subjects till they reached the Castle. And after luncheon John went to the library and stared at the shelves again, and Miss Fane ambled and grunted to church, and Di sat with her grandmother.

There are some acts of self-sacrifice for which the performers will never in this world obtain the credit they deserve. Mrs. Courtenay, who was addicted to standing proxy for Providence, and was not afraid to take upon herself responsibilities which belong to Omniscience alone, had not hesitated to per-

form such an act, in the belief that the cause justified the means. Indeed, in her eyes a good cause justified many sorts and conditions of means.

All Saturday and half Sunday she had repressed the pangs of a healthy appetite, and had partaken only of the mutton-broth and splintered toast of invalidism. With a not ill-grounded dread lest Di's quick eyes should detect a subterfuge, she had gone so far as to take "heart-drops" three times a day from the hand of her granddaughter, and had been careful to have recourse to her tin of arrowroot biscuits only in the strictest privacy. But now that Sunday afternoon had come, she felt that she could safely relax into convalescence. The blinds were drawn up, and she was established in an armchair by the window.

"You seem really better," said Di. "I should hardly have known you had had one

of your attacks. You generally look so pale afterwards."

"It has been very slight," said Mrs. Courtenay, blushing faintly. "I took it in time. I shall be able to travel to-morrow. I suppose you and Miss Fane went to church this morning?"

"Miss Fane would not go, but John and I did."

Mrs. Courtenay closed her eyes. Virtue may be its own reward, but it is gratifying when it is not the only one.

"Granny," said Di, suddenly, "I never knew, till John told me, that my mother had been engaged to his father."

"What has John been raking up those old stories for?"

"I don't think he raked up anything. He seemed to think I knew all about it. He was showing me my mother's miniature which he had found among his father's

papers. I always supposed that the reason you never would talk about her was because you had felt her death too much."

"I was glad when she died," said Mrs. Courtenay.

"Was she unhappy, then? Father speaks of her rather sadly when he does mention her, as if he had been devoted to her, but she had not cared much for him, and had felt aggrieved at his being poor. He once said he had many faults, but that was the one she could never forgive. And he told me that when she died he was away on business, and she did not leave so much as a note or a message for him."

"It is quite true; she did not," said Mrs. Courtenay, in a suppressed voice. "I have never talked to you about your mother, Di, because I knew if I did I should prejudice you against your father, and I have no right to do that."

"I think," said Di, "that now I know a little you had better tell me the rest, or I shall only imagine things were worse than the reality."

So Mrs. Courtenay told her; told her of the little daughter who had been born to her in the first desolation of her widowhood, round whom she had wrapped in its entirety the love that many women divide between husband and sons and daughters.

She told Di of young Mr. Tempest, then just coming forward in political life, between whom and herself a friendship had sprung up in the days when he had been secretary to her brother, then in the Ministry. The young man was constantly at her house. He was serious, earnest, diffident, ambitious. Di reached the age of seventeen. Mrs. Courtenay saw the probable result, and hoped for it. With some persons to hope for anything is to remove obstacles from the path of its achievement.

"And yet, Di," said Mrs. Courtenay, "I can't reproach myself. They *were* suited to each other. It is as clear to me now as it was then. She did not love him, but I knew she would; and she had seen no one else. And he worshipped her. I threw them together, but I did not press her to accept him. She did accept him, and we went down to Overleigh together. She had—this room. I remembered it directly I saw it again. The engagement had not been formally given out, and the wedding was not to have been till the following spring on account of her youth. I think Mr. Tempest and I were the two happiest people in the world. I felt such entire confidence in him, and I was thankful she should not run the gauntlet of all that a beautiful girl is exposed to in society. She was as innocent as a child of ten, and as unconscious of her beauty—which, poor child! was very great.

"And then he—your father—came to Overleigh. Ten days afterwards they went away together, and I—I who had never been parted from her for a night since her birth—I never saw her again, except once across a room at a party, until four years afterwards, when her first child was born. I went to her then. I tried not to go, for she did not send for me; but she was the only child I had ever had, and I remembered my own loneliness when she was born. And the pain of staying away became too great, and I went. And—she was quite changed. She was not the least like my child, except about the eyes; and she was taller. Mr. Tempest never forgave her, because he loved her; but I forgave her at last, because I loved her more than he did. I saw her often after that. She used to tell me when your father would be away—and he was much away—and then I went to her. I

would not meet *him*. We never spoke of her married life. It did not bear talking about, for she had really loved him, and it took him a long time to break her of it. We talked of the baby, and servants, and the price of things, for she was very poor. She was loyal to her husband. She never spoke about him except once. I remember that day. It was one of the last before she died. I found her sitting by the fire reading 'Consuelo.' I sat down by her, and we remained a long time without speaking. Often we sat in silence together. You have not come to the places on the road, my dear, when somehow words are no use any more, and the only poor comfort left is to be with some one who understands and says nothing. When you do, you will find silence one degree more bearable than speech.

"At last she turned to the book, and pointed to a sentence in it. I can see the

page now, and the tall French print. 'Le caractère de cet homme entraîne les actions de sa vie. Jamais tu ne le changeras.'

"'I think that is true,' she said. 'Some characters seem to be settled beforehand, like a weathercock with its leaded tail. They cannot really change, because they are always changing. Nothing teaches them. Happiness, trouble, love, and hate bring no experience. They swing round to every wind that blows on one pivot always — themselves. There was a time when I am afraid I tired God with one name. "Jamais tu ne le changeras." No, never. One changes one's self. That is all. And now, instead of reproaching others, I reproach myself—bitterly—bitterly.'

"And she never begged my pardon. She once said, when I found her very miserable, that it was right that one who had made others suffer should suffer too. But those

were the only times she alluded to the past, and I never did. I did not go to her to reproach her. The kind of people who are cut by reproaches have generally reproached themselves more harshly than any one else can. She had, I know. It would have been better if she had been less reserved, and if she could have taken more interest in little things. But she did not seem able to. Some women, and they are the happy ones, can comfort themselves in a loveless marriage with pretty note-paper, and tying up the legs of chairs with blue ribbon. She could not do that, and I think she suffered more in consequence. Those little feminine instincts are not given us for nothing.

"She never gave in until she knew she was dying. Then she tried to speak, but she sank rapidly. She said something about you, and then smiled when her voice failed her, and gave up the attempt. I think she

was so glad to go that she did not mind anything else much. They held the baby to her as a last chance, and made it cry. Oh, Di, how you cried! And she trembled very much just for a moment, and then did not seem to take any more notice, though they put its little hand against her face. I think the end came all the quicker. It seemed too good to be true at first. . . .

"Don't cry, my dear. Young people don't know where trouble lies. They think it is in external calamity, and sickness and death. But one does not find it so. The only real troubles are those which we cause each other through the affections. Those whom we love chasten us. I never shed a single tear for her when she died. There had been too many during her life, for I loved her better than anything in the world except my husband, who died when he was twenty-five and I was twenty-two. You often re-

mind me of him. You are a very dear child to me. She said she hoped you would make up a little to me; and you have—not a little. I have brought you up differently. I saw my mistake with her. I sheltered her too much. I hope I have not run into the opposite extreme with you. I have allowed you more liberty than is usual, and I have encouraged you to look at life for yourself, and to think and act for yourself, and learn by your own experience. And now go and bathe your eyes, and see if you can find me Fitzgerald's 'Omar Khayyám.' I think I saw it last in the morning-room. John and I were talking about it on Friday. I dare say he will know where it is."

CHAPTER X.

"Si tu ne m'aimes pas moi je t'aime."

IT was the time of afternoon tea. Miss Fane rolled off the sofa, and with the hydraulic sniff that can temporarily suspend the laws of nature, proceeded to pour out tea. Presently John and the dogs came in, and Di, who had found Mrs. Courtenay's book without his assistance, followed. John had not the art of small-talk. Miss Fane, who was in the habit of attempting the simultaneous absorption of liquid and farinaceous nutriment with a perseverance not marked by success, was necessarily silent, save when a carroway seed took the wrong

turn. She seldom spoke in the presence of food, any more than others do in church. Few things apart from the Bull of Bashan commanded Miss Fane's undivided homage, but food never failed to, though it was reserved for plovers' eggs and the roe of the sturgeon to stir the latent emotion of her nature to its depths.

The dogs did their tricks. Lindo contrived to swallow all his own and half Fritz's portion, but, fortunately for the cause of justice, during a muffin-scattering choke on Lindo's part, Fritz's long red tongue was able to glean together fragments of what he imagined he had lost sight of for ever.

Di inquired whether there were evening service.

"Evening service at seven," said Miss Fane; "supper at quarter past eight."

"Do not go to church again," said John. "Come for a walk with me."

Di readily agreed. It was very pleasant to her to be with John. She had begun to feel that he and she were near akin. He was her only first cousin. The nearness of their relationship, accounting as it did in her mind for a growing intimacy, prevented any suspicion of that intimacy having sprung from another source.

They walked together through the forest in the still opal light of the waning day. Through the enlacing fingers of the trees the western sun made ladders of light. Breast-high among the bracken they went, disturbing the deer; across the heather, under the whisper of the pines, down to the steel-white reeded pools below.

They sat down on the trunk of a fallen tree, and a faint air came across the water from the trees on the further side, with a message to the trees on this. Neither talked much. The lurking sadness in the air

just touched and soothed the lurking sadness in Di's mind. She did not notice John's silence, for he was often silent. She wound a blade of grass round her finger, and then unwound it again. John watched her do it. He had noticed before, as a peculiarity of Di's, not observable in other women, that whatever she did was interesting. She asked some question about the lower pool gleaming before them through the trunks of the trees, and he answered absently the reverse of what was true.

"Then perhaps we had better be turning back," she said.

He rose, and they went back another way, climbing slowly up and up by a little winding track through steepest forest places. Many burrs left their native stems to accompany them on their way. They showed to great advantage on Di's primrose cotton gown. At last they reached the top of the

rocky ridge, and she sat down, out of breath, under a group of silver firs, and, taking off her gloves, began idly to pick the burrs one by one off the folds of her gown.

There was no hurry. He sat down by her, and watched her hands. She put the burrs on a stone near her.

They were sitting on the topmost verge of the crag, and the forest fell away in a shimmer of green beneath their feet to the pools below, and then climbed the other side of the valley and melted into the purple of the Overleigh and Oulston moors. Far away, the steep ridge of Hambleton and the headland of Sutton Brow stood out against the evening sky. Some Tempest of bygone days had dared to perpetrate a Greek temple in a clearing among the silver firs where they were sitting, but time had effaced that desecration of one of God's high places by transforming it to a lichened ruin of

scattered stones. It was on one of these scattered stones that Di was raising a little cairn of burrs.

"Forty-one," she said at last. "You have not even begun your toilet yet, John."

No answer.

The sun was going down unseen behind a bar of cloud. A purple light was on the hills. Their faces showed that they saw the glory, but the twilight deepened over all the nearer land. Slowly the sun passed below the leaden bar, and looked back once more in full heaven, and drowned the world in light. Then with dying strength he smote the leaden bar to one long line of quivering gold, and sank dimly, redly, to the enshrouding west. All colour died. The hills were gone. The land lay dark. But far across the sky, from north to south, the line of light remained.

Di had watched the sunset alone. John

had not seen it. His eyes were fixed on her calm face with the western glow upon it. She did not even notice that he was looking at her. One of her ungloved hands lay on her knee, so near to him yet so immeasurably far away. Could he stretch across the gulf to touch it? His expressionless face took some meaning at last. He leaned a little towards her, and laid his hand on hers.

She started violently, and dropped her sunset thoughts like a surprised child its flowers. Even a less vain man than John might have been cut to the quick by the sudden horrified bewilderment of her face, and of the dazzled light-blinded eyes which turned to peer at him with such unseeing distress.

"Oh, John!" she said, "not you;" and she put her other hand quickly for one second on his.

"Yes," he said, "that is just it."

Her mouth quivered painfully.

"I thought," she said, "we were—surely we *are* friends."

"No," said John, mastering the insane emotion which had leapt within him at the touch of her hand. "We never were, and we never shall be. I will have nothing to do with any friendship of yours. I'm not a beggar to be shaken off with coppers. I want everything or nothing."

Her manner changed. Her self-possession came back.

"I am sorry it must be nothing," she said gently, and she tried quietly but firmly to withdraw her hand.

His grasp on it tightened ever so little, but in an unmistakable manner, and she instantly gave up the attempt.

A splendid colour mounted slowly to her face. She drew herself up. Her lightning-bright intrepid eyes met his without flinching.

They looked hard at each other in the waning light. Once again they seemed to measure swords as at the moment when they first met. Each felt the other formidable. There was no slightest shred of disguise between them.

There was a breathless silence.

Di went through a frightful revulsion of mind. The sunset and the light along the sky seemed to have betrayed her. These pleasant days had been in league against her. And now, goaded by the grasp of his hand on hers, her mind made one headlong rush at the goal towards which these accomplices had been luring her. Where were they leading her? Glamour dropped dead. Marriage remained. To become this man's wife; to merge her life in his; to give up everything into the hand that still held hers, the pressure of which was like a claim! He had only laid his hand upon her hand, but it

seemed to her that he had laid it upon her soul. Her whole being rose up against him in sudden passionate antagonism horrible to bear. And all the time she knew instinctively that he was stronger than she.

John saw and understood that mental struggle almost with compassion, yet with an exultant sense of power over her. One conviction of the soul ever remains unshaken, that whom we understand is ours to have and to hold.

He deliberately released her hand. She did not make the slightest movement at regaining possession of it.

John wrestled with his voice, and forced it back, harsh and unfamiliar, to do his bidding.

"Di," he said, "I believe in truth even between men and women. I know what you are feeling about me at this moment. Well, that, even that, is better than a mistake; and you were making one. You had not the

faintest suspicion of what has been the one object of my life since the day I first met you. The fault was mine, not yours. You could not see what was not on the surface to be seen. You would have gone on for the remainder of your natural life liking me in a way I—I cannot tolerate, if I had not—done as I did. I have not the power like some men of showing their feelings. I can't say the little things and do the little things that come to others by instinct. My instinct is to keep things to myself. I always have—till now."

Silence again; a silence which seemed to grow in a moment to such colossal dimensions that it was hardly credible a voice would have power to break it.

The twilight had advanced suddenly upon them. The young pheasants crept and called among the bracken. The night-birds passed swift and silent as sudden thoughts.

Di struggled with an unreasoning, furious anger, which, like a fiery horse, took her whole strength to control.

"I love you," said John, "and I shall go on loving you; and it is better you should know it."

And as he spoke she became aware that her anger was but a little thing beside his.

"What is the good of telling me," she said, "what I—what you know I—don't wish to hear?"

"What good?" said John, fiercely, his face working. "Great God! do you imagine I have put myself through the torture of making myself intolerable to you for no purpose? Do you think that you can dismiss me with a few angry words? What good? The greatest good in the world, which I would turn heaven and earth to win; which please God I will win."

Di became as white as he. He was too

strong, this man, with his set face, and clenched trembling hand. She was horribly frightened, but she kept a brave front. She turned towards him and would have spoken, but her lips only moved.

"You need not speak," he said more gently. "You cannot refuse what you have not been asked for. I ask nothing of you. Do you understand? *Nothing.* When I ask it will be time enough to refuse. It is getting late. Let us go home."

CHAPTER XI.

"Those who have called the world profane have succeeded in making it so."—J. H. THOM.

THE dreams of youth and love so frequently fade unfulfilled into "the light of common day," that it is a pleasure to be able to record that Madeleine saw the greater part of hers realized. She was received with what she termed *éclat* in her new neighbourhood. She remarked with complacency that everybody made much too much of her; that she had been quite touched by the enthusiasm of her reception. It was an ascertained fact that she would open the hunt ball with the President—a

point on which her maiden meditation had been much exercised. The Duchess of Southark was among the first to call upon her. If that lady's principal motive in doing so was curiosity to see what kind of wife Sir Henry, or, as he was called in his own county, "the Solicitor-General," had at length procured, Madeleine was comfortably unaware of the fact. After that single call, the duration of which was confined to nine minutes, Madeleine spoke of the duchess as "kindness and cordiality itself."

She was invited to stay at Alvery, and afterwards to fill her house for a fancy ball, in October, in honour of the coming of age of Lord Elver, the duke's eldest son and chief thorn in the flesh; a young man of great promise "when you got to know him," as Madeleine averred, in which case few shared that advantage with her.

Other invitations poured in. The neighbourhood was really surprised at the grace and beauty of the bride—*considering*. It was soon rumoured that she was a saint as well; that she read prayers every morning at Cantalupe, which the stablemen were expected to attend; and that she taught in the Sunday school. The ardent young vicar of the parish, who had hitherto languished unsupported and misunderstood at Sir Henry's door, in the flapping draperies that so well become the Church militant, was enthusiastic about her. She was what he called "a true woman." Those who use this expression best know what it means. Processions, monster candles, crucifixes, and other ingredients of the pharmacopœia of religion, swam before his mental vision. The little illegal side-altar, to which his two "crosses," namely, the churchwardens, had objected, but without which his soul could

not rest in peace, was reinstated after a conversation with Madeleine. A promise on that lady's part to embroider an altar-cloth for the same was noised abroad.

Sir Henry was jubilant at his wife's popularity, which lost nothing from her own comments on it. Although nearly six months had elapsed since his marriage, he was still in a state of blind adoration—an adoration so blind that none of the ordinary events by which disillusion begins had any power to affect him.

He was not conscious that once or twice during the season in London he had been duped; that the jealousy which had flamed up so suddenly against Archie Tempest had more grounds than the single note he found in his wife's pocket, when in a fit of clumsy fondness he had turned out all its contents on her knee, solely to cogitate and wonder over them. He had a habit which tried

her more than his slow faculties had any idea of, of examining Madeleine's belongings. His admiring curiosity had no suspicion in it. He liked to look at them solely because they were hers.

One day, shortly after their arrival at Cantalupe, when he was sitting in stolid inconvenient sympathy in her room, whither she had vainly retreated from him on the plea of a headache, he occupied himself by opening the drawers of her dressing-table one after the other, investigating with aboriginal interest small boxes of hairpins, curling-irons, and that various assortment of feminine gear which the hairdresser elegantly designates as "toilet requisites." At last he peeped into a box where, carefully arranged side by side, were the dearest of curls on tortoiseshell combs which he had often seen on his wife's head, and some smaller much becrimped bodies which filled

him with wondering dislike—hair caricatured —*frisettes.*

"What *are* you doing?" said Madeleine, faintly, lying on the sofa with her back to him, holding her salts to her nose. Oh, if he would only go away, this large dreadful man, and leave her half an hour in peace, without hearing him clear his throat and sniff! On the contrary, he came and sat down by her chuckling, holding the curls and frisettes in his thick hands. She dropped her smelling-bottle and looked at them in an outraged silence. Was there, then, no sanctity, no privacy, in married life? Was everything about her to be made common and profane? She hated Sir Henry at that moment. As long as he had remained an invoice accompanying the arrival of coveted possessions, she had felt only a vague uneasiness about him. Directly he became, after the wedding, a heavy bill de-

manding cash payment "to account rendered," she had found that the marriage market is not a very cheap one after all.

Sir Henry was not the least chagrined at a discovery which might have tried the devotion of a more romantic lover.

"Why, Maddy," he said, "you are much too young and pretty to wear this sort of toggery. Leave 'em to the old dowagers, my dear;" and he dropped them into the fire.

She saw them burn, but she made no sign. Presently, however, when he had left her, she began to cry feebly; for even feminine fortitude has its limits. She was in reality satisfied with her marriage on the whole, though she was wiping away a few natural tears at this moment. But in this class of union there is generally one item which is found almost intolerable, namely, the husband. He really was the only drawback in

this case. The furniture, the house, the southern aspect of the reception-rooms, everthing else, was satisfactory. The park was handsomer than she had expected. And she had not known there was a silver dinner-service. It had been a love match as far as that was concerned. If Henry himself had only been different, Madeleine often reflected! If he had not been so red, and if he had had curly hair, or any hair at all! But whose lot has not some secret sorrow?

So Madeleine cried a little, and then wiped her eyes, and fell to thinking of her gown for the fancy ball at Alvery next month. She called to mind Di's height and regal figure with a pang. Perhaps, after all, she had been unwise in asking her dear friend, whom it would be difficult to eclipse, for this particular ball. Madeleine was under the impression that she was "having

Di" out of good nature. This was her tame caged motive, kept for the inspection of others, especially of Di. Nevertheless there were others which were none the less genuine because they did not wait to have salt put on their tails, and invariably flew away at the approach of strangers.

Madeleine had not remembered to be good-natured until a certain obstacle to the completion of her ball-party, as she intended it, had arisen. The subject of young men was one which she had approached with the utmost delicacy; for, according to Sir Henry, all young men—at least, all good-looking ones—were fools and oafs whom he was not going to have wounding *his* birds. She agreed with him entirely, but reminded him of the duchess's solemn injunction to bring a party of even numbers.

Sir Henry at last gave in so far as to propose an elderly colonel. Madeleine in

turn suggested Lord Hemsworth, who was allowed to be "a good sort," and was invited.

"Then we ought to have Miss Di Tempest, if we have Hemsworth," said Sir Henry, blowing like a grampus, as his manner was in moments of inspiration. "I'm quite a matchmaker now I'm married myself. Ask her to meet him, Maddy. She's your special pal, ain't she?"

Madeleine felt that she required strength greater than her own to bear with a person who says "ain't" and "a good sort," and designates a lady-friend as a "pal."

She pressed the silver knob of her pencil to her lips. There was, she remarked, no one whom she would like to have so much as Di; but Mr. Lumley was her next suggestion, and Sir Henry slapped himself on the leg, and said he was the very thing.

"We want one other man," said Madeleine,

reflectively, after a few more had passed through the needle's eye of Sir Henry's criticism. "Let me see. Oh, there's Captain Tempest. He dances well."

"I won't have him," said Sir Henry at once, his eyes assuming their most prawn-like expression. "You may have his cousin if you like, the owl with the jowl, as Lumley calls him—Tempest of Overleigh."

"He is sure to be asked to the house itself, being a relation," said Madeleine, dropping the subject of Archie instantly. She did not recur to it again. But after their return home from the visit to the Hemsworths', at which she had met Di, she told her husband she had invited Di for the fancy ball, as he had wished her to do.

"Me?" said Sir Henry, reddening. "Lord bless me, what do I want with her?" And it was some time before he could be made to recollect what he had said nearly a

month ago about asking Di to meet Lord Hemsworth.

"You forget your own wishes more quickly than I do," she said, putting her hand in his.

He did, by Jove, he did; and he bent over the little hand and kissed it, while she noticed how red the back of his neck was. When he became unusually apoplectic in appearance, as at this moment, Madeleine always caught a glimpse of herself as a young widow, and the idea softened her towards him. If he were once really gone, without any possibility of return, she felt that she could have said, "Poor Henry!"

"The only awkward part about having asked Di," said Madeleine, after a pause, "is that Mrs. Courtenay does not allow her to visit alone."

"Well, my dear, ask Mrs. Courtenay. I like her. She has always been very civil to me."

She had indeed.

"I don't like her very much myself," said Madeleine. "She is so worldly; and I think she has made Di so. And she would be the only older person. You know you decided it should be a *young* party this time. It is very awkward Di not being able to come alone, at her age. She evidently wanted me to ask her brother to bring her, who, she almost told me, was anxious to meet Miss Crupps, the carpet heiress; but I did not quite like to ask him without your leave."

"Ask him by all means," said Sir Henry, entirely oblivious of his former refusal. "After that poor little girl, is he? Well, we'll sit out together, and watch the love-making, eh?"

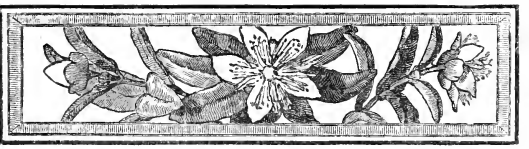
Madeleine experienced a tremor wholly unmixed with compunction at gaining her point. She would have been aware, if she had read it in a book, that any one who had

acted as she had done, had departed from the truth in suggesting that Di could not visit alone. She would have felt also that it was reprehensible in the extreme to invite to her house a man who had secretly, though not without provocation, made love to her since her marriage.

But just in the same way that what we regret as conceit in others we perceive to be a legitimate self-respect in ourselves, so Madeleine, as on previous occasions, "saw things very differently."

She was incapable of what she called "a low view." She had often "frankly" told herself that she took a deep interest in Archie. She had put his initials against some of her favourite passages in her morocco manual. She prayed for him on his birthday, and sometimes, when she woke up and looked at her luminous cross at night. She believed that she had a great influence

for good over him which it was her duty to use. She was sincere in her wish to proselytize, but the sincerity of an insincere nature is like the kernel of a deaf nut; a mere shred of undeveloped fibre. What Madeleine wished to believe became a reality to her. Gratification of a very common form of vanity was a religious duty. She wrote to Archie with a clear conscience, and, when he accepted, had a box of autumn hats down from London.



CHAPTER XII.

"Oh, Love's but a dance,
Where Time plays the fiddle!
See the couples advance,—
Oh, Love's but a dance!
A whisper, a glance,—
'Shall we twirl down the middle?'
Oh, Love's but a dance,
Where Time plays the fiddle!"

AUSTIN DOBSON.

IT was the night of the fancy dress ball. The carriages were already at the door, and could be heard crunching round and round upon the gravel. Sir Henry, all yeomanry red and gold, was having the bursting hooks and eyes at his throat altered in his wife's room. Something had to be

done to his belt, too. At last he went blushing downstairs before the cluster of maids with his sword under his arm. The guests, who had gone up to dress after an early dinner, were reappearing by degrees. Lord Hemsworth, in claret-coloured coat and long Georgian waistcoat and tie-wig, came down, handsome and quiet as usual, with his young sister, whose imagination had stopped short at cotton-wool snowflakes on a tulle skirt. An impecunious young man in a red hunt coat rushed in, hooted on the stairs by Mr. Lumley for having come without a wedding garment. Madeleine sailed down in Watteau costume. Two married ladies followed in Elizabethan ones. Presently Archie made his appearance, a dream of beauty in white satin from head to foot, as the Earl of Leicester, his curling hair, fair to whiteness, looking like the wig which it was not. Every one, men and women alike,

turned to look at him; and Mr. Lumley, following in harlequin costume, was quite overlooked, until he turned a somersault, saying, "Here we are again!" whereat Sir Henry instantly lost a hook and eye in a cackle of admiration.

"We ought to be starting," said Madeleine. "We are all down now."

"Not quite all," said Mr. Lumley, sinking on one knee, as Di came in crowned and sceptred, in a green and silver gown edged with ermine.

Lord Hemsworth drew in his breath. Madeleine's face fell.

"Good gracious, Di!" she said, with a very thin laugh. "This is dressing up indeed!"

The party, already late, got under way, Mr. Lumley, of course, calling in falsetto to each carriage in turn not to go without him, and then refusing to enter any vehicle in

which, as he expressed it, Miss Tempest was not already an ornamental fixture.

"This is getting beyond a joke," said Lord Hemsworth, as a burst of song issued from the carriage leaving the door, and the lamp inside showed Di's crowned head, Sir Henry's violet complexion, and the gutta-percha face of the warbling Mr. Lumley.

Di sat very silent in her corner, and after a time, as the drive was a long one, the desultory conversation dropped, and Sir Henry fell into a nasal slumber, from which, as Madeleine was in another carriage, no one attempted to rouse him.

Di shut her eyes as a safeguard against being spoken to, and her mind went back to the subject which had been occupying much of her thoughts since the previous evening, namely, the fact that she should meet John at the ball. She knew he would be there, for she had seen him get out of

the train at Alvery station the afternoon before.

As she had found on a previous occasion, when they had suddenly been confronted with each other at Doncaster races, to meet John had ceased to be easy to her—became more difficult every time.

Possibly John had found it as difficult to speak to Di as she had found it to receive him. But however that may have been, it would certainly have been impossible to divine that he was awaiting the arrival of any one to-night with the faintest degree of interest. He did not take his stand where it would be obvious that he could command a view of the door through which the guests entered. He had seen others do that on previous occasions, and had observed that the effect was not happy. Nevertheless, from the bay window where he was watching the dancing, the guests as they arrived were visible to him.

"He! he!" said Lord Frederick, joining him. "Such a row in the men's cloak-room! Young Talbot has come as Little Bo-Peep, and the men would not have him in their room; said it was improper, and tried to hustle him into the ladies' room. He is still swearing in his ulster in the passage. Why aren't you dancing?"

"I can't. My left arm is weak since I burned it in the spring."

"Well," rejoined Lord Frederick, who as a French marquis, with cane and snuff-box, was one of the best-dressed figures in the room, "you don't miss much. Onlookers see most of the game. Look at that fairy twirling with the little man in the kilt. Their skirts are just the same length. The worst part of this species of entertainment is that one cuts one's dearest friends. Some one asked me just now whether the 'Mauvaise Langue' was here to-night. Did not

recognize the wolf in sheep's clothing. More arrivals. A Turk and a Norwegian peasant, and a man in a smock frock. And—now—what on earth is the creature in blue and red, with a female to match?"

"Otter-hounds," suggested John.

"Is it possible? Never saw it before. There goes Freemantle as a private in the Blues, saluting as he is introduced, instead of bowing. What a fund of humour the youth of the present day possess! Who is that bleached earwig he is dancing with?"

"I think it is Miss Crupps, the heiress."

"H'm! Might have known it. That is the sort of little pill that no one takes unless it is very much gilt. Here comes the Verelst party at last. Lady Verelst has put herself together well. I would not mind buying her at my valuation and selling her at her own. She hates me, that little painted saint. I always cultivate a genuine

saint. I make a point of it. They may look deuced dowdy down here—they generally do, though I believe it is only their wings under their clothes; but they will probably form the aristocracy up yonder, and it is as well to know them beforehand. But Lady Verelst is a sham, and I hate shams. I am a sham myself. He! he! When last I met her she talked pious, and implied intimacy with the Almighty, till at last I told her that it was the vulgarest thing in life to be always dragging in your swell acquaintance. He! he! I shall go and speak to her directly she has done introducing her party. Mrs. Dundas—and—I don't know the other woman. Who is the girl in white?"

"Miss Everard."

"What! Hemsworth's sister? Then he will be here too, probably. I like Hemsworth. There's no more harm in that young

man than there is in a tablet of Pears' soap. A crowned head next. Why, it's Di Tempest. By —— she is handsomer every time I see her! If that girl knew how to advertise herself, she might become a professional beauty."

"Heaven forbid!" said John, involuntarily, watching Di with the intense concentration of one who has long pored over memory's dim portrait, and now corrects it by the original.

Lord Frederick did not see the look. For once something escaped him. He too was watching Di, who with the remainder of the Verelst party was being drifted towards them by a strong current of fresh arrivals in their wake.

The usual general recognition and non-recognition peculiar to fancy balls ensued, in which old acquaintances looked blankly at each other, gasped each other's names, and then shook hands effusively; amid which

one small greeting between two people who had seen and recognized each other from the first instant took place, and was over in a moment.

"I cannot recognize any one," said Di, her head held a shade higher than usual, looking round the room, and saying to herself, "He would not have spoken to me if he could have helped it."

"Some of the people are unrecognizable," said John, with originality equal to hers, and stung by the conviction that she had tried to avoid shaking hands with him.

The music struck up suddenly as if it were a new idea.

"Are you engaged for this dance?" said Mr. Lumley, flying to her side.

"Yes," said Di with decision.

"So am I," said he, and was gone again.

"Dance?" said a *Sporting Times*, rushing

up in turn, and shooting out the one word like a pea from a pop-gun.

"Thanks, I should like to, but I am not allowed," said Di. "My grandmother is very particular. If you had been the *Sunday at Home* I should have been charmed."

The "Pink 'un" expostulated vehemently, and said he would have come as the *Church Times* if he had only known; but Di remained firm.

John walked away, pricking himself with his little dagger, the sheath of which had somehow got lost, and watched the knot of men who gradually gathered round Di. Presently she moved away with Lord Frederick in the direction of Madeleine, who had installed herself at the further end of the room among the *fenders*, as our latter-day youth gracefully designates the tiaras of the chaperones.

John was seized upon and introduced to

an elderly minister with an order, who told him he had known his father, and began to sound him as to his political views. John, who was inured to this form of address, answered somewhat vaguely, for at that moment Di began to dance. She had a partner worthy of her in the shape of a sedate young Russian, resplendent in the white-and-gold uniform of the imperial *Gardes à cheval.*

Lord Frederick gravitated back to John. No young man among the former's large acquaintance was given the benefit of his experience more liberally than John. Lord Frederick took an interest in him which was neither returned nor repelled.

"Elver is down at last," he said. "It seems he had to wait till his mother's maid could be spared to sew him into his clothes. It is a pity you are not dancing, John. You might dance with your cousin. She and

Prince Blazinski made a splendid couple. What a crowd of moths round that candle! I hope you are not one of them. It is not the candle that gets singed. Another set of arrivals. Look at Carruthers coming in with a bouquet. Cox of the *Monarch* still, I suppose. He can't dance with it; no, he has given it to his father to hold. Supper at last. I must go and take some one in."

John took Miss Everard in to supper. In spite of her brother's and Di's efforts, she had not danced much. She did not find him so formidable as she expected, and before supper was over had told him all about her doves, and how the grey one sat on her shoulder, and how she loved poetry better than anything in the world, except "Donovan." John proved a sympathetic listener. He in his turn confided to her his difficulty in conveying soup over the edge of his ruff; and after providing her with a pink cream,

judging with intuition unusual to his sex that a pink cream is ever more acceptable to young ladyhood than a white one, he took her back to the ball-room. The crowd had thinned. The kilt and the fairy and a few other couples were careering wildly in open space. John looked round in vain for Madeleine, to whom he could deliver up his snowflake, and catching sight of Mrs. Dundas on the chaperon's dais, made in her direction. Di, who was sitting with Mrs. Dundas, suddenly perceived them coming up the room together. What was it, what could it be, that indescribable feeling that went through her like a knife as she saw Miss Everard on John's arm, smiling at something he was saying to her? Had they been at supper together all this long time?

"What a striking face your cousin has!" said Mrs. Dundas. "I do not wonder that people ask who he is. I used to think him

rather alarming, but Miss Everard does not seem to find him so."

"He can be alarming," said Di, lightly. "You should see him when he is discussing his country's weal, or welcoming his guests."

"Why did I say that?" she asked herself the moment the words were out of her mouth. "It's ill-natured and it's not true. Why did I say it?"

Mrs. Dundas laughed.

"It's the old story," she said. "One never sees the virtues of one's relations. Now, as he is not *my* first cousin, I am able to perceive that he is a very remarkable person, with a jaw that means business. There is tenacity and strength of purpose in his face. He would be a terrible person to oppose."

Di laughed, but she quailed inwardly.

"I am told he is immensely run after," continued Mrs. Dundas. "I dare say you

know," in a whisper, "that the duchess wants him for Lady Alice, and they *say* he has given her encouragement, but I don't believe it. Anyhow, her mother is making her read up political economy and Bain, poor girl. It must be an appalling fate to marry a great intellect. I am thankful to say Charlie only had two ideas in his head; one was chemical manures, and the other was to marry me. Well, Miss Everard. Lady Verelst is at supper, but I will extend a wing over you till she returns. Here comes a crowd from the supper-room. Now, Miss Tempest, do go in. You owned you were hungry a minute ago, though you refused the tragic entreaties of the Turk and the stage villain."

"I was afraid," said Di; "for though the villain is my esteemed friend in private life, I know his wide hat or the turban of the infidel would catch in my crown and drag

it from my head. I wish I had not come so regally. I enjoyed sewing penny rubies into my crown, and making the ermine out of an old black muff and some rabbit-fur; but—uneasy is the head that wears a crown."

"I am very harmless and inaggressive," said John, in his most level voice. "The only person I prick with my little dagger is myself. If you are hungry, I think you may safely go in to supper with me."

"Very well," said Di, rising and taking his offered arm. "I am too famished to refuse."

"She is taller than he is," said Miss Everard, as they went together down the rapidly filling room.

"No, my dear; it is only her crown. They are exactly the same height."

No one is more useful in everyday life

than the man, seldom a rich man, who can command two sixpences, and can in an emergency produce a threepenny bit and some coppers. The capitalist with his half-crown is nowhere—for the time.

In conversation, small change is everything. Who does not know the look of the clever man in society, conscious of a large banking account, but uncomfortably conscious also that, like Goldsmith, he has not a sixpence of ready money? And who has not envied the fool jingling his few halfpence on a tombstone or anywhere, to the satisfaction of himself and every one else?

Thrice-blessed is small-talk.

But between some persons it is an impossibility, though each may have a very respectable stock of his own. Like different coinages, they will not amalgamate. Di and John had not wanted any in talking to each other—till now. And now, in their hour of

need, to the alarm of both, they found they were destitute. After a short mental struggle they succumbed into the abyss of the commonplace, the only neutral ground on which those who have once been open and sincere with each other can still meet—to the certain exasperation of both.

John was dutifully attentive. He procured a fresh bottle of champagne for her, and an unnibbled roll, and made suitable remarks at intervals; but her sense of irritation increased. Something in his manner annoyed her. And yet it was only the same courteous, rather expressionless manner that she remembered was habitual to him towards others. Now that it was gone she realized that there had once been a subtle difference in his voice and bearing to herself. She felt defrauded of she knew not what, and the wing of cold pheasant before her loomed larger and larger, till it seemed to stretch

over the whole plate. Why on earth had she said she was hungry? And why had he brought her to the large table, where there was so much light and noise, and where she was elbowed by an enormous hairy Buffalo Bill, when she had seen as she came in that one of the little tables for two was at that instant vacant? She forgot that when she first caught sight of it she had said within herself that she would never forgive him if he had the bad taste to entrap her into a *tête-à-tête* by taking her there.

But he had shown at once that he had no such intention. Was this dignified, formal man, with his air of distinction, and his harsh immobile face, and his black velvet dress,—was this stranger really the John with whom she had been on such easy terms six weeks ago; the John who, pale and determined, had measured swords with her in the dusk of a September evening?

And as she sat beside him in the brilliant light, amid the Babel of tongues, a voice in her heart said suddenly, "That was not the end; that was only the beginning—only the beginning."

Her eyes met his, fixed inquiringly upon her. He was only offering her some grapes, but it appeared to her that he must have heard the words, and a sense of impotent terror seized her, as the terror of one who, wrestling for his life, finds at the first throw that he is overmatched.

She rose hastily, and asked to go back to the ball-room. He complied at once, but did not speak. They went, a grave and silent couple, through the hall and down the gallery.

"Have I annoyed you?" he said at last, as they neared the ball-room.

She did not answer.

"I mean, have I done anything more that has annoyed you?"

"Nothing more, thanks."

"I am glad," said John. "I feared I had. Of course, I would not have asked you to go in to supper with me if Mrs. Dundas had not obliged me. I intended to ask you to do so, when you could have made some excuse for refusing if you did not wish it. I was sorry to force your hand."

"You will never do that," said Di, to her own astonishment. It seemed to her that she was constrained by a power stronger than herself to defy him.

She felt him start.

"We will take another turn," he said instantly; and before she had the presence of mind to resist, they had turned and were walking slowly down the gallery again between the rows of life-size figures of knights and chargers in armour, which loomed gigantic in the feeble light. A wave of music broke in the distance, and the few

couples sitting in recesses rose and passed them on their way back to the ball-room, leaving the gallery deserted.

A peering moon had laid a faint criss-cross whiteness on the floor.

The place took a new significance.

Each was at first too acutely conscious of being alone with the other to speak. She wondered if he could feel how her hand trembled on his arm, and he whether it was possible she did not hear the loud hammering of his heart. Either would have died rather than have betrayed their emotion to the other.

"You tell me I shall never force your hand," he repeated slowly at last. "No, indeed, I trust I never shall. But when, may I ask, have I shown any intention of doing so?"

Di had put herself so palpably and irretrievably in the wrong, that she had no

refuge left but silence. She was horror-struck by his repetition of the words which her lips, but surely not she herself, had spoken.

"If you ever marry me," said John, "it will be of your own accord. If you don't, we shall both miss happiness—you as well as I, for we are meant for each other. Most people are so constituted that they can marry whom they please, but you and I have no choice. We have a claim upon each other. I recognize yours, with thankfulness. I did not know life held anything so good. You ignore mine, and wilfully turn away from it. I don't wonder. I am not a man whom any woman would choose, much less *you*. It is natural on your part to dislike me—at first. In the mean while you need not distress yourself by telling me so. I am under no delusion on that point."

His voice was firm and gentle. If it had

been cold, Di's pride would have flamed up in a moment. As it was, its gentleness, under great and undeserved provocation, made her writhe with shame. She spoke impulsively.

"But I *am* distressed, I can't help being so, at having spoken so harshly ; no—*worse* than harshly, so unpardonably."

"There is no question of pardon between you and me," said John, turning to look at her with the grave smile that seemed for a moment to bring back her old friend to her ; but only for a moment. His eyes contradicted it. "I know you have never forgiven me for telling you that I loved you, but nevertheless you see I have not asked pardon yet, though I had not intended to annoy you by speaking of it again—at present."

"No," said Di, eagerly. "But that is just it. It was my own fault this time. I

brought it on myself. But—but I can't help knowing—I feel directly I see you that you are still thinking of it. And then I become angry, and say dreadful things like—— "

"Exactly," said John, nodding.

"Because I—not only because I am ill-tempered, but because though I do like being liked, still I don't want you or any one to make a mistake, or go on making it. It doesn't seem fair."

"Not if it really is a mistake."

"It is in this instance."

"Not on my part."

There was a short silence. Di felt as if she had walked up against a stone wall.

"John," she said with decision. "Believe me. I sometimes mean what I say, and I mean it now. I really and truly am a person who know my own mind."

"So do I," said John.

Rather a longer silence.

"And—and oh, John! Don't you see how wretched, how foolish it is, our being on these absurd formal terms? Have you forgotten what friends we used to be? I have not. It makes me angry still when I think how you have taken yourself away for nothing, and how all the pleasure is gone out of meeting you or talking to you. I don't think you half knew how much I liked you."

"Di," said John, stopping short, and facing her with indignation in his eyes, "I desire that you will never again tell me you *like* me. I really cannot stand it. Let us go back to the ball-room."

CHAPTER XIII.

"Ah, man's pride
Or woman's—which is greatest?"
E. B. Browning.

"DI," said Archie, sauntering up to her on the terrace at Cantalupe, where she was sitting the morning after the ball, and planting himself in front of her, as he had a habit of doing before all women, so as to spare them the trouble of turning round to look at him, "I can't swallow little Crupps."

"No one wants you to," said Di. "If you don't like her, you had better leave her alone."

"Women are not meant to be let alone," said Archie, yawning, "except the ugly ones."

"Well, Miss Crupps is not pretty."

"No, but she is gilt up to the eyes. Poor eyes, too, and light eyelashes. I could not marry light eyelashes."

"I am glad to hear it."

"Oh! I know you don't care a straw whether I settle well or not. You never have cared. Women are all alike. There's not a woman in the world, or a man either, who cares a straw what becomes of me."

"Or you what becomes of them."

"John's just as bad as the rest," continued the victim of a worldly age. "And John and I were great chums in old days. But it is the way of the world."

Men who attract by a certain charm of manner which the character is unable to bear out, who make unconscious promises to

the *hope* of others without ability to keep them, are ever those who complain most loudly of the fickleness of women, of the uncertainty of friendship, of their loveless lot.

Di did not answer. Any allusion to John, even the bare mention of his name, had become of moment to her. She never by any chance spoke of him, neither did she ever miss a word that was said about him in her presence; and often raged inwardly at the ruthless judgments and superficial criticisms that were freely passed upon him by his contemporaries, and especially his kinsfolk. From a very early date in this world's history, ability has been felt to be distressing in its own country, especially in the country. If a clever man would preserve unflawed the amulet of humility, let him at intervals visit among his country cousins. John had not many of these invaluable relations; but,

happily for him, he had contemporaries who did just as well—men who, when he was mentioned with praise in their hearing, could always break in that they had known him at Eton, and relate how he had over-eaten himself at the sock-shop.

"One thing I am determined I won't do," continued Archie, "and that is marry poverty, like the poor old governor. He has often talked about it, and what a grind it was, with the tears in his eyes."

"What has turned your mind to marriage on this particular morning, of all others?"

"I don't know, unless it is the vision of little Crupps. I suppose I shall come to something of that kind some day. If it isn't her it will be something like her. One must live. You are on the look out for money, too, Di, so you need not be so disdainful. You can't marry a poor man."

"They don't often ask me," said Di. "I

fancy I look more expensive to keep up than I really am."

"Ah! here comes Lady Verelst," said Archie, patronizingly. "I'd marry *her*, now, if she were a rich widow. I would indeed. She is putting up her red parasol. Quite right. She has not your complexion, Di, nor mine either."

Archie got up as Madeleine came towards them, and offered her his chair. Archie had several cheap effects. To offer a chair with a glance and a smile was one of them. Perhaps he could not help it if the glance suggested unbounded homage, if the smile conveyed an admiration as concentrated as Liebig's extract. His faithful, tender eyes could wear the sweetest, the saddest, or the most reproachful expression to order. Every slight passing feeling was magnified by the beauty of the face that reflected it into a great emotion. He felt almost

nothing, but he appeared to feel a great deal. A man who possesses this talisman is very dangerous.

Poor Madeleine, confident of her appearance in her new Cresser garment, with its gold-flowered waistcoat, firmly believed, as Archie silently pushed forward the chair, that she had inspired—had been so unfortunate as to inspire—"une grande passion malheureuse." Almost all Archie's love-making, and that is saying a good deal, was speechless. He could look unutterable things, but he had not, as he himself expressed it, "the gift of the gab."

Madeleine was sorry for him, but she could not allow him to remain enraptured beside her in full view of Sir Henry's study windows.

"How delicious it is here!" she said, after dismissing him to the billiard-room. "I never lie in bed after a ball, do you, Di?

I seem to crave for the sunshine and the face of nature after all the glitter and the worldliness of a ball-room."

"I don't find ball-rooms more worldly than other places—than this bench, for instance."

"Now, how strange that is of you, Di! This spot is quite sacred to *me*. I come and read here."

Madeleine had, by degrees, sanctified all the seats in the garden; had taken the impious chill even off the iron ones, by reading her little manuals on each in turn.

"It was here," continued Madeleine, "that I persuaded dear Fred to go into the Church. It was settled he was to be a clergyman ever since he had that slight stroke as a boy; but when he went to college he must have got into a bad set, for he said he did not think he had a vocation. And mother—you know whatmother

is—did not like to press it, and the whole thing was slipping through, when I had him to stay here, and talked to him very seriously, and explained that a living in the family *was* the call."

"Madeleine," said Di, rising precipitately, "it is getting late. I must fly and pack."

If she stayed another moment she knew she should inevitably say something that would scandalize Madeleine.

"And I did not say it," she said with modest triumph that evening, as she sat in her grandmother's room before going to bed; having rejoined her at Garstone, a relation's house, whither Mrs. Courtenay had preceded her. "I refrained even from bad words. Granny, you know everything: why is it that the people who shock me so dreadfully, like Madeleine, are just the very ones who are shocked at me? You are not. All the really good earnest people I know are not.

But *they* are. What is the matter with them ? "

" Oh, my dear, what is the matter with all insincere people ? It is only one of the symptoms of an incurable disease."

" But the being shocked is genuine. They really feel it. There is something wrong somewhere, but I don't know where it is."

" It is not hard to find, Di," said Mrs. Courtenay, sadly ; " and it is not worth growing hot about. You are only running a little tilt against religiosity. Most young persons do. But it is not worth powder and shot. Keep your ammunition for a nobler enemy. There is plenty of sin in the world. Strike at that whenever you can, but don't pop away at shadows."

" Ah ! but, granny, these people do such harm. They bring such discredit on religion. That is what enrages me."

"My dear, you are wrong; they bring discredit upon nothing but their own lamentable caricatures of holy things. These people are solemn warnings—danger-signals on the broad paths of religiosity, which, remember, are very easy walking. There's no life so easy. The religious life is hard enough, God knows. Providence put those people there to make their creed hideous, and they do it. Upon my word, I think your indignation against them is positively unpardonable."

Di was silent.

"You don't mind being disliked by these creatures, do you, Di?"

"Yes, granny, I think I do. I believe, if I only knew the truth about myself, I want every one to like me; and it ruffles me because they make round eyes, and don't like me when their superiors often do."

"Mere pride and love of admiration on

your part, my dear. You have no business with them. To be liked and admired by certain persons is a stigma in itself. Look at the kind of mediocrity and feebleness they set on pedestals, and be thankful you don't fit into their mutual admiration societies. That 'like cleaves to like,' is a saying we seldom get to the bottom of. These unfortunates find blots, faults, evil, in everything, especially everything original, because they are sensitive to blots and faults. They commit themselves out of their own mouths. 'Those that seek shall find,' is especially true of the fault-finders. The truth and beauty which others receptive of truth and beauty perceive, escape them. Good nature sees good in others. The reverent impute reverence. This false reverence finds irreverence, as a mean nature takes for granted a low motive in its fellow. Oh dear me, Di! Have I expended on

you for years the wisdom of a Socrates and a Solomon, that at one and twenty you should need to be taught your alphabet? Go to bed and pray for wisdom, instead of complaining of the lack of it in others."

Di had had but little leisure lately, and the unbounded leisure of her long visit at Garstone came as a relief.

"I shall have time to think here," she said to herself, as she looked out the first morning over the grey park and lake distorted by the little panes of old glass of her low window.

Two very old people lived at Garstone, who regarded their niece, Mrs. Courtenay, as still quite a young person, in spite of her tall granddaughter. Time seemed to have forgotten the dear old couple, and they in turn had forgotten it. It never mattered what time of day it was. Nothing depended on the hour. In the course of the morning

the butler would open both the folding doors at the end of the long "parlour" leading to the chapel, and would announce, "Prayers are served." Long prayers they were. Long meals were served too, with long intervals between them, during which, in spite of a week of heavy rain, Di escaped regularly into the gardens and so away to the park. The house oppressed her. She was restless and ill at ease. She was never missed because she was never wanted; and she wandered for hours in the park, listening to the low cry of the deer, standing on the bridge over the artificial 1745 lake, or pacing mile on mile a sheltered path under the park wall. The thinking for which she had such ample opportunity did not come off. It shirked regularly. A certain vague trouble of soul was upon her, like the unrest of nature at the spring of the year. And day after day she watched

the autumn leaves drop from the trees into the water, and there was a great silence in her heart, and underneath the silence a fear—or was it a hope? She knew not.

There was one subject to which Di's thoughts returned, and ever returned, in spite of herself. John was that subject. Gradually, as the days wore on, her shamed remorse at having wounded him gave place to the old animosity against him. She had never been angry with any of her numerous lovers before. She had, on the contrary, been rather sorry for them. But she was desperately angry with John. It seemed to her—why she would have been at a loss to explain—that he had taken a very great liberty in venturing to love her, and in daring to assert that they were suited to other.

She went through silent paroxysms of rage against him, sitting on a fallen tree

among the bracken with clenched hands. Her sense of his growing power over her, over her thought, over her will, was intolerable. Why so fierce? why such a fool? she asked herself over and over again. He could not marry her against her will. Indeed, he had said he did not want to. Why, then, all this silly indignation about nothing? There was no answer until one day Mrs. Courtenay happened to mention to Mrs. Garstone, in her presence, the probability of John's eventually marrying Lady Alice Fane—"a very charming and suitable person," etc.

Then suddenly it became clear to Di that, though she would never marry him herself, the possibility of his marrying any one else was not to be borne for a moment. John, of course, was to—was to remain unmarried all his life. Her sense of the ludicrous showed her in a lightning-flash where she stood.

To discover a new world is all very well for people like Columbus, who want to find one. But to discover a new world by mistake when quite content with the old one, and to be swept towards it uncertain of your reception by the natives assembling on the beach, is another thing altogether. For the second time in her life Di was frightened.

"Then all these horrible feelings are being in love," she said to herself, with a sense of stupefaction. "This is what other people have felt for me, and I treated it as of little consequence. This is what I have read about, and sung about, and always rather wished to feel. I am in love with John. Oh, I hope to God he will never find it out!"

Probably no man will ever understand the agonies of humiliation, of furious unreasoning antagonism, which a proud woman goes through when she becomes aware that she

is falling in love. Pride and love go as ill together in the beginning as they go exceeding well together later on. To be loved is incense at first, until the sense of justice —fortunately rare in women—is aroused. "Shall I take all, and give nothing?"

Pride, often a very tender pride for the lover himself, asks that question. Directly it is asked the battle begins.

"I will not give less than all. How *can* I give all?" The very young are spared the conflict, because the future husband is regarded only as the favoured ball-partner, the perpetual admirer of a new existence. But women who know something of life—of the great demands of marriage—of the absolute sacrifice of individual existence which it involves—when they begin to tremble beneath the sway of a deep human passion suffer much, fear greatly until the perfect love comes that casts out fear.

Some natures, and very lovable they are, give all, counting not the cost. Others, a very few, count the cost and then give all.

Di was one of these.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Austerity in women is sometimes the accompaniment of a rare power of loving. And when it is so their attachment is strong as death; their fidelity as resisting as the diamond."—AMIEL.

THE newspapers arrived at tea-time at Garstone. Every afternoon Mrs. Garstone and Mrs. Courtenay drove out along the straight high-road to D—— to fetch the papers and post the letters; four miles in and four miles out; the grey pair one day and the bays the next, in the old yellow chariot. It was the rule of the house. And after tea and rusks, and a poached egg under a cover for Mr. Garstone, that gentleman read the papers aloud in a voice that

trembled and halted like the spinnet in the southern parlour.

"Is Parliament prorogued yet?" Mrs. Garstone asked regularly every afternoon.

Mr. Garstone, without answering, struck his key-note at the births, and quavered slowly through the marriages and deaths. Before he had arrived on this particular afternoon at the fact that Princess Beatrice had walked with Prince Henry of Battenberg, Mrs. Garstone was already nodding between her little rows of white curls. Mrs. Courtenay was awake, but she looked too solemnly attentive to continue in one stay.

"The remains of the Dean of Gloucester," continued Mr. Garstone, "will be interred at Gloucester Cathedral on Friday next."

The information was received, like most sedatives, without comment.

Latest intelligence. Colliery explosion at Snarley.

"Di, has not John coal-pits at Snarley?" asked Mrs. Courtenay, becoming suddenly wide awake.

"Yes," said Di.

"Explosion of fire-damp," continued Mr. Garstone, slower than ever. "No particulars known. Great loss of life apprehended. Mr. Tempest of Overleigh, to whom the mine belonged, instantly left Godalmington Court, where he was the guest of Lord Carradock, and proceeded at once to the spot, where he organized a rescue party led by himself. Mr. Tempest was the first to descend the shaft. The gravest anxiety was felt respecting the fate of the rescuing party. Vast crowds assembled at the pit's mouth. No further news obtainable up to date of going to press."

Mrs. Courtenay looked at Di.

"He must be mad to have gone down

himself," she said agitatedly. "What could he possibly do there?"

"His duty," said Di; and she got up and left the room. How could any one exist in that hot close atmosphere? She was suffocating.

The hall was cold enough. She shivered as she crossed it, and went up the white shallow stairs to her own room, where a newly lit fire was spluttering. She knelt down before it and pushed a burning stick further between the bars, blackening her fingers. It would catch the paper at the side now.—John had gone down the shaft. —Yes, it would catch. The paper stretched itself and flared up. She went and stood by the window.

"John has gone down," she said, half aloud. Her heart was quite numb. Only her body seemed to care. Her limbs trembled, and she sat down on the narrow

window seat, her hands clutching the dragon hasp of the window, her eyes looking absently out.

There was a fire in the west. Upon the dreaming land the dreaming mist lay pale. The sentinel trees stood motionless and dark, each folded in his mantle of grey. Only the water waked and knew its God. And far across the sleeping land, in the long lines of flooded meadow, the fire trembled on the upturned face of the water, like the reflection of the divine glory in a passionate human soul.

It passed. The light throbbed and died, but Di did not stir. And as she sat motionless, her mind slipped sharp and keen out of its lethargy and restlessness, like a sword from its scabbard.

"Now, at this moment, is he alive or dead?"

And at the thought of death, that holiest

minister who waits on life, all the rebellious anger, all the nameless fierce resentment against her lover—because he *was* her lover —fell from her like a garment, died down like Peter's lies at the glance of Christ.

The evening deepened its mourning for the dead day. One star shook in the empty sky, above the shadow and the mist.

"Love the gift is Love the debt." Di perceived that at last. A great shame fell upon her for the divided feelings, the unconscious struggle with her own heart, of the last few weeks. It appeared to her now ignoble, as all elementary phases of feeling, all sheaths of deep affections must appear, in the moment when that which they enfolded and protected grows beyond the narrow confines which it no longer needs.

If he is dead? Di twisted her hands.

Who, one of two that have loved and

stood apart has escaped that pang, if death intervene? A moment ago and the world was full of messengers waiting to speed between them at the slightest bidding. A penny stamp could do it. But there was no bidding. A moment more and all communication is cut off. No Armada can cross that sea.

"Perhaps he is dying; and I sit here," she said. "I would give my life for him, and I cannot do a hand's turn." And she rocked herself to and fro.

For the first time in her life Di dashed herself blindly against one of God's boundaries; and the shock that a first realization of our helplessness always brings, struck her like a blow. She could do nothing.

Many impulsive people, under the intolerable pressure of their own impotence, make a feverish pretence of action, and turn stones

and pebbles, as they cannot turn heaven and earth; but Di was not impulsive.

And the gong sounded, first far away in the western wing, and then at the foot of the staircase.

Many things fail us in this world; youth, love, friendship, take to themselves wings; but meals are not among our migratory joys. Amid the shifting quicksands of life they stand fast as milestones.

Di dressed and went downstairs. It seemed years since she had last seen the "parlour," and old Mr. Garstone standing alone before the fire.

He did not appear aged.

"It's later than it was," he remarked; and she had a dim recollection that in some misty bygone time he invariably used to say those particular words every evening, and that she used to smile and nod and say, "Yes, Uncle George."

And so she smiled now, and repeated like a parrot, "Yes, Uncle George."

And he said, "Yes, Diana, yes."

Breakfast was later than usual next morning. It always is when one has lain awake all night. But it ended at last, and Di was at last at liberty to rush up to her room, pull on an old waterproof and felt hat, and dart out unobserved into the rain.

The white mist closed in upon her, and directly she was out of sight of the house she began to run. There were no aimless wanderings and pacings to-day. Oh, the relief of rapid movement after the long inertia of the night, the joy of feeling the rain sweeping against her face! She did not know the way to D——, but she could not miss it. It was only four miles off. It was eleven now. The morning papers would be

in by this time. If she walked hard she would be back by luncheon-time.

And, in truth, a few minutes before two Di emerged from her room in the neatest and driest of blue serge gowns. Only her hair, which curled more crisply than usual, showed that she had been out in the damp. She had come home dead beat and wet to the skin, but she had hardly known it. A new climbing agitated joy pulsated in her heart, in the presence of which cold and fatigue could not exist; in the presence of which no other feeling can exist—for the time.

"Are you glad John is out of danger?" said Mrs. Courtenay that evening as they went upstairs together, after Mr. Garstone had read of John's narrow escape—John had been one of the few among the rescuing party who had returned.

"Very glad," said Di; and she was on the

point of telling her grandmother of her expedition to D—— that morning, when a sudden novel sensation of shyness seized her, and she stopped short.

Mrs. Courtenay sighed as she settled herself for her nap before dinner.

"Has she inherited her father's heartlessness as well as his yellow hair?" she asked herself.

Mrs. Courtenay had lived long enough to know how few and far between are those among our fellow-creatures whose hearts are not entirely engrossed by the function of their own circulation. Youth believes in universal warmth of heart. It is as common as rhubarb in April. Later on we discern that easily touched feelings, youth's dearest toys, are but toys; shaped stones that look like bread. Later on we discern how fragile is the woof of sentiment to bear the wear and tear of life. Later still, when sorrow chills

us, we learn on how few amid the many hearths where we are welcome guests a fire burns to which we may stretch our cold hands and find warmth and comfort.

END OF VOL. II.

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