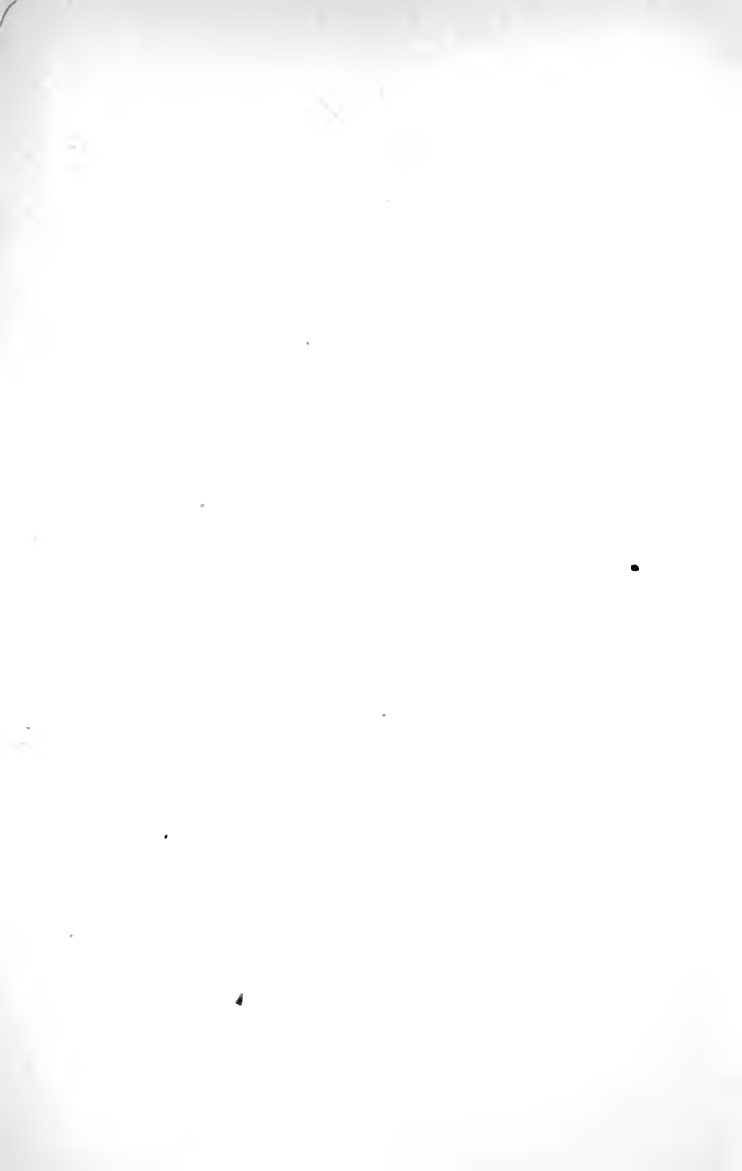


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THE GIRLHOOD

OF

SHAKESPEARE'S HEROINES

IN

A SERIES OF TALES

BY

MARY COWDEN CLARKE

Author of the Concordance to Shakspeare

Vol 43

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New York

A. C. ARMSTRONG AND SON

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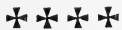
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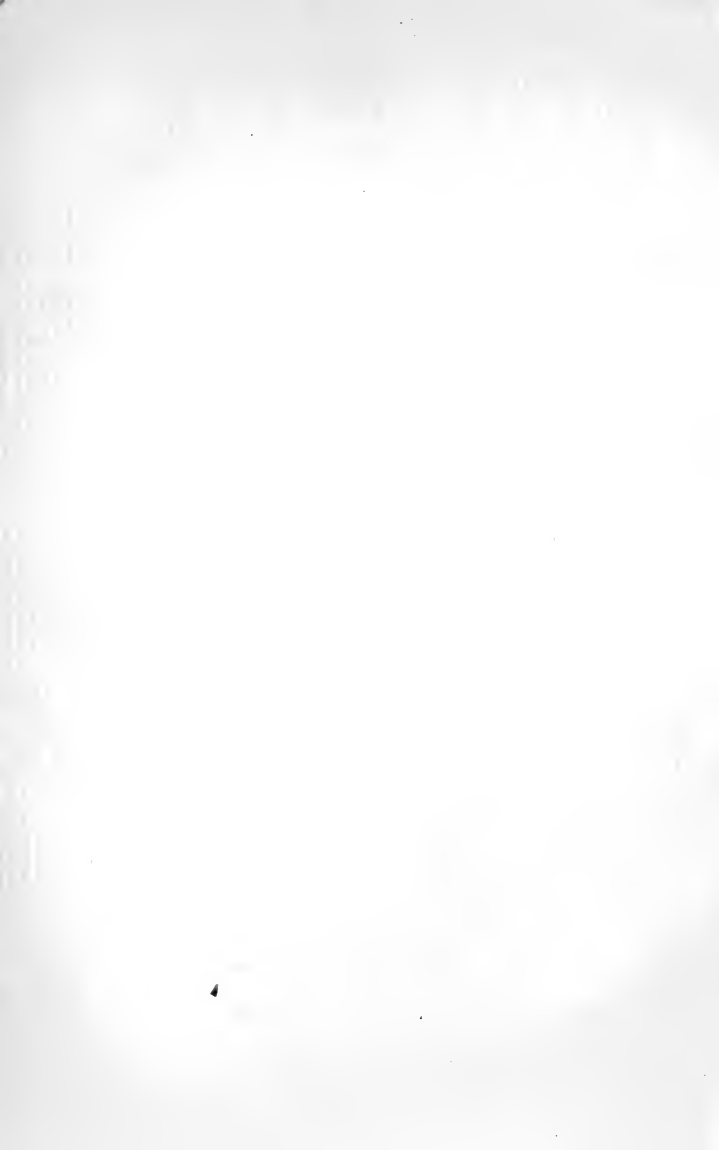
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JULIET; THE WHITE DOVE OF VERONA.





TALE X.

JULIET ; THE WHITE DOVE OF VORONA.

“ She doth teach the torches to burn bright !
Her beauty hangs upon the check of night
Like a rich jewel in an Ethiop’s ear :
Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear !
So shows a snowy dove trooping with crows,
As yonder lady o’er her fellows shows.”

Romeo and Juliet.

It was Lammas-eve. The breath of early August hung hot and sultry upon the scene. Not a leaf or a blossom stirred. The flowers in the garden, the fruit on the orchard-trees, yielded their incense to enrich its heavy-perfumed volume. The mingled scents of carnations, with their clove aroma ; of fragrant jessamine, of delicious orange-blossom ; the faint languor of lilies, the matchless luxuriance of roses, the honeyed sweetness of woodbine ; together with the fruity opulence of peach, nectarine, and mulberry, the musky smell from fig-tree and vine, and the redolence of the grape-clusters themselves, exhaled a steam of spicery that seemed to add voluptuous weight to the torpid atmosphere, which hung close, oppressive, motionless ; laden with odorous vapours. There was a hush, a pause, as of a mighty suspended breath. Within the Verona garden, on the branch of a pomegranate-tree, —deep-nestled amid its profusion of scarlet blossoms, —sat a pair of snow-white doves ; their grain-like beaks joined in that close-wrestling kiss of their tribe,

nearest allied in its pretty prerogative to the human caress.

All seemed preternaturally still. The sky looked dense, for all its glow of azure and golden light. There were masses of sullen clouds, in the horizon, purple, crimson, gorgeous and sluggish, amid copper and emerald-hued back-grounds; bright bars and edges of dazzling splendour, were crossed and interwoven with broad flushes of rose color, that stretched up athwart the heavens. The distant mountains looked of a deep violet; dark, yet sharply defined against the leaden murkiness of the sky, in the quarter away from the western sun. There was a sinister beauty in all; in the rich colors of the firmament, as in the voluptuous stillness of the atmosphere.

Thunder muttered, low and remote, its solemn music; sternly tremulous, it seemed to usher in reluctant doom. A few heavy drops fell,—Nature's tears for fate decreed. As closed the beauty of this fair Italian summer evening in storm and devastation, so was to end the ill-starred pair of Italian lovers' brief joys, in despair, destruction, death. Yet, like the beauty of Italian summers, renewed with the returning sun, the love of those Italian lovers shall endure in immortal light, casting into shadow the transitory darkness of their early grave. So long as the sun of Italy and the world shall shine, Italy and the world will cherish the memory of that Italian love-story,—the love-story of the World.

Sudden, in the very midst of the slumberous pause, a vivid flash, accompanied by a burst of thunder, rent the air. The birds were smitten from the tree; their snowy feathers scattered to the ground; the rain poured forth its torrents; the trees bent and waved beneath the fury of the electric wind, which sprang up in abrupt and violent gusts, hurling all to and fro in agitation and tumult, where late had been naught but mute repose; the heads of the flowers were cast to the earth, smirched and torn; the leaves were swept from

the boughs, and whirled away ; the mould of the beds, the gravel of the paths, were snatched up by the violence of the rain ; the lightning flung its scathing glare abroad and afar ; and the thunder with scarce any intermission.

But at the moment the bolt fell, which struck the two white doves, a little human dove fluttered into existence,—drawing its first panting breath in this world of passionate emotion. Juliet was born.

The birth of this child was the subject of great rejoicing to the house of Capulet. Her father was, by direct descent, and by wealth, the chief representative of this one of Verona's most illustrious families. He had been anxious for an heir, to perpetuate its dignity ; and though he was a little disappointed, when the child proved to be a girl, yet he consoled himself with an heiress rather than with no descendant at all ; and moreover, he had the supplementary comfort at looking forward to a time, when, by the birth of a brother, the heiress's claims might yet devolve upon an heir.

The lord Capulet, when a young man, had busied himself rather with his own personal enjoyment of his birth-right, than with any care of its honor and dignity ; far less, with any solicitude regarding the provision of a future successor to its rights and privileges. But as he advanced towards middle age, these considerations struck him in the light of a duty. He felt that it rested with him, as head of the house, to see that its state was maintained, that its influence and power among Verona's magnates was preserved undiminished ; that its name should in nowise be suffered to risk decreasing estimation, decadence, or extinction. He could not conceal from himself, that his own course had hitherto been one little calculated to add to the repute of the noble name he bore. He knew that his career had been idle, dissolute ; profitless to himself and to others ; a mere pursuit of pleasure, without one serious consideration as to the sources whence

pleasure can alone be truly derived. He had sought to steep himself in luxury, without a thought given to the securing of happiness; he had revelled in passing gratifications, to the utter neglect of a solid, a genuine, a permanent satisfaction. His mind was a void, for he had taken no pains to store it; his heart was a blank, for he had never cultivated its best emotions. He passed for a generous young man; for he had plenty of money, which he spent freely. He had never met with trouble or vexation to cross him; therefore he had the name of being a very good-natured young man. He was full of lively gossip, proficient in all the scandal of the day, versed in all the talk, the practice, the intrigue, of society; and of course was pronounced by society to be a most accomplished young man. He was, in fact, but a good-humoured voluptuary.

He had just awakened to something like a conviction that he ought to reform his way of life (perhaps he had become satiated with the futile husbandry, called sowing wild oats); that it was high time to settle down into a respectable personage; that it would be well to think of family honor, and marry; of the family name, and become a father; of the family dignity, and renounce his bachelor establishment; when these virtuous considerations were confirmed by the advent of an heir to another noble Veronese house, which had always rivalled his own in distinction. The birth of a son to the house of Montague, determined the chief of the house of Capulet to lose no time in wooing and wedding, that he also might have a legitimate successor to inherit his title and dignities. He was casting about in his thoughts who, of all the youthful fair ones of Verona, he should select for the honor of being his partner; when he received a summons from a dying friend, conjuring him to come and receive his parting breath, together with a sacred legacy he had to bequeath.

This friend was a gentleman of Ferrara, named

Egidio. He had been a soldier of distinguished gallantry ; and indeed, it was of a hurt, mortal, though lingering, received in his last battle, that he was now dying. The friendship between Capulet and the Ferrarese officer had originated in a service which the latter had rendered the former some years before, in Venice, on the occasion of a youthful frolic ; when, in some night-brawl, Capulet had been surrounded by opponents, and might have fallen beneath their swords and poniards, but for the timely aid of the young soldier. Since then, the intimacy had been, at various times, renewed, as opportunity served ; Egidio coming to Verona, whenever an interval in his military duties permitted his spending a season of gaiety there.

Of later years these visits had been rarer ; and for some time previous to the final summons, Capulet had almost ceased to hear from his friend.

Now, however, he lost no time in hastening to him ; shocked into gravity and reflection, at the thought of so soon beholding one, — whom he had never seen otherwise than in the height of health, hilarity, and enjoyment, — prostrate on a bed of death.

Subdued into this unwonted mood, he arrived at the house, to which he had been directed as his friend's abode. He was surprised to find it in so poor a quarter of the town ; and still more surprised to find it one of the most mean-looking among the poor places there. He found that it was, in fact, a lodging-house ; for, on entering the room which opened into the street, — merely screened from it by a dingy curtain, — he saw a basket-maker, surrounded by his wife and family, just sitting down to their noontide meal of polenta. These good people answered his inquiries after his friend Egidio, by at first shaking their heads, as knowing no such person ; but on his happening to drop something of his dying state, they exclaimed, " Ah, the poor sick gentleman — the wounded soldier — surely ; he lodges here — *su di sopra*," added they, pointing up a rickety staircase, that led to the floor above.

Capulet, his heart sinking lower and lower, at each step he took, when he came to the top landing (it was but a single-storied house), paused to take breath; more from the oppression of sadness, than from the exertion of mounting. At length he mustered composure to knock softly at the door which presented itself. It was as softly opened. The half light which the interior of an Italian house always preserves during the principal hours of day, in careful exclusion of the outward glare, scarcely permitted Capulet to discern more than the general appearance of the figure that stood in the doorway, when opened.

It was that of a young girl, who, before Capulet could utter more than the few first words of his enquiry, exclaimed:—"Ah, you are the friend he expects—longs to see! Come, come to him; he feared he should never survive to speak to you, yet said he could not die until he had spoken to you. Oh, come, come!"

The girl, clasping her hands, and looking earnestly into his face, seemed to forget that she herself was the only delay to his advance, while she stood there imploring him to enter. But her whole manner was wild, and agitated, as if she were beside herself with alarm and anxiety.

Capulet attempted to speak a few soothing words; then whispered, "Lead me to him. Where is he?"

The young girl led Capulet into an inner room, where, on a miserable pallet, lay Egidio.

"My poor friend? Is it thus I see you again?" sobbed Capulet.

"I thought you would not fail me!" exclaimed the dying man. "And yet, friendships made in the spring of youthful gaiety and folly, endure not always through a season of sadness. But you are come! You are come! Let me look upon your face—let me assure myself you are here. Put back the curtain from the window, Angelica mia," added he, to the young girl, "that the light may fall full upon him; I cannot have

the comfort too certainly, of knowing him to be here."

"You are exhausting yourself by talking;" said Capulet, as the haggard face of Egidio showed pale and ghastly in the stream of sunshine that was admitted, while the features worked with excitement, in eagerly perusing those of his friend. "Be composed. I am here; here for as long as you wish. Do not speak farther till you are better able to bear the exertion."

"That will never be—I am better able now, than I could have hoped. Let me tell you all I have to tell, while I have strength. Even this poor remnant may not be mine long."

He gasped, and sank back upon his pallet; while a passion of tears and sobs burst from the young girl. The dying man's eyes were bent mournfully upon her.

"'Tis of her I would speak—my poor Angelica—my child. It is the thought of leaving her alone in her young beauty to fight the rough fight with the world—ever ready to deal its hardest blows against the unprotected, the innocent, of her sex,—which makes it so bitter a thing to me to die;" said Egidio.

"My father!" was the broken exclamation of the sobbing girl, as she stood gazing upon him with clasped and outstretched hands, in the helpless bewildered agony of manner that had been hers throughout.

"I knew not that you had a daughter, my friend," said Capulet, looking upon her with sympathy, yet with a certain curiosity to see whether she possessed the amount of perilous beauty, her father had deplored. He could not help a passing thought of the partiality of a parent's love, which will exaggerate into loveliness dangerous to its possessor, mere comeliness of youth, and a passable set of features.

It is true, that these latter were swollen and distorted by grief; her dark eyes were clouded; their long lashes were heavy and matted with tears; the lids were red and distended; there were two purple rings beneath, telling of distress of mind and body,

both sorrow and want; the cheeks were wan and bleared with weeping; the lips were colorless; and the tall figure was not only bent, but gaunt, with watching and want of food. She looked the young girl, whose beauty, in the very spring of its development,—when most needing fostering care to cherish it into the perfection proper to it,—was nipped and marred by misery.

A man of finer imagination, of a truer heart, of a nobler soul, of a higher nature than Capulet, might have seen something of what lay obscured from the superficial view of the man accustomed to judge of womanly beauty only as it is seen dressed for admiration, for meretricious display and allurements; but to his eyes she merely presented the image of an overgrown girl, with a face spoiled by crying, and a figure injured by hardship.

“It was one of my many weaknesses,” said Egidio, in answer to Capulet’s last words, “to keep you in ignorance of my marriage. I could not bear that you, the witness and sharer of so many of my bachelor freaks, should know that I was in fact a married man; that you, the partaker of so many of my youthful follies, should learn that I possessed the onerous ties—for then we affected to consider them such—of a wife and children. I could not endure that to you, in whose eyes I had always appeared the gay, free, unembarrassed young soldier, I should become known as, in reality, the man of cares, of impaired fortunes, the thoughtful husband, the anxious father.”

Egidio paused, with a deep sigh, then resumed—
“My wife was of an illustrious Bolognese family. I had met her in one of the campaigns produced by civil war in central Italy, which brought me into her vicinity; and knowing that her proud house would never sanction an alliance with a soldier of fortune, though of gentle birth, I found means to persuade her into a clandestine union. Her family never forgave the disgrace which they conceived she had brought upon

them ; and their inflexibility broke her heart. She bore uncomplainingly the change from her old life of distinction and luxury at Bologna, to a life of privation and obscurity at Ferrara,—for she loved her husband. But her gentle nature could not endure the severance from all ties of kindred and of former childhood home, and she visibly drooped and pined away.”

Egidio again paused and attempted to wipe the gathering damps from his forehead ; which his daughter perceiving, sprang forward, and bent over him, to aid his trembling hand.

“ She left me with two children ;” resumed the dying man, with a stern look settling upon his face ; the elder has been a constant source of shame and misery to me. My son ; he has, ever since he was of an age to know vice from virtue, been devoted to the pursuit of the former. His childhood was deceit ; his boyhood was wild and reckless ; his youth has been incessant profligacy. My slender resources have been drained to supply his excesses. His home has been impoverished, and more than myself have frequently foregone a meal to furnish his spendthrift exaction ; for we yielded all, in the hope of reclaiming him. In my daughter—my Angelica—I have had ever one pure source of comfort ; it is only now, now that I must leave her exposed to all the harms of helpless youth and beauty—I feel bitterness mingle with my joy, my pride in her.”

The father’s face was convulsed, and he writhed in anguish, as he looked upon her ; while hers was buried in her hands. Suddenly he turned again towards Capulet, and said :—“ I must utter it—I must speak the hope in which I sent for you. My friend, it was the trust that your generous heart would not hesitate to bestow the sole comfort mine is capable of receiving, which made me entreat you to come hither and accept this sacred charge. Save her, my friend ! Take her to your guardian care. Be her protector, her husband !”

“Marry her! She is a mere child! Would you have me marry her?” exclaimed Capulet.

“She is of gentle—nay of noble birth. Her mother’s blood ran in the veins of one of Bologna’s proudest houses. My own descent no humbler. I know your generosity of soul too well to think that her poverty can be any obstacle. Her many virtues, let her father avouch, who has known them proved and tried, throughout her young but arduous life; of her beauty, your own eyes will tell you, his partiality does not speak too highly.”

“The dying man turned his eyes fondly upon his child; who still stood absorbed in grief, hiding her face within her clasped hands.

At this moment the door of the apartment was softly pushed open, and a friar, whose garments spoke him to be of the Franciscan order, came into the room.

His entrance aroused the young girl, who sprang forward to meet him, exclaiming:—“O welcome, good holy man! your advent always brings comfort to my dear father! Welcome, good father Ambrosio! Welcome!”

“Holy St. Francis be praised! I bring comfort indeed!” said the friar, advancing to the bedside of the dying man. “One of our brotherhood, just arrived from Bologna, brings tidings of the decease of your late wife’s father, the count Agostino; who, it seems, in the hour of his death, rescinding the harsh sentence he had formerly uttered against her, pronounced a forgiving blessing on her memory, and acknowledged her issue as his grandchildren, and his joint heirs. Since all the rest of his descendants have, by a fatality, died off in the course of the last few years,” continued father Ambrosio, “the inheritance of your son and daughter will be considerable. Cheerly, my son; let these good tidings give you health and strength, to revive.”

“I am past revival, good father:” murmured

Egidio ; “but all the joy I can receive from your news, I heartily thank your goodness for.”

“Render thy thanks where they are due, my son—to Heaven ; that hath ordained things thus for comfort and blessing in thy parting hour ;” said Ambrosio.

“Comfort and blessing, truly ;” said Egidio, turning his dying eyes upon Capulet. “I may now offer to my generous friend’s acceptance a rich heiress, in lieu of a poor orphan ; but, save in the article of worldly wealth, she is scarce more a treasure than before ; her own worth is her best dower. Give us your help, holy father ; that I may see my child safe-bestowed on my dearest friend. Reach me thy hand, my Angelica. Weep not, my girl ; thy father is about to yield thee to the loving custody of one who will be hardly less fond than he himself has been. Thy hand, also, my friend ; and now, good father Ambrosio, do us thine office in making man and wife of these two dearest to my heart.”

Capulet, superficial, unreflective, tolerably good-humoured, and easy-dispositioned,—from a dislike of the trouble of opposing, or arguing a settled point,—yielded, almost unconsciously, to the decisive manner in which Egidio had assumed that his marriage would be the best possible arrangement for the happiness of all parties. He saw that the dying man had set his heart upon it ; he heard the young girl’s goodness and beauty extolled ; he knew her to be of high lineage ; he found that she was to be the inheritrix of a large fortune ; and all these combined circumstances, together with the unwillingness to thwart his expiring friend, worked confusedly upon his not unkind nature to induce him into a sort of mechanical compliance with what was so completely taken for granted. He conformed, almost without knowing he did so ; he assented, hardly aware that his consent had not been formally asked. He found it was an understood thing, ere he had time to demand of himself whether he indeed wished this. He had a vague no-

tion that he had intended to marry and settle about this time ; and that he might therefore as well gratify his dying friend's wishes, marry the heir's of one of Bologna's most illustrious houses, and take to wife a virtuous young girl who was by no means ugly.

With some such floating thoughts, Capulet allowed the father to place his child's hand within his. His own good feeling, and ready gallantry, prompted some kindly whispered words, to the drooping figure beside him, as, in obedience to her father's signal, the young girl took her station there, with her appointed husband, before the good friar.

She had appeared, throughout, like one in a bewildered dream ; acting involuntarily, and by no impulse of her own ; regardless of external circumstances, excepting as they affected her dying father, upon whom her whole soul seemed concentrated. But at the moment friar Ambrosio opened his book, and stood opposite, to marry them, the young girl raised her eyes, and fixed them with a searching look, full upon those of Capulet. It was but for an instant ; but even in that short space, there might be read eager enquiry, appeal, and trust, expressed with all candour, but without a spark of immodesty in its full regard. The limited sight of the man of pleasure, could not convey to him all that there was of reliant, of touchingly hopeful, in this single look ; but it enabled him to observe that her eyes were more beautiful in colour and shape, and far more expressive than he had yet thought them to be. To a man of more refined perceptions, there would have been eloquent indication of a newly-awakened prepossession in his favor, arising out of confidence in his honor and good qualities ; he would have beheld something directly appealing to the better part of his self-love—to his consciousness of worth—to his most generous emotions ; while the gay, surface-skimming man of the world, saw nothing more than a girlish, unpractised betrayal of liking.

But the newly-discovered undoubted beauty of her

eyes, together with this symptom of innocent preference, won extremely upon Capulet, and made rapid strides in his good graces ; so that by the time friar Ambrosio had come to the end of the marriage-service, the bridegroom was internally and sincerely congratulating himself upon the bride he had so unexpectedly won. The final words were spoken ; and Capulet was about to crown the ceremony by turning towards Angelica, and claiming her as his wife with a nuptial kiss, when he was startled by a piercing scream which burst from her lips as she sprang from his embrace, and cast herself upon the dead body of her father. Egidio had breathed his last, in the very moment of beholding his sole earthly wish fulfilled.

Capulet's first care, after consigning the remains of his friend to the grave, was to remove his new-made wife from the scene of her sorrow. Many reasons induced him to defer taking her home to Verona. He wished that time should do its kind office in restoring her native good looks to his young bride ere he should present her to his friends and kindred. He thought that an intermediate change of scene would do much to effect a diversion in her grief, and towards giving her an air of ease and dignity in her new position as the wife of a nobleman, before she appeared on the spot where she was to assume her rank and title. He trusted that his own precept and example would greatly tend to form her manners, and polish into unconstraint and self-possession, any girlish bashfulness that might naturally be expected as the result of her hitherto secluded,—nay, obscure mode of existence. He resolved, therefore, that previously to their repairing to Verona, he would take her on a visit to Bologna ; where he might, at the same time, establish her claims as the heiress of count Agostino.

The journey, the fresh air, the variety of new objects, the good-humoured attentions of her husband, the total change from her late life of monotony, denial,

and wearing anxiety, to one of comfort, amusement, and comparative excitement, operated powerfully and speedily upon the impressionable temperament of Angelica. The young girl recovered her spirits, her beauty ; which soon gave token that it was originally of no common order, although privation and care had dulled its lustre for a time. Her complexion resumed its natural brilliancy ; her large dark eyes shone with animation ; her lips recovered their rich vermilion hue ; and her tall figure showed in all its rounded yet elegant proportions, erect, and full of stately grace.

Her husband, delighted to find her beauty develope and increase with her restored health and spirits, spared no pains to cheer and enliven her. His habits of society had gifted him with a flow of sprightly conversation ; his tastes had led him to cultivate a tone of gallantry, and an agreeable manner in his address to women ; to this young girl, therefore, who had never seen any man, save her father, with even a pretension to the attributes of refinement, Capulet appeared the finished gentleman. He fulfilled her ideal of all that was attractive in manly beauty. In her eyes he was the perfection of chivalrous bearing, of noble seeming. From the moment when he had appeared on the threshold of their poor home, bringing peace and comfort to her father's heart,—that father whose words had so often painted him to her in the partial words of a friend's enthusiasm,—he had become to her the impersonation of all that was grand and admirable in man. His rich attire, his air of conscious rank, his advantages of person, combined to impress her imagination. She looked up to him as a superior being. His very maturity of years gave him added consequence with the young inexperienced girl. He was then at the period of time when every added twelvemonth is apt to detract something from a man's good looks,—the very age which is often, in girlish eyes, the prime of manly life. Added to this, were his present good-natured attempts to win her from her depression, his lively con-

versation, his gaiety of manner, all heightened in their effect by the tone of good breeding and conventional grace, which his social training had superinduced ; what wonder, therefore, that the young lady Capulet grew daily more enamoured of the husband to whom a father's provident care, and her own singular good fortune had united her ? For some time she lived in a blissful dream,—lapped in the delicious sense of the surpassingly happy fate which had suddenly become hers.

Her first awakening was a strange start of misgiving which she felt, on hearing her lord express his extreme exultation at the news that greeted them when they reached Bologna. It was discovered, on opening the count Agostino's will, that he had, by some means, come to the knowledge of his grandson's profligate courses ; and that in consequence, he had declared, in a codicil lately appended to the original testamentary document, the absolute disinheritation of Egidio's son, while he constituted the daughter, Angelica, sole heiress. The terms in which the count disowned and disinherited the young man, were bitter and absolute ; declaring that no one, upon whose honor the lightest taint of suspicion had once breathed, should ever bear the unblemished name and illustrious title which he had himself received as a spotless and sacred trust from a long descent of worthy ancestry. He formally annulled all claims of his, or his possible heirs ; solemnly vesting all rights in the person of his granddaughter Angelica, as sole representative of their ancient house.

Capulet's unreserved demonstration of delight on hearing this important increase to his young wife's wealth and consequence, gave her the first uneasy sensation of doubt lest her husband's regard for her, might be inferior to her own for him. It was the first of a long train of doubts that arose to haunt her, thenceforth, with their spectral shadow. She could not help calling to mind, that, before friar Ambrosio had entered their poor room, bringing the news of her

claims to be considered an heiress to both rank and fortune, the lord Capulet had never signified his assent to her father's proposal of making her his wife. She could not but remember that even her own parent had admitted this as an additional reason for urging his friend to marry her at once. Could it be that he had no individual preference for her? That he would not have accepted her, had she been no other than the poor orphan girl he first saw her on the point of becoming? Would she have been rejected, had it not been for her title to wealth and a birthright equal to his own? Had then, her own poor beauty no attraction of itself for him? It was but too likely,—so her distrustful heart answered,—that a man so noble, so gifted, so endowed with every natural and adventitious advantage, should look down with indifference, if not with disdain, upon an alliance so far beneath what he had a right to expect. She now remembered, with the distinctness of an embittered mind, intent upon collecting confirmations of its own misgivings, Capulet's words:—"She is a mere child! Would you have me marry her?" They had at the time fallen upon her sense of hearing,—dulled with wretchedness, absorbed with fears for her father, and employed in listening to every moan, every dying accent of his,—as meaningless in themselves, and of slight consequence to her; but now they came back to her thought with a vivid and terrible import. He would not have wedded a poor unformed girl—a mere child. He would have rejected her as wholly unsuited to, and unworthy of him. "Rejected!" It was a bitter thought. "Rejected!" Her proud spirit,—for with all her sincere admission of self-inferiority to him she loved, she yet had much sensitive pride, the pride of womanhood,—writhed beneath the impression, that, had he been permitted a choice, he would have "rejected" her. That had he followed the first impulse of his heart, he would have rejected one who had so little to recommend her in outward appearance; that had he been allowed time

for reflection, and for the exercise of his better judgment, he would have surely refused, rejected her. But no, he had been hurried into a decision ; his kindest sympathies were enlisted in his own despite, by the urgency of her father ; and he had yielded, partly from unwillingness to cross his dying friend, partly perhaps from the consideration of a prospective hope, which was now more than confirmed by her increased heritage.

All these tormenting doubts beset her with renewed force, when she arrived with her husband in Verona. She saw him courted and admired in his own circles, flattered, followed ; she saw his society sought, his opinions consulted, his patronage solicited. She saw him treated with the distinction due to the head of one of the first families in his native city ; and more than ever she drew mortifying comparisons between his assured manners and her own deficiencies. She dreaded that she was awkward, ignorant. She thought she could perceive in him a look of anxiety lest she should commit herself, by some inadvertence when he presented her to his friends ; she fancied she could trace a look of mortification at any want of ease, good-breeding, or usage of society on her part—at anything that betrayed her having known a humbler position than the one she now occupied. The mere dread of these things engendered the very evil they anticipated. They made her embarrassed, and ill at ease. She felt herself constrained, and showing to little advantage ; and a thousand times she asked herself how he could admire one so full of imperfections,—so inferior in all that distinguished him. The more the sense of her own defects gained upon her, the more her love and admiration for him grew. But in proportion with her worship of her husband's superiority, and consciousness of her own little likelihood of attracting his regard in return, was the proud reserve with which she gradually learned to guard all these feelings from observation. She taught the fond attachment she felt towards him to lie concealed beneath a calm,—not to say a cold

exterior. She allowed the deep consciousness of her own inferiority, to assume the outward aspect of dignified, if not haughty, composure.

A superficial observer like Capulet was not likely to read the inconsistencies, and wayward emotions of a young girl's heart ; and he soon came to look upon her as just the sort of woman he could have wished his wife to be,—handsome, lofty-mannered, somewhat passionless perhaps, but undoubtedly lady-like, and perfectly fitted to fill the high station to which she was entitled both by birth and marriage.

There was another subject that secretly agitated the heart of the young lady Capulet. Her brother's errors had not been able to estrange him from her affection. She still indulged a fond recollection of him in those early childhood times, when they had been playmates together, and when she had no idea that he was not as innocent in thought as she herself. Even his subsequent course of wildness, had been unknown to her in its worst features ; and as for the many self-denials it had exacted from herself no less than from her parents, they had but served to produce in her that feeling of compunction apt to arise in a heart which would willingly love where it cannot esteem ; a feeling akin to tenderness, in its affectionate pity for the object of so much unavailing sacrifice. She generously regretted her brother's exclusion from a share of the heritage which had so unexpectedly fallen to her lot ; and a thousand times she wished she knew where he was, that she might beseech him to accept the portion which should have been his. She thought how all-important this sum might now be to his welfare ; and over and over she mused of how she might hit upon some means of learning where he was, how situated, and how she could best convey relief and comfort to him.

Once when she had dropped a few words, attempting to consult her husband on the subject, he had checked her from ever recurring to it again, by some

worldly remark uttered in a light tone, touching the unadvisability of stirring the question of a poor relation, likely rather to reflect discredit, and bring trouble on them, should he ever come to light, than to produce either benefit or pleasure by his reappearance.

There was a grand entertainment at the Scaligeri palace, in honor of the coming of age of the young prince, Escalus. All the nobility of Verona were present; and many distinguished members of the most illustrious families from other Italian courts, had been invited, in honor of the occasion. Capulet, and his beautiful young wife, were of course among the former; and it gratified his pride not a little to see the admiration excited by her appearance,—strikingly handsome—even amidst so brilliant an assemblage of all that was loveliest in person and most magnificent in attire. The dazzling fairness of her skin was heightened by the black dress she still wore in memory of her father. The amplitude of its skirts fell in rich folds around her stately figure; while its otherwise shapely adjustment permitted the rounded grace of her white arms, and the slender proportions of her waist, to be seen to full advantage. It was closed at the bosom by a clasp gemmed with diamonds; while round her classically shaped head, and set amidst hair of the same jet hue as her robe, was a circlet of like jewels of the purest water. She looked the true Italian lady; there was the simplicity of good taste conspicuous even in the costliness of her array.

Capulet's judgment in feminine charms was no less discriminating than fastidious; and he knew that his own wife need yield to none of the young beauties then assembled in such star-like profusion. He took pleasure, amidst all his bustle of receiving and dispensing amenities himself, in noting the effect she produced upon others; and whilst he seemed only alive to the gaiety of the general scene, was in secret enjoying the impression produced by her beauty. It cast a reflected glory and credit upon himself, to be

possessed of so universally-admired a young creature. But he was one of those men, who think it not prudent to let a wife perceive too much of the satisfaction derived from the contemplation of her charms, in their effect either upon himself or upon others; such men deem it safer not to trust womanly discretion with the power involved in the knowledge of this secret; and consequently are apt to indulge themselves with it privately and exclusively. Lady Capulet, therefore, was likely to perceive little or nothing of the true state of her husband's feelings towards her; and meantime she continued to form her own conjectures on the subject, imagining his indifference, and believing that it was the natural result of her own inferiority. Hitherto this had been a dull, saddened feeling; rather a passive regret, than an active emotion. Now, however, it was to be roused into all the poignancy of a real suffering, a strong passion,—jealousy, with a definite object. She had felt a mournful resignation, a deep dejection and self-mistrust, a sort of acquiescent sorrow in the slight regard she fancied herself capable of exciting in her husband's heart, in return for the warmth of love she was conscious dwelt in hers towards him, awaiting only his ardor to call forth its manifestation: but when once she thought she beheld another able to inspire that attachment which she herself despaired of obtaining, her resignation became anguish; her apathy, her dejection, her misgivings, were changed for resentment, and a wild sense of injury.

She had been dancing a measure with a Florentine of royal blood, when, as her princely partner led her to her seat, lady Capulet saw her husband engaged in earnest talk with one whom she had never before seen—a young lady, surpassingly beautiful, on whose animated countenance, beamed an expression of the most fond interest in what Capulet was uttering. Her eyes were fixed on his, her lips were parted, and slightly trembling, while she seemed to be absolutely

drinking in his words, which he was breathing forth in a low under-tone of confidence. As lady Capulet approached, she heard her husband's concluding words, as he made a slight movement of his hand towards the bosom of his vest : " Not now ; we shall be observed. But rely upon me, dearest lady. Trust in one who is wholly devoted to your sweet service. Trust me, dearest Giacinta." The lady looked in his face with her eager eyes, and whispered :—" Kindest friend, I do !"

Not only was the look visible, but the words were distinctly audible to lady Capulet, though the full red lips softly formed, rather than uttered them. She felt a sudden glow mount into her own cheeks, at a familiarity, and ease of confidence, on the part of this young lady, which she was conscious her own intercourse with her husband had never yet assumed. She instinctively drew back, that she might not disturb them by her approach ; but she allowed herself to take refuge in the draperied recess of a window not far distant, whence she could still observe them.

She fed her misery by noticing the undoubted beauty of the lady. She drew mortifying comparisons between her and herself. She contrasted those golden tresses with her own dark ones. She saw how glowing, how sparkling with animation that fair countenance was, and felt how pale and distorted her own face must be, by the emotions that agitated her heart. She looked at the spotless white, girdled with a zone of rubies, while a single damask rose lurked amid the profusion of sunny curls ; and she thought how radiant it all shone, against her own swart robes. She saw the appealing glance, the look so full of fond reliance, so expressive of confidence and preference, and her heart kindled as she saw them bent on him, whom she herself never felt encouraged to regard face to face with any such unreserve and open eloquence of look. Still more did her inmost soul stir, to think of the effect such looks must needs produce upon him towards whom they were directed ; and to trace upon

his countenance the actual reflex of their effect. She saw his eyes respond to the tenderness that beamed in Giacinta's, and yet with a sort of covert, stealthy air, as though he would fain not attract observation, towards their mutual good understanding. He continued his low-voiced conversation with her; but seemed to keep a guard on his manner, lest it should betray too much of exclusive devotion.

As all this presented itself to her sight, lady Capulet heard her husband's name pronounced by some one near her.

“Yes, that is lord Capulet;” said the speaker,—one of the two young gentlemen who were lounging near to where she stood; “he is one of our noted gallants here in Verona, though his age might warrant a little more sobriety on his part, and a little more indifference on that of the objects of his gallantries. Besides, he is lately married; and he might learn to confine the sphere of his attentions to their legitimate orbit. His wife is a glorious creature! Such star-like eyes! A very goddess! A young Juno! I'll wager now, he would think himself a monstrous ill-used gentleman, should any poor fellow with less mature, but perhaps none the less handsome pretensions, allow himself to make her the object of such court as he is paying to yonder beauty.”

“Who is she?” asked the other. It was the very question lady Capulet had been feverishly repeating to herself, and thirsting to have answered.

“She is the lady Giacinta; a wealthy heiress; countess of Arionda in her own right. She is an orphan; no one to control her choice in marriage; and all Verona are dying to know upon whom she will bestow her estates, her rich dower, and—beyond all other treasures, herself. It was thought that this very lord Capulet was laying close siege to her heart, with some chance of success, just before he quitted Verona; but he returned, bringing with him as a bride, a lady of a Bolognese house. Surely the countess

Giacinta cannot think of paying such an old fellow as that, the compliment of wearing the willow for him. Yet many noted her drooping looks during his absence ; and her revived spirits since his return. See how brilliantly happy she looks now ! Her face to-night is as radiant and unclouded as noonday ! The devil's in the old fellow for bewitching the young beauties, I think ! What's his secret, in the name of all that's wondrous ?”

“ He doth not seem so very old, neither ;” replied the other, laughing. “ Your juvenile envy calls him old, when partiality, or justice, might fairly call him no more than middle-aged.”

“ No more ? What more, or what worse, than middle-aged need you call him ?” retorted the first speaker. “ Surely a middle-aged gentleman should be no such very irresistible being to a fair young girl.” “ Fair young girls *ought*, doubtless, to prefer fair young gentlemen, like ourselves, eh ?” said his companion with a smile ; but his face became graver as he added, “ and yet I have known of these sober elderlies, who, if once they do contrive to fascinate the imagination of a young creature, fill her heart and soul to the utter exclusion of any hope for us poor simple youths, whom she is apt to look upon thenceforth as frivolous boys, until such time as she herself, —if she chance to have missed her elderly ideal meantime,—hath gained a wiser judgment with added years ; for then, naught will suit her but a young husband, forsooth. But with her added years have come silver hairs ; and then the youths, who have become wise men, will have no more to say to her, than she would formerly have to say to them. And thus do youth and beauty play at hide-and-seek with age and gravity ; chasing each other at cross purposes, till the game of life ends.”

“ It seems, then, you Paduan students have been at odd times worsted by your successful rivals, the Paduan professors ?” replied the other gaily ; but

seeing the look of pain that settled more and more evidently on his friend's face, he passed his arm through his, saying :—" I heard something of this, but knew not it was so serious. She is married, then ? And, as report says, to one old enough to be her father ?"

The young Paduan said in a low tone that struggled to be firm :—" He is a worthy honorable man. She loves him. I have nothing to complain of. But my part in life is played out. Let us speak of other things, my friend."

" Not so, by heaven !" exclaimed the other. " Thou shalt not throw up the game as though thou hadst lost all, because the elder hand hath had the luck to cut thee out. What if he have happened to win the partner thou sett'st thy heart on. There are others, man ! Let us see if some of our Verona beauties cannot put spirit in thee to try one fresh venture ! Come, I'll back thee ! Come ; and let me introduce thee to a certain fair cousin of mine, who is the very queen of hearts herself ; though she might pass for the queen of diamonds, as she sits sparkling in her jewels, yonder."

The Paduan with a faint smile, suffered his impetuous friend to lead him away, and the two young gentlemen left lady Capulet still pondering on what she had heard of the first part of their conversation.

While she was still lost in thought, she was accosted by her late partner, the Florentine prince ; who besought her to grace him with her hand, that he might lead her to a banquet prepared in one of the farther apartments, towards which, the company were now most of them proceeding. As lady Capulet assented, she gave one glance towards the spot where her husband and the countess Giacinta had sat together. The moving crowd intercepted her view ; but the next moment, she was able to perceive that they had disappeared. In passing through the long suite of rooms, however, that led to the supper-saloon,

she caught sight of them again. Through a doorway, opening into a side apartment, which was lighted only by the rays of the moon, that made their way through a draperied window filled with exotics ; there, among the tall flowering plants, clearly perceptible amid the stream of moonlight that poured its silvery sheen around them, stood Capulet and the countess Giacinta. His wife beheld them but for a transient moment, as she was led past the entrance, but the vivid picture was distinctly traced. She saw her husband draw a letter from his bosom, give it Giacinta, and raise her hand to his lips ; while the look of radiant happiness which beamed on the fair face of the countess, caused a shadow, dark as night, to fall upon that of her who saw it.

“ She is calm, self-possessed, full of happy ease at heart—she, the guilty one, she, loving with an unhallowed passion the husband of another. While I, the injured, miserable wife, am tossed with a thousand agitating emotions ;” thought lady Capulet. “ And ’tis that very unruffled beauty, that very serenity of aspect, which gives her the pre-eminence in his eyes. Why, alas, cannot I, poor untutored, unpractised girl that I am, maintain as tranquil an air ? Let me school myself to wear a look of ease, that may hide my aching heart from indifferent eyes, from his, above all.”

In her proud agony, she contrived to stifle and shut up within herself the rage of jealousy that consumed her ; and this very constraint she imposed upon the feelings burning inwardly, made her appear only the more exteriorly chilling. Her husband’s admiration of her beauty was counter-balanced by his impression of her cold temperament ; and at the very time she was glowing with concealed passion, he felt the only drawback to her charms was her want of warmth. There was thus, little likelihood of their coming to a knowledge of the amount of love mutually existing between them. She, bent on crushing all outward

demonstration of the resentment springing from an excessive affection ; he, unsuspecting of the cause, and only reading reserve almost amounting to indifference. She imagining herself held lightly by him as one too young ; he, feeling it more than probable that she looked upon him as too old. This very feeling on his part led to an unwitting confirmation of her self-mistrust and jealousy. For Capulet, in his silly vanity and in his shallow notion of what might excite a girl's interest, was not unwilling that his young wife should hear of his character for gallantry. He thought that for her to know of his reputed successes among women, would be to give him consequence with her, and enhance his value as an attractive man in her eyes. He scarce attempted therefore to deny the charge, when it chanced to be jestingly alluded to ; but laughed it off in such sort, as rather to accept as a compliment, than refute as a serious accusation. Consequently, had any evidence of his young wife's jealousy inadvertently escaped her, he would have been rather pleased than otherwise to let her suppose that they were not entirely without grounds. In all essential respects, however, he treated her with affectionate consideration ; and was a kind, nay, an indulgent husband.

It happened, shortly after the entertainment at the Scaligeri palace, that lady Capulet was walking up and down one of the shaded alleys in her garden, brooding upon all the circumstances which had that evening so painfully impressed themselves upon her ; when her meditation was disturbed, by perceiving some one standing in the path before her. The abruptness of the approach it was, partly, which startled her ; and also the strangeness of the appearance. It was a boy, a ragged urchin, of some eight or ten years old. His clothes were literally mere tatters, and hung about him with scarce a pretence of affording a covering ; but they might have been costliest apparel, for aught of beggarly they communi-

cated to the air of him who wore them. The various colors of the patches might have been selected for picturesque effect, so little of mendicant wretchedness did they impart. Although the rents discovered the bare skin, yet its texture and color spoke somewhat of delicate and refined that seemed no part of pauperism. The young limbs had a turn and polish that conveyed a something of high breeding; the face was instinct with a look of aristocratic self-assertion, and native haughtiness; it was not vulgar boldness, nor forwardness, nor pert audacity; it was neither presuming, nor pretentious, but a settled, innate expression of arrogance. It was nothing assumed or put on; but an ingrain, inborn confidence and consciousness, the confidence of blood and birth. It was the same integral animal qualification, which swells the veins of the high-bred horse, which gives vigor to his muscles, and grace to the turn and proportion of his limbs. The child stood there in the meanest of plebeian garbs, but he looked from top to toe the little patrician.

Lady Capulet had no thought of alms, when she said:—"What is it you seek, child?"

The boy fixed his eyes on her, and answered:—"You."

"I, child? How came you here? Who are you?"

"I am Tybalt; your nephew. I came here, because my father bade me come, when he died. He told me to seek my aunt, and that she would be a mother to me. Are you not she? You are lady Capulet, aren't you?"

"My brother's child! my poor brother—my dear brother. Yes, you are like him, boy! 'When he died,' you say? Alas, he is dead then!"

"Yes; but he charged me with his last breath never to forget that though he lay there dying like a rat in a corner, he was born a gentleman, of an honorable house, one of Ferrara's noble families: that

though misery had dragged his name through the very mire, yet its genuine lustre could not be dimmed or sullied, and that he bequeathed to me the duty of wearing it in its original brightness. But I will never take what he left tarnished," said the boy, with a flashing eye. "Best make myself a new one at once, than seek to rub off old rust. I heard what Matteo and the rest said, about his boasting of a lofty name that he had degraded. I made the fellow rue his having dared to utter a slighting word of my father; I drubbed him within an inch of his life; but I remembered what he had said about the name having suffered degradation, and I vowed to myself I would never bear it,—and I never will. I'll earn one of my own, and make it famous."

"Will you take mine?" said lady Capulet, smiling at the boy's indignant earnestness. "I am to be a mother to you, you know; you will bear your mother's name."

"Capulet; ay, I do not know that I could do better;" said the boy with an air of consideration, as if he were about to confer a favor by adopting the title as his own. "I will become a Capulet, I think. It is an ancient name, is it not?"

"One of Verona's most illustrious and oldest houses;" said lady Capulet. "Few vie with it in distinction and honorable renown."

"And those few shall hereafter learn to yield it undisputed priority;" replied the boy. "When I grow up, I will be a soldier. And soldiers can hew their way to even royal pre-eminence."

Lady Capulet's resolution to take the entire charge of her brother's orphan son, was warmly seconded by her husband. Capulet took a great fancy to the boy; thinking him a fine manly lad. His natural arrogance passed for proper family pride. His hot temper, and fiery, impetuous bearing, were thought to be proofs of high spirit. His lordly disdain of others, his haughty self-sufficiency, were deemed part and parcel

of his lofty descent, and his sense of the importance of the family of whom he now made one. His uncle gave him his own name, and treated him, in all respects, as if he were by blood, instead of by marriage and by adoption, a scion of the noble house of Capulet.

There was to be an entertainment *al fresco*, at Villa Arionda. The countess Giacinta had invited her friends to meet in the beautiful grounds of her country mansion ; and lady Capulet resolved to avail herself of the opportunity which such an occasion would afford of still more closely observing the conduct of her husband towards their fair hostess. She looked forward to the day with an eagerness of impatience that seemed like joy ; instead of being, as it was, the feverish anxiety springing from bitterest dread. Jealousy is ever inflicting new tortures on itself in the vain hope of allaying those it already suffers. It conceives that to know the worst it suspects, would be preferable to the present agony of suspense ; and lady Capulet longed to have her fears either confirmed or annulled.

But whatever of consoling, or freshly alarming, might have been in store for her from what she gathered from her observations on this day she was destined never to know. Before the day arrived, Giacinta, in her prime of youth and beauty, was struck by a mortal illness. She died suddenly ; and three days before the one on which her friends were convened to meet at her villa, they were all assembled in the great church of St. Peter's to witness the ceremonial of her lying state. There, on a bier, according to Italian custom, lay the fair body, arrayed in its richest robes, decked in its costliest jewels. She, whom they had looked to behold in all the animated beauty of a prosperous existence, young, lovely, wealthy, mistress of rank, of lands, surrounded by numerous friends, was stretched before them, cold,

lifeless. In lieu of playful converse, of dancing, of lively music, there was the solemn pealing of the organ, the choristers' mournful voices chanting her dirge, the funeral train of priests, the attendant acolytes with swinging censors, the sad faces of weeping friends, the but half-stifled sobs of her domestics, who stood there lamenting. There was a hush—a pause. And then these latter, as was the wont for retainers of deceased nobility, passed in sad procession round the body of their late mistress, offering their last homage of servitude and fealty in the words, “Comanda niente altra da me?” Not a heart there, but was wrung by the thought of the contrast presented by this scene with that which they had looked forward to; but lady Capulet, in the midst of her shocked sympathy, could scarce forbear indulging a cruel joy, as she watched her husband's depth of grief. A sense of security, of triumph, took possession of her, as she looked again upon the marble stillness of those features, whose beaming expression of fond happiness had once caused her such misery. Suddenly, there was a sound of horse's feet galloping across the space outside; there was a stir among the crowd that hung about the entrance of the church; and then, through the midst of them, burst a young man, in an officer's uniform, who rushed staggeringly up the centre aisle, with pale face, and wild looks. He made his way straight to the bier upon which lay the dead Giacinta, and cast himself prone upon the body.

A murmur of amaze and inquiry ran among the crowd. “Who is he? Who can he be? Who is this stranger that claims so dear an interest in her?” were the questions that each asked of each. Some stepped forward to prevent, some to assist the young man; but when they raised his head from her bosom, they found he was equally insensible to their opposition or their aid. He was dead. He had struck his dagger to his heart, that it might wed hers in death.

Then, an old serving-woman of Giacinta's, raised

her feeble voice. It was heard in the silence which ensued among the awe-stricken crowd. She told them that the young gentleman who lay there dead, was secretly betrothed to her dear mistress. She herself, she said, and one other, were alone privy to the engagement between the lovers. It had been Giacinta's wish to have it concealed, until such time as she could present her future husband to her assembled friends ; and it had been her intention to do this, on the occasion of the festival she had appointed three days thence. But Heaven, seeing fit to decree otherwise, had called her to itself ; while her betrothed had been permitted to proclaim his right of being joined with her in the grave, by yielding his own life upon her dead body. The assembly reverently acknowledged the lover's sad claim. His corse was laid beside hers on the bier ; the chanting of the dirge was resumed ; the funeral ceremonies proceeded ; Giacinta and her betrothed were borne together to one tomb, and side by side rested in death.

Lady Capulet on her return home, was rebuking herself in all humility of remorse for the injustice of her late jealous suspicions, when her husband volunteered the confession that he himself was the one other person mentioned by Giacinta's servant, as being the only sharer with herself in the secret of her mistress's private betrothal. He said, that, as the young lady's guardian, and an old friend of her father, he had been informed of their mutual attachment ; that he had been the medium of communication between the lovers ; had conveyed their letters from one to the other, during the period of the young soldier's absence with the army ; (here lady Capulet's heart smote her, as she heard this explanation of a circumstance which had caused her such jealous pangs ;) and, in short, had been their confidant assistant throughout. For although the young countess was accountable to no one but herself for her choice in marriage, yet as her lover was then but a young soldier of fortune, they

wished to keep their engagement a secret from the generality of her friends, until such time as he should attain military rank and distinction to entitle him, in worldly eyes, and in conventional esteem, to become a fitting aspirant to the hand of the lady Arionda. "Dear creature! Sweet Giacinta! She had looked forward with a proud hope to the day when she was to present him whom she deemed no less endowed by nature, than by his now acquired honors, with full title to her loving favor; she exultingly trusted that the time was come when she might proclaim to the world the preference she had so long cherished in patient expectancy of this happy moment. Alas! alas! a moment never to be hers. Dear Giacinta! gentlest lady! cold in death thy warm and loving heart! Pale thy sweet face! A bier thy nuptial couch! That those tender limbs, that so fair a body, should find such resting-place!"

While her husband gave way to these lamentings, lady Capulet felt her resolution, to throw herself into his arms, and own all her late weakness, her doubts, her jealousy, gradually fail her. She felt as it were, her heart contract and close, at the sight of his grief for one whom she had so long feared as a rival. So mean a passion, so narrowing to the soul is jealousy, that it perpetually inspires a thousand new unworthy chimeras, to crush and dispel any occasional yearning towards good. Had lady Capulet yielded to her first generous emotion of contrition, and her consequent impulse of unreserved confidence in her husband, she would have saved herself many an hour—nay, many a year of torture. As it was, she thought:—"Why did he tell me this? Why did he explain to me the circumstances of his connection with Giacinta? Could he have suspected my jealous folly? So far from confirming his suspicion, let me rather conceal from him that it ever had grounds; and if I have done him and her injustice, I will right them in my own belief of their innocence. Let that suffice."

But who shall safely rely upon the resolve of a weak heart to do justice in thought to wronged friendship? If we would be sincere in such redress, let us make honest, open avowal, face to face with our injured friend. Let us ask his help in our endeavour. Let us rather confide in the strength of his forgiving love, than in our own frail, unassisted, secret resolutions. Seldom have these vigour, of themselves, to be maintained. The very courage to avouch the error that originated them, is a test of their force, and a proof of their sincerity, as well as being an expiatory effort we owe to those whom we have wronged.

Lady Capulet had another motive for thinking it unnecessary to make the mortifying confession of her jealousy to her husband. She was about to become a mother; and she fondly trusted that this new claim upon his tenderness and regard, would centre them wholly upon herself. How could she imagine there was need to own having entertained a doubt of his affection, when she so soon hoped to see it exclusively hers? She looked forward to the birth of her child, not only as a source of delight in itself, but as a means of securing the love of him she so loved and revered.

But when her little girl was born, being unable to nurse it herself, she was compelled to give up the hope she had allowed herself to indulge from the joint pleasure of her husband and herself in possessing this mutual source of interest. Her own health had suffered much. It was thought advisable that she should have a change of air; the infant Juliet was therefore consigned to the care of a wet-nurse; while, as soon as lady Capulet herself could bear the journey, her husband took her on a visit of a few months, to some old friends, who resided on their estate near Mantua.

It was a charming spot; its owners were pleasant people; in such a scene, and in such society, lady Capulet regained health and spirits, with renewed strength of body; but she suffered a relapse of her

old mental malady. Their host and hostess had an only daughter, named Leonilda. She was a gay, light-hearted creature, the treasure of her dotting parents, and the delight of all who knew her. She was playful in speech, sportive in manner, from pure cheerfulness of nature. The very sight of her face entering a room, was like a beam of morning; and her airy figure, as it flew along the garden-paths, seemed akin to the dancing of the flowers and leaves, stirred by summer breezes. Her eyes sparkled and moistened when she spoke on any animating theme, like sunshine reflected in the water; and her color varied with her thoughts, as the sky reddens at the coming of dawn. She was happy in herself, happy in others; and made others happy, in seeing herself so happy. Her blithe humour was infectious; few could resist the influence of her sprightly tones, they were so unaffectedly gladsome; they compelled an unconscious sympathy of joyful feeling. You felt elate you knew not why, only to look at her. At least Capulet always felt this, when he had his eyes on her face, and he naturally took delight in letting them rest there often. He had known her from earliest childhood, and loved her fondly as though she were still a child. She knew him as a good-humoured, merry-mannered man, who had always lent himself to her gay whims and fancies, and had made himself a pleasant companion, ever since she could remember, in spite of the difference between their ages. They were old acquaintances,—for he was an intimate friend of her father and mother, to whom he had been all his life in the habit of making long and frequent visits,—and they therefore met now with all the familiarity and ease of enjoyment naturally springing out of such a connection.

Instead of this mutual liking appearing, as it was, the simple affection between a light-hearted girl, and a lively tempered man, whose manners suited each other, to lady Capulet's jaundiced eyes, it seemed

the powerful attachment which springs up irresistibly between assimilating natures. She saw in the gay and brilliant Leonilda precisely the being calculated to win the love of an accomplished man, such as she deemed her husband. She felt it to be but too likely that the smiling bright-eyed beauty should attract him in preference to the dark-eyed gravity of countenance, and the serious repose of demeanour, which were her own characteristics. Again she allowed her thoughts to toss and struggle in the perpetual unrest of jealous surmise.

Meanwhile time insensibly crept on. Capulet was not willing to leave friends with whom he was so happy ; and his wife dared not trust herself with any proposal of departure, lest her true motive for disliking to protract her visit should betray itself. At length Capulet himself began to share the desire which had been one of her motives for wishing to return home. Both father and mother longed to see their little girl. They had heard, through messengers appointed to bring them regular news from Verona, that the child was constantly thriving ; but now that it had attained an age beyond mere infancy, they wanted personally to witness its growth and improvement, and to have it always with them.

Hitherto, the little Juliet had dwelt at the farmhouse, with her foster-parents, tenants of the Capulet family. The farmer was a hearty, jocular, good soul, well nigh as fond of the little daughter of his feudal lord, as of his own bantling ; while his wife vowed there was not a pin to choose betwixt them, which was dearest to her, lady-bird Juliet, or baby Susan.

“ May-be, our Susan is the best little good thing in her temper, whilst my pretty lamb here, is the sweetest innocent in her pets and her tempers ;” said the nurse to her good man, who was busy near his wife, trimming and training some stray branches of a vine that grew against the wall, near to which she was sitting, with one babe on her lap, and the other at her feet.

“How mean’st thou, wife? Like a true woman, thou muddl’st thy kindly meaning with untoward speech. What wouldst thou say of our good little Susan’s temper, and pretty Jule’s tempers?”

“Marry, all the world trows that temper and tempers are two. Susan hath an angel’s temper for honey-sweet goodness. Take her up out of her sleep, and she’ll crow and coo; snatch the pap from her very lip, and she’ll crow and coo; whip her out of your arms, and lay her sprawling on the floor, and bless ye, she’ll still laugh, and coo, and crow, like any cockrel! But it isn’t so with Jule! No, no! Marry come up, I warrant ye, my young lady-babe knows who’s mistress. She’ll kick and foin, a very colt of viciousness, an’ ye cross her anywise. See her only this morning! When my young madam must needs have Susan’s bowl of milk ’stead of her own; how the pretty fool fought and strove for it, till she got it. Susan, I warrant ye, knew her place, and gave’t up. She’s a good little soul, is our Susan; but Jule’s a dear lambkin of pretty wilfulness.”

“Ay, by my holidam, that she is!” quoth the farmer. “She’s like one of these birds, wife;” said he, pointing to the dove-house, just above their heads; “there’s a deal o’ pouting, and ruffling, and show of angers, and threatenings, but it’s all love, bless ye, all love. Jule’ll kiss ye, very minute after she’s done roarin’ and strivin’ for something she’s set her heart on. Wilt thou not, Jule?”

“Say ‘Ay,’ as thou did’st yesterday, when he asked his merry question, after thoud’st fallen and broken thy brow, Jule;” said the laughing nurse, to the babe on her lap. “See now, how she’s rumpling and foraging my kerchief! Ha’ done then, lady-bird! ’Tis naught, ’tis naught, I tell thee! Thou wilt not like the wormwood, I promise thee. ’Tis high time thou wert weaned, lambkin. A good bowl o’ milk is what’s best for thee, now. Thou liked’st it well this morning, thou know’st. Art thou so head-

strong? Yea, art thou? Nay then, taste it, sweet-heart, and see how the bitter will put thee in a pretty pet."

The good farmer had stayed his hand from his work, to watch the little humors of the child, as his wife played with it, pretendedly teasing and thwarting it, now withholding, now proffering that which she had taken care to render distasteful to her nursing; when, as he turned again towards his work, he saw the wall heave, give a lurch, and recede from the twigs he was preparing to nail against it. At the same moment, through the still air, came a deep sound, inexpressibly awful in its hidden menace. The farmer cast his eye up towards the blue sky. No signal of storm was there. It was not thunder. Then the dove-house swayed to and fro—the birds flew wildly hither and thither—the ground shook, with a vast tremble—trees waved, and bent their tops, as beneath a mighty wind, though no breath of air was stirring—and again was heard that grave subterranean murmur. "Away, wife! Away!" cried the farmer; "make the best of thy way to the field yonder. Go not near the house. Away! The earthquake! Trudge, quick as thou canst to the open field with my lord's babe, while I follow thee with our own. Where's Susan? Mother of heaven! the child has waddled away out of ken. No, there she is, 'mongst the vine-leaves. Begone you, wife; I'll fetch our Susan. Away with ye! Trudge, trudge, woman, for dear life!"

The nurse fled, with the child in her arms. The next instant, down came the dove-cote with a crash; and in another moment, as the farmer ran to snatch up his little one, the vine-covered wall tottered, was split and rent asunder, and falling, both father and child were buried beneath its ruins.

Next day, when the lord Capulet and his wife arrived, they found the little Juliet safe; and their first care, in gratitude towards her who had been the

means of the child's preservation, was to remove the nurse from the farm, and instal her in their own household, making it her future home. In the pride of being at the great house, in the constant dwelling beside her foster-child, the nurse found consolation for all that she had lost.

But no sooner had Lady Capulet's anxiety respecting her child been allayed, than her mind reverted to the subject that usually engrossed it. She thought over all that had occurred to confirm her fears of her husband's attachment to another than herself. She remembered his high spirits, his evident state of happiness and enjoyment, during their late sojourn at Mantua ; she remembered a sudden sadness that had taken possession of him on the eve of their departure from their friends' house ; she recalled the struggle with which he had,—plainly enough to her eyes,—endeavored to conceal his emotion at parting with Leonilda ; she recollected how vainly he had contended against the dejection into which he had fallen during the journey, and which had preyed upon him ever since, rendering him,—usually so lively, so carelesstempered, — thoughtful, absent, and melancholy. When she ventured to allude to his evident depression, he had roused himself, denied that he had any particular source of uneasiness ; but soon relapsed into his former abstraction. This, instead of decreasing, grew upon him ; and at length, he, in a half-affected negligence of manner, announced that he intended returning for a few days to Mantua, as he did not think his friend looking well when they had left him.

Lady Capulet dared not trust herself to offer any objection ; but she felt sure that although Leonilda's father was the pretext, it was Leonilda herself who occasioned this return. It was true, that Capulet's friend had been ill—sufficiently ill to keep his room for a few days, and to consult a physician,—therefore the solicitude on the father's account was plausible

enough ; but lady Capulet's conviction was, that the true anxiety arose from a desire to see the daughter. She believed that her husband could not endure the absence from her he loved ; she believed that it was this sick desire to be with the secret object of his passion, which caused his unhappiness, and which induced him to brave all, that he might return to her.

Capulet went to Mantua. Again he went ; and again ; and yet again. These repeated visits tortured his wife into full credence of all she had feared. Yet she allowed not one symptom of jealousy to escape her. She was too proud to complain ; too anxious for his love and esteem, to risk losing the portion she possessed, by reproaches ; she disdained to have any betrayal of her feelings extorted from her. She suffered in silence.

Time crept on, and brought no abatement of her misery. Rather increase of conviction, and bitterness of regret. She had nothing to complain of in Capulet's behaviour to herself. It bespoke respect, and entire confidence in his wife's worth and excellent qualities. But she felt herself estranged from her husband's heart ; she thought herself bereaved of his passionate attachment, his preference, his love.

Once, she was brooding on this void in her existence—this failure in her dearest hopes, and she could not refrain from shedding tears in the forlornness of her heart. Capulet was away ; gone on one of his frequent visits to his Mantuan friends ; and she felt peculiarly lonely,—desolate, deserted. Her little girl was at her feet, playing with some chesnuts, that Tybalt had collected for the child's amusement, to roll about the floor, and scramble after. For Juliet could run about well, now ; and talk, and prattle, and play with him ; and the boy was very fond of his pretty gentle little cousin, who, in turn, had taken a great fancy to him.

The sight of her mother weeping, caught the child's attention, and she paused in her sport. The burnished

brown balls were permitted to roll unheeded away, as the little creature raised herself from the ground and leaned against her mother's knee, and gazed up in her mother's face.

"What are you crying for, *mamma*? Have you hurt yourself?" Lady Capulet had, unconsciously, one hand clasped in the other. "Have you hurt your poor finger? Let Juliet kiss it, and make it well. Or I will fetch nurse to bind it up; she always cures me, when I hurt myself."

"I have not hurt myself, *cara di mamma*;" said the mother.

"Then why do you cry? Has any one else hurt you? Let me look at your hand; you hold it as if it pained you. Let me kiss it."

"No one has hurt me, foolish little tender heart;" said lady Capulet, softly pinching the cheek of the face that looked up at her with such childish earnestness; "I have no wound. None that I could show to you, dear child. Who should hurt me?"

"Who indeed?" echoed Tybalt, who came into the room just then, and heard his aunt's last words. "I should like to see the man who would dare to hurt or offend you. Boy as I am, I'd teach him better manners."

There was something in the lad's defiance, idle vaunt as it was in one of his years, that sounded pleasantly to lady Capulet; it seemed a promise of *championship* to one who felt herself forlorn.

"Why, what wouldst thou do, by way of lesson to one who should injure me, young cousin?" she said with a smile. "Thou art yet too slight to think of coping with a grown man, should such a one offer me wrong."

"Skilful fencing masters many a tall fellow;" said the youth; "and I practise evermore, that I may get perfect command over my weapon; for that gives command over men,—over all. But there are ways even for those who have the disadvantages of inferior

years, inferior strength, and inferior skill in fence ;” added he, nodding his head with an air at once mysterious and confident.

“ Indeed ? and what may they be ?” asked lady Capulet.

She was startled, when he promptly replied :—“ A hulking giant, beyond the reach of a poor swordsman, might be brought down by a poisoned arrow, or a sure draught. Italian honour wronged, must be avenged, come the vengeance by what means it may. Italian revenge for injured honor is not over-scrupulous. Why should it be ? He who wrongs mine honor, becomes my rightful victim. If I cannot retaliate by force, I may by craft. If I have not the power myself to punish him as he deserves, I may yet contrive that he shall not remain unpunished. No ; none who offend me, or mine, shall ever escape without his due.”

“ What ! talk’st thou of poison, boy ? Dost thou know how fearfully it sounds in thy young mouth ?” said lady Capulet, lowering her voice beyond hearing of the child, Juliet.

“ Never too young to consider means of avenging insult ;” replied the stripling, with one of his haughty looks. “ Long ago,—before I came to Verona,—an old man, a neighbour of ours, gave my father a curious poison. I heard them talking together about its properties. The old fellow, who thought himself obliged to my father, gave it him, as a valuable matter, the possession of which might one day stand him in good stead. He told him it was so subtle, that a few grains of it laid in a glove, would make that glove a deadly gift to its wearer. The venom would insensibly make its way through the pores of the hand, take possession of the vital powers, palsy them, subjugate them, and eventually destroy life itself, without leaving a trace of how the mortal stroke had been dealt. The safety, the unsuspected security, thus afforded of putting an enemy to death, gave the value, he said,

to the gift. They did not know I overheard them, but I did ; and when my father died, I, as his rightful heir, took possession of the only thing of worth he had. I brought it away with me, thinking, boy as I was, I might need vantage my years denied me 'gainst possible foes. But I shall never want it now. Henceforth, I trust to mine arm as my sole avenger."

"But it is not fit, boy, thou shouldst possess means of such deadly potency, within thine own discretion, to use or not, as seems to thee good ;" said lady Capulet. "Give the poison into my keeping. Best not trust thyself with such fatal temptation to evil."

"Willingly ; I have no farther use for it. I will deliver it into your charge, that you may make sure of my never using it, by throwing it away yourself."

Well had it been for the lady, had she immediately done so. The words she used to her nephew, were applicable to herself. 'Best not trust thyself with such fatal temptation to evil.' But when once the poison came into her possession, she contented herself with carefully locking it up in a cabinet in her own room, thinking it was out of harm's way, now that it was beyond the power of a rash boy. She never reflected that it was within the reach of a desperate woman—a woman made desperate at moments, by the haunting thoughts of a fancy heated and distempered by the passion of jealousy. It never struck her, that she, who shrank from the bare possibility of crime in another, might be goaded to its commission herself, when the insupportable sense of wrong, together with opportunity, should combine to sting her into oblivion of all, save thirst for vengeance.

Some time after this, it happened that there was a fashion,—a sort of rage,—for a peculiar light-colored glove. They were worn by all ladies who pretended to taste and distinction. They were presented in half dozen pairs by gallants to their mistresses. They were called Cleopatra gloves ; and were of a pale tint,

supposed to be that of the waters of the Nile. In short, they were just that sort of elegant trifle, which constitute a necessity, while the "furore" lasts, in circles where luxury and fashion dictate laws.

Capulet one morning brought several pairs of these gloves as a present to his wife. She, charmed with the attention from him, received them with gracious words of delighted acceptance. But all her pleasure was marred, when he added :—"By the way, I think of riding over to Mantua next week, what say you to sending a share of your Cleopatras to Leonilda? I will take them for you. They will be a welcome gift to a country damsel, who, though she lives out of the world, only prizes the pretty toys and trickeries of the world the more. Come, will you spare them to her; no churl are you, good my lady, I know. So, how say you?"

What could she say? None other, of course, than that she should be happy to comply with his wish. But in her heart she recoiled from this enforced courtesy. To be offered through him, too! And then the cruel thought arose, that this was a planned thing,—a scheme of her husband's, to present Leonilda with some of these gloves as a gallantry from himself, under pretence of being a friendly token from his wife. She was used as a screen, then,—a convenient blind!

Lady Capulet revolved and revolved these galling thoughts, until she writhed beneath the barbed agony. Suddenly an idea darted like a lightning-flash into her brain. Across her mind, darkened and confused by the chaos of her previous reflections, this new thought came with a scorching, scathing glare. It was that of the poison. The poison that was so subtle in its effects. The poison that was to be administered through the medium of a glove. The poison that she had by her, concealed in her cabinet. At first, appalled, she started from her own suggestion; but gradually it won upon her imagination; she con-

fronted it ; she admitted it ; until it seemed to smile upon her, as a possible ray of guidance, of hope. She went so far as to consider that since a week was to elapse before her husband's setting forth for Mantua, she could decide in the interim whether one of the pairs of gloves among the packet she sent, should be a poisoned pair or not. Once permit the soul to entertain a criminal purpose—to dally with its proposition—to moot the possibility of wrong doing ; and it is sullied ready for the deed. She went farther. She went so far as to *prepare* a pair and to place them in her cabinet, marked with a private mark, that she might distinguish them and include them among Leonilda's or not, as she might at the last moment determine. Fatal first step in error ! Who knows whither it may lead,—through what tortuous paths it may deviate from virtue and happiness,—in what unforeseen abyss of sin and misery it may end ?

On the eve of her lord's departure, lady Capulet was sitting in her own room, with her little girl, as usual, playing about, amusing herself with her own childish games ; now hunting Tybalt's chesnuts across the floor, now running in and out of the balcony, among the orange-trees and oleanders, now busying herself with the pretty colors of her mother's silk-winders, now scrambling under the table, anon clambering up upon the chairs, and peeping into the vases and pateras, on the marble slab, or peering into the large mirror that hung above it, watching the vapour fade, and fleet, and disappear, as she touched it with her rosy lips, and breathed upon its crystal surface. Capulet had just left the apartment, reminding his wife of her promised gift to Leonilda, and bidding her make up the packet ; as he meant to take horse for Mantua early on the morrow, that he might have the cool morning hours for beginning his journey.

The lady went to the cabinet. With an agitated hand she drew forth the drawer in which lay the

gloves. Whether it was that the faint and scarcely perceptible odour which hung about the poisoned pair, affected her ; or, that a sickening sense of their foul and insidious purpose overpowered her ; but she wavered, put her hand to her forehead, and, turning away towards the open window, leaned against it, trembling, and overcome. She remained thus, for a considerable space of time, partly oppressed, partly sunk in painful reverie, when she was suddenly aroused by hearing her little Juliet exclaim, in the pretty caressing words of an Italian child's expression of delight :—
 “Quanto sono carini !” How lovely ! See what a gay lady I am, with my pretty gloves, like a grown woman ! See here, *mamma* !”

The word ‘gloves’ struck upon the mother's ear, with a pang of ill omen. She looked round, and beheld the child,—who had scrambled up to the cabinet by means of a chair,—with her baby hands buried in a pair of the well-known pale-tinted, Nile-coloured gloves ; holding them up in innocent triumph, smiling, and exulting, and calling upon her mother to exult with her.

In deadly terror, the mother staggered forward, snatched them off, and gave one despairing glance to see if the fatal mark were there which identified the envenomed pair. They were unmarked ; and lady Capulet, catching her child to her bosom, sank on her knees, and buried her face in her hands, in a passion of thanksgiving.

After a time she arose ; set herself to satisfy the inquiries of her child, who wondered to see her mother's agitation ; and then, with as much calmness as she could summon, went to the cabinet, took from it the marked pair of gloves, which, together with the remainder of the poison, she set fire to, by means of a lighted taper, and watched them until they were reduced to ashes. When this was done, she made up the packet of Cleopatra gloves for Leonilda, with a firm hand ; feeling as if in conquering her reluctance

to send them, she made a sort of expiatory offering for her late intentional misdeed.

But though her gratitude was profound, for having been mercifully spared the frightful consequences to her child which might have resulted from her meditated crime, yet it could not so wholly inspire her with virtuous resolves for the future, but that they gave way beneath fresh incitement and temptation. Her tortures of jealousy and wounded love, were all bleeding anew the next day, when her lord took leave of her, professedly to go and spend some time with his friends at Mantua. She was sitting disconsolately in the garden; no sight of nature brought repose or solace to her perverted feelings; she was too much absorbed in the sense of her injuries, to derive relief and comfort from so pure a source.

Presently, she heard hasty footsteps at no great distance, as it seemed, from the alcove where she sat; and the moment after, she started up, in some alarm at seeing a man, with a pale face, and disordered attire, rush towards the spot. He was looking wildly around, and casting occasional glances behind him, as if in fear of pursuit. When he perceived the lady, he paused for a moment; then, forming a hurried resolution to throw himself upon her mercy, he cast himself at her feet, and besought her to take pity on an unfortunate wretch escaping from officers of justice.

“Should I be taken, they will condemn me to the galleys—break me on the wheel—burn me alive;”—thus he poured forth his incoherent supplication—“Save me, save me from the fangs of the bloodhounds! They will tear me to pieces! I am not so guilty as they think. Conceal me but until the first keenness of search is past. Then I’ll reach a church. Once ‘prender chiesa,’ and I’m safe!”

The vehemence of his petition moved her. “Ay, sanctuary! ’Tis well thought of;” she said. “That will be your best refuge. There is no safe concealment here. How came you hither?”

“In my desperation, I contrived to leap your garden-walls. But they are close upon my track. They can hardly fail to discover which way I have fled. Hasten, dear lady! Help me to hide! I am lost if they get hold of me before I can take shelter in a church. Once safe there, I can set them at defiance. They dare not break sanctuary. Hasten, hasten, lady!”

Lady Capulet yielded to his urgency: she stayed to question him no farther; but led him to a small door in the orchard-wall, that opened into a by-street, through which the family were wont to pass, on their way to the neighbouring church, close at hand. She directed him hastily; bade him take sanctuary there; and promised by-and-by, when all was quiet, to bring him food herself.

It was some hours ere she could make her way thither unobserved. The dusk of evening cast murky shadows along the old aisles, as the lady crept into the then empty church. The hour of vespers was over; the few stragglers whom the service had congregated, were now dispersed; and not a living soul was there, save that unhappy guilty one, lurking for a refuge from disgrace and death. The space of marble walls and vaulted roof, struck chill upon her senses; the silence, broken only by the echoes of her own trembling footsteps, impressed her with the vague feeling of dreariness and dread; the long vista of tombs stretching into a dim depth of distance that the eye could scarcely penetrate, saddened her with a gloomy and foreboding apprehension of she scarce knew what. Things familiar to her, in the broad face of noon, and in the company of accustomed associates, assumed a threatening and almost spectral aspect, viewed under the circumstances of privacy, and stealth, and shame that now invested them. An avowed criminal, an offender, a culprit evading justice,—was she absolved in blindly aiding him to escape a perhaps righteous retribution? She felt mistrustful,—dubious;—in pre-

cisely that mood of mind, which made her fancy herself, in a manner, partaker of the degradation and abasement, she had come to help. Her recent meditated wrong, had fearfully diminished her self-respect, her conscious integrity. She had forfeited the right of an unspotted conscience to denounce those who had fallen from virtue. She had a terrible secret prompting, that made her involuntarily acknowledge herself on a sort of guilty level with this man; although her crime was unperpetrated save in will, and his was actually committed.

She shuddered beneath the impression of some such feelings as these, while she watched the stranger eagerly devour the contents of the basket she had brought for him. His gaunt, and hunger-starved looks, no less than the avidity with which he fed, told how long and severe had been his fast.

"It puts heart in me!" he at length exclaimed. "I am a new man! Methinks I could now brave a meeting with those hell-hounds, and dare them to do their worst. But I shall baffle them yet. This respite—this good food—will enable me to follow up my flight. With midnight to favor me, I shall make my escape from this place; and whilst they snore in Verona, I push on to Mantua. There I have secure hiding-holes of mine own, out of all human ken. But should I never see you more, lady, let me thank you for your bounteous succour. I could wish to prove my gratitude to my preserver. Tell me, madam, is there aught in which I may serve you? Men call me ruffian, outcast, worthless villain. But there is something yet in Onofrio, vile as he may be, which bids him hope to show that he can be grateful."

"What was the crime for which the justicers are in pursuit of you?" asked lady Capulet, for she now saw him as he was, a reckless, hardened mis-doer, whom a temporary strait had rendered apparently submissive, but really abject.

"I stabbed a man to the heart, who had sought to

betray the girl I love. The scoundrel seducer perished, as he ought, by the hand of him he would have deprived of all most dearly held. You, lady, dwelling in the calm of a prosperous existence, little know of the wild temptations to vengeance begotten of wrong and oppression. How should you conceive the goading torture of seeing the one object to which your soul claims a right—the right of your own devoted love,—lured away, beguiled, perverted, snatched for ever from your hopes ?”

But lady Capulet’s deep sigh unconsciously betrayed fullest sympathy with the case his words depicted.

Onofrio regarded her attentively.

“ You can conceive it—you can feel it ; you can comprehend its provocation, and the deadly thoughts it engenders. You have experienced its fever, its agony,—and know the fatal thirst which nothing can allay, save the blood of the injurer,—the tumult of the soul which nothing can still, save the death of the wronger. You have stretched forth a helping hand to me in mine hour of peril, lady ; let me aid you to your revenge. Should you desire a home-blow for a faithless lover, or riddance from a troublesome rival,——”

He paused abruptly, and significantly.

Lady Capulet started to hear her own dimly-seen wish—a wish scarce shaped to herself—thus put into words.

He looked at her ; then resumed :—“ This arm is not one to hesitate. It will strike a sure blow. No compunctious scruple, at latest moment, shall shake the allegiance it vows. I owe my life, my freedom, to you ; and I dedicate their first deed to your behalf. Tell me how it may serve you.”

“ You spoke of Mantua,—you are about to repair thither,”—faltered she.

“ It is there the girl I spoke of, lives. Petronilla, —handmaiden to the lady Leonilda.”

“Leonilda!” hurriedly exclaimed lady Capulet.

“Aye; she. Do you know her? A mocking witch; a flouting, jeering young madam, who banterers and ridicules everything and everybody; one who turns you into a jest and a by-word, with a twinkle of her eyes; and who’ll make you a laughing-stock and a mark for the finger of scorn, with a curl of her lip; and all forsooth under pretence of mirth and good-humour. A murrain on her smiles! I hate them. I owe her a reckoning for a pestilent trick she played me—or which I’m well-nigh sure she played me, when I was last there, lurking about their grounds in hope of catching a moment’s sight of Petronilla. Is it the sportive cruelty,—the gay malice of the lady Leonilda,—so sinister in their affected light-heartedness, and innocence, that have played you the ill trick of inveigling the heart you prize? I can well believe it of her. Is it she?”

Lady Capulet attempted to reply, but the words died on her lips. She stood looking fixedly at him; the pallor of her face, the expression of her eyes, the set rigidity round her mouth, sufficiently answering his question.

“And it is this laughing sorceress, you would have quieted? Faith, it would be benefit rather than harm, to stop the mouth of a scoffing simpleton like young madam Leonilda. He’d deserve thanks, rather than blame, who should stay her gibing titter. It is just such foolish gignots as she, who ensnare and enslave men who see not through their gay craft, bewitching them out of their senses, with wily looks and wanton raillery. A man will risk his soul for one of those smiling mischiefs. I know them. I know her.”

The thought of her husband—of his evident thrall to the fascination of those smiles—of the power they had to draw him perpetually away from his home—of his absence now on one of these visits—of the irresistible charm they possessed for him—of the spell which they exercised over him, counteracting and nullifying

all her own hopes of winning his heart, pressed upon her, and sharply seconded Onofrio's words.

She still kept looking at him ; motionless and unable to speak. But as he again paused, she drew her purse from her girdle, and mechanically placed it in his hand.

The man gave a grim smile.

"I am pledged to your wish, madam. I can read it without words. No need of them. Best none. But this much, understand. A dagger may silence a gallant—but a woman must be otherwise dealt with. Her own pillow will suffice ; stopped breath leaves no tell-tale scar. They shall think no other than that she—ha ! ha !—died a natural death. As though all death were not equally 'natural,' when it's desired—by those who die or by those who survive."

The lady shrank from his words. She revolted from the very brutality, which was to secure the accomplishment of her secret wish. But still she uttered no word. She turned away and retraced her steps ; the darkness of her own thoughts a yet more heavy shadow than any which fell amid the cloistered aisles. She crept through the door that admitted her into her own gardens ; she stole along the embowered paths and alleys ; and here she paced up and down for a season,—the silence, the retirement, the obscurity, all suiting best with her mood, and with the consciousness of stealthy misdoing, in which she was plunged. On repairing to her own apartment, the light seemed to bewilder her with a sense of guilt revealed and denounced. She sought refuge, in the curtained seclusion of her child's sleeping-room. But here, it was still worse. The half-light, the screened quiet reigning here,—above all, the sight of that baby face, reposing in its pure innocence, struck upon her accusingly, and aroused a sense of contrast with her own unquiet spirit, her own guilty purposes, that was intolerable. She once more took flight from the scene, forgetting that it was her own heart which presented

such fearful images, and from which she could not fly.

At length, after some hours of vain struggle with herself, she took the resolution of going once more to the spot where she had left Onofrio ; of forbidding him to interpret her wishes amiss ; and of clearly enjoining him to forbear from all attempted injury towards Leonilda. But on reaching the old church she found it deserted. She carefully searched every portion of the building, but found it, beyond a doubt, empty. The man had evidently left the place, and was even now on his way to Mantua. There was no longer a choice ; she must abide by what had already passed between them ; there was no retracing.

All night she lay awake, a prey to self-reproach, and to horror unspeakable at the thought of her impossibility to avert the probable result of her own criminal instigation. What though she had not expressly stated her desire to have Leonilda removed from her path ; she had allowed it to be inferred from her manner ; she had left the inference uncontradicted when Onofrio plainly showed it to have been so drawn by him ; nay, she had, by the significant donation of her purse at that very moment, sufficiently denoted her sanction to what was perfectly, though tacitly, understood between them. In the darkness of midnight, conscience is apt to lend us its clearest light. In the hours of gloom and uncertainty, it often sheds its most luminous convictions upon the soul. We dare not then refuse admission to its holy, guiding ray. But with the coming dawn, we suffer it to pale, and lose its influence upon us. With the return of morning, with the rising sun, our boldness gathers strength to outface the gentler monitory light, and its power is soon quenched in the full glow and glare of day.

So with lady Capulet. When she arose next morning, she threw off many of the salutary fears and regrets of the past night, as overstrained, imaginary,

and needless. She persuaded herself that she was unnecessarily allowing mere visionary terrors to haunt her. She endeavoured to feel satisfied that there was cause for neither self-blame nor alarm. She resolved to abjure reflection, to cast off anxiety, as much as possible ; and to this end, she determined to go into society more than she had hitherto done, that its distractions might serve to dissipate a fruitless solicitude. She was piqued into a confirmation of this resolve, by noticing her husband's manner on his return from Mantua. He made no secret of his last visit having been a most happy one ; he affected no concealment of the delight, the fresh accession of joy and good spirits it had occasioned him ; and Capulet's gaiety determined his wife to try and emulate it, by her own assumed animation.

At the different houses lord and lady Capulet frequented, among the brilliant assemblage they met there, lady Capulet had often again encountered the young Florentine prince who had been her partner on the night of the ball at the Scaligeri palace. She could not but perceive, that his youthful highness was greatly struck by her beauty ; and that he lost no opportunity of letting her know by the ardour of his manner, and by the eloquent language of his eyes, that he only required her sanction and encouragement to become at once her avowed admirer. But her own conduct had always been at once so unaffectedly and unostentatiously dignified, yet so quietly simple ; so unmistakably guarded, yet so gentle and kind in its manifestation of liking towards him ; that the young man had never hitherto ventured beyond these mute expressions of his adoration. He contented himself by letting his patient assiduity, his constancy, his silent attentions, his never omitting to be present at any party where she was likely to be, plead for him, and make their way, if it might be, to her heart. He knew that when sincerely and perseveringly pursued, these seldom fail in producing an impression on

womanly nature,—more especially on Italian womanhood.

It was just at this juncture, that lady Capulet, resolving to enter more into the spirit of society, and take more pleasure in its diversions, consequently met, now almost daily, her admirer ; and it was now she first began to allow herself to note the silent tokens of his passionate admiration with sympathy and interest. She went so far as to ask herself why she should waste the treasure of her love, by persisting in devoting it exclusively, though secretly, to a husband who regarded her, she was too fatally convinced, with more than the usual indifference and insensibility attributed to conjugal feelings. She sighed as she watched Capulet, at this very instant engaged in gallant assiduities and lively converse, by the side of one of the most distinguished beauties in the room ; while she could not help reverting in thought to the young Florentine, who stood a few paces from her, she knew, in patient hope of her looking towards him. She permitted her eyes to rest in that direction ; and the next moment brought him, elate and happy, to her side. Her heart involuntarily acknowledged the flattering homage of such watchful promptitude ; and the dangerous question arose within her, “ Why may not I, as well as so many others, take comfort from a love that proffers itself to me, since I am denied the one I seek ? Why should I not follow the example of other women, who console themselves with a lover’s attachment, when that of a husband is withheld ? Why must I disdain a love so fervent as this youth’s, and pine for an affection which I can never hope to gain ? Surely, I am perverse,—unreasonable,—ungrateful. Why not secure the happiness of being beloved, without scanning too curiously its source ? I am ever marring my own content by a too careful solicitude. Those who are most happy, take least thought. Let me be thoughtless and happy, like my neighbours.” She turned to the young Florentine

with the gay ease of manner suited to such a course of reflection ; and he was not slow to evince the joy with which it inspired him.

Their conversation fell into a livelier strain than it had ever assumed before. Lady Capulet was animated by all the fire and vivacity of a half-formed, reckless resolution, to defy prudence, and its cold, calculating dictates ; while the prince, enchanted by her grace and condescension, gave freer rein than he had ever yet dared, to the expression of his delighted admiration.

In a crowded room—in the midst of gay talkers like themselves—surrounded by company, and by a blaze of light, all this passed as mere social homage—the light gallantry suited to the scene and hour—no more. But when, on taking leave at the close of the evening, as he led her through the hall, towards her coach, the young prince, in an eager voice, which faltered and trembled with the consciousness of earnest meaning, that had deepened its tone from the high laughing pitch of their late converse, whispered an enquiry of whither her engagement would lead her on the following evening?—at what party they should meet?—she felt that they stood committed to each other as they had never done before, by his manner, and by her hurried reply to it :—“ Oh, I do not go out to-morrow ; I am at home.”

She would have given much to have recalled her words. It was too late. His eyes already showed the hope he had conceived from them—from her embarrassed answer to his agitated question. The cloak of pleasantry,—of mere passing gallantry—would no longer serve. She could not but feel she had acknowledged the seriousness of the sentiment with which he regarded her.

“ You will be at home—you will suffer me to come—” said the prince, in a glad low voice, raising her hand to his lips, as he placed her in her coach. She could only bow, as the equipage drove on. The

young man's face, as she saw it at that last moment, beneath the high light of the lamps hanging around the entrance, fully disclosed to her in its eagerness of hope, its concentration of youthful enthusiasm, its earnest devotion, remained stamped upon her imagination during the dark tranquil hours that succeeded. In the sobriety and silence of night, she still saw that handsome young face—handsome in its native beauty of feature, as in its still more impressive beauty of energetic feeling and heartfelt expression,—and she then asked herself how she dared trifle with the sacred emotion she saw there depicted. “This young man loves me—with as much of truth and sincerity in his passion, as such a passion hath in its nature,” mused she. “Shall I wrong him, by giving him in exchange for his true affection, a counterfeit—a simulation of love? Shall I wrong this young, earnest heart, by the pretence of a passion I know I can never feel? I know full well I can never give love—genuine love to any but one—why then deceive this youth with a false show of love, in return for the gift of his honest heart. Should I not rather try to disenchant him from his present belief? To open his eyes to the delusion which makes him fancy that his present passion is indeed true love? It is true—sincere—genuine—as far as his young unhackneyed heart knows of love. But such a nature as his is capable of a far higher sentiment than a passing passion for one who is already a wife. That which he at present feels,—powerful and genuine as it may be, in its degree—is yet but a mere foreshadowing of that all-absorbing one which he shall hereafter know, when he meets the woman whom he can make exclusively his own. To lead him to believe this, were a far nobler deed, than to attach him to my side, a mere conquest of heartless vanity. The prince's worth—his preference for me—should all engage me to the trial. It shall be made. Let me attempt one honest thing, in lieu of

those forbidden deeds, near to which I've strayed too oft, of late, for peace of mind."

This resolve was but confirmed next day. She sat, towards evening, her hands idling with silks and tapestry-needle, and thoughts busied with the same subject. Her child, the little Juliet, was frolicking about the spacious apartment, at high romps with cousin Tybalt. The sight of the little creature, sporting to and fro, in all the innocent gaiety, activity, and animation of childish spirits, brought the mother's heart another powerful argument in support of her determination. It added the weight of yet another reason why she should not be misled into betraying both herself and another into the misery and delusion of an illicit attachment. It opened her eyes to the fallacy, the absurd chimera, the hollow mockery, of proposing as a *consolation* the substitution of an unlawful passion for that which the heart claimed as its true, its rightful, its chosen happiness. She saw the folly no less than the criminality, of hoping to make another man's love supply the place of his to which a woman has a claim by her own exclusive preference, as well as by wedlock ties. She felt the futility of the notion that a lover's liking, can console for the want of a husband's regard,—when that husband is beloved; she felt the utter mistake of attempting substitution in love, of one object for another, when the heart is once wholly, however hopelessly,—devoted.

"For his sake,—no less than for my own,—I will be entirely frank with him. His nobleness deserves it;" she murmured to herself.

"Juliet is tired with play; she'll rest now;" said the little girl, coming and sitting on the hassock at her mother's feet, and laying her head against her mother's knee.

"Poor little creature! Girls are soon wearied out;" said Tybalt; "they've good heart for play, but their sinews and muscles are nought. What a

soft little peach cheek it is !” said he, giving her a gentle pinch on her rosy face, as he spoke. “ And see what arms ! As smooth and as pulpy as curd—and well-nigh as white. Pretty ! But poor little things for hard work or hard play ! A game at ball makes ’em ache—a racket would tire ’em to death—and as for fencing—fancy a girl’s arm wielding a good sword, or a rapier, for even a quarter of an hour. Why, a poniard would be too heavy for her to handle.”

“ Fortunately, there’s no need of our little Juliet’s learning to defend herself ; she has a doughty champion in that master of fence, her young cousin ;” said lady Capulet, smiling.

Her nephew turned on his heel. “ Well, I’m off to the meadows, beyond the Amphitheatre ;” said he. “ Some of our set promised to meet me there in the cool of the evening. I hope none of those Montague fellows will dare to come and disturb us. We’ve taken a fancy to the spot for a play-ground ; and for their own sakes, they’d best not dispute the place with us.”

“ Can’t you all play together there ?” said his aunt ; “ there’s surely space enough.”

“ As though you knew not, madam, that the same ground cannot contain Capulets and Montagues together ! I am a Capulet, heart and soul ; and I,——there’s no breathing-space for me, where one of those born-foes of ours—those Montagues, set their foot ! Best let them keep away, or——”

“ Nay, young cousin, no threatening looks ; no quarrelsome gestures. Thou know’st, my lord, thine uncle would be sore displeas’d were he to find thee ruffling and ranting, picking quarrels, giving and taking offence, and embroiling thyself in vexatious feuds with these youths of the Montague family. Although thine uncle hath little ground for aught but displeasure against the house of Montague, yet he deems it better befitting the honor of his own, to treat the members of theirs with quiet scorn, than open ani-

mosity. Take heed of this, I beseech you, cousin Tybalt.”

The youth, muttering with an ill grace a few words of half assent, flung out of the room.

The little Juliet arose from her seat ; and leaning upon her mother’s lap, and looking up in her face, she said :—“ Take me up, *mamma* ; I want to be cuddled. Hug me well ; hug me in your arms.”

The child was very fond of nestling thus, held soft and close against her mother’s bosom. She was a gentle, affectionate little creature ; demonstrative in her own manner, and loving to be petted and caressed, and made much of, in return. She had a pretty fondling way of climbing up upon her mother’s knee, to kiss her, and to creep within her arms ; where she would lie quietly, and happily, without stirring for a considerable space of time, contented with the mere sense of repose, of snug safety, and pleasant cherishing.

Now, tired out with her game of romps, lulled by the silence, composed into complete rest, by the comfort of her position (for who can hold a child with the magic,—the instinctive consulting of its accommodation in every limb, as a mother does ?)—the little one fell into a deep slumber. Lady Capulet still sat thus, when an attendant announced his highness, the Florentine prince.

The young man entered, and was coming towards her with an eager step ; but the sight of the child sleeping in her arms, and, yet more the calm of her own manner, seemed to affect him with a sudden impression, that made him pause in his approach.

The lady held out her hand smilingly, with a grave sweetness of look, and welcomed the prince ; while she besought his excuse that she could not rise to receive his grace, burdened as she was with the babe in her arms.

He took the seat she proffered, on the couch beside her ; he raised the extended hand to his lips ; but there was something in the very frankness, and kind

case with which these courtesies were tendered by her, which made them somehow the less welcome to him.

“ In the glare of a ball-room, in the confusion of a crowded assemblage, your image intoxicated me with the majesty of its beauty,” whispered the young prince; “ but in the tranquillity of this scene, my heart is subdued to the full sense of your perfections. It is your will, then, that I should be utterly powerless to restrain the avowal of the passionate admiration with which all this fills me? You must have seen it;” he hurried on; “ you must have perceived the rapture which the mere contemplation of your beauty, at humble, hopeless distance, caused me; judge, then, how irrepressible the transport, which now hurries me into this mad avowal; judge it—judge it leniently—and forgive it; for it is you that have hastened it, by thus showing yourself to me, in your most winning, your most irresistible aspect. In your own home, in the gentle fulfilment of your motherly character, in the repose and retirement of such a scene as this—ah, a thousand times more irresistible, than in all the lustre of jewels, and of surrounding suffrage.”

Lady Capulet made no attempt to withdraw the hand he had seized, and upon which he was pouring out his ardour of declaration; she even abandoned it to his grasp, and suffered him to press those kisses upon it, which he seemed no more able to restrain, than the passionate words he uttered.

“ If I have myself brought on this avowal, as you say, my lord, believe that it was with no light thought of coquetry—no vain and heartless wish to secure to myself the honor of a conquest over such a heart as yours; for to inspire even a passing liking in such a heart as your grace’s, should be a triumph: but it is because I believe I know the full worth, the nobleness, the honor and generosity of that heart, that I now appeal to it, to strengthen me against the weaker part of myself, and to aid the higher and better part of my nature. I will confess to you, that I cannot take de-

light in such a passion as you avow. That even could I return it, it would be a source of misery and self-reproach to me, inasmuch as mutual, it would abase me in my own eyes, and existing on your side alone, I could not acquit myself of ingratitude. But I cannot return it; and I will not wrong you, by accepting a love which I cannot requite with one as sincere."

"I pray you, bear with me, my lord, and hear out what I have to say;" continued she, as she saw the prince about to interrupt her. "I will prove to you how highly I esteem the heart you offer me, by entreating you to believe that it is capable of a far higher passion than the one you now believe it to be filled with. It is capable of love—exalted love—love for a pure woman; such as I should not be, could I accept yours. It is capable of love, exclusive love, for a woman whom you could make all your own; it is capable of love, true and genuine love, for her who should be able to give you true and genuine love in return—which I never can."

"But why—why may I not hope that the force of the passion I feel for you, shall in time excite some pity, some tenderness towards me?" burst from the prince's lips. "Why did you encourage my hope by allowing me to come hither, to behold you in this soft, enchanting domesticity, to speak to you in this blessed privilege of home-freedom, and ease of privacy, if you felt not some touch of compassion, which may bid me presage future and farther relenting?"

"Forgive me, my lord, if I have indeed unwittingly caused you deeper pain by the step I have taken; but I could think of no other, than this, of perfect candor, to prove to you how high is my esteem and regard for yourself, and how anxiously I would preserve yours towards myself."

"You would fain persuade me of your esteem, and you withhold your love; you would accept my regard, while you reject my love! Be generous, lady; take

what I lay at your feet ; and give that which I covet. Love, love alone will satisfy me ;—love bestowed and received.”

“ Dear prince, I do love you. I love your worth, your nobility of soul. But it is because I do love them, that I desire to see their treasures reserved ; and not wasted upon one who has no affection with which to reward them,—one who is already a wife.” Lady Capulet’s voice sank to a whisper, as she uttered these last words.

“ And yet it is said that he to whom she belongs, is but too insensible of her merit ; that he devotes to idle gallantries, the time which he should dedicate to her perfections ;” said the prince.

Lady Capulet writhed beneath this confirmation of the publicity to which her husband’s preference for the society of other women had attained. But she would not let even this pang swerve her from the course she had resolved on. She paused for a second, as if to gather resolution ; then added, with a firmer tone : “ I will be entirely frank with you. I will give you incontestable proof that I do indeed tender your worth dearly, by trusting it with a secret ; by confiding to you, my lord, my inmost heart, which has never been hitherto shown to a single human being, in the perfect unreserve that it is about to use towards you.”

Her manner involuntarily betrayed so deep an emotion, that the prince’s sympathy could only show itself in a silent and earnest respect.

“ Pity me, my lord ;” she said. “ I love my husband ; and I have too fatal reason to believe that he loves not me.” Her head sank on her bosom ; and a few tears of inexpressible bitterness fell from her eyes. In another moment she struggled to resume composure ; the voice was saddened and tremulous,—though it gained firmness as she went on,—with which she said :—“ You now know why it is impossible I can give you the passionate feeling which can alone duly reward that which you at present unhappily en-

tain for me, dear prince. I am too proud to sue, where I could wish to reign. The heart of the man I love must make me its mistress, by willing gift of itself to me ; not by cession. I cannot demand, what I even die to want ; and if I am never to possess my husband's love, but by a mean appeal to his pity, I will go to my grave unblest. I can never cease to desire it ; but I will never entreat for it. He shall never know from me, unsolicited by him, the love that exists in my heart. But as I feel that that love will ever exist ; that no other love will ever supplant or extinguish it, so believe, dear friend, that I have no hope to offer you ; and that I should have done an injury to your noble heart, had I not confided all to it, thus ingenuously."

The prince had no words for the fulness of his feelings ; but his eyes, and the fervour of his manner, spoke sufficiently.

"Since I see that I have your sympathy, your interest in my behalf, dear prince, let me ask one comfort at your hands."

"It is your own generous heart, that in its kindness, devises comfort for me, by telling me how I may minister to yours, dear lady ;" murmured the prince.

"Well then, grant me this boon ; let me have your friendship instead of the love, of which I confess myself unworthy ; and to your friend make promise that you will use you best endeavour to withdraw your affection whence it at present harbours, that you may have the inestimable gift ready to bestow on the best and fairest lady you can find. To the end that you may make diligent search for such a woman, you shall give me your word that you will bid farewell to Verona for the space of a twelvemonth."

"You banish me then from your side ?" said the young prince. "You talk of friendship,—of confidence in me ; and you will not trust me."

"Be reasonable, dear friend ;" she said gently. "Let us be honest with each other, and with our-

selves. Such trust, is rashness,—hazard ; not trust. It is no proof of kindness and confidence, to charge you with an onerous trial of fortitude—to burden you with a perpetual temptation. Travel for a year. Return at the end of that period, if you will, to your friend ; and tell her that change of scene, fresh ideas, have stimulated you to worthier ambitions, while they have been successful in effacing the old weakness.”

“ I shall but have to tell her that my friendship, call it how I may, is still, must ever be, love,—love alone ;” sighed the prince.

“ Believe me, dear, dear friend,” said lady Capulet, with an earnestness that spoke her sincerity, “ I would far rather find you anew devoted, than constant. Bring me a bride in your hand ; and your old love will rejoice, as her and your true friend.”

The prince shook his head. But her manner was too kind, and calmly affectionate, for him to offer one word in opposition to her expressed hope.

“ I may never hope for such another opportunity of taking my leave unwitnessed, dearest lady. I cannot submit to part from you, in the presence of strangers, and in conventional form. After what has passed between us—after all your sweet candour, your gentle goodness—you must ever be a woman apart from all others in my heart and imagination. Let me bid you farewell at once. To-morrow I shall set out on my pilgrimage, in obedience to your wish. Heaven have you evermore in its care ! And find some way, in its own wisdom, to bring consolation to your wounded heart, as you have to-day dealt consolingly and tenderly with mine. God bless you, beloved lady !”

The prince knelt at her feet ; and straining her hand against his bosom, held it there, whilst he fixed his eyes upon hers in a mute leave-taking.

Lady Capulet could not refuse to their passionate supplication, the farewell token they besought ; she stooped forward, and pressed her lips upon his eye-lids, as she echoed the valediction.

The prince, for one instant, passed his hand round her head, and drew her face closer against his own ; then starting up without another word or look, he hurried away.

He had not been gone many minutes, when Capulet entered the room, with an open letter in his hand. He was in great perturbation ; and in his usual exclamatory, incoherent way, gave vent to his agitation, stammering out its cause :—

“ See here, my dear Angelica ! This terrible letter ! My poor friend ! What must be his grief ! And her unhappy mother, too ! Ah ! the sweet, sweet Leonilda ! So young, so light-hearted ! To be snatched away in the very flower of her age ! A flower ! A very blossom ! ”

Lady Capulet turned deadly pale. “ How, my lord ? What mean you ? Can it be that—— ” She gasped. She could not speak the terrible question.

“ Too true ! Too true ! Alas, alas ! The poor young thing ! The sweet Leonilda ! She is dead ! My good Angelica ; I see that thy kind heart feels this blow. I was too sudden in telling thee the news. The wretched parents ! My poor friend ! Too well he knew—but I must hasten to him. I have ordered horses—I shall set forth instantly, to carry what comfort I can, to my unhappy friend. He knew I loved her with well-nigh as fond and fatherly an affection as his own. Yes, yes, my presence will be a comfort—I will set forth at once. Lie thee down, gentle Angelica. Lie back on this couch. There, there ! I did wrong to break the fatal news so abruptly to thee. I should have used more precaution. But who can think wisely in time of trouble ? Not I, alas ! my brain and heart are confused together. Let me place the child by thee ; she hath not awakened with all this misery. Poor little innocent ! Thou’rt ghastly white, kind wife ; thy very lips are colorless. ’Tis thy good heart ! I will send thy women to thine aid. Meantime, fare thee well, I must away. Thou thyself

wilt bid me lose no moment, I know, in hastening to my poor friends."

Her husband stooped ; kissed her forehead ; and then bustled away, with tip-toe step, and fussy ostentation of quiet ; in his own peculiar fashion.

Lady Capulet lay perfectly still. She had not fainted ; but she was as if stunned, by the announcement of Leonilda's death. Could she doubt to whom this death was owing ? Was it less her deed, than if she had dealt the stroke with her own hand ? There had been no hint that the letter contained any allusion to violent, or suspiciously sudden death. But she remembered only too well, that Onofrio had distinctly said, the murder should be so effected, as to leave no trace of outrage. She was then a murderess !—a secret assassin !

The little Juliet, whom her father had placed on the couch beside lady Capulet, now stirred and awoke. The child raised itself on its arm, and looked about ; then seeing where it was, crawled, crowing and laughing, over its mother, and began patting her face, to coax her into a game of baby play. Shrinking from its innocent mirth and caresses, as something she had no right to indulge in,—blackened and guilty as she felt,—lady Capulet was relieved, when the nurse and other women attendants came into the room, to take away the little one, and to offer assistance.

She declined this latter, saying she had not swooned, but wished to remain where she was ; desiring that she might be left perfectly undisturbed.

Her own women obediently withdrew ; but the nurse, accustomed in her domestic capacity, and from indulgence, to have her own way, officiously insisted upon staying to cheer her poor lady with some remarks upon the calamity that had occurred.

"The messenger, who brought the letter to my lord, was taking a flask of wine, and a ration, after his hard ride,—well, sorrow's dry, and aqua vitæ moistens grief not amiss,—when I chanced to go below. Now

I'm above mixing and consorting with the flirt-gills of maids, and saucy jacks and knaves of fellows, the lower-servants, being as I'm an upper-servant myself, —but sometimes for change, and for kindness' sake, I do go among 'em for an odd quarter-hour or so—so I heard the groom-messenger tell our Peter of the sad mishap of his young lady's death. Poor lamb ! It seems she was found dead in her bed, as composed as you please. She must ha' died in her sleep, with a prayer in her mouth, for she was smiling like any angel, and her hands were folded like a saint's on a tombstone. No chrisom babe, safe be-hung with relics and pazienzi, is surer than she is, of going to Heaven,—rest her soul !”

“ Pr'ythee, good nurse, leave me, I would fain be alone ;” murmured lady Capulet.

“ Well ! we must all die, Lord knows ; more's the pity. But for one so young, and so full of life and spirit, and so blooming,—the joy and very apple of her parents' eyes, as I may say, poor folks ; 'twould ha' been well for them, if they, instead of her, had been called away ! But there's no picking rotten-ripe, nor yet mellow fruit, 'mongst those one'd choose for Death's devouring. He hath a sweet tooth in his skull, and he'll e'en pluck the sweetest and freshest first, an' he takes the fancy. There was my own honey-tempered Susan, pretty pippin ! a sweeter babe ne'er drew breath, so good, and so milk-mild ! Well, she was too sweet for me, so Heaven let Death take her.”

“ In pity, good nurse, leave me for a season ; I think I could rest ;” again pleaded her mistress.

“ Ay, do ; we all have need of rest ! 'Tis a sorrowful world ! Heaven rest all Christian souls ! Poor young lady ! Well, grieving won't bring her back out of her grave !” And at length the nurse took her departure.

The instant she had left the room, lady Capulet got up from the couch, and staggered into the balcony that

overhung their spacious gardens. Here she drew freer breath. She could bare her forehead to the cool air of evening; she could look forth upon the extent of lawn and grove; she could let her spirit range abroad, and her eyes wander into the blue sky, high and remote among the few stars, that were now beginning to shine forth. She seemed able to cast off that stifling oppression which had weighed upon her, whilst lying there, within the room. To woo yet farther this sense of relief, she left the house, and went forth into the garden; where she could join freedom of movement to freedom of breathing. The fresh air, together with the action, restored her to herself; and she continued for some time pacing up and down one of the broad paths, where the gentle plashing of a fountain was the only sound that broke the prevailing stillness. Evening deepened into night, and the stars had become myriad, ere the lady thought of resting. She instinctively wished to tire out her body, that it might become exhausted, and so her mind be compelled to find a respite with it, from the terrible unrest that kept possession of her. Just as she, at length, thought of allowing herself to sit for awhile, upon one of the garden-seats, a man stole from one of the covered alleys near to where she stood.

It was Onofrio.

She with difficulty suppressed a cry of horror, at the sight of him.

“Begone! Murderer! ruffian! What do you here?” burst from her lips in vehement whisper.

“You have heard then?—you know,—you have learned, that fate hath——”

She scarcely listened to his words, in her agitation.

“Begone, I say, villain!” she repeated. “How dar’st thou venture hither, after thy black deed? Begone, I say!”

She had put her hand before her eyes, or she would have seen the look of surprise that came upon his face.

“Not so, lady;” he said, after a moment’s pause.

“Why should I be gone, when I came expressly to tell you, that your wish is accomplished. She you hated, is removed from your path; the bearer of such tidings, should deserve welcome—reward—not reviling.”

“Accurst the hour when first I beheld thee, fellow. It was thou who temptedst my soul astray, by offering the very means of evil, I could not otherwise have commanded. But for thee, I had been still guiltless.”

“Be not so sure of that, madam;” said the fellow. “Once wish such evil may befall, and the soul is already on its way to seek the means. Had you not stumbled on myself to place them within your grasp, you would soon have hit upon other means of compassing your purpose. However that may be, your purpose is accomplished—your ends are gained. It is fit that I should obtain mine. My object is more money. I cannot live without it—I must have it. So give me some.”

“Dost thou dare to ask more of me?” said lady Capulet.

“Nay, madam, the purse you gave me when we spoke together in yonder old church, is empty—all gone. I must have more. I tell you, I cannot live without it; and I desire to live.”

“How, villain? Dost thou think I will aid thee to live—I who know——”

“Tush, madam,” interrupted Onofrio; “we both know that of each other, which makes it safest to agree together. I will deliver you of my presence,—which seems less welcome than I could have supposed, considering the news I bring,—and you will deliver me the sum I require.”

“What is the sum you require?” said she, hastily.

“What have you about you, madam?” he said.

She drew forth her purse. He examined it quickly. “’Tis well filled—and with gold—it shall suffice; for the present, at least. Meantime, farewell, lady. I will not linger, both for mine own sake, and for yours;

and moreover, for the sake of my promise to you, which I thus promptly keep, to show you good example for the future,—when we may meet again. Now, farewell !”

He was gone ; and lady Capulet fled back to the house.

When Capulet returned home, his wife had the repeated agony of hearing all the circumstances of Leonilda’s death related, with every variety of detail and comment.

He dwelt, with the sincere regret of a friend, mixed with all the mournful complacency of a gossip-lover, upon the particulars of the event, as well as upon the consequent grief of the parents, and the general consternation of the household. For it was awfully sudden at last, he said, although he and his friend, her poor father, had known for some time that it must happen.

In answer to the involuntary expression of surprise that escaped lady Capulet at these words of her husband’s, he went on to explain, that, just previous to the conclusion of their first visit to Mantua, she might remember that Leonilda’s father had been so much indisposed as to keep his bed ; that this indisposition had been in consequence of his having learned from the physician who attended in the house, that the young, apparently so blooming, so healthful Leonilda, was the victim of a secret insidious disorder, which might carry her off at any given moment. That she had, in fact, a heart-disease, from which nothing could save her. That it was the knowledge of this circumstance confided by the unhappy father to himself, which had caused Capulet’s settled melancholy, on the occasion of their leaving their friends’ house. He told his wife that he had been enjoined, nay vowed to secrecy, by his friend, lest by any chance, the knowledge of her daughter’s peril should reach the mother ; and that this had been the reason of his never having breathed a word on the subject, even to her. He

said that when he had last left Mantua, his hopes had revived ; for Leonilda had been so more than usually well and gay, that he could not believe her to be doomed to early death. He and his friend had succeeded in persuading each other, that the physician's fears had magnified the reality—certainly the imminence of the danger ; and had accordingly indulged hopefuller thoughts, and higher spirits. But alas ! The blow had fallen when least expected. She had taken leave of her parents at night, all apparent health and animation ; and in the morning, she was found dead. The features were calm—the limbs composed—but they had evidently been many hours cold. Unhappily, the help she might have had, when first seized, was not at hand ; for it was found that her waiting-maid, Petronilla, who usually slept in the dressing-room adjoining her young lady's bedchamber, had that very night absconded,—it was supposed, in company with a man of disreputable character, who had long been known to court the girl, and had often been caught lurking about the grounds. This last circumstance it was which (joined to the confirmation afforded by her late interview with the villain himself) destroyed lady Capulet's scarce-born hope that Leonilda's death might, after all, have been owing to natural causes, and not to the murderous hand of Onofrio. She too well felt, that though the unhappy parents, and her own husband, had not a suspicion but that Leonilda had submitted to a decree of Heaven's will, in the mortal disorder with which it had seen fit to visit her,—yet that she alone knew the secret of her fate. She knew that Onofrio's connection with the treacherous Petronilla, had afforded the facile means of his entering her lady's sleeping-room, where he had doubtless effected his purpose, stopping her breath, as she lay, in her bed.

The lady was spared no item of the fearful detail. She was forced to hear over and over again all the minutiae ; from the pale face of the victim, when the

body was discovered, and the despair of the father and mother, down to the amazement of her fellow-servants at Petronilla's flight. "And one of the strangest circumstances in the whole affair, is," Capulet would add, "that although not a doubt can be entertained, that the wench went off with the fellow, —robber, thief, and for aught I know, cut-throat as he may be—she did not touch a single article of her mistress's property. Leonilda's jewel-case was unrifled—not so much as a grain of coral taken. What the girl's object, in leaving so kind a mistress as sweet Leonilda ever was, cannot be guessed at. But love, I suppose! It's the way with them all! The baggage could not resist a soft speech or two, I'll be bound. Like her betters! like her betters!"

But lady Capulet's severest trial was still to come. Her husband, in his kindly-meant endeavour to withdraw the afflicted parents from their brooding grief, entreated them to quit the monotony and seclusion of their own home, and come to his, for a time. He invited them to Verona, that its society, its stir, and animation, might afford a salutary distraction to their sorrow. The mere change of scene, he contended, would do them good. They yielded to their friend's urgency, and came.

It was the sight of them, which formed lady Capulet's cruelest penance. As she beheld those mourning habits, those woe-begone faces, the forlorn misery of those desolate parents, and conscience whispered to whom they owed their desolation, she could scarce endure the load of remorse that weighed her to the very earth. As she viewed their fresh burst of sorrow, at sight of the little Juliet, her heart smote her with the thought of who it was that had bereft them of their only child. She asked herself in the bitterness of her soul's self-reproach, how she deserved the blessing of a daughter, who had deprived this father and mother of theirs. Truly, her pangs were fierce enough, to punish even her guilt.

So little, however, is often guessed of the true springs of feeling, by human beings most nearly associated, that these throes of her accusing conscience passed for the emotions of generous sympathy ; and raised lady Capulet in the eyes of her husband, for the evidence they gave of tenderness towards their unhappy friends in their distress. When her eyes were unable to meet theirs from inward reproof, she seemed but sharing their downcast sorrow ; and while most self-abased and conscious of having caused their unhappiness, she looked most warmly penetrated with interest in its present sufferings. These tokens, as they appeared to her friends themselves, of loving sympathy with their afflictions, on the part of lady Capulet, endeared her especially to them. They felt grateful and peculiarly soothed, that one who usually had the name of being somewhat lofty, reserved, and even cold in character, should show herself thus compassionate and tender in their behalf ; and this preference, this gratitude of theirs, so ill merited, was an additional sting to lady Capulet,—another bitter drop in the penal draught she now daily and hourly swallowed.

Among the diversions which Capulet's well-intended zeal devised for the entertainment of his friends, was a gladiatorial exhibition to be given in the arena of the Verona amphitheatre. All the fashionable world were to be there ; and he insisted that the sight, the society, the animation and excitement of the scene, would serve to revive and interest them. As usual, they yielded to the bustling precipitancy with which he always settled a point of this sort.

He made a large party of friends,—his own peculiar adherents, and favorite associates, which included an extensive circle. There were seats taken beforehand, for the occasion ; and there was much bowing, and recognition, and friendly greeting, among the various parties, as they successively arrived, forming together, one vast concourse. The entire bulk of Verona's in-

habitants seemed assembled there ; the royal suite, consisting of the Scaligeri family,—then rulers in Verona,—occupied a sort of covered dais, or place of honor, erected over the principal entrance ; the nobility and gentry filled the spacious ranges of seats, that encircled the amphitheatre ; while the mob of commonalty, attendants, artizans, labourers, idlers, the poorer order of all kinds, were permitted to fill the standing-room, in the vomitories, or gateways, affording entrance to, or egress from, the amphitheatre.

Among some of the first arrivals in the vast assemblage, was Capulet's large party. As they were about to take their places, a sort of tumult arose. There was some misunderstanding, apparently, about the occupancy of certain seats, a mistake as to the order of time in their having been bespoke, a difference of opinion as to the right of precedency ; it was scarcely discoverable, what was the precise origin of the contention. But contention there evidently was. Tybalt's voice was heard high in dispute. Dissension swelled into quarrelling,—quarrelling into brawl. Taunts were bandied to and fro ; threats were muttered and exchanged ; defiance was hurled at each other ; rapiers and poniards were drawn. It threatened to grow into a serious affray ; when the arrival of the prince Escalus, and the rest of the royal party, stilled the disputants, and compelled them to give up the contest. It was generally whispered, that the two great rival factions, the two principal houses in Verona—the Montagues and the Capulets—seized this opportunity of showing some of their scarce-smothered rancour against each other ; but the majority of reports agreed in allowing that young Tybalt had been most rash and violent in his demonstrations of insolence and stubbornness when asserting his right to the disputed places ; while the youthful Romeo,—lord Montague's son,—had behaved with great spirit and temper ; and that, indeed, it was mainly owing to his gallant forbearance, that the matter ended more amicably than

might have been at first expected. Many agreed, that though a mere stripling in years, he had evinced the judgment and grace of a finished gentleman ; and augured highly of his future excellence. These praises of young Montague seemed particularly to gall master Tybalt, who could not repress his ill-humour for some time after he had rejoined his uncle's party and taken his seat among them. He continued to vent disdainful mutterings against " that Romeo boy—that Montague fellow—who with the rest of his tribe, Benvolio, and the others, hold their heads so high. And all, forsooth, on account of their having got among their set, that lad Mercutio, a scape-grace ; a good-for-nought ; but because he can claim kindred with prince Escalus, must needs be esteemed a worthy companion, whose society is an honor. Why, we number among our set, a kinsman of the Prince's, too, if that be all ; young Paris, a count, and a very king of good fellows. He never contradicts,—never opposes. He is a chum worth having. But as for Mercutio, that those chaps Romeo and Benvolio, are so proud of knowing, why he——"

" Come, come, let's have no more of this vulgar sneering ; 'tis unseemly—'tis not gentlemanly—let's have no more of it, nephew ;" said Capulet. " The lads are well-conducted lads, as I hear ; though I take little heed of the Montagues, and their promising scions, any more than thou dost. Still let us treat them like gentlemen, while we meet only on neutral and social ground."

" Then I care not how soon I meet them on ground where I may tell them my mind plainly, with my hand and arm to enforce my plain meaning, uncle ;" retorted Tybalt. " The open field would be the best ground I could meet them on, to give them a taste of my meanings—both mentally and bodily."

" Meantime, hold thy peace, until thou canst declare war, good cavaliero nephew ; I tell thee this is no place for mutterings and defiance."

The youth bit his slips, to conceal his mortification at his uncle's rebuke ; but he obeyed, and spoke no word more during the remainder of the show.

The sports in the arena proceeded.

Lady Capulet had her little girl upon her knee, the father having wished Juliet to be brought, thinking the show would amuse her. The mother had been sitting lost in thought, little attentive to the scene that was passing before her, when she suddenly felt the soft hand of her child against her cheek, drawing her face down to hearken, while she whispered :—"Mamma, who is yonder man, that keeps his staring eyes fixed upon us?"

Lady Capulet looked in the direction of Juliet's other hand, which pointed towards one of the vomitories nearest to the spot where they were seated. Among the crowd, she distinctly saw the man her child meant. It was Onofrio.

She felt herself turn sick and faint, and deadly white. She closed her eyes for a moment ; struggling for composure, for strength, to prevent herself from swooning as she sat. Presently she heard her little one murmur, as if relieved at getting rid of an ugly sight :—"He's gone now. I'm glad."

She took courage to open her eyes, and turn them towards the spot he had so lately occupied. He was no longer there. And the mother, too, took a deep breath ; of relief, of satisfaction.

The little Juliet had a remarkable shrinking from all disagreeable, painful, or offensive objects. She had none of the curiosity, or excitement, about distasteful things, that some children cannot help feeling. She seemed to have an instinctive avoidance for whatever could shock, or disgust, or displease her ; while, on the contrary, towards aught that possessed beauty, or grace, in shape, color, or intrinsic quality, she was irresistibly attracted. She loved flowers ; she was fond of smelling them, playing with them, and contrasting their varied form and hue. She loved all the

beauties of sky and landscape ; and took more pleasure in natural objects than a child of her age usually demonstrated. She liked, too, looking at pictures. She took a fancy to all handsome, pleasant-mannered people ; and hung about those who were soft-voiced, gentle, and kind. She was never shy with strangers ; excepting with those who were forbidding, either in person or behaviour. She manifested her preferences in a very ingenuous, unmistakable mode ; and would hold up her rosy mouth in thanks, or wind her little arms around the neck of those to whom she was partial.

But return to the amphitheatre. During the continuance of the entertainment, lady Capulet saw no more of the face that had so struck her child, even at first sight ; and herself, on only too fatal a recognition. But at the close, as their party were making their way through the crowd, to their coaches ; there, in the midst of the throng, the lady again beheld Onofrio. He was evidently watching for her. Their eyes met ; and she vainly endeavoured to master the agitation that took possession of her. He made no attempt, however, to address her, but stood motionless ; apparently, merely one of the gazing idlers, who loitered there to see the grandes pass to their equipages. But she had nearly betrayed herself, by the mingled terror, shame, and anger, that burned within her, when she saw the ruffian actually come in contact with those two unhappy parents, whom he had rendered childless. To her unspeakable abhorrence, both of herself and of him, she saw the fellow, as they passed close to the spot where he stood, instead of receding, and withdrawing from their path, suffered them to touch him, —him who had been their daughter's murderer.

Had her life depended on it, she could not have forborne the withering glance she cast upon the villain for his hardened audacity ; but he did not seem to heed it. His hard mahogany face preserved the same unmoved look, with which he had regarded her from the first.

Some days elapsed ; and then their Mantuan friends besought Capulet and his lady to excuse them, but they could no longer conceal from themselves that their own home was after all the only place where they could hope to find resignation beneath their load of sorrow ; solitude, seclusion, they said, best assorted with their withered hopes ; and that if any chance of restored serenity remained for them, it was there they must seek it. They thanked his friendly zeal for the cure it had sought to effect ; but they felt it was a vain expectation.

There was no gainsaying these bruised and broken hearts. They took leave of their friends ; and on both sides, it was felt that the farewell, was in all probability, eternal.

Full of the thoughts to which their departure gave fresh poignancy, lady Capulet rambled slowly along the banks of the Adige. She had been taking her little girl an evening walk by the river side, attended only by her nurse, to carry the child, when it was tired of being on its feet. The lady's fit of abstraction, had rendered her no very amusing companion ; and the little Juliet receiving few answers from her mother, to her lively questions, had lingered behind to prattle with her nurse. They were thus, some considerable distance in the rear of her, when lady Capulet was startled from her reverie, by a well-known voice not far from her. Her eyes had been fixed on the ground, in her deep musing, but though she raised them, and cast them hurriedly around, she could see no one. But she heard the voice of Onofrio say :—
“ I am near to you, but I do not step from my concealment, for your sake, as you would probably not care to have me seen by other eyes than your own. Send the child and her attendant away ; I must speak with you.”

“ By what right, dare you dictate thus to me ? ” and she trembled as much with resentment, as with fear.

“ You know best by what right. I need not re-

mind you of the parley in the old church—of the night conference in your own garden—of her whom you——”

“Be silent!” she exclaimed. Then, turning, she met the nurse, who was advancing with the child in her arms. The little Juliet, partly by dint of talking and walking, partly owing to the fresh air from the water, was looking sleepy, and was drowsily leaning her head upon the nurse’s shoulder.

Lady Capulet took advantage of this circumstance to bid her woman hasten home with the child, that it might not risk taking cold by sleeping in the open air.

As the nurse obeyed and returned quickly to the house, lady Capulet thought, “How low am I fallen, when a paltry excuse, a mean subterfuge is seized, to evade a servant’s observation! O, fatal first step in guilt! To what vile and pitiful shifts as to what enormity of crime may you lead!”

Onofrio stood beside her.

“Best waste no time, lady, for your sake, and mine own. We may be seen, and neither you nor I, care to attract curious eyes.”

There was something in the way in which the fellow always contrived to remind her of the hold he had upon her, from the circumstance which had associated them, by speaking of her and himself thus together, in a tone of joint equality, and familiar ease, particularly goading to the lofty lady Capulet. But she repressed the words which arose to her lips in reproof of his manner.

“I want more money—much more;” he went on. “I must have enough to last me some time; for there’s hard ado to get at you, when I need fresh supplies. I saw you up yonder at the amphitheatre, t’other day; but I had too much consideration for a lady’s scruples, to address you before all your fine friends. I have some generous feeling for you—for you have shown me some,—nay, much. But you must reward me for my forbearance. If you want

me not to haunt your steps, to dog your path, at every turn, you must make it worth my while,—you must put it in mine own power,—to keep away. Give me money enough to live upon, far from here.”

“What sum will suffice?” she said.

He named a large one.

“I have not nearly so much with me. Do you imagine that I carry a sum in my purse, that might tempt a chance robber to way-lay me, as well as be at hand to satisfy the extortion of a known ruffian?”

“Neither taunts, nor hard names shall move me from my purpose, madam. You are welcome to use them; they are some ease to the heart, I know. So out with them, as often, and with as many of them, as you choose; but consider whether it be for your own advantage, to stay bandying them here with me, at the hazard of incurring eaves-droppers’ notice.”

“If I consent to give you the sum you ask, where and how can I convey it to you?” she asked.

“I will make that sure, lady. You have a key to the garden-gate which, I know, admits you from this river-side walk to your own grounds. I have too long prowled about them, for some time past, in hope of meeting you a second night, walking abroad as before, not to know every lawn, grove, terrace, and gate, in the whole range of gardens. I will follow you thither. I will take your promise that you lose no time in going straight to the house, to your own room; that you will provide yourself with the sum I have named, and return without delay to the close embowered-alley, by the fountain,—the spot where we met once before. Give me your word that you will do this, and I will pledge mine in return, to carry all discreetly, and to leave you in peace for a long space of time—for as long a space, as I can make my money eke out a living.”

“And if I refuse to comply with the terms of this infamous exaction?” said lady Capulet.

“I shall know how to make my claims heard;” he

said promptly and calmly. "I shall know how to gain them more numerous auditors, as well as more attentive listeners, than the lady who hath the spirit to employ an assassin, but the meanness to grudge him his hire. Fetch the money, madam ; you had best, depend on't—for both our sakes."

They had reached the garden-gate he had alluded to, by this time. Lady Capulet entered ; sped to her own room ; took from her cabinet the amount demanded (for her husband's wealth, and lavish allowance caused her to be never unfurnished with a considerable sum) ; found Onofrio where she had appointed ; and giving it into his hands, was once again freed from his presence.

Time passed. Months, years, passed ; and at length, so long a space of time elapsed, without lady Capulet's having seen or heard anything more of Onofrio, that she gradually allowed herself to indulge the hope of being indeed released from that accusing presence,—of being freed once and for ever, by his death. The first time this thought flashed upon her, she felt as though a dread shadow had been removed from her path through life,—as though a blessed light of comfort, and renewed strength were shed upon her existence. It seemed as if now she could look up with a cheerful trust, that future good resolves and acts should be permitted to expiate former errors of intention and of deed. She felt that she could commence in earnest, and with the encouragement and solace which virtuous purpose inspires, a new course of moral being. Time had worked its sobering effect upon the passions which had so agitated her soul in early youth. She grew reconciled to her position ; nay, satisfied with the attachments that were hers. She learned to look for happiness from the affections, instead of perpetually craving after an ideal regard. She was now contented to accept the affectionate esteem, the kindness, the indulgence of her husband, in lieu

of that warmth of love,* that refined and exclusive preference, which her girlish heart and imagination had so pined for. She came to take pride and interest in the development of that matchless beauty in her young daughter, which manifested itself more and more with each year, rather than to indulge, as formerly, in her own engrossing thoughts, and self-contemplative feelings.

Juliet's loveliness of person, while still a mere girl, was remarkable. She inherited her mother's strikingly beautiful features, with more softness of expression; her perfection of shape, and dignity of mien, with even yet more of winning grace, and suavity in motion. Her father, too, was a handsome man; his limbs were elegantly turned; he had white, well-shaped hands, and small dapper feet; he possessed a certain aristocratic bearing, and conventional elegance of demearour (when in society, and not bustling and fussing amid domesticities), which were very prepossessing. All the most attractive points in her father, Juliet inherited, together with those which distinguished her mother; while in herself, her parents' personal advantages shone with an added charm of their own. She would have been a celebrated beauty already; had not the accustomed retirement of a young Italian maiden's life, detained her hitherto from general gaze. Her father's mansion, its garden grounds, formed the limits to her sphere of existence. Here she dreamed away her life, in a succession of smiling hours; a child in thought, a child in feeling, a child in pursuit and amusement.

One morning a friend of lady Capulet's came to pay her a visit; and began telling her with much eagerness about a matter, which, she said, she had greatly at heart.

"I own I wish to carry this point, my dear lady Capulet;" said her friend; "and I want your aid, as together, I feel sure, we shall succeed. I think you will feel with me, that the poor young thing has been

aggrieved by this unwarrantable report ; and if it be allowed to gain ground, by any show of credence on the part of us Verona ladies, her character is lost."

"But, my dear friend, you have not yet told me of whom you are speaking ; nor the circumstances which interest you in her behalf, and which are to interest me ;" said lady Capulet, smiling.

"Ah ! just like my giddy head ! My heart always whirls it round and round, and away from the subject it ought to keep to. The more my heart takes a settled interest in any matter, the more it unsettles my head. Let's see ! where ought I to begin ! Oh,—you must know that there is a charming young creature, named Virginia di Coralba (sweet name, isn't it ? her very name, as I say, seems to bespeak her purity), lately arrived in Verona. She is, it seems, an orphan, a rich heiress (by the way, I forget where her estates lie—but somewhere in Calabria, I think she says), travelling about for the benefit of her health, which has suffered much, I understand, from grief at the loss of her parents. Well, would you believe it, my dear creature, that from Venice (where last she was staying for a time), there have come certain whispers, which, if believed, would be highly prejudicial to the character of this sweet young woman. Now I have been introduced to her (by my husband, who met some distant connections of hers in the south, he says, when he made a tour there, some years ago, as a young man) ; and from what I see of her, and hear of her (for she talks with such charming discretion and modesty, and plays the lute like an angel), I won't believe one word of these scandalous tales. To show that I won't, and don't, I'm determined to visit her, and to take all my lady-friends to visit her. Now, your rank, your position in society, my dear, dear lady Capulet, make you all-powerful. Once give your notice, your countenance and support, to this poor young lady, and her title to general respect and consideration are confirmed.

Who would dare to breathe a word against the reputation of any one, whom lady Capulet chooses to visit? All sinister whispers would die away of themselves, the very first time your coach is seen at her door. Let me beseech you, grant me the kindness to order it at once; and let me take you thither. I came for the very purpose. I am dying to have you see her. I know the impression she will produce upon you will confirm mine. How I am running on! But as I say, my heart always runs off with my head. I own I am enthusiastic for the sweet Virginia; and so will you be, when you see and hear her."

Lady Capulet, though amused at her friend, the lady Anatolia's eagerness, consented to her wish; and the two ladies set forth at once to the superb mansion, which the signora Coralba had hired for her residence during her intended sojourn at Verona.

"Does such a place as this look like the lodging an adventuress would choose?" said the lady Anatolia triumphantly, as the coach drove through the entrance to the court-yard. "Adventuresses seldom possess such wealth as this argues, I think?"

"It proves the young lady rich, certainly, as far as the command of money goes;" said lady Capulet quietly.

"She will prove herself rich in all else;" answered lady Anatolia; "in virtue, in discretion, in beauty, in accomplishment. Reserve your judgment until you have seen and heard her; that is all I ask."

The interview with Virginia di Coralba crowned the anticipations of her warm partizan. The lady Anatolia was more than satisfied with its effect. Lady Capulet, who had been prepared to allow somewhat for the exaggerated enthusiasm of her friend, could not resist the combination of beauty, soft manners, and attractive claims to her favor, presented in the person of the fair stranger. A face and person almost childish in their waxen complexion, and infantine slightness; a long sweep of flaxen ringlets; eyes, in

color, like turquoise ; a mouth like a rose-bud ; a shrinking timidity of speech, a humility of voice, a shy glance, a hesitating gesture, made the modesty of her appearance and demeanour amount nearly to bashfulness, in its pretty, submissive, deprecating appeal.

Her two lady-visitors went away charmed with her ; and lady Anatolia was scarce more loquacious in her favour now, than the generally somewhat taciturn lady Capulet.

She seemed quite struck with the fair orphan, and took a lively interest in the difficulties of her position. She warmly espoused her cause, enlisting all the ladies of her acquaintance to show her countenance and encouragement, by their visits and invitations. She was rather surprised to find that her husband took no part in her enthusiasm on the subject. On the contrary, when she had offered to take him with her, the next time she should call upon signora Coralba, and introduce him, he had showed no disposition to go ; but had more than once afterwards avoided accompanying her thither. She thought this strange caprice in one who had always hitherto evinced curiosity and interest at the slightest mention of a pretty woman ; but she settled the question in her own mind, by deciding that he had conceived some prejudice against the young lady ; for once, while she was descanting upon the loveliness of the fascinating Virginia, and persuading a lady of her acquaintance, to join her in negating the sinister reports, vowing that she did not credit one of them, Capulet had dropped a few words, advising her not to be so vehement in her advocacy of a stranger, of whom, after all, he remarked, she knew nothing.

His wife, indignant at anything that sounded like an insinuation against her charming Coralba, would not listen to a covert attack ; but urged him to speak out openly, if he had heard anything against her. But Capulet, as if repenting of having said even thus much, attempted to laugh it off, alleging that he meant nothing by his speech.

“It is really too unjust, the way in which detraction assails the most helpless, and the most innocent;” continued lady Capulet, turning to her acquaintance. “The merest whisper of slander suffices to sully the reputation of a defenceless girl; yet envy scruples not to breathe it against one whose only real crime in their eyes is, her undeniable wealth, beauty, and gentleness. Capulet began to fidget about the room; and at length took his stand at an open window, a little apart from where the two ladies sat conversing. “To let you know one of her many excellencies, I will tell you, that I understand she has a brother,—an unhappy, afflicted, deformed, deaf-and-dumb brother, whom she takes about with her from place to place, wherever she goes, that he may benefit by the change of scene and air.”

Capulet twitched the blossoms from a flowering myrtle that stood in the balcony, near to the open window, at which he was standing; and, as his wife went on, he rubbed them into pellets, dropping them through his fingers, and strewing the ground beneath.

“Virginia herself owned it to me,” continued lady Capulet; “and, with tears in her soft blue eyes, confided to me all about this deaf-and-dumb brother.”

The crushed blossoms were vigorously pelted against the edge of the balcony.

“What, there is a mystery about him?” enquired the lady acquaintance.

“A terrible one;” said lady Capulet. “It seems that he is not only hideous in form,—crooked and deformed; but so loathly in countenance,—frightfully distorted, and covered with a leprous crust as it is,—that he perpetually wears a large dark mantle, enshrouding and enveloping him from head to foot, and a mask upon his face. Out of compassion to humanity, which would be involuntarily shocked and outraged by the sight of such ultra hideousness, even while it pitied the object himself, the unhappy orphans hit upon this method of sparing the feelings of others, while they

indulged their own wish to be together ; for Virginia vows she will never forsake her miserable brother ; and he is, of course, devotedly grateful to her, and would follow her throughout the world."

"A terrible mystery indeed—a fatal secret cause of sorrow, for one so lovely and so interesting as you describe her to be," said the lady. "Poor young thing !"

"Beautiful, patient, generous Virginia !" exclaimed lady Capulet. "And this is the creature a malicious world would defame ! A self-denying martyr ! One who sacrifices all to sisterly affection. I would stake my reputation on the faith of hers ; and feel that I could almost hazard my life to defend her innocence !"

Capulet jerked the remainder of the pellets high up into the air, scattering them far and wide, as he abruptly quitted the window, and whisked out of the room.

The more lady Capulet saw of Virginia di Coralba, the more infatuated she became with her. The sentimental tone the young lady always used in speaking of her unfortunate brother, seemed to lady Capulet the acme of generous tenderness.

In the intimate and frequent communion that now took place between them,—no day passing without lady Capulet's spending a portion of it with the fair stranger,—she, of course, often saw this brother ; that is, as much of him as could be seen. He fully answered the description she had heard of him. He usually sat, huddled in his dark cloak, close-hooded, masked, mute, and apart, unable to take the least share in the conversation. Virginia would speak of him, in his presence, without the least reserve, as his deafness prevented his feelings being hurt by any allusions to his afflicted state.

"Never, no never, will I give up hoping that time, and change, may restore my unhappy brother to himself and to me. I never will consent to cease cherishing the belief, that some blessed day, he may be

cured of his fearful complication of infirmities, so that he shall be able to confront his fellow-beings,—to take his place among humanity. Now, my own delicacy and his, urge this veiling of our afflictions from the public eye. But the moment may come—nay, shall come—when that blighted form—that disfigured face—those uninformed ears, and silent lips, shall be redeemed from the shroud, to which, living, they have been hitherto doomed.”

“Preserve that pious hope, dear Virginia;” said lady Capulet, in a tone of sympathy. “But,” continued she, in a lower voice, “are you quite sure no sense of hearing lingers?—are you certain no sound reaches him? I fancied I saw an involuntary movement—a slight start—when you alluded to his calamity.”

“Not a syllable—not a breath, alas!” sighed Virginia, “e’er makes its way to those sealed portals. I am compelled to write down all I would say to him.”

She drew a small set of tablets, that lay upon the table, towards her as she spoke, and hastily wrote upon them, “Give me your hand, dear brother!”

She held the words before the masked face.

A hand was protruded from the folds of the mantle; and Virginia clasped it fondly, covering it with kisses. Then she held it for awhile in both hers, looking upon it with streaming eyes, and murmuring, “Dear, dear brother! Endeared, by thy afflictions, beyond all brothers! Dearer than ever brother was to sister!”

As lady Capulet threw a glance of curiosity towards this hand, to see whether it bore any evidence of the deformity which blighted his person, she was struck by a singular mark it bore. Immediately below the knuckles, in the centre of the back of the hand, was a deep empurpled scar, cut in the shape of a cross. It was precisely, in shape, hue, and position, similar to one which she had often remarked on the hand of signor Vitruvio, her friend, lady Anatolia’s husband; who had received the wound which was its origin, in

a duel he had once fought. As her eyes fixed upon this remarkable scar, she perceived the hand struggle, as if to disengage itself from Virginia's hold.

"Strange!" she could not help inwardly exclaiming. The impression haunted her. As she drove homeward, she could not help recurring to the circumstance, and musing upon it deeply. She had bidden her coachman take her a somewhat longer drive than usual, that she might have opportunity to ponder the matter. Suddenly she desired him to take her as speedily as possible, to the house of her friend Anatolia.

"Is the lady Anatolia at home?"

"Yes, madam."

"Signor Vitruvio?"

"No, madam. My master has been abroad the whole morning."

"'Tis no matter. I will see them this evening. Bid my coachman proceed the way I first told him."

As she resumed her drive, the thought perpetually reverted.

"Surely never were two marks so singular, yet so precisely alike! On the left hand, too! And then the consciousness apparent in the movement! Strange!"

That evening, when she met her friends, she took care to look particularly at Vitruvio's left hand. She observed that he kept his glove on, for the most part; but in partaking of some iced coffee that was served, he drew it off; and then she had an opportunity of scanning the scar minutely. The scrutiny but confirmed the wonderful identity in the appearance of the mark on the hand of her friend's husband, and on that which had been put forth from the dark cloak which enshrouded Virginia's deaf-and-dumb brother.

Again and again, she repeated to herself:—"Strange! Can it be possible! Can I have been deceived in her? And poor Anatolia!—So enthusiastic—so generously unmistrustful! Can you be playing her false, sly signor Vitruvio? Could your

introduction of the Coralba to your unsuspecting wife, be a mere husband's artifice—a man's trick upon woman's simplicity? I shall see Virginia again to-morrow; and it shall go hard, but I'll get another sight of her brother's left hand."

But before lady Capulet paid her visit to the fair Coralba the next morning; it so happened, that the lady Anatolia called, at an hour still earlier.

The brother sat as usual, muffled, and apparently unmoting.

"Is not your poor brother dull, sometimes, my dear creature?" asked Anatolia of Virginia. "How sadly he must lack amusement, cut off as he is from the usual resources of mankind, among their fellow-men."

"He generally contrives to find entertainment from watching the passers-by from that window, where he usually sits, you see;" answered she. "Besides, he and I, when we are alone, have this means of interchanging our thoughts;" and she took up the tablets.

"Well, to be sure writing is something—but talking is worth a million of jotting down one's passing fancies;" said the lady Anatolia. "Scarce any one's will bear that. I'm sure mine run on in such a stream—such a bubbling stream,—so airy, and so shallow, too, I fear,—that it would never do to turn them into the sobriety of ink."

"Ah! but the consolation of conveying ideas to one who can get them through no other medium," sighed Virginia, as she wrote down:—"We love each other, do we not, my brother, though we have no other means than this, of uttering our feelings?"

She held the lines before the masked visage; and then a hand came from beneath the mantle, and wrote beneath:—"No brother could love—no brother hath the reason to love—his sister, as I love my Virginia."

The eyes of the lady Anatolia happened to fall upon the hand which inscribed this sentence; and she could hardly believe what they beheld, when she saw upon the middle finger, a very peculiar ring, which was ex-

actly like one that her friend's husband, Capulet, constantly wore. She looked at it carefully ; and felt more and more assured of the precise similarity.

"Very extraordinary !" thought she, after she had taken leave, and was driving away from the house. "Can we after all have been deceived in this Virginia ! I know that my friend's husband is reputed a man of gallantry ; but surely, this would be too bold an intrigue even for his enterprise. Pshaw ! impossible ! How could it be ? I am dreaming ! My silly head is off at a tangent as usual, at the mere sight of a ring—a bauble !"

As her carriage left the Coralba's door-way, lady Capulet's equipage drove up. "I have brought you some flowers, Virginia ;" she said, as she entered the saloon, where the brother and sister sat together. "I fancied your brother would take pleasure in their beauty and perfume."

"Like your kind heart to devise means of delight for one whose unhappy state leaves him so few ;" replied Virginia. Then she wrote on the tablets :—
"The amiable lady Capulet has brought hither flowers from her garden, for thy express behoof, my brother."

She held up the tablets, and tendered the flowers. A hand was stretched forth to receive them. It was the left hand ; and lady Capulet's eyes fastened upon it. But no scar was there. It was white and unblemished.

She leaned back in her chair, bewildered, and uncertain what to think ; while Virginia wrote another sentence :—"Will you not write your thanks, dear brother, to the gentle lady who hath had this kind thought for thee ?"

But the tablets were hastily rejected by the left hand,—and with no answer written in return.

Virginia made some farther effort to induce her brother's compliance ; but he seemed as if he either could not or would not understand her wish. Shortly after, lady Capulet arose, and took her leave.

She had no sooner quitted the room, than Virginia

di Coralba exclaimed in a voice which vainly sought to preserve its usual honied accents of bland deference, and soft timidity :—" Why, what in Lucifer's name, could induce you to withhold compliance with my hint ? How came you not to write when I bade you ?"

" Softly, fair Coralba !" said the gentleman in the mask. " This confounded ring would have betrayed me. She would infallibly have recognized it, and then we had both been lost, for she is——"

" Pshaw !" interrupted Virginia. " Why could you not pull off the ring, under your cloak ?"

" It is tight for me ; I snatched, and plucked, and pulled at it, but in vain. It wouldn't come off, all I could do. Besides, if it had, she would have known my handwriting, for——"

" So then, she would have seen characters that have often met her eye in the form of an amorous billet ?" laughed Virginia scornfully. " She is one of your worship's old flames, is she ?"

" She is my wife !" replied the gentleman. " And I am a sorry villain in my own eyes, to have wronged a generous unsuspecting nature, that shows disinterested kindness to a supposed orphan brother and sister ill-used by nature and by the world,—for the sake of one who is an embodied falsehood ; with the tongue of a virago in a mouth of meal ; her very name's a mockery. Virginia ! Coralba ! Herself as hollow an unreality as her sham brother ! ' Deformed,' quotha !" exclaimed he, flinging off the mantle ; " ' Foul-visaged ! ' " chucking the mask on the table ; " ' Deaf-and-dumb ! ' "

" And so she is thy wife ?" said Virginia, in a tone of mingled derision and triumph. " I knew I could not be mistaken ; I discerned thee for one of the married herd, or thou hadst ne'er been admitted of my train. A pretty fellow to rail at me as a falsehood, a deceit ! Pray, what art thou ? A sweet figure thou cut'st here, of truth and honor,—of fidelity to thy wife, of faith to me. Didst not palm thyself off a

gay young bachelor,—a free man,—a devoted gallant? And these are the fellows,—these husbands, these demure rascals, these hypocrite knaves,—who denounce a wife, for a word, a look given to another than to him who hath bought up, with church fees, the exclusive right and title to herself and all she possesses; while they reserve to themselves the privilege of indulging in amusement wherever it offers, and of rating their entertainers for lightness and falsehood, when they tire of them. But I weary of thee, man. Get thee gone; let me see no more of thee.”

“I’ll tell thee what, fair mistress, an’ thou dost not——”

“Begone, I say!” interrupted she, with so unmistakable a decision of tone and gesture, pointing to the door as she spoke, that Capulet thought fit to tarry no longer; but straightway walked out.

His wife had meanwhile driven to her friend the lady Anatolia, and arranged with her, that they would go together on the morrow to the house of the Coralba, keep a close watch upon her and her muffled brother during their visit, and compare notes afterwards of their observation; since they mutually confessed they began to have their suspicions of the fair-seeming Virginia, and her mysterious relation.

As lady Capulet was proceeding homewards, her coach was for a few moments detained by some passing obstruction, from a knot of people, gathered to enjoy the humours of a puppet-show, exhibiting at the corner of a street. Looking out to see the cause of the halt, her eyes fell upon a face and figure, which, through all the change that years had wrought, she instantly recognized. They were those of Onofrio. The fierce black eyes were dulled and hollow; the mahogany face was of a sallower hue; the jet beard that encircled his cheeks and throat was now grizzled; and his form was bent, and shrunken. But there was no mistaking the hardened look, the bronze determination, that characterised the whole man.

Lady Capulet shrank back. But he had seen her. In another second, he was at the coach-window ; his face horribly near to her own, as he rapidly whispered :—“ Be in your garden,—near the fountain,—at midnight. Come provided ; and fail not, as you hold sacred the memory of Leonilda !”

The utterance of that name, which had so long been a mute terror to her thought, completed the overwhelming effect of Onofrio’s sudden reappearance, after she had suffered herself to indulge the hope of never again beholding him ; and lady Capulet sank half fainting upon the cushions of her coach. The next moment it moved forwards ; and the man was out of sight.

The interview at night in the garden,—for she dared not withhold it,—was a repetition of those which had formerly taken place ; and the result, money extorted from her dread of discovery. Onofrio’s protracted absence was explained, by his owning that he had been condemned, for some minor offence in which he had been detected (his identity with the malefactor who had before escaped, being unknown to the local authorities who had passed sentence upon him),—to seven years’ labour as a galley-slave.

He was once more at large,—free to haunt her as before ; and lady Capulet felt her life again darkened. At any moment she was subject to the shame of these secret meetings with a ruffian ; or to the still more intolerable disgrace of his disclosures.

Her wan countenance, and swollen eyes, spoke plainly next morning to her friend Anatolia, of a disturbed mind, and restless night. “ Can poor Angelica have any suspicion of the part her faithless spouse has been enacting in this farce, which the spotless Virginia and her afflicted brother have, I fear me, been playing off upon us Verona ladies ? I should have paid more heed to the rumours from Venice ; at any rate have enquired farther into their source, before I so resolutely set myself to discredit them. But my foolish enthusiasm ! my runaway heart and head !”

It was singular, that lady Capulet, who had formerly suffered such tortures of jealousy on groundless occasions, should now entertain no shadow of mistrust. The conviction of the injustice she had done Capulet in the case of both Giacinta and Leonilda, together with the salutary teaching engendered of remorse, had greatly contributed to her present freedom from misgiving. But partly because few passions so effectually blind the judgment of its victims as jealousy, partly because men are naturally more guarded where there is an amour, than where they feel an honest liking, certain it is, that lady Capulet never for one instant glanced towards her husband, when her eyes were opened to the true character of the pseudo Virginia di Coralba. The two ladies found this artless young creature hanging over her brother, turning the leaves of a portfolio of drawings, for his entertainment.

Lady Capulet said ;—“ I have brought some more flowers for your brother, my dear, since he seemed pleased with those, the other day ;” and without waiting for the ceremony of the tablets, she held them at once towards the muffled figure.

A hand—a left hand—was promptly stretched forth to receive them.

“ No scar !” thought lady Capulet. Aloud, she said :—“ your brother is miraculously cured of his deafness ! I give you joy, Virginia.”

Virginia shook her head. “ I fear his hearing is no better, madam. He must have seen the nosegay in your hand ; he has a keen sight for flowers ; he loves them so.” She sighed with a pretty deploring air.

“ You are fond of flowers then, sir ?” wrote lady Anatolia on the tablets ; which she placed open before the masked man. A hand came forth, and wrote down reply :—“ Beyond expression,—far beyond my poor powers of expression !”

“ No ring !” thought lady Anatolia. Then she added aloud :—“ Virginia, my dear, I have planned a charming scheme for the enjoyment of your brother ;

and indeed, I trust we shall all find much diversion in it. I mean to have all my favorite friends of the party. It is, to go to a country-seat on the Adige, belonging to signor Vitruvio and myself, where there are flowers in profusion, for the delight of your poor brother, and where the rest of us will, I hope, find a few days' agreeable repose from the gaieties and bustle of Verona. What say you, my dear?"

"You are only too good, sweet madam;" replied Virginia di Coralba. "But alas! I fear that my dear brother will be unable to——"

"Tut, tut!" interrupted lady Anatolia, rising to take leave; "I will take no denial, my dear. So be prepared to give us your company to-morrow, when my friend lady Capulet and I will call for you in my coach. Addio! A rivedersi!"

No sooner had the two ladies left the room, than the gentleman in the cloak, sprang from his seat, threw back the hood, plucked off the mask, and burst into a fit of merriment.

The laughing features were neither those of the grave signor Vitruvio, nor of the middle-aged Capulet. They were those of a young gallant, scarce arrived at manhood; so light was the down on his lip, so sparkling and boylike the mirth in his roguish eyes, so thoughtless and careless his whole bearing. He seemed as though frolic,—the love of jest—the light spirits of youth, were his sole guide, his only rule of action.

"And how wilt thou contrive now, fair plotter?" he said. "Thou canst not carry on the disguise for days together, beneath their very eyes—at least, I cannot; it hath well-nigh stifled me already. Ouf!" exclaimed he, as he cast away the cloak. "Fairly caught in thine own springe, my dainty woodhen!" he continued. "Own thyself foiled, at length, by these quiet ladies. 'Faith, they more than suspect thee already, I believe; for didst thou see how they scanned thy deaf-and-dumb brother? If their eyes had had the gift to pierce the folds of my mantle, the

keenness of the glance which they fastened thereon would have riddled it through and through, like an arrow-shot."

"I will yet foil them, not they me!" exclaimed Virginia. "When those women come to-morrow, they shall find the bird, they thought to snare, flown. Till now, I have had no thought but vengeance; henceforth, I will have none save love. Share my flight,—you have no tie here,—go with me to some far-away place where we may live to each other, forgetful of aught that may have crossed us hitherto. I will no longer be known as Virginia di Coralba; you shall adopt some other name than Mercutio."

"Nay, few are the crosses I have either to look back to, or to turn my back upon;" returned the youth. "And, as thou say'st, few ties. But one or two I have, which I would fain not break. I have a generous friend and kinsman in the Prince: two favorite companions in a couple of lads yepeled Romeo and Benvolio; who, though sober-sided youths, yet have a something about them, that would make me loath to leave them. But for thyself, fair Coralba; tell me, 'beseech thee, what vengeance thou talkedst of but now; tell me something of thy story; tell me what malicious devil it is that looks out of thine eye, when thou speak'st the words 'those women.'"

"It is because I glory in tricking and befooling them to their very faces. It has been the aim of my life to entrap as many of their precious mates from them as may be. For it was one of these prudes, these wives, these wedlock purities, these church-bargains, these honest women, forsooth, who defrauded me of the only man's heart I ever cared to possess. In the hour of my agony, when I discovered the wrong she had done me, I vowed to revenge myself upon her whole married sisterhood; and I have already succeeded in immolating a hecatomb of deluded wives upon the altar of my hatred to that one. By the device of disguising all my lovers, in turn, as an afflicted

brother, too hideous to be looked upon, I have managed to evade prying eyes, and to preserve tolerably intact that reputation which was essential to my success with such respectable personages as I had in view,—to my plans of inveigling demure husbands, and of hoodwinking prudent wives.”

“How can'st thou to encourage a miserable bachelor fellow like myself, pretty mistress?” said her companion; “I have no wife whom thou may'st add to thy dupes and victims. What mad'st thou care to enlist a poor single devil 'mongst thy train of bewitched husbands?”

“Thy favor hath a singular resemblance to his, of whom I was beguiled. It was thy likeness to my youthful first love, that attracted me to thee. Just such a gay dauntless spirit sat sparkling in his eyes, as shines from thine. The others I have allured,—I have sought to win; but thou hast won me. Vow that thou wilt be constant to me, and I swear to give up all future thought of conquest for revenge-sake, or for aught else; and will devote myself wholly and solely to thee.”

“Gramercy for thy kind intention, fair Coralba;” said the youth, laughing; “but knowing, as I do, that I can boast no iota of steadiness in all my madcap composition, I were a pre-perjured villain to vow constancy. I cannot, nor I will not feign. Take it how thou wilt. While the fancy lasts, I am thine. When it ceases, I am mine,—mine own man again.”

“Heartless trifler!” exclaimed the lady.

“Not so, madam; I trifle not; I speak the truth. But to palates used to the high-flavored draught, flattery, plain well-water truth seems insipid offence. I crave pardon for commending it to those pretty lips. So, a sugar touch of them to sweeten it, and to take the taste out of both our mouths!”

“I have done with casual caresses forever, either to give or to receive;” said she vehemently. “Give me yours, once for all; or not at all!”

“Then ‘not at all’ for me, fair dame ;” said he, taking up his plumed cap. “‘Once for all’ is too solemn a pledge for a roving blade who loves his liberty beyond aught else. Liberty of tongue, liberty of look, liberty of foot, liberty of love, liberty of thought, word, and deed for me ! Whereupon, I kiss your hands, fair lady.”

“Not even my hand, fair sir ;” she said, drawing it angrily away from him, as he attempted to snatch it to his lips.

“As you will, pretty tyrant. I am not for persevering against a lady’s wish. Her favor must be mine by her own good grace, or I seek not to secure it ; I shall be admitted to salute even her hand, by her own sweet granting, or I touch it not. I have no courage ’gainst disinclination. I cannot strive for reluctant liking. She must be a willing woman, who is a winning woman to me. I submit to your decree. We are henceforth strangers,—enemies, if so you ordain it. Save you, fair foe !”

He bowed and withdrew.

The lady Anatolia had no sooner stepped, with lady Capulet, into her coach, than she said, in her usual parenthetical style :—“I have a scheme to unmask this creature, (who, I fear, is nothing more nor less than an adventuress, after all, my dear friend,) and her brother also. I have my shrewd suspicions that he is not what he seems, any more than she, with her languishing looks, and her soft speech. I shall ask both our husbands to accompany us, without telling them whom they are to meet ; and then we can have their unbiassed opinions, and observation, to confirm our own. How say you ?”

“I think your plan is good, if you can bring it to bear ;” answered lady Capulet ; mentally adding, “Poor Anatolia ! How unsuspecting she is ! I wonder whether signor Vitruvio will indeed be there.”

And as this passed through her mind, her friend was thinking :—“Poor Angelica ! How guileless she is !

What if her wretch should send an excuse, and not come?"

But the experiment was never tried; for, on the following day, Virginia di Coralba had disappeared from Verona.

Some months elapsed unmarked by any new event, when one evening as lady Capulet was returning from vespers, through the by-street that lay between the old church and her own gardens, a paper was hastily thrust into her hand by some person, who, directly afterwards, darted down a turning near, and was lost to sight. She could not distinguish anything of the figure, in the deepening twilight, and in the transient glance she obtained; she only felt certain that it was not Onofrio himself, though she could scarce doubt but that it was some emissary from him, when she opened the paper, and read as follows:—"As you are a christian woman, come to a dying wretch, whose soul cannot release itself from fleshly shackles, until it has told you that which has burdened it for years."

The paper was a foul blotted scrawl; well-nigh illegible. It contained, besides these words, the direction to a miserable lodging-house, in one of the lowest quarters of Verona. He was dying, then! That was the idea paramount in her thought. He was dying,—and she should now at length be securely freed from the one bane of her existence. To witness his very death-agony would lose its terrors for her imagination, in the feeling that thus she possessed assurance he could never again cross her path. The horror of beholding him expire before her, would be merged in the exultation of knowing she need never more dread him, alive,—a living witness against her. It was such thoughts as these that nerved her to the task of setting forth alone, to find the place indicated in the paper. She muffled herself in a plain dark dress and veil; the absence of her husband at a large party, and her daughter's early hour of retiring to rest, affording her the opportunity of leaving home

unobserved under favor of nightfall. She was not long in reaching the street she sought ; for she walked fast, both to avoid notice, and to keep pace with the hurry of her mind. It seemed strange to her, a lady accustomed to all the attendance and luxuries of her rank, to be walking alone by night ; here, among the obscure haunts of poverty. Poverty in its decent struggles, and its despairing recklessness ; its cares, its wretchedness, its squalor ; its laborious industry, its idleness and vice ; in all its various phases, poverty here met her view at every step. There were groups sitting in doorways, breathing the night air cooled by darkness ; it made its way down the close, narrow street, as well as it could, between the tall blocks of houses ; and in the absence of the sun's rays, it seemed to come refreshingly. Lady Capulet looked up at the strip of deep blue sky, thick-set with stars, that appeared through the narrow crevices formed by the confined street, with a sense of relief at the calm elevation of that sight, contrasted with the pent turmoil below, the scene around her. There were blinking lights within the ground-floor rooms ; seen through dingy curtains partly drawn back from doorways which they had served to screen all day. The glimpses into these interiors presented different scenes in succession. Now a laughing party seated round a supper-table, noisy, but good-humoured, making coarse fare pleasant by sociality ; now a solitary woman watching her husband's return, rocking her cradle with her foot, while her hands were employed with a distaff and spindle ; next, a set of men drinking wine out of flasks and skins, while a crowding together of eager heads, and a clamour of voices proclaimed that they were deep in the game of *mora* ; anon, a shop-full of polenta-buyers ; farther on, a solitary barber, lounging in his doorway beneath the shadow of his pole, his dangling brass bason, and his roof-tree ; next to him, a fruit-woman chaffering with a customer ; and next an assemblage of earnest talkers. At the house

which was the object of her search, lady Capulet found the lower room fitted up as a sort of shop, but traffic seemed not the object of its present occupiers, who were numerous, and engaged in an animated discussion, the gist of which was utterly incomprehensible to any but themselves, from the jargon in which it was carried on, the screaming key in which all the voices were pitched, and from the circumstance of their all being at full talk together. The lady did not stop, either to ask questions, or to state her errand. The apartment, and the story it occupied in the house, had been all minutely set down ; so she went straight up the crazy staircase, until she came to the door of the room in question.

It was ajar,—either left open for the admission of air, or from the carelessness of the last person who had gone out. Lady Capulet tapped softly.

“Avanti!” responded a feeble voice. It was a woman’s ; and lady Capulet thought she must have made some mistake in the room. But she entered. The room was in darkness, save what feeble glimmer made its way through the rents in the tattered window-curtain ; not undrawn, though the heat and glare of day had passed. Enough of the place was visible, to show that it was of the meanest description. Barely tables and chairs were there ; a miserable bedstead of the most sordid description occupied one corner, and on this, lay stretched the person who had bid lady Capulet enter. The woman made a faint attempt to raise herself upon her arm ; but the effort was beyond her strength, and she sank back, with a hollow cough, and a moan of pain.

“I fear I have disturbed you ; this is not the room I was directed to,—you are not the person I seek,—the person who summoned me ;” said lady Capulet ; “I fear I am mistaken.”

“Your voice tells me you are right ;” gasped the woman. “Though so many years have passed since I heard it—I remember it.” She paused ; checked

by a fit of coughing that seemed to tear her asunder ; then resumed. “ Draw back the curtain, madam ; though the noonday sun itself would make it no clearer to me, that you are lady Capulet. Your voice suffices. But I would have you cast what light the sky affords, upon my face, that you may see if you can behold in it aught of one you saw many times, years ago.”

Lady Capulet, wondering,—for the woman’s voice had yielded no clue to her remembrance,—drew aside the curtain. The stars shed sufficient light to enable her to distinguish an emaciated form, haggard looks, and a pallid face ; in each cheek a hectic spot, and the muscles of the mouth drawn back with the lips, in that fatal drag, peculiar to deep decline. But in nothing of all this, could she discern a single trace of any one whom she remembered to have seen.

The woman perceived how totally she was unrecognized. She sighed ; and through her almost incessant cough, which pierced lady Capulet’s heart with its ill-omened sound, said :—“ ’Tis as I thought ; care, disappointment, remorse, even more than years, have blotted out all that once made my lord, your husband, call Petronilla the prettiest lass in Mantua.”

“ Petronilla !” exclaimed lady Capulet.

“ Even she ;” replied the dying woman. “ She whom you once knew a brisk, cheerful girl, without a thought of care, without a dream of ill ; now the broken, guilty, dying creature you see.”

She strove to suppress her racking cough, as she went on :—“ But it is because I am guilty, and know how insupportable the sense of guilt is,—it is because I am dying, and would fain have the solace of doing one good deed ere I die, that I have entreated you hither. Listen ; when you first saw me, madam, I was in the service of the young lady Leonilda. You shrink from that name ; but bear the present pain for the sake of after comfort. In an unhappy hour, one festa-day, I met with Onofrio. His flattery, his handsome person, the persevering court he paid to me, won

my girlish heart. I fell madly in love with him ; and once he had discovered this, I was wholly in his power. From what you know of Onofrio, madam, I need not tell you, that with him, to know his power, is to use it."

For some moments the harassing cough overmastered her ; when she had succeeded in stifling it, Petronilla continued :—" When obliged to fly for his life, after stabbing the young rake who insulted me, Onofrio, in my anguish at parting, obtained my ready promise, that if ever he escaped alive, and returned to claim me, I would become his wife. His love for me was, I believe, the one sincere and master passion of his life. Had it not been for my belief in that, I should have died—I should have destroyed myself long since. He did return. It was after his first encountering you, madam. It happened at that time that I had conceived a strong resentment against my young mistress, from some imagined affront that she had put upon me. I fancied that she treated me with unwarrantable caprice,—injustice,—I know not what, now ; but then it appeared to me unpardonable, unbearable. In this mood he found me ; and in this mood, he had little difficulty in persuading me, not only to leave her service and to marry him ; but to revenge the ill-treatment, I believed myself to have sustained, by carrying off her jewels, which we might convert into money sufficient for us to live upon in some distant place. He also got me to promise that I would admit him into the house, on the night we had fixed for our flight, after the family had retired to rest. He did not explain what was his purpose in this ; but I afterwards learned his fatal intent."

Lady Capulet's eyes were fixed upon Petronilla's lips, as though she would have forestalled every word they uttered, ere well formed. She scarce breathed, in the intensity of her eagerness to gather each syllable that came gasping forth.

" I sat that night, counting the hours as they crept

on towards the appointed time, in the little dressing-room adjoining the one in which my young lady slept ;” continued Petronilla. “ I strove to cherish my wrath, to stimulate my resentment against her, by recalling all the circumstances of the conduct by which I had thought myself aggrieved. I sought to strengthen myself in the belief that I was justified in leaving her, in defrauding her, and in escaping from dependence on her tyranny, to independence with the man I loved. But I could not entirely succeed in stifling something within, which told me I was about to commit that which I should repent my whole life long having done. It drew towards midnight ; and that was the time fixed by Onofrio. To rouse myself from the misgivings that were fast creeping over me, I resolved to sit thinking there no longer, but to fetch the jewel-case, and set it ready for carrying away. It always stood in my young lady’s room ; on a small porphyry table near her bedside. I stole into the chamber on tip-toe. I listened, to make sure, by her breathing, that she slept. Not a sound,—not a breath, reached my ear. I approached nearer. On her bed she lay. The stillness was beyond that of sleep. There was no mistaking that blank silence, that marble immobility. Appalled, I drew back. The next instant, I desperately laid my hand upon her ; not the slightest motion heaved the bosom. I caught at her arm ; it was cold, and fell heavily from my grasp. I should have screamed aloud in my horror, but that its very extremity paralysed me ; and a moment after, I heard Onofrio’s signal. I hurried out to him ; and attempted wildly to draw him from the spot. He was struck by the disorder of my manner. In incoherent words I told him what had happened. ‘ No time to take you into the house now,’ I said, ‘ let us fly at once—whither you will—I cannot look upon that pale dead face again.’ ‘ Dost mean to say, she is certainly dead, my girl ?’ he exclaimed ; ‘ art sure of it ?’ ‘ But too sure !’ I replied. ‘ Leave wringing of thy

hands ;' said he ; ' fate hath brought about that, which otherwise must have fallen to my share. Fortune hath done me one good turn, in requital of the many scurvy tricks she hath played me, and made me play. This night's chance hath spared me a villainy. I am quite as well content to be without the burden of that young creature's death,—mocking wench though she was,—upon my soul.' ”

“ All-merciful Heaven, I thank thee for removing its burden from mine !” murmured lady Capulet.

“ I understood not the full meaning of Onofrio's words, then ;” Petronilla went on ; “ but afterwards, when he found that I had, in the shock of discovering Leonilda's death, left the jewel-case behind me, he told me how destitute of resources he was ; how impossible it was to him to obtain a livelihood by any honest means, since his character was blasted beyond redemption ; and he ended by confiding to me without reserve his whole position. I then learned to what a man I had linked my fate ; but he gave me so many proofs of the strong attachment he had for me, and I loved him with so passionate a fondness, that even that discovery failed to make me regret my having become his. He made no secret to me of what had passed between yourself and him, madam ; and he told me he should go immediately to Verona, that he might by being the first to inform you of Leonilda's death, endeavour to obtain a reward for his welcome tidings, which should afford us means of subsistence for a time.”

“ I believed that he claimed that reward as her murderer ;” shuddered lady Capulet.

“ To his surprise, he found this ;” returned Petronilla. “ He found that you did not know her death had occurred naturally, but imagined it to have been the work of his hand. A mistake so favourable to his views, was not to be corrected. He allowed you to remain in your error, and continued, from time to time, to make it the means of extorting money from

your fears. When he was seized and condemned to the galleys, I accompanied him. I say nothing of those weary years. They passed. We wandered back to Mantua, old in disgrace and misery. Some short time since, he brought me to this neighbourhood, that he might be near, to work afresh upon your fears, madam. He again tried, and succeeded. With the sum he obtained on that occasion, he set out for Mantua, on some scheme of building a fortune with a young fellow, who had worked with him, chained to the same oar, and who had been freed from his term of condemnation at the same period as himself. Before Onofrio left me, I used all my efforts to persuade him, as I had many times done before, to confess all to you, madam ; to relieve your conscience of the load that burdened it, and to throw himself upon your generosity for the future. He would not listen to me ; but, laughing at me for a faint-hearted wench, left me, bidding me keep up my spirits, and prepared to receive him with full health and smiles when he should return, as he speedily hoped to do, a rich man."

Petronilla paused ; checked in her speech by a violent convulsion of coughing ; then resumed :—" I had been some time declining. On his leaving me, I rapidly grew worse ; and within this day or two, I have felt that I shall never recover. Since the moment I became convinced of this, I have been haunted with a desire that you should know the truth concerning Leonilda's death. Within view of the grave, I have learned to see many things clearly revealed to me, which formerly struck me only passingly, indistinctly. I have learned to see my own follies and weaknesses in their full measure of evil consequence ; I have learned to feel compassion for other erring souls ; I have come to desire nothing more earnestly, as a hope of expiation for my own misdeeds, than to carry comfort to at least one wounded conscience, and to relieve it from a sense of deeper stain than in truth attaches to it. Let my soul in its parting hour have the one

solace, madam, of knowing it hath whispered peace to yours. Let my love for Onofrio have this one virtuous deed to hallow it; by making him, through me, do you this poor justice."

"May he not, when he returns, resent this generous step on your part, my poor girl?" said lady Capulet. "I would not that your courageous thought for me, should endanger your own safety or peace."

"My safety and peace, both, will by that time be beyond all human power to affect;" said the dying woman. "Neither Onofrio's praise, nor Onofrio's blame, will then avail to work their old influence on Petronilla. I know not whether he will be pleased or displeased at the step I have taken; but it will then be past recall, and he is not one to spend much lament upon things done and gone. I shall leave him a few words of farewell; I shall tell him what I have done, and I shall tell him that it was an ease to my heart in my dying hour; and I think I know enough of Onofrio's love, to assure me that will suffice with him. He will forgive his Petronilla all in that moment. He will then remember only what we have been to each other, through our struggles, our disgraces, our mutual discomforts and comfort."

She paused again; and a look of fond thought dwelt for a few moments upon her countenance. Then she went on:—"He will know, madam, that it is now in vain to make any future attempt upon your dread of discovery. He is henceforth in your power, not you in his; but I trust to your honor, that you will never use it against him, in return for the voluntary reparation I have made you this night. I do not ask you to pledge me your word, lady; I know that you will never let my avowal bring harm upon him I love." She fixed her eyes as she spoke, upon lady Capulet; who replied to their earnest appeal, by volunteering her promise that Onofrio should be safe from her betrayal, so long as he left her unmolested.

Petronilla endeavoured to express her thanks, but

exhausted by her long recital, she was unable to do more than look her gratitude ; and lady Capulet, after making all the arrangements in her power for the comfort of the dying woman, bade her farewell, blessing her for the ineffable consolation she had bestowed.

Passionate temperaments such as lady Capulet's, are strangely affected by sudden chances of joy or sorrow, by consolation or anxiety. Lady Capulet had sustained many violent emotions with comparative calm, on former occasions. She had succeeded in stifling and concealing her jealous misery ; she had hidden from all eyes her tumult of solicitude, her anguish of remorse ; she had borne with firmness all this, and had even maintained her health of body untouched by these struggles of mind. But now, all at once, the tide of unaccustomed inward satisfaction, the sense of freedom, of release from guilty fears and self-reproach, acted upon her with overwhelming force, and she fell ill from pure reaction of feeling.

On the morrow she was in a high fever ; and for some days her physicians declared her life was in danger. It was then that the affection with which her husband really regarded her, showed forth in all its strength of demonstration. That love, of which she had entertained so many torturing doubts, was now unequivocally declared ; that love, which, while she was well and apparently happy, was content to show itself only in a good-natured easy kindness, and indulgence,—to exist in undisplayful liking, passive approval, and silent content,—now betrayed its full force of passionate attachment, in the moment of alarm at the thought of losing her. But she lay unconscious of his very presence, neither hearing his lamentations, nor beholding his irrepressible tears ; she lay utterly insensible to all that would have excited such a new torrent of grateful emotion could she have witnessed it, knowing its cause.

The physicians, fearful of the agitating effects which it would have on their patient, should she suddenly

become aware of her husband's presence, and perceive his uncontrollable grief, had prevailed upon Capulet to retire to his own room, while the sleep into which his wife had at length subsided, was allowed to have its full chance for composing and restoring her. They owned to him that this was the crisis of her disorder; from which she would, in all probability, awake either to renewed life, or sink into eternal rest.

Capulet suffered them to lead him away; and Juliet, who had been sedulous in watching her mother's sick-bed, was induced at the same time to go with her nurse to her own chamber and endeavour to take some repose.

From her deep slumber the lady at length awoke. The room was hushed. The very attendant who was stationed there to watch, had fallen into a doze. Lady Capulet raised herself in her bed, and looked around. She strove to recall the cause of her being thus; she found she must have been ill—ill for some time—dangerously ill, though now she felt wonderfully revived,—strong,—and able to think clearly. She remembered the circumstances which had preceded her illness; she thought upon the important revelation of the dying Petronilla, which had been providentially permitted to lighten her soul of its load of guilt; she thought of the resolution it had inspired within herself to make avowal of all to her husband. She felt that she owed the candour of confession in return for the boon which confession had been to her. She recollected how nearly death had stepped in to prevent this intended act of expiation; and she was seized with irresistible longing to lose no moment now in fulfilling it. She got up, threw on a dressing-gown, her excited mood enduing her with strange power to support herself. She took her way straight to her husband's room, which lay in the same corridor. She pushed open the door, which moved noiselessly; and beheld him seated with his back towards her, his face buried in his hands, weeping in all that despairful abandon-

ment, so terrible to witness in man. On the table beside him stood an open casket ; and before him lay a miniature. A sudden faintness overpowered lady Capulet, and she leaned against the doorway. She well remembered having once seen her husband place a miniature in this casket ; and but too well recalled the many jealous pangs it had cost her subsequently, when she had chanced to note the casket, and to speculate on what woman's picture it contained, so carefully enshrined there by him. There was a revulsion of all the tender thoughts which had possessed her on first seeing him buried in grief ; she had believed that those tears might be caused by her danger, that it was the fear of losing her which so moved him. But now the terrible idea suggested itself—could it be an old memory revived ? Could it be regret, that just as he was about to be free, to be released from wedlock thralldom, the original of the miniature no longer lived, to share and bless his liberty ? Could it be Giacinta ? Leonilda ? Desperately she resolved to know the truth. She staggered silently to his side, and saw—a portrait of herself.

She dropped at his feet, clasping his knees, her head resting on them, in a transport of happy gratitude. Capulet, in amazement, raised her to his arms, pouring forth a torrent of questions.

She replied by a full confession of the history of her heart ; from its first girlish idolatry, its misgivings, its waning hopes, its fears, its jealous rage, its weaknesses, its guilty purposes. Her husband, in turn, told her, in his own half-vain, half good-hearted way, how that he had never seriously loved but her ; how he might have had his youthful follies before marriage ; how he had become weaned from them by the surpassing loveliness of the beautiful young creature whom her father's friendship had bestowed upon him for a wife ; and smilingly showed her the miniature of herself, which, in the time of his early married adoration, he had had executed by a young artist,

who painted it from memory ; how her reserve had constrained him to a less demonstrative affection, than he might otherwise have shown ; how her coldness of manner had chilled him to a corresponding appearance of indifference very little accordant with the passionate warmth of admiration with which she really inspired him ; but that fancying it best pleased her, had acquiesced in the calm and friendly regard of conduct which gradually established itself between them. He told her how his attachment for her had kept him always a constant husband ; and that, notwithstanding the license of Italian manners, he had never felt tempted to the slightest infidelity, save in the instance of his passing infatuation for Virginia di Coralba. He said he told her of this, that there might not now exist the shadow of reserve between them ; and then he took from the casket certain relics of by-gone bachelor flirtations—scented billets, fragments of faded nose-gays—an odd ring, or locket, and such trifling knacks, offering to destroy them before her face, to show his wife how valueless they had become in his eyes.

Lady Capulet had much too generous a spirit, had had too bitter an experience of true jealousy, and had moreover received far too deep a lesson of self-discipline, to permit her entertaining a moment's uneasiness upon such grounds as these. She would not hear of her husband's proposal ; but playfully told him she would have him preserve the mementos of his youthful gallantries, as trophies of her own conquest and triumph.

As a proof how entirely cured she was of her former jealous meannesses, and how true was the reformation her own character had undergone, her reflections upon the subject of the adventuress, Virginia di Coralba, were full of candour, and forbearance. She felt the admonition that was to be drawn from her own blindness on that occasion ; she felt that this single instance of her husband's forgetting what was due to herself and him, was mainly owing to her own apparent caprice and inexplicable reserve of conduct,

—to her own coldness and unsociable abstraction, while constantly employed in brooding over her own suspicions, and unhallowed resentments ; she felt that by such moods women naturally estrange their husbands from themselves, and teach them to look for more agreeable companionship elsewhere ; in short, she exchanged the intemperance, the irrationality of jealousy, for the peace and joy of confiding love ; and lady Capulet was from that time a happy wife and woman. Shortly after this, she had the pleasure of receiving a letter from the Florentine prince. It was dated Palermo ; and ran thus :—

“ Beloved friend,

“ So long as my rebellious heart would not admit itself to the extinction of those hopes you had enjoined it to abandon, and indulge those new ones you had taught it to form as its true base of happiness, I would not give you the pain of hearing from me. But now I have learned how truly you foretold that my nature was capable of receiving its best joy from a pure passion, and that mutuality of love which could not exist where I ventured to aspire before, I no longer refrain from writing to you ; but call upon you to rejoice with me, as I know your noble heart will, in the fact of my having attained this knowledge. A certain fair Sicilian lady, daughter to the viceroy here, taught me first to think it possible you might be right. She is now hanging over my shoulder, as I write, bidding me tell you how earnestly she joins in my gratitude towards that noble woman, who treated an inexperienced heart in its rashness but sincerity of passion, with tender consideration, with gentleness, with kindly inducement to better self-knowledge. She bids me thank and bless the generous woman, who subdued her own feelings, who sacrificed her own scruples of delicacy, that she might, by a confession of her own unreturned passion, effectually extinguish any lurking hope which might mislead, and prevent the substitution and growth of wiser love in the breast of him who had cherished a presumptuous one. My young

wife glories with me, in attributing our present mutual happiness to the high-souled and unselfish ingenuousness of your conduct on that occasion. Had you coldly contented yourself with rebuking my presumptuous passion, in lieu of confiding to me the cause of its utter hopelessness, and leading me to believe that it might be hereafter replaced by a hopeful love for a legitimate object, I might never have learned to look for that happier fate which I now enjoy with my Sicilian bride. Let me tell you that she hath the same glorious dark eyes—the same majesty with sweetness of aspect—that same witchery of blended dignity and gentleness of mien that first entranced me, and bound me thrall to a certain beauty of Verona. Had not my fair Sicilian reminded me a thousand ways of her who was my first love, of her who must ever live enthroned in my heart as the noblest of women, she had never succeeded in impresing anew that heart which you had enjoined to love again. It hath been my happy fate to win the esteem of the two most generous women upon earth ; for my wife is never better pleased than when I tell her of those beauties most resembling Angelica's. Dear friend, think of us ever, as two happy beings, gladly owing our happiness to you ; and, if it may be, send us assurance you are not unhappy yourself, that our joy may be perfect."

It may be believed with what sincere and eager delight lady Capulet responded to this letter, by the tidings that she now as fully enjoyed the treasure of her husband's undoubted and undivided love, as she or they could desire. She concluded her letter with the words :—" My dear lord is sitting beside me ; his arm is about me, as I write ; he will but take the pen from me to assure you, in his name as well as mine, how entirely we are, dear friends,

Your loving friends,

ANGELICA,
CAPULET."

And now it was, that lady Capulet had leisure of mind to devote in thought and companionship, to her young daughter. Hitherto, she had been so absorbed in her own reflections, that she had given but sparing and intermittent attention to Juliet. There had been between them but little of the sympathy and intimate communion usually subsisting between a mother and daughter. With parents severally so engrossed in their own pursuits,—the mother in her secret cares,—the father in his social pleasures,—it came that the young Juliet had been thrown almost wholly on her own resources for the development of her ideas. She had been brought up in the style of seclusion and retirement usual for a young Italian lady. Her intercourse had been strictly limited to the members of her own family, and their household. From earliest childhood she had been in the habit of seeing her father at his breakfast-hour, before he went out to his rounds of visiting; and had invariably been brought to bid him good night, when he happened to be in the house at her own early bed-time. He had good-naturedly frolicked with her, when some party did not call him away, and took pride and joy in marking her growth, her beauty and grace of person. Her mother had had her in the room with her while she embroidered, or sat at home; but for the most part, the little creature had played about at her feet, while lady Capulet silently pursued her occupation, lost in thought; and as the child grew into the young girl, the hours she spent in her mother's room, had passed scarcely less silently; for the lively questions that naturally sprang to her lips, learned to restrain themselves from utterance, when, through a course of years, they met with but monosyllables, or short sentences spoken abstractedly, in reply. Gradually, her communion with both father and mother became almost entirely restricted to the wonted periodical salutes, exchanged between Italian parent and child, when she kissed, first their cheeks, and then their hands, on bidding them good-

morning,—after meal-time,—and before retiring to rest.

She was fond of her cousin Tybalt ; but his active pursuits, and pugnacious disposition, took him much abroad,—to the fencing-school, to the sports of his fellow-youths, to the taking part in their quarrels, and frequently to the fomenting of their differences,—so that he made but little of a companion to her, in her girlish tastes, and her stay-at-home resources.

Juliet's most constant associate was the nurse ; who had been her foster-mother in babyhood, her attendant in childhood, and still maintained her situation about her person, from the circumstances which had induced lord and lady Capulet to give her a home in their household, and from her own strong attachment to her young lady. Once, when there had been a talk of engaging a waiting-maid, the nurse was highly affronted ; exclaiming :—“ Ought not I to know how to dress thee, better than any tire-woman of them all ? I, who bore thee—in my arms ? I, who shared my own Susan's milk with thee ? I, who weaned thee, when my good man—rest his merry soul !—stood by ? Well, there's no standing 'gainst a tottering wall, when an earthquake bids it jog,—and us be jogging ! But e'en in falling stones, is Heaven's mercy ! It took both the merry heart, and the little one too good for this earth, to its own rest,—rest their souls !”

The person whom Juliet held in chiefest reverence as her friend and counsellor, was her spiritual director, her confessor, a certain holy man, called friar Lawrence, a brother of the Franciscan order. In his quiet cell, kneeling at his feet, pouring out her innocent soul in humility and contrition for offences, fancied rather than actual, this young girl gained teaching from his wisdom, help and strength from his virtue, steadfastness and courage from his moral admonition. With him she learned to perceive and partially to analyse the feelings, the impulses, the aspirations within her. With him she attained something

of self-consciousness ; something of that interior understanding, that auto-comprehension which teaches us our own individuality, as sentient, thinking beings. Very little of this was hers ; but what little she had, was gained through the gentle teachings of friar Lawrence. She felt this, without perhaps being aware of it,—far less, reasoning on it ; but what she felt, sufficed to give her a sense of reliance, of sustaining confidence in his counsel and friendship ; and made her find some of her happiest hours, those she spent in the good friar's cell.

Juliet was by no means an intellectual girl either from nature, or from training. She inherited a susceptible disposition from her father,—a man of gallantry and pleasure. From her mother,—a woman of strong though suppressed feeling, all the more concentrated, for her lofty and reserved exterior,—she inherited a sensitive, passionate temperament. Her parents' several native qualifications and habits, unfitted them for the development of their young daughter's mind ; and it has rarely been the usage in Italy to bestow much cultivation on a young maiden's mental acquirements, from external sources,—from masters.

Juliet's refinement sprang from herself. She had a natural affinity with the beautiful in all things. She had an innate perception of the beautiful and the voluptuous in both Nature and Art. It was through this intense appreciation of beauty, that her refinement existed. Her heart informed her mind. It might be said, that her feelings, rather than her understanding, thought. Profoundly impressionable,—her senses and instincts were more at work than any mental process. Her soul was elevated by its native purity, and affinity with beauty, rather than by any inspiration or effort of intellect. Her religion was one of sentiment rather than of conviction,—of impulse, not reason. She knelt at the good friar's feet with all the implicit reverence, the unquestioning faith, the

passive credence, of a child ; she let him judge for her, rather than used judgment of her own ; and took for granted, unscrutinized, all that he said, or made her subscribe to.

It was this passionate sense of beauty in all existing things,—whether of Heaven's creation, or of man's ingenuity, that supplied Juliet with food for her ideality of feeling ; and entirely precluded any sense of dullness or weariness in the retired and monotonous life which had been hers. She felt no want of society, while she had the glorious face of Nature to look upon in loving companionship ; she scarcely missed human associates, while she revelled in contemplation of sky, and earth ; shadow, and sunshine ; morning light, and starry evenings ; the broad expanse of her father's garden-grounds, the partial glimpse of the impetuous Adige, the distant purple of the mountains, sole boundary to a scene affording wide scope to the imagination. Her father's indulgence had given her a range of apartments, in one wing of the palace, that commanded a magnificent view from one of the large balconies that opened from her own peculiar chamber. This balcony was a favorite resort of Juliet's. It was here that she filled her soul with happy contemplation. It was here that,—no reader,—she fed her thoughts with things, rather than with studies, and gained ideas from objects, instead of from books. She learned wondrous secrets from tree, and shrub, and flower ; she heaped up strange lore from noontide rays, and the soft moonbeams ; she stored up innumerable fancies from the ever-dancing waters of the fountain, from the growth of blossoms, from the ripening of fruit, from watching the flights, the careerings, the hoverings, of birds and their nestlings ; from listening to the lark's upsoaring rush of song, and to the luxuriant melody of the nightingale.

In her favorite room hung several pictures, that furnished her with Art-beauty of ideas. The only child and heiress of a wealthy nobleman, it may be believed

that her suite of rooms lacked no adornment that money could command. There were massive silken hangings ; tasteful furniture ; the walls were hung with paintings ; and in the niches stood groups of statuary. Two pictures had an especial charm for her. The first showed Mary in the garden, approaching Him as a simple gardener, who was her Master and her Lord. It represented the moment, when His voice, uttering her name, revealed to her the sacred Presence in which she stood ; there was expressed in her figure all the awe, the heart-struck reverence of the sudden recognition, while in His, was all of good and benign impersonated. It was a presentment of human imperfection with perfect love ; of the divine spirit of Hope and Beatitude. The other was a painting of a holy legend, showing an aged man,—a saint grown old in self-denial and in the exercise of virtue,—led on by an angel. The emaciated countenance of the poor, worn-out piece of mortality, was raised in meek hope, Heavenward, while the angel, in whose bright face shone immortal youth and happiness, pointed towards the sky, and cast a look of compassion and superhuman intelligence of comfort upon the suffering saint, now so soon to be released from his earthly probation. These two pictures formed an un-failing resource to Juliet, when in a humour for reflection. In other moods of feeling, there was a picture she delighted to look upon ; allowing her imagination to take free range amid the exquisite fancies it suggested. It was a woodland scene ; an embowered thicket deep within the recesses of a forest. On the grass lay the queen of beauty and of love,—Venus herself ; beside her was the young Adonis ; unheeded stood his courser impatiently chafing, and champing the bit, eager to be away with his master to the chase ; all as unheeded stood his leashed and coupled hounds, and his boar-spear flung aside. It might have been a defect in the painter, failing to tell the story aright ; but there was no reluctance visible in the face of

Adonis : it was turned towards that of his enamoured mistress ; the eyes of both were mutually engaged ; and the lovers seemed all in all to each other, within the green seclusion of that forest-dell.

Among the sculptured marbles, were some that forcibly appealed to the sense of beauty and grace, which was Juliet's predominant characteristic. There was one of Galatea and her nymphs ; their rounded limbs emerging from the fresh and crested waves ; while the face of the goddess looked radiantly towards the land, where she knew awaited her coming her shepherd-love, Acis. There was one that showed the pair of fate-linked lovers, borne onward upon the hell-wind ; sad Paolo and Francesca. And one there was, in relievo, where Aurora flew, scattering flowers, before the ramping steeds of Apollo, hastening to unfold the golden gates of the east. Amid such objects, Juliet cherished her love of the beautiful. Unaided, her own inclination for whatever was fit and lovely, indued her with discernment, discrimination, and appreciative admiration ; unenlightened by a single rule or theory, she gathered new perceptions, and acquired a confirmed taste. Thus, her native tendency to whatsoever contained elements of harmony and beauty, engendered its own power of culture, and refinement.

It came, as a matter of necessity, from such a process of self-forming, that Juliet rarely gave expression to her thoughts. They were rather vague musings, delicious reveries, insubstantial day-dreams, indulged secretly and alone, in the retirement of her own chamber, than uttered to others, brought forward, or discussed. They were a hoarded treasure of silent communings with her own spirit ; not spoken, or idly shown.

Indeed, as has been seen, she had few to whom she could have confided them. One other person there was, besides those already cited,—her parents, her cousin Tybalt, the good friar, and her nurse, with

whom she held intercourse ; and that one was, Rosaline, a niece of Capulet's. But she, though a young and very beautiful girl, was still so much older than Juliet, that there was less of freedom and intimacy between them than might have been supposed to exist with two such near relations. Besides, they had scarcely a point of sympathy in common ; their dispositions, tastes, opinions, feelings, were all singularly dissimilar. Juliet was warm and enthusiastic ; Rosaline was cold and sedate. Juliet was impassioned in her language, when she ventured to give utterance to the emotions that stirred within her ; Rosaline was grave and measured in speech, and rarely gave words to anything but arguments, and ascertained facts. The one spoke from feeling, as if feeling were too vehement to be suppressed ; the other never seemed to give vent to impulse, but to assert from settled conviction. The one alluded to impressions, and glanced at imperfect conceptions ; the other stated opinions, and announced the result of mature deliberations. While Juliet's eyes surveyed with ecstasy some effect of light in the landscape, and her lips quivered with the fervour of her silent emotion ; Rosaline's head would be bent over the rosary she held in her hand, and her eyes would be fixed on the beads, which her lips would tell over in a pious pomp of undertone. While Juliet feasted her imagination with some harmonious outline, or felicitous blending of tints, Rosaline would descant aloud upon the question whether a man rightly fulfilled his destiny in chipping out morsels of marble ; or declaim scornfully against the preposterous notion of a human being dedicating his energies to dabbing patches of colour on to canvas.

Rosaline was so serenely didactic, so solemnly oracular, and evinced such placid faith in her own unerring judgment, that she imposed greatly on those around her ; she passed among her own friends for a prodigy ; a singularly superior young lady. Capulet stood secretly in much awe of her ; in her presence his

usual glib volubility, and garrulous ease subsided into a sort of snubbed silence; he seemed to have a fidgety dread of committing himself before her. He would whisper behind his hand to some one near her, as a sort of deprecatory votive offering to her superiority:—"My dear sir, she is quite a philosopher, I can assure you;—quite one of the illuminati in petticoats;—a very, very superior young woman is my fair niece Rosaline, let me tell you, sir!" Rosaline had announced, in her own sublime style of lofty humility, that it was her intention to forswear love, to abjure wedlock, to vow herself to celibacy; in order that she might the better dedicate her whole soul to her high pursuits,—contemplation of mysteries, reflection on profundities, and meditation on all matters abstruse and recondite.

Tybalt, one day, in his off-hand style, astounded his uncle by rapping out the remark that "it would be no great loss to the bachelor world if she did vow to die unmarried; for that no one would have such an affected young pedant!"

Capulet looked scared; but, casting a furtive glance in the direction of his fair niece, and seeing that she was engaged in silencing somebody with an oration upon her own views touching a mooted theory, he indulged in a little stealthy titter; which, however, was nipped in the bud by her turning her head in his direction; whereupon he rose, fidgeted about, took up a humorous print that lay on a table near, as if that had been the cause of his laugh; and at last, ambled out of the room.

Shortly after, some visitors who had been there, took leave; Tybalt flung away, to join the young county Paris in a walk; and lady Capulet being called out to attend to some household superintendence, the two young ladies were left alone.

Juliet ventured timidly to ask her cousin Rosaline, what had made her take so violent a resolution against love and marriage.

“Not ‘violent ;’—but decided ;” replied she. “I do nothing violently ; but I have come to a decision,—a calm decision against them, that nothing can induce me to alter. It is not so much aversion to matrimony that sways me ; I have a respect for the holy state, abstractedly ;” she continued ; “but I have no wish to enter it myself. I should not choose the duties of wife and mother,—duties which I should consider myself called upon to fulfil most scrupulously and conscientiously, were I to accept the title,—I should not choose, I say, these duties to interfere with those higher tasks to which I have devoted my energies.”

“Can there be higher ?” said the soft voice of Juliet. It was so soft, that perhaps her cousin did not hear the remark ; at any rate, Rosaline did not answer it ; but went on as if there had been no interruption.

“After all, any commonplace, dull-souled, mindless woman can perform the mechanical drudgery in question ; but not only should I object to the onerous and incessant calls upon time and thought which the conjugal and maternal offices involve ;” she said ; “but I seriously repugn the notion of wasting, in the idle process of courting, precious moments that might be so far more advantageously bestowed, both morally and mentally. Do not think, my dear cousin, that I mention the circumstance I am about to tell you, as a vain-glorious boast, or from any motive of display ; for if I know myself, I am above such foolish vauntings ; but there is a young lord who persecutes me with his attentions, and will not be said nay ; and his vexatious suit would teach me the trouble, and noyance, and frivolous waste of time that courtship is, even had I not known it before from the numerous wooers that this poor beauty hath attracted around me, to my infinite perplexity, and to the bringing about of the vow I have taken. The youth I speak of,—I will not tell you his name, Juliet, for his sake, poor fel-

low!—is well enough,—nay, very well; he is really handsome, and heir to one of the noblest houses in Verona; but so importunately, so abominably in love, that really I should have no time I could call my own, were I to admit his attentions. If he be so exacting, and tormenting, now that he is hopeless, what would he be, you know, my dear, were he a favored lover?"

Juliet seemed to be lost in thought. Seeing she did not answer, after a moment's pause, Rosaline continued:—"He really is pitiably in love, this poor young fellow, and yet I cannot find in my heart to pity him. No; I am convinced that I have done wisely, in coming to the determination to live to myself, to my own exalted views of what is the prerogative of a human soul—free, uncontrolled, unlimited speculation of mind; unshackled by the petty concerns of this earth."

She held forth for some time longer in this strain: but seeing Juliet still wrapt in her own thoughts, soon after took leave. Juliet was indeed pondering upon many things that suggested themselves to her thought, during this late—not conversation, but harangue. It struck her, among other things, that Rosaline seemed to take pride in the fact of this youth's love, not for any delight it afforded her, but for the glory of having it to reject. As she had looked into her cousin's beautiful face, and heard her descant so coolly upon this passionate lover, she marvelled; she could not but wonder to hear one so lovely proclaim herself so unloving. She wondered that Rosaline could resist the charm of an attachment so devoted; she could scarcely comprehend the remaining unmoved by such fervour of affection as the one described. She felt a strange kind of pity and sympathy for this unknown lover, so hopelessly enamoured. She now, for the first time, asked herself what her own feelings would be, were she to discover that she had inspired such a passion. The idea startled her; and held her for some time pausing, with her cheek leaning upon her

hand, her head drooping, and her eyes fixed upon the ground. She was still quite a girl in years, though on the verge of Southern early womanhood ; her heart spoke powerfully in its young and ardent feelings ; it was pure, fresh, unhackneyed ; all the more potent in its impulses, for its very purity. She sat there, deeply musing, motionless as though she had been a statue. Her reverie held her entranced, though without a definite object. She seemed awaiting,—like the clay Pandora, the touch of Prometheus,—the vital fire of Love which was to make her, from a dreaming child into a sentient, passionate woman.

She was aroused from her abstracted mood, by the return of Tybalt. He began with his usual vehemence, to tell her of some offence he had newly taken, upon some imaginary ground, against some members of the rival family of the Montagues. He endeavoured to explain the nature of the affront, and to make her understand how he naturally felt himself wronged, insulted, aggrieved. But although Juliet, for the sake of her cousin,—to whom she was as fondly attached as if he had been her brother,—had always tried to take an interest in these quarrels of his, yet she could never rightly comprehend the nature of the feuds and jealousies between the rival houses. She sometimes persuaded herself that she shared the rancour, the party-feeling that animated all her kindred against the other faction ; but in reality, she understood little, and cared even less, about the rivalry that existed between them. She called the Montagues, enemies, because all of her house and name called them so ; but she had not one spark of genuine hatred. She had never even seen any of the family ; for the retired life she had led, had afforded no opportunity for meeting them.

She had more than once heard of public contentions, of affrays in the open street, that had taken place between parties of the several houses ; but she had not entered into the merits of these contests, save inasmuch, as she concluded that the Montagues were

of course in the wrong, and the Capulets of course in the right. She now only made out that Tybalt was enraged against young Romeo, the son of lord Montague, for assuming the right of walking in a certain grove of sycamore that lay to the west of the city, with an air as if he claimed the sole occupancy of the place; and that her cousin was highly indignant, for some unstated cause, against young Benvolio, whom he called "a conceited pragmatist."

He went on to mutter:—"The fellow holds himself to be best fencer in Verona; when, as all the world knows, and as I hope to prove, one day,—but enough." He started up, bit his lip; then burst out again, with some invective against Mercutio.

"There is something about that fellow that makes my blood boil but to look upon his face. It hath a laughing, careless, insolence of contempt in it, that sends my fingers tingling to my sword-hilt, to let a little of its malapert ruddiness forth. There's a twinkle in his eye, that tells of a sleeve-smiling, even whilst he lifts his cap with most of studious courtesy." His cousin asked some slight question concerning the lord Montague's son.

"Hang him!" was the reply. "Sweet youth, and virtuous gentleman as he is reputed by the wiseacres of our city, I hope to see him hanged some day, or throttled somehow. I shall never feel at rest till the whole tribe of Montagues are got rid of,—cast out from amongst us,—fairly banished from Verona."

Juliet smiled at his testy humour; and to divert him from it, told him that her father had spoken of a masked ball which he intended giving on the occasion of his wedding-day anniversary; having always marked it by a festival of some kind.

Tybalt said something in reply, about letting his friend Paris know, that he might have his mask and domino in readiness; and added, with a meaning look, which Juliet could not then interpret, that he believed

his friend, the county, intended having a private interview with his uncle Capulet before the ball.

The result of this interview was communicated to her afterwards. The evening appointed for the entertainment had arrived ; and just as Juliet was about to enter the ball-room, she thought she heard her mother's voice, in another apartment, enquiring for her. Then the nurse, who was with lady Capulet, came forth to summon her to her mother's presence. Juliet hastened towards her with the words :—

“ How now, who calls ? ”

And now to tell the sum of Juliet's life, her love, her death, the Poet's “ strength shall help afford.”





BEATRICE AND HERO; THE COUSINS.





TALE XI.

BEATRICE AND HERO; THE COUSINS.

“ A pleasant-spirited lady. There’s little of the melancholy element in her.”

“ Is she not a modest young lady ? * * she is the sweetest lady that ever I looked on.”

Much ado about nothing.

A sound cuff.

“ What do you hit me for ?”

Another. “ Give it up ! Will you give it up ?”

“ No !”

Another cuff. And a box on the ear. “ Give it up, I say !”

Another “ No” was about to be bawled ; and a look in the lout’s eye gave token that it would probably be accompanied by a return of the blows he had received ; but suddenly he seemed to think better of it. Muttering something about being “ too near master constable’s house, or he’d ha’ kept it as sure as he was alive,” the boy flung down the demanded toy, turned on his heel, and made off.

The little girl who was thus left victress of the field, picked up the doll, brushed the dust off its smart skirts, arranged its rumpled head-dress, ascertained that its nose was neither cracked nor flattened, nor its eyes damaged, and then triumphantly walked up to another little girl, who had stood aloof during the affray, and restored the plundered favorite to her arms.

“ Oh, I'm so glad to have her back ! My beautiful new doll that my father gave me only yesterday ! ” exclaimed the child, hugging it to her, and smiling through the tears that still glittered on her cheeks.

“ Why did you let him snatch it from you ? ” said the other little girl. “ Why didn't you run after him, and force him to give it up ? ”

“ He was such a great fierce lad—I couldn't—I didn't dare ; ” replied she.

“ Why didn't your sister run after him, then, for you, and thump him, till he gave it up ? ” persisted the first little girl, looking towards a young boy who stood by, rubbing his knees, his back, and his elbows alternately ; looking very scared, and very disconsolate ; with a few big tears rolling down his face ; and evidently in all the discomfiture of having only just recovered his legs.

“ I'm not a girl, miss ! ” he blurted out, with a half shame-faced, half indignant glance at the beautiful, spirited face that was eyeing him. “ What made you take me for a girl ? Don't you see my dress ? ” And he cast a look of sheepish pride at his legs, which certainly were cased in masculine fashion.

“ Don't I see your tears ? What's crying but the trick of a girl ? ” said she, with a motion of her lips that made him wince. “ Why didn't you fly after the fellow, instead of standing blubbering there ? ”

“ He knocked me down ! ” said the boy. “ He took good care to make sure of me, before he snatched at Hero's doll. How could I fly, miss, when he knocked me down ? It's not so easy to fly, let me tell you, when a fellow sends you sprawling. ”

“ But I suppose you could have scrambled up again, couldn't you ? Unless you thought it more prudent to lie still. But for the sake of your sister's doll, you might have——”

“ She isn't my sister,—she's my cousin ! ” interrupted the boy, glad to seize upon any point of defence, that he could safely maintain.

“Never mind, Gaetano, I have my doll again ;” said its owner ; and then, with her kind sweet tone, she turned to the little girl who had so bravely rescued it for her, and thanked her, in a manner so pretty and earnest, as to bespeak her unmistakeably the young lady born and bred.

The children fell into talk ; and began to question each other how it was they happened to be out alone, how they had met, who they were, and so forth.

It appeared that the little girl, Hero, was the governor of Messina’s daughter, his sole child and heir-ess ; that the young boy, Gaetano, was the son of her uncle, Antonio. That they had left the palace in the morning, for a walk, attended by a servant ; but that some show, or public procession, had suddenly attracted a crowd, in which they had been separated from their attendant. The other little girl, when she learned their names, uttered an exclamation of surprise. She told them that she was their cousin ; that her name was Beatrice. That she was bound to their house, at the very time she encountered them ; and that, singularly enough, the circumstance which had occasioned Hero and Gaetano to lose sight of their attendant, had also separated her from the person who was entrusted with the charge of bringing her from her native place to Messina.

Beatrice was an orphan. Her mother had married a poor lieutenant, contrary to the will of a rich maiden aunt ; and, in consequence, had been cast off, disavowed, denounced. She had lived in seclusion, in a distant part of the island, enjoying the society of her husband, when the intervals of his military duties allowed him to be with her ; and finding her chief happiness in the cultivation of her child’s mind and disposition. While her husband lived, she had little missed the family ties she had broken for his sake ; but he fell in battle ; and then, beneath the stroke of this sudden affliction, her heart learned to acknowledge that she had been unfeeling and ungrateful, in

not having better striven to soften the resentment of one who had brought her up, and centred all her hopes in the niece who so cruelly disappointed her ; it learned to feel that she had been unmindful of the affectionate bonds in which she had once lived with her brothers, Leonato and Antonio ; it learned to perceive that she had suffered pride and unrelenting—with their ever-strengthening, ever-hardening barriers,—to interpose between her aunt and herself, and that she had allowed coldness, and indifference, to estrange her from her best friends. She felt that it was now too late to attempt the recovery of her aunt's favor ; but, on her death-bed, she bequeathed her little girl to the guardianship of Leonato, beseeching him to be a father to her orphan child.

It was on her way to her future home, that Beatrice happened to witness the incident which brought her so unexpectedly acquainted with her young relations. She saw the ruffianly lad snatch the child's doll ; she saw neither the little girl nor her companion make any attempt at resistance ; and her own immediate impulse was to force him to yield his prey. How she succeeded has been seen.

“ But what shall we do ? We none of us know our way ? I don't—you don't, Hero ; and of course you don't, miss ?—Beatrice, I mean. Of course, cousin Beatrice, you can't be expected to know the streets here in Messina, or the way to the governor's palace (that's my uncle),—you, who have never lived here ;” said Gaetano. “ Oh dear, oh dear, how provoking it is of Matteo to have let us stray so ! Where can he be, I wonder ? You don't see him anywhere, do you, cousin Hero ?”

“ No, cousin ;” she replied.

“ Oh dear, how could he be so careless of us ?” repeated Gaetano, with a look deplorably helpless.

Beatrice took her handkerchief out of her pocket, and held it towards him.

“ What's this for ?” he said.

“ I thought you might be going to cry again, and would want it to wipe your tears ;” replied Beatrice. “ With that rueful look and tone, what but weeping should follow ?”

“ Ah, it’s all very well ;” said the boy ; “ but we’re very young, and oughtn’t to be left alone. My father and my uncle will both be rarely angry with Matteo, when they hear how he lost us, staring about him.”

“ But how are they to hear ?” returned she. “ You are no tale-bearer, sure, to bring a poor serving-man into disgrace ?”

“ Why, when a servant neglects his duty, what are we to do, miss ?” said Gaetano.

“ Not tell tales, miss ; certainly not tell tales ;” replied she.

“ Why do you call me ‘ miss,’ cousin Beatrice ? I’ve told you already, I’m no girl. If it’s because you are displeased at my calling you miss, now that I know you for my cousin ; you should recollect that it isn’t so easy all of a sudden to get into the way of calling a strange little girl by her name. It seems so familiar ; and I don’t know how it is, but you’re not one to be familiar with, I think.”

She laughed. “ And you should recollect that it isn’t so easy to treat you as a boy, when I see you behave like a girl. But, come, I’ll forgive your calling me ‘ miss,’ if you’ll let me call you so.”

“ No, no ;” he said ; “ I’d rather not. I won’t be called so ; and I’m sure I don’t wish to call you ‘ miss.’ Nay, I like calling you Beatrice, much better. Only, let me get accustomed to it, cousin.”

“ Very well, cousin. Meantime, cheer up, put on a bold face, and enquire our way for us, at some house ;” she said.

“ I don’t know—I never did—I’m not accustomed to speak to strangers ;” hesitated he.

“ And if you never begin, you certainly never will be accustomed. Are you afraid of getting bad habits ?

Or do you intend to go through the world without speaking to any but your intimates?" she said.

"I don't know what you mean;" said he, with a puzzled look. The boy stood gazing in her face for a moment or two; but there was something in that clear eye, and in the turn of that lip, that made him cast down his eyes, and bite his lip.

"Shall we try if this way will lead us right?" said Hero, pointing down a street that looked invitingly cool; there was a fountain in the centre, shaded by a broad-spreading chesnut-tree; round which stood a group of women, washing, and filling pitchers; some men watering their mules; the animals whisking away the flies with their tails, shaking their long ears, and drawing refreshing draughts from the marble basin, through their bright and tasseled head-gear.

"Stay, suppose I just ask that lad, who is lounging in yonder door-way, whether this turning will do;" said Beatrice, stepping forward as she spoke, and addressing her enquiry to a sturdy hobbledehoy, who was idly chipping splinters off the door-post with the end of a bill he poised in his hand.

"Thou know'st not whom thou'rt questioning, little girl;" he said, looking over his shoulder at her in a lordly manner; "'twere a pity of thy life, an' thou were't to question me too closely, seeing that I am the constable's eldest son; and seeing moreover, that thou art, or I'm much mista'en, no better than thou shouldst be. 'Tis my father's calling to apprehend all aspiring people, and vagroms; and were I to tell him that I have seen you three chits loitering about here for some time past, he'd charge you be accused in no time. I've had my eye on you, I promise ye; and think not over well of your looks, I tell ye honestly."

"What dost thou see in our looks, that hits not thy taste, fellow?" said Beatrice.

"Nay, 'fellow' not me, little girl, nor 'thou' not me, if thou be'st wise. 'Tis not for mendicomes and vagabonds to make too familiar with a limb of the

law,—a limb, a very member,—being as I am, constable's son, and likely to be constable myself, one of these days."

"We are neither beggars nor thieves, law-limb ;" she replied ; " we but seek to know our way ; we only ask——"

"You only 'ask !' What is asking but begging, I should like to know ? What is wandering, but going astray ; what is going astray, but erring ; what is erring, but wickedness ; and what is wickedness, but the highroad to thieving ? Trust me, I think you're no more virtuous than you should be."

"Who is, Jack ? Let us all try and be as good as we may, we can scarce hope to be more good than we should and ought to be."

"What mean you, by calling me 'Jack,' little girl ? 'Tis none of my name. Another proof of error, in thee, thou see'st."

"No error—nor proof of error—but a plain truth, as I will prove. I call thee Jack ; for art thou not Jack—in office ?"

"I am not in office yet ; though 'tis not to be doubted there's a goodly dearth of brains here, to make me exceed to my father's office hereafter. The meritless sire makes the meritless son ; and my father has long been known for the most meritless man to be constable in Messina. So, thou see'st, Jack-in-office is not my title now, whatever it may be by-and-by ; and thou only commit'st thyself more and more, each word thou speak'st, little girl ; and will force me to commit thee to my father's comprehension, if thou have not a care."

"Heaven deliver us from any of the family comprehension, which I think is none of the most promising, to judge by the sample. It sufficeth not, even to direct us the right road ;" said Beatrice, turning away, with Hero and Gaetano, who had been for the last few minutes plucking at her skirts to prevent her from getting them into trouble with this foolish lad.

They instinctively turned down the inviting-looking street ; and when they reached the spot where the fountain stood, Hero said she should like to sit down and rest, under the shady tree. There was a wooden bench, ran round its trunk ; and here the three children seated themselves, watching the good-humoured women, as they laughed and talked over their splashing task, with the muleteers, and the rest of the men grouped around.

“ How pleasant the water looks ! How it sparkles, and splashes down from the dolphins’ mouths ! The sound is as welcome as the sight !” said Hero. “ How delicious a draught of it would be.”

“ I’m so thirsty !” said Gaetano, in his lackadaisical tone of lament.

“ Why don’t you drink, then ?” said Beatrice.

“ I can’t ;” said he. “ I can’t drink from the basin, where the mules are dipping their noses in, and fouling the water ; and where the women are muddling it with their linen.”

“ We might perhaps find a reason why you should drink with mules ; but as for your making a wash-tub serve you for the nonce, that might be an unfitting utensil, for such a lady-like boy as my cousin Gaetano ;” said Beatrice. “ Why can’t you make a drinking-cup of your hand, and hold it beneath one of the fresh streams from the dolphin-mouths ?”

“ It’d splash so ;” said Gaetano.

“ And signorina Gaetano would be wet through, and mayhap, take cold !” laughed Beatrice. “ I suppose, too, she is too modest,—too timid in speaking to strangers, to ask one of these good people to help her. But you are tired, Hero, and would be glad of a draught from the fountain. I’ll try what can be done.”

Beatrice advanced among the men and women, and said in a frank, raised voice :—“ Is there any one here, who will lend a horn, or a cup of any kind, to a little girl who is thirsty ?”

For a moment, there was a look of wonder at the beautiful child who stood thus amidst them, with her clear eyes, and fearless voice ; the next, several pocket drinking-cups of horn, leather, or wood, with which most of them were provided, were heartily proffered.

After they had all three partaken of the welcome refreshment, Beatrice said, in her firm ringing tone : —“ If any one of you will show us the way to the governor’s palace, signor Leonato will join his thanks to ours, for the kindness his daughter has received at your hands, good friends.”

There was a murmur of surprise ran through the crowd ; and then there was a loud shout : —“ Evviva signor Leonato ! Long live our noble governor !”

Beatrice was warmly welcomed to her new home, by all its inmates. Her uncle Leonato grew to love her no less proudly and fondly than his own child ; her uncle Antonio was entertained with her sprightliness and confirmed bearing, so different from his own boy’s ill-assured ways ; Hero felt as if a sister had been suddenly vouchsafed to her ; and Gaetano was perplexed, pleased, vexed, and interested with her, all at once. He had been a sickly infant, was still a delicate child, and was therefore petted, humoured, and indulged in all his whims and whinings, his fears and his fancies, until he was the spoiled boy,—the half-girl,—that so amazed and amused Beatrice, when she first saw him.

Like all cowardly children, he was always getting into hurts and accidents ; like all over-cautious children, he was always getting into scrapes ; like all self-pitying children, he was always getting into trouble. He was ever dreading something about to happen, or lamenting over something that had happened. He was in a perpetual state of uneasiness and fret. His face was always lengthened ; his air discomfited ; his lips ready to quiver, and his eyes ready to fill,—or rather to brim over ; for they were generally moist

ened, and glistening, preparatory to a shower, at the least word or event.

“Hark ! There’s that unhappy boy ! Howling again, I declare !” said Beatrice to Hero, as sounds of lamentation reached them, in an alley of the garden, where the two little girls were walking together. “What can be the matter now, I wonder ? Some portentous trifle, or terrible nothing, I suppose, as usual. He certainly is the most unhappy of children ! Unhappy in the misfortunes that befall him, unhappy in his sense of them. Poor Gaetano ! ‘Gaetano, the infelicitous,’ I call him.”

“You should not nick-name him, coz ;” said little Hero ; “I don’t think he likes it. He has been accustomed to have his own way, and he won’t choose to be laughed at.”

“I shall give him no choice ; I shall try and laugh him out of some of his whimsies, whether he will or no ;” answered Beatrice.

“But do it by degrees, then ; be very gentle with him ; for he’s not strong, poor little fellow ;” said tender-hearted Hero.

“His pate’s not strong, assuredly. Pooh ! It’ll do him good to be bantered ; he must learn to bear a joke, or he’ll never be worth anything. A boy that can’t take a joke, will never be able to defend himself against a blow. Coolness and fortitude are main things in both cases, for victory.”

“You ought to have been a boy yourself, cousin Beatrice, you are so fearless and so firm ; and know so well what a boy ought to be ;” said Hero.

“I like courage, in boy or girl ;” said Beatrice. “A girl needn’t be unseemly bold, or forward, for having a strong heart ; any more than a boy need be an unfeeling brute for knowing how to face danger. But here comes infelicitous Gaetano.”

He was making his way hastily towards them, when a large hornet happening to fly close by his ear, made him start aside ; his foot tripped, he stumbled, and

fell headlong ; his face flat upon the gravel-path. He cried lustily. The girls both ran to pick him up.

“ His nose bleeds ! ” exclaimed Hero.

“ Oh, the blood ! ” he said, turning pale ; “ and my hands are grazed ! See here ! Oh dear ! oh dear ! ” and he burst out a-crying afresh.

“ Dear little cherub ! ” said Beatrice.

“ Are you pitying me, or are you laughing at me ? ” he said. “ What do you mean by cherub ? I’m no cherub, cousin Beatrice. ”

“ No ? Don’t you ‘ continually cry ? ’ You are ever proclaiming your right to the title. Here, let me wipe away the marks, and when you don’t see them, perhaps you’ll forget the wounds ; they’re not very deep ; only a scratch or two. ”

“ But they smart so, you can’t think. And my nose, oh, my nose ! See how it keeps bleeding ! ”

“ Stay, I’ll run into the house for something to stop it ; ” said Beatrice ; “ and when the blood has done flowing, you can dry up your tears, you know, at the same time. ”

“ Are you angry with her, Gaetano ? ” said his cousin Hero, peeping into his face ; as Beatrice flew away to bring sponge and water, and to get help.

“ Oh, no ! I’m never angry with cousin Beatrice, tease me as much as she will ; ” said he, his tears subsiding into sobs ; “ she never seems to do it from malice—but as if she couldn’t help the fun of it. I suppose it’s funny to her, though it’s not so to me. ” And he sighed in his lachrymose style.

“ If it’s not pleasant to you, what if we beg her not to tease you any more ? ” said Hero.

“ No, no ; I don’t wish her to give up teasing me. I don’t know how it is, but somehow, though I’m provoked with her, I rather like it. She looks so bright with good-humour, while she’s joking me, that I feel pleased, even though I’m teased. Did you ever notice, cousin Hero, how her eyes sparkle, and how her lip curls, when she’s rating me ? I look at her

face, and then I can't feel angry. It's very odd ; but I can't."

"I'm glad of it ; for that shows you have a good temper of your own, dear Gactano ;" said Hero ; "and so, I know, you have. But so has Beatrice too, for all she loves to plague and torment you a little. See how good-naturedly she helped you up, and now runs off to fetch something that'll cure you. Let us go and meet her."

Some few years had gone by without incident, after Beatrice's domestication at her uncle Leonato's house ; when, unexpectedly, he received a message from the countess Giustina, his aunt, to say, that now his young daughter was beyond babyhood, she wished to see her, and make acquaintance with her, as the individual in whose person would eventually centre the honors of their house. This countess Giustina, was an old lady of very dignified notions. She was proud of her patrician blood, proud of her relations ; proud of their independent position, yet proud of the added importance they derived from their connection with her. This countess Giustina, was the aunt whom the mother of Beatrice had mortally offended by her marriage ; as an alliance far beneath that which her niece had a right to form. The old lady was a strict disciplinarian ; she thought that it was her pride, her sense of honor, her idea of what was due, which were wounded by this match. They were, but not solely. Her affections had received a stab deeper than all the rest. Her heart had been more warmly fixed upon this girl, —whom she had brought up, and fostered from the very hour which orphaned the little creature and its brothers,—than she herself knew ; and when she vowed never to forgive her, never more to look upon her face, she little imagined that the bitter regret of love, no less than resentment, dictated the denunciation. In the pang of finding that she was not all-in-all to this beloved niece, as her niece was to her, she

cast from her all compromise of comfort, by resolving never more to communicate with, or behold her. She remained shut up in her castle, with a few faithful retainers; held little intercourse with the world; none, save an occasional interchange of messengers, bearing greetings between her two nephews and herself. She never lost the habit of authority with them, which she had acquired during the years when they were boys, left to her care; and now, when she wrote to her nephew Leonato, bidding him give her the pleasure of seeing his daughter, to spend a few months with her, she dictated entirely the conditions of the visit. She told him neither his brother Antonio, nor himself, were to come this time, as she wished to judge his little girl, uncontrolled by the presence of father or uncle. She forbade the attendance of any hand-maidens; saying, that her own woman should wait upon the young ladies. She begged that Hero might be accompanied by her female cousin only. This was the sole allusion made to Beatrice throughout the letter; but Leonato knew enough of his aunt, to understand, that this signified his niece was to be included in the invitation.

He rejoiced that the lady Giustina should have wished their visit, as it showed her interest in his child; he remembered that in his boyhood he had himself received nothing but kindness and sensible indulgence from his aunt, notwithstanding the rigid discipline she maintained, and he was well-pleased that his own daughter should now enjoy the same treatment; he was glad, too, that the young girls should have the pleasant change of a country holiday. The old lady's castle lay up among the mountains, a long day's journey from Messina, in a wild, picturesque solitude; and the fresh breezes of the high ground, would form a healthful contrast with the heat of the plains.

"Will it not be charming?" said Beatrice to her cousin, as the two girls paced up and down the

orchard-path together ; soon after Leonato had announced to them the intended visit.

“Ye—yes ;” murmured Hero.

“Only think, Hero ! A delicious journey—a fine old castle—noble grounds—a grand view—with glorious rambles among the mountains. Will it not be charming—most charming ?”

“Well, I suppose so—most charming ;” repeated Hero ; but in a tone anything but the echo of her cousin’s eager delight.

“Why, thou say’st ‘charming’ in a most lugubrious voice ; worthy to be that of infelicitous Gaetano himself !” said the laughing Beatrice. “Dost thou really not enjoy the thoughts of this charming holiday ?”

Hero did not immediately answer ; and Beatrice after observing her for a moment, went on :—“Why, thou look’st as scared and as helpless as our doughty cousin, when I smother him with impossible propositions. Come, tell me, Hero ; dost thou, in faith, dislike it ?”

“N—o ;” said Hero.

“Or dread it ?” said Beatrice, eyeing her closely.

“No ;” repeated Hero. But it was more hesitatingly uttered than before ; and she glanced disturbedly in her cousin’s face, and then threw an uneasy look behind her.

“Thou dost, Hero. Tell me, now, like the honest girl thou art, what it is thou fear’st.”

“Well then, how can you like the thoughts of the journey, when we may be waylaid by robbers ? They say, that in those mountain roads, they lurk about, and hide behind rocks, and watch their opportunity, and then suddenly start out, and pounce upon unwary passengers, and rob and murder them. Oh, Beatrice !”

“And, oh, Hero !—They may waylay grown people, but why should they attack little girls ? We’re safe from the signori masnadieri, depend on’t. Forget the unlikely terrors of the journey, and think of nothing but the positive delights of the visit.”

“Worse, worse, Beatrice! I could tell you such things I have heard, of the strictness of our great-aunt, lady Giustina. She never forgives the smallest fault, or overlooks the slightest misbehaviour. Think what it will be to live all day long, and for many weeks and months together, beneath her severe eye. I fancy I feel it upon me now;” said Hero, shivering; “even your courage would quail beneath that severe eye, I think, Beatrice. Ursula has told me such things of the countess Giustina’s tasking eye. She says no one was ever known to meet it steadily.”

“When they felt they deserved its reproof, I suppose;” said Beatrice. “But how came your maid Ursula to know anything about the lady Giustina? She is too young, surely, ever to have been at Montaspro?”

“Her mother lived in the castle, many years ago. She was in the countess’s service; and when my father was appointed governor of Messina, lady Giustina sent him Ursula’s mother as a clever housekeeper. Old Ursula has often made her daughter and me shudder with her stories of Montaspro, and its imperious mistress. By day, lady Giustina’s terrible eye; and by night,—”

Hero broke off. Beatrice could see her actually tremble.

“Well; by night——?” urged Beatrice.

“Oh, I can’t repeat it,—I can’t tell you,—we shall see, all too surely, when we go to Montaspro;” whispered Hero. “Now you know why I did not think of my visit there with any great delight.”

“But if you dread it, why not ask my uncle to allow you to give it up?” said Beatrice.

“O, I would not on any account object to going;” said Hero. “My father respects our aunt. I have heard him say, he owes her a large debt of gratitude; she was a friend to him in his boyhood; she was like a mother to him and his brother and sister,—uncle Antonio, and aunt Beatrice,—when they were all

three left orphans. She is very, very good, although so strict, I know."

"If she be good and just, we have nothing to fear;" said Beatrice. "I was too young when my mother died," she went on, gravely, "to understand much of what she felt and thought; but I think I can make out, from what I remember of words she dropped, at the time, that she reproached herself with ingratitude towards one who, with all her severity, had been bountiful in goodness and care. If lady Giustina was harsh and unforgiving in the hour of her anger, she was at any rate generous and kind before offence had been given. We'll try and think of this, when we see her, if she should chance to be very severe with us."

"One comfort, we shall go together;" said Hero; "and you will help me to bear difficulties cheerfully, and teach me to meet them bravely. With you, Beatrice, I shall be ashamed to be a coward; and with you time must always pass happily."

There was a handsome retinue appointed, to conduct the two young ladies to their destination; for Leonato knew, that although his aunt had thought proper to forbid the attendance of women-servants, yet that she would be displeased, were her grand-nieces not to travel in a style befitting their rank. Their journey was to be performed in a kind of coach, or litter, drawn by mules, well-suited to the rugged mountain-paths they would have to traverse.

Their way lay through scenery of the most picturesque beauty. It almost immediately arose from the plains; and wound among the uplands; commanding a grand view of sea and land. Beneath them lay the city, with its amphitheatre of palaces; beyond it stretched its sickle-shaped harbour, bearing stately vessels within its bosom, at safe anchorage. Still farther might be seen the sparkling waters of the Faro di Messina, bounded by the opposite Calabrian coast, with the cliffs of Scylla; whose frowning as-

pect, and baying of her ever-threatening rock-dogs, were softened by distance.

The early morning sun shone brilliantly, and as yet, temperately, upon all ; for they had commenced their journey with the dawn, and were to halt at noon-tide, in order to avoid the greatest heat of the day, and that they might reach Montaspro before night-fall. The fervid blue of the cloudless sky, arched above ; while around them, was the welcome verdure of trees, and pasture,—at that altitude fresh and unscorched. The luxuriant foliage of the chesnut-tree, the walnut, the fig, the almond, and of the graceful ash, which yields its rich tribute in shape of manna ; alternated with the soberer hues of olive and cork trees ; impervious hedges of spine-leaved aloes, intermingled with the Indian fig, or prickly pear, flanking the way-side, together presented variety in profusion.

The novelty, the beauty, the delightful sense of open air and motion, had their effect upon Hero. She had forgotten her apprehensions, in the present pleasure. She enjoyed the journey to the full as much as her cousin ; and it was not until the sun was sinking towards the west, that she began to exhibit symptoms of an abated satisfaction. The path became wilder and wilder, as they penetrated farther up among the mountain solitudes ; the purple glow of evening threw a less brilliant light upon all around ; the shadows deepened and lengthened among the rocks ; there were fewer trees, and barer and more rugged crags on every side. Her animated tone subsided ; her admiring exclamations became fewer and fewer, and at length sank into silence.

Beatrice at first did not heed the change ; then, when she remarked it, she thought it proceeded from weariness, and she let the conversation drop, that Hero might have quiet, and rest. But she soon saw that so far from resting, her cousin grew less and less tranquil ; and at length her uneasiness was so visible, that Beatrice thought the best way would be to notice

it, and try to cheer her with sprightly talk, and an encouraging tone.

“ Are you looking out for Montaspro, Hero ? We cannot be far from it, I should think. We shall soon be there, I dare say ; and then for a hearty supper, and a good long rest. This mountain air sharpens the appetite to an edge as keen,—nay, keener,—than itself. If it wear out the spirits, at length, with its delicious excitement, and weary the limbs, with many hours of it, yet it bountifully repairs the mischief, by supplying the means of restoring both spirit and strength. Your mountaineers eat well, and sleep well, whereby they are ever fresh and ready for the morrow. How we shall enjoy to-morrow morning, Hero !”

“ Shall we ?” said Hero, abstractedly. She could hardly follow Beatrice’s words, so engaged was she in peering out.

“ Have you caught a glimpse of the castle yet ?” asked Beatrice.

“ No ; I am not watching for the castle. I was looking yonder. Don’t you see something brindled, crouching over there ? If it should be a wolf ! They say, that there are wolves among these mountains ; and snakes, Beatrice.”

“ Well, they won’t hurt us ; they can’t glide up into the coach, and bite our heads off, unaware, can they, Hero ?” laughed her cousin.

“ Hush ! What’s that ?—Hark ! don’t you hear a noise ? If it should be banditti !”

“ It sounds to me, like the rush of waters ;” said Beatrice. She paused to listen. Then, she pointed through the curtains on her side. “ Look ! is not that a grand sight ?” she said.

Through an opening in the rocks, appeared the castle of Montaspro. It stood perched, as it were, mid-air, on the summit of a precipitous crag, that beetled up in solitary pre-eminence from amid the surrounding heights. It seemed standing aloof, in sullen majesty,

austere and repulsive. Its walls, rough and solid, looked part of the rock from which it reared its frowning crest. No shrubs, or trees, feathered the sides of the yawning chasm beneath ; no draping ivy, or vine, hung its festoons amid the rifts, to grace and conceal the stony bareness ; but abrupt and jagged points ; shelving ledges, and sheer depths, among which leaped, and tore, and boiled, a fierce mountain torrent, were the environments that aided the effect of haughty and almost hostile seclusion, which the castle presented.

“ And that is Montaspro ? ” whispered Hero. “ It looks a fit residence for our stern grand-aunt, the severe-eyed lady Giustina. How shall we ever venture to encounter her ? I know I shall never dare look her in the face ; so I shall never know whether she is pleased or angry with me. I may go on offending her, from want of courage to meet her eye. I wish I hadn’t heard about that terrible eye of hers. It haunts me. I feel as if it were watching us all the way up this glen to her castle.”

“ Think of it but as a fable—such as the eye of our *Ætna Polyphemus* of old ; ” said Beatrice. “ Scorn it, like the sea-nymph *Galatea* ; defy it, and outwit it, like the brave *Ulysses*.”

“ I have not a spark of bravery in me, when I think of being so near ; ” said the trembling Hero.

“ We are yet some distance ; the road winds ; ” answered Beatrice. “ Come, call thy courage to thee. Remember, she’s no ogress ; she will neither eat thee, nor murder thee. Let her looks be never so terrible, she will not harm thee, believe it.”

“ If Gaetano were but here ! ” murmured Hero.

“ What ! Gaetano, the infelicitous ? How should he aid us, in the name of all that’s impossible ? How should he be a champion, who cannot help himself ? How should he be a stay, who can’t hold up against the least wind of mischance. What should make thee wish for him, Hero ? Why, thine own name were of

more avail in a difficulty, than his whole strength. 'Tis the very unhopefullest thing thou couldst have hit upon, to wish him here. Why, he would bring us into more trouble with his whimpering, and hamper us more with his terrors, in a single hour, than we could suffer trouble and terror from aunt Giustina in a week. Of all wretchedness, desire not infelicitous Gaetano were with us. What could make you wish for him ?”

“ He would be one more, at any rate ;” said Hero ; “ one more, on our side, to face the lady Giustina.”

“ One more to quail before her, you mean ;” replied Beatrice ; “ his only help, would be helping to dishearten us ; his only aid, assisting us to bewail ourselves ; his only support, supporting us in our fears, which ten to one, are but groundless fears, after all. Best think so, till we’re sure they have some foundation ; and best save up our courage till we actually need it, instead of spending its strength beforehand, running to meet disagreeables half-way, that may never be there, at all, to meet us.”

They had yet a considerable space to traverse, ere they reached Montaspro ; the road went far round ; the commanding situation of the castle rendered it visible long before it was reached ; and thus, Hero, instead of gathering courage, had time to confirm herself in her alarms, as is mostly the case in such periods of protracted expectation. The evening glow faded, leaving the rocky solitude more chill and blank than ever ; each succeeding view they obtained of the castle, it showed more and more gloomy ; and by the time they arrived at its portals, night had thrown its dark pall over the scene, heightening the mysterious solemnity of the approach, and exciting Hero’s agitation to an almost unbearable degree.

As the litter proceeded across the drawbridge, and beneath the massive gateway, and they entered a spacious courtyard, where a body of the lady Giustina’s retainers received them by torch-light, the scene

was so strange, so impressive, that it might well have struck more self-possessed and more experienced travellers than the two young cousins, with awe.

They were assisted to alight, with much ceremonial deference. They found stationed in the great hall, a grey-headed old man, very stately and upright,—the countess's seneschal, or steward ; and a grey-headed old dame, also very stately and upright, and very angular,—the countess's own woman, or duenna. By these two personages, they were accosted in a grave manner, and begged to state which of their two young ladyships was his lordship the governor's daughter. Hero got out a word or two, announcing herself ; and then the two stately personages, giving her the preference, led the cousins in a silent and stately manner into a spacious apartment, where sat the lady of Montaspro. She occupied an easy chair by the hearth ; but she sat perfectly erect. She was surrounded by all the tokens of wealth and of a magnificent taste ; but her own person was simply attired, to an almost ostentatious plainness. She was entirely in black—her gown of a homely stuff, her head-gear a plain coif ; but there was that in herself, which denoted her, unmistakeably, the gentlewoman. She needed no richness of dress to set forth her claims to high rank, no jewels to declare her illustrious name,—her pride of birth, or dignity. She sat there, a noblewoman, in her whole aspect ; in her very look, in the slightest turn of her head, in the least motion of her hand. She had marked features, but her complexion retained its delicacy ; that, and the silver-white of her hair, made her face and hands show in almost snowy contrast with her swart garments. There were two points of color in her countenance. Her eyes were jet-black, of piercing brilliancy, with an alert and observant motion, rather belonging to youth, or maturity, than to such advanced years ; and her lips were of a vivid red, no less remarkable at her age.

“ And you are Hero ? ” she said, taking a hand of her young grand-niece in hers.

“ Yes, madam ; ” replied Hero ; “ and here is Beatrice ; ” she added, looking towards her cousin, who had followed her up to the countess’s chair.

But the lady Giustina kept her eyes fixed upon Hero’s face, saying :—“ I see your father in your look, maiden. How is he ? How doth my good nephew Leonato ? ”

“ My father is well, madam, and bade me present his dutiful greetings to your ladyship. My cousin is charged with them, no less than myself. ” And again she turned to where Beatrice stood waiting to pay her respects.

But the countess went on :—“ And how doth my worthy nephew Antonio ? He hath a son, I hear. Doth he give promise of being as hasty as his sire could be, when a boy ? ”

“ My cousin Gaetano is the most gentle creature living, madam ; and Beatrice will tell you, that—— ”

Again Hero moved towards Beatrice ; and again, lady Giustina took no notice of the reference.

“ Too gentle, is scarce commendable in a boy, whatever it may be in a girl ; ” she said ; “ and when thou talk’st of the most gentle of living creatures, what can a young thing like you, know of degrees of gentleness in so large a range of beings ? Speak ever within bounds, little maiden, lest thou chance to outstate fact, and so prove thyself either ignorant or false. ”

Abashed at having already incurred her aunt’s rebuke, Hero had no voice for a reply. There was a pause. And then the countess put her two hands upon the arms of her chair, and turning her face in the direction of Beatrice, said in a suppressed voice :—“ Come hither, child. ”

Beatrice advanced a step, and stood immediately before her. The old lady’s eyes were fixed upon her own lap, for another instant ; then raised as if by an

effort of will, and directed full upon the face of the young girl.

The keen black eyes never wavered ; their lids never stirred ; the muscles of the mouth never altered ; but the red lips waned in color, until they blanched to the whiteness of the pale face itself.

Beatrice, while the countess thus continued to gaze upon her, had it in her heart to say that she had no greetings to bring from a living parent, but that her mother's parting hour had been embittered by the thought of dying unforgiven of one, who had been deeply beloved, though so unrelenting ; but there was something arose within her, to check the reproachful speech.

The lady Giustina raised her hand, as if to screen her eyes from the glare of light. "Remove that lamp farther back ;" she said to one of the attendants ; then, turning again to Beatrice, she said :— "Welcome to Montaspro, child ; I am well pleased that you should have accompanied Hero ; well pleased to have both my young cousins to spend some time with me ; and trust they are well-pleased to come."

"I have rejoiced, ever since I learned we were to visit the castle, madam ;" replied Beatrice.

"And now, Prisca," said the lady Giustina, addressing her stately gentlewoman, "these young ladies will doubtless be glad to see their rooms. Lead them thither, and assist them with what change of apparel they think fit and refreshing, ere they return to take some refection with me. They must need some, after their long day's journey."

The ancient handmaiden performed her mistress's bidding, by beckoning an attendant to precede them with lights. She led the way up a flight of stairs, wide enough to have admitted the two girls being carried up them in the litter in which they had travelled, —mules and all ; it was of wood, so dark with age, as to look like ebony, and so bright with polishing, as to reflect the lights the attendant carried, like a mirror,

They passed on into a corridor so lofty, and so long, that it looked like the aisle of a cathedral ; it opened by side doors, into different chambers. One of these doors, the stately gentlewoman threw open ; while she looked at Hero, and said :—“ Yours, young lady !”

As Hero peeped into its depths, she thought it looked like a chill cavern ; but the stately gentlewoman did not tarry for her to examine it, or to enter, but led the way straight on, to the end of the corridor, till she came to another flight of stairs, as wide, as dark, as polished as the other. At the top, they found themselves in a narrow gallery, which seemed to lead somewhere out upon the ramparts of the castle ; certainly, into the open air ; for there was a strong draught, which threatened to extinguish the lights. After traversing this gallery, they came to another long and lofty corridor ; at one of the doors in which, the ancient duenna stopped, and throwing it open in like manner as before, she looked at Beatrice, and said :—“ Yours, young lady !”

The two girls exchanged a dismayed glance ; they had always, since their living together, been accustomed to occupy the same sleeping-room, and Beatrice knew her cousin would not like this solitary arrangement,—especially so far distant from each other.

Hero stood aghast, and said nothing. But Beatrice said :—“ We are in the habit of having but one room between us, mistress Prisca ; either of these we have seen, will serve for us both.”

“ My lady ordered separate chambers ;” said the ancient gentlewoman, with the sententiousness of an oracle.

“ Can we not have rooms nearer together, then, mistress Prisca ?” persisted Beatrice.

“ These are the appointed chambers ;” rejoined the gentlewoman, as if uttering an irrevocable fiat.

“ Why not dis-appoint them ? Better they be disappointed, surely, than we, of sleeping near each other, when we desire it ;” replied Beatrice.

“ If you wish alteration, you must ask my lady ;” said the duenna.

“ No, no ; pray, Beatrice, no, no ;” eagerly whispered Hero ; then she added aloud :—“ Let it be as it is ; since it is my aunt’s wish, we are satisfied.”

The cousins hastily performed such toilette evolutions, as would enable them to meet their grand-aunt in requisite order for supper ; while the grim mistress Prisca officiated as tire-woman. She was a gaunt, bony person, looking mightily like a veteran man-at-arms dressed in a coif and pinders, and petticoats. She had angular features, pointed elbows, a flat chest ; and her skirts hung so lank, as to look as if they wrapped a couple of vine-props. She was habitually silent ; never spoke, but in reply ; and when she did open her lips, she used the fewest possible words, and spoke in the dryest possible voice. She glided about the gloomy apartment, hovering round the two girls, supplying them with what they needed ; looking like a ghostly skeleton, doomed to walk the earth in the garb of a waiting-woman, abiding until she should be accosted, according to the invariable usage of ghosts, ere she could speak to these inhabitants of earth.

During the meal, lady Giustina was very gracious to her young cousins ; and afterwards dismissed them to their night’s rest with words of hospitable courtesy.

At the door of Hero’s cavernous room the cousins parted for the night. Mistress Prisca being present, they only exchanged a good-night kiss, and a silent squeeze of the hand ; but Beatrice, as she took her way on to her own chill cavern, thought of Hero’s white cheeks, and could not get to sleep for some time, from sympathy with the discomfort she knew her cousin was suffering.

Next morning, the first glimpse she had of them, showed how accurately she had guessed ; they were still more wan, and poor Hero had evidently had little or no rest.

There was no time for question or sympathy, how-

ever; for mistress Prisca told them her lady was already in the breakfast-room expecting them. Beatrice, who had hastened to Hero's room, now helped her cousin to get ready; and, after as speedy dressing as might be, the two girls hurried down.

The lady Giustina was seated at the breakfast-table, when Beatrice and Hero approached to pay her their morning respects.

"Your journey somewhat excuses your late-rising, maidens;" said the countess; "but remember, for the future, my breakfast-hour is earlier; and it is but fitting respect, that youth should not keep age waiting."

There was no want of color in Hero's cheeks now; but as she took her seat at the breakfast-table, she found courage to say:—"Beatrice would have been ready, madam, but that she waited for me."

This vindication of her cousin, at her own expense, pleased the old lady; and she said:—"Perhaps you slept badly, and that made you late. How did you rest?"

Unfortunately, Hero, anxious to conciliate her aunt, answered:—"Thank you, madam; quite well."

The countess had noticed the pale young cheeks, and in surmising their cause, had half resolved to indulge Hero,—who she at once saw was a gentle, timid child,—with companionship at night; but this denial of having rested ill, she deemed a deviation from truth, and as such, resolved to punish it, by taking no farther notice of her tremors. At any rate, she resolved that the little girl should herself ask for what she desired, before help was proffered.

"In future, then, let me find you with your cousin, here, in the breakfast-room when I come down. As I said before, better youth should wait for age, than age for youth."

"And yet age would be glad sometimes to wait for youth, if it could hope to be overtaken by it again, would it not, aunt?" said Beatrice. "It would be

pleasant to keep people older than ourselves, waiting, if we could hope to make them as young as ourselves ; for then we might hope to keep them the longer with us, you know."

"So, so, saucy child, thou hast a rogue's tongue of thine own, hast thou?" said the countess, with a smiling tone, that showed her anything but displeased by the sally.

"I have a heart that beats so merry a tune, aunt, it sets my tongue dancing, whether I will or no ; will you pardon it, if it caper unseasonably?"

"Not if it cut unseasonable or unreasonable capers ;" answered the old lady. "But provided it do not exceed a discreet gaiety, I shall be glad to let it dance to the bidding of its heart's tune of content."

"And that is to the tune of I know not how much, —a measureless measure!" said Beatrice, in great glee to find the formidable aunt encourage her in rattling on gaily, as she was wont. "I am in higher than tip-topmost spirits, this morning, at the thought of the delightful mountain ramble you are going to allow us to take, madam."

"Am I, child? No, not a mountain ramble ; these wild passes might not be so safe for you. Montaspro hath not a neighbour roof within many miles of it ; and the rocks and caverns harbour gentry, they say, who are not pleasant to meet with. What makes you tremble, Hero?" said lady Giustina, interrupting herself, and fixing her jet eyes upon the young girl's face. "There is no fear of these lawless people, while you are within the walls of Montaspro. I hope you do not give way to idle fears. I despise a dastardly spirit! Your father's child should be no coward."

"My cousin belies neither her father's name, nor her own, madam ;" said Beatrice. "Hero is no coward."

"She seems no great heroine ;" said lady Giustina. "How wouldst thou be able to meet a real danger,

maiden, if thou quak'st now at the mere mention of one? Keep thy heart brave, and thy spirit strong, and then they will serve thee in time of need."

"Hero hath a tender heart, and a gentle spirit, madam, but they neither of them want for courage when occasion calls for it;" said Beatrice. "She hath stood between me and disgrace many a time, when my giddy spirits had well-nigh got me into scrapes; and as for poor Gaetano,—she hath been a very *Ægis* 'twixt him and disaster. But shall we not, indeed, be allowed to enjoy a ramble among this fine scenery?"

"Beyond the demesnes, you must not go;" said the countess. "But the castle-grounds are extensive, and command several fine points of view. You shall walk abroad, attended by my gentlewoman, after breakfast."

Beatrice felt disposed to have uttered a remark as to the abatement their delight in the ramble would suffer, if accompanied by mistress Prisca; but she prudently suppressed it.

The grounds belonging to castle Montaspro were indeed, as their mistress had described them, both fine and extensive. They were magnificent in their wild luxuriance; grand in their uncultivated beauty. Notwithstanding the presence of the angular duenna, Beatrice enjoyed her walk intensely; but she could perceive that her cousin was constrained, abstracted, joyless. She longed for an opportunity of speaking unreservedly with Hero, that she might endeavour to reason her out of her uneasiness, and to cheer her into better spirits. She felt there was no chance of it, so long as that lank shadow, that ghostly silence, stalked beside them; so she resolved to get rid of the restraint. Beatrice knew it was of no use to appeal to mistress Prisca herself, who would be sure to reply:—"My lady bade me accompany you;" or, "The countess desired I should attend you;" so she hit upon a device to distance her without her concurrence.

“Come, Hero! Let you and me have a good race together, as far as yonder pine-clump!” exclaimed she, with a glance at her cousin; and in another moment the two girls had set off at a rate of speed, that quickly left mistress Prisca far in the rear. By dint of appointing fresh goals, as often as the duenna gained upon them, Beatrice and Hero contrived to get some snatches of talk together.

“Dear Hero, you are unhappy, I fear; tell me what grieves you.”

“Not unhappy, Beatrice; but I wish we were at home. This wild place—this gloomy old castle—my terrible aunt,—”

“Nay, she is not so terrible, surely, as we had pictured to ourselves. Though she can look seriously enough when she chooses, yet she can also look pleasantly. Did you see?—She all but smiled this morning.”

“But how sternly her face settles into an immovable expression sometimes. Oh, how she looked at you last night, Beatrice! My blood boiled, when I saw that hard unkind gaze fixed upon you,—you who had never—who could never have done anything to offend her.”

“You forget that she saw in me the daughter of my mother;” said Beatrice, in a low voice. “She had offended her.”

“How cruel, how unjust, to resent your mother’s offences upon you!” exclaimed Hero. “And then how coldly she received you! Hardly deigned to look at you! Never called you by your name! Never said ‘Beatrice,’ but ‘child.’ Never even took you by the hand. Oh, she is a hard, unfeeling, terrible woman!”

“Do you know, Hero,” said Beatrice, “I have a notion those very things you have instanced, prove her not to be the cold hard woman you take her to be. I can’t help fancying that it was not that she disdained, but that she dreaded, to look upon me, lest

she should see a face that would remind her of one she remembers but too fondly and sadly. I think that she called me 'child' because her pale lips (did you notice how pale they grew?) dared not trust themselves to utter the name 'Beatrice'—which was that of my mother,—the niece who was once as dear to her as a child. And I think she grasped the arms of her chair, on purpose that she might not take my hand, lest I should feel hers tremble. As these things came into my head about her, do you know, Hero, I pitied my aunt instead of fearing her."

"I wish I had your courage, Beatrice;" sighed Hero. "It was very kind of you to say what you did for me, this morning, of my being no coward; but I fear sometimes that I am a bit of one."

"Then don't let yourself grow into a whole one;" said Beatrice. "Cast away the rotten morsel of poltroonery, if thou'rt conscious of any such thing in thy composition, and resolve to be a sound and entire brave girl."

Hero smiled; as she always did at her cousin's attempts to cheer and encourage her; but the next instant, her face dropped again, as she said:—"Oh, Beatrice! night will come again!"

"Ay; or day would never come again. Night must succeed, or we should ne'er have the blessed dawn. If we gave up the dark hours, how could we have the joy of beholding the light break; eh, Hero?"

"But when night returns, we shall be sundered again, dear coz!" said Hero. "They will make us sleep in separate rooms; and I don't like to be away from thee. I confess, I dread to be alone in the dark; darkness fills me with I know not what alarms. Especially after what I have heard of Montaspro;" and she visibly shuddered.

"What hast thou heard, dear?" said Beatrice, gently.

"A tall figure, dressed in white, and veiled with black, they say, has been seen to wander through the

corridors and chambers of the castle ; it wrings its hands, and moans sadly,—that it is fearful to see and hear ;” whispered Hero.

“ Most likely the moonbeams gliding in phantom shapes upon the old walls ; and the wind sobbing and sighing as it bears them company ;” said Beatrice.

“ Oh, indeed, Ursula said,——”

“ Ursula has told thee a parcel of fine stories, dear Hero ; to see if she could not make thee open thy eyes, and admire at them ;” said Beatrice. “ Thou see’st, dear girl, we met with no robbers by the way, as she spoke of ; and thou saw’st nothing last night, that should make thee believe there is anything more real in her foolish tale of the ghostly figure ; didst thou, Hero ?”

“ I saw nothing, certainly ;” said Hero. “ But oh, dear Beatrice, if you only knew how I lay and trembled, and could not go to sleep, do all I could ; and how my heart beat, and my head ached ; and how I longed for your pleasant voice to comfort me ; and your kind arms to hug me round, and make me feel safe.”

“ Dear Hero !” said Beatrice, as the cousins embraced each other affectionately. “ We’ll get permission to share the same sleeping-room in future ; and then thou wilt have thy fair night’s rest. How came you to say you slept well, when lady Giustina asked this morning how you rested ? You must not let your fancies make you a coward in speech, dearest coz ; that is worse than any other cowardice ; it leads you to be afraid of the truth.”

“ I meant not to tell a falsehood ;” said Hero ; “ but I hardly know what I answer my aunt ; I stand so in awe of her.”

“ If you do not like to ask her leave that we have one room, I will ;” said Beatrice.

“ No, no, Beatrice ; if you love me, don’t do that. I should rather anything than that ! She will think me a coward ! She will reproach me with my dastard-

ly spirit. Promise me that you won't speak of it to my aunt. Anything better than that. The very thought of the veiled spirit itself, is less terrible to me than lady Giustina's face of displeasure."

Beatrice had but just time to calm Hero's agitation by the required promise, before the angular mistress Prisca overtook them.

She made no remark, but her looks censured them severely. Of these, however, the cousins took no notice; and they returned, in silence, to the castle.

Day followed day, and week succeeded to week; and yet Hero's awe of the countess Giustina lessened no jot. Her night terrors were as powerful as ever; but they yielded before the greater one of letting her aunt know of them. She resisted all her cousin's persuasions, either to avow them herself, or to suffer them to be avowed for her; and the lady Giustina, who had some notion of what was passing in her timid niece's heart, though not to its full extent, deemed it a point of duty not to foster a weakness, by affording it succour. She erred from a good motive; though she certainly erred, in too great strictness of dealing with a youthful nature. She did not sufficiently allow for involuntary defects; she treated all faults with equal severity; she did not rightly distinguish between the mere failings of inexperience, or of native temperament, and those of wilful dereliction. She was so eager for those she loved, to be perfect, that she was harsher with their imperfections than she would have been with those of persons less dear to her. She conceived it to be so imperatively her duty to consider their good, in preference to their happiness, that she risked rendering miserable those, to secure whose welfare she would have sacrificed her own. She was austere from kindness; and unrelenting from regard. Her affection would not permit her to be fond; and her love forbade her to be indulgent. She put the severest restraint upon her own heart, when she was most rigorous towards her favorites.

Thus, poor Hero was left to struggle, unassisted, with all her contending apprehensions. Beatrice watched her narrowly,—for their opportunities of conversing confidentially were very rare,—and she could perceive that this state of agitation, this alternation of vague night alarms, with daily anxiety, were preying upon her cousin's health and spirits.

One cause of the anxiety, arose from Hero's frequent delinquencies in the matter of early-rising, and her consequent dread of her aunt's displeasure, which never failed to be evinced on every such occasion.

The long wakeful nights—the many hours spent in feverish alarm, in lieu of healthful repose, made the poor young girl heavy to sleep of a morning; and when the hour came for her to get up, she had often not long sunk into a profound slumber. Then came the late waking, the hurried dressing, the hurry of trepidation, and the hurrying down stairs.

Hero would enter, with trembling steps, beating heart, and contrite deprecation in every conscious look and gesture, as she approached the breakfast-table to pay her morning respects to her awful aunt already seated there. While Beatrice's eyes filled and sparkled with mingled grief and indignation to see her cousin in such evident suffering, lady Giustina would coldly turn her eyes upon the abashed offender, and say:—“Late, as usual, Hero? I thought I signified my wish that you should be in the breakfast-room, every morning, before I make my appearance.”

“Indeed, madam, I meant to be up early;” Hero would falter; “but I don't know how it was,—I lay,—I intended,—I,—I suppose I must have dropped asleep again while I was thinking to get up.”

“A not unfrequent result of lying intending to get up, instead of jumping up at the first intention;” said the countess. “At your age, maiden, I was an inveterate slug-a-bed, myself; but by a little resolution I contrived to break myself of the habit,—a most pernicious one, believe me.”

“What a pity so many pleasant things are pronounced pernicious!” exclaimed Beatrice. “Why should lying in bed be pernicious? It’s on the contrary, delicious!”

“Lying late is pernicious to the health—to the energies,—moral, physical, and intellectual;” said lady Giustina. “Neither man nor woman can hope to be good or great, strong or worthy, who indulges the habit. It enfeebles the frame, impairs the beauty, injures the faculties, and destroys self-respect. For body and soul, alike pernicious. There is scarcely a more unwholesome habit.”

“Ay, everybody says so;” said Beatrice. “But don’t you think, aunt, that perhaps it isn’t true? Perhaps it has been put about by the grave-diggers for the benefit of their craft.”

“Child! child!” said lady Giustina, suppressing the smile she felt stealing upon her; “your sportiveness is not unbecoming at times—and upon proper subjects; but I must caution you not to let it tamper with that which should be gravely considered. Early-rising is momentous to our welfare through life, and should not be lightly spoken of; and moreover, do not encourage your cousin in her foibles, by laughing at them, or by laughing off the reproof that should cure them.”

“One happy thing is, aunt, that Hero has so few faults to cure, she will soon get through the task, when she sets about it;” said Beatrice.

“The fewer faults she has, the more imperative it is that she should set earnestly to work to root them out,—for her own sake, and for that of those who love her;” said lady Giustina. “It is more vexatious to discover blemishes in a fine picture than in an indifferent one; it is more grievous to find stains, and specks, and flaws upon a goodly mirror, than upon a paltry pocket-glass. Hero is the daughter of my noble nephew, and I would fain have her blameless. She is a gentle, good girl, and I would see

her become all that is virtuous and excellent in woman."

At this unexpected praise, from her strict aunt, Hero's cheeks became crimson. She glowed with a strange feeling of encouragement; she felt a pride and gratification in the lady Giustina's approbation, that she might very likely never have experienced from that of any one less habitually severe; but it could not console her for the want of affectionate ease, and loving freedom in their intercourse. So deeply, by children of Hero's temperament, is kindness of manner felt to be the most winning of all qualities in their elders and associates.

"And was my uncle Leonato always so noble?" asked Beatrice. "Was he always as grave and good, as decorous and proper-behaved, as kind and condescending, as he is now, aunt? Children are sometimes rather more faulty than they grow up to be. Who knows? perhaps at her age he wanted as much of being perfect as his daughter does. What kind of boy was he?"

The countess looked straight into the smiling eyes, that sparkled and flashed their sly saucy meaning up into hers; the old lady seemed to find something very attractive there. That unabashed aspect,—equally remote from impudent boldness, as from shyness or awkwardness,—that confident expression of a clear heart and mind, a transparent soul, which belonged to Beatrice, gave her beautiful features their crowning grace. Lady Giustina continued to gaze; fascinated, as it were, by what she beheld, and lost in thought. Suddenly, she covered her eyes with her hands; and when she withdrew them, her lips were very pale. But she gave no other token of emotion; and said, in a composed voice:—"You shall see what kind of boy your uncle was, child. Come with me."

She arose to leave the room; then, turning, and perceiving that Hero was modestly remaining, she added:—"Come with me, both of you; you shall

both see what a noble boy, my nephew Leonato was. I have a picture of him, taken when a youth ; and though it shows him outwardly fair, it doth not express him more goodly, than his own merits proclaimed him to be, in all respects."

The countess led the way across the great hall to a small door, which led into a long gallery, looking out across the precipitous rock on which the castle stood, for some distance down the valley. The other end of the gallery opened into a chamber which formed the base of a turret, that sprang up, at one end of the castle, from the pleasance or garden. This turret, from its upper windows, commanded the fine wild picturesque view of the valley, the rocks, and the cascade, on one side ; and the prospect of the wooded castle-grounds on the other. The turret was ascended by a winding stair ; and the chamber on its highest story was the one which had been selected by the lady of the castle as her own private room. Years had scarcely rendered the steep and narrow stairs any obstacle to one, who still retained so much of her youthful erectness, and alert energy ; and the old lady now stepped on before her two grand-nieces, with a pace scarce less assured than their own.

When they reached the top of the winding stair, the countess opened a door, and raising some hangings that covered it on the inside, bade Hero and Beatrice enter.

They found themselves in a circular room, hung round,—with the exception of the spaces occupied by the three windows,—with dark green tapestry, worked elaborately, representing the story of Proserpine borne away by Dis from the fields of Enna. In one corner stood an ebony cabinet, inlaid with silver ; near to it was a table of green marble, bearing an ivory casket wrought with silver, and crusted with jewels. Above the casket hung three pictures, one of which was covered with a black curtain. Beyond the farther window, was a kneeling-chair, and desk,—the countess's

oratory ; and close beside it, stood her bed, hung with dark curtains to match the tapestry.

The lady Giustina led her grand-nieces at once to the pictures ; and pointing to the two uncovered ones, said :—“ You see my nephews, Leonato and Antonio, precisely as they looked, when little more than your respective ages, maidens.”

And then she went on to tell them of the youths' good qualities, of their promising talents, of their obedience, their docility, their dutiful conduct from childhood to manhood. She told them of Leonato's high sense of honor ; and of Antonio's hasty, but affectionate, and generous temper. She spoke at length, and with all the minutia of pride and affection, of the several peculiarities that distinguished them ; and related many anecdotes of their boyhood, such as age loves to dwell upon, and such as youth interestedly listens to, of the by-gone youthful days and doings of their predecessors.

Beatrice, while the old lady was speaking, felt her curiosity strangely excited respecting the veiled picture that hung between the portraits of her uncles. She could scarcely maintain her attention to the narration, so intently were her thoughts engrossed with the hidden painting. She could not keep her eyes from it. They fastened themselves upon it. The ardour with which she looked, seemed as though capable of raising the black silk veil, or curtain, which concealed it from her gaze. She felt as if she knew what must be beneath, and yet as if she must certify her surmise. This feeling grew ; and when her aunt at length paused, she could no longer resist its impulse. She advanced, stepped upon a low stool that stood beside the marble table, and stretching forth her hand towards the black curtain, to draw it back, said impetuously :—“ And this picture, aunt ?”

“ Hold !” exclaimed the voice of lady Giustina.

The tone was so piercing, its command so impera-

tive, that Beatrice dropped her hand, on the instant, and stepped down.

“Rash! Presumptuous! You know not what you dare! You know not to what peril you expose me—my soul—my vow——”

In great disorder, the countess poured forth these incoherent words. Her jet eyes flashed fire upon Beatrice; who trembled,—not from fear—but to behold the agitation she had caused in one so old, and so habitually calm.

All self-control seemed, for the moment, lost. The grey hair was pushed hurriedly from her temples; the white face and lips worked convulsively; the nostrils quivered, and the aged hands were clenched in spasmodic fixure.

Presently, by an effort, she seemed to recall her composure. She murmured something, in half articulate words; then went to her oratory, and knelt there for a space, absorbed in silent prayer.

When she arose from her knees, and returned to the spot where the two girls stood motionless with concern, she spoke to them with her usual air,—serious, self-possessed, authoritative. She turned to the cabinet; unlocked it, drew forth some of its drawers, containing shells, fossils, and other natural curiosities, which she showed to them with entertaining comments and instructive explanations. She showed them a fine collection of medals; some very costly and beautiful jewels; which, she told them, were heir-looms belonging to their ancient house; and which, some day or other, would be theirs, in virtue of descent from that noble and honorable stock to which they belonged. She dwelt with some complacency on this theme, and seemed to think that family-pride was nowise unbecoming. She told them the story of the tapestry-hangings; how that they had been given to her for the decoration of her favorite apartment, by a venerable friend of hers, who possessed a castle in the interior of the island, on the very

site, tradition said, of the fields of Enna. She told them many curious legends of their native Sicily; evidently exerting herself to efface, by the interest of her present conversation, the remembrance of her temporary emotion, and of the incident which had called it forth; and when they were all apparently restored to their ordinary mood, she led the way from the turret-chamber, and returned to the usual sitting-rooms of the castle.

But not so easily could the impression be removed. Upon Hero it produced the effect of heightening the awe she already felt of her grand-aunt; and in Beatrice it excited a strong feeling towards her, compounded of curiosity, liking, provocation, compassion, admiration, sympathy, and interest, all at once. She certainly felt more attracted towards her than ever; at the same time that she felt less able to venture upon intimacies or familiarities with a being so singular.

But her thoughts, at this period, became centred upon her cousin. She perceived that Hero grew daily more hollow-eyed, more wan, more languid. She noticed that her meals were scarcely touched; that she started at the most trifling noise; and that she frequently lapsed into silence and abstraction. Beatrice watched assiduously for an opportunity of speaking in private with her, but none could she obtain.

At last, she determined to take a bold measure, which should secure to them an uninterrupted interview, besides affording the means of remaining with Hero long enough to comfort and reassure her.

She resolved, that when the angular duenna left her for the night, and when a sufficient time should have elapsed to give warrant for supposing that all within the castle had retired to rest,—she would get up, and make her way through the passages and galleries to Hero's room.

That very night she put her plan in execution. She stole through the darkness,—for she would not take the lamp with her, lest it should betray her procedure,

—along the corridor, and into the narrow gallery. Midway, she fancied she saw something stir. A fitful light shone from the loopholes in the outer wall ; and she paused, trying to make out what it was she saw. A shiver crept over her, but she resolutely shook it off, with the thought that it was the fresh outer air which made her blood chill. Again she could make out that something moved, in the dim space beyond. She strove to steady her gaze ; and then she smiled, at finding that it was a bat flitting to and fro, having made its way into the gallery through the loopholes. She hastened onward ; glided down the dark staircase, and found her way into the corridor below. She crept along, carefully counting the doors as she passed, that she might be sure of the one belonging to Hero's chamber ; and when she reached it, she opened it softly, and spoke, that her cousin might at once recognize her voice.

“ Is it possible ! Dear, dear Beatrice ! Is that you ? ” exclaimed Hero, starting up at the welcome sound, and clinging to her cousin with delight.

“ To be sure ! to be sure ! It is I ! Who should it be, you foolish trembler ? I'll wager now, you have been watching the door, fancying the veiled spectre would steal in, and make you pop your head under the bed-clothes, like a goose as you are. But you see it's no ghost ; only your own sauce-box cousin, come to rate you for scaring yourself out of your wits, and the roses out of your cheeks, with such idle fancies. Come, confess ; you have never seen such a thing as the shadow of a shade, the ghost of a spectre, have you ? Why then should you torment yourself with conjuring up vain terrors of things that never exist, of appearances that never appear ? Wait till they show themselves, ere you show you're afraid of them.”

“ But I've had such terrible dreams, Beatrice ; whispered Hero. “ If you only knew ! Here, get into bed ; you'll take cold. How good you are to

come to me ! And through those long dark passages, too ! Oh, how brave of you to venture—and how kind, for my sake ! Dear, dear Beatrice !” As Hero hugged her cousin, and nestled close to her, she again whispered of the fearful dreams she had had.

“ One, in particular. I must tell you, Beatrice, how dreadful it was, that you may own it was enough to make any one a coward, to behold such fearful things. I thought I had offended aunt Giustina by coming down very late—so late, that she was sitting at the table, ready for dinner, instead of for breakfast. She spoke to me in her marble way—you know, Beatrice,—said that I had transgressed beyond the limits of her forbearance, and that she therefore intended punishing me in so signal a manner, that I should learn to obey her in future. I saw her sign to Domenico, the old seneschal, who came towards me, took me by the hand, and led me away. I saw you start up, with your cheeks on fire, to plead for me ; but the door closed upon me, and I heard you no more. The seneschal took me across the hall ; and opened that low door, studded with iron, beneath the great stair-case. I saw dark steep steps leading downwards, under ground ; and thought I remembered having heard it said that they led to some vaulted dungeons beneath the chapel. The seneschal went on in silence, leading me down with him, and I thought I now understood, that I was to be shut up here, in chains and darkness. I was just going to appeal to Domenico, when he seemed to fade away, and instead of him, I saw my father, standing at a little distance, before me. He beckoned to me, looking smiling and happy ; and then I saw that there was a crowd of people standing about him, all very gaily dressed, as if for some festal occasion. I found that the dark steps, the underground vaults, had disappeared ; and that instead, I was in the chapel, brilliantly lighted,—the high altar dressed,—a venerable priest standing near

it. I saw you, Beatrice. You were, like my father, smiling, and looking joyfully towards me. I found that I had a long white veil on, which fell all round me ; but I don't think I was going to be a nun. My father took my hand, and kissed my forehead, and led me towards the altar ; but just as I had come within a pace of it, something seemed to rise out of the earth—very ghastly and hideous. I couldn't rightly make it out—what it was—a figure—a shape—I cannot describe it ;—but I felt it to be something monstrous,—revolting, shocking,—unspeakably horrible and loathly. I recoiled ; and turned towards my father, to take refuge in his arms,—and oh, Beatrice ! That was worst of all ! I thought he shrank from me—as if I had somehow acquired part of the loathliness of this thing,—whatever it was,—that had arisen out of the earth to poison all our joy. I cast my eyes towards you, Beatrice. You were looking very sorrowful, and yet angry ; just as you do when you think I am in disgrace, unjustly. Then the whole scene swam before my eyes ; I seemed to be falling, falling, falling, down an immeasurable depth, I knew not whither. I struggled ; and awoke, striving to cry out. My face was covered with tears, and I lay bathed in an agony of terror. Oh, such nights as I have spent in this fearful castle !”

“ You shall spend no more such ! At least, if my lying by your side can prevent your imagination from running wild, and playing you such painful tricks as these, my poor Hero !” said her cousin. “ I will steal down from my room each night, as soon as dragoness Prisca leaves me ; so, do you keep a brave heart for that short time ; and then we'll sleep cosily together, holding the ghosts at bay till cock-crow ; when you know they take their flight from earth, as I will to my own room again, in time to dress for breakfast.”

“ Dear coz ! And then you will be sure to call me early, and make me get up ; and then I shall escape

the disgrace of being too late, as I so often am ;” said Hero.

As she spoke, Beatrice started up in bed, and remained motionless.

“What? What? Do you see something? Do you hear anything?” whispered Hero.

“No, no ;” replied Beatrice ; but Hero felt that she trembled, and was much agitated.

“I fear I have done very wrong—it is my fault—the lamp !” exclaimed Beatrice, under her breath. “Do you not perceive a strong smell of burning, Hero?”

“Certainly,—yes,—I surely do !” returned Hero.

“Now there is real danger—true cause for alarm—show yourself a brave girl, dear coz ;” said Beatrice. “You who have owned to being a coward about ghosts, and that you are afraid of the dark—will yet prove yourself of good courage in the hour most needful. I fear the castle is on fire. Get up ; dress yourself quickly ; make the best of your way down stairs ; across the hall, into the offices, and rouse the household. I will join you, as soon as possible.”

“Are you not going with me?” said Hero, who had sprung out of bed, and was obeying her cousin’s directions with an alacrity that showed she really had the presence of mind, and self-possession, in this moment of actual peril, which had failed her under an imaginary fear.

“No ; but I shall be below scarcely a moment after you ; I must go upstairs—I must see whether it be my own folly—my own imprudence——”

Beatrice paused not to explain, but hurried away, wholly possessed with the one thought of ascertaining whether it was owing to her having left the lamp burning, that the fire had broken out. This strange irrational reasoning, this perverse notion of necessity on absurd grounds, is a not unfrequent concomitant of a sudden alarm of fire. People have been known to save the most worthless trifles—to waste their energies

upon preserving the veriest rubbish, and committing all kinds of vagaries, both of thought and deed, in the trepidation of such a moment. So it was with Beatrice ; she could not divest herself of the feeling that it was her imperative duty to go back to her room, and see whether it was her carelessness that had caused this calamity. She sped on in all the eagerness, and senseless pertinacity, which such an object, so viewed, inspires ; not perceiving that with each step, the smell of burning, and the suffocating presence of smoke became less perceptible. But when she reached her own room,—and beheld the lamp safely standing where she had left it—and had ejaculated one fervent exclamation of thanksgiving at finding that she had not herself to reproach, as the occasion of the evil,—her next thought was one which filled her anew with agitation. Her aunt ! Lady Giustina,—old—sleeping apart—in that lonely turret—none to warn her—to arouse her !

Beatrice retraced her steps with even more eagerness than she had come. She flew back along the passages ; enabled to use greater speed than before, by the terrible light that now began to glare upon her path. Through the loop-holes in the gallery-wall, she caught glimpses of the red glow that seemed to fill the air outside. As she descended the first flight of stairs, she was conscious that the atmosphere became denser and hotter ; and when she had reached the landing at the end of the lower corridor, and came upon the staircase leading into the hall, she found that she was approaching the seat of the fire itself. Volumes of smoke rolled through the spacious hall, and curled up towards its lofty roof. She could hear the crackling of the flames—and the splitting of timbers. She would not suffer herself to be appalled, but kept steadily on. She made her way straight across the hall, towards the door which she knew opened into the gallery communicating with the turret. As she hurried along, she caught sight,—through the range

of windows that looked out across the precipice, down which foamed the cataract and torrent, and on which Montaspro stood perched,—of the scene of wild and terrific grandeur which the valley now presented. The rocks and giant cliffs that rose abruptly on every side, reflected the lurid glare from the burning castle. They could be tracked far down the valley in strange unnatural vividness. They were redeemed from the blackness of night by the huge torch that flared its light upon them ; and the sky was flushed with the broad crimson glow, flung far and wide. The darkness of the mountain gorge, the savage desolation of its ravines, showed more than ever gloomy and threatening, beneath the glare of this dread beacon. The rifts and chasms yawned around with a more sombre depth, while the salient points and edges of the crags, caught the unwonted glare. But Beatrice scarce allowed herself one hasty, awe-stricken glance, at the sublime horror of the scene without. She steadied her thoughts upon the task she had in hand. She held her way onwards, resolving to shut out, as much as possible, the sense of sounds and sights that every moment thickened around her. She had just attained the entrance to the turret, when a portion of the inner wall of the gallery gave way, and a volume of flame and smoke came bursting through into the space she had passed, as if pursuing her. She instinctively closed the door behind her, as if to put a barrier between herself and the approaching fire ; and then sped up the winding-stair. She reached the door at the top,—her aunt's chamber-door. She waited for no ceremonial knock ; but opened softly, lifted the tapestry, and entered. The room was in perfect stillness. Its mistress lay in a deep sleep. The air of complete repose, of peace, of tranquillity, of utter unconsciousness, that dwelt within the place, and upon the features of the aged countess, smote upon the young girl's heart, with almost a feeling of self-reproach, that she should come to arouse one so calmly at rest,

into all the tumult of terror and danger ; but the next moment, the urgency of the peril pressed upon her recollection, and she leaned over lady Giustina, whispering :—“ Awake, dear aunt, awake !”

The countess opened her eyes, fixed them on the beautiful young face hanging over her, and said :—“ Already morning, darling ?—And so my Beatrice is come, as usual, to help me arise. Methought I dreamed a long and ugly dream, that you were gone from me, my Beatrice !”

The tenderness in the tone,—the name,—such as never before had the young girl heard from those lips ; the fond look, such as never before had she seen in that rigidly-calm face ; all told Beatrice that the old countess’s thoughts had gone back, in the first confused and imperfect perceptions of awakening, to that period of her life when her other Beatrice, her own child-niece, used daily to awaken her, hanging lovingly over her. The idea of the contrast of the present night, with those quiet happy mornings, the remembrance of her mother, the discovery of the deeply-cherished tenderness in which her mother really survived, within the heart of the externally-austere countess, all combined to overpower Beatrice for a moment ; but she recalled her courage, and endeavoured effectually to awaken the lady Giustina to a true sense of what was passing.

“ Dear aunt ! It is not morning. It is night. But there is danger. You must get up. Let me lead you away.”

The old countess passed her hand across her eyes ; and seemed struggling to reduce her scattered thoughts to order. Her habit of self-control prevailed. When she withdrew her hand, her face wore its accustomed calmly-severe aspect ; but her lips had turned deathly white.

“ How came you here, maiden ?” she said sternly. “ I know you now ! You looked for the moment like one I—you seemed to my scarce-awakened vision,

one of the angels from heaven. How came you to venture hither, child? I love not intruders in my room. No one ever enters here unbidden. Begone, child!"

"It is no time to obey you now, aunt. You must rise,—and quickly. You must go with me!"

"You are bold, maiden!——" the countess began.

"Listen, dear aunt; understand me; the castle is on fire, and we shall hardly get forth in time!"

Lady Giustina's habitual self-command again came to her aid. She got up, without a word more; threw on a dressing gown, put her feet into slippers, and went with a firm unhurried step, towards the door of the apartment, beckoning Beatrice to accompany her, with her usual air of calm authority. But on raising the hangings, and issuing out upon the landing at the head of the winding-stairs, she perceived the smoke rising in volumes, and could hear the roaring of the flames below. Another moment or two, and the door at the foot of the turret, which Beatrice had closed behind her, as she came up,—crashed in, and the flames came pouring through the breach, caught to the first steps of the staircase, and sent their spiral tongues, darting and threatening, up the interior of the turret.

Beatrice cast one look at the impassable gulf beneath them; her tongue clove to the roof of her mouth; her lips seemed suddenly bereft of all moisture, her throat was parched; but she uttered no sound. She fixed her eyes upon her aunt's face, mutely took her hand between both hers, and grasped it very tight.

"Brave wench!" exclaimed the old countess, as she returned the firm pressure; her eye dilating, and her lip regaining its ruddy colour, in the proud delight of noting a fearless spirit, worthy of the noble race from which they sprang. But as she continued to gaze upon that courageous young face, its features once more revived within her the memory of those they so closely resembled; and she ejaculated with an emotion, which the thought of her own danger had never

once called forth :—“ And must she perish ? Is there no way to save her ? So young ! So brave ! So beautiful !” Her voice sank to a whisper as she added :—“ *Her* child !”

Beatrice strove in vain to articulate the words that arose in her heart ; but she raised the hand she held to her lips ; and led her aunt back into the room, and stood opposite to the veiled picture, and pointed up towards it ; and then she found voice to say :—“ Since we must die, let us look upon her face together. Let the child hear you pardon her mother.”

“ My vow to Heaven !—I took a vow I would never more behold that face——” murmured the aged countess.

“ Heaven absolves you from it by the lips of her child ;” said Beatrice, earnestly. “ Doubt it not. Bid me draw the curtain. Pronounce her forgiveness. ’Twill give us both courage to meet death.” Her tone was low, but clear. It seemed as though the high thoughts that possessed this young creature, in this supreme moment, rendered her collected amidst its terrors. It seemed as though the hope of atoning her dead mother, with one whom she had so loved and offended, raised her above the fear of death itself.

“ God of mercy, acquit my soul of wilful sin !” murmured the countess devoutly. “ In His name, draw the curtain, my child ; and let me look once more upon that beloved face, which I never thought to see, until heaven itself should reveal it to me.”

“ She blessed you in her parting hour, besought pardon for her errors towards you, and your name was the last word she breathed ;” whispered Beatrice, as she unveiled the picture.

The light from the advancing flame shone through the doorway upon the aged form bent in fervent thanksgiving ; and upon the youthful face that seemed mirrored in the picture she gazed at in reverent devotion.

At that moment there was a sound at one of

the windows,—the window that looked across the castle-grounds. Backed by the red glare outside, Beatrice could perceive the dark figure of a man, attempting to effect an entrance through the casement. It was Pietro, one of the countess's faithful retainers, who had reared a scaling-ladder against the wall of the turret, and had climbed up, to attempt the rescue of his aged mistress.

“ See, aunt ! There is help at hand ! They are coming to save us ! ” Beatrice sprang to the casement to unfasten it.

“ The countess ! My lady !—where is she ? ” shouted the man, as he put the young girl aside, and leaped into the chamber. “ Quick, quick, madam ! For the love of heaven ! Trust yourself in my arms—they are strong and lusty—they will bear you down safe—I will not doubt it—with the help of the Almighty I shall be able to lift you down to earth in safety. Come, madam ! ”

But lady Giustina drew back. “ Her child ! Save her ! Save Beatrice ! ” exclaimed the aged countess, pointing to her niece.

“ By your leave, my lady, I save none, till I have saved yourself ; ” said Pietro sturdily. “ Deign to throw your arm well over my shoulder, madam, and I'll carry you safely. Fear not—hesitate not—there's no moment to lose.”

“ Pietro,” said his mistress, with that voice of stern decision which none around her dared oppose, “ I charge you on your fealty, do as I command. As I have ever found thee a faithful liegeman to our house, perform now the last behest, it may be, that I shall ever enjoin thee. Save her—save the child of one I loved better than myself,—and if it be God's will, that I should also be preserved, return for me ! ”

“ There will be scant time ! ” muttered Pietro. “ But be it as your ladyship wills.” And he turned to where the young girl stood.

But Beatrice in her turn refused to be rescued first,

“ My child—my Beatrice—obey my wish ;” said lady Giustina, in her impressive tone, now rendered more than ever so, by the persuasive tenderness that trembled in its pleading. “ Better, if one must perish, the decaying tree, than the young sapling. If Heaven will that both shall survive, be it so. If not, I am content to die thus.” And the aged countess pointed with a happy smile to the portrait of her with whom she was now reunited in peace, forgiveness, and love.

Pietro, merely saying, “ My lady must not be gain-said,” lifted Beatrice in one of his stalwart arms, bidding her lean her weight as much across his shoulder as might be ; climbed the window-sill ; firmly planted his foot upon the first rung of the ladder ; and commenced his descent.

As the man appeared from the window, with his human burden, there arose an irrepressible shout from those anxiously assembled below ; but the next instant, it was hushed ; a solemn silence took its place, as breathlessly his progress was watched. Pietro bore her carefully, steadily. They were still some feet from the ground, when Beatrice threw herself out of his arms, exclaiming :—“ Return ! return ! Go up again ! Hasten ! hasten !”

The man needed no urging ; he had scarcely felt himself freed from his load, ere he was re-mounting towards the turret-window. But by this time, the flames had made their way into the chamber. Their dread light could be seen through the casement, flickering, and glaring ; now obscured and dulled, anon in a sudden blaze, fitfully revealing the interior of the room to the night-sky.

Intensely the watching eyes beneath, followed Pietro’s every movement, as he neared the burning window. They saw him gain it,—boldly step in,—into the very midst of the smoke and flames.

A pause ensued, of unspeakable suspense.

Nothing could be discerned of what passed within

the room ; but the next moment, a tremendous rushing sound—a crumbling and mighty yielding—and then the floor sank in burning ruins, the roof collapsed, and fell in, leaving the outer walls of the turret, a hollow tower—a mere shell, from which spouted forth a volume of fire, waving and flaming upward in fatal splendour.

A cry of horror burst from the crowd of faithful retainers ; while the two cousins clung to each other, weeping and awe-stricken.

The moment Beatrice reached the ground, she had been clasped in the arms of Hero. When they parted, in the first alarm of fire, Hero had hastened down stairs, across the hall, and towards the quarter of the castle where the servants slept. But it was some time ere she succeeded in finding her way ; and when she had done so, she had great difficulty in rousing them. Then, when they were awakened, they were in such consternation, so scared, so bewildered, that it took some time to make them understand what they had to do. Hero, with a courage and forethought which might hardly have been expected from one of her timid bearing under ordinary circumstances, spoke to them reassuringly, and took a tone of quiet authority that more than anything recalled them to their duty. She showed in this moment of terror and confusion, the fortitude that gentle natures frequently possess ; a fortitude that gives way under threats of the imagination, while it stands firm in real calamity. The first thing of course, was to warn the lady Giustina ; but when they would have gone to her apartments, they found the access already in flames. The gallery that led to the turret, was even then filled with smoke, and burning rapidly. To get to her window, was the next thought that struck them ; and all hurried round to the foot of the turret outside. This wing of the castle arose from the commencement of the pleasaunce and grounds, where they adjoined the rocky precipice, on which the front of the edifice was reared. A scaling-

ladder was planted against the turret well ; stout-framed and stout-hearted Pietro volunteered mounting to the rescue of his honored lady ; while the rest watched the result with breathless expectation. Hero had no thought of anxiety but for her aged aunt. She fancied that Beatrice was already in safety ; having left her fully aware of the impending danger, and in a spot from which there was facile escape. What then was her dismay, when she discovered in the person borne down the ladder by Pietro, no other than her beloved cousin. But she had no sooner hugged her in her arms, surely and securely on the earth, than her solicitude again arose for the lady Giustina. Tremblingly the two cousins together watched the attempt made by the faithful servitor ; appalled, they together beheld him perish in his heroic effort.

The morning dawned upon the ruins of Montaspro. The old seneschal asked the young ladies if they would not have a messenger despatched to Messina, that the lord governor might be informed of the calamity which had befallen ; and that he might come and fetch away his daughter and niece from so melancholy a scene.

“ Dear Beatrice,” said Hero, “ let us leave it at once. We shall arrive at home as soon as the messenger. I cannot endure the thought of remaining here, now that we have lost her, whom I fear I never loved so tenderly as she deserved. Besides, we can break the tidings of her fate more gently to my dear father, than he would hear them from another. Let us go home without delay. I sigh to be at home. I pine for home.”

“ If there were but means——” began Beatrice.

“ The litter and mules are safe, young lady ;” said Domenico. “ The outhouses where they were bestowed, have escaped the fire. There is naught need detain you in this scene of desolation. I will undertake that all diligent search be made for the remains

of mine honored mistress, and see that all care be taken to give them reverent obsequy."

"Be it so, good Domenico;" said Hero. "Bid them harness; in less than half an hour, my cousin and I will be ready to set forth."

The sun had scarcely arisen, when the little train wound along the mountain path leading from Montaspro. The blackened, and still-smoking walls, lay a disfigured heap, where late they had stood erect in strength and seeming security; stricken, and prostrate, on the very spot where they had frowned defiant. The bright gilding of the morning beams, the smiling beauty of the azure sky, seemed a mockery, as they hung over the castle ruins smouldering within this gloomy mountain gorge.

The cousins kept their eyes mournfully fixed upon the spot, so long as it remained in view; but when the windings of the road deviated, farther down the valley, and the intervening rocks hid Montaspro from their sight, Hero, with a deep sigh of suspended breath, sank back among the cushions of the litter.

Worn out with the fatigues and excitement of the past night, the young girl fell asleep; and Beatrice, glad to see her thus, addressed herself to seek a like repose.

Some hours must have elapsed; for when Beatrice awoke, she saw that the sun was high in the heavens. Hero still slept; and her cousin, unwilling to disturb her, watched in silence. The soft regular breathings, the placid expression of countenance, the perfect repose of attitude, all bespoke how sweet, how deep, was this welcome and most salutary sleep. Nothing could so probably restore Hero, after the late exhaustion of spirits she had undergone, as this profound and prolonged rest; and Beatrice remained quite still, that it might not be interrupted. There was ample occupation for her thoughts, in what had so recently occurred; but, willing to divert them from so painful a subject, she allowed them to dwell upon the beauties

of the scenery through which the litter was passing. The sterile rocks, and barren crags, that immediately neighboured Montaspro, had given place to less stern features of the picturesque. Rocks still abounded, on either side of the road, but they were covered with verdure ; they were less abrupt and angular in their form, sloping and undulating, rather than jutting forth in harsh and pointed outlines. Groups of trees clothed their sides, giving grace and variety to the picture ; while beneath their shade, grew luxuriantly green, the corn and grass, which at this altitude flourished, but which, lower down in the valleys, lay brown and scorched. The tall and slender sugar-cane, and the fantastic growth of the prickly pear, or Indian fig, that occurred at intervals, imparted something of an oriental effect to the rich profusion of leaves and plants. Wherever a patch of bare rock appeared, lizards were sure to be basking ; revelling in the heat, with outspread limbs embracing the baked stone, and backs dilating beneath the rays of the sun, as if fixed in a transport of burning adoration ; but darting away with the speed of light at the approach of intruders. Among the underwood might be seen a stray porcupine huddling to its burrow, or lazily sleeping in the noontide heat. Birds hovered about the trees ; and innumerable bees hummed their busy music among the flowery blossoms and weeds that gave out their aroma to the summer air.

The mules were slowly toiling up a long rise ; the attendants were strolling on leisurely a-head ; when Beatrice, attracted by the leafy coolness of a grove of trees that skirted the road, felt inclined to walk awhile, that she might the more entirely enjoy their shade. She softly unfastened the door of the litter without awakening her cousin, and sprang lightly to the ground. The beauty, the stillness, won upon her. She wandered on among the trees ; now gathering wild fruit and berries ; now discovering a store of honey in some rocky crevice, or hollow of a tree ;

now stooping to collect a limpid draught in the palm of her hand from brook or rivulet. On emerging from the grove at the summit, a fine reach of extended landscape met her view. The road wound on, down the mountain, and was lost in the distance among wooded plain and valley, that stretched far away, as far as the eye could reach, until they again rose into upland and hill. A moment she still lingered, to feast her eyes upon the glorious prospect ; yet a moment longer she lingered, to gather for Hero a branch of ripe oranges that hung temptingly near, ere she should bound onward to overtake the litter. She had secured the golden fruit, when her attention was caught by a purple cluster of grapes, that nestled amid some vine-leaves, drooping just above her head. The thought of the refreshment they would be to her cousin on awakening from sleep, made her long to add them to the oranges. As she scrambled up the tangled bank where they grew, and reached among the leaves and tendrils for her prize, she became suddenly aware of two strange faces that peered at her from above. They shone like burnished metal,—their deep olive complexion, bronzed by constant exposure to the sun ; they were hung about with black elf-locks of matted hair, and had eyes that sparkled with mingled keenness and ferocity. These two faces kept an unwinking gaze fastened upon Beatrice, that made her feel she was the undoubted object of their watch. Her heart beat, as the thought of Hero's tales of Banditti crossed her mind ; but hastily resolving that her best chance of safety was to behave as if they were harmless peasants, until she found them hostile, said, as she nodded up in their direction :—" Good day, friends ! I suppose this ground is no enclosed vineyard ; and that it is hardly a theft for a thirsty traveller to help herself to a handful of fruit ?"

The men came crashing and bursting through the foliage towards her. They were tall stout fellows, in mountaineer garb, with broad shady hats, and knives

in their girdles ; one had a short spear, or lance, in his hand, while the other grasped a bow and arrows.

“ It’s not for us to decide too strictly on what’s theft, and what’s not, young lady ;” laughed one of them ; “ but it’s my notion that all things by the road-side, come fairly to hand, if so be that a man can lay hands on them. What say you, Matteo ?”

“ Truly, I think that’s sound law, brother ;” grinned the other. “ The high-way’s free to all men, to pick up whatsoever waifs and strays they may find there, or the devil’s in it. If the high-way and the road-side an’t free, I should like to know where a man is to find freedom, for my part, that’s all !”

“ And so you’re a traveller, are you, signorina ?” said the first fellow. “ As sure as my name’s Filippino, I’d ha’ been bound,—no,—I’d ha’ wagered, you didn’t belong hereabouts. And yet you’re not on foot, neither ; those little feet would never ha’ brought you far. No, no, you can’t be on foot.”

“ Why, don’t you see, I am ?” said Beatrice, as she stooped for her branch of oranges, which she had laid on the bank while she reached up to gather the grapes ; “ so I’ll bid you good-morning ; I must tarry no longer.”

“ Ay, you’re on foot,—or on your feet,—now ; we see that well enough, signorina ;” said Filippino, with a wink ; “ but it’s my opinion that you have only just stepped out of yonder litter, trotting down hill, there ; and that it’s in that you’ve been travelling.”

“ Well guessed ;” said Beatrice ; “ and I’ll thank you, friend, to add to your courtesies, by shouting to that same litter, that it may stop for me. Your voice will carry farther than mine, I fancy.”

“ It’ll outscreech an eagle, in general, signorina ; but I’m afeard I’ve got a hoarseness, just now ;” said the man, leering facetiously.

“ And my throat is well enough in a barcarola, but tells for nothing in a shout ;” said his companion. “ It’s a good singing-voice, but a bad speaking-voice.”

“So I hear;” replied Beatrice. “I’ll try my own.” And she suddenly gave a loud ringing call; but it failed to reach those to whom it was addressed. She could see the litter and the attendant horsemen still plodding on.

One of the men started, half drew his knife, and muttered a curse; but the other laughed, and said:—“Don’t be in a hurry to leave us, signorina; we can’t part with you yet. It isn’t every day we have the honor of seeing the governor of Messina’s daughter in our mountain solitudes. You must pay a visit to our captain; he’ll be delighted to see you. Ay, you may look at me, young lady; but I know who you are, fast enough. You’re not so grown out of knowledge since then, but I can remember you for the little one that bade some of us take you and your cousins home to the governor’s house, that he might thank us for his daughter’s safety.”

Beatrice now recollected the face of the man who spoke, as one of those she had seen among the group, standing by the fountain, on the day she and her cousins lost their way, some years before.

“And now we’ll make him not only thank us, but pay us, for returning her to him safely;” said the other. “But come, signorina, you must go see our captain.”

“Some other time; I cannot stay now;” said she. “Present my compliments to your chief; and say, that on some fitter opportunity, I shall with all due delight make his acquaintance; but that now, he must excuse me.”

“No time like the present, signorina; no excuse will serve; you must come;” said Filippino.

“Since you’ll take no denial,—since you’re so hospitably pressing,”—said Beatrice; “come, then, lead me to your captain.”

She saw that there was no escape from these masnadieri. She saw that she might preserve Hero from the fright and possible peril of capture, if she main-

tained their delusion with respect to her identity ; she therefore resolved to go bravely through with the adventure, gaining spirits from the thought that she had so far rather it had occurred to herself than to her more timid cousin.

The two men walked on either side of her, leading the way through the grove of trees, along the skirts of which she had so lately passed. It thickened into a close wood ; but the men threaded their way unhesitatingly, amid all the intricacies of bush and briar, thicket and dell, underwood, overhanging branches, and near-set boles of trees ; until at length they came to a comparatively open space, though surrounded on all sides by rock and wood. In the midst, on the margin of a small lake, there stood an old dismantled watch-tower, or stronghold. Its roof was open to the sky ; its walls were rent and ruined ; and it was covered with ivy and other parasitical plants that flourish on decay.

Beatrice, struck with the romantic beauty of the spot, said :—“ If that be your captain’s abode, he hath commendable taste in a house, so far as site is concerned ; but methinks he might keep it in better repair, with stronger chance of in-door comfort.”

“ He hath a solider roof than one of masonry, for his abiding-place ;” said Filippino, as he struck three smart blows against a rock near which they stood. A portal, so artificially constructed, that it seemed, when closed, like a portion of the solid crag itself, receded at the signal, and gave entrance to a cavern, part natural, part hewn out. Beatrice, on being led in, found herself in an arched space, that seemed like a vast hall supported by irregular pillars. At the farther end, several men were employed spreading a board with food and wine ; while near to them paced a man with folded arms, and lowering brow, as if lost in moody thought. Beatrice’s conductors went toward their chief, and exchanged a few hasty words with him. The short colloquy ended by his saying, in a

harsh voice, as he flung himself on a kind of settle, spread with the skins of wild animals, "Bring her hither."

The two men returned to where Beatrice stood, and said :—"Our captain desires to speak with you, young lady."

"Is it thus your captain receives his guests?" said Beatrice. "Scant courtesy, methinks, to loll there, and send a message, instead of stepping forward to greet them himself. The welcome they meet, tempts few to visit here a second time, I imagine."

"Few visit us at all, by their own good will;" grinned Filippino; "it taketh some persuasion,—not to say force,—to prevail upon travellers to become our guests."

"Your people lack discipline, signor capitano," said Beatrice, advancing; "you should teach them better manners, than to keep a young lady waiting in the entrance, while they parley with their master; and they would doubtless learn to doff their hats in her presence, were they to see you set them an example;" added she, glancing at the broad beaver which shaded his brow, already darkened by a heavy frown.

Involuntarily,—in his surprise at her coolness,—the man's hand stole to his hat, and lifted it from his head; but he was yet more surprised to see the young girl quietly seat herself beside him upon the settle, saying :—"Well; they told me you wanted to speak to me. What have you to say?"

"I am in the habit of putting questions, not of answering them, young lady;" said the man sternly. "Those who are brought before me, stand there, and reply, in lieu of sitting here, questioning me."

"I sit here from no wish to come so close, believe me;" answered she; "but I saw no other seat at hand, and I am tired with my ramble. If you have not the courtesy to offer me a chair, I must help myself, and take one. That is the mode here, I fancy."

"We have learned to help ourselves, since none

will help us ;” said the robber-chief, in his harsh voice. “ I see you guess our calling. We live upon what we can seize, or extort, from the fears of those who have made us outcasts. Trusty Filippino and Matteo saw the litter approaching this morning ; watched ; saw that it contained only yourself and your sick cousin,—she is your cousin, is she not ?”

“ Yes ; but I don’t see how her being my cousin, gives you a right to way-lay me ;” said Beatrice.

“ They guessed that to plunder the litter would profit them little ;” proceeded the captain ; “ as it was not probable that two girls travelling alone would carry much worth taking. But on recognizing one of them for the governor of Messina’s daughter, they knew that by detaining her, they could secure heavy ransom. This is our object, I tell you honestly.”

“ Your words are more honest than your deeds, then, signor capitano ;” said she.

“ Young lady, I’m a plain man, and——”

“ I see you are ;” interrupted Beatrice.

“ I’m a plain man, who speak my plain mind ; and I tell you——”

“ If person and mind are both so ill-favored, the less shown of either the better ;” said she.

His lip struggled with a smile, as the captain went on :—“ I tell you, young lady, ransom we are determined to have ; and you will be detained here as hostage, until such time as we are in possession of the sum.”

“ Best send me to fetch it ;” said Beatrice.

“ That would show less wit on our part than you have shown on yours, young lady ;” answered the man ; his forbidding look visibly relaxing beneath the sunshine of the young girl’s playful manner. There was something, too, in the fearless ease with which this scarcely more than child bore herself beneath his eye, that irresistibly won upon his nature, accustomed, as he was, to see even grown people quail before him. “ We will not fail to obtain your ransom ;” he con-

tinued. "Concern not yourself as to the measures taken."

"My only concern is that you should get it;" said Beatrice.

"We shall surely do that;" he replied. "Mean-time, signorina, you must be content to remain here."

"Remain I must; contentedly, is more than you can compel me to, or I can answer for;" interrupted she.

"To remain here our prisoner;" he resumed; "though you shall have all courteous treatment."

"That is glad hearing; if it be only as a welcome change from what I have already had;" said she. "Suppose you begin your courtesies by offering me something to eat and drink; for I am half-famished. I have had but scant breakfast this morning; and travelling sharpens the appetite."

"We were about to sit down to our noontide meal, when you entered. Will you share it with us?" said the brigand.

"It will be the first stolen dinner I ever ate; it should needs be sweet. I suppose you dispense with grace-saying here, since all your meals are graceless; being, as they are, the produce not of labour, but of thieving; not of slavery, but knavery. No offence, I hope, gentlemen; you cannot but take pride in hearing your profession named, since you take no shame to follow it."

"Corpo di Bellona! a spirited young devil she is!" exclaimed one of the men enthusiastically. "I would thou wert a few years older, little one, and thou shouldst stay here, and be our queen! 'Tis a million pities thou'rt not old enough to marry our captain, and share his sway! Corpo di Bacco! I'll drink your health, young lady!"

"Fill me a cup, and I'll pledge you all, good gentlemen;" said Beatrice. "But I have no ambition to be your queen. I should soon be an unpopular monarch among you, for I should begin my rule, by re-

forming your ways. No molestation of peaceful travellers—no way-laying of unoffending passengers—no detaining people against their will, and extorting unjust ransoms from their anxious friends. Liberty, not license, on the road, should then be your maxim ; and I would make you observe, what now I only give you as a toast—‘Freedom for *all* upon the highway !’ ”

She nodded gracefully round to them, as she put her lips to the wine-cup ; and the robbers shouted a loud ‘Evviva !’ to her honor.

“And now, as I am a prisoner, a dungeon is to be my withdrawing-room, I presume ;” she said. “Let me begone to it at once, for I am not accustomed to the prolonged dinner-table you doubtless favor ; and I would not be the means of curtailing your enjoyments. Use no ceremony with me, I beg. Pray do not think of rising from table one moment before your usual time, on my account ; but let me retire.”

“If you will pass your word not to attempt escape, young lady,” said the grim captain, “you shall have free range throughout our fastness ; I think I can trust you.”

“If I were so simple as to promise, you might be so simple as to trust me ; but if I have wit enough to get out, and you skill enough to keep me, why should we either of us bind ourselves to what we mayn’t care to abide by ? I might repent my promise ; you, your trust. No, no, best be free altogether, where neither promise nor trust are like to be preserved.”

“The strong-room in the tower must be your portion, then, wilful one ;” said the robber-chief, nodding to Filippino, who led the way with Beatrice out of the cavern hall. They passed through a long subterranean passage, at the end of which were some rude steps cut in the rock, that communicated with the basement of the old watch-tower. In one of the upper chambers, her conductor left her, after a somewhat ostentatious drawing of bolts, turning of keys,

and fastening of chains on the outside, that she might hear she was securely locked in.

The young girl, the moment she was alone, eagerly inspected her prison. It was a middle-sized room ; bare of furniture, with the exception of a pallet-bed, a rough table, a stool, and an iron lamp. There was but one window,—if that might be called a window, which was a mere grated outlet. But it was not very high up in the wall ; and the embrasure was so deep, that Beatrice could lean upon it, and look out upon the magnificent view that spread in front of the tower. She remained here for some time, feasting her eyes upon the beauties of rock, lake, and wood, while her thoughts flew to Hero,—to her uncles ; to what would be the consternation of the former on waking, and discovering her cousin no longer by her side in the litter ; to what would be the anxiety of the latter in learning that she had not returned home. But then came the consoling thought of the promptitude with which they would send to her rescue, when they should learn what had befallen her. As she leaned, musing, her eyes closed, her head dropped upon her arms, and she slept.

It was late in the afternoon, when she was awakened by the unfastening of her prison-door, and the entrance of Filippino.

“ I have brought you some supper, young lady ;” he said ; “ and I am but a rough chambermaid, but I’ll try and make your bed a bit tidy for you, against you go to rest. You see, the last gentleman that slept here, left his bedclothes rather in a tumble. He was roused up on a sudden,—on particular business,—he couldn’t be spared, you see,—but he slept sound ever after. He was never disturbed again,—never wakened no more.”

“ He was despatched to a better rest than any to be found under this roof, hospitable as it may be, I suppose ;” said Beatrice, as she watched the man, smoothing the rags and coarse linen that lay heaped on the pallet.

“ You needn’t fear resting, mind ;” said Filippino, turning to look at her ; “ nor disturbing neither. You’ll not be roused, like the gentleman, nor sent to rest, as he was. You’ll not be wanted on the business he was wanted for. You’ve friends to pay your price for you.”

“ That’s one of the comforts of being a helpless girl ;” said she ; “ I needn’t take care of myself. It’s almost a pity though, for my friends’ sake, that I’m not a worthless girl, for then they needn’t buy me back.”

“ If they’re of my mind, they won’t grudge a good round sum, for such a brave-hearted little creature as you. Per Bacco ! What a glorious robber you’d make !”

“ Should I ?”

“ Yes, that you would. Maledetto ! I could find in my heart to curse and swear, when I think of such an amazon spirit as that, going back to be quenched and dulled in a round of stupid fine-lady existence, instead of staying here to spend a free roving life worthy of it. It’s enough to make a man blaspheme, to think of the crosses of fate ! That you should be doomed to pass through life a governor’s daughter, when you would have made such a noble masnadiera !”

“ Never mind, Filippino ;” returned she laughing ; “ we must be resigned to things as they are. We can only learn to submit with the best grace we can muster, and settle them as we best may. Here, accommodate me by drinking this flagon of wine ; it is a superfluous part of the supper you have kindly brought, as regards me ; but by taking the disposal of it on you, you may please both yourself and me.”

“ There again ! What a hand you’d be at dividing spoil ! Such notions of justness and fitness as you have, to be wasted on civilized society,—where everything’s adjusted for you ! Now in our way o’ life, they’d have had such fine scope ! Destiny ought to be ashamed of itself, for thwarting Nature at this

rate. Why, you were born for a leader of banditti, —if you'd only been a boy ; and Fortune's a cross-grained jade, to have made you a young lady and a governor's daughter."

"Nay, there's a consoling point in most things,—a bright side to almost everything, good Filippino ;" said Beatrice ; "perhaps, after all, those very notions of justice and fitness you speak of, might have interfered to prevent my making so good a bandit-chief as you're pleased to fancy. I might have some foolish scruples, and troublesome fastidiousnesses touching right and wrong, that would probably have spoiled me for a robber."

"Not a bit of it ; you'd soon have got the better of them. Don't tell me ; I know you're just the right stuff to make a highwayman of."

"But supposing I had in time overcome early prejudices ; learned to see right and wrong in their true light, perceiving that it was right to take from others what I could have by force, and wrong to leave them in possession of what I could extort ; that I had acquired wider principles on the subject of property, than the old strict ones in which I was brought up, yet even then, I fear me, I should have made but a sorry bandit. No, no ; let me not aspire too high. Disappointed ambition is misery. Since I cannot hope to be a worthy thief, let me rest contented with mine own station."

"Well, you may take it as you will, but I shall never cease to regret that you were born a lady, when you might have been a brigand," said Filippino. "Cospetto ! Che vergogna ! Che peccato ! But it can't be helped ! Buona notte, signorina. Felice notte !"

"Felice notte !" echoed Beatrice. "Good night, good Filippino. May thy dreams be undisturbed by regrets for me."

"Felice notte !" repeated Filippino, as he withdrew, muttering, "Ma che peccato !"

When she was again left to herself, Beatrice for the first time felt a little down-hearted. Night was coming on ; here, in this wild place, among these wild and lawless men, with no friend at hand to cheer or aid her, a sense of loneliness, of unprotectedness, crept over her ; and she sat, for a space, in a pensive attitude, lost in saddened thought. Then she took some of the bread and fruit from the supper Filippino had brought, and took them to her old leaning-place, the deep window-ledge, and eat them there, that her eyes might imbibe comfort and hope, from the view of Nature in her serene aspect. The moon had risen, and the lovely sequestered spot lay steeped in her soft beams. The lake was like a mirror, save where the night breeze from the mountain gently stirred its surface, and caused the planet's rays to be reflected in silvery undulation. Hesperus, and a few attendant stars, peered from the blue firmament, and lent their placid light to the scene. The masses of foliage clothing the well-wooded rocks, looked sombre and embrowned against the radiant Sicilian sky, of a clear and cloudless azure, although deepened by night into intenser colour.

As she gazed, the thought of her friends, of what would be her uncle Leonato's solicitude, her uncle Antonio's uneasiness, her cousin Gaetano's lamentations, and, above all, Hero's misery, at her prolonged absence, made her writhe with impatience at her captivity ; and, in an irresistible impulse of longing to get to them, she clutched at one of the bars of the iron grating before her. To her surprise and delight it moved beneath her grasp. She felt it sensibly give way. She applied all her strength in pulling at it ; and to give still greater purchase, she climbed up into the deep embrasure. It yielded more and more ; and at length she succeeded in wrenching it out of its rusty socket, entirely. Its removal afforded space sufficient for her to pass her body through the opening thus made ; but the difficulty now was, to avail herself of

this egress. The bed-clothes torn into lengths, and fastened together, might form a means of letting herself down outside ; but she remembered that the watch-tower stood immediately on the brink of the lake, and she was uncertain whether the walls might not go sheer down into the water. She determined to try, however. She set to work with the energy inspired by a definite object and hope, and at length succeeded in forming her knotted ladder. She fastened one end securely to the loose iron bar, that it might form a steadying weight, and the other end to the grating. She then lowered it out ; and by the tightened strain, found that it could not have reached to the ground. Notwithstanding, she crept through the opening of the grating, and trusted herself to the strength of the new-made rope. Beatrice was a girl of courageous heart, and firm mind ; therefore no nervous terrors added their force to the mere physical effect of her new situation ; but this was sufficient to make her head swim, and her heart beat, as she felt herself suddenly launched mid-air, with nothing but her own hands and feet to depend upon for safety. Luckily, she had been accustomed to active sports, and constant out-of-door exercise, which gave her strength of limb, as well as good command of them. Firmly she clung to her bed-clothes-ladder, carefully letting herself down from knot to knot, until at length she had the joy of feeling that she had arrived at the friendly iron bar. She planted her feet steadily upon it, as it hung crosswise ; and then ventured to look down, which she had refrained from doing till now. She found that she was within a few feet of the bottom of the tower ; but although the rugged walls did not absolutely spring from the water itself, yet the ledge of earth which surrounded them was so narrow, that it could scarcely afford a footing. Still, Beatrice resolved to risk letting herself drop upon it,—the rather, as the light of the moon enabled her to discern that the lake, so far from being deep just there, was

shallow and shelving, its pebbly bottom clearly to be seen. With an inward aspiration, therefore, she quitted her hold, slid down, and fell safely to the ground. Before endeavouring to regain her feet, she lay still for a moment, that she might recover from the giddiness that she felt ; and then she leaned over the grassy edge, and dipped her hands in the cold water, and laved some on her face ; and then the giddiness passed quite off.

With great care she made her way along the grassy ledge that margined the lake ; the rugged inequalities of the old stone walls, and the tufts and twigs of lichen, brambles, and tough grass that grew among their interstices, affording her the means of clinging for safety, and helping herself forward. A false step must have plunged her in the water ; but she kept steadily on, proceeding cautiously, though unremittingly ; until at length she reached a spot where the ground widened, and she could tread with freedom. She had nothing to guide her in the choice of a path ; but any direction seemed well, so that it led away from the tower walls. She struck at once across a grassy plain, dotted with trees, that lay stretched before her ; the lake abruptly diverging to her right, leaving an onward way open and unimpeded. She kept as much as possible within the shadow of the trees, that her progress might be unnoted, should there be any stragglers of the troop abroad. The moon shone high in the heavens ; the warm breath of a Sicilian night was tempered by the freshness of the mountain air ; there was the bright silvery dew upon grass and leaf ; while thousands of fire-flies floated around her path, like spirits of light, and buoyancy, and winged hope, to cheer her onward. The sense of liberty within, seemed to find tangible expression and response in every object that met her view ; and Beatrice walked on at a rapid pace, her frame alert, her soul elate, her heart happy. After a time the way became steeper ; it arose from the plain she had

passed, among the rocks and higher ground. Gradually it had less and less of tree and vegetation ; and she began to fear that she might be getting back again among the mountain range, from which on the previous day she had journeyed. She had no means of judging her course ; but she instinctively kept forward, that she might, at any rate, leave the robber-hold in the rear. The rocks became every moment more cliff-like in their aspect ; and there was now a certain quality in the air, that seemed to tell her she was approaching the sea. She had hardly recognised this,—with a feeling of welcome natural to an islander, and one accustomed to dwell on the sea-shore,—ere she came upon a sight at once lovely and sublime. Between an arched opening of the rocks,—forming, as it were, a natural frame to the picture,—she saw, down, many feet below, the calm blue sea, sleeping beneath the moonbeams, its broad expanse stretching away, far as eye could reach ; in the foreground lay the green and sloping shore ; and to the extreme right arose majestic *Ætna*, crowned with volcanic fires. Volumes of smoke curled around its lofty head, mingled with wreaths of flame that spired upwards, proclaiming to earth, sea, and sky, the might and magnificence of the Mountain-King.

Beatrice seated herself in a hollow of the rock, that she might rest herself, and contemplate at ease this superb spectacle ; and when its awful beauty had impressed itself upon her imagination in characters never to be effaced, she turned to the tranquil loveliness of ocean, for repose and refreshment of spirit. The coast immediately beneath, formed one of those exquisite sequestered bays so numerous on the classic shores of Sicily, such as the poesy of the Greek creed peopled with Galatea and her train, sea-nymphs and Tritons gambolling upon the green waves, blowing through pearly shells and sounding conchs ; and now, as the young girl gazed, she saw a little fleet of boats, with each its gleaming torch-light. She knew these

craft belonged to poor fishermen, who by night pursue their calling, in search of tunny and sword-fish ; but they gave a wondrous air of peaceful animation to the scene, as the distant lights glowed like reflected stars upon the surface of the water, in contrast with the broad glare of *Ætna's* consuming fires.

When Beatrice resumed her way, she determined she would endeavour,—by keeping *Ætna* immediately behind her, and the sea on her right hand,—to shape her course northward, which she knew would then be the direction of Messina. For some time, she succeeded in her purpose ; but as the track led more and more away from the shore, and the rocks on either side arose higher and higher, she found that both the sea and *Ætna* were unavoidably lost to her view. She wandered on for some hours ; having lost all trace of whether she were pursuing her homeward way, but resolved nevertheless to persevere ; when, just as day broke, she discovered, to her great mortification, that she was not far from the spot where she had yesterday morning first encountered the two robbers. She could not be mistaken ; there was the road, winding down the declivity, where she had last seen the litter, trotting away in the distance, hopelessly unhearing of her cry to stop ; there was the tangled bank, up which she had scrambled to pluck the fruit for Hero ; there the very spot whence she had beheld the brigands' faces glaring down upon her. The thought that even now they might be watching her, that she had unconsciously returned to the precise place most likely to afford risk of meeting them again, filled her with such alarm and uneasiness, that it sufficed to give her afresh that energy which an instant before had well-nigh failed her, from vexation and fatigue. Notwithstanding that she was by this time much tired with her long night ramble, she walked, or rather ran, with her best speed, down the hill, avoiding the open road, lest she should be seen, but skirting it, to keep it in view, that she might be sure of her way. She had

nearly reached the more level ground, at the foot of the descent, when she saw a man with a sickle in his hand ; there was a mule beside him, fastened to a tree, grazing ; and into the large baskets that were slung on either side of the animal, the man was loading the green fodder as he reaped. He was shouting a rustic song, in broad Sicilian dialect, at the full stretch of his lungs. His garb was coarse ; and his look was unmistakeably countrified. "He looks safely a peasant,—a peasant,—a rude peasant—I may surely trust him ;" thought Beatrice, as she eyed the man, who looked up at her approaching step.

"Hallo, little one ! Where did you start from ? From the earth, or from the bole of a tree ? Or did you drop from the clouds ? Out of breath, panting, dusty ! Are you pursued ?"

"Not pursued, but afraid of being pursued,—almost as bad, good friend ;" she said. "In fear of being affrighted, is the fearfulest of frights. Will you be my friend, and help me to escape being caught, as well as the dread of catching ?"

"Who's to catch you, child ? Or perhaps you deserve to catch it, as the saying is. Have you been doing anything amiss ? Have you run away from rightful punishment,—from your true friends ?"

"No, no ; they have no right,—they are no friends,—they are enemies ; in one word, I have been seized by the masnadieri,—have made my escape from them, and fear lest they should discover it, and recover me. Hide me, good man ; give me rest and shelter for awhile, and then be my guide to Messina,—to my home,—where you shall have both thanks and reward."

"Softly, softly, little one ! how glibly your tongue runs on ;" said the peasant, who, unlike the generality of his vivacious countrymen, seemed gifted with peculiar phlegm in his mode of speaking, thinking, and acting. "Let me understand this matter. You have been taken by the masnadieri. Good. You call

them no friends, but enemies. Good again ; so far as you are concerned ; but it's different in my case. They are no enemies of mine—but very good friends and neighbours—as friends and neighbours go.”

“ That's to say, they neither rob nor murder you ;” said Beatrice.

“ Exactly ;” assented the peasant. “ And it would be a poor return on my part, if I were to rob them of their hope of gain. They'd think I joined to defraud them, if they knew I helped you out of their clutches. They expect ransom for you ; and if their hostage slips away, how are they to get it, I should like to know ? Be just ; and tell me that. Be reasonable.”

“ Just as reasonable as you will ; and no less just than is reason ;” answered she ; “ but in your turn, be honest, and say at once you won't help me.”

“ I shall say no such thing, for I mean no such thing ;” said he. “ I'll help you if I can ; but it must be without offence to my excellent friends, the signori masnadieri. I must keep well with them. Keep clear of affronts with friends,—specially powerful ones,—and be kind if ye can to strangers, is no bad rule. It's mine.”

“ Well then, now to square your rule between us. I need your kindness ; how do you propose to aid me, and yet keep all smooth with your worthy friends ?”

“ Thus, You want to get away from them ; very natural. They want to keep you ; very fair. I want to please both parties ; very right. If I manage your escape, unknown to them, well and good in all ways ; you are saved, and they remain unoffended,—that's the main thing.”

“ And how is this to be done ? Quick, quick, good man ! They may even now be upon us.”

“ 'Tis for that very reason, I must contrive a way to take you to my hut unseen, little one ;” said the peasant ; “ it is at some distance, and on your way there, we might, as likely as not, stumble upon one or

other of the signori briganti. Here, step into this basket ; you will ride softly and easily upon this couch of new-cut grass, and I will cover you lightly over with more, so that no matter whom we meet, I shall be seen in no awkward company, and my mule will seem to carry a no less innocent load than green fodder. Be heedful of suspicious circumstances, and mind your appearances, is another good rule for passing through life safely and well."

"You are full of beneficial rules for self-regulation, good man, or at any rate they are full of selfish benefit ;" said Beatrice laughing, as she stepped into the pannier. "Now, be a little practical in your measures ; put some stones in the opposite basket, that it may weigh down the grave charge you consent to carry in this one ; otherwise you'll be betrayed by a lop-sided appearance. Wear a show of equity, at least, before the world."

"Mayhap you think I ought to beware how I burthen my conscience with a deception ;" grinned the man, as he began to pile the grass over the bright face of the young girl that was smiling up at him from amidst the green heap ; "if so, step out again, and save me from sin."

"'Tis thy mule bears the burthen, not thy soul, man ;" replied she ; "thou saddl'st the sin,—if sin there be,—not upon thy conscience, but upon thy beast's back, and so shift'st it from thine own shoulders, like the wise man thou hast proclaimed thyself to be, in thy rules for self-government and advantage."

"Be silent, and lie still ;" said the peasant.

"You bid me do the two most difficult things in nature,—at least, feminine nature,—if what slanderers say, be true ; a girl is but a woman in the bud ; and if full-blown womanhood, with all her practice, finds it so hard to hold her tongue, and keep quiet, how can a young girl expect to succeed ? But I'll try, for your sake ; since you've agreed to oblige me."

The peasant, after putting the final touch to his

arrangements,—duly filling up the green heap, and nicely adjusting the balance of his mule's panniers,—led the animal by the rein ; with an easy air full of virtuous unconsciousness, resuming his rustic song, as he went his way.

It was not long ere he had occasion to rejoice at his forethought.

A voice called lustily after him :—“ Girolamo ! Ohe ! Girolamo ! ”

“ Ah, messer Matteo ! Bon giorno ! ” said the peasant, turning to salute the bandit with every appearance of hearty greeting ; “ you are early abroad this morning. Ah, well, you can't be too early at work. Early industry makes wealth betimes. The ready hand comes soon to gain. Swift to seize is speed to win ; eh, messer Matteo ? Excellent rules all. ”

“ You're a shrewd dog, master Girolamo ; ” answered Matteo, with a sly glance, “ and know how to match things cunningly ; no man better can pass off a queer act with a seemly saying, a wry deed with a strict sentence, or an ugly trick with a pretty speech. 'Tis a commendable art, and helps one through the world, amazingly ; but I could never attain it, myself. So, as I couldn't depend upon my tongue to gloze me on, I was fain to have recourse to my hand ; a bold snatch for a living, and a bold blow for all defence. ”

“ Boldness in word and deed becomes the honest man ; ” said peasant Girolamo, in his moralising, sententious style. “ Earnest in meaning ; sincere in speech ; brave in act. You can't do better than follow that rule. ”

“ Let's to business, then ; ” said the robber. “ Our people got hold of a young girl yesterday, whom we've reason to know is none other than the governor of Messina's daughter. It stands to reason that we ought to get a good ransom for such as she, and we took care of her, according. But see the

heartlessness of the world ! So far from feeling grateful, this young hussy must needs take advantage of our all being peacefully asleep, to steal away in the night, and leave us without so much as good bye t'ye, or thanks for the food and the shelter she had."

"And you are out this morning to look after her, and see if you can reclaim her, messer Matteo?" said Girolamo.

"Even so;" answered he. "When Filippino went to look in upon her at day-break, just to see that she was all safe and comfortable, he found the bird flown; and I was despatched to try and bring her back to cage. You haven't happened to see her pass by, have you, Girolamo?" continued Matteo, twitching out one or two of the blades of grass that overhung the basket in which Beatrice lay ensconced. "A little gay-eyed, red-lipped thing, that looks too bright and fearless to mind anything. She seems not to know what tears mean; and as if neither harm nor sorrow could ever come near her. She speaks up so open, and looks so straight into your face, that you feel as if she must be right and you wrong; which isn't altogether pleasant, though it isn't altogether unpleasant,—to look at."

"Just such a child as you describe, I saw, this very morning, not half an hour ago;" said the peasant. "She was wandering about. I questioned her, as in duty bound. She told me she had made her escape from your hands. I washed mine of the concern, as became me. I said you would not approve of my helping her away, if it should come to your ears that I had done so; and that I liked to live in peace with my neighbours."

"Well said, good Girolamo;" said Matteo; "our captain shall know of the good turn you have done him. And so you left the little one to do as well as she could. Quite right. And whereabouts was this?"

"Close by; just up there, yonder;" said the peasant, scrupulously pointing to the spot where the

colloquy had taken place between himself and Beatrice.

“ And you think I shall find her there still ? ” said Matteo.

“ She can't have got far ; ” replied Girolamo. “ I shouldn't wonder, but she's crouching among the long grass ; hiding somewhere quite near, I'll be bound. ”

“ Thanks, good friend, I'll not forget to report you to our captain ; and, in return for your neighbourliness, it shall go hard but we'll spare you a token of our good-will out of the chit's ransom, when it is ours ; ” said the robber, as he strode off in the direction pointed out.

“ I'm much bounden to you, messer Matteo, ” said the peasant ; “ lest I seem selfish, I'll not say I wish you may get it. ”

And coolly taking up his song again at the very note, and turn of the tune, where he had been interrupted, the phlegmatic Girolamo jogged on by the side of his mule as before. For some time, they went on thus ; Beatrice peering through the wicker framework, and getting sufficient air to prevent her smothering in her green nest ; which, baked through and through by the sun, now mounted high into the heavens, became somewhat oppressive ; but the motion was easy, and she had the pleasant feeling that she was snugly and securely making her way homewards. At length, the mule, of its own accord, turned out of the main path ; the glare of the sun was exchanged for the cool green light of trees overhead ; the dust of the road no longer arose in clouds about them ; there was the loose rich earth of cultivated ground beneath their feet ; and the panniers brushed their way past lines of maize, vines, canes, and waving broom plants. She could discern that they were entering a small ‘ *campagna*, ’ of humble pretensions, but well tilled, and kept in order. There were apple, walnut, and peach trees ; and near the house, she noted the usual broad trays made of canes, on which

lay figs spread to dry for winter provision. The house was a mere cottage, built in the rudest form ; but of stone, with thick walls, as a protection against the heat ; while the side trellis, over-run with vine-leaves and drooping clusters, the bunches of bright orange-coloured ears of Indian corn that hung round the windows to ripen and dry, with here and there a long-necked bottle-gourd, and a huge tawny pumpkin, gave a picturesque effect to the spot, which a place of greater elegance and exactness might have lacked.

Peasant Girolamo did the honors of his 'campagna' with much courtesy, after his own phlegmatic fashion ; bidding Beatrice abide beneath the vine-trellis until he should have seen his mule unladen, and comfortably stalled and littered ; observing that "care to his beast, was its master's first duty, to the end it might be ready and able for his next need." He said that his guest was not to scruple helping herself to some of the grapes that hung so temptingly ; remarking that, "when a license was likely to be taken, it was as well to have the credit of granting it." And after he had paid due attention to the mule, he went into the cottage, and spread a table, and set chairs, and made other hospitable preparations in his own orderly, methodical manner. He had an air as if he were discharging a moral duty in all he uttered ; and performing a religious ceremony in all he did ; so precise, and formal, and completely unnational, was this Sicilian peasant, Girolamo. When he had concluded his arrangements, he went to the door, and beckoned Beatrice in.

He glanced with a sort of meek triumph, a kind of composed pride, upon the repast he had set forth ; as though he knew its super-excellence, but that he was capable of the heroism of bestowing it upon his new acquaintance, since he had already done so much for her. It looked certainly very tempting ; a crusty loaf of barley-bread upon an olive-wood trencher ; cheese made of ewes' milk, embedded in cool green leaves ;

honey, looking like liquid topaz ; and heaps of fruit, golden oranges, burnished pomegranates, rough walnuts, purple grapes, rosy apples, and bloomy peaches, piled into a pyramid that looked as though Amalthea's horn had tumbled its contents upon the board.

The young girl's many hours' fast, and long wanderings in the open air, had given her an appetite which lent the crowning zest to this pleasant meal ; and the relish with which she evidently enjoyed, and did justice to his entertainment, was not lost upon her host. He looked on approvingly from time to time, in the intervals of his own eating ; cut for her huge corner hunks of bread, and selected for her the choicest fruit. He pledged her in some of the rough new wine which formed his own beverage ; but seeing that she merely put her lips to it from courtesy, he went and filled a gourd with water, cold and fresh from the well, for her especial drinking.

“ To some palates, water comes more welcome than wine ;” he said ; “ a young lady's mouth hath mostly this delicacy of taste ; to please it, I grudge not the trouble of fetching.”

“ Mine host is as gallant as he is hospitable ;” said Beatrice. “ In this delicious draught, refreshing and grateful, I drink his health ; not coolly,—for all the coldness of the cup,—but thankfully and heartily, in return for his kindness to a strange little girl, a poor unfriended wayfarer.”

“ Help to others without injury to self, is a debt we all owe ; and when we can discharge it, it does us credit ;” said the moral Girolamo ; “ nay, it ought to afford us pleasure, when a convenient opportunity offers ; since the acquittal of a duty or a debt is sure to bring ease of conscience ; and ease of conscience is happiness,—virtuous happiness.”

“ 'Tis a kind of ease and delight to you, I doubt not, master Girolamo, to deliver yourself of these goodly sentences, in which you seem to abound ;” said Beatrice, with a merry twinkle in her eyes ; “ they

seem to rise and mantle as cream, on the rich milk of your brain ; you pour them forth like oil, in such a stream of platitudo and plenitudo, that it is pity you have not more hearers to be edified by them. You lead a very quiet life, here, I conjecture ?”

“ I live quite alone ; but he who hath virtuous thoughts to keep him company, cannot complain of solitude, young lady ;” said Girolamo ; “ they are better than visitors ; they never come inopportunately, they never tire ; their very sweets never cloy. Let me give you some of this honey, by-the-by ; it is very fine ; my swarms originally came from thymy Hybla.”

“ I have already had abundance of good things,—good things to repletion ;” said Beatrice. “ But you will not think me wanting in acknowledgment, if I seem eager to quit them, the moment I have had enough. Pity my impatience to reach home, to see my friends, to relieve their anxiety, to embrace them all once more.”

“ Far be it from me to thwart so natural, so worthy a desire ;” said the peasant. “ Orecchiutone, my good mule, will have rested and dined by this time. Let us away, then, in the same order we came.”

“ Must I become food for asses and mules again ?” said Beatrice.

“ No, little one ;” replied Girolamo, with a grim smile ; “ like many a better wit than thyself, thou dost but wear the semblance for a time, that thou may’st pass current with the world,—the majority of whom are either foolish or obstinate, and can’t or won’t relish wit in its true form.”

“ If one, both ;” said Beatrice ; “ asses of men, are mostly mulish ; and mules of men, assish. And so, to force them to swallow unpalatable truth and sense, it is to be offered to them in the guise of unformidable nonsense,—familiar food,—innocent stuff,—green fodder ? I shall try to remember thy precept, good Girolamo.”

“ Good precepts make good people,—that is if they

are taken to heart, as they should be ;” said Girolamo. “ It’s my opinion, that in good hands you might become anything. Moulded by a master-hand, you’ll be a diamond,—a very star among women ; now you’re but a lively child, a mere child—hardly better than the green fodder you represent. But by-and-by,—Aha ! *altra cosa* !”

“ May you live to see what I shall grow up to be, good friend ! I trust I may do honor to your prediction ;” said Beatrice.

Through the afternoon, they went jogging on again ; until at length, towards evening, they arrived within view of the gates of Messina.

Leonato was perturbedly pacing up and down one of his saloons, anxiously hoping for news of his lost niece, from some one of the several parties he had sent forth in search of her. Ever since the previous evening, the palace had been a scene of distraction. Hero had arrived in the greatest distress, bringing the news of the calamity at Montaspro, and of her cousin’s unaccountable disappearance. She herself had slept late into the day, worn out with her previous emotion and fatigue. On awakening, she had missed Beatrice from her side ; but at first imagined that she had merely got out to walk for awhile. She had caused the litter to halt, hoping every instant to see her cousin come up with it ; but after lingering in vain, till there could be no longer any doubt that Beatrice must have lost her way, Hero had hurried home to Messina, that her father might take instant and effectual means for having their dear one sought and recovered.

As yet no intelligence had returned ; and Leonato was still in all the newness of his grief for the countess Giustina’s untimely fate, divided by his suspense respecting Beatrice, when an attendant hastily entered the saloon, to say, that there was a strange man, a peasant mountaineer, who was in the court-yard, in-

sisting upon seeing his lordship, the lord governor of Messina himself.

“Perchance he brings news of my niece ; bring him hither ; why did you not admit him at once ?”

“My lord, he will neither be brought hither, nor admitted, nor anything else ;” said the attendant. “He will not wait upon your lordship ; but says forsooth your lordship must come down to him, as he can’t leave his mule. We offered to take charge of the beast ; he wouldn’t hear of it. We proposed to take his message ; not a word would he deliver. We questioned him, we rated him, we even made as if we would have turned him out of the court-yard, but nothing would bring him to reason,—nothing would suit him but my lord governor must descend in person, and hear what he had to say. The rascal rustic ! The pitiful peasant ! Had we not feared that he might bring news of my young lady Beatrice, which we might lose, an’ we turned him away, he should soon have seen the outside of the palace-gates.”

Half of the attendant’s ireful speech at this insult to his master’s dignity, was lost to Leonato, who had hurried out of the saloon, as soon as he had gathered that the peasant would only tell what he had to say, to himself.

At sight of the lord governor entering the court-yard, the crowd of lackeys, and guards, and attendants, that had gathered round the stranger, gave way ; and Leonato advanced to the spot where stood Girolamo holding his mule by the bridle, with an air perfectly grave and cool. He seemed not to be disturbed one jot by the hubbub of enquiry, and remonstrance, and indignation around him ; but to stand there, prepared for the firm performance of a duty, the carrying through of a momentous act, the consummation of an important deed.

“I am come to offer you a bargain, my lord governor ; will you buy this load of green hay ? Will you give me a fair price for it ?” he said,

“ I will give thee thine own price for it, good fellow, if, as I hope, thou bring'st me news of my dear child, my lost niece, my Beatrice. Tell me what thou know'st of her. Speak, man !” said Leonato eagerly.

“ If I bring you better than news of her, my lord ? What if I bring you herself ?” said Girolamo.

“ Where is she ? Where have you left her ?” said Leonato.

“ What price shall I say for the green hay, my lord governor ?” said the peasant. “ Any price is no price ; best fix the sum.”

“ Name it thyself, fellow. But why keep tormenting me about a paltry hay-load, when I am dying to hear of my Beatrice.”

“ Every one for his own pet interest, my lord, as is natural ; your thought runs all upon your niece, mine all upon the contents of my panniers, quite natural ;” said Girolamo. “ But you bid fairly, you offer mine own price. If I name a high one,—as I shall,—don't wonder. You'll think it cheap.”

“ What thou wilt. But Beatrice—you say you have brought her—where does she tarry—why is not she home ? She was ever all impatience to fly to me.”

“ She has had much ado to restrain it ;” said Beatrice, springing up, throwing off the heap of green fodder, and leaping from the midst of it into her uncle's embrace.

“ And now, good friend, tell me what I can do for thee, in return for the happiness thou hast bestowed ;” said Leonato, turning to peasant Girolamo, after the first transports of finding Beatrice restored ; “ this purse of gold shall acquit my promise of purchasing the load of hay ; but I would have thee tell me if there be anything in which I can farther pleasure thee, as a recompense for the care thou hast taken of my wanderer. Speak frankly.”

“ Since you bid me, my lord governor, I will honestly tell you, there are three things in which you can mainly oblige me. Firstly, let your treasurer exchange

me this purse of gold for the like value in copper coins ; secondly, allow it not to get wind how my young lady, your niece, made her way home ; and thirdly, give me your lordship's promise that you will not visit their late misdemeanour upon my neighbours."

"Grant him his petition for my sake, dear uncle, and I will explain all ;" said Beatrice, observing some surprise, and hesitation in her uncle's look. "I fancy, I have learned enough of mine excellent friend Girolamo's way of thinking, during the single day I have had the pleasure of his acquaintance, to interpret the grounds of his three requests. Friend Girolamo is of a cautious turn of mind, and would fain not attract the attention of his neighbours, by any ostentatious display of an unwonted kind of metal, when next he hath occasion to disburse coin ; which would be the case had he gold pieces to change ; therefore he modestly and wisely preferreth copper. Friend Girolamo is of a peaceable turn of mind, and would fain not run the chance of giving offence, by having it known that he aided me to find my way back to Messina, unransomed. And lastly, friend Girolamo is of a generous turn of mind, and therefore speaks a good word on behalf of those who have it in their power to give him a helping hand now and then, as his very good friends and neighbours."

Peasant Girolamo, who had checked off on his fingers each clause of her speech in succession, as they were uttered by Beatrice, at its conclusion, nodded gravely :—"Well set forth, little one ; I could hardly have better delivered it, mine own self."

"It shall all be as thou wishest, good fellow ;" said Leonato ; "but the copper coins will be a heavy burthen for thee to carry."

"Friend Girolamo hath the prudence to let his mule bear all troublesome charges, for him ;" said Beatrice. "The docile beast jogs on, unmindful of risk or weight. A world of mischief in the form of

womanhood ; or that perilous breed-bate and parent of care, money ; all's one, to plodding, patient Orecchiutone." The young girl patted the good animal's neck ; and then extended her hand in a kindly farewell to its master ; upon which Girolamo made his parting obeisance, and took his departure towards his mountain home.

" And now for uncle Antonio, and my dear Hero, and cousin Gaetano !" exclaimed Beatrice, " Where are they all ?"

" Here come my brother, and Hero !" said her uncle. " As for poor Gaetano, he's in bed."

" In bed !"

" Ay ; he was so distressed when he found you were missing, that he was obliged to lie down ; and he has not been up since. Poor lad ! I believe he was really ill ; he worked himself into such a fever of inquietude, it was quite pitiable."

" Pitiable, indeed !" exclaimed Beatrice. " To take it to heart, he must take to his bed ! Alack, most infelicitous of Gaetanos !"

Time went on. Leonato, as the young people grew up, abated nothing of his indulgence towards them ; he loved his daughter Hero tenderly ; and her two cousins he treated in every respect like children of his own.

There was a strength, a spirited decision of character, belonging to Beatrice, joined to her cheerful-hearted, playful manners, that gained her her uncle's esteem,—almost respect, as well as his fondness. He loved her as a most winning, delightful creature, whilst he entertained for her a regard like that which is felt towards an equal. Many things, which to his daughter, with her more soft and yielding nature, he would not have dreamed of confiding, to Beatrice with her quick intelligence, he imparted, as to a tried and valued friend, upon whose judgment he could rely. He had none of the paltry fear which is apt to beset many of his sex, that to take counsel of a woman, is

to give her an opportunity of governing him. He had the sense to perceive native good understanding ; the wisdom to cultivate and strengthen it into future excellence, which might avail both its possessor and her friends ; and the prudence to give it such accompanying principles of morality, and at the same time so much of his own trust and honor, as should teach it to use its power for its fosterer's good, not for his subjugation : and when the result was achieved, he was not afraid of availing himself of the aid such a mind could afford him, because it happened to be a woman's. Between Hero and Beatrice a perfect understanding and affection subsisted. Hero partook too much of her father's candour and generosity of disposition not to appreciate Beatrice's superiority of intellect, and to yield it, in consequence, her entire and unjealous admiration ; while Beatrice on her part, was so passionately attached to Hero's gentle excellence, and so perfectly unvain herself, that no idea but of equality and love could have place between them. There was moreover, just that spice of indolence in Hero's character,—not unfrequently a part of softness and sweetness such as hers,—which made the energy of mind and body that characterized her cousin, peculiarly valuable, as something to be looked up to, and relied upon. Thus, the trust placed in Beatrice by her uncle Leonato, and the active part she took in the household at his request, were regarded by his daughter not only as natural consequence of superior ability, but as tasks which she gladly beheld fulfilled by one more suited to their exigencies than she felt herself to be, either from power or inclination. In a weak girl, such a state of things might have engendered envious misgivings of undue influence ; have inspired jealous fears of a rival in her father's affection ; in a feeble-minded girl, they would most probably have produced lamentations at her own inferiority, and hatred of her cousin's excellence ; but Hero was tender, not weak ; gentle, not feeble. She was of a

loving nature, with all the thousand good and generous qualities comprised in that one attribute.

As for Gaetano, he grew up to be, as a young fellow, much what his boyhood had promised.

“Cousin Beatrice,” he said to her one day, “my father has been telling me ’tis high time I should be thinking of a profession; what’s your opinion?”

“It goes beyond your father’s;” said she.

“How?”

“That you should be doing something more than thinking; though it would be well, if you could do that much, to any purpose.”

“But Beatrice, I want you to be serious; leave jesting.”

“I’m perfectly serious. Want of thought is no jesting matter; though many thoughtless people pass for jesters.”

“Do you know, cousin Beatrice, I think I should like to be a soldier; it’s a gentlemanly profession.”

“Certes, ’tis a good profession for a thoughtless gentleman; none better. Should his brains chance to get knocked out, there’ll be the less to regret.”

“Ay, but that chance is just what I don’t altogether like;” said Gaetano. “I think I’ll change my mind.”

“You couldn’t do better;” she replied. “You must be a gainer.”

“Nay but Beatrice; I am in earnest. I really want to consult you. Listen to me with a sad brow.”

“I cannot;” she said. “’Tis not in my face, or my nature. But, look into mine eye, for the picture-in-little of thine own; which is sad enough in all conscience,—sad as an ill-baked cake.”

“I wonder whether I could be a statesman;” he said, ponderingly; “’tis an honorable position, and my uncle’s influence would not be wanting, I know, to push me forward.”

“If you are indeed in earnest, Gaetanino mio,” she said, “determine to push yourself forward. Make

such strength, by work, as shall carry you on of your own force, and not by that of interest or influence ; such strength as shall raise you to eminence, and maintain you there, unpushed, unsupported. Learn to rely on yourself."

" Ah, cousin Beatrice, I an't clever."

" Work, then ; work hard ; work in earnest ; and make yourself clever."

" Hard work's so difficult !" sighed Gaetano.

" If it were easy, it wouldn't be hard ; and if it were not hard, it wouldn't prevail or endure. I'm afraid there's no choosing any profession, in which hard work isn't a condition,—for success."

" And, of course, I should like to be successful ;" said Gaetano ruefully.

" Then be so. Exert yourself ;" said his cousin.

" Dear Beatrice, to you,—so full of animation, so full of energy, so quick-witted, so bright,—nothing seems more possible ; but to me, who am the reverse of bright,—dull, in fact,—exertion is just the most formidable thing in the world. You see I am not strong ; either in health or in spirit. ' Work ? ' I wish I could work !"

" Don't wish : try. Wishing is wasting time in breath, which should be given to endeavour. ' I wish I could,' mostly means ' I wish somebody else would, for me.' "

" She is hard upon me ;" sighed Gaetano, as Beatrice turned away into the next alley to gather some honeysuckles that had just come into bloom, and hung in profusion round a pleached bower there.

" Tell her so, and she will be more forbearing ;" said Hero, who was in the garden with them, and overheard his words.

" No ; I do not wish her to forbear me. I like her to take me to task ; I like to fancy that she interests herself in me sufficiently to rate my faults. I would not have her abate one jot of her lively

banter—her vivacity enchants me—but I cannot bear to think she despises me.”

“Despise you ! The very animation of her rebuke proves her regard. She strives to inspire you with some of her own energy ; she would not do that by one she cared nothing for. But she must do it in her own way,—which is raillery ; sometimes apt to forget, in its sportive humour, that the spirits of others may not keep pace with its own. When she runs you a little too hard in her playful attacks, you must forgive them for the sake of the kindness and affection they really betoken.”

“You think so, cousin Hero !” said poor Gaetano, with sparkling eyes. “If I could believe she cared one straw that I were less of a blockhead than I am, I verily think it would give me strength to work ; to strive, to force myself into becoming something better worthy her notice,—her regard. Her ‘regard,’ you said, cousin Hero, didn’t you ? But no, it is impossible she can regard so very a dullard as I know myself to be.”

“She hath a sincere regard for you, dear cousin ;” said Hero. “Believe it, believe that we both love our cousin Gaetano the better for that very modesty of character which will not let him think better of himself than he does ; though we could wish that he would not let it hinder him from becoming all that he might be.”

“Your gentle nature prompts you to say this, cousin Hero, to comfort me under my sense of defect ;” he said.

“You are too despondent, cousin Gaetano ;” replied she. “You torment yourself. You make your own misery. You do yourself injustice, every way.”

“Of my own deficiency, I am but too sensible. It is the only thing, alas, in which I am sensible ;” he added.

“Gaetano complaining of being too sensible !” said Beatrice as she returned towards them. “He is

fruitful in complaint I know ; but even his ingenuity I should scarce have thought would have discovered that source of lament. Too sensitive, or too full of sensibility, for the bluff dignity of manhood, might afford more legitimate regret, methinks ; eh, gentle coz ?”

“Sensible of mine own defects,—no more ;” he said meekly and deprecatingly.

“No more ? What would you more ? What could you claim higher ? What sense can be better than that which teaches you your own wants ? It tells you what you need, it tells you what you should seek, it tells you what you must make your own, to supply that which you lack. Courage, man ! If you have got so far as to find out thus much, ’tis your own fault if you do not achieve more,—all.”

“When I hear you speak thus, cousin Beatrice, when I see that beaming look, I feel as if I could do, I could be, anything you bid me. But directly I leave you, I feel as if I walked out of the sun into the shade ; my fancies cool, my spirits chill, my hopes grow cold ; all is dark and sad with me.”

“Kindle a fire within, that shall supply the place of the sun’s heat, cousin mine ;” she said. “Fan the sparks of your own mind into ardour ; keep it furnished with plenty of fuel, and a steady warmth shall glow, that will be worth all you can receive from my rays.”

“But promise that you will not withdraw their light from me ; they do me good, although they sometimes scorch.”

“Bravissimo ! For the infelicitous, that’s not amiss ;” she replied.

An attendant coming just then, to summon Gaetano to his father, Hero said to Beatrice :—“You should be more merciful to him, coz. If he be not so bright as we could all wish,—himself included, for no one is more conscious of his inferiority than he,—you should pity, not taunt him.”

“Nay, he cannot be in want of pity from others, who hath so much of his own. He is too much of a self-pitier. The only form of pity I can bestow, is to allow that he is pitiful. I feel so provoked with him, I could scourge him with the feathers of my fan. But that might make the poor dear creature weep. ‘Pity him!’ Truly he is a most commiserable fellow.”

“He hath a fear that you hold him in contempt, cousin ; and that hurts his feelings.”

“His feelings are over-tender. They are without their natural skin. They shrink from a touch, like a snail’s horns. Why doth he not case-harden himself against the chance of contempt by conduct that shall command respect. A man should be able to protect himself from a woman’s scorn. He should be capable of returning her jest-blows with as hard-hitting as her own. He should show that he spares her,—as he would refrain from striking her,—with the forbearance of superior strength.”

“But if he hath not that superior strength ? If he acknowledge yours, and defer to it, should not that teach you the very forbearance you speak of, coz ?” replied Hero.

“Let him not yield it slavish deference, and I will not use it tyrannously ;” said Beatrice. “It is because I think there is more in him than he’s aware, that I would teach him not to undervalue himself. A little ill-usage will but make him look about him for his defences, of which, I believe, he hath more than he knows. Once let him find out his own powers, and learn to trust to them, he will leave his sickly fancies, and rouse himself in good earnest to become what mine uncle, his father, could wish.”

About this time Leonato set forth on a progress through the island, taking his daughter Hero with him, and leaving Beatrice in Messina, with Antonio and Gaetano, to hold the court during his absence.

His reliance on the zeal of his brother, and on the spirit, tact, and discretion of his niece, gave him full security that all would proceed as he could wish. It happened, shortly after the lord governor was gone, that the duchess of Milan, with the prince her son, arrived in Messina, bringing letters to the court. She was travelling, in great state, to visit various cities, and places of note ; it was thought, with a view to choosing a consort for the dukedom's heir.

It so chanced, that upon their first arrival and presentation, the illustrious visitors imagined no other than that Beatrice was the daughter of Leonato ; and it was not until the interview they had with her was well-nigh over, that the fact of her being his niece, and not his only child and heiress, was discovered. But the change this discovery worked upon the haughty duchess, and her insolent son, was too marked to rest unperceived by Beatrice. She saw that the affectionate courtesy, the coaxing flattery, with which the duchess overwhelmed her at first, was soon exchanged for an air of insupportable arrogance and patronage. She saw that the respectful adulation, the deferential observance with which the prince had originally addressed her, suddenly took a turn of familiarity and freedom in its unreserved admiration, the most offensive.

In her quality of hostess, however, and for the sake of her uncle, whose guests they were, she forbore to resent their behaviour ; resolving patiently to endure it for the present.

On their return from the palace, the duchess questioned her son upon the evident impression Beatrice's wit and beauty had made upon his susceptible imagination. " Fear not, madam," he had replied ; " I shall not fail to keep my heart and hand free for the governor's daughter when she makes her appearance ; meanwhile allow me to amuse myself with that charming sparkler, who hath too much discernment to feel otherwise than flattered by the notice of your son."

The duchess, contented with this assurance of his docility in reference to Leonato's heiress, now gave herself up solely to the object of establishing their popularity in a court with which it had long been her project to form an alliance. Their high rank, together with the cajoling condescensions of the worldly mother, and the handsome person, and insinuating manners of the son, failed not to procure them everywhere the reception they sought. All the world of Messina joined in their laudation, and vied with each other in sounding their praises. Nothing was talked of but the distinguished air of the duchess, and her marvellous kindness ; the graces and accomplishments of her son, his amiability, his irresistible fascinations.

" My sister says he is the sweetest prince ;" said a rich city lady to Beatrice, upon one occasion. " The most condescending ! His highness visits her as unceremoniously, bless you, as though he were a man of no greater consequence than her husband."

" Ay, I have heard that theirs is quite an undress acquaintance ; that they are on terms of morning-gown familiarity—I might almost say, of night-cap intimacy. A high honor, truly. But there are not wanting women who find that his grace's graciousness and easy ways amount to freedoms ; and who accordingly approve them not,—nay, regard them as dishonor rather than honor ;" said Beatrice.

" Such women are mere spiteful prudes ; envious because they have not his highness's attentions and society ;" replied the lady, tossing her head.

" On the contrary ; my informant found he pressed so close a friendship, that she was compelled to decline his acquaintance ;" said Beatrice.

" Who are these people that all the world are talking about ?" enquired Hero, of her cousin Beatrice, upon her return home ; " this duchess of Milan, and her son ?"

“Who are they? The duchess of Milan, and her son, the prince;” answered Beatrice. “In these two titles, the good folks of Messina seem to think are comprised all that is great, and good, and charming.”

“But what think you of them, coz? Come, describe them to me. First, for the duchess.”

“Well, then, to picture her to you morally, she is the sort of woman who comforts her husband in a misfortune, by telling him 'tis his own fault; and to present her to you physically, she hath the face of a parrot; a sharp, smooth beak, a sidelong eye, with a black tongue capable of uttering well-sounding sentences.”

“What age?” asked Hero.

“There comes a time when the weakness of plucking out grey hairs is mad waste of all we're worth;” replied Beatrice. “The duchess hath reached that period.”

“Do not her white hairs give her a venerable look?” said Hero.

“She forfeits it, by being ashamed of them;” said Beatrice. “Nature sets this snow-wreath upon a woman's brow in requital for the youthful graces of which years rob her, that she may engage reverence where she formerly won admiration; but if she affront Nature with bedizenments of Art, she gains neither reverence nor admiration,—naught save ridicule.”

“And the son?”

“You will see him and judge for yourself. He is to be at the court ball my uncle gives this evening, in honor of your return.”

“Meantime, tell me how thou hast seen and judged him coz;” insisted Hero.

“Frankly then, he pleases neither my sight nor my judgment. He hath too much license in his regard. His looks hold freer communion with my person than I approve. His eyes are too attentive; they are ever busier with my face, my neck, or my hands, while I

speak, than his thoughts with my words ; and I like not such mode of converse. And then his insolence to Gaetano. He is as disdainful to him, as he is presuming to me.”

“ To Gaetano ! He is too modest, surely, to provoke insult.”

“ Modest ? Ay ; but there are some people who love to kick modesty, for no other reason than that it is modesty, —too modest to kick again.”

During the entertainment given at the palace that evening, the prince's manner to Beatrice was totally changed. He affected to neglect her ; and to devote himself to her cousin Hero. But he could not avoid allowing his attention to be distracted towards the end of the room where her brilliancy of beauty and manner drew a little crowd around her. He did his utmost to control his thoughts, to concentrate them upon the object he had in view ; but they perpetually wandered to that which possessed so potent a spell for him. His jealousy was roused by perceiving her the centre of compliments, and flatteries ; incense of mouth, ear, and eye, from gazers and listeners ; while it was in a measure appeased, at the same time that his admiration was heightened, by the smiling ease with which she parried the homage, half receiving it as her due, half rejecting it as scarce worthy of acceptance. Above all, he rejoiced to perceive the absolute indifference with which she treated every one. He could discern no shadow of preference towards any who addressed her. Vivacity, playfulness, gaiety of heart, marked her manner ; but no symptom of inclination, no token of superior liking was there.

Presently he saw her led forth to dance by a gentleman of lofty air. The prince could not help watching her graceful and spirited movements through the measure. When it ended, he saw her partner draw her arm through his, and lead her to a cooler portion of the apartment. They came near to where he sat,

trying to entertain Hero in conversation ; and he could overhear part of theirs.

Beatrice appeared to have been pleading some suit with great earnestness, which seemed to have been withstood ; for she rejoined :—“ I beg your pardon, my lord ; I was giving you credit for a heart and feelings ; I crave forgiveness for doing a statesman the injustice of believing he possessed any such unstatesmanlike attributes.”

“ You urge this young poet’s cause, madam, with a warmth that suggests a very peculiar interest in the subject ;” sneered the gentleman.

“ The subject is ill-rewarded genius, my lord ; it is one that warmly interests me, I own ;” she said.

“ And your zeal in the theme is heightened by ardour for the man, I fear. Lady, you know my own hopes. I cannot relinquish them. This young poet, tell me,—my mind misgives me,—”

“ True, my lord, it does misgive you ;” said Beatrice, with sparkling eyes, and an impetuosity very different from her usual light mood ; “ let me tell you it does misgive you ; it gives you a multitude of things amiss. It gives you false views, false impressions, false convictions. It gives you to draw false conclusions, to act upon false premises ; it gives you to make false judgments, and to deliver false and unjust sentences. Moreover, your mind—your statesman’s mind,—unencumbered by such superfluous excrescences as heart and feelings—unbiassed by such weaknesses as loves and hatreds, sympathies, affinities, antipathies, and repugnances,—contemplates genius, intellect, and such like gifts, to be the patented right, the exclusive monopoly of you rulers ; or that if they dare to exist among the ruled, they are to be considered as so many illegal possessions, and their produce to be fined, taxed, mulcted, drained down to proper dimensions accordingly, for the behoof of the state stock, which cannot be too large, too arrogant in plethoric abundance.”

“ ’Tis not to be doubted, the motive for this vehemence, madam ;” said the nobleman, with a deeply offended air. “ Your client shall not fail to learn his good fortune ;” he added, as he bowed and left her.

Presently, a young man, with an air of intolerable and unmistakable self-sufficiency, the look of a thorough-paced coxcomb, made his way towards the spot where Beatrice still stood.

He addressed her with a strain of high-flown acknowledgements, in which flattered self-love, and consciousness of desert, mingled in equal measure. It was evident he thought the aspirings of his heart, and the marvels of his brain, were each on the point of receiving their due estimation and reward. He had just been informed by the chagrined and disappointed statesman, of the manner in which the lady Beatrice had betrayed her partiality for the man in pleading the cause of the poet ; and he had come to pour forth his conceited complacency of gratitude.

Beatrice heard him to an end ; until he had revealed the full extent of his fatuity ; and then she merely said :—“ I worked for the cause, not for thee, man ; for the principle, not for the individual. As one who claims brotherhood with poets, you may conceive me entitled to your thanks, for the love I bear sweet poesy, and for the earnestness with which I pleaded her rights ; but in good sooth, I deserve no gratitude of yours.”

He looked confounded at this cool reception, where he had evidently been led to expect so different a one ; and shortly after, bowed himself from her presence, to go and rail at lady’s caprice.

“ You dismissed the poor devil with a scorn that will teach him less presumption in future, madam ;” said the prince, as Beatrice approached to speak to her cousin.

“ Presumption is an inapt pupil, my lord ;” replied Beatrice ; “ it is slow to take a hint, and dull at learning a lesson ; it requires whipping. I should not have

used the rod to yonder puppy, but that he is a pretender as well as a presumer. A poetaster ; no true poet. I had not him in my thoughts when I urged the cause of poetry and genius erewhile. This man is a sorry scribbler,—a versifier ; one who thinks he writes poetry, because he puts down his lines all of a length.”

“ Many lose their way through life, mistaking their right road to Fame ;” said the prince.

“ Nay, perish miserably ;” she rejoined. “ Witness the numskull who threw himself into the burning mountain, one day, to pick up a name ; but he only calcined himself into an eternal fool, who, knowing his own farthing value, chucked it into a hole. Or that fellow who set light to the Ephesian temple, to kindle himself a reputation that should flame down to posterity ; but he did no more than brand himself an ass, in arson immortality. Goddess Dian was busied elsewhere,—tending the birth of another of those Famesters, Alexander the great baby, who cried for a second world-orange,—or she had never suffered her shrine to be scorched to cinder.”

“ You care not for renown, fair lady ?” enquired the prince.

“ I care not for too much of a good thing, my lord ;” she replied. “ Had I been Eve, I should have asked to be let out of Paradise, long before she was turned out.”

“ Indeed ! Why ?”

“ I should have liked to see something of the world ;” answered Beatrice.

“ And rejoiced the world to see you ;” said the prince.

“ A vacant compliment, my lord. You forget ; the world was empty, then ; of men, at least, whose admiration is supposed to be the one thing acceptable to us women.”

“ If the world were empty, you would fill it,—with delight ;” said the prince, forgetting all his resolutions with regard to paying exclusive court to Hero.

“ A delightful world ! Pity your highness did not live then, and have it all to yourself ;” said Beatrice. “ But here comes cousin Gaetano, to claim his promised dance with me.”

“ And fair Hero will accord me her hand for this measure ?” said the prince.

Later in the evening, the prince saw Beatrice engaged in lively talk with a gentleman whom he had not seen before. The stranger was handsome ; with great spirit and grace in all his movements. He had an open, animated countenance, with eyes of remarkable brilliancy and intelligence ; a noble, easy air, bespeaking the well-bred man, and distinguished gentleman. The prince had the curiosity to ask who he was.

“ His name is signor Benedick, of Padua ;” replied Antonio, of whom the inquiry was made. “ He is newly arrived in Messina, and hath letters to my brother Leonato, from his excellent friend don Pedro of Arragon, who promises soon to be here himself.”

“ The lady Beatrice grants this stranger much of her attention ;” remarked the prince ; “ he hath held her in talk I know not how long.”

“ She is interested to find one who can retort her own smartness upon her, I fancy ;” said her uncle ; “ from what I overheard of their colloquy but now, I could gather that she hath met with her match. But yonder is my old friend, count Gregorio ; I must to him, and ask whether he hath heard lately of the young soldier, his nephew Claudio.”

Antonio hurried away, leaving the prince still moodily watching Beatrice from a distance. “ I am no longer master of myself ;” he muttered. “ To gaze upon her,—to hear her, is to lose all command, all controul. Why do I trust myself even thus near ? If my mother’s hope is to be fulfilled, I should shun her. Where is Hero ? Let me seek her ; and keep my thoughts steadily on the end in view.”

In pursuance of this purpose, his highness, the next

morning, arrived at the palace, fully determined to dedicate all his attention to Hero, and to banish Beatrice from his mind. But, to the utter subversion of all his prudent resolves, on being ushered into the saloon usually occupied by the cousins, he found Beatrice sitting alone at her embroidery-frame. He approached with involuntary eagerness ; but endeavouring to recover himself, he made some enquiry respecting the lady Hero.

“ My cousin indulges in a late hour this morning, to match her late hours of last night, my lord ;” said Beatrice. “ If you will favor her with a still later, in your visit, she will probably be pleased to receive your highness.”

“ I will await her coming, here, if my presence be not unwelcome to the embroideress ;” said the prince.

“ So that you come not so near as to hinder the free drawing of my needle, my lord, your presence is no more unwelcome than usual ;” said Beatrice, as the prince took a seat close to her elbow.

“ Is the progress of your embroidery so important, that you cannot spare a moment from it ?” he said.

“ ’Tis important, in all likelihood, as aught that may claim my attention. Besides, I can talk and work ; stitch and listen at the same time ; like a thrifty housewife, save the precious moments, by putting them to double use.”

“ But it is a loss of half the pleasure, conversing with a woman at needle-work ; it is to miss the comment of her eye when you speak, and its lustre when she replies ;” said the prince.

“ Your confidence assumes that you speak to pleasure her, my lord ; otherwise, the comment might chance to be so little agreeable that it were better avoided, and the lustre rather fierce than benign.”

“ I have been so favored hitherto as to have seen few marks of displeasure from fair ladies’ eyes ;” said the prince ; “ I will not fear that the lady Bea-

trice can be less gracious to me than those who were her inferiors in every gracious attribute."

"If you boast their favor, my lord, they must be my superiors in grace;" said Beatrice.

"Can you accord me none, then?" whispered the prince.

"I cannot spare it; I cannot afford to be graceless myself;" she said.

"You will not understand me. So perverse! So chilling!" said the prince. "Why so cold lady?"

"'Tis the winter quarter, my lord. But though the season be unusually severe, yet I care not to be kept warm by such near neighbourhood. Your chair encroaches upon my comfort; give me freer room, my lord."

"I do but admire these beauties of yours;" he said, pointing to the flowers of her embroidery, and bending still more closely over her.

"Your highness's breath flutters the fur on my dress; I neither like the down to be scared, nor my shoulder to be breathed upon; my temper ruffles at both."

"By heaven, the swan-down itself shames not the whiteness of the shoulder 'gainst which it rests." And the prince's lips dared to touch it with a kiss. In an instant, the whiteness of the skin he had at once so lauded and profaned, was lost in the glow that suffused it,—like northern snows encrimsoned by the midnight sun.

Beatrice started up; calling, in her ringing voice:—"Who waits!" There was a pause. One of the attendants from the ante-room, entered. When he appeared, his young mistress said:—"Open the door; and if ever this person comes again, shut it."

Without farther words, she turned away, and left the apartment.

Not long after, her uncle Antonio met her, and with the tremulous motion of the head peculiar to him when he was agitated, or excited, said:—"What is

this I hear, niece, that you have dismissed the prince with indignity ?”

“ He offered me one ;” she said quietly.

“ Is it possible ? A man of his condition ? His highness could not surely——”

“ His highness was guilty of a baseness, dear uncle ; neither you nor uncle Leonato would have had me submit to the affront passed upon me.”

“ Surely not ; yet my brother will be vexed that a man of the prince’s rank and influence should quit Messina offended ;” said Antonio.

“ If he scruple not to give offence, let him e’en take it, an’ he will ;” returned Beatrice ; “ and, for his rank, his grace disgraced himself by his own deed.”

The expected guest, don Pedro of Aragon, arrives. He is a valued friend of Leonato’s ; and very different, in all respects, from the prince whom he succeeds as a visitor at the court of Messina. The young duke of Milan was a selfish libertine, with sufficient ambition to wish to controul his passions for the sake of an advantageous match, but not sufficient virtue to subjugate them ; while the prince of Arragon is a noble gentleman, full of honor and high principle. He brings with him his brother, don John ; a gentleman of temper as unhappy as his origin ; for he is an illegitimate son of the late prince their father by a low-bred woman. His tastes are degraded, his habits vicious, his nature crafty, and his manners morose. But don Pedro permits his accompanying him, that a better example may act propitiously ; and serve to wean him from the unworthy society he has hitherto frequented.

The brothers were attended, each by their several followers. Don Pedro had a large retinue, as befitted his rank ; with one confidential servant, named Balthazar. This Balthazar was a staid, worthy man ; he had native good sense, and had had an excellent edu-

cation ; he was much respected by the prince his master, and he possessed one accomplishment which won him his especial liking and favor. Balthazar was an admirable musician ; he played on the lute with great skill, and possessed a charming tenor voice.

Don John's attendant was named Borachio ; a dashing, dissolute fellow, who passed for very good-looking, among the tribe of susceptible serving-damsels and waiting-gentlewomen.

One of the lady Hero's women, Margaret, a smart, forward girl, was smitten on the spot. The instant she beheld this irresistible gentleman's gentleman, she fell desperately in love. She flirted, she coquetted, she 'kept company with him ;' though she held him aloof all the while ; prudently resolving not to give up so good a situation as she enjoyed with her young mistress, the governor of Messina's daughter, either by a loss of reputation, or by a marriage with a roving blade, who might desert her the next week to follow his master's fortunes.

This flirtation cost the sober, serious Balthazar many a pang. With all his sobriety and gravity, he could not resist the captivation of the smart damsel, Margaret. He loved her against his better sense ; he loved her in spite of himself ; his prudence was not proof against her pretty face, and brisk gaiety. But all his love, strong and involuntary as it was, availed him nothing. It could not win him one smile from her whose whole stock was lavished upon the showy, rakish Borachio.

But the love-affairs of the hall and ante-chamber need be no farther adverted to.

Don Pedro's visit to his old friend at Messina had lasted about a month, when one morning a young gentleman, an officer, arrived at the governor's palace, enquiring for the prince, and announcing that he brought news from the army to his highness.

It happened that don Pedro, with signor Benedick, signor Leonato, signor Antonio, Gaetano, and Beatrice,

had ridden forth on a short excursion in the neighbourhood, to visit some classic remains of great beauty, regarding which, the prince had expressed interest and curiosity.

The young soldier,—who had announced his name as Count Claudio, saying that he would await the return of don Pedro,—was shown into one of the saloons ; which chanced to be a favorite sitting-room of the two young lady-cousins. It opened into a large conservatory, full of exotics, and the rarer flowers and plants. In this saloon sat the young officer for some time ; listlessly turning over a large portfolio of engravings that lay open on a stand ; examining the various elegancies that profusely adorned the table ; glancing at the embroidery-frame in one window, that announced occasional feminine occupation of the apartment ; looking at the pictures that hung upon the wall ; and varying all these attempts to beguile the time, by a low-whistled tune, or a half-hummed air ; when, of a sudden his attention was attracted by the sound of another voice, also singing a little quiet song, in that sort of busy idleness, and occupied leisure, which employs the fingers, while it leaves the thoughts and voice free to move to music.

He held his breath, and listened. Yes, it was a soft womanly voice, sweet and clear, singing very near to him. It seemed to proceed from the conservatory. He was sitting not far from the open door which led directly into it ; but on raising his eyes, he saw mirrored in a tall Venetian glass that covered a large portion of the wall opposite to him, a complete picture of the interior of the conservatory, which he could contemplate without stirring from the position he occupied.

It presented to him, amid the profusion of foliage and blossoms with which the conservatory was filled, the figure of a young girl ; graceful, beautiful, blooming as themselves. She had a light but capacious basket on one arm ; into which she dropped the flow-

ers as she cut them. She was gathering a large quantity, and culling them with some niceness; for still she went on cropping flower after flower, now reaching up after some half-blown favorite, now plunging amid a thicket of leaves, now pressing through stem and spray for some choice bud, or selected beauty. And ever as she proceeded in her fragrant task, she murmured her low liquid carol, with tones as sweet and full, as were the perfumes and colors she collected.

The young officer sat entranced, watching her. Count Claudio was not of a disposition to be troubled by any refinement of notion, such as might have prompted a nature of more scrupulous delicacy and generosity than his, to step forward and announce his presence to the young lady. He was a man of the world, a soldier, with certain accomplishments of person and manner that made him pass for a very pleasant, gentlemanly youth; he thought the young girl made an exceedingly pretty picture, bending among her plants and flowers; and he had no hesitation in gazing on it as long as he pleased,—which was as long as it continued before him.

At length the basket was filled; and the young lady advanced towards the door which led into the saloon. As she entered, she perceived the count. A blush of surprise, at seeing a stranger, where she had expected to find no one, crossed her ingenuous face; but no embarrassment, no confusion, marred the high-bred ease and grace with which she approached him, and paid him the courtesy of reception in her father's absence.

He hastened to explain, that he was the bearer of despatches to don Pedro; which he feared would summon him from the scene of his present enjoyment, as his highness's presence was required at the seat of war.

On the return of the riding party, it was found that it was even so; and on the very day after, don Pedro and his train bade adieu to Leonato; not however, without the expression of a hope that when the cam-

paign was over, they should all return to enjoy a renewal of their pleasant visit.

Their departure left quite a void in Leonato's circle. The affability, and kindly feeling of don Pedro ; with the wit and spirit of signor Benedick ; were especially missed. The family party were assembled in the saloon, the evening after their friends had left them ; when they fell into the unconscious silence which betokens an unexpressed regret, felt in common ; until Beatrice exclaimed :—

“ Come, this is dull work, this sitting doing nothing. Thinking and brooding, is worse than nothing, yet the same,—’tis naught.”

“ What should we do better, coz ?” said Hero.

“ Talk—talk scandal. Let us amuse ourselves with backbiting our friends, in revenge for turning their backs upon us.”

“ What scandal wilt thou invent, niece ? For sure calumny itself cannot find aught to report amiss of the noble gentlemen who have just left us ;” said Leonato. “ There is my esteemed friend, don Pedro ; even thy saucy tongue will not dare level slander against a gentleman so complete ?”

“ He is your dearest friend, uncle mine ;” she said ; “ that should exempt him from censure, even though his own desert did not set slander at defiance. But there is his brother, don John. Can charity itself say a word in his favour, and hope to be thought other than hypocrisy ?”

“ He was ever an unhappy gentleman ;” said Antonio ; “ his position and his disposition are both unhappy.”

“ And, certes, he makes those about him unhappy ;” said Beatrice. “ He is enough to poison bliss itself. If a woman were to meet him in Heaven, she’d pray to be delivered thence.”

“ You allow there’s a likelihood of his going thither ?” said her uncle Leonato, smiling ; “ there’s a chance yet for my friend’s poor brother.”

“He is indeed a poor soul! Yet he hath the pride of the prince of fallen angels,—Lucifer himself.”

“Do you think he’s proud?” asked Leonato.

“‘Proud?’ He’s too proud to say his prayers;” she answered.

“How like you count Claudio, the young soldier, my friend Gregorio’s nephew?” asked Antonio.

“I saw him but yesterday for the first time;” she replied; ’tis hard to judge a man by a few hours’ knowledge, when whole years scarce suffice a woman to get all her husband’s foibles by heart; but a soldier’s character is seldom so deep but it may be seen through, as you look into a stream,—down to the very bottom at once.”

“Pure, and transparent;” said Hero.

“Cry you mercy, sweet coz!” said Beatrice.

“What say you to shallow, and nothing but gay babble?”

“Claudio hath more in him than belongs to a mere soldier;” said Leonato; “he is a young gentleman of good discretion, good breeding, and good birth.”

“With a good pair of eyes, uncle, a good leg, a good hand, and an excellent good opinion of himself altogether;” said Beatrice.

“Nay, you cannot call him vain, cousin;” said Hero; “he hath a tongue as ready in others’ praise, as it is mute upon his own.”

“You have haply given more time to the study of this new tongue than I, coz;” returned Beatrice.

“I learned scarce anything of it; you seem well versed in its subtleties. I give you joy of your proficiency, sweet Hero.”

“You have not told us what you think of signor Benedick, of Padua, niece;” said Leonato.

“I think nothing of him, uncle. Which may mean that I take him to be worthy of no thought; or that I think him of no worth. The truth is, he hath sunk himself to a cipher in my opinion, since I have found the poor opinion he hath of women.”

“ I know signor Benedick stands at low rate with cousin Beatrice ;” said Gaetano ; “ for she treats him even more roughly than she does me. She uses little ceremony with us, but still less with him. But I can’t wonder at it ; for the gentleman is scarce civil to her. He seizes all occasion to taunt and retort upon her for her just treatment of him ; calling her my lady Disdain, and other fine witty names, that I can’t see the humour of, for the life of me. If she disdain him, very right ; if she scoff at him, so much the better.”

“ But what is this poor opinion he entertains of women, niece ?” said Leonato.

“ Marry, uncle, this ; he professes to believe that none look on him, but love him.”

“ He should at least be grateful for their weakness, and hold his tongue about it ;” said her uncle, laughing.

“ So far from gratitude, he professes, that, for his part, he can love none in return. ‘ Bella donna’ is the deadliest of all poisons to him. He desires to keep his heart unscorched ; whereby he thinks he proveth he hath more sense in one of his little toes, than Leander in all his big head,—who, they say, poor youth, was troubled with water on his brain, besides fire in his heart.”

“ You will allow that signor Benedick hath wit, niece ? No one can deny him to have wit ;” said Leonato.

“ Truly uncle, if Nature hath gifted him with any, ’tis the more shame of him to mislay it as he does. ’Tis ever new moon with him ; the best part of his wits are gone wandering ; and where he should seek ’em, is in darkness.”

“ Nay, niece, this is sheer malice. Benedick’s wit is ever forcible, lively, and present to the occasion.”

“ Right uncle, ’tis so ever present, we would fain have the relief of its absence. We rejoice in its absence,—as we are doing now.”

But the campaign lasted long ; the wars were pro-

tracted ; and it was more than a twelvemonth ere don Pedro was at liberty to fulfil his promise of returning to Messina. At the end of that period, however, a messenger arrived from his highness ; announcing his approach forthwith. Leonato and his family welcomed the tidings with joy ; and questioned the bearer eagerly respecting their friends. Beatrice perplexed the man by asking after her old wit-adversary thus :—“ *I pray you, is signor Montanto returned from the wars, or no ?*”

When Hero rejoined :—“ *My cousin means signor Benedick, of Padua.*”

And now, gentle readers, you will rejoice, “ when you have seen the sequel.”



OLIVIA ; THE LADY OF ILLYRIA.





TALE XII.

OLIVIA ; THE LADY OF ILLYRIA.

“ She that hath a heart of that fine frame,
To pay this debt of love but to a brother,
How will she love, when the rich, golden shaft,
Hath kill'd the flock of all affections else
That live in her ! when liver, brain, and heart,
These sovereign thrones, are all supplied, and filled,
(Her sweet perfections) with one self king !”

Twelfth Night.

It was one of those glorious evenings on the Adriatic shores. The sun had set ; but the rich orange glow in the west, still marked the gorgeous pomp of his departure ; mingling its fervid gold with the intense blue of the southern sky. The vivid glare of light was sobered into a depth of color,—the heat of day was tempered into a soft luxurious warmth, that filled the air with voluptuous beauty. The nearer trees were embrowned in shadow ; the mountain horizon lay empurpled in distance. All was steeped in the sumptuous hues, and balmy repose of evening in a meridional clime. The sole enjoyer of the scene, at this hour, was a solitary horseman, pacing slowly along the road ; which lay rather inland, the sea-coast screened from view by trees, and broken ground, and such intervening objects. It was scarcely more than a bridle-way ; little frequented by travellers, although it led to the principal place in Illyria, where the reigning duke held his court ; strangers mostly arriving by ship, and proceeding from the harbour into the capi-

tal. The extreme loneliness of the road, together with its picturesque aspect,—the deep and almost solemn beauty of the evening, seemed in perfect harmony with the horseman's mood. He was wrapt in thought, which allowed of just so much perception of external circumstances and influences, as to render him alive to their sympathy with his feelings. These had till now been so full of a recent misery, that they were unable to occupy themselves with aught save their own fruitless, but imperious activity ; but this evening, for the first time since his heavy bereavement, they suffered themselves to be soothed into something like calm. His spirit could bear to admit the mysterious consolations of mighty Nature ; he could endure to look upon her in her serene aspect, and not feel it a mockery,—a jarring discord, to the tumults within his soul. He yielded his heart to her benign ministry, and felt he could accept her comfort.

He was a native of the south of Germany ; a gentleman of birth and fortune. He was the sole surviving representative of an ancient house ; but in marriage with a woman whom he passionately loved, he had felt no longer alone in existence. His wife was to him all the world ; friends, society, enjoyment, happiness, were all comprised to him in her single self. In her possession he had possessed all. In her loss he had lost all. She had died in giving birth to their first child. He was smitten, in his anguish, with a brain fever, which for a long time threatened both intellect and life ; but youth, and a fine constitution, redeemed him from extinction of either ; though he was scarce grateful for the boon. Return of reason was return of consciousness in misery ; restoration to life, was renewal of unhappy existence. On recovering from his prolonged illness, his old housekeeper,—a faithful creature, but one little skilled in dealing with such profound feelings as his,—had opened all his wounds afresh, by familiar allusions to his loss, commonplace condolences, entreaties that he would see how like his

little daughter was to the "dear departed lady," and prosy details of how nicely she had managed to bring up the baby baroness, herself, by hand, instead of trusting it to "any interested hussy of a wet-nurse." He had borne all patiently; merely begging, in a quiet voice, that she would let him know when the child was asleep, as he chose to trust himself to look upon it first thus.

His wish was obeyed. At night, when the baby was laid in its little bed, the housekeeper summoned him to the room. He entered; his face very pale; his knees trembled, and his hand shook; but there was that in his look, as he pointed to the door, which cut the garrulous housekeeper short in her stream of words, and caused her to walk out in the very midst of her oration. She heard the door locked upon her, as she withdrew. When she returned,—in some alarm at the length of time that elapsed, ere she was summoned,—she found the door flung wide open, no one in the room, and the little bed empty. The father, on being left alone, had staggered to where his child lay; but with the first glance at that baby face which had cost life to her whom it innocently resembled, came so overwhelming a rush of emotion, so many wild regrets, so passionate a sense of his misery, that all other wishes were merged in the one distracted desire to fly from any chance of witness to his grief.

With the desperation of anguish, jealous of its solitary indulgence, he formed his resolve. Hastily but tenderly, he wrapped the sleeping babe in the warm coverlet; crept out of the room; stole down stairs, into his library; furnished himself with money; went straight to the stable; saddled a horse, mounted, and rode fast and far away from his ancestral castle,—from the prying eyes, and prating gossip of officious attachment. He determined to travel; that alone he might wrestle with his sorrow, and try what time and new objects might do towards softening its agony. He journeyed on horseback, carrying his little daugh-

ter before him, softly cradled in the quilted coverlet ; and so far from finding her presence a burthen or an inconvenience, it was the only thing that afforded a diversion to his misery. The providing for her comfort, the necessary forethought for her accommodation, served to arouse him from the exclusive brooding upon his loss. He proposed to wander along the shores of the Adriatic, through Illyria, and Dalmatia, as lands where he might range uninterruptedly and unobservedly. He had reached Illyria, and was pursuing his solitary way, when the soft glories of that sunset evening first stole upon his wounded spirit, and reawakened it to a sense of peace and calm.

He had, for some miles, not met with a single passer, or a house of any kind, save a straggling cottage or two, mere peasant-huts, or vine-dressers' habitations. But at a bend of the road, he came to a cypress avenue, that led up to a fine old mansion, embowered in trees, and surrounded by extensive grounds. The deep orange glow from the west, still lent its rich hue to the sky, forming a gorgeous back-ground to the picture ; while the single lustrous star of evening shone immediately above the house. It looked so quiet, so secluded ; all was so still, and suggestive of repose about it, that the horseman could not help pausing to gaze upon this sequestered dwelling. He was irresistibly attracted by its air of unostentatious yet substantial comfort. It looked an embodiment of those qualities which to an English mind are summed in the one word 'home.' It was the recognition of this home-look, that caused the traveller to stop and contemplate the place so attentively.

He rode on with a deep sigh, as he thought how little any dwelling could now be 'home' to him. Then his train of regretful thought branched off into the idea of his child's future home. Would she be doomed to pass her life with so unfit an associate for a young hopeful spirit, as his own ? Would it be right to retain her in companionship with a broken-

hearted man, a widower-father? What would indeed be her home? He peeped at the close-nestled face of his little one, who lay in a profound slumber, lulled by the open air, and the plodding pace of the horse. There was something in the serene expression of the sleeping babe, that whispered hope to the father's heart,—hope, and a something allied to interest in the future.

At that instant, a sharp pain smote him. He was stabbed in the back, by a coward stroke from a ruffian, who, in company with three others, had sprung from a thicket unperceived, and set upon him. They repeated the blow, and he fell from his horse, pierced and bleeding. They lost no time in rifling his pockets of all they contained; during which process he swooned. With an assurance to each other, that he was safely settled, they were proceeding to ransack the holsters and other cases about the horse's housings, when, one of the brigands remarking that they could do that at their leisure, and had best make off lest they should be surprised, they all plunged into the thicket again, leading the animal with them.

After a space, the pain of his hurts roused the wounded man from his swoon. His first thought was, his child. With the instinct that surmounts the pang of death itself, in a parent's heart, he had clutched the babe fast, in falling. This, together with the strange impunity with which infant limbs sustain the roughest shocks, from their unresisting mode of meeting them, had preserved the little creature. It lay,—still close curled up within the quilted coverlet,—near beside him. He strove to raise himself. A vague thought of endeavouring to reach the house he had so lately passed, swam through his brain. But it would not be; the blood oozed fast; no means of staunching it; no help; no hope; he tried to shout, his voice died away; his arms made one effort to grasp her to his heart, and then his head fell back in the dust of the pathway.

Within that house sat a family party. It consisted of a gentleman, who sat in an arm-chair, with one elbow leaning on the table near him, reading,—in a most luxurious state of domestic comfort and ease,—to a lady seated near him, occupied with some kind of light needle-work. As the candle-light fell upon the bent head of the gentleman, and the hand that supported it, there was something in the shape and turn of both, that bespoke the high-bred man ; while in the listening countenance of the lady, there was both beauty and intelligence. Near to them stood a cradle ; in it lay a heap of snowy clothing, from the midst of which peered a rosy little face, with blue eyes that stared and blinked alternately, as if they were now wondering what could be the meaning of the humming monotony of the reading aloud, now resolving to break it up with a startling roar that should demand summary attention. Close beside the cradle, on a low stool, sat a little girl, who was employed in rocking her baby brother, and watching anxiously the staring eyes, and the several moods they portended ; now amusing herself with the grave interest they seemed to be taking in the subject of the book, now all terror lest they should screw up into an inflexible determination to obtain a hearing for their small owner.

Before this point was settled to the satisfaction of the small mind employed upon it, another interruption to the reading occurred. There was a loud ring at the entrance-bell.

“ My brother Toby lets us know of his arrival, this evening, with yet more than his usual energy ;” said the lady. “ I could wish he would not ring with so imperative a hand. It almost sounds like some dread summons—the hasty announcement of some fearful accident.”

“ The level murmur of the reading has made it sound more than common sudden ;” replied the gentleman, with an anxious glance at his wife’s face ; for he knew that her health was not strong, and that her

nerves were easily shaken. "Fear nothing, my love ; 'tis no more than Toby's eagerness to apprise us of his coming,—which he knows always enlivens and pleasures us."

But the first sight of his brother-in-law's face, as he entered the room, showed the gentleman that something had indeed happened more than usual.

In lieu of the hearty, easy, and somewhat boisterous way in which the new-comer made his nightly entrance among them ; instead of the bright, good-humoured, jovial look that generally beamed from out his broad and ruddy countenance ; he came in hurriedly, agitatedly, with pale cheeks, and with an expression in his eyes, that spoke plainly their having just come from beholding a sight of horror. In his arms he held an infant covered with blood.

He hastily told his story. How he was coming as usual, to spend the evening with his sister and her husband, whistling thoughtlessly as he lounged along the road, when he had nearly stumbled over the body of a man, that lay right in his path, pierced through with wounds. How he had discovered upon leaning down to succour him, that he was quite dead ; that he must have fallen by the hand of robbers, for that his pockets had been rifled ; all his money and papers gone. How, upon the dead man's bosom lay the sleeping babe, steeped in its father's blood. How he had raised it in his arms, and brought it home to his sister. He ended by saying that he had taken leave to send some of his good brother's servants to fetch the body of the poor gentleman out of the road.

"And now, sister mine," added he, "let me have a cup of old Chianti, to take the taste out of my throat. It still sticks there. Nothing but wine will wash my palate clean of the queer flavour that came upon it, when I saw that poor young fellow lying weltering on the ground ; his bright hair in the dust, his eyes up-staring, his mouth agape, and his little child, with its head upon his breast, all unconscious

of the dreadful sight so near. Poor innocent ! See it now !”

The child had awakened ; and was leaping and bounding in his arms toward the shining candle, and crowing with delight at the brilliant object that attracted its gaze.

The eyes of the good-natured sir Toby were moist, as he watched the rapture of the little one, dancing for joy, and thought of how he had found it. He went on tossing it, and indulging it with the gay sight ; while both his brother and sister partook of his emotion to see the little creature with its starry eyes, and gleeful crow, and frock bedabbled with the heart-blood of him who gave it life.

“ You will let it be our child, my husband ; it shall abide with us, shall it not, and be no less our care, than our own two ?” whispered the lady.

“ Surely ;” replied he. “ What says my little Olivia, will she have a baby-sister as well as a baby-brother ?” And the gentleman turned to his young daughter, who had stolen from the cradle-side, and was peering under his arm at the pretty stranger.

But before she could reply, the small individual in the cradle, having at length come to the conclusion that a yell was advisable, as the only way of making his wrongs known,—wronges which had lately received a grievous addition to the insult of reading aloud in his presence, by the daring defalcation of his young nurse,—now began to cry lustily. This created an instant diversion in his favour. All eyes were turned from the babe sir Toby was jumping and tossing, to the one that lay roaring in the cradle. For some time every effort to soothe the small gentleman’s indignation was unavailing. Just as they began to indulge a too-sanguine belief of a lull, a fresh blare put all their hopes to the route ; and no sooner had they succeeded in calming that, and ventured to admit a dawning hope of coming peace, when another, and still another rave burst out. At length his sister hit upon the

happy expedient of showing him the new baby. In an instant, the sight of the bright, sparkling, lively little thing, took his attention, and his fancy ; he held out his arms towards it, and strained, and kicked, and struggled to get at it.

“ Put it in the cradle with him ! Let him have it near ! Let’s see what he’ll do with it ! ” exclaimed the little Olivia, enchanted that her baby-brother should have such a new toy to play with.

Her uncle Toby placed the child gently by the side of the other one ; and there they both lay, crowing, and kicking, and cooing at one another ; partly in play, partly in wonder ; but merry, and happy, as could be.

As they stood watching the pretty sight the lady said softly :—“ Poor little creature ! I wonder what her name is ! Were there no traces, brother ?—no pocket-book,—no mark by which you could guess who or what the unhappy traveller was ? ”

“ None ; but he had the unmistakeable look of a gentleman ; ” replied sir Toby. “ No matter however, for his, or his child’s true name ; since you and my good brother consent to adopt the little one, give her a name of your own choosing. ”

“ Since she was found by the light of the stars,—or rather of one star ; for, no other than the evening planet is in the sky ; and since her starry eyes still dance before mine, as they leaped and shone, reflecting the candle light ; and since she comes to us like a little star herself, beaming and sparkling, to make our evening bright ; what say you to calling her *Astrella* ? ” returned the babe’s new father.

And thus it was settled.

The gentleman who adopted the orphan foundling, was count Benucci. He had married an English lady, who, with her brother, was travelling on the continent for the sake of her health ; which had never been strong since the loss of her parents. At Venice, dur-

ing the carnival, they had met ; and the Illyrian nobleman, struck with the gentle beauty of the fair English girl, had ceased not until he had won his way to her heart, and persuaded her to exchange her native land for his. He had succeeded in prevailing upon her brother to do the like. Orphans, without kindred, or ties, to attach them to England, they had felt the less reluctance in resolving to form a new home abroad, where they might live unseparated from each other, and with a new friend, who bade fair to replace in his warmth of regard, the few acquaintances they had possessed in their own country. The count would fain have induced his wife's brother to take up his abode with them in their own mansion ; but Sir Toby, in his sturdy English way, had preferred an independent bachelor lodging in the suburbs of the capital, not far from which count Benucci's estate lay. In every way, he said, it would suit him best. He should have the gaieties of a town life, which were a part of his constitutional requirements ; he should have freer scope for putting in practice his own peculiar theory of good living, without interfering with his brother and sister's notions—or chance of interference from them ; he could have their society whenever he desired it, by taking a walk of less than two miles, which would be of advantage to his health—his temperament more than verging on the florid and the epicurean, not to say, the plethoric ; and that thus his pleasure in their company would ever have the zest of novelty, and risk no abatement from a necessitated constancy.

The count liked his good-humoured frankness, his sociality, his heartiness, his easy temper, and enjoying disposition, too well, not to let him bring them in his own way ; and his sister was glad to have him with her at any rate, and on any terms, most agreeable to himself.

Thus it came, that no evening passed at Casa Benucci without its inmates seeing the broad good-humoured face, and burly figure of the young English

knight, sir Toby Belch, making their way along the avenue ; bringing with them an atmosphere of cheerfulness, and mirth, and readiness for any hilarious or convivial proceedings that might be toward. He looked a beaming personification of enjoyment,—a jovial embodying of jollity, and relish for jollification. Capacity for revelling to the utmost lengths of revel, sat upon each feature ; a festive expression swam and glistened in his eye ; a luxurious fullness rounded his cheeks and lips, giving smoothness, flexibility, ease, to their every line and curve ; a lazy richness and repose dwelt in his ample chin ; there was a rotund plenitude of plumpness in his person, and a universal air of ruddy ripeness,—of maturity in youth, that made him look the poet's feigned Bacchus in the guise of an Englishman under thirty. In harmony with all these external indications, he had a voice racy, and mellow ; a mouth that rolled out its words with a sonorous tone, and unctuous flow, at once recommending and enjoying the good things it uttered ; while it conveyed a no less enjoyment of those it swallowed.

The vicinity of Casa Benucci to the capital, enabled the count to draw around him a great deal of society ; and for some time after his marriage, his house was the resort of a large circle of friends,—the learned, the witty, the gay, and the accomplished of both sexes. But after the birth of her first child, the countess's health had relapsed into the delicacy, from which it had been temporarily restored. Her husband's devoted affection for her, and the intellectual resources he possessed within himself, caused the sacrifice of company to be little felt by either of them ; they thenceforward saw few guests, lived a calm retired life, and gave themselves up entirely to domestic pleasures. About four years after their little daughter was born, the countess brought her lord a son. The baby was called Cynthio ; and formed the delight of his young sister Olivia ; as both the children constituted that of their parents, and uncle.

Sir Toby's good-humoured countenance never looked more good-humoured than when it was leaning down to answer some prattled question of the little Olivia's ; or looking laughing up to hers as she rode on his shoulder ; or hanging in good-natured giant wonderment over the miniature features of baby Cynthio, as he dandled it in his arms, or watched it in its cradle. With the children, in return, this merry uncle was an especial favorite ; and, from the time he brought the little stranger among them, no less a favorite with her than with the rest.

The hour of the jolly knight's advent, was looked forward to by them all, as the period when sport and mirth of all kinds were to abound, and be at their height. He himself was in general request. Olivia wanted him to look at her pet dove, or her own peculiar garden ; but Cynthio had scrambled up to sit astride on one of his knees, that it might be his 'cavalluccio ;' and Astrella had seized upon his foot for a see-saw.

It was generally found that in these various struggles for the appropriation of good-humoured sir Toby, the one that prevailed was Astrella. She had a winning little coaxing way with her, that was irresistible ; and then the other two were naturally of so yielding, so generous a disposition, that it came, as a matter of course, they should give up their whims to hers. Olivia gave way to her brother, because he was younger, and because she doted on him, and so that he was happy, she was happy ; and Cynthio gave way to Astrella, because he took more interest in watching her, than in pursuing his own devices.

The fascination that this little creature had possessed for his baby eyes the first time she had come within their ken, never lost its power, never abated of its influence. The sight of Astrella, at any moment, sufficed to quiet him, to engage his whole attention. In the midst of a roar blatant, the vision of the little Astrella held up before him, would act as a sedative,

and change his cries of wrath into cries of pleasure ; and as he advanced from babyhood into boyhood, it was still the same ; were he in ever so obstreperous a fit of contumacy, bring Astrella where he was, and his perverseness would become playfulness, his rashness and violence turn to gladness. Her presence was a delight to him, that seemed to swallow up and absorb all others. He would forget his own plays to watch hers, or to join in them ; he would neglect his own pursuits, to help her in hers ; he would at any time leave what he was about, to look for her, and see what she was doing.

A boy among girls is apt to become exacting,—an unconscious tyrant ; making them minister to his whims, and yield in all things to his will and fantasy. But Cynthio, in his worship of Astrella, not only bent his own humours and tastes to her likings, and devoted himself to her service ; he also caused his sister's inclinations to become ancillary to those of his little idol. Olivia's pleasure was to please Cynthio ; and since his happiness consisted in seeing Astrella happy, it followed, as a matter of course, that all which could tend to make her happy was done by both loving sister and loving brother. It must be confessed that, thus, the felicity of all three was attained ; for Astrella was just one of those sweet natures that are not spoiled by indulgence. She was affectionate ; therefore so much love made her loving in return. She was gentle, and modest ; therefore so much yielding made her grateful, not encroaching or imperious. She was a warm-hearted, charming child ; as apt to gladden others by her joyful but unselfish acceptance of kindness, as she was alive to its gladdening reception herself. She was very beautiful ; one of those clear brown beauties, that are designated by a single word in French. She was a 'brunette.' She had soft, brown eyes, capable of expressing deepest feeling, yet sparkling with intelligence. Her hair was brown, with a bright golden light upon it. Her skin

was one of those complexions that cannot be called fair, yet are well-nigh more lustrous than the most dazzling whiteness ; a transparent surface, that shows every slender blue vein, every varying glow of emotion, each rosy blush, or timid pallor. And she possessed sensibility to exhibit such a complexion in its highest perfection. While yet a mere child, the thought of earning the commendation of the count, of displeasing the countess, or of making sir Toby laugh, would heighten her color, or blanch her cheek, or flush it into brightness, as either of the fancies possessed her.

Olivia was no less beautiful ; but hers was a beauty of a totally different character. She was a dark beauty. She had dark hair, like a raven's wing—as glossy, as smooth as its plumage. She had dark eyes, large, liquid, and full ; with that peculiar transparency, which seems to admit of penetration into their very depths. Her skin was of that tint known as an olive complexion ; a pure, even tint, exquisitely calculated to show to advantage the pencilled eye-brows, and long lashes. Scarcely any color tinged the cheek ; but its absence was not felt as a defect, in that delicate, waxen, uniform hue, with oval shapeliness, belonging to an Italian face.

Her little brother, Cynthio, was even radiantly fair. He had one of those seraph heads, which the painters of old loved to multiply in their beatific subjects. Locks of light golden hair hung around a face beaming with roseate beauty. His eyes were like sapphires ; so clear, so gem-like an azure was theirs. His throat and forehead were white and polished as sculptured marble ; and his lips were coral-red. His beauty was almost feminine in its extreme fairness ; a complexion so delicate, features so regular, limbs so symmetrically formed, seemed rather those of a girl than a boy. But his countenance had spirit, as well as delicacy ; and his limbs energy, as well as grace.

They were still, all three, mere children, when As-

trella was attacked by a violent fever. The countess left the sick-room to hear the opinion of the physician who was called in. She did not perceive that her little son, Cynthio, was within hearing; who, after the doctor's first few words, crept out of the room, in search of Olivia. The young boy was accustomed to refer to his sister all questions that puzzled or interested him.

“Olivia, what did the doctor mean by saying:— ‘I will not conceal from you, madam, that there is danger,—great danger.’ Did he mean danger to Astrella? Danger! What danger?”

“Did he say so?” asked Olivia, her eyes filling with tears. “Poor Astrella! I did not know she was so ill; last night she was quite well. And now——”

“Then the danger is to her! What danger? Tell me, tell me, Olivia!” said Cynthio, impatiently, and with the same marks of emotion as his sister.

“Danger that she will die!” wept Olivia.

“‘Die!’ what is ‘die,’ sister? What do you mean?”

“She will leave us—be taken from us for ever—we shall never see her again!” said Olivia; and she tried to explain to her innocent young brother the terrible mystery of death, as well as her simple, child-like conceptions of it would permit.

As she proceeded, Cynthio fixed his eyes upon her face, and drank in her words with a kind of breathless wonderment and horror; then burst into a passion of tears, exclaiming “Astrella! Dear Astrella! Ah, Astrella, mia!”

His sister attempted to soothe him; but he broke away from her, and ran out of the room even more hurriedly than he had entered.

She was about to follow him, when her mother came in, looking anxious and pale, but as if with a resolution to speak calmly and with patience.

“Listen to what I have to say to you, Olivia mia;” she said. “Do not come to me; stay where you are,

dear child ;” as her daughter would have run towards her. “ Show me that you can behave like a little woman, my Olivia ; be brave and steady in affliction, —the courage mostly needed from a woman. The physician has pronounced Astrella’s disorder to be a fever of the most virulent kind. He does not conceal from me that he fears the worst for the dear child. But he tells me that if I would save my other darlings, I must keep them from entering her room—nay, send them from the house. The disorder is infectious. Go therefore to your father, and beg him from me——”

“ But yourself, dear mamma——” interrupted Olivia.

“ I do not fear contagion ;” said her mother ; “ besides, whatever may be the risk for me, it is already encountered ; I have been all night in the sick-room with her. To none other than myself will I yield the charge of watching my Astrella ; whom I love not less than my own dear ones. Go, my dear child, as I bid thee, to thy father, and tell him all this. Tell him I entreat that he will lose no time in taking Cynthio and yourself to a place of safety ; when this is done, I shall be relieved of the only anxiety which might give force to the fever to take effect upon myself ; and thus we shall have the better chance for the happy result which I hope may attend my careful nursing.”

“ Dear mamma——” still hesitated Olivia.

“ Lose no time ; do as I would have thee, dear child ;” urged the countess, as she prepared to return to her little patient. “ I may not embrace thee, lest harm should already dwell in my touch ; but I fold thee to my heart in spirit, and bid Heaven’s blessing and a mother’s be with thee.”

But on re-entering the sick-room, what was this tender mother’s dismay at seeing her young son stretched upon the bed by the side of Astrella, sobbing as if his little heart would break.

His head was buried in the bed-clothes, as he yielded to this overpowering fit of grief ; then he started

up, and resumed hanging over her, kissing her flushed cheeks, and parched lips, flooding them with his tears, and snatching her burning hands in his.

“Cynthia mio, how came you here? Listen to me, dear boy;” said his mother, bending over him, and whispering in her gentle voice. “Do not cry so bitterly; hear what I have to say. You will disturb poor Astrella by this violence of grief; be still, be quiet, lest you make her worse.”

The sobs were checked, the cries stifled, the tears held back, as well as he could.

“Oh she is very ill, mamma! Very ill!” he faltered. “See how she lies, taking no notice of anything; and just now, her poor head was turning from side to side, backwards and forwards, backwards and forwards,—and she was talking—O so fast!—and without any meaning—and she didn’t seem to hear, or make out what I said, when I spoke to her. O she’s very ill! And that cruel doctor said,—I heard him,—that there was danger; and now I know what that means.”

He buried his face once more in the bed-clothes that he might smother lamentations which would not be restrained.

“How came you to overhear what was said? I did not see you,—I did not know you were in the room;” said his mother. “But cease crying, dear Cynthia; be more of a man; you will not only hurt Astrella by it, but you will make yourself ill.”

“I am not afraid of being ill; I came here on purpose to be ill,—to be ill with Astrella;” replied Cynthia. “I heard him say that first; I heard the doctor say, ‘I would advise you, madam, to forbid any one to enter the little girl’s room,—they might take the fever of her; it is of a very infectious kind. I will not deceive you; there is danger,—great danger.’”

“How could you come hither, then, without my leave, Cynthia?” said his mother; “since you heard what the doctor said.”

“ I heard him advise you to forbid our coming ; ” said Cynthio ; “ that was only his advice ; you had not said you forbade it, and lest you should, I left the room directly ; for I thought it very hard Astrella should have the fever all by herself,—quite alone,—no one to keep her company, to amuse her, to play with her ; so I determined I would come and be ill here too. In my way, I asked Olivia, what the doctor meant by ‘ danger,—great danger.’ And oh, she told me ! Dear, dear Astrella ! ” His sobs breaking forth afresh.

“ You learned the danger, yet you still came ! Ah, my dear boy ! ” involuntarily exclaimed the countess.

“ You would not have had me stay away for that, mother ? ” said he, his blue eyes flashing through their tears. “ You have always said boys should be brave, and learn to face danger. There was the more need for me to come and help her, if there was danger to be met. Why should Astrella meet it alone ? Oh, Astrella ! Astrella ! ”

And the little fellow again flung himself down, his cheek close against hers.

“ The mischief is incurred, alas ! ” murmured the mother. “ Heaven avert its worse consequence ! ” And now, since it was too late to hope that by sending him from the room, the chance of infection could be avoided, she, with the wisdom taught by a mother’s love, turned the very strength of his affection,—which had brought him into peril,—to a means of advantage. She availed herself of his passionate fondness for the little Astrella, by urging him to subdue his grief for her sake ; that he might keep well in order to help nurse the patient through her illness. This thought did more to rouse him from his grief than anything else. The idea that he might contribute to her comfort, the hope that he might help to make her well, were the happiest suggestions that could have been devised.

“ And do you think she will be saved from dying,

if we nurse her carefully, mamma ? Do you think she will recover, if we take pains ?” he asked, almost joyfully.

“ We will try our utmost in that hope ;” said the mother ; “ and for the rest, we must have faith in Heaven’s mercy. In the worst evils that befall, there are two chief resources ; which bring their own comfort. Do our best, and trust in God.” And soon, the strength of these consolations was tested by the poor mother herself ; she had need of all their aid beneath the trial that awaited her ; of all the fortitude they could lend, when she beheld her young boy languish, and sicken, and fall ill of the same raging fever that burned in the veins of Astrella. His noble, unselfish love, his affectionate sympathy for his little play-fellow, rendered it only the more heart-breaking to see him the victim of his generous impulse. And yet, in the very hour when her fears were at their highest,—when she thought there was no chance but she must lose him,—the mother felt that she could not wish him one jot less noble, less excellent. A mother’s heart cannot afford to abate a single trait of goodness in her child ; she will rather yield him up the harder sacrifice, with all his perfections, than consent to own in him one virtue, one merit the less.

“ My Cynthio is but worthier of Heaven ;” sighed the mother, as she strove to school her murmuring heart into submission.

But she was not doomed to endure this bitter extremity. Her son was spared to her. Both he and Astrella struggled through their peril, and survived.

The fever left them weak, and singularly altered in person. Astrella had shot up into a tall thin girl, looking three or four years older than she really was ; while the boy Cynthio seemed to have shrunk into the dimensions of a baby. His fair face had become wan ; his active limbs had shrivelled into skin and bone ; he had wasted away to a mere skeleton of what he once was ; and he had so little strength left, that

he could only move about wheeled in a garden-chair.

Change of air,—especially sea air, being recommended, the count removed his family to one of his tenant's houses, that stood on the extremest verge of the estate, and was situated down on the very beach.

This place, though humble, and possessing none of the conveniences of their own luxurious mansion, yet found favor with the invalids. Here, they could be out-of-doors as long as they pleased. The cool hours of morning and evening,—at earliest dawn, and by latest sun-down,—they spent close on the margin of the sea ; watching the calm blue expanse, with its scarce-varying tide ; wooing the light breeze that occasionally played upon its surface ; gathering shells upon the smooth brown sand, and bringing them to the side of Cynthio's chair. He would lie there patiently, watching his sister and Astrella, as they flitted to and fro, never once uttering a repining word that he could not run about with them. He seemed to find pleasure enough in following every active movement of the latter, as her agile figure moved hither and thither ; and his words, his manner, showed never-failing interest and delight when she brought her collected treasures, or hovered about him to help arrange them. Near them would sit the count and countess, reading, or noting the pastimes of their children, happy in their happiness. The countess's health, never strong, had suffered much from the anxiety and confinement consequent upon the children's illness ; and her husband was as glad for her sake as for theirs, of this sea-side sojourn.

The children had two new companions, also, who helped to make the time pass gaily. Their uncle, sir Toby, had been absent for some time, on a visit of several months, at a friend's house in Venice. Their two new play-fellows were more of their own age. One was a brisk, lively girl, daughter to the count's tenant, in whose house they were at present lodging.

With the ease of southern manners,—which admits a freedom of intercourse between persons of unequal rank, unknown to the stiffer northerns, and yet which nowise extinguishes the real respect of dependants towards their superiors in station,—this tenant's daughter could join in the sports of the children of a count, her father's landlord, without a notion of presumption on her part, or derogation on theirs. She was a few years older than Olivia; had a comely face, a smart person, high spirits, and a paramount turn for wag-gery and drollery. Her name was Maria. The other, was a young lad, who was said to be the orphan son of a poor fisherman, drowned on that coast. The boy had strayed from a neighbouring hamlet; and this was all that could be gathered from the rambling story he had told of his origin. He was reputed an oddity; but his light-hearted frolic, fun, and inexhaustible good-temper, made him a great favorite with those among whom he had come to dwell. There was not a cottage round about but gladly afforded a meal or a shelter for as long as he chose to remain, to whimsical Feste, as they called him.

“'Tis a strange name, they have given thee, my lad;” said the count to him, one day. “And yet I know not, but it suits thee as well as another.”

“Nay, better, my lord count; better than a better name could fit one that hath nothing good about him, save a good heart, good sight, and a good voice. A good name is somewhat of a burthen, too, to him that is gifted with other good gifts—as modesty, for instance. Best rest contented without it, believe me.”

“How, boy? Methinks the modestest of men aspires to stand well with his fellows; the meekest ambition would fain have a good name;” said count Benucci; for he had taken a fancy to this youth, for his merry humour, and loved to encourage its sallies.

“Troth, my lord, thus may a good name be a burden to a modest man; it weighs him down with a heavy sense of his own lack of merit; besides pressing

upon him the necessity of living up to itself. A thousand things that a man unshackled by it might permit himself, may never be indulged in by one that hath the ill luck to get a good name. No, I'll none of it. Give me an indifferent name, and free leave to do what odd things I please,—it may be, among them, a few better ones than I'm given credit for."

"What kind of name dost call thine own, boy? Is that an indifferent one?"

"'Tis indifferent in so far, as 'tis indifferent to me how I'm called, so that it be not too late for meals or good fortune, my lord;" replied he. "But, in truth, it cannot well be called indifferent, in so much as it was given me as a token of liking, rather than of indifference; nor can it be called a bad name, since the good folks hereabouts gave it me in no ill-will. They first named me *Festeggiante*, as signifying that joyous spirit, that festive disposition they were pleased to ascribe to me, or rather, to discover in me; and afterward it dwindled into *Feste*, as being the more familiar, as well as more festinate designation."

"Well then, *Feste*, thou shalt e'en go with me, an' thou wilt, when we return home to *Casa Benucci*, and be henceforth one of its inmates; since I think thou hast no particular dwelling of thine own, nor no more pressing engagement elsewhere;" said the count.

"I know not what accomplishments I may boast that should entitle me to such good service as yours, my lord;" said the lad, carrying off a certain choking sensation that came into his throat, with an attempt to retain his usual careless gayety; "but among them is not the art of making professions; otherwise I might protest gratitude and ever faithful loyalty in return for your lordship's goodness; but though I proclaim not these, they are none the less living in my heart."

"Let them rest there, good lad; and let me know of them but through thine own happy looks, and blythe words. I love a mirthful speech, and a gay

song, both which I know thou canst give me ; so I shall be the gainer by having thee with me at Casa Benucci.”

There was but one person who objected to this addition to the household. That one, was an individual accustomed to pretty much authority in the dispensation of its affairs,—the count’s steward, Malvolio. He was a grave personage ; had an exalted opinion of what was due to the dignity and honor of the house of Benucci, and the most precise notions of honor and dignity generally. He was exact in etiquette ; strict in punctilio. He was a great observer of forms himself ; and demanded the most formal observance from others. He had a serious stateliness of deportment that is seldom seen but in middle age ; and bore himself with all the staid importance of advanced life, when still quite a young man. His demeanour was that of a man fully possessed with the innate consciousness of merit. He stalked about with an air of proud self-content, of serenely triumphant interior approval. He held himself very loftily ; as if his erect body were a type of his upright soul. On his countenance sat an unruffled composure, as of a conscience on good terms with itself ; a perpetual complacency, the reflection of a heart incessantly occupied with its own worth. He looked as though he knew of powers and goodnesses within, which cast a perpetual shine outwards ; and that his greatness of spirit bade him permit some of this light to fall upon others for whose inferiority he could make allowance ; although for their benefit, he would not suffer either their defects or errors to pass without the assistance of his admonition, reprobation, and censure. In his manners there was condescension,—a kind of patronising affability, as of superiority extending generous encouragement to less perfect humanity ; but withal a reservation of rectitude which would take the earliest needful occasion of asserting itself. He had an implicit faith in his own judgment ; a firm conviction of his supreme

excellence. He believed his counsel invaluable ; his opinions unimpeachable, as they were infallible. He had the count's confidence, for he was a man of integrity ; no less honest and trustworthy than fastidious, ceremonious, and pompous ; no less sincerely attached to the true welfare of the house of Benucci, than zealous for its repute and nice conduct. His foibles were tolerated, for the sake of the sterling qualities he really possessed.

When this grave steward first heard his lord's intention of admitting the boy Feste among his retainers, as a kind of privileged fool, half jester, half minstrel, he failed not to remonstrate with the count on the uselessness such an appendage would be to the household ; setting forth, in his own didactic style, arguments against the measure ; saying that he knew it was a fashion that had much obtained among families of distinction, though he could not but consider it an absurd, a worthless amusement,—if amusement it could be called, to entertain oneself with the follies and futilities that issued from the mouth of ignorance ; that it was affording a licence to folly to utter its nonsense, in lieu of encouraging wisdom to profit the world by the utterance of its axioms ; that it was a piece of extravagance to have such another eater of bread in the house, who could contribute nothing in return,—no service, no help,—naught save emptiness and vain laughter ; that though the honorable house of Benucci had a right to its fashionable extravagances as well as any other ; yet he thought it behoved this family in particular to set an example of higher tastes, by refusing to harbour folly, and by resolving to surround themselves with none other than persons of decorum and discretion.

“ Good Malvolio,” answered the count ; “ in thine own person we have decorum and discretion enow to suffice the entire household. Content thyself that it controls and supervises the whole ; that it secures for us the comfort and well-being a household so directed

enjoys. Let me indulge myself with this one freak of folly,—idle and vain, if thou wilt, yet pleasant withal,—and do thou continue to give me the countervailing benefit of thy sageness and solidity. They must ever have their weight with me, for their true poise and value.”

Satisfied by this concession, the grave steward gave his sanction to his master's wish.

The sojourn at the sea-side had produced its hoped-for effect. When the family returned home to their own mansion, it was with renovated health and strength. The countess seemed less delicate than she had been for some years ; and her young son was restored from the state of helplessness to which his illness had reduced him. But though Cynthia recovered the use of his limbs, was able to dispense entirely with that of his garden-chair, and could run about as freely as ever ; yet his growth was irretrievably stunted. He remained a very little fellow ; and seemed a mere child, for some years to come. On the contrary, Astrella's sudden increase of stature after the fever, went on. She not only outstripped Cynthia, but she grew still taller than Olivia ; who, though nearly four years her senior, was frequently taken for the younger girl.

Cynthia's devotion to Astrella continued the same. His deference to her lightest word, his delight in procuring her joy, his happiness in her presence, the fondness with which he watched her every look and movement, the assiduity with which he studied her tastes, complied with her likings, and prevented her wishes, were singular, in one so young. He seemed to have no will but hers ; and to have as much pleasure in yielding his, when it chanced to differ, as most children find in getting their own way. He was so attentive to her, so careful of her, that it became matter of remark · he was called Astrella's ‘ little husband.’

He took much pride in the title ; and spoke of her as ' my wife,' with great complacency. He said it as if it gave him a sort of property in her, a right of guarding her, which evidently delighted himself, while it amusingly contrasted with his childish looks and slight proportions. It gratified him to call this tall girl ' my wife,' as bringing her more on a level with himself by the air of authority and protection it enabled him to put on. It was the only air of the kind he ever cared to assume towards her ; whom he treated more as an idol, than an equal ; one to be worshipped, rather than loved. Olivia, he held in tender regard ; and behaved to her with the easy, familiar confidence of brother towards sister ; but for Astrella, the affection he testified, had the fond reverence, the devoted attachment, the passionate intensity, which, in one of elder years would have formed the preference of a lover.

Soon after their re-establishment at Casa Benucci, sir Toby returned from Venice. He brought with him a young Frenchman, whom he had met there ; and to whose society he had taken a great fancy. As the knight's bachelor lodgings, in the capital, afforded no accommodation for visitors, he begged his brother-in-law, the count, to invite the young gentleman to his own house.

The chevalier Dorfaux was welcomed by the count and countess with all the cordiality that his introduction by their brother, sir Toby, ensured. The young Frenchman's lively manners and companionable qualities soon won him the favor of the count ; but from the first there was something—to which she could have scarce given a name, a something rather felt than understood—about this stranger, that made the countess find it impossible to like him. This feeling seemed to herself so much the offspring of mere prejudice, towards one whom she had known for so short a time, that she would not allow it to bias her mind ; still less would she endeavour to impart it to her hus-

band, until she should see more of a man, of whom both he and her brother thought well. Why should she endeavour to injure him with either, until there were more sure grounds for disapproval? She thought it would be injustice, on a mere instinctive impression, to condemn him herself, or to influence others against him. She determined to be silent, and observe as impartially as might be.

Had she know where, and how her brother had met this young man, she would not have deemed it her duty to be so passive. In a brawl at a low casino, and afterwards at the gaming-table, the acquaintance had commenced and progressed. Sir Toby's sense of delicacy was not so nice or refined, his perceptions of right and wrong were not so scrupulous, as to suggest to him the impropriety of presenting one encountered amid such haunts, to his brother and sister. He could see no reason why one whom he found an agreeable companion, should not be a fit associate for them, or even for their innocent children. Accordingly, the chevalier Dorfaux's specious manners, his plausible tongue, and his artful knack of winning his way, had an opportunity of exercising their powers among the inmates of Casa Benucci. With the exception of the countess, there was not one of them, with whom he had not soon made himself a favorite.

He was respectfully facetious and jocular with the count; he behaved to the countess with implicit deference; he flattered the grave self-love of Malvolio; he drolled with Feste; and he lent himself to all the sports and pastimes of the children. He took part in their old games, and taught them new ones; he played with the eagerness of a boy, and entered into all their pleasures with a spirit that seemed as genuine as it was vivacious. "Well done, little fellow! Bravissimo!" he exclaimed, on one occasion, as Cynthio was swinging his sister Olivia, in a large swing that their father had had erected for them between two lofty trees in the grounds. "For such a slight little chap,

you have famous muscle in your arm. It must be your good-will that puts such strength into each push, or they could never send her flying that height. Well tossed ! Parbleu, well done !”

His praise stimulated the boy to strain every nerve, to exert all his strength.

“Cynthio mio, you will tire yourself ; do not work so hard. I have just as much pleasure in being swung less high ;” said his sister.

“I am not tired ; not in the least ;” said Cynthio.

“Let me swing her, let me take my turn ;” said the chevalier, taking his place.

He continued for some time swinging Olivia, the two other children looking on. Once or twice they spoke to her ; but Olivia seemed distracted from attending to them by something or other ; uneasy, and unable to answer them.

Suddenly she said :—“Brother, I wish you would swing me ; or, stay,—no,—I have had enough. I’ll get out. Help me down, Cynthio, dear.”

But the chevalier stepped forward, and lifted her out of the swing. The little girl did not thank him ; but freed herself from his arms as quickly as she could, and walked away to a seat somewhat apart.

“Now let me swing ! I should like to have a swing now !” said Astrella. “And toss me high ! high ! high ! you know I love to fly up among the tree-tops, and fancy myself a bird !”

“I’ll take care !” said Cynthio, as he helped her into the swing.

“Here, let me !” said the chevalier.

“No, no ; I’ll swing Astrella ; I always swing Astrella ;” said Cynthio.

“I’ll bet you what you will, I toss her higher than you can ;” said the chevalier, after Cynthio had gone on some time.

“I’m sure you couldn’t ; though you’re a tall man, and stronger than I am ;” said the boy. “I shouldn’t

be afraid of the wager ; but I can't let you swing Astrella."

"No ! And why not, pray, my brave little fellow ?" laughed the chevalier.

"Because I never let any one swing 'my wife,' but myself ;" said Cynthio, quite gravely.

"Oho, young gentleman ! you're afraid of her safety ; but I'll be very cautious, I assure you."

"I'll trust nobody but myself to take care of her ; and I can't give up the pleasure ;" said Cynthio.

"Well said ! Quite a gallant little husband, I declare ! You ought to be very proud, signorina Astrella, of such a lord and master."

"The beauty of my little husband is, that he never lords it over me, nor ever tries to master me ;" answered Astrella. "Cynthio's too kind and good to be a tyrant."

"Quite a jewel of a little husband, indeed !" said the chevalier. "But come, if you won't trust your cara sposina out of your own hands, what say you to taking a bet that you won't be tired of swinging her before another hundred tosses."

"I'll bet you that, and welcome !" exclaimed Cynthio.

"Well then, what shall be the wager ?" said the chevalier.

"All my pocket-money ! I don't care how much ! Any money you like !" said Cynthio, eagerly.

"Don't lay a wager about it,—your arm will ache, Cynthio ; it'll be too much for you ;" said Astrella.

"Not a bit of it. I'm not afraid !" said Cynthio.

"What pocket-money have you ?" said the chevalier.

"I don't know exactly ; but never mind,—any sum you like ; I can ask my father for the rest, if it shouldn't be enough."

"No, no ; let it be as much as your own money amounts to—whatever that may be. Now say, 'Done, and done'—and begin your hundred ;" said the chevalier.

“Don’t bet, Cynthio, mio ;” said his sister Olivia. “Remember, mamma did not like you to lay a wager with cousin Toby, once, when he proposed it. She said it was an idle practice, and might grow into a vicious one.”

“Did she ? I had forgotten ;” said Cynthio.

And so the matter ended.

A few days after, the three children had been taking the chevalier Dorfaux a long walk through the grounds, to show him the spot by the sea-side where they had spent their pleasant holiday ; and as they returned, it happened, that a brook, which was ordinarily so narrow as to be easily cleared by jumping, was now swollen so wide by late heavy rains, as to be almost impassable. But it was far round, to get to a bridge that crossed the stream in the direction of the house ; and as the little girls were somewhat tired with their long walk, they wished to get home as quickly as possible.

“I will lift the young ladies across ;” said the chevalier ; and turning to Astrella, who stood nearest to him, he raised her in his arms, and bore her across the brook.

“Why did you not leave her to me ? I would have carried my wife myself ;” said Cynthio to the chevalier, who now returned for Olivia.

“I fear it would have been too much of a feat for the gallantry of even the gallant little husband ;” laughed the chevalier. “The little husband would have been too little for that, I fancy.”

“I am stronger than I look ;” said Cynthio, with a bright color in his face. “I don’t want to brag, but I’m sure I could have lifted her. Let me try to carry you, Olivia mia.”

“Give me your hand, dear ;” she answered. “I mean to step through the water, myself ; it is not deep. If you let me hold by you, we shall steady each other.”

“Best let me bear you across ;” said the cheva-

lier. "Your feet will be wet through, signorina."

"I can change my shoes and stockings, as soon as I reach home; we are not far from the house, now, I thank you, sir;" she replied.

When they had all safely reached the other side of the brook, the chevalier walked on, with Astrella. As the brother and sister followed a little way behind, Cynthio said:—"You did not like him to lift you in his arms, Olivia?"

"No;" she said, quietly.

"You did not like him to swing you, the other day? I have noticed, that you have never let him swing you since;" said her brother, after a pause; as if musingly.

She did not answer; and presently Cynthio went on:—"I don't think you like this French gentleman so well as you did at first, do you, Olivia?"

"No;" she said.

"Why, sister?" said the young boy, looking suddenly but earnestly up in her face, as he walked by her side.

"I hardly know;" she replied; "he is as amusing, as obliging, as good-natured in his manners as ever; but——"

She stopped. After another pause, Cynthio said:—"You did quite right to ford the brook, sister. I wish I had carried Astrella across—or that she had walked through, as you did, holding by my arm. Let's step on and overtake her. I was sorry, at first, when I heard that the chevalier Dorfaux was to leave us next week; but now, I think, I am rather glad."

"Take my arm, Astrella;" said Cynthio, as he and his sister came up with her and her companion; "you are tired, sposina."

"Here is mine at the young lady's service;" said the Frenchman, offering it with such alacrity as to render acceptance almost unavoidable.

But Olivia, on seeing Astrella take it, said:—"Your

little husband's arm affords excellent support ; it brought me through the brook as firmly and strongly, as though it had been a giant's. Did you not see how bravely it upheld me ?”

“ 'Tis a doughty little arm, indeed !” said the chevalier aloud ; adding in a whisper that only Astrella could hear ;—“ pity 'tis of such dwarf-like proportions !”

In a few days time, the chevalier Dorfaux's visit at Casa Benucci came to a close. He took leave, and sir Toby went with him ; as it had been agreed, that the two gentlemen would take a trip together to Naples, during the carnival season.

Her brother had not long left them, when the countess Benucci was attacked by a mortal illness, which terminated her existence suddenly. So suddenly, indeed, that there was scarcely time to summon her brother home, ere she had breathed her last.

Sir Toby was on his way to Casa Benucci when he learned the fatal issue of his sister's disorder ; but as it was then too late, he turned back and prosecuted his journey with Dorfaux, unable to encounter the spectacle of his brother-in-law's grief. He sent him an affectionate letter ; but in his own bluff style : declaring that until he could hope to bring back courage enough to face home without her who had made it home to them, he should wander on, in search of as much amusement as he could now find heart to enjoy.

The count too, thought it best to travel for a time ; that change of scene might work its good effect upon the young people and himself. He knew that it was precisely at their age that travel is apt to be of most advantage in forming the character. He therefore took them a tour into Greece ; which occupied a considerable period, with profit to both mind and body ; restoring them to Casa Benucci in recovered peace.

The count was well-pleased to see the grace and discretion with which his young daughter filled the post of mistress, in presiding over his household. It

was a proof how well she had profited by a childhood passed beneath a mother's eye ; that Olivia, still so youthful, was able to acquit herself as lady of the house, in a manner to justify the joyful pride her father took in her. He sent for his tenant's daughter, Maria, and placed her as waiting-maid about the person of the young countess, knowing Olivia's liking for her ; and thinking that her sprightly disposition would make her a desirable companion. Maria was the very briskest and smallest of creatures ; she was like a fairy in her proportions ; neat and trim in her dress as a doll ; light and quick in her motions as a bird,—nay, as a bat,—but then a bat has an ugly face. Now hers was a nice little round face, with pippin cheeks, and cherry lips, and bright beady eyes. They looked as sharp and as piercing as needle-points,—darting mischief through their keen glances : merry, waggish, roguish eyes. You could not think of their prettiness for their mischievousness ; and could hardly trouble yourself about their mischievousness, for their good-temper ; and certainly, whatever you might think about when you looked at them, you couldn't keep yours off them, such bewitching little wicked eyes they were. She flitted about the house like an elf, or a sprite ; so light of foot, so airy, so quickly appearing, so swiftly vanishing, was she. You caught sight of her whisking skirts like a butterfly's wing ; they had fluttered away before she could settle—what she had come for ; or you, that you had actually seen her. She darted into your ken like a falling-star, and disappeared as abruptly. She could neither move, look, nor speak, but rapidly. She was a midge, an atomy, —anything that is lightest, brightest, and smallest.

Insensibly time crept on. The children had grown up into youth and confirmed beauty, preserving still the same characteristics which had from the first distinguished them. Sir Toby found them all wonderfully grown, when, after loitering away a long period

in each different city that took his fancy, on his return from Naples, he came back at length to Illyria. He declared they were metamorphosed, from little brats,—whom he could dance on his knee, or have a good game of romps with, or pull about in any frolicsome fashion he chose,—into orderly young people, comely gentlefolks, whom he should learn to look up to, to respect, and even to consult, upon matters of moment. He said that when he looked at the loveliness of Astrella, he should feel that he must be on his guard against all the dangers that are said to lurk in the titles of ‘a wit’ and ‘a beauty ;’ that when he contemplated the perfections of his niece Olivia, he should be obliged to call himself to task for all that could militate against the kindred between himself and the impersonation of so much purity, sense, and grace ; and that though Cynthio’s girlish face and figure might make him seem the least formidable of the three, yet that there was something of angel mixed with mortal knowledge about the boy, that made him stand more in awe of him than of all the rest.

“ Truly, a man feels ashamed to call nephew, one whose innocent face makes his uncle look to his sins,—which mayn’t so well bear a reckoning ;—and feel a twinge when he thinks of his own remote acquaintance with the Latin grammar. I’ll warrant, now, he knows the deeds of Alexander, Belisarius, and Cæsar, like his A. B. C ; when, if I know more of them than their initials, I’m a heathen Turk, and no Christian Englishman. ’Tis so long since I have looked into a book, that I hardly know how it opens.”

“ You will find Cynthio and the two girls good, dutiful children, still, though grown into all but young men and women ;” said the count ; “ and as well-inclined for a frolic with cousin Toby as ever.”

“ ’Tis a good hearing ; for is not mirth the spirit of existence, and jollity the wine of life ? Without mirth and jollity, man is little better than a drained

flask, a stale anchovy, a musty melon ; a dry, empty husk,—fruitless, worthless, to himself or others.”

“ Thy metaphors, brother, remind me that we have offered thee no refreshment yet ;” said the count ; “ forgive us our scant hospitality, omitted in the eagerness to welcome you back. After your warm walk, a cool flask of Cypro will not be amiss. Olivia, bid them bring fruit and wine out here in the garden ; let it be placed beneath the shade of this spreading chesnut.”

Olivia despatched her gentlewoman with the requisite orders ; and her uncle had fresh occasion to laud her grace and housewifely accomplishment.

“ By my troth, they shall be my three mirabilaries ;” said he, looking upon her, Cynthio, and Astrella. “ I will quote them as wonders of creation, and vaunt them to be no less than perfections of nature.”

“ You will risk spoiling your wonders, cousin ; and then they will be no longer perfection ;” said Olivia. “ That methinks, were scarcely the deed of a good or wisé kinsman.”

“ To be wise and good, asks more prudence than dwells in frail humanity, when there are such things to praise and enjoy, as those now before me ;” said sir Toby, helping himself to some of the fruit and iced wine ; “ Casa Benucci overflows with excellence ; from its inmates to its good cheer ; fairest creatures, and choicest fare ; what would a man have more to make him the reverse of prudent ?”

“ Is not prudence just the requisite quintessential drop that gives the highest flavour to all the rest,—the truest relish to their enjoyment ?” asked the count.

“ Truly, I know not but you sober fellows may have the advantage in the long run over us roysterers ;” said sir Toby ; “ but while we are running, we think wholly of the sport, nothing of its consequences. But what a keen eye to consequence have you shown, brother, in your choice of the people who

have gathered about you, since last I was here. For signor Malvolio,—who is a treasure of consequentiality in himself,—you had him for a steward ere I left ; but there is that lad, Fabian, who carried hither the wine ; he hath a fund of intelligence in his face, that promises well for a helping hand at a joke, or a pleasant device ; and then there is the other lad,—Feste, I think you called him,—with a trick of eye, and a humorous twist of his lip, that speak a world of lurking jest and good fooling.”

“And you shall hear him sing a song presently, brother, that shall make you call him a lark in human shape, so blithe, so airy, so melodious and untiring is his voice ;” said the count.

“With all my heart ; I love a good song as I love good wine ; it sets a man’s blood spinning triumphant ; and fills me his brain with ecstatic fancies. A man is a god while he listens to music, and quaffs grape-juice.”

“Good mistress Maria, bid Feste come hither ;” said the count, to his daughter’s waiting-maid, who had just brought out a veil for her young lady.

“And then there is that little silver moth of a damsel, whom you have chosen for my niece’s gentlewoman ;” continued sir Toby ; “can anything be better devised, than having such a grig of a girl always in sight. Her very look is enough to banish spleen from a household.”

“She is indeed, merry and lightsome as a bird ;” said the count.

“A very titmouse,—a golden-crested wren !” said sir Toby.

“And when heard you from your friend, the chevalier Dorfaux ?” asked the count.

“Odso, I had forgot ! I have a letter here in my pocket from him ;” said sir Toby. “It is dated from Paris ; but in it he talks of leaving immediately, and travelling fast, so as to meet me on my return hither ;

he may, therefore, be expected, nearly as soon as his epistle."

"He was a well-graced, pleasant young man, I shall be glad to see him here again;" said the count.

He had hardly given utterance to the words, ere a servant announced the arrival of the chevalier himself.

"We will all go into the house and give him welcome;" said count Benucci.

As Cynthio and Olivia, with Astrella, followed their father and uncle from the garden, the youth said to his sister:—"I had almost forgotten there was such a being in the world. It seems like a dream, when he paid us a visit before. Do you remember that time? Do you remember the evening we crossed the brook, Olivia? Did you remember this French gentleman, Astrella?"

A visible confusion passed over her face; for she thought of the disparaging words the chevalier had whispered about him who now asked her the question.

"I see you do;" he said.

He fell into a deep reverie; from which he was awakened by their reaching the house. He heard the chevalier paying eager greeting to all, and receiving the welcome of the count and sir Toby in return. He looked up to see the young Frenchman bowing upon Astrella's hand, and pouring forth a profusion of compliments upon the heightened charms that time had wrought in both her and Olivia. He advanced mechanically, to offer the usual words of salutation to the newly-arrived guest; when the chevalier, turning, saw him, and exclaimed:—"Ah, 'the little husband!' How are you, mon cher?"

At this instant, Cynthio caught sight of the group they presented, in one of the tall mirrors near. He saw the handsome face and figure of the Frenchman; tall, elegant, full of that self-possession and polished air, which knowledge of the world confers. He saw beside it, his own slight, boyish frame, and girlish

countenance ; striking him as something singularly inconsiderable, ignoble, and effeminate. He saw, or fancied he saw, a look of embarrassment cross Astrella's face, as the chevalier, in his cool, easy, French style, uttered the words " little husband."

For the first time in his life, Cynthio found himself wishing that they had never been applied to him in connection with Astrella.

He was frightened at the rush of emotion that came upon his heart, as it followed the thoughts that suggested themselves in rapid succession upon this idea. To deal with them freely, and unobserved ; to question their true source ; to endeavour at the comprehension of his own feelings, so strange, so new ; he left the saloon, and wandered forth alone into the garden-grounds.

It was just such an evening as the one he had often heard described, when Astrella was first brought home, an orphan babe, to his father's house.

" She has never regarded me in any other light than as a brother, I fancied I thought of her but as a sister, notwithstanding the idle titles they gave us ;" he passionately mused ; but what I have learned of my feelings within this last hour, tells me, it is as no sister that I love her. When I think of Olivia it is with a calm joy, an assured content, a pure, undisturbed, unanxious happiness ; ah, how all unlike the tumultuous rapture, the transport, the intoxicating flood of delight that agitated my heart, when I looked upon Astrella this night, and asked myself for the first time, what was the affection I felt for her. But is hers for me of the same nature ? Does not she rather behold in me but the friend, the companion, the playfellow of her childhood,—the mere boy brother ? Her every easy look, her every confiding word, the very warmth and unrestraint of her manner, tell me but too plainly that what she feels for me is not love,—not the love mine is for her. She is too demonstrative, too affectionate, in her innocent unreserve towards me, too

frankly tender, too open and lavish in her endearments, to give me hope that any of the passion which now burns at my heart, has found its way to hers. And shall I not hazard even those marks of her gentle affection, if I let her see the new kind of love that has taken the place of mine own old attachment towards her? Will she not shrink from any but the fraternal tokens of regard that have hitherto been mine? How will she bear to think of me as a lover,—me, a brother, a boy, as she has always considered me? And what am I better? A poor paltry boy, with a creamy face, a stripling form. I saw it—I saw it—against his, so tall, so manly. At this very moment, am I not shedding hot, childish tears, at mine own poverty of spirit, that yields to so base, so unworthy a feeling as envy? Yes, I envy him, I am jealous, jealous. Envious if he appear comely and brave in her eyes, while I seem but as a boy. Jealous, if she find in him a lover, when in me she can see but a brother. Oh *Astell*! *Astell*!”

The poor young fellow strove to contend with his emotion; but it would have way. He wept for some time in bitter, burning, vehemence. Then he raised his head from between his clasped hands, and said:—

“But this is not the way to render myself worthy of her,—giving way to these unmanly tears—to this weak lamentation—less than all, to this mean envy and jealousy. Never after this night will I so degrade mine own nature; which shall be deserving of her love, though it may never hope to win it. If but a boy, a poor silly youth, in appearance, let me be a man in spirit, in heart. My first task shall be to teach myself control: that I may not shock her by a premature betrayal of any other feeling than the affectionate brotherly love to which she has been accustomed; that I may patiently seek to convert the regard she has for me into the preference I would have it; and that I may gain assurance no such preference is already growing in her heart for another. But if

she should learn to love another ? Astrella,—my Astrella ! Can I bear to yield her ? She, whom I have never thought of apart from myself,—whom I love far beyond myself,—whom I have worshipped from infancy ? Ay, if I do worship her,—if I do indeed love her beyond myself, her happiness should be dearer to me than my own. Well then, once let me find that she cannot give me her love,—that she can only find her happiness in another,—and I will resolve to secure her peace at all risks. Whatever befall, she shall see none of this boyish weakness. If her little husband cannot gain her affections, he will at least preserve her esteem.”

At breakfast next morning, Cynthio began his self-imposed task of keeping strict guard on his every look and word. His sister Olivia, noting in him the heavy eye, and white contracted lip, that betokened the anxious vigils of the past night, asked him of his health. A headache, which he might truly avow having had, formed sufficient plea. Declaring that he now felt quite well, he exerted himself to chat with his father, and the chevalier ; and joined heartily in a plan the former was setting on foot for an excursion to a neighbouring spot, celebrated for its fine view. The gay manner in which he rattled on, passed completely with all the rest ; but Olivia thought she could perceive that her young brother's spirits were forced.

It was agreed to make the excursion a riding-party. Horses were saddled, and brought round ; the young people, with the count, preparing to set forth with all the gleeful anticipation that a suddenly-proposed holiday of the kind is apt to inspire. Their father ever entered so warmly into their pleasures, so entirely making himself one of themselves, that his presence,—instead of acting as a restraint,—was always felt to be the crowning satisfaction, without which theirs was incomplete.

The count placed his daughter on horse-back himself ; and Cynthio was preparing, as usual, to offer

his assistance to Astrella in mounting, when the chevalier advanced, in his peremptory style of officious deference, and lifted her into the saddle. She cast a look at Cynthio, saying :—" I am accustomed to have you for my groom, am I not ? I cannot fancy any one else. The chevalier will excuse me. But Cynthio spoils me, with his indulgence of all my whims."

The youthful face was turned towards her, glowing with happiness, at her affectionate words and manner.

" The little husband is doubtless only too proud and happy to be your equerry. Who would not ?" said Dorfaux. " But I should have thought the little husband's stature would have scarcely fitted him for the office. It demands a tall, stout fellow. Young signor Cynthio's proportions are more page-like, than beseem a ' palfrenier.' "

" There is more knack, than strength, required, I fancy, in assisting a lady to mount her horse ;" said Olivia ; " Cynthio's skill and kind care more than supply whatever defect of height may be his."

" So long as my services find acceptance with my—— with Astrella, I shall aspire to be her master of horse, as well as her faithful page ;" said Cynthio.

" As gallant a little husband, as ever, I declare ! But perchance, the little husband does not choose to trust any one with the nice task of placing his wife in her saddle. He was wont, I remember, to think no one could take such good care of her as himself ;" said the chevalier, with that peculiar gay sneer, which is meant to pass for playful jesting, but which often covers deepest malice.

" Cynthio is too modest to vaunt his loving care ;" said Astrella ; " but I can avouch it for him ; none could be more indulgent to my every wish, more tender of my every caprice. The care he has for his own sister, does not surpass that he takes of his Astrella. When little more than an infant, I have heard my dear lady—the countess say, his devotion for the baby-stranger

was remarkable, and often made them all smile with its pretty shows of affection. Once, when quite a little fellow still, it was demonstrated, even at the risk of his existence; for it took him into my room to share life or death with me, at a time that I lay sick of a raging fever. Well may he think no one can be so devoted to Astrella as her kindest Cynthio." The young girl spoke and looked with enthusiasm.

Her boy-lover, as he looked at her radiant countenance, and heard her fervent words, felt his heart elated into something like hope; but she had scarcely ceased, ere he thought;—"Would she speak with this ingenuous warmth, did she love me otherwise than as a sister? Would she allude to my affection for her thus frankly, had she the slightest suspicion it were any other than a brother's? Ah, no! Surely no."

"The little husband is honoured, indeed, by so glowing an eulogium on his devotion, from the lips of his spouse;" said the chevalier.

"So, you have caught up the foolish titles we allow ourselves to use for these two young ones, have you, chevalier?" said the count. "Cynthio is growing almost too big for such a baby name, and as for Astrella, she's now so tall a girl, we shall have her a young woman in no time. I forget how years slip by! Why, it seems but the other day, that she was brought, a little starry-eyed thing of a few months old, into our house."

The count sighed; the sigh that generally follows looking back into the past.

The chevalier Dorfaux asked some question that led the count on to give the whole history of Astrella's first appearance among them.

"No relation to the family—no friends—no name—a way-side 'trouvaille'—a dependant on the count's charity;" were the thoughts that passed through the chevalier Dorfaux's mind, as the tale concluded.

All the while the count had been speaking, Astrella's horse had shown symptoms of uneasiness. It

was a skittish, spirited creature ; and Cynthio had always objected to Astrella's trusting herself on its back ; but she was a good horsewoman and a fearless rider, and she would hear nothing in disparagement of Bayardo's good qualities. But now, the heat, and the gnats, together, tormented Bayardo beyond his patience. He pranced, and curvetted about, and at length began rearing. Cynthio rode close in upon the snorting beast, seized the bridle, and effectually checked him.

“ Well done, ‘ *petit palfrenier!*’ Bravissimo, master of the horse !” exclaimed the chevalier, approaching, when the steed was quieted ; for, during the worst, he had kept at the respectful distance usually observed by French horsemen in emergencies of the kind. They rode on for some time after this, quietly enough. But at a turn of the road Bayardo suddenly darted away at full gallop.

The chevalier was mounted on a noble animal, one of the finest in the count's stud. It instantly set off after Astrella's runaway horse.

“ Stop, stop, chevalier ! Your pursuit will but endanger her !” shouted the count. “ The sound of your horse's feet will only urge hers on the faster !” But it was in vain. The Frenchman's skill sufficed not to rein in a horse bent upon a chase.

“ He does not know, father ; he thinks to rescue her !” said Olivia ; (Cynthio could not speak.) “ All we have to hope is that he may succeed. Heaven grant, his rashness may answer better than our caution.”

And the three went on as quietly as their impatient fears would let them.

Meantime, the two runaway horses had shot far out of sight. Bayardo dashed on at full speed. On, on, they went. The breathless rapidity of the pace she was going, the terror, the imminence of the peril, at length caused Astrella to swoon. Then she was thrown. But she fortunately alighted on a turf-bank, which broke the violence of the fall.

The chevalier's horse had stopped of his own accord, not far from the spot. The suddenness of the check had like to have pitched the rider over, head foremost. But he recovered himself, dismounted, and went toward Astrella who still lay senseless.

She revived, to find the chevalier Dorfaux bending over her, and whispering softest entreaties and enquiries.

"You have saved my life, sir ;" she said. "How can I be sufficiently grateful for your intrepidity, your presence of mind. I owe you my life."

The Frenchman made no denial. "You can more than reward any help I may have been so fortunate as to afford, sweet Astrella. It is my life that is in your hands. Dispose of it ; redeem it from misery, if you think that I have saved yours. Make it henceforth a happy one, by telling me I may win your love."

Astellla did not reply ; she looked round, as if for her accustomed friends.

"You do not answer me, lovely Astrella ; look upon me,—say you do not hate me,—say,——"

"Hate you ! How can I hate one who has been so generously good to me ?—one who has just risked his life to save mine ?" said the young girl ingenuously.

"Say then that you will take pity on me, that you will love me, that you will let me prove my love for you ;" and the Frenchman pressed her in his arms.

Astellla withdrew from his embrace, saying ;—
"But where are Cynthio and Olivia ? Where is the count ?"

"You think more of the little husband than of your unhappy lover. Can you see my misery, and not yield me one word of comfort ? Cruel Astrella !"

"Indeed I would not be cruel—ungrateful ; what would you have me say ?" she replied.

"Say that you will give me your love ; that you accept mine ;" said Dorfaux.

“ I have never thought of love ;” the young girl answered.

“ Save for your little husband ;” said the chevalier.

“ Ay, for Cynthio, and for Olivia ; they have been like brother and sister to me, as the count has been a father. I could not love them all more dearly, were they indeed such relations. But the love I bear them, is not the love——” she hesitated.

“ Not the love I mean,—not the love I desire from you ;” continued the chevalier eagerly. “ No, charming Astrella, the love I would have of you is a supreme love, a love paramount to every other, a love capable of all generosity, of all kindness and favor ; one that will accept love in return,—mutual love, blissful love, the love of lovers.”

Astellla sighed ; looked down ; then gazed about her once more, in search of her own true friends.

“ Mine is a passion that has grown to full force at once ;” pursued the chevalier ; “ though I loved you before,—when quite a young girl, your early promise won my heart unconsciously, and prepared it for the passion which has now taken possession of me wholly. Do not doom it to despair ; do not, in the hour, when you think you owe me a life, condemn mine to misery. Be generous, say you will not refuse the vows of your lover.”

Dorfaux would have attempted to seal them upon her lips ; but Astrella timidly shrank back, and he went on :—“ Or if you cannot now resolve to accept them, promise me you will think of it,—that you will take time to reflect. But let me owe all to your own free choice ; consult only your own heart ; do not refer my fate to any one else’s judgment. To you—to you alone, I leave the decision of my future happiness.”

“ I will think,—I will consider ; I will question myself ;” she said, trembling. “ If I know anything of my own heart it is neither ungenerous nor ungrate-

ful. Now let us seek the count, Cynthio, and Olivia ; they will be very uneasy."

She had hardly finished speaking, ere they all three came in sight.

"She is safe, then ! How can we thank you enough, chevalier, for your care of our dear one ?" said the count, grasping the chevalier's hand, while Olivia and Cynthio threw themselves off their horses, and hastened to Astrella.

"She shall ride home on my pony, she shall not mount the vicious beast again !" exclaimed Cynthio ; "old Nerino is quiet as a cardinal's pad-nag."

This incident made the chevalier a greater general favorite at Casa Benucci than ever. The service he was supposed to have rendered Astrella, gave him every opportunity of prosecuting his schemes upon her. He had marked her out for his prey from the moment he heard she was an orphan, with no kindred claim upon the family in which he found her. He dedicated the majority of his time to her, at the count's mansion ; and the remainder to sir Toby, at his bachelor lodgings, where primero, and dice, were the amusements, which gave him free scope for beguiling and fleecing the knight.

Warily, stealthily, he proceeded, with all the craft and cunning of a practised sharper. It is precisely upon such unworldly people as the count, and the rest of the inmates at Casa Benucci, that such a man's art is likely to impose. They are too good, too guileless, themselves, to detect anything amiss under the specious exterior of such a man as Dorfaux. Once, indeed, Feste, the clown, whispered in the ear of Maria, a scoff at his title of chevalier ; declaring that for his own part, he believed it was through industrial qualifications alone, that Dorfaux could lay claim to it.

" 'Industrial !' He's said to be a man of birth and honor ;" answered Maria ; "such people are above being industrious, thou know'st. Their spirit won't

let 'em earn their own bread. They'd rather beg it ; or eat it out of other people's industry."

"You don't take me, good mistress Mary ;" he replied. "Be it known unto you, that there is a certain order of chivalry in his country, that live by their brains, and such odd quirks of contrivance as the brain deviseth ; knights of the fertile invention, that by the aid of quick wits, and it may be, of nimble fingers, do manage to pick up a living out of the follies and foibles of their fellow-men ; and these knights, being notable workmen, ever-busy in operation, passing active in practising their art, have been distinguished by the appellation—'chevaliers of the order of industry.' Their badge is a swan ; which beareth a fair white body on the surface, and plies black legs beneath."

"Pick-pockets, pick-purses, highwaymen, and thieves, are the brothers of such an order of chivalry as thou describest ; and none other than god Mercury their Grand-master ;" answered she.

"Thou chooseth ill-favored names, mistress Mary ;" replied the clown. "But the gentry I mean, might come under the category of polite pick-pockets,—robbers on the high-way of saloons and drawing-rooms."

"And such a one thou thinkest this chevalier Dorfaux ?" said she.

"Think what I may, I say nothing. 'Tis seldom safe to say half we think ; and nothing is less than half ;" he concluded, turning on his heel.

And so, this shrewd surmise of Feste's passed off but as one of the fool's jests.

Meantime, the chevalier's insinuating address, elegant person, and persevering court were winning their way with Astrella. Above all, the claim she conceived him to have upon her gratitude, in saving her life, inclined her to return his ardently-expressed passion. She began to love him as he could wish, warmly, devotedly. Unpractised in the ways of the world, unsuspecting, unguarded, she had followed his in-

sidious wish of keeping the avowal of his feelings a secret. It accorded best with her own timidity and indecision on being first asked whether she could love in return ; and gradually,—almost insensibly, the matter had gone on thus, unacknowledged to her friends. On a certain morning, she sat at one of the windows in the room where the family usually passed the forenoon, occupied with a drawing, which she was making of a group of flowers, for the count's approaching birthday. The chevalier was hovering near the table, under the pretence of making a sketch of the view of the grounds from the window.

Cynthio held a book in his hand, and sat reading, or appearing to read, not far from them, in the next window-seat. Olivia was turning over the leaves of some lute-music, and trying a piece or two, that she intended to sing with her brother and Astrella on the coming occasion.

Under cover of the low-struck chords, and half-hummed singing, the chevalier was pursuing a murmured conversation with Astrella, as she bent over her drawing.

Presently, Olivia approached the table, to see the progress made in the flower-group. “ ’Tis finished ! Surely there can be no more touches required ! ” said Olivia. “ ’Tis lovely ! ’tis perfect ! That rose looks as if it breathed perfume. ”

“ The ‘ rose d’amour ! ’ The most exquisite rose that blooms ; ” said the chevalier.

“ Is that the name of the rose ? ” said Olivia. “ ’Tis fitting that it should be among the flowers Astrella presents to my father on his birthday. ”

And she moved away ; presently leaving the room, with the intention of joining the count in the garden.

“ He will have the enduring blossoms,—those fixed in imperishable beauty by the fair artist's fingers ; but who shall have the originals ? ” said Dorfaux, pointing to the group of flowers in the glass before her.

“They will be good for nothing but to be thrown away ; they will have faded ;” said Astrella.

“Thrown away ! Their having served you for a model ought surely to exempt them from such a fate. Let me keep them. Give me at least the rose ;” said the chevalier.

Cynthio heard no answer ; but as he raised his eyes from the page before him, he saw the bright blush that accompanied her silent denial.

“I will get you fresher flowers by-and-by, from the garden ;” she said, after a moment.

“The rose,—the rose, is the one I would have ;” he urged.

Yet another moment she hesitated ; then she raised her hand, as if about to draw it from among the others ; but in the act, her eyes met those of Cynthio.

“The chevalier Dorfaux shows less taste than usual, Cynthio ;” she said, attempting to cover her conscious confusion, by a gay manner ; “he would fain persuade me that these half-withered flowers are better than fresh ones.”

“They have acquired a value from having formed a study for my father’s gift ;” said Cynthio, anxious to relieve her embarrassment. “Come, you shall distribute them ; give me one.”

“And welcome ;” she said, in her frank cordial manner ; “choose which it shall be.”

“Not the rose ! I have claimed that !” said the chevalier.

“I will be contented with this little star-flower ;” Cynthio said ; “I know not its name, but its simple, innocent beauty is all I could wish. Is it a jessamine ?”

“That ! What an ignorant botanist you are, Cynthio mio ;” said Astrella ; “that is a humble little hedge-side blossom,—a weed. I think they call it ‘stellaria ;’ Olivia and I met with it in one of our walks, thought it pretty, and brought home a root of it to set in our garden. It was Olivia who would have

me put it in the group for the count's birthday drawing ; she said the little starry thing would remind him of his *Astrella*. Choose some other ; that's a poor weed. 'Tis not worth your having."

"Nay, if you give me any, give me the *stellaria* ;" said Cynthio.

"If you've taken a fancy to it, you shall have it ;" she said, drawing the stem of the delicate white blossom out of the water ; "let me put it in the button-hole of your vest, for you ; since you pay the meek little wretch the honor of choosing it, its glory shall be proclaimed to the world."

As she stuck the flower in his bosom with the playful freedom of a child ; as her hands lightly hovered about him, and her gentle head with its fragrant hair bent close before him, Cynthio had need of all his resolved control, to forbear clasping her to his heart, and imploring her to show less of such loving ease, torturing in its very sweetness and familiarity. The fondling intimacy of her manner, the innocent unconstraint of her approach, the confiding tenderness of her attitude,—transporting as they were in themselves to him,—how gladly would he have exchanged them for the blushing consciousness, with which, a few moments after, she turned to comply with the chevalier's re-urged request that she would confer upon him the other flower,—the one he had chosen,—the rose d'amour.

It was no longer to be refused ; denial would now have betrayed that more meaning was attached to the gift, than the mere bestowal of a flower asked in sportive gallantry. But the glowing cheek, the down-cast eye, the trembling hand, with which it was presented, the eager triumph with which it was received, spoke plainly the deeper pledge it was felt to convey.

"She loves him ! I can no longer doubt ; she loves him !" was the thought that smote upon Cynthio's heart, as the chevalier led *Astrella* away, beseeching her to indulge him with a walk through the

grounds to the flower-garden ; under pretext of comparing the rose he had preferred, with those she had offered to gather for him. "She loves him ! she loves him ! Oh, *Astrella ! my own Astrella !*"

He wrung his hands ; he clasped them together, and flung them wildly over his head. But as the boy-lover felt the anguish of his heart swelling up to his throat, and struggling to have vent, he made a strong effort, forced back the emotion, suppressed it, mastered it. His chest heaved, his nostril quivered, his lip trembled, in the vehemence of this wrestle with his feelings ; but not a sound, not a sob escaped him. He had conquered ; but the victory left him as if overpowered, vanquished. His arms fell heavily beside him, and his head drooped on his breast.

His eyes fell upon the stellaria. Its sight had well-nigh wrung from him those tears which he had so lately repressed ; but again he bade them back, and compelled his heart to be firm. It was one of those moments when the soul attains the growth of years in a single point of time. *Cynthio's* spirit had learned its own powers of fortitude, of endurance, and resistance ; its force of will, its energy of purpose, its strength in self-contest ; he had acquired the maturity of feeling wrought by such a struggle ; and however boyish his person might remain, he had acquired a sense of internal mastery which rendered him thenceforth a man.

Olivia, when she had quitted the room, with the intention of seeking her father in the garden, knew at once the spot where she should most likely find him. It was a bowery seat, deep-shaded and cool, even in the height of noon-day ; it was formed in the heart of an old box-tree, so close, so thick of leaves, as to form an impervious wall of green. There was space enough for two or three people to ensconce themselves within, very conveniently ; and its screened snugness made it a favorite resort of the count's, who fre-

quently brought his book there, and loitered away hour after hour in pleasant leisure. His daughter took a volume with her, that she might not disturb him ; for they both liked to sit thus together, severally occupied, but in each other's society. There is something peculiarly delightful, to two people fully and confidently loving each other, in this silent communion, this mute participation, of reading or writing alone together ; it is solitude without loneliness, company without exertion. No need to speak ; the sense of the beloved presence is there in its all-sufficing charm.

When Olivia now joined the count, in the box-tree bower, she merely peeped in, saw he was there, and crept quietly to a seat by his side ; while he, looking up, welcomed her with a smiling holding out of his hand, and went on reading. The father and daughter sat thus for some time ; the stillness of the spot and of their employment, harmonising with the quiet understanding between them, and producing that exquisite contentment, that serene condition of being, which is almost more perfect than joy. It is happiness without any exciting element. It is consummate peace of heart and soul.

Presently, upon the silence, there came a sound of low-murmured conversation ; or rather of one voice, breathing in soft pleading tones, which were only now and then responded to by a still softer, sweeter voice, faltering forth a few words.

The speakers were in a green alley, carpeted with turf, and canopied by over-arching shrubs and trees, —a covert walk that led immediately at the back of the box-tree bower,—and as they came nearer, what they said, could be distinguished. There was something equivocal in the import of the pleading speeches that seemed to strike upon the count's ear. He listened ; changed colour ; then started up, exclaiming :—“ He would not dare be guilty of such baseness, such perfidy ! He dare not mean such villainy !”

Olivia rose also, eagerly about to question her father, but he laid his hand on her arm with an imperative gesture.

Again he listened, his teeth hard set, his hands clenched. Then he stepped forward, made himself a way through the branches of the box-tree, and stood in the green alley, confronting Dorfaux and Astrella.

For a moment the count gazed earnestly upon the latter,—without anger,—but keenly, penetratingly, as if he would read her heart. Then he turned to the Frenchman, and said, with a stern calmness :—“ You love this young creature ? You love her truly,—honorably ? Your intentions are honorable ? I cannot, will not doubt it.”

“ I am a younger brother, my lord, with but a younger brother’s portion to support a wife ; how can I hope to marry,—how dare I offer marriage,—” stammered the chevalier.

“ Yet you dared to offer love, sir ;” said the count. “ You dared seek to entangle the affections of an artless, innocent girl. But if, as I fear, they are indeed won,” he added, again glancing at the trembling Astrella, “ your plea of scanty fortune shall be no bar. She is my adopted daughter. As mine own daughter will I treat her. She shall have no less a dower than I destine for Olivia. If your views, therefore, are what, for your own sake I will not doubt them to be——”

“ What can they be but marriage,—marriage with one I love even to the forgetfulness of aught save my rash passion ;” interrupted Dorfaux. “ It urged me to forget the strange appearance my secret suit might bear ; it led me to forget what was due to my Astrella’s protector, her guardian, her more than parent,—her adopted father.”

“ Come hither, my dear child ;” said the count to Astrella. He took her tenderly in his arms, and said :—“ Do you love this gentleman ? Can you accept him for your husband ?”

“ He saved my life,—he loves me ;” whispered

Astrella, as she hid her glowing face upon the count's bosom.

He half sighed ; but he kissed her cheek encouragingly, affectionately. Then he put her hand in Dorfaux's, saying :—" You will understand me, when I tell you, sir, that for the sake of this gentle heart, I accept your own construction of the words I overheard you speak to her. I will believe they meant no other than the declaration of an affection, sincere and honest,—seeking but her welfare, her honor, her happiness. Let your future care, prove that they were your sole object ; when she is your wife, they will be your own. Cherish them ; cherish her. She has known nought but cherishing from those among whom she has dwelt from infancy ; let her find none but kindness from him who will henceforth possess the treasure of her affection,—her husband."

The chevalier replied by a profusion of acknowledgments, and grateful protestation ; appearing penetrated with the count's goodness, and enraptured with his promised bride. Once more, he was all his gay former self. He rattled on with twenty amusing trifles ; he laid himself out to please and entertain. The count's generous, open disposition, was not proof against such an appearance of good-hearted frankness. He believed the young Frenchman to be as inconsequent and thoughtless as he seemed ; and restored him to his full confidence again, thinking him to have been led away by temporary error, and never dreaming that he had been prosecuting a scheme of hardened and premeditated iniquity. They returned, with Olivia, to the house ; the count playfully talking over his projects for settling the young couple in a charming cottage he had on the borders of his estate, so that Astrella should be always near her old friends ; his plans for fitting it up newly to receive the bride ; and his resolve to have a speedy nuptial, and a gay celebration. He was still chatting on, upon this topic, when they entered the sitting-room.

“Cynthio moping here by himself, upon one of the couches, when there is so much lively matter toward !” exclaimed the count. “Rouse thee, boy, for shame ! Thou look’st kalf asleep, I think. But we have news that will wake ye up, I warrant. What think ye of a wedding ?”

“I think Cynthio has one of his bad headaches to-day ;” said his sister gently.

“I ought to have burst into the room, less noisily, if so ;” said the count. “But we have tidings that’ll startle your headache away, my boy. I can hardly believe it myself. To think of such a young creature, —why it seems but yesterday that Toby brought her in ; and that she was dancing and leaping in his arms, with her staring starry eyes reflecting the brightness of the candle.”

“You forget, my lord, that the little husband may not be so delighted to hear that his wife is to be taken from him ;” said the chevalier, laughing. “Who knows but he may be for fighting a duel with me.”

“Pooh ! It’s high time that foolish name should be given up ;” said the count. “It was all very well when they were babies together. Cynthio is a tall lad now ; and boys are apt to be so absurd as to feel ashamed of a title like that. We’ll spare his bashfulness the awkwardness of asking us to cease calling him the ‘little husband.’ Eh, Cynthio ? it shall be so, shall it not ? And you needn’t look disconcerted, or vexed, about such a trifle. Why you bite your lip, and turn as white, as though you were really angry. Come come ;” continued his father ; “we all know you love *Astell* nobly, and truly ; as a good brother should ; she is no less dear to us all, than if she were in truth our own flesh and blood. This very evening, we will all go in a body, and look at the pretty place of which she is soon to be mistress. You know the cottage I mean ? The one I call the little farm ; with the olive-ground and vine-yard, and the peep of the sea from

the upper windows ?” And thus the count chatted on, in the gaiety of his heart.

In the evening, sir Toby joined the count and the young lovers in their walk to the cottage-farm ; Cynthio owning that he was indisposed, and that he would rather remain at home ; and Olivia preferring to stay with her brother.

“ And now, Cynthio mine, you shall not talk, and I will be as quiet as a mouse, so that you shall get rid of your headache before they return ;” said his sister in her gentle voice, as she drew the couch with its back to the light for him, and took a low stool by his side. “ Perhaps you will sleep, and so be better.”

“ I shall not sleep, but I shall be very quiet thus ;” he said, as he took her hand, and laid his cheek in loving thanks upon it. “ How pleasant and cool your hand is, Olivia mine, and how sweetly you minister to my comfort.”

“ Your cheek is hot !” she said ; “ and how burning your forehead ! Your eyes, too, so languid and heavy. You are indeed not well, my Cynthio.”

She put back the light golden locks, and kissed the white brow, and thought how fair and childish her young brother still looked.

“ It is the light. Pull the blinds quite down ; make the room as dark as you can ;” he said. She did so. He lay quite still for a few minutes. Then he said :—“ Now, tell me how it all befell.”

“ You mean the chevalier’s proposal for Astrella. My father and I were sitting reading in the box-tree, when voices approached ; they proved to be Dorfaux’s and Astrella’s. Something in what he overheard, seemed to offend my father extremely. He arose, as if indignant, and went straight to where they were. I followed, and saw my father standing, drawn up to his full height, with his arms folded, and speaking in the lofty tone which you know he can assume when he is displeased. Dorfaux looked as I have never seen him look before,—thoroughly abashed and confound-

ed. Poor Astrella seemed scarce able to stand. I went to her, and made her lean upon my arm."

Cynthio moved a little, and kissed the gentle hand that lay beneath his cheek.

"Nevertheless, I could not help feeling very angry with her;" continued Olivia. "That she should have borne what followed! That she should have witnessed it, and yet consent! When she must have gathered from my father's words, as I did, that—No, a woman fails in what is due to the delicacy and dignity of her sex, who can accept a man for her husband, who has once tried to obtain her on other terms! I cannot understand it of Astrella, so good, so pure-hearted! But, I suppose it is to be accounted for by that which reconciles all that is strange, and inconsistent, irrational and unaccountable, in a girl's conduct. It must be, that she's in love, as it's called."

A sharp quiver, that he could not restrain, shot through all Cynthio's frame.

"You are suffering; my talking disturbs you, dear brother?" she said.

"No, no; 'tis nothing. You wonder that she——"

"That Astrella should fall in love?" Olivia resumed, finishing the sentence her brother left unfinished; "no, not so much that. She is of a gentle, affectionate nature, and it was likely that some time or other, she should love; but I would have had her choice fall upon one whom we both could have thought worthy of her. We who know her excellence, can hardly feel contented to yield Astrella to such a man as this chevalier—this Dorfaux."

Cynthio writhed; but recovering himself, added in a faint, inward voice:—"You do not like him, Olivia?"

"I never liked him; but I tried to conquer my dislike; and I must try still more to do so, if he is to be Astrella's husband;" she replied; "yet I can hardly bear to think it, even now. It is possibly my preju-

dice,—but he seems to me not the man to deserve such a creature as our *Astrella*. How she, by possibility, could come to love him, is what I cannot comprehend. Methinks it shows her less nice in judgment, less exact in taste, than I believed her.”

“ You must not blame her,—do not let her suffer abatement in your esteem, sister ;” said *Cynthio* ;—“ that would be worse than all. Still think the best of her, however unhappily she may have bestowed her liking ; nay, she the rather needs unfailing regard from those who have loved her from childhood, if he——”

“ If this man should prove that my instinctive distaste has not done him injustice ;” said *Olivia* ; “ then indeed, will our poor *Astrella* need more than ever our love, our care. All our tenderness will barely suffice to console her, if his should grow less. Unless I grievously mistake, that careless-seeming manner, and shrewd, calculating eye, combine not to make a constant-hearted man—unless it be, constancy to his own interest. It did not escape me, that his sudden change from lukewarmness to eagerness in matrimonial aims, dated from my father’s mention of *Astrella*’s dower.”

“ How ! Her dower ? Could it be other than herself, that he——”

“ My father nobly, and like himself, declared that he regarded *Astrella* as his own daughter, and should bestow, with her, a similar portion to the one he destined for me ;” said *Olivia*, in reply to her brother’s few breathless, indignant words. “ I observed that immediately upon this, *Dorfaux* spoke of marriage. He then spoke of it with promptness, with decision, and has ever since been most earnest, most pressing ; following my dear father’s motion for an early day with all a lover’s eagerness.”

“ If indeed he be the hollow mercenary villain your interpretation of his conduct proclaims him, sister,” said *Cynthio*, raising himself on one arm, with flash-

ing eyes, and an energy almost wild in its startling and vehement eagerness, "she should be saved from such a man! It is not yet too late! She shall be saved! She must be saved!"

"You forget, dear brother;" said Olivia mournfully; "if Astrella love this man, as I fear she does, she will not think it saving; she will think it undoing, destruction, wreck of all her happiness!"

Cynthia sank back with a stifled groan.

"If she love him, she will believe all we could say, mere prejudice, misconstruction, misapprehension; she will think that we do him injustice, and therefore be inclined herself to do him more than justice. With so little real knowledge of his character as we possess, all that we could say, would in fact seem but injurious suspicion; and that would naturally dispose one so generous as Astrella, still more in his favour than before. Nay, I think it is but too plain that her heart is already so deeply engaged, that to prevent her marriage now, would be to ensure her future misery. If so, to express our doubts of him would be not only cruelty, but would produce a greater evil than the one we dread,—which, after all, our anxiety for Astrella may lead us to exaggerate."

Olivia paused; but Cynthia made no reply; and the gentle sister could not hope that he shared the cheerfuller view she had striven to take of Astrella's prospects.

"At all events, we shall have this comfort, brother; we shall have her near to us, thanks to my father's kind provision; and we will pledge ourselves still to watch over Astrella's happiness, will we not, Cynthia mio?"

Cynthia strained the sisterly hand against his heart, for all answer. But inwardly he murmured:—"Her happiness! Yes, her happiness! Be that secured, come what else may!"

Never once did it cross Olivia's thought, that her young brother's own happiness was involved in the

question they had been discussing. He seemed so mere a stripling, such a boy, such a child in face and form, that the idea of a man's passion, a man's fullness and intensity of love taking possession of his soul as it had done, seemed impossible. He had loved Astrella from babyhood, with so entire, so unreserved an affection, that it never for a moment struck her that it could be other than the same kind of love with which she herself loved Astrella. Its very strength was understood ; for was she not conscious of loving both Cynthio and Astrella with as strong, as firm, as devoted an affection ?

The walking party returned. The chevalier all gay rapture, and amiable gallantry. He was full of the cottage-farm, of its beauties, of the paradisaical life he looked forward to leading there, with his young bride. He was full of himself, and of his happy prospects. He spoke in ecstasies of the vineyard, the olive-ground, the myrtle-hedge, and the trellis of roses.

“ But, rich in beauty as those roses are, not even they, can ever hope to equal in my eye this one little single bud ; ” said the chevalier, touching the flower that drooped from his button-hole ; “ it is faded, alas, but I still wear it as a trophy of my triumph—’tis the token of my conquest—my victory—the pledge of my having won this coy little heart. Not for the universe, would I have suffered my rose d’amour to stray from this faithful breast, where the lady of my destiny vouchsafed to let it rest. ”

The chevalier gallantly raised Astrella's hand to his lips, as he concluded ; then glanced at Cynthio's vest, adding with his gay sneer :—“ I perceive the little star-flower has not been thought worthy of equal cherishing. I shall be ready, as her devoted champion, to do battle with any one capable of slighting my mistress's favors. The stellaria has not kept its place with the same constancy as the rose d’amour ; but my lady is too gentle to resent the throwing away of her one flower-gift, though I trust she is sensible of the

homage paid her in the faithful preservation of the other."

Astrella little thought that the white star-blossom had been tenderly withdrawn from its conspicuous position outside the vest, to be enshrined within ; and that at this very moment, it was lying close against the young beating heart of him who sat there so mutely, offering no word in answer to the Frenchman's light talk ; but she said in her own sweet manner, at once unaffected and affectionately trustful : — "Cynthio knows he can have as many flower-gifts as he pleases, from his Astrella ; why should he keep a withered one ? No need of love-tokens at all, between him and me ; we have known each other's hearts from childhood ; he is as sure of mine, as I am of his. In a love such as ours, what need of flowers, and tokens ?"

"Yet you gave me one,"—said the chevalier, glancing at the rose d'amour.

"Ah, *you!*" said Astrella, ingenuously ; then blushed at her own emphasis, which involved so much.

The tone, the look, stabbed sharp to the heart of Cynthio ; but he was growing skilled in concealing his emotions, even if the lovers had not been too much engrossed with each other, to have leisure for observing him.

The whole order of celebration of the approaching wedding was confided by the count to his steward, Malvolio ; that grave functionary being peculiarly fitted for the appointment and careful supervision of such an occurrence. There was to be a sumptuous entertainment, to which all the count's friends were invited. The nuptial ceremony was to be performed by a priest, who filled the office of chaplain in the count's household ; and was to take place in the chantry or private chapel attached to the mansion.

All was active preparation and bustle in Casa Benucci. Maria flitted to and fro with even more than her usual vivacity, in breathless consultation upon

the all-important questions of skirts, robings, and tires of every description ; now suggesting some valuable hint in the style of a trimming, or inestimable suggestion in the set of a feather ; now insisting upon the indispensable necessity of trying on a new dress for the twentieth time, now whisking a bewitching hat on to her young mistress's head that they might judge its effect, or sporting an irresistible mantle on her own shoulders, to show it off to the least advantage first, she said ; now spreading silks, and admiring velvets ; and anon holding up jewels to the light, dangling ear-drops against her own laughing cheek, contrasting them with her own bright saucy eyes, twisting chains round her fingers, coiling and uncoiling strings of pearl, and playing a thousand mad-cap tricks of pretended busying with the bridal finery.

Feste was on the alert with new songs and plenty of ready jests for the coming occasion ; and Fabian undertook to marshal the rustic sports, and out-of-door pastimes, that were to be arranged for the count's tenantry in the grounds.

Sir Toby proffered his services to assist the pantler and butler, in the selection of rarest dishes and choicest wines ; that all due honor might be done to the festive part of the celebration ; while the count looked on, with his usual quiet enjoyment of the gaiety and activity that were going forward.

Amidst the general pre-occupation, Cynthio's misery passed unnoticed. His father observed that the lad looked pale and thin, but thought him out of health. His sister perceived his feverish hand, his wan complexion, and his contracted lip, together with a general air of lassitude, and abstraction ; but she also attributed these symptoms to indisposition of body, partly caused by his anxiety respecting the character of the man who was to become the husband of their Astrella.

As the day approached, these outward evidences of his secret sufferings were with more and more diffi-

culty suppressed ; but Cynthio's fortitude and power of self-control grew in proportion with the increasing demand upon his courage ; he resolved that nothing now should force from him a betrayal of those feelings, the knowledge of which could only serve to mar the happiness of Astrella. He compelled himself to take comfort from seeing her look happy ; he strove to repress all thoughts that bade him repine at not himself forming the cause of that happiness ; he schooled his heart to satisfy itself with the one consolatory fact, that hers, at least, had its wish. When he was most dejected, he forced himself to look upon her sweet countenance, so expressive of innocent hope, and joy, and trust ; when he was most sunk in bitterness and sadness of regret, he sought to soothe them with the aspect of modest gladness, serenity, and fullness of content that dwelt in Astrella's air.

“ If she be happy, have I not a thousand times told my heart, that shall suffice ? And shall I lie to my own heart,—to my own soul ? ” He had so bravely and steadfastly kept this truth and singleness of purpose present to his spirit, that it sustained him to the end, in his resolve. No one—Astrella least of all—had a suspicion of how it was with him. It enabled him, on the day itself of the espousals, to bear his part in the festivities, with such self-possession, that he seemed to share the general interest and animation. His spirits might have seemed forced, his cheerfulness overstrained, had there been leisure for observation ; but all attention was, of course, concentrated on the chief actors of the scene,—the bride and bridegroom.

The ceremony in the chantry was performed ; the banquet in the grand saloon was concluded ; the sports in the grounds had been protracted to a late hour, and the dancing had continued in the saloon ; when the count and his family assembled in one of the small withdrawing-rooms, to bid the young couple farewell ; it having been agreed that they should at once occupy their new home,—the cottage-farm.

The count was occupied in delivering to the chevalier Dorfaux the title-deeds of the small estate he had presented to his adopted daughter, together with a casket containing her marriage-portion ; Olivia was interchanging loving assurances of constancy in their mutual sisterly affection with the new-made young wife ; sir Toby was playfully bantering her on her late-vowed duties of obedience, and honoring submission ; Maria was fluttering about, adjusting and readjusting the bride's garments ; now arranging the folds of the veil, now giving an extra twitch to the base of the skirt, now sticking an additional pin into the bodice, now admiring from a distance, now darting close up, to give still some crowning grace, some final touch of tire-woman's art.

A little apart stood Cynthio ; striving to conceal the trembling of his heart, by as marble an exterior as he could command. The restless activity, the perpetual movement, the hurried, continuous talk, with which, through the day, he had contrived to cover his agitation, could now no longer serve ; and he was compelled to the still more difficult task of remaining quiet, yet preserving hidden the tumults within.

In endeavouring to appear calm, his attitude became fixed ; in the effort to seem composed, his features became rigid. As he stood there, with his white, set face, and his slight motionless form, he seemed rather some Greek statue of boyhood, than a warm, living youth.

The count turned to where his adopted daughter stood, spoke some fervent loving words to her, embraced her tenderly, and paternally, and then was about to surrender her to the chevalier ; but Olivia took her from her father's arms, saying :—" Astrella, dear sister, remember you have two homes now ! Although you have a home of your own henceforth, yet forget not that you have, beside, the home of your childhood, where your old friends will miss you, if you do not often accord them your presence."

“ Dear Olivia—my more than sister,—revered father,—kind uncle,—beloved brother,—” faltered Astrella, as she gave her hand to each in turn, “ you know my heart, dear friends, you know it is not ungrateful, though unable to express its recognition of all your loving care.”

Sir Toby had hugged her against his broad burly chest, with something that sounded very like a sob trying to smother itself up in a chuckling laugh ; but not succeeding altogether to his mind in his effort at mirth, he had playfully pushed her away, declaring that she should not choke up his throat, and prevent his draining the dozen bumpers he meant to quaff to the health of the bride and bridegroom after they were gone.

Astrella turned from the good-humoured knight to Cynthio, who stood next to him.

“ Cynthio, dearest friend, kindest brother,—” she said, “ forgive me if I have ever encroached on your unwearied tolerance of all my whims of babyhood, childhood, and girlhood. Often and often I have felt your generosity, when I have only appeared to take advantage of it. Pardon your old playmate’s caprices, and think only of your own indulgence towards herself.”

Cynthio, in a blissful dream of one moment, held her in his arms, where she had thrown herself with all the frank freedom of her innocent, loving heart. He held her in his arms,—for the first time since he had learned how he loved her ; he held her in his arms, close against his bosom, against the bosom that throbbed with so passionate, though so boyish, an ardour. He held her in his arms, with the desperate intensity of joy that concentrates into one transient instant the imagined bliss of years. Vague and dreamlike, yet profoundly conscious, were his sensations, during that single point of time. But he could utter no articulate sound, save a murmured echo of her own last word :—“ Herself ! herself !”

From the mingled ecstacy and agony of such a moment, Cynthio was recalled by hearing the chevalier's voice, saying in its tone of paraded gaiety :—" The real husband may now assert his privilege, in preference to the little husband. Come, Astrella ; in pity to the impatience of your grown spouse, limit the leave-taking of your boy spouse ; in deference to the claims of your legitimate lord and master, pray abridge the farewell of your temporary possessor. He will doubtless cede you to the wishes of our friends here, as well as to mine. See, they are all tarrying to escort us as far as the garden-gate."

Cynthio, as still in a trance, saw the chevalier advance to lead Astrella away ; he saw the train of friends, gathering round their receding figures ; he unconsciously clutched at something near him for support, which he fancied was the cushioned back of a couch by which he stood ; he watched the gradual disappearance of the crowd, while the buzz of eager voices floated in his ears, and the mass of moving persons swam before his eyes, until the last had passed through the portal ; then he staggered blindly forwards, as if with some indefinite idea of following, in the hope to gain yet one more parting glimpse of her.

By his side had stood Olivia. She had noted the rigid and deathlike aspect of her young brother as he had remained rooted there, a little apart, before the leave-taking ; she had seen his strange, wild, wrapt look, in the instant of Astrella's embrace ; she had heard his inarticulate murmur ; she had beheld the start with which he had been recalled from his momentary dream ; and she it was, who in happening to lean on the back of the couch, had received the vehement imprint of Cynthio's grasp upon her arm. She read his secret. She saw that the young boy, the stripling lad, cherished a passion strong as ever mastered man. She saw that it was with no brother's affection that Cynthio loved Astrella.

In deep sympathy with him, she would have in-

stantly followed ; but she had her duties of hostess to perform towards those guests, whom her father had quitted, that he might attend Astrella partly on her way. For the present, therefore, Olivia returned to the saloon, joined the dancers, fulfilling her office of presider and entertainer with her usual grace. But hour after hour went by, and yet she saw nothing of Cynthio. She had hoped that he might come back with her father ; or that if not, the count's return would enable her to quit the company, and go in quest of her brother. But still some fresh delay occurred, to detain her where she was ; and still the hours passed on, bringing no relief to her anxiety respecting him. At length, the party broke up ; at length all the duties of leave-taking had been gone through ; at length she was released. As she saw the last lady-guest withdraw, leaning upon her father's arm,—for the count, with the formal politeness of the old nobility, omitted not to pay his fair guests the courtesy of leading them to their coach,—she flew out of the ball-room, to seek Cynthio. As she sped along the corridors, the soft light of the dawn, peering through the windows, told her of the lapse of time. She crept gently to her brother's sleeping-room ; though she scarcely dared to hope that she might find him retired to rest. The chamber was empty ; and the bed bore evidence that it had not been occupied that night.

With one lingering hope still left, Olivia went to her own room, knowing that Cynthio used often to come thither in old childish times, and sit with her in quiet brother-and-sister talk, after guests were gone. But her fears had whispered more truly than her hope. Neither there could she find him. She threw open the casement, and leaned out into the morning air, that its sweet freshness might calm her troubled fancy, which began to busy itself with a thousand undefined alarms for her young brother. All looked so bright yet so peaceful, that she would not allow herself to believe aught of harm could have befallen

him. The trees and grass, sparkling in their dewy coolness beneath the slanting rays of the rising sun—the stillness—the pure beauty of the skies—all seemed to give her assurance of serenity and comfort. She breathed a prayer to Heaven, that they might once more be her brother's, when time should have softened to him this first bitter trial of his young heart. She besought,—if it might so be,—that a sister's love should suffice to console him for the loss of that other love, which was now denied to him.

Meantime, where should she seek him, that she might manifest the tenderness which should prove a refuge and a solace? Suddenly, a thought struck her. She snatched up her veil, and hurried forth into the grounds. There was one spot, where she instinctively felt she should find him. It was a little green knoll of sloping turf, planted thick with trees, which formed a kind of grove; and stood on the highest ground in the park. Its eminence commanded a rather extensive view. It was the one spot in the grounds, from which the cottage-farm was visible,—the roof which now held *Astell*.

The sister's presage had not deceived her. *Olivia*, as she approached the green knoll, saw a figure stretched at length upon the turf, beneath the trees. It was there *Cynthio* had flung himself in his despair; it was there he had given free vent to the misery that had been so long denied expression; it was there he had abandoned himself to the full violence of the anguish until now taught to crush itself within his own heart. Alone with Nature, he had at length suffered his spirit to cry forth its agony. *Olivia* stole close to him, and knelt upon the grass beside him. She raised the head that was buried in the folded arms, and bent her own face against his, until their cheeks touched.

“*Olivia!* My sister!” exclaimed *Cynthio*.

“Ay, dear brother; *Olivia*, come to beseech you will stay no longer here. The night-air has chilled

you—the dews have soaked your hair and linen. Imprudent !”

She laid her hand upon his chest, that had neighboured the damp earth ; she thought of the hollow cough that had lately made itself insidiously heard, and shuddered.

“ Fear not for my health, Olivia mia ;” he said, with an attempt to speak lightly ; “ ’twill do well enough ; a night in the open air, after the fever of a ball-room, should be refreshment not injury. These limbs are but too puny ; I would make them hardy ; I ought to learn to rough it. How shall I ever be a man,—fit to protect my elder sister, fit to champion her as she should be championed ? Why, such a poor stripling as I, am meeter to be her page, than her knight. See, here is brawny muscle, for a woman to trust her cause to !” he said, baring his slender boyish arm, and holding it out, with a scoffing laugh. “ Let me do what I can to put due toughness into such giant thews and sinews.”

“ Night-dews will not strengthen a delicate frame, any more than a show of lightness warrants a sound mind, or a careless exterior can hide a bruised and bleeding heart ;” said Olivia softly.

At the tender earnestness of his sister’s voice, Cynthia’s face fell, from its assumed gaiety, to an expression of deepest sadness.

“ Braving out a malady, whether of mind or body, is not always the surest means of relief ;” she said ; “ it too often but skins the wound over, leaving it to fester within, and breed more fatal evil. Not only relief, but healing,—cure,—come of careful heed ; of soft tendance, gentle nursing, for bodily ills ; of confidence, kindness, and sympathy, for those of the soul.”

Cynthia looked straight into that sweet earnest face, into those soft, loving eyes, that were regarding him with such a look of angel compassion. They seemed to say :—“ Tell your griefs to me ; cease to add to

their load by these shows of heart-case, which are a mockery between you and me ; let your sister share your weight of sorrow, she will help you to bear it ; it will relieve you of half your burthen, while it will be less for her to endure, than this present pretence, this make-believe of tranquillity.”

“ You think I have a pain,—a sorrow, that I conceal from you ;” he faltered.

“ I know it ;” she replied.

He shrank, as though she had touched a hurt.

“ I do not ask you to reveal it, to speak of it ;” she went on, in a low voice, that breathed rather than uttered the words ; “ but let it be understood between us, that I may aid you to endure its pangs ; they will be softened to you, when you need no longer seek feints to deny their existence, or to account for the evidence they will wring from the stoutest human heart, in moments of imperious torture. To know that there is one being who perfectly comprehends and feels your inmost sufferings, who in her sisterly sympathy yearns for your every throb, is moved by your every emotion, and shares in unison your every thought, must help to sustain an overcharged spirit. Let its nature be unavowed—unalluded to, if you will, since it is now irreparable ; but let it no longer be withheld, that there is this woe to be borne together. No reserve shall henceforth mar the brother and sister love between us.”

Cynthia's head drooped upon Olivia's bosom. She gathered him in her arms, gently and lovingly as a young mother might have done ; his fair face, and slender figure, making him look still quite a boy, and much her junior.

“ You guess my secret ?” He at length said, in a broken tone, just venturing to glance at her countenance, while he kept his own averted.

“ I do.”

He looked fixedly for an instant into her face ; then started from his reclining posture on the grass. Olivia

arose also. He walked a few paces from her, as if irresolute ; then returned, and stood beside her, with his hands clasped in each other, and his teeth set firm. And then once more he gazed into his sister's face.

She answered the mute questioning of his look, by a silent, but eloquent gesture. She laid one hand on his arm ; and with the other she pointed to the roof just visible among the olive-trees,—the roof of the cottage-farm.

Cynthio flung his arms about his sister's neck, drew her face towards him ; kissed her on the mouth and eye-lids ; and then led her beside him, with one of her hands grasped in his, towards their own home.

He walked on in silence until they had nearly reached the house ; then he paused abruptly, and said in an under-breath :—" Now I am glad you know this."

He wrung her hand, and was turning away ; but she detained him yet one instant, to whisper :—" You will promise to take some rest ?"

He nodded, and was gone.

In an hour after, Olivia crept to his room, and found him in a profound slumber. He had flung himself upon the bed, dressed as he was ; and exhausted by his previous emotions, as well as by the immediate reaction of feeling caused by his divulged secret, he had fallen into this deep sleep. His sister, blessing Heaven for this first propitious result of the step she had taken, watched that his repose should continue undisturbed. When her father came down to breakfast, as usual asking for his children, she caused herself to be apprised by Maria, that she might join him immediately, and forestal his enquiries respecting Cynthio.

" I feared he would take cold, coming out with us into the night-air, after the heated rooms, and the exercise of dancing ;" said the count. " Boys will be thoughtless of their health. We learn better wisdom as we grow older. I did not once forget your charge to don my velvet cap, Olivia mine, each time

that I left the ball-room for the hall ; while there was that young scapegrace of ours, with his bare head and throat, out in the portico ; although, could he have seen his own face, he would have known he ought not to play such tricks. We must teach him to take more care of himself ; he really looks worn and white, and has a cough that I do not like to hear."

" I mean to nurse him myself, dear father ;" said Olivia. " I shall treat him like an invalid, that I may frighten him a little, and persuade him he is worse than he thinks. I have made him lie late this morning ; and shall take heed that his rest be not broken, until he wake of his own accord."

With ceaseless vigilance, Olivia dedicated herself to the care of her young brother. She guarded his secret from suspicion, she protected him from remark, as from all that could surprise him into self-betrayal, or add poignancy to his regrets. It was touching to see the loving ingenuity with which she devised means of screening him, both from observation, and from fresh cause of pain. It was wondrous in how many ways, the instinct of her sisterly affection taught her to spare his feelings. She seemed gifted with a subtle and intuitive perception of what could most jar them, as of the best method to avert the threatened effect. She was ever near, ever watchful, to prevent, to shelter, or to soothe. Yet, with the delicacy as well as rectitude of such a love as hers, she contrived amidst all this tenderness of her brother's unhappy passion, nowise to foster it. She was gentle to its sufferings, without feeding its weakness ; she was indulgent to its misery, without indulging its malady. She rather checked than encouraged, even while she was most forbearing to its waywardness. She contrived ever to strengthen and to stimulate towards a more healthful state, at the very time she was most lenient to its morbid condition. She sustained and supported, instead of yielding ; she assuaged, but never enfeebled ; she administered re-

lief, but she neither ministered to the disease, nor promoted its growth.

One of the earliest occasions Olivia had for the exercise of her sisterly thought, was when Maria flew into the room where Cynthio and she were sitting together quietly, to announce the first visit of the new-married pair.

“She’s come, she’s come! The bride is here! The bride and her husband! I should say, the bride and bridegroom,—or, properest of all,—the chevalier and madame Dorfaux. How strange the new name sounds! Our young lady Astrella;—madame Dorfaux!”

Knowing how the new name, thus abruptly spoken, must smite upon his heart, Olivia made the most of her own startled hearing of the sound.

“And is it in this wild fashion thou bring’st me the tidings?” she said; “but, in sooth, a wedding is apt to turn the soberest of damsels’ wits; and thou, Gill-o’-the-wisp as thou art, must e’en be forgiven for startling me thus. Come, lead me where she is.”

And Olivia, anxious to afford a moment to her brother for the recovery of his composure, hastily followed the steps of Maria, who had darted out again.

He was prepared, when they all entered; but he laid down the book he had been reading to his sister, for the hand that held it, shook. It was the only thing that might have shown he was agitated. All else was outwardly calm.

“Any commands to sir Toby?” asked the chevalier, towards the conclusion of his visit. “I hope to see him this evening.”

“This evening?” said the count. “Do you expect him at the cottage-farm?”

“No;” carelessly replied the chevalier; “I fancy cottage-charms hath no charms for the worthy knight; he would find it dull. No, he gives a little supper this evening to a few choice spirits, and hath done me the

honor to include me among them. He had the cruelty,—you may think it the grace,—to say that perhaps I might have some scruples in leaving my wife so soon, to spend a jolly bachelor evening out ; but I told him we Frenchmen are not foolishly uxorious—whatever other faults we may have.”

“ And what says Astrella ? ” said the count, drily.

“ Oh, Astrella is too good a wife to deny her husband any pleasure ; ” said Dorfaux.

“ And the pleasure of the bachelor evening, at sir Toby’s, outweighs that of a dull evening at home ? ” said the count.

“ On the contrary, the charms of a domestic tête-à-tête must of course surpass those belonging to every other mode of passing the time ; only, that delight we can enjoy whenever we please,—we, who have the good fortune to be married men ; but, a little supper—a social meeting—an evening with choice spirits,—that is not to be refused, when it offers. Astrella was the first to entreat me to accept sir Toby’s invitation.”

“ The ‘ first ? ’ ” repeated the count.

“ Yes, the very first,—after I had mentioned it to her ; ” answered the chevalier.

“ Humph ; ” said the count, holding his under lip pinched together, and tapping on it with his fore-finger, while he looked thoughtfully on the ground.

“ Speak, Astrella ; ” said her husband ; “ tell the count, it was your own wish.”

“ Indeed it was ; I should have been sincerely grieved if Dorfaux had lost a pleasure to indulge my selfishness ; ” replied she.

“ Yes, yes ; she is, as I tell you, my dear sir, too good a wife not to prefer her husband’s enjoyment to her own ; ” said the chevalier, with the air of a man who can afford to be generous in his praise.

“ ‘ Too good a wife ! too good a wife ! ’ ” repeated the count in a musing tone. “ It depends on the husband, if a woman be ‘ too good a wife.’ ”

“ Exactly, my dear sir ; it depends on a husband’s

good sense, on his own discretion and wisdom, combined with a proper tenderness and consideration for the foibles which his *cara sposa* shares in common with the rest of her dear sex, whether she shall be 'too good.' 'Too good' is sometimes rather too bad, egad ! Too fond, for instance, is apt to be a little too much of a good thing ;" laughed the chevalier.

" 'Tis seldom a fault complained of, in a young bride ;" said the count.

" But the young bride is, one day or other, to settle down into the—I will not say, old—wife ;" said the chevalier, with a gay bow to her ; " and in order that she may not feel the change, she shall learn the character by degrees—rehearse it, as it were."

" Act the part in play, before she learns to play it in earnest ?" asked Olivia.

" Well, young lady, something like it. I intend to enact the judicious husband, for my part, that she may not be 'too good' a wife. It would be quite too good, were she to let her fondness detain me at home, when I wish to be abroad. No, no ; I must not have her 'too good.' "

" Can she be too good a wife for such a husband ?" said Olivia.

" Too good a wife for my taste ;" said the chevalier ; " as I have explained how ; I mean betimes, to show my wife that I know how 'to love wisely and not too well,' as the saying goes."

" Not too well ! not too well !" repeated the count, in his abstracted tone, still gazing on the ground, and tapping his lip. " Too good a wife ! too good a wife !" And he rose, walked to one of the windows, looked forth with a sigh, adding to himself :—" Too good a wife for him, I fear !"

The intimacy between sir Toby and the chevalier Dorfaux, was maintained now with greater zest than ever. Astrella's dowry formed an agreeable supply to her husband, at the very time when his previous resources had dwindled to a mere nothing. It princi-

pally found its way to the gaming-table ; but there were other resorts of so-called pleasure, where this sum quickly melted. Amusement, entertainment, sociality, were the aim of sir Toby's roustering habits ; the chevalier had other ends in view. But as is mostly the case with such objects as his, pursued through such means, they failed in their attainment. Instead of turning his gambling and licentious life to account, it gradually left him poorer and poorer,—profitless,—bankrupt in pocket as well as in morals.

After some months, scandal began to be busy about him ; it was whispered that he owed more money than he was able to pay ; his credit waned ; the tradesmen with whom his extravagant tastes and habits had involved him, grew clamorous ; while the gentlemen towards whom he had contracted debts of honor, became rather more than politely pressing.

Rumours of these things spread through the town, beyond it, and at length reached Casa Benucci.

“ I have been to blame—I have been too easy—too unregardful ;” thought the count, as he sat in the box-tree bower one morning, after a visit from a town acquaintance of his, who had dropped some hints relative to the chevalier Dorfaux's spendthrift courses, not knowing the connection existing between the Frenchman and his friend ; “ I have given my child—or one whom I love as though she were my child—to a stranger, a perfect stranger, in all that regards his character. I took him upon trust, because he was a pleasant companion, and had the good word of my kinsman Toby. Knowing as I did, the knight's loose notions on the score of social right, how came I to allow his choice to decide mine, in introducing a friend here—an associate, an inmate, with mine innocent children ? I have been culpably unsuspecting. I ought to have mistrusted those insidious, those equivocal advances made to my poor Astrella ; instead of which, by sparing her a temporary heartache, I have allied her with one who may break her heart. I

sought to account for her late altered looks and mien, by attributing them to her prospect of becoming a mother ; but I fear me, they may have been occasioned by anxiety, by unhappiness ; by her husband's frequent absences, and by a suspicion of their cause. He truly said, though in his wonted sportive style, ' too good a wife.' Yes, she is too good a wife to complain of the lot her own rash choice has drawn. Poor child ! It should have been the part of her adopted father, to protect her against her own inexperienced heart. Now, it may be too late to interfere ; rather increasing her troubles, than mitigating them, were I to remonstrate with her husband."

The count was still communing with himself on this theme, when Fabian came to announce the chevalier and madame Dorfaux.

" At this hour ! In the heat of the day !" exclaimed the count, as he entered the saloon, and saw Astrella looking pale and faint. " You should not have let her walk so far in the mid-day sun, Dorfaux ; I would have sent the coach for her, had I known you were coming."

" A thousand thanks, my dear count ; but not the least occasion. I like to see my wife above whimsical airs and nonsense. Astrella is too sensible a woman to give way to any such fanciful follies. She knows I despise all those contemptible tricks of pretended delicacy, and affected weakness, which her sex are too apt to give themselves, as much as I admire her for being above them. My wife cannot please me better, than by evincing her superiority to the general run of young ladies."

" The general run, meaning the majority, I presume ?" said Olivia.

" Alas, my dear young lady, I am sorry to say, the majority of your sex are not too wise ;" said the chevalier, with his usual bow ; " you and my charming Astrella, form the beautiful minority."

" The minority are obliged to you for your limited

opinion of them, and for your enlarged estimate of the rest of their sisterhood, sir ;” she replied.

“ I came to ask you, my dear count,” Dorfaux next said, “ to let us all ride over this morning to see some archery, which I hear is to take place in some grounds about five miles off ; it will be capital sport ; there is to be a high prize given ; there will be some good betting ; it will be excellent sport ; the ladies will enjoy it, and——”

“ You would not surely venture on horseback, Astrella ?” said Olivia, putting into words of her own, the anxious thought she knew was in Cynthio’s heart.

Astrella looked timidly at her husband.

“ Pooh, pooh ! ’twill do her good ! Nothing like a good scampering gallop for health. You will go, *ma chere amie* ;” said the chevalier.

“ Certainly ;” she said gently. Astrella’s gentle voice had, for many weeks past, become more than gentle,—it was subdued, in its tone of mild resignation. There had, almost imperceptibly, stolen over Astrella’s whole air and person, a great change, from the bright, elastic-spirited creature she once was. The alteration had been so gradual, it had been so carefully sought to be concealed from her friends, by the assumption of as lively a manner as might be, whenever she was with them, that it could scarcely be traced, during its progress ; but Astrella now, after some months of marriage, and residence at the cottage-farm, and Astrella the happy, light-hearted girl of Casa Benucci, contrasted with each other, were two different beings. For a long while, knowing nothing of the chevalier’s course of life, little imagining that evening after evening, he left his wife alone at home, while he repaired to the capital, returning only after dawn, sleeping away the best part of each morning, her friends guessed not the cause that existed to make her less happy than she seemed ; while her own efforts to appear contented and at ease, contributed to keep them blind to the growing change in her looks ; and

whatever vestiges of less blooming health than heretofore might be apparent, had an ostensible source in her condition. The thinner cheek, the hollow eye, the lassitude of frame impossible to be entirely concealed, were gladly referred by them to this cause, rather than believe them to originate in sadness, or depression of spirit. One, especially there was, who longest clung to the desperate hope that it was not unhappiness that wrought the effect he involuntarily acknowledged. Better impaired health, than sorrow,—disappointment. Better believe her ill, and suffering in body, than sick and suffering at heart. Had he not sacrificed all thought of his own happiness, that he might secure hers! And was she indeed not happy, after all? If so, there was yet a bitterer pang for him, than all he had hitherto endured. Of late, he had reluctantly admitted this question. Now, it was forcing its truth upon him.

Olivia, with her intuitive perception of Cynthio's feelings,—though no explicit form of words had ever passed between the brother and sister upon the subject, any more than on the first morning, when she had shown him his secret was known to her,—had marked the process of his mind throughout; and saw that he had at last unwillingly arrived at the terrible conviction that his self-abnegation had failed in its aim,—that it had not purchased her happiness for whom the sacrifice had been made. She saw that he at last perceived how it was with Astrella; how she had given her heart to a man unworthy of her; a man who took advantage of her gentle nature to make her submit to all his selfish humours; a man who by superficial compliments, and parade of gallantry, covered his real indifference; a man who had married her for mere convenience, as an indispensable accompaniment to the sum of money which he could not otherwise have obtained than as her marriage-portion; that she was, in fact, a despised, a neglected wife. And this was the result of Cynthio's heroic resolve, for her

sake, to bury his passion within the recesses of his own soul ! He had yielded her for this ! His Astrella ! His beloved Astrella ! Olivia knew how all these thoughts were burning at his heart, while the above conversation was passing ; she saw how he had need of his most resolute control, to preserve the silence he uniformly maintained on occasions such as these. She herself was about to entreat Astrella would rescind her assent to the proposition of riding, at the risk of betraying her sense of its inconsiderate selfishness, when the count said quietly, in reply to the young wife's last complying word :—" My dear child, I will not have it so ; your husband must allow me the license of an old married man and your adopted father, to forbid your mounting on horseback. I do not think it would be prudent for you to ride ; and moreover, the chevalier will excuse me if I add, that I do not approve of amusements where betting, and high stakes form the chief attraction."

" But I assure you, the archery itself is expected to be very fine ; that in itself will be excitement sufficient ;" said Dorfaux, with his usual glib decision, and off-hand mode of turning a question to his own view of it. " I would not lose the sight for the universe ; so, if your paternal care of Astrella—for which I cannot be too proudly grateful—will not let you think it safe for her to go, I beg you will have the kindness to lend me a horse for the occasion. It is too far to walk ; and as a poor country gentleman like myself cannot afford to keep a nag, I must e'en be beholden to my friend."

" I am glad to learn the chevalier Dorfaux is guided by prudential considerations, even in so far as the keeping of a riding-horse is concerned ;" said the count. " Rumour gives him not credit for so strict an economy."

" Oh, I assure you, my dear sir, I am the most economical of men ;" said the airy Frenchman. " Were it not for the sake of my wife—your all-

charming Astrella—I could be content to live upon a crust ;” added he, helping himself plentifully to some of the iced wine and other refreshments that the count’s attendants brought in at this juncture.

“ It is the part of a fool to make wise observations,” said Feste, the clown, who was pouring out a goblet of water mingled with Aleatico, for his master ; “ and I’ve observed that those people who say, ‘ I can do with a crust,’ never find a crust do for them.”

“ It is the part of a fool, if he be wise, to keep his sapient remarks to himself, until they be called for ;” said the chevalier, with more petulance, than his usual craft of careless gaiety allowed itself.

“ That remark of yours, shows you know nothing of a fool’s duty, sir chevalier ;” replied Feste ; “ a fool should make all his remarks aloud, that his hearers may benefit : the vicious, by the wisdom contained therein, the innocent, by the wit. And as for awaiting solicitation, ’tis the essence of his vocation that his sallies be ever ready, and forthcoming, undemanded.”

“ Nay, it may be so, good fellow ; I pretend to know nothing of the merits of a fool ;” said the chevalier ; “ I should be wanting in modesty, were I to say other than that there is little of the fool in me.”

“ More knave, than fool, perhaps ?” asked Feste, slyly.

“ You exceed your license, sirrah ;” said the count ; “ because your over-boldness is tolerated by ourselves, in allowance for your jester’s privilege, I cannot have you take liberties with our guests.”

“ Where there is no truth in the sarcasm, there is no offence in the jest, my lord ;” said the clown. “ Conscious of integrity, the chevalier can surely hear the word knavery without wincing. Even though he be taxed with it, the idle word can no more cleave to him, than breath to a mirror. His unsullied conscience doubtless, like the crystal, only shines the purer and brighter for the passing attempt to mistify it.”

“ A truce with thy mistifications for the present ; ” said the count ; “ bid thy fellows remove these things, when the ladies shall have had what fruit they please ; and meantime, the chevalier will do me the favor to accompany me to my study, where I have a word for his private ear.”

In the interview that ensued, the count spoke to the young man with the explicitness warranted by his age and character. He told the chevalier the reports that had reached Casa Benucci, of his reckless expences, his extravagance, his debts. He told him that he could forgive imprudence, thoughtlessness ; but that he trusted to his sense of honor, to his sense of what was due to his wife and to his unborn child, for a promise that he would in future be more circumspect in his conduct, and not endanger the peace, as well as involve in ruin, those whom he was bound to shelter from harm. The count ended by presenting him with a sum, which he said he hoped would free him from present embarrassments, as an earnest of his own confidence that he would be more prudent in future.

The chevalier was boundless in professions of good intention, profuse in acknowledgment, and lavish of promises to reform ; and the good count, willing to hope the best, and knowing none of the worst features in the young man’s conduct, gave credit to assurances that he wished to believe true.

The count Benucci had lived so retired a life, had seen so little of the world and its ways, that he was singularly simple and undiscerning. Having no experience, and being by nature very unsuspecting, it was scarcely to be wondered at, that, with such a man, a specious-worded, plausible-mannered, conventional gentleman like the chevalier Dorfaux, should pass for what he wished to appear. The count, himself an upright, worthy man, had none of the severity of judgment which sometimes accompanies righteousness ; nay, it must be owned he was somewhat deficient in judgment. He was rather disposed to see

things kindly, than to discern them justly. It was one of the notions of this kind-hearted, but not very far-seeing gentleman, that his kinsman sir Toby, by his example, led Dorfaux into many of the irregularities which were reported of him. The count knew that the jolly English knight was prone to indulgence, and that he and the chevalier were boon companions. He thought, therefore, that if he could persuade his brother-in-law to adopt a somewhat stricter course in his own pursuits, it might influence the younger man to follow his example.

He did not, in his easy good-natured way, like the idea of speaking to sir Toby himself ; as a hint from him, he thought, might look too much like prescribing, and assuming upon the sort of right which his position gave him to interfere. But he knew that Olivia had much influence with her uncle ; and he desired her to take an opportunity of winning their kinsman to a more orderly mode of life, and to re-urge the former proposal of his coming to dwell in the house with them.

Olivia had a pleasant way with her, that made any suggestion, or even counsel, accepted willingly by her friends. She never, in what she said, had the air of lecturing, or dictating, which so often renders advice unpalatable. Playfully, or earnestly, she spoke, as the case might need ; but always affectionately,—carrying the irresistible impression that it was for love of the person addressed, and not with any thought of self-interest, self-pride, or self-display. A woman, among men-friends, she possessed their confidence, their esteem, their respect, as well as their love. They regarded her opinion, no less than they cherished her sweetness and beauty ; they consulted and valued her judgment, as much as they doted on her gentleness and grace ; they prized her good sense, while they were charmed with her modesty, and womanly bearing. Her father relied upon her ; her uncle was at once swayed by, and fond of her ; her brother felt

towards her the devotion and affiance of perfect sympathy in feeling.

In pursuance of her father's wish, the next time sir Toby came to Casa Benucci, Olivia took an opportunity of sportively chiding him for letting so long a time elapse between his visits to them ; telling him that she would not allow his acquaintance to have stronger claims upon his time than his friends ; that she wished he would give up his bachelor lodgings in the capital altogether, and come and live with them ; for that she was sure, as a family-man, among those who loved him, he would be more comfortable, more happy, and it might be, more good, than among those with whom he now associated.

“ ‘ More comfortable ? ’ Why, niece mine, to your lady niceness, 'twould sound strange, were I to say, that there is, to us free hearts, a certain charm in ruffling and riot, in discomfort, disorder, and disregard of teasing proprieties, beyond all the dull smoothness of comfort. As to ‘ more happy,’ there may be a wicked joy in pleasure, that makes happiness seem but vapid, flat, faded, colorless, worthless in the comparison ; but this also is enigma to your pure sense. Let that pass. For ‘ more good ; ’ all I can say, is, would I were as good as Nero.”

“ As Nero, cousin ? ” replied she, humouring his humour, and falling in with it, as was her wont.

“ Ay, truly. Had he not five years of worthiness ? I,—that cannot answer for myself through the four-and-twenty hours ! Why, an’ I could lead a good life for five years together, methinks I should have no cause to despair of my virtue. Might every man boast his ‘ Quinquennium Neronis,’ your saintly ones need weep no more over ‘ this wicked world ! ’ ”

“ Nay, cousin,” laughed she ; “ we have but Seneca’s word for it. He may have lied, for the honor of his pupil. Every way, the credit of those five years is due to the philosopher, rather than the emperor ; for, granting their tolerable decency, it

lasted but so long as Nero suffered himself to be guided by the wise counsels of his tutor. An' thou wilt take pattern from Nero, be warned by his example in this,—cast not away thy good advisers. Be ruled by me, and amend."

"Take warning from the story thyself, niece. When Seneca's advice grew unpalatable, he was bid to make an end of it and himself at once. If thou wouldst have me hearken to thee with the old pleasure, sweet lady cousin, give me no counsel but such as I can relish."

"Thou ask'st for advice after the fashion of all counsel-seekers ; it must accord with thine own fantasies, or thou'lt none on't. But in sober earnest, good mine uncle, for thine own sake, and to pleasure my father,—which I know will weigh even gravelier with thy good heart,—keep more within range."

"Range, quoth'a ? I will range ! I will become a very ranger. Thou shalt have no cause of complaint on that score ;" returned sir Toby.

"'Tis a settled thing, then, that thou accept'st the office my father would have thee fill, cousin ? Thou wilt be ranger of our park-grounds ? And the office implies residence, thou know'st ; so I may tell my father you will become one of our household ; and I'll give order that apartments be got ready for your occupancy forthwith."

"Thou dost with me e'en what thou wilt, fair niece ; there is no withstanding aught thou say'st, denying what thou ask'st, refusing what thou hast set thy heart upon, or avoiding that which thou hast fixed,—more especially when thy demands square so prettily with a man's own desires. For to tell thee sooth, I have long had it in my mind to take up mine abode with you. Had it not been for a lingering scruple of independence, I had owned this before. But we learn to subdue toys of conscience, as we wax in age and sageness."

"You know how to grant a favour with the grace

of letting it seem one to yourself, kinsman ;” she replied.

But after sir Toby came to live with them, it soon became evident that his example was not the cause of the chevalier Dorfaux’s prodigal courses. News, not only of his reckless expenditure, but of his dissolute habits, his dishonorable practises, were now perpetually coming to their ears, from sources not to be doubted ; and they could no longer conceal from themselves the entire worthlessness of the man to whom their Astrella’s fate was joined. The count now saw that it would be mere weakness to supply her husband with money, out of any hope of giving him an opportunity to arrange his affairs, and retrench ; all he could do was to furnish her with as many personal comforts as possible, that she might not feel the destitution to which such courses as Dorfaux’s would in all likelihood eventually reduce her. From discomfort of this kind, her friends could still protect her ; from the bitter sense of disappointment in him to whom she had given her affections, and allied her faith, they could not preserve her. Theirs was a nice task ; but with all the tact and judgment which love such as theirs inspires, they fulfilled it with truest delicacy and tenderness. They respected her wifely duty by refraining from blame or reproach towards her husband ; and as their candour would not permit them to speak of him with respect, they gradually ceased to mention him save in terms of mere courtesy and requisite enquiry. When they saw him, they treated him with that polite reserve, most chilling to persons of honest feeling and right sensibility,—most agreeable to persons of his calculating selfishness, and superficial, worldly sentiments. So that they but tacitly disapproved, he cared not ; provided they ostensibly received him. It mattered not to him that he was endured, tolerated, for the sake of his wife ; if his presence were permitted, it was enough. It suited him to visit at the count’s house ; it told well

for him to have his countenance ; that he was an uninvited guest,—that he was there on sufferance, signified little. To such men as Dorfaux an unexpressed dissatisfaction gives no pain ; a silent reprobation no inquietude. That all goes smoothly on the surface, is quite sufficient for them. That all should seem well before the world, is the utmost of their care.

The birth of Astrella's child was a joyful circumstance to those who loved her. It afforded a source of sympathy between them, unconstrained, complete. Upon this little creature, its beauties, its gifts, its perfections, they all could descant to their hearts' content. Here was a subject upon which they could dwell without fear, without consciousness, without alloy of satisfaction. To Cynthio, above all, this babe was a delight, a treasure, upon which he could lavish all the secret store of love he had cherished for its mother. He would hold it in his arms for hours, hanging over it and fondling it with those caresses which in the days of his own bygone childhood he had given to his girlish playmate. It was the restoration of those long-past happy times ; it was a renewal of his old, glad, unrestrained feelings of affection, when they might pour themselves forth in kisses and embraces innocent as they were warm and free. He had his Astrella once again ! His little Astrella ! His darling Astrella ! His own Astrella ! His father would laughingly joke him for his unmasculine fancy for nursing a baby ; but Cynthio was too much in earnest, too content in his new-found delight, to be laughed out of his enjoyment.

Olivia was enraptured with the advent of this source of solace to her brother. She could truly define the profound feelings with which he held it to his heart. She could estimate the sensations of relief and freedom with which he lavished on it those evidences of a love so long pent and hidden. She knew the past anguish ; she could understand the present joy. When she saw Cynthio's eyes, so long conscious, and

troubled, and full of inquietude, gazing in placid comfort upon the sleeping babe ; or when she saw his writhing disgust beneath some selfish speech of the father's, refuge itself in tracing the pretty smiles or still prettier gravity of the infant ; or when she beheld the look so often forbidden to dwell upon Astrella's face, now turned in open, unrestricted, fullness of love upon that of her child, Olivia inwardly blessed Heaven, that had vouchsafed this requital of her brother's past unhappiness.

Astrella herself, in her affectionate regard for Cynthio, saw with delight the joy he took in her little one. She rejoiced to see the power it had to interest him, to rouse him from that apathy and abstraction, that strange kind of restraint which she had with pain noted in him for some time past, and for which it had frequently given her as much concern as perplexity to account.

She was sitting leaning over the back of a low couch, upon which Cynthio lay playing with her child one morning. She watched them romping and frolicing together, and saw the gentle way in which he lent himself to the humours of the little creature, now submitting to be crawled over, and tumbled over, and pulled over ; now hiding his face beneath a handkerchief, now popping it forth, that the babe might have the glory, and startled transport, of discovery ; now still as a mouse, now joining in the sudden crow and giddy laugh that succeeded revealment ; now letting the little open palms pat and stroke his face, now allowing the bits of fingers to poke their way in pursuit of the white, irresistible teeth, that lurked at hide-and-seek behind his lips ; now suffering them to make vain clutches at his eyes, that showed so bright, so tempting, so provokingly unattainable, when he opened and closed their lids for baby's wonder ; now abandoning his hair to the most ruthless of tugs, now smoothing and caressing the fair locks (that light golden brown he loved so well) of the little tigger's

own head in turn. And as *Astrella* watched all this, and saw the tender pleasure, the absorbed enjoyment that *Cynthio* took in playing with her child, a feeling of contentment, partly at his happiness, partly at her own, in causing it to him, thrilled through the young mother's heart.

"Little rogue!" she said; "thou supplant'st thy mother in the indulgent love which was once hers."

"It is the same;" said *Cynthio* in a low voice.

The child had found out a new object of attraction; it was now plucking at a dark slender chain, espied among the folds of *Cynthio's* vest.

"Be good, little encroacher;" said the mother, gently trying to disengage the coil in which her babe's fingers had entwined themselves; "thou wilt break it! Be not so graceless, as return injury for indulgence. Let go, let go, naughty one!"

"She will be unlike her mother before her, if she requite loving-kindness with anything but gentleness;" said *Olivia*, who sat near. "Gently, gently, little one;" she added, leaning forward to help extricate the chain from its grasp; "since the toy is woven of my hair, *Cynthio* would not care to have it broken. Gently, gently! let go, *Astellina-Strellinetta*!"

But it was too late to prevent what *Olivia* foresaw. The child's pertinacity had succeeded in twitching forth the chain; and at the end, hung a small crystal case. The clearness, the dangling motion of the trinket, together with the success of attainment, combined to delight the babe, and nothing could persuade it into relinquishment. No; fast, fast, the little fingers clutched; triumphantly it crowed, as it brandished the new-found gaud; and perseveringly it threatened to scream, upon the least attempt at withdrawal.

They could have laughed to see the baby wilfulness; had they not all three been possessed by secret thoughts that made their smiles but constrained. *Olivia's* was for her brother. She instinctively felt and knew the charm which the contents of that locket possessed for

him,—though she knew not absolutely what those contents were,—and she trembled to think what Cynthio now felt, to see them hanging in the babe's grasp, close in the eyes of its mother. She dared not look at her brother's face, lest she might behold, as well as draw attention, to the confusion painted there ; she directed her efforts to playfully speaking with the child, and making it a means of diversion to them all. But neither Cynthio nor Olivia need have feared. The little star-flower treasured within the crystal, though clearly visible through the transparent enclosure, was no longer recognizable. It had too surely lost all shape and color. To his eyes the fair white petals, the slender green stem, were still there in all their delicate beauty ; to his eyes, the form of her who gave it, her look as she placed it in his vest, every myriad association of herself in all her loveliness and grace were there enshrined and apparent ; but to all eyes else, a few faded shreds, without distinguishable substance or import, were alone perceptible. And still the child held them in its mother's sight, and still no trace of their identity reached her. But there was something,—all at once,—in the embarrassed silence which had seized Cynthio, that struck her as giving significance to the contents of the little bauble which her baby persisted in bringing forth to light, and holding up for display.

“Can it be, that he loves ? Can it be, that so young, he has already loved ? Can he, so young—have known disappointment ?—so gifted—have loved in vain ? Cynthio ! He ?”

This train of ideas engrossed her. She could scarcely attend to the delight of her babe, that continued unabated. She sat absently gazing at her little one, hardly seeing its leaps of ecstasy, or hearing its shrill cries of pleasure.

“I am fanciful ;” she thought, smiling to herself, after a few moments, as she looked upon Cynthio's face, and saw it resume all its usual calm (a calm re-

sumed in the conviction that his secret was safe,—that no eyes save his own, could trace aught of it beneath the withered stellaria); “I am supposing a mystery where none exists; the dark hair is the color of Olivia’s; the chain is her gift; doubtless, the locket also; the thought that it might be injured, caused his momentary embarrassment; while his love for me and my baby, prevented the expression of his uneasiness. Dear Cynthio! ever kind, considerate, loving! Gentle and good,—how could he love in vain? I was mad to think it but for an instant.”

As she looked upon that face, so full of earnest sweetness, so boyishly young and fair, yet so beaming with the sensibility and intelligence of a passionate nature, Astrella felt that it would indeed be a sore grief to her to think that he was doomed to know the bitterness of a fruitless affection. In the depth of her feeling, she breathed a mute prayer that he might be spared this cruellest of all pains. At the very moment of her inward aspiration in his behalf, Cynthio chanced to raise his eyes towards her; and there he read the same pure, ingenuous look of loving regard that had ever beamed upon him from his Astrella. He blessed her in his heart, while she was praying for him in hers.

The babe had at length given up its plaything, and had fallen into a quiet sleep in Cynthio’s arms, when the chevalier suddenly entered.

“Desolate to break up so charming a society!” he exclaimed, bowing round; “but I am compelled to request my wife’s return to the cottage-farm immediately; I have business to transact there, that cannot be effected without her presence. Desolate, I assure you! But it must be.”

Astrella arose to obey her husband.

“My father has taken the coach this morning, to pay a long-deferred visit to an old friend, who lives at some distance;” said Olivia; “is it indispensable that you must return home immediately, sir?”

“ Indispensable ! absolutely indispensable, parole d’honneur ! ” he replied, laying his hand on his breast, and bowing again ; “ or I would not be so barbarous as to exercise my conjugal authority and prerogative.”

“ We will walk with you across the park-grounds, *Astrella* ; ” said Olivia ; “ you must not carry your baby so far.”

“ Do you think I should have permitted my *cara sposa* to bear the burthen ? You do not give due credit to the gallantry of our nation, signora ; ” said the Frenchman.

Olivia did not say she had so little faith in it, that she knew he would only carry the babe out of sight of the house, and then let his wife bear it the rest of the way ; but she said :—“ The child is asleep ; best not disturb it. *Cynthio* will carry it. And I shall contend for my turn, when it wakes.”

“ As you will ; I always defer to a lady’s proposals, and comply with her wishes, when I can ; ” returned the chevalier, with another bow ; then turning to his wife, he said :—“ *Allons, ma chere amie* ; pray use a little of your usual complaisance, and get ready in less time than the generality of your charming sex take for the adorning of their sweet persons. Come, where is this shawl ? Let me have the felicity of putting it on for you.”

The chevalier was evidently in a violent hurry. His utmost blandness and politeness were in requisition, to cover his impatience. All his suavity was employed to mask the eagerness with which he hastened them along.

But Olivia, who could see the ill-suppressed tokens of *Astrella*’s faintness and fatigue, and knew the slight frame and unequal strength of her brother, contrived that they should have rest. The chevalier tried to contravene her ; but even his adroit manœuvring, was not a match for her quiet arrangement. He was working for himself ; she was acting for her friends.

It happened, that as they came to the green knoll, the chevalier, who thought he would try to laugh her out of her plans, proposed their resting there ; but Olivia, ever-mindful of Cynthio's feelings, had purposely chosen a seat a short space before they came to it, in order that her brother might be spared sitting in this spot, of all others, with his present companions ; she therefore led on, declaring that she knew of a shady nook a little farther, that would be much better for their purpose. It was often curious to see how the quiet dignity, the honest courage, the simple, straight-forward decision, with lady-like ease, of this young girl, could put aside and baffle the wily selfishness of the man of the world.

When they reached the cottage-farm, Cynthio put the child in its mother's arms ; and Olivia, knowing how unwillingly her brother entered that roof, took leave at once. The chevalier made not even the pretence of detaining them ; and his wife was too anxious to know the cause of her abrupt recall, not to acquiesce.

She learnt it but too soon. A pressing demand, had caused her husband to return and extort all that she had left. The last remnant of her money had long since vanished ; her jewels had followed ; and now the title-deeds of her estate,—the cottage-farm and land, which had been the gift of her adopted father, in an instinctive desire to endow her with a home,—were to be ceded to the rapacity of him, whose duty it was to protect her from robbery, not to rob her himself. It was to sign away these deeds, that he had summoned her ; it was to deprive herself and child, of house and home for ever, that he had fetched her to that home. She made a feeble attempt to remonstrate, to entreat that he would not strip them of this last resource ; but with his selfish inflexibility, veiled in smoothest and most amiable terms, he compelled her to sign. The instant he had obtained what he wanted, he seized the parchment, snatched up his hat, and with a smiling bow, departed.

That night Astrella's second baby was born,—dead. That night its father was spending the hours in revelry,—the king of his company, the admired of jovial men, the adored of pretty women. One of these latter,—a lady who had abandoned all the observances of her rank, save a sovereign contempt for the opinion of those whom she considered beneath her, condescended to accompany the chevalier Dorfaux to a rural breakfast at his cottage-farm ; and on their arrival, the gay couple were much discomfited to learn the inconvenient incident that prevented the mistress of the house from doing the honors, and receiving them. But they did as well as they could without her ; that is, they discussed an excellent repast of strawberries and cream, which the town-lady was so obliging as to declare more delicious than any she had ever eaten,—and then they went their way again ; but not before the gallant husband had paid a visit to his wife's bedside, kissing her hand with the most assiduous tenderness, and beseeching she would take care of her health.

Not many hours after, the person who had now a right to call the cottage-farm his own, sent men to take possession ; they were proceeding to make an inventory of the goods, with other usual forms, when the good peasant woman, who acted as nurse to madame Dorfaux, took upon herself to despatch one of the farm-boys up to the great house to inform count Benucci how matters were going on.

The count was still absent, but his son and daughter hastened to their Astrella. Her delicacy would yet have kept them in ignorance of this climax to all that she had been suffering so long, in secret ; but she was now left no option. The well-meaning nurse met them at the gate, and told all. She spared no detail of Dorfaux's misconduct ; she even censured Astrella's too great yielding.

Olivia saw the expression of Cynthio's face, and hastened to interpose, ere he should give utterance to

the rebuke she saw trembling on his lips ; but before she could speak, the nurse added :—“ Poor young thing ! She has dealt herself her own death-blow, through her weakness ; it has killed her infant, and it will kill herself. She’s not long for this world, and she knows it.”

Olivia saw Cynthio stagger, and turn deadly white. She hastily sent the woman for water, that she might get her from the room, saying :—“ We are her dearest friends, you tell us this too frightfully.”

Cynthio wrung his sister’s hand ; turned away ; then came back with a look set into stern composure, and said :—“ We must see her ; she must see nothing of what we feel. For her sake,—for her sake——” His words died away ; but the look with which his sister met his own, told that he was understood.

The nurse returned, saying that her young mistress had heard her friends were come, and begged that they would let her see them.

The brother and sister went to Astrella’s room.

They found her sitting up in bed, propped by pillows ; with a faint flush on her cheek at the joy of seeing them. In the arms of a young girl, the nurse’s daughter, was Astrella’s child. It stretched out its little hands, and crowed with delight, at seeing its friend Cynthio. Olivia stepped forward, took it in her arms, and sent the attendant away. The babe would still have made advances to be taken by Cynthio ; but his sister carried it to the window, and soon contrived to amuse it, and engage its attention to herself.

The mother’s eyes dwelt with serene delight upon her child in the arms of her gentle friend Olivia. She signed to Cynthio to sit upon the bed’s edge beside her, and stretched forth her hand for his. She held it locked in her own, and lay thus half reclined, with her gaze fixed upon her child, and her two dearest friends, looking wrapt in a content and peace so deep, as to seem like happiness.

For some time no sound, save the innocent cooings and murmurs of the little one, broke the stillness in that hushed chamber. Each felt the presence of the others a sufficing comfort. No need of communion, where mutual sympathy was so truly understood, so deeply felt.

At length the voice of Astrella made itself heard, low, inward, nearly extinct ; but tranquil,—with no inquietude, no agitation.

“ Dear friends,” she said, “ it will be your best solace to know that I am happy. Happy in the ceasing of my own weary task,—happy in the knowledge that my little Astrella will have the same guardian care that sheltered her mother. At like infant years, you took me in, a little wandering star ; and now, another. Both bereft of a parent’s care ; my father perished ; hers is dead to her. You will never let her know the lack of a father—I feel, I know, you will not.”

“ You know us too well to doubt it ;” said the soft voice of Olivia ; while the pressure of Cynthio’s hand bore testimony to his confirmation of his sister’s words.

“ One promise I have to entreat of you ;” Astrella went on. “ It is this. Should her father’s caprice ever claim her as his child, promise me that you will refuse. He is no meet parent—no fit protector, guide, for childhood—for girlhood.” She shuddered ; then resumed her steadfast tone. “ Hard as is the task, to deny a child to its father, this task I beseech of your friendship. I entreat you to save her, to preserve her, from a man to whom she must not belong. Pollution, soul and body, is in the guidance of such as he. And shall it be risked, in deference to a claim, nominal, conventional ? Parentage consists not solely in blood. What parent could have trulier fulfilled his part, than the father I have found in yours ?”

“ She shall be our child ;” said Olivia ; “ my brother and I will never yield her.”

“ I am conscious that I ask a pledge that may in-

volve you in difficulty, in contest. But I know the strength and constancy of your friendship ; and I tax it thus far, conscious that your best reward, as your best comfort hereafter will be, the peace which this knowledge and reliance gives me in my dying hour. It brings me peace upon the only point where inquietude could have reached me—my child, my little Astrella. In Olivia's gentle care she will become happy and worthy ; in your protection, Cynthio mio, she will be safe from her unworthy father. In this thought, I can resign my soul to the bliss of its release."

"You can leave us—leave life without a sigh?" murmured Cynthio in broken tones. "Your existence was then a burthen ; your sufferings were bitter ; why did you not confide in those who loved you ? Why not have let them take you from this bondage ? Why not have yielded them the poor preference to death ?"

"It is hard to own a heart mistaken, deceived, betrayed ;" she returned ; "harder still to arraign him whom you have once loved. Cruellest of all to know him unworthy. The humiliation of being wedded for what you bring, not for what you are ! And oh, the misery of living unloved !"

Cynthio started. Then he said in an under-breath :—"That misery has not been Astrella's."

"True ;" she replied, with the look of full, open, loving regard which her face always wore, when she spoke or thought of the affection between them ; "I do not justice to the love of my friends, when I talk of living unloved ; but ah," and her face sank to its previous sadness, "the heart will thirst for a paramount love, an exclusive love,—love itself. There will come a day when my Cynthio's young heart will learn this thirst—this imperative demand."

"It has already known it ;" he said in the same tone as before.

"Then the crystal I saw—it did contain the secret

of your heart,—your love? I thought it, and yet——”

“It contained yourself—my little star—my Astrella!” he faltered.

Her eyes were fixed upon him. They seemed as though they would seek the truth of that wild incredible surmise which now, for the first time, presented itself to her imagination. Her eyes were fixed upon him; but their other sense,—that inward sight which busies itself with by-gone things, past scenes, deeds, words, looks, at the very time the outward sight is occupied with a present image,—was actively employed searching for corroborative circumstance of what she heard.

Sadly, mournfully, yet with a rapturous intensity that was akin to transport, his eyes were bent on hers, and seemed to follow their process of retracing remote events and objects. He saw the tender remembrance, the gentle memories that glided upon her vision; he saw the moistened eyes with which she recalled certain passages in their past life; he beheld the soft smile which played in them, as she at length murmured:—
“My little husband!”

“He loved you!” Cynthio exclaimed; and the passionate truth of the words was told upon her lips.

Olivia was at length alarmed by the silence that ensued. Approaching the bed, she saw them pale and lifeless. Her young brother was in a deep swoon. He had bravely sustained sorrow; but joy was too mighty for him. For Astrella,—she had died in the knowledge that she was beloved by this faithful, noble heart; she had resigned life, contented, happy.

Now it was that all Olivia’s tenderness, and thoughtful courage, all her womanly qualities, and gentle excellence, had scope. Her first care was to recover her brother; her next, to break to him gently the sad truth; and then to soothe and sustain him in his affliction. She controlled and suppressed her own

grief, that she might minister to his. And when he, passive and unresisting, suffered her to lead him from the chamber of death, she put Astrella's child in his arms, bidding him remember that here was a part of herself left him to love and to cherish ; that here was at once a source of consolation, and a bond of union with her who was now in Heaven. And seeing him shed gentle tears over the babe, as he pressed it to his heart, she left appealing innocence and helplessness to work their own kindly effect upon his loving unselfish nature ; while she returned to pay the last sad duties to the remains of her friend.

With the unflinching energy which belongs to women of her sweet and gentle, yet steadfast and generous natures, Olivia took upon herself the whole of the mournful tasks which followed ; she spared those she loved, from all that she could save them from, by the exertion of her own courageous forethought ; and when her father returned, he found that all had been already done, which his presence could have effected.

Count Benucci warmly seconded his son and daughter in their resolve of adopting Astrella's child ; and supported them in their resolution to withstand the claims of its father, should he ever think fit to urge them.

For some time, there seemed no chance of this ; but after a space, the thought that his little daughter might be made a means of extorting money from those whose love for the mother had evidently been transferred to the child, induced Dorfaux to threaten the assertion of his natural and legitimate rights. He applied by letter ; for even his brazen assurance failed him, at the thought of meeting face to face those whom he had so cruelly, so basely injured. The count wrote in answer ; temperately, but decisively, declining to give up Astrella's child.

The chevalier retorted peremptorily, violently. He declared that nothing should prevent his appealing to a tribunal that should compel submission to his legiti-

mate plea ; he should lay his cause before his friend Orsino, the reigning duke of Illyria.

This name he thought would carry weight ; and force the count to a compromise. He relied upon a passing introduction he had once had to the duke, and to his own insinuating address, and plausible representation, in case he should have to carry out his menace of applying to his grace.

The count's reply was but a repetition of his former one ; and the chevalier Dorfaux, exasperated by this resistance, and the disappointment of his mercenary purposes, waited upon duke Orsino.

But speciously delivered as was the tale, there was something in the bare facts of the case, that suggested other feelings than the ones sought to be produced.

The duke felt interested in the noble family who had shown this generous sympathy with orphanhood ; he felt irresistibly drawn towards, and curious to see, persons who had refuged and fostered the mother, and now championed and protected the child. He secretly resolved he would enquire farther into the matter, ere he delivered his opinion ; and coldly told the chevalier that he would take time personally to consider of it, before he could even encourage him that he would sanction its consideration by his council.

The duke was a man of a romantic nature, chivalrous sentiments, and a poetical and passionate sense of beauty. There was something in Dorfaux's hard, calculating eye, and shrewd smile polished into complaisance, peculiarly repulsive to Orsino's refined and delicate perceptions. He instinctively doubted a man that inspired aversion by his mere look. The idea possessed him that he would take means to see the other actors in this drama, and judge whether their appearance affected him contrariwise to the impression he had conceived of them.

He called a confidential attendant, named Curio ; bade him get horses saddled, and prepare to ride with him a short distance out of town, suddenly, and quite

privately. Orsino had informed himself of the whereabouts of Casa Benucci, sufficiently to know that he was approaching its precincts, when, on looking over a park paling, among some trees, he saw, seated beneath their shade, a group,—a family-party, that at once arrested his attention. It consisted of a venerable gentleman, of benign aspect, and distinguished bearing, who occupied an easy chair; near to him sat a youth, with a young child upon his knee, over whom he bent in fondling interest with its half-articulate prattle. Close beside the youth stood a lady, reading a letter. She was young, and very beautiful; there was a mingled dignity and sweetness in her countenance, both majesty and graciousness in her mien. The tidings of the letter seemed pleasant, for a smile sat upon her lips, and brought into sight an exquisite dimple that lurked in one of the most perfectly and softly rounded cheeks imaginable. As she raised her eyes, the smile shone there too, in those large, dark, lustrous orbs of transparent depth.

“And Toby writes cheerfully, and happily, does he?” said the grey-haired gentleman, as he looked up in her face, and saw its expression; “when does he talk of coming back to us? He has found Venice attractive. His stay there, this time, has been longer than ever.”

The young lady did not immediately reply; her eyes had encountered those of the stranger on horseback, who was looking over the fence towards their party. He raised his hat, on perceiving that she had observed him, and rode on to the gates of the mansion; where he caused himself to be announced as duke Orsino, who requested an interview with the count Benucci.

“I have seen the venerable count, if I mistake not, seated with his family in the grounds;” said the duke. “Stay, I will not give his lordship the pains of coming to the house to receive me. I will seek him there myself.”

The attendant summoned the count's seneschal, Malvolio, who ushered his grace with much ceremonial, to the spot where they sat.

Duke Orsino, with his native urbanity, introduced himself to the count, saying he had wished to make his acquaintance; and since his lordship frequented not the court, he, as the younger man, thought fit to waive the privilege of rank, in deference to that of age, and come to see him in his retirement,—a retirement he could no longer wonder at, since he saw what inducements there were to its preservation.

The duke, as he concluded, bent courteously to Cynthio and Olivia; asking if he were mistaken in supposing them the count's son and daughter.

They made suitable replies; and then the duke, taking a hand of the child's into his own, led to the enquiries he wished to make, regarding her story.

The little one shrank from the strange gentleman, clinging to the bosom of her friend Cynthio; and the duke, smiling, remarked that she proclaimed her own choice of father and protector.

"Dorfaux has then made the appeal he threatened!" exclaimed the count. "But surely your grace will not uphold him in his unjust claim."

The duke replied that he had before felt doubtful of the right contended for; but that since what he had beheld of the loving protectors of the child, he should be more than ever inclined to contest the power of him who seemed inclined to exercise it rather in hate than in love; that their kindness ought to give them a superior authority to that of mere kindred; that he could scarce conceive their affection to have less natural force than the tie of an unnatural father; nevertheless, that being a grave question of right—it must be decided by law, and not by private judgment, if the chevalier still persisted in maintaining his claim.

With some farther expressions of his personal sympathy and interest, the duke took his leave; entreat-

ing that the count would permit him to improve an acquaintance, so happily to himself commenced.

The count replied with the warmth which this gracious advance demanded, and they parted, mutually pleased.

More than pleased was Orsino. Enchanted, enamoured, with the rare beauty of Olivia, he could think of nothing, dream of nothing, but her, her alone. But as yet he hazarded no avowal of his admiration. For the present he contented himself with visiting the family, and forwarding their wishes as much as lay in his power relative to the trial of the cause which soon commenced between them and the chevalier. He contrived that it should be protracted, and judgment deferred, as long as might be ; trusting that these silent attentions might win him a way to her liking, ere he risked a declaration of his sentiments.

It was hoped that the delay of the law's decision would tire out Dorfaux's patience, and exhaust his means, so that he should be compelled into yielding. It effected the two former ; but when he found himself baffled, he took a resolution to have revenge, since he could not obtain profit.

His drained resources forced him to fly the country, and he determined to steal away his child, and carry her with him, as the most stinging cruelty he could inflict upon those who had defeated him.

He laid his plans well. He watched his opportunity. His knowledge of Casa Benucci enabled him to take his measures securely, and surely. One evening he got into the house ; lay in wait ; watched Olivia, her father, and brother, go out for a ride on horseback ; knew that the child had just been put to bed ; contrived to elude the vigilance of the nurse ; took it from its cradle ; made free with one of the count's horses, and rode away at full gallop. He was seen by one of the servants, just as he made his escape ; and when the riding-party returned, they were told what had befallen.

Cynthio, scarcely staying to hear the direction Dorfaux had taken, set off in pursuit. He was much lighter, and a far better horseman than the Frenchman, besides being animated by feelings that urged him to the speed of the wind. Although some time had elapsed, yet he did not despair of overtaking him.

At a turn in the road, he saw him ! He gained upon him ! Faster spurred the chevalier ! Swifter flew Cynthio ! The houses of the capital were in view,—the shipping in the harbour, where Dorfaux meant to embark. To the very rowels the miscreant strove to plunge his spurs. The gallant beast reared, then bounded onwards.

What was it Cynthio beheld ? He saw a something white, like a stricken dove, fall from the saddle,—either jerked out of the chevalier's hold by the horse's curvet, or dropped by the dastard arm that preferred seizing its own last chance of safety.

Breathless, appalled, Cynthio darted on, and flung himself out of his saddle. Too truly had his foreboding heart told him the fatal truth ! It was his darling ! His bequeathed treasure ! His only Astrella !

Bleeding, and lifeless it lay there, a white heap in the dust.

Tenderly he lifted the little mangled body, and bore it home.

From that hour Cynthio's spirit drooped. His heart died within him. His body gradually declined. His health, long undermined by secret conflicts, sank into habitual malady. He had no active disease ; but his frame, never strong, was now so enfeebled and worn, that it became reduced to a mere skeleton. He was gentle, uncomplaining, but he visibly languished and perished away.

Olivia tended him with all her wonted care, and loving assiduity. She devoted her time wholly to him ; and after their father's death,—which occurred about that period,—she had no object in life, to

divide her thoughts with her beloved brother. All her study was how she might best cheer and sustain him ; all her faculties were dedicated to the devising means for his comfort, his consolation.

They lived a more quiet, secluded life than ever. Cynthio's state of health would not permit his entering into society ; and Olivia derived no enjoyment from that which fatigued and oppressed him. A few very old and intimate friends of the late count, still visited at Casa Benucci, and were always cordially received for his sake, by the orphan brother and sister ; but they made no new acquaintances, and accepted no invitations.

Among their few visitors, was duke Orsino. He came still ; but still delayed the declaration of his feelings, out of respect to Olivia's recent bereavement, promising himself that when her term of mourning for her father should have expired, he would then prefer his suit.

Sir Toby had returned from Venice, and was now permanently established at Casa Benucci. He had lately received a letter from England, from an old schoolfellow of his, one sir Abel Ague-cheek, written on his death-bed. It recommended to his friend sir Toby's notice, his son, Andrew, who was about to visit Italy, where the family possessed an estate, and where the new sir Andrew would in all probability settle. The letter spoke in high eulogium on the benefit of foreign travel in forming a young man, and ended by entreating that sir Toby would undertake the supervision and farthering of this desirable end ; as all that the young man lacked, was a little forming.

“ ‘ Forming, ’ quoth’a ? ” was sir Toby's comment to himself, as he folded up the letter, and put it in his pocket ; “ I'll form him, I warrant. He shall be reformed altogether. Marry, he shall be no more a fellow of the same substance, 'neath my polishing.”

As a first step in sir Toby's views upon the young knight, he introduced him to his niece Olivia ; and

encouraged the young gentleman in the passion with which he was at once smitten for her. He promoted his amusement ; and initiated him into divers gay methods of spending his time and his money ; he kept him entertained, and contrived himself to profit by his entertainment.

“ What like is this young English knight ? ” said Maria to Feste, the clown, after sir Andrew’s first visit to Casa Benucci. “ Thou hast seen him, I know ; for thou wert in the hall, and reached him his hat, as he took leave. Tell me what he is like.”

“ ‘ Faith, he’s like to the picture,—if such a one could be painted a speaking likeness,—of a born simpleton, and a grown natural ; but truly, of all living men, he is likest to himself ; ’ ” replied the clown.

“ Is he good-natured ? Hath he wit enough to be that ? ” asked she. “ Many a man may be pardoned folly, if he have but so much inkling of sense as to let good-nature shine through it.”

“ Well, he’s what often passes for good-natured. He’s a doughy loaf without any crust. And a loaf without its top crust,—its first letter,—is oaf.”

“ And those three letters sum his character ? Sir Toby told me he was a monstrous eater of roast beef ; and that’s the staple of character, as I’ve heard, where he comes from.”

“ Was that what sir Toby was telling thee, when I saw him whisper thee, in the box-tree, t’other day ; ” asked the clown.

“ None of thy rogue’s questions, master Feste ; they’ll get but scant answers from me, I promise thee ; ” said Maria, turning away with a laugh, and a reddened cheek.

“ I did but ask, for the sake of knowing what could be the parley that made a chuck under the chin meet commentary and adjunct ; ” returned he.

“ Be gone about thy business,—if thou hast aught of business, beside idling and trifling ; ” she said,

whisking away from him, and darting up-stairs to her lady's room.

Sir Toby, whose jovial habits nothing could restrain, and upon whose boisterous hilarity the society of his gentle niece and sick nephew acted as a restraint, gave them less and less of his company; and associated almost wholly with Maria, Fabian, and Feste, whose gayer spirits assimilated better with his tastes.

While Olivia and Cynthio sat quietly enjoying a book, or music, in the saloon together, sir Toby would be luxuriating in a cool stoop of wine in the buttery-bar; or discussing a bowl of Ipocras in the orchard, while Feste trolled him a merry song; ever chatting, bantering, toying, drinking, joking, or singing.

“Give me more of that pickle-herring. I'm athirst like the salt sea-sand, which never tires of sucking in;” he would say.

“Pickle-herring! How shall that mend your drouth?” exclaimed Maria.

“What, wench? Doth it not provoke drinking,—and is not drink a quencher of thirst?”

“'Tis but a satisfaction once removed;” said Feste; “and happy is he that hath satisfaction so near at hand. No farther out of reach than one remove off, is no intolerably deferred content, methinks, for poor humanity; which mostly hath its cravings beyond mortal gratifying.”

“Yonder is Malvolio pacing up and down the terrace-walk, stupidly sedate, like a fish going his rounds in a glass vase;” said Maria; “an' you keep up this noisy talk, he'll overhear you; and then he'll think it his duty to bid you be quiet, out of consideration to my lady. He's of so fractious a virtue, that reproof hath more relish to his palate than anchovy; and he indulges his taste, under pretence of regard for my lady's wishes. Be less loud, for the love of peace and quiet.”

“Marry, when the knight is in his cups, he becometh over strepent;” said the clown. “As my

lady's loving uncle, beseech you, sir Toby, be less nuncupative. Pity that your joys should not be joys unless they be audible. Emulate the mouse in his cheese, who nibbles on in plenitude of smothered satisfaction."

"Hang such hole and corner doings say I!" roared sir Toby. "Give me an honest open debauch! Come, Maria; let's have t'other flagon."

Sometimes sir Toby would meet sir Andrew at a place he called his *cubiculo*,—where he had sleeping quarters in the neighbourhood; and would take *l'este* with him to make merry, and sing to them. The clown had a trick of *rhodomontade* in his jesting, which mightily took the two knights; and he spared not to use it for their amusement. Sir Andrew doted on him; and lavished money on his singing, and praise on his wit.

"He's passing excellent at it;" he would say. "I know not whether I don't prefer it to mine own. Mine is more like a natural fooling—but his is a gift of art."

"And who shall say thou art not natural,—a very natural?" returned his friend sir Toby.

"Who indeed?" said the clown. "For so sure as Anaxarchus was no flincher, so Diodorus Siculus was as much a tapster as a stay-at-home; and how shalt thou prove the stars to be sparks, but by allowing that the moon is made of sea-water? Thou art no sager than cheese, if thou canst not dispute me these things scholarly and wisely."

Meantime, Cynthio grew rapidly worse. He could not now stir from the couch on which he had used occasionally to rest. His sister constantly occupied a seat near,—reading to him from some choice volume, or playing to him on her lute, some favorite air; breathing it, soft-toned and musical, in her sweet voice. She could not bear to quit him now for an instant; although she did not yet allow herself to own

her fear that there was danger ; she could not, would not, believe that he was so ill,—dying. He looked so fair, so young, it seemed impossible that he had lived out his life ; that he had reached the end of his existence. But involuntarily she felt that she must husband her time with him, that she must treasure up every moment, for that they should not be long together. She grew miserly of each instant spent by his side, and jealous of each second that took her away.

The duke Orsino came one morning as was his frequent wont ; but he saw that in the sitting-room they usually occupied, and into which he was shown, the brother and sister sat no longer. Malvolio, with his grave face, and stilted manner, was explaining to his grace how it was that the countess Olivia, in order to spare her brother the fatigue of descending a flight of stairs, had had the couch disposed for him in her own apartment, when Maria glided into the room, like the reflection of the sun in a looking-glass, flitting upon a wall, and said that her lady prayed the duke to excuse her from receiving him that morning, as she was in close attendance upon her brother. Orsino sent a message of courteous sympathy in return, saying that he would not detain her, but that he trusted she would indulge him with an interview, were it but for one moment, as he could not return, without a word of assurance from her own lips, respecting the condition of her brother. The duke awaited with a beating heart, the answer to his message. The door of the apartment opened, and to his disappointment he beheld Feste.

“ Good fellow, I had hoped to have seen thy mistress ; will she not accord me an instant, will she not come, think you ? ”

“ She is coming, my lord ; ” replied the clown. “ I announce the presence of my mistress, as the dial’s gnomon shadows forth the blaze of noon. ”

When the young countess entered, she made the

duke a graceful apology for having at first declined seeing him ; but owned that her brother's state was now so precarious as to make her unwilling to leave his side for however short a space of time.

The duke's manner of expressing his sympathy with her anxiety, was so warm, so particular, that Olivia, for the first time perceived his attachment for herself. The embarrassment which this discovery occasioned her, told Orsino that his secret was guessed. He could no longer refrain from urging his suit. He told her that he had loved her from the first moment he beheld her ; that he had only been deterred from declaring his passion from respect to her filial grief ; that he now besought her to listen favorably to his suit, which he trusted might find acceptance and sanction from both herself and brother.

There was something inauspicious in her manner, as she prepared to reply, that caused Orsino to add hurriedly that he would not urge an answer now ; that he would not detain her longer from her brother, to whom he entreated she would confide his proposals, as he trusted to Cynthio's friendship to dispose her graciously towards them ; and that he should hope, the next time he came to Casa Benucci, to receive with the news of Cynthio's better health, confirmation of his own happiness.

No sooner had the duke withdrawn, than Olivia hastened back to her brother.

There was a look of blushing confusion visible in her, as she reappeared, that confirmed a thought which had occupied Cynthio's mind while she was away. He had not been so long a passionate lover himself, without having learned to detect the symptoms of a silent passion in another. He had for some time marked the ill-concealed preference of Orsino for his sister, as well as the unconsciousness of its existence on her part. He saw that she had not the most distant suspicion of the duke's attachment ; but he could not believe but that when it should be declared, it

would win for him all the regard from her, which the love of so noble, so well-graced a being as Orsino deserved. He had seen that this love could not rest much longer unavowed ; and when Orsino's second message was delivered that morning, pressing to see her but for a moment, Cynthio had felt that this was the occasion when all would be avowed. Olivia's countenance, on her return, told him how truly he had presaged.

He held out his hand to her, as she took her usual low seat beside his couch.

“ I fear that you have dismissed his grace with less than your usual grace, sister mine ;” he said playfully. “ Your love for your brother will make you scant in courtesy to your guests ; and this must not be, for the honor of our house. You know, by our father's will, you are left in the protection of your brother ; and he must take care that you consult the dignity of the family in every particular of your conduct.”

“ 'Tis for the honor of our house, and the dignity of the family, both, that love should take precedence of courtesy, that a brother should be held dearer than a guest ;” she replied in the same tone, delighted to find him able to rally into cheerfuller mood than had been his for some time.

“ Than a guest, ay ;” returned her brother with smiling emphasis. “ Orsino is our guest. The duke of Illyria is our honored guest.”

“ Our honored guest ;” she replied.

“ Our welcome guest ;” Cynthio added.

“ Our welcome guest ;” she repeated.

“ No more ?” he asked looking into her downcast face.

She did not answer. And Cynthio reverted to what he had said before :—“ By our father's will, he left Olivia in the protection of her brother. But in sooth, it should have been the brother who was left in the protection of the sister. Olivia's gentle bravery of

heart, her loving strength, her constancy and care, make her the guardian—not I. What would become of me, poor, frail, puny youth, were it not for the courageous, noble woman? But so it is, the manly prerogative is to be maintained; and thus the young countess Olivia is left in the guardianship, the protection, of the young count, her brother,—the son, the heir of the house. Come then, let me exercise a little of this guardian authority, this right of protection. Do you acknowledge it?"

"Entirely;" she said, with her smiling eyes full on his.

"Orsino is not merely duke of Illyria;" said Cynthio; "he is a noble gentleman, high and honorable in principle; refined and pure in feeling; accomplished, well-gifted, brave, learned; young, and very handsome."

He paused. His sister's eyes had drooped from their open gaze. She thought:—"He wishes this alliance! Can I thwart him? Can I tell him how averse my own wishes are? Can I oppose them to his? Can I deny Cynthio aught he desires?"

The brother's thought was:—"She loves him! Let me not be selfish, and keep her by my side, when her heart has found it can love even more tenderly than it has done yet. Because her brother has hitherto possessed the treasure of her love, let him not grudge its bestowal when she herself would yield it to one, who, though he cannot return it more truly, may yet requite it more fully and happily to herself. Why should I bid her rest satisfied with brother-love, when she has learned that there is yet a dearer love? Why should I, because she is the most loving of sisters, limit her generous heart to sister-love, doom her to know none other than brother-love? The more deeply and fondly her brother loves her, the more it behoves him to take heed that his own love do not become a selfish love; nor preclude her from the joys of love itself."

“ Well, what says my sister ? My ward ? What says Olivia to her brother,—her guardian ?” he resumed.

“ That Orsino is all you have described him ;” she replied softly.

“ And this noble gentleman, rich-gifted by nature as by fortune, has told my sister, that all the good gifts of nature and fortune are valueless in his eyes, unless she will give them their crowning value by accepting them ?” said Cynthio.

“ I cannot deny that he tendered himself to me,—that he professed love for me,—this very morning ;” said Olivia.

“ And he felt what he professed. Orsino loves you. I have long seen it ;” said Cynthio.

“ And oh, my brother, you wish that I should accept his love !” she exclaimed.

“ Ay, if you love him ;” Cynthio said.

“ But I do not—I cannot love him ! That is——” she paused.

“ That is, you have only just discovered you love him ; and so start from the first avowing of your new-found secret. But fear not to speak frankly to your brother, my Olivia ; think how often he has derived consolation from his feelings being known to you.”

“ Dared I speak frankly to you, Cynthio mine,—dared I tell you all that is in my heart, without fear of opposing your wishes——” she faltered.

“ Speak frankly, honestly ; there should be no shadow of reserve between you and me ;” he said.

“ Tell me that you have not seen Orsino’s excellences without yielding them their due tribute ; tell me that you have not heard his love, without requital. Be not afraid to tell your brother that you have found one whom you love only better than himself. Be not afraid that he will be so selfish, so unworthy, as to repine at this most natural impulse of a heart so rich in loving capability as yours.”

As he continued to speak she looked up ; and once

more her eyes met his with smiling, happy, open, fullness of regard.

“ And it is in the thought that my heart is engaged in this suit, that you urge it? I might have known that my Cynthio’s sole thought would have been for his sister,—for her happiness, above all. Dear brother, know that my happiness is to remain with you ; I seek no other love than yours ; I love none other than my Cynthio, my brother.”

“ But can it be that Orsino’s fine qualities, his many excellences, have failed in inspiring a yet more powerful affection? I know my Olivia’s love for her brother—as genuine, as devoted, as noble a love as ever dwelt in the heart of sister ;—but has no tenderer feeling touched that gentle heart? May it not unconsciously have yielded to the worth and manly beauty of Orsino?”

“ Not a whit ;” and she looked with so clear, so transparent a truth, into her brother’s face as she spoke, that he could not but give credence to the entire sincerity of her smiling words. “ To tell thee sooth, my Cynthio,—and now, remember, I am confessing in all honesty of avowal to my guardian-brother,—to tell thee the very inmost of my heart, I will own that it is not such a favor as Orsino’s that could win my wayward fancy. You speak of his manly beauty. To please my fastidious taste, there must be a delicacy, a grace, a subduing gentleness and sweetness, in the youth I could love, which I do not find in my lord duke. I could describe to thee precisely the sort of being, to whom, methinks, I could give my whole heart, were it not that instead of painting thee a picture, thou wouldst say I but held up a mirror before thee.”

“ A sorry image, sister mine ;” he said with his own sad, sweet smile ; “ what should so weakly, so effeminate-framed, so baby-faced a being as I, present, to win the liking of such a woman as my Olivia? Nay, nay, thy partiality would make me believe im-

possibilities. Thou wouldst as soon fall in love with a girl, as with such a girlish-looking youth as thy Cynthio."

"Could a girl look like the glorious creature I see before me," Olivia said, with enthusiasm, as she gazed upon her beloved young brother, and thought of all the noble qualities, the high heart and mind that were enshrined within that delicate face and slender form, "I should sooner be bewitched into losing my heart to such a semblance, than to the substantial proportions, and giant bulk of my lord duke. His grace's grace is not the grace that findeth grace with me. He is over tall and portly to please mine eye; his bearing too lofty and commanding to suit my taste. No, when I can find a youth, with eyes at once soul-appealing and sportive, brow white and smooth, yet with such intelligence as ought to bring wrinkles; mouth both sweet and serious, limbs of slender mould, and deportment gentle as sincere, giving earnest of the high spirit within, then, and then only will I love,—love as you would have me. Till then, I'll content myself with mine own love, my love for my brother, and with his for me."

"Best and dearest of sisters!" exclaimed Cynthio, as he drew her to his heart.

And when this well-beloved brother expired,—yielding his last breath in her arms, and blessing her for all that she had been to him,—what wonder that Olivia, in her first paroxysm of grief, shut herself up from the world, vowing to abjure the very face of the sun for the space of seven years, and observing well-nigh cloistral seclusion in her own apartment, that she might dedicate her thoughts wholly to his memory? Orsino sent hourly embassages of enquiry, condolence, and sympathy; but dreading a renewal of his suit, she sent coldly courteous replies. Her kinsman sir Toby, and her household, with a respectful observance of her mourning sorrow, pursued their

own devices apart, and as far from her ken as might be.

Once however, the knight had been spending a roystering evening with sir Andrew Ague-cheek ; he had sat up, the night through, roaring songs and catches with Feste, the clown, and, with him, had reeled home to the mansion at day-break. This disorderly, and ill-timed conduct, had much offended the lady Olivia ; and when, some hours later, the jester came into her presence trying to disarm her anger, and make his peace, by a few of his usual sallies, she turned from him in displeasure, saying :—

“ *Take the fool away.* ”

How the fool was pardoned ; how the wiseacre was befooled ; how the lady found her ideal embodied ; how the waiting-maid married the knight ; and how the duke wedded a damsel-page in lieu of the countess ; with “ each circumstance of place, time, fortune,” may now be known, since “ golden time convents,” and “ Twelfth-night, or what you will,” awaits you.





PASSAGES IN THE PLAYS

IN RELATION TO

FACTS, NAMES, AND SENTIMENTS,

WITH WHICH IT WAS REQUISITE THE TALES SHOULD ACCORD.

TALE X.

- Page 7,
line 1. “Even or odd, of all days in the year,
Come *Lammis-Eve* at night, shall she be four-
teen.”—ROMEO AND JULIET, Act i., s. 3.
- Page 11,
line 32. ‘Polenta’ is a boiled mash ; sometimes made
of chesnut-flour, but mostly of maize. ‘Su di
sopra’ is a common Italian idiom for up stairs.
- Page 12,
line 38. We learn lady Capulet’s Christian name,
from her fussy lord’s words, where he is pot-
tering about, giving orders for hastening the
wedding feast. Among other injunctions, he
says : —
“Look to the bak’d meats, good *Angelica* ;
Spare not for cost.”—*Ibid.*, Act iv., s. 4.
- Page 20,
line 33. From several passages in the play we trace
that Capulet is an elderly man. That his wife
must be considerably his junior, we find from
what she says to her daughter, just after we
have learned that Juliet is scarcely fourteen :—
* * * * * “by my count,
I was your mother, much upon these years
That you are a maid.”—*Ibid.*, Act i., s. 4.
- Page 25,
line 8. At the period when the Veronese date the
events of Romeo and Juliet’s history, the
Scaligers ruled over Verona ; and Shakespeare
has given the prince the name of Escalus.

Page 26,
line 4.

Capulet's early gallantries may be inferred from his gossiping talk with a kinsman at the commencement of the masquerade scene ; and afterwards, from those few words between him and lady Capulet,—which also furnish hints for her jealousy, as wrought out in the tale :—

Cap. * * * * “What! I have watch'd
ere now

All night for lesser cause, and ne'er been sick.

La. Cap. Ay, you have been a mouse-hunt in
your time ;

But I will watch you from such watching now.

Cap. A jealous-hood, a jealous-hood !”

Ibid., Act iv., s. 4.

Page 33,
line 33.

La. Cap. “Tybalt, my cousin! *O my
brother's child!*”—*Ibid.*, Act iii., s. 1.

Page 36,
line 14.

A custom that obtains in Italy to this very
day.

Page 43,
line 31.

See the nurse's speech of reminiscence, in the
third scene of the play.

Page 46,
line 33.

We have Tybalt's fencing-school proficiency, together with his fiery pride of spirit, hit off in Mercutio's humorous description :—“The very butcher of a silk button, a duellist, a duellist; a gentleman of the very house,—of the first and second cause : Ah, the immortal pas-sado ! the punto reverso !”

Page 49,
line 29.

They, to whom lady Capulet's conduct may appear over-coloured in the tale, are referred to the passage in the play, where she betrays her vindictive Italian nature by the deliberate proposal of despatching the “villain, Romeo,” who has killed her nephew Tybalt :—

“We will have vengeance for it, fear thou not :
Then weep no more. I'll send to one in
Mantua,—

Where that same banish'd runagate doth live,—
That shall bestow on him so sure a draught,
That he shall soon keep Tybalt company.

* * * * *

Find thou the means, and I'll find such a man.”

ROMEO AND JULIET, Act iii., s. 5.

- Page 52,
line 35. 'Prender chiesa' is a common idiom for taking sanctuary.
- Page 73,
line 13. For a description of 'pazienzi,' see Tale VII., p. 55.
- Page 80,
line 30. "Three civil brawls, bred of an airy word,
By thee, old Capulet, and Montague,
Have thrice disturb'd the quiet of our streets ;"
Ibid., Act i., s. 1.
- Page 81,
line 1. Into the mouth of Capulet himself is put this testimony to the fair reputation of Romeo,—
heir of the rival house :—
"He bears him like a portly gentleman ;
And, to say truth, Verona brags of him,
To be a virtuous and well-govern'd youth."
Ibid., Act i., s. 5.
- Page 81,
line 13. Romeo speaks thus of Mercutio :—
"This gentleman, *the prince's near ally,*
My very friend, hath got his mortal hurt
In my behalf."
And afterwards, Benvolio, addressing the prince, says :—
"There lies the man, slain by young Romeo,
That slew *thy kinsman,* brave Mercutio."
Ibid., Act iii., s. 1.
- Page 94,
line 38. Among the written list of Capulet's friends, invited to his entertainment, occurs :—"the lady widow of Vitruvio."—*Ibid.*, Act i., s. 2.
- Page 124,
line 35. Juliet's observant delight in Nature's beauties, may be inferred from one line alone that she utters :—
"It was the nightingale, and not the lark,
That pierc'd the fearful hollow of thine ear :
Nightly she sings on yon pomegranate tree."
Ibid., Act iii., s. 5.
- Page 127,
line 1. In the list before alluded to, of Capulet's invited guests, her name thus appears :—"My fair *niece,* Rosaline." Her identity with Romeo's first love is to be traced from Benvolio's

saying to him, immediately after it is read aloud :—

“ At this same ancient feast of Capulet’s
Sups the fair Rosaline, whom thou so lov’st.”

The hints for her character are taken from what we hear of her from Romeo himself, from friar Laurence, and from Mercutio ; the last of whom calls her “ that same pale-hearted wench, that Rosaline.”—ROMEO AND JULIET, Act ii., s. 4.

Page 128,
line 11. “ She hath forsworn to love ; and, in that vow,
Do I live dead, that live to tell it now.”
Ibid., Act i., s. 1.

Page 129,
line 17. That Juliet has never beheld Romeo previously to the commencement of the play, the poet has conveyed to us in the passage :—

Jul. “ What’s he, that follows there, that
would not dance ?

Nurse. I know not.

Jul. Go, ask his name :—if he be married,
My grave is like to be my wedding-bed.

Nurse. His name is Romeo, and a Montague ;
The only son of your great enemy.

Jul. My only love sprung from my only hate !
Too early seen unknown, and known too late !”
Ibid., Act i., s. 5.

Page 132,
line 5. See those exquisite lines of Benvolio’s in reply to his friend’s mother, lady Montague :—

“ Madam, an hour before the worshipp’d sun,
Peer’d forth the golden window of the east,
A troubled mind drave me to walk abroad :
Where,—underneath *the grove of sycamore,*
That westward rooteth from the city’s side,—
So early walking did I see your son :
Towards him I made ; but he was ’ware of me,
And stole into the covert of the wood.”

Ibid., Act i., s. i.

Page 132,
line 15. For Benvolio’s repute in fence, see Mercutio’s banter, at the commencement of the third act of the play,

TALE XI.

- Page 139,
line 12. The warrant for Gaetano's existence, lies in the words of Leonato to Antonio : "How now, brother ? Where is my cousin, your son ?"
MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING, Act i., s. 2.
- Page 140,
line 13. Leonato when he is affecting to commiserate Beatrice's supposed hopeless passion, says of her :—"I am sorry for her, as I have just cause, being *her uncle and her guardian.*"
Ibid., Act ii., s. 3.
- Page 152,
line 35. The Greek legend was, that the sickle of Saturn falling on this spot, gave the harbour its form.
- Page 153,
line 13. We are told that Sicilian manna is an exudation of the sweet sap of the ormus, a species of ash which grows in the mountainous parts of the island.
- Page 221,
line 27. *Leon.* "Niece, will you look to those things I told you of ?"—*Ibid.*, Act ii., s. 2.
- Page 223,
line 32. "bid her steal into the pleached bower,
Where honey-suckles, ripen'd by the sun,
Forbid the sun to enter."—*Ibid.*, Act iii., s. 1.
- Page 227,
line 5. "I saw *the duchess of Milan's* gown, that they praise so."—*Ibid.*, Act iii., s. 4.
- Page 230,
line 25. *D. Pedro.* "She cannot endure to hear tell of a husband."
Leon. O, by no means ; she mocks all her wooers out of suit."—*Ibid.*, Act ii., s. 2.
- Page 234,
line 30. Leonato says, after hearing the high report of the messenger concerning Claudio :—"He hath an uncle here in Messina will be very much glad of it."
- Page 236,
line 38. *Urs.* "I know you well enough ; you are signor Antonio."
Ant. At a word, I am not.
Urs. I knew you by *the wagging of your head.*"—*Ibid.*, Act ii., s. 1.
- Page 238,
line 21. The hints for this attachment of Balthazar's, are taken from a few words of his to Margaret

in the masquerade scene ; and from those he utters just before his song, in a subsequent scene :—

“ Many a wooer doth commence his suit
To her he thinks not worthy; yet he woos.”

Ibid., Act ii., s. 3.

Page 243, Benedick's first greeting to Beatrice in the
line 7. play, is :—“ What, my dear *lady Disdain!*
are you yet living ?”—*Ibid.*, Act i., s. 1.

Page 243, ‘ *Bella donna*,’—the botanical name for the
line 19. deadly nightshade.

Page 243, Vide Ariosto,—for lost wits sought in the
line 31. moon.

Page 244, That don Pedro's last visit to Messina took
line 1. place about a twelvemonth before the play
begins, may be inferred from Borachio's
words :—“ I think I told your lordship, *a year*
since, how much I am in the favor of Margaret,
the waiting gentlewoman to Hero.”

Ibid., Act ii., s. 2.

TALE XII.

Page 267, The clown's name is ascertained, where the
line 23. duke asks for “ that old and antique song,”
his attendant answering :—“ He is not here, so
please your lordship, that should sing it.

Duke. Who was it ?

Cūr. *Feste*, the jester, my lord ; a fool, that
the lady Olivia's father took much delight in.”

TWELFTH NIGHT, Act ii., s. 4.

Page 279, Maria's diminutive stature is clearly denoted
line 10. in several passages of the play ; among others,
sir Toby's exclamation on her approach :—
“ Look where the youngest wren of nine comes.”

Ibid., Act iii., s. 2.

Page 297, Maria,—when her confederates in the plot
line 34. against Malvolio are placed by her where they
may watch and overhear him,—says :—“ Get
ye all three into the *box-tree*.”

Ibid., Act ii., s. 5.

- Page 307,
line 36. The chantry belonging to the household, is mentioned by Olivia in the third scene of the fourth Act, as the place where her betrothal with Sebastian can be immediately solemnized.
- Page 308,
line 18. Fabian owes Malvolio a grudge, for having "brought me out of favor with my lady, about a bear-baiting."—*Ibid.*, Act ii., s. 5.
- Page 335,
line 24. Mr. Leigh Hunt, in those delightful notes to his translation of Redi's *Bacchus in Tuscany*, tells us that Redi says:—"Our language makes use not only of diminutives, but of the diminutives of diminutives, even unto the third and fourth generation." And he himself adds:—"An Italian nurse will *piccininino* a little baby till there seems no end."
- Page 352,
line 7. Fabian says of sir Andrew:—"This is a dear manakin to you, sir Toby.
- Sir Toby.* I have been dear to him, lad; some two thousand strong, or so."
Ibid., Act iii., s. 2.
- Page 352,
line 25. "I am a great eater of beef, and I believe that does harm to my wit."—*Ibid.*, Act i., s. 3.
- Page 352,
line 34. Of sir Toby's intimacy with Maria, we have hints, from the clown's speech to her in the fifth scene of the first Act; from the knight's boast of her "adoring him," in the third scene of the second Act; from the tone of his raptures at her "device" against Malvolio in the fifth scene of the same act; and from Fabian's report of their marriage at the conclusion of the play.
- Page 354,
line 10. *Sir And.* "Where shall I find you?
Sir Toby. We'll call thee at the *cubiculo*."
Ibid., Act iii., s. 2.







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