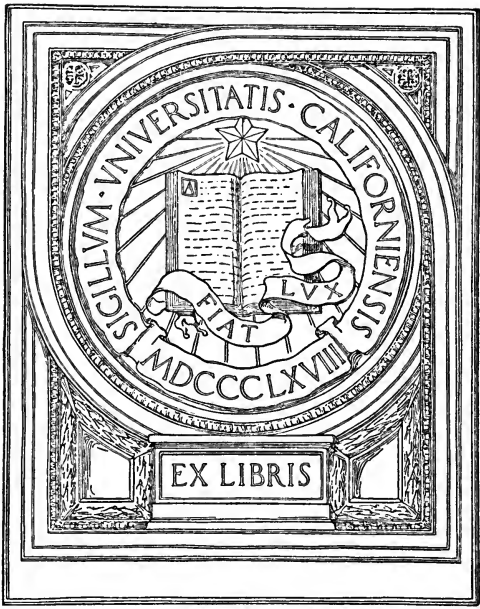





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PETTICOAT GOVERNMENT.

A NOVEL.

BY

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AUTHOR OF "THE LOTTERY OF MARRIAGE," "FATHER EUSTACE," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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PETTICOAT GOVERNMENT.

CHAPTER I.

ABOUT a quarter of a century ago there resided in a cathedral town, which we will distinguish by the name of Westhampton—chiefly because we know of no town so called—a very respectable family of the name of Jenkyns. They lived in a house which, though not in the close, was very near it, and which, better still, was built very much in the same handsome, substantial style as the prebendal houses.

This mansion had been in the possession of the Jenkyns' family for several successive gene-

rations, and during the whole of this period it had never been inhabited by any one who did not bear the name; a circumstance which, of course, greatly added to the respect in which the residence and its inhabitants were held, and this feeling was the stronger perhaps, because the magnates of a cathedral town are, of necessity, not hereditary magnates.

It was generally understood that the family were originally from Wales, and had, as all the Westhampton townspeople strenuously declared, very excellent blood in their veins; an advantage also of which they were, of course, justly proud, but which nevertheless had not prevented the race from being bankers in the said town of Westhampton, from father to son, pretty nearly from the time that country banking was first established in these realms.

The race of Jenkyns had hitherto not been a very prolific race, for though there had never been wanting a David Jenkyns, Esquire, to succeed to the banking business whenever the preceding David Jenkyns, Esquire, had been removed by death, there had never been any one of them, since the time of their first settle-

ment in Westhampton, who had been blessed with more than one son at the time of his death.

Neither were the daughters of the house very numerous, and of these the majority had died single, which may be accounted for by the fact that every successive David Jenkyns, Esquire, banker of Westhampton, had been uniformly of opinion that they owed it to themselves, their name, and their bank, not to diminish their credit, or the solid funds which supported it, by bestowing any very tempting amount of fortune on the daughters of their race; and the consequence of this was that, though their family connexions had not greatly increased, the family property had never been lessened.

But for some years before the time at which my narration begins, this regular succession of Westhampton Jenkynses was overthrown, and their bank extinguished by the want of a male heir.

The last David Jenkyns had married a beautiful young woman immediately upon the demise of his father, which took place

when this son had attained the age of thirty-five years, and of this marriage four female Jenkynses were born, but that was all: no little David arrived to bless his grey hairs, and carry on his bank.

The regret occasioned by this was great; but the last male Jenkyns was a worthy, sensible man, and neither tormented himself, his wife, nor his daughters on the subject. Yet, notwithstanding this peaceable disposition, he was not long-lived; departing in peace at the age of fifty-five.

He bequeathed to his wife four hundred a-year for her life, together with the use of the house which had been the scene of their one score years of peaceful union, and all that was contained in the said house in the way of plenishing. The rest of his property he left to be divided in equal portions between his four daughters, with the proviso, however, that if any one or more of them should remain single at the death of their mother, the house and plenishing should belong to them, to the exclusion of such as might at that time be married.

His widow survived him just twenty years, during which time she had seen her eldest and her youngest daughter married. But the marriages were not greatly to her satisfaction, for, considering that both the young ladies were as lovely as she had been herself, and possessed moreover fortunes amounting to the respectable sum of ten thousand pounds each, she thought that they might have done better.

Penelope, the eldest, had in truth married as imprudently as it was well possible for a young lady to do, having bestowed her pretty self, and her pretty fortune on her drawing-master, a very clever artist, and a very fascinating companion, but a singularly imprudent, yet by no means a worthless man. Though positively without a vice, and gifted with abounding talents of all kinds, he contrived somehow or other to get through rather more than half her property before he died, leaving her with one son, who was just old enough to have acquired his father's passionate love for art, as well as the habit of devoting pretty nearly all his hours of study to the cultivation of it. He was an enthusiastic musician, too,

and this he likewise inherited from his father, as well as his magnificent dark eyes, his fascinating smile, and handsome form ; but with all this, and a multitude of fine moral qualities to boot, this orphan son was an anxious treasure to his widowed mother, who having been long resident at Rome, remained there for many years after her husband's death, with little or no intercourse with her offended family.

The marriage of Judith, the youngest of Mrs. Jenkyns' four daughters, was less unfortunate, though, at the time it was formed, it was far from appearing prudent, for the young man was on the eve of his departure for India, with very little besides a cadet's commission in the Company's service by way of a provision for himself and his beautiful wife. In this case, however, the marriage did not take place by stealth, like that of the elder sister, and the pretty Judith's fortune was settled upon herself and her offspring. Moreover, the young man lived long enough to attain the rank of Colonel, having distinguished himself on more than one occasion as a gallant soldier.

He had likewise enjoyed the still more solid advantage of obtaining so profitable a government contract as enabled him, in a few years, to realize a very considerable sum of money ; and then he died, poor man, just when he was arranging his affairs in such a manner as might enable him to revisit Europe with his wife and family.

Colonel Maitland left three children ; but scarcely had his widow sufficiently recovered from the shock occasioned by his sudden death to permit her to renew the preparations for her homeward voyage, than her eldest child, a son, and her youngest child, a daughter, were seized with cholera, which carried them off in a few hours. Judith, a girl about sixteen, escaped the fatal malady by being on a visit to some distant friends, and it was some weeks before her mother thought it safe to recall her. But when she came at last, it was only to receive the last sigh of that broken-hearted mother whose health had failed even before that of her husband, and who had no strength to bear the load of sorrow that had fallen on her.

By the will of her father the young Judith, as his sole heiress, inherited all the property he left, as well as the ten thousand pounds settled upon her mother ; and knowing little, and caring less, about anything that was likely to happen to her for the future, the weeping orphan was shipped off to England to be made a ward in Chancery, with a fortune somewhat above forty thousand pounds, and a sort of testamentary letter from her poor mother to her two maiden sisters, entreating them to apply to the proper authorities for permission to take the personal charge of the young heiress, and to supply to her the place of the parents, the brother, and the sister she had so suddenly lost.

CHAPTER II.

WHILE these events occurred to the two married daughters of the Jenkyns family, the two spinster sisters of the same respectable race had passed the interval with much less of adventure, and much less apparent change of condition ; but although they were still Miss Barbara Jenkyns, and Miss Elfreda Jenkyns, as they had been at the time of their father's decease, they had nevertheless passed through a variety of quiet little transitions which had brought them to a condition as little resembling that in which his death had left them, as if, among other changes, they had changed their names also.

Whether it be the natural sequence of cause

and effect, or the result of a special dispensation of Providence, may be considered, perhaps, as a matter of doubt ; but it is, speaking generally, an admitted fact that in a family of several daughters, those who are considered as the beauties among them are less inclined to be studious, than those who are considered as not beauties.

This was very decidedly the case in the Jenkyns family. The eldest and the youngest daughters were very pretty girls, and though they were neither of them particularly silly, or particularly coquettish, they certainly had, somehow or other, a vast deal more of visiting dress, and visiting acquaintance, to attend to, than their plainer sisters.

Miss Barbara Jenkyns, the second daughter, being a quick-sighted, discerning young lady, was not yet twenty years old when she discovered that the officers never, or very rarely, asked her to dance ; for even in those peaceful days there was generally a small detachment of military quartered in the commodious barracks of Westhampton. She observed, also, that at the archery meetings for which the

neighbourhood was particularly celebrated; some reason or other was always found why it would be more convenient for her eldest sister, or her youngest sister, or both of them, to belong to the set that were to wear the uniform, &c. &c. &c., than either her sister Elfreda or herself. Nor was Miss Elfreda, the third sister, at all less quick in making the same sort of discoveries; and not long after the death of their father they talked the matter over together, and their two heads conjointly were quite equal to the task of discovering the why and the wherefore of these peculiarities.

“The fact is,” observed Miss Barbara, “that both Penelope and Judith are what is called regular beauties; and you may take my word for it, Elfreda, there is not a greater bore in the world than the having a regular beauty belonging to you. I do not believe that I *am* particularly ugly, because mamma always says I have such a good nose. You, Elfreda, have not any one good feature in your face, and therefore, of course, I suppose you are particularly ugly. However, there is nobody will deny, I think, that we are both of us ten

thousand times cleverer than they are. And, moreover, you and I know, if nobody else happens to remember it, that this beautiful large house, and every thing in it, is to belong, after mamma's death, to whichever of us continues to remain single. And with ten thousand pounds a-piece, I cannot but think that I, for instance, with my ecclesiastical information, and my high principles upon church and state, you know, and all that sort of thing, I cannot but think it will be strange if I do not make myself count for somebody, in such a place as this. As to the officers, I don't care one single straw for the whole set of them! A parcel of idiots, that are here to-day, and gone to-morrow!—I would rather have a good long talk, or a rubber of whist either, with the very ugliest old prebend of the whole set, than with the finest red-coat of them all."

To all which Miss Elfreda replied with equal quickness and sagacity :—

"If I *am* uglier than you, sister Barbara," she said, "so much the better for me ; for the uglier I am, the better my chance of being let

alone and permitted to remain as I am, and so of going half-and-half shares in the house with you. But you seem to forget my pretty feet, my dear. Mamma says I have the best legs and feet of the whole family. However, I don't want any body to fall in love with my legs and feet, not I, for I should not like to shape my intellect so as to please any man. I would not marry one of the clerical set if all their wives were in heaven to-morrow, and I had first choice of the bishop, dean, prebends, and minor canons, with the singing men into the bargain. And as to the red-coats, I never saw one yet that I liked well enough to give up my fortune to amuse him, instead of spending it myself. However, Barbara, if it really should happen that we two are left in the possession of this house and all it contains, there will be no occasion, you know, for us both to be always living in it. I am quite ready to allow *your* superiority to the beauties in all intellectual matters, and I don't suppose you will deny mine. Upon my honour I don't believe that they, either of them, know the difference between the occiput and the frontal

sinus, any more than the cook-maid or the footman. And as to the distinction of races, and all the immensely important doctrines connected with it, I doubt if they could comprehend the very simplest phrase that could be uttered on the subject."

"Likely enough!" responded Miss Barbara. "In fact, they neither of them seem to me to comprehend any thing beyond the most becoming way of putting on a bonnet, or arranging a scarf. It is really pitiable! Heaven knows I do not envy their beauty, and I should be sorry to think that you did, either; though I can't say that I think your wearing smaller shoes than the rest of us is likely to make much difference."

"Never mind my small shoes, Barbara," returned her sister with a smile, which, if rightly interpreted, might have been found to display the conviction of the small-footed sister that her advantage in this particular branch of beauty *was* minded, and very much minded, by the rest of the family. "Never mind my small feet; they can't have any thing to do, you know, with what I was saying about

the house. There would be no occasion, I suppose, for us both to live here always? I am sure there is no such clause as that in my father's will. London is the only fitting residence for a person so devoted to science as I am, and I don't think I shall ever be happy any where else. We could divide the value of the house, you know, without my living in it."

"We can settle all that when the time comes," replied the very sensible Miss Barbara; and for several years no more was said on the subject, though it may be that it was often in the thoughts of both.

But, though not very speedily, this time came at last, and then the discussion was renewed; and the settlement of the question appeared to involve some difficulties.

At the time of Mrs. Jenkyns' death Miss Barbara had attained the mature age of forty-three, and her sister Elfreda was two years her junior. Miss Barbara, or more properly speaking, Miss Jenkyns, gave it as her opinion that the best thing they could do, would be to continue to live together in the commodious mansion which the thought-

ful kindness of their good father had provided for them.

The two sisters were at this time each of them in possession of rather more than fifteen thousand pounds,—the respective share of their mother's settlement, together with their own savings during the twenty years which had elapsed since the death of their father, amounting together to this sum. And the income of this, as Miss Jenkyns the elder very judiciously observed, must and ought to be fully sufficient to enable them to continue in the paternal mansion with perfect ease and comfort. But on this point Miss Elfreda most completely differed from her, and with a sturdiness of purpose not likely to be overcome.

It was not, however, because she really anticipated any pecuniary difficulties that Miss Elfreda objected to this plan, for she was herself an excellent manager, and well knew that her sister was so likewise; but the "living together" in the old-world ecclesiastical county town which had hitherto been their residence, accorded not in any way with either her wishes or intentions. She

felt that she was not born for such an existence as that.

“ I hope we are not going to quarrel about our poor dear father’s will,” said the younger sister, “ for the doing so could by no possibility do us any good, but might very likely bring us eventually to absolute penury ; for I am quite determined that I will try your right to make me live here in a court of law, Miss Jenkyns, before I yield to it,” was her reply to her sister’s proposal.

“ Very well, Miss Elfreda ; then let the law decide,” returned the elder. “ The intention of the good and wise testator,” she added, “ is obvious. He meant that the respectable house in which we were born, and the venerable city in which we were bred, should be our safeguard and protection through life, in case we remained single ; and it never entered his head, dear, blessed man ! that one of his children should pay rent to another of them, for permission to live in the house that it was his express purpose to bestow upon her as a dwelling without her paying any rent at all for it. It

must be queer logic that would prove this, I think."

"You have stated your case strongly, and cleverly enough, Miss Jenkyns, and it gives me pleasure to hear you," replied her sister; "for it would be really too mortifying if the conviction were forced upon me, that all my race were as completely idiots as Penelope and Judith have shown themselves. So you must not suppose that I have any intention whatever to quarrel with you. The folly of our quarrelling would indeed be preposterous. Nothing can be more agreeable than our prospects for the future, if we do not mar them by some folly of our own. My purpose is to establish myself in comfortable, lady-like lodgings in London, in a quarter not so fashionable as to make every inch of space important, nor yet so out of the way as to produce an obstacle to the easy visitings of my acquaintance. When thus established, I shall have much pleasure in receiving you as a visitor during the cold winter months—or weeks, during which you might find Westhampton dirty and dreary; and when London becomes

dull and dusty, I shall have great satisfaction in returning your visit. But I have no intention, while pursuing this very rational plan of existence, to commit the egregious folly of giving up my share of the property which was expressly left by our father for the consolation of such members of his family as did not happen to obtain the much-vaunted felicity of matrimonial love and protection. This is *my* case, sister Barbara. But as a proof of my sisterly confidence and affection, I will add that I have already had half an hour's perfectly unreserved conversation with our respected friend Mr. Price, who, after having read the clause in my father's will which we are now discussing, gave it as his professional opinion that if you went to law with me on the point you would not have a leg to stand upon, however large your feet may be. It seems highly probable, he says, that it was the project of our excellent father that such of his daughters as remained single should continue to reside together in the family mansion at Westhampton; but, inasmuch as his last will and testament makes no mention

whatever of such an arrangement as making a *condition*, upon which alone the single daughters can claim the benefit of the bequest, it becomes evident that we must, in some way or other, divide it."

Miss Barbara Jenkyns paid precisely such a degree of attention to this statement as proved that her intellectual faculties deserved the praise which her sister had bestowed upon them. She remained silent for a minute or two; then bowed her head, and said, "You, too, have stated your case clearly, Elfreda. I agree with you, entirely, in your opinion that there would be great folly in our quarrelling; and in my judgment, there would be great sin also: we will hope, therefore, that there is no likelihood that we *should* quarrel. But, as you have had the advantage of a friend's advice and I have not, we do not at this moment stand upon equal ground; for which reason I shall beg to be allowed two or three days,—let us say a week, if you please,—before I give you my final answer. You cannot object to this?"

"Nothing can be more reasonable," returned

Miss Elfreda. This was her only reply, as she rose to leave the room in which this conference had taken place; but ere she closed the door, after passing through it, she gave a little Parthian hint in these words, accompanied by a smile which, if it did not absolutely tip the dart with venom, very decidedly added to the sharpness of its point.

“ I hope it will not be *very* long before I hear of Dr. Wroughtley’s being admitted to the study, Miss Barbara, for, to say truth, I am anxious to have this question settled at once.”

Had there been no truth in the insinuation conveyed by these words, and the smile which accompanied them, Miss Barbara Jenkyns would not have coloured so vehemently; neither would she have tossed back the sable streamers of her cap with a movement expressive at once of so much indignation and contempt; however, she very soon recovered herself, for there was too much of conscious superiority about her (to say nothing of her conscious rectitude) for any such

idly quizzing looks and words to annoy her much.

Her somewhat long visage speedily recovered its ordinary hue, and her crape lappets were sedately and deliberately deposited behind her shoulders, as she sat down and wrote the following note:—

“ MY DEAR DOCTOR,

“ Perhaps, if not better engaged, you will give us the pleasure of your company this evening? I think I shall be able to get Mr. and Mrs. Eccles to join our rubber, and partake of a brace of birds afterwards, which have just reached us in very good order. But, if you do us the favour of coming, I must beg of you to let William show you into the study before you make your appearance in the drawing-room. I will not detain you there long, but I greatly wish for your opinion upon a subject of some importance.

“ Yours, very sincerely,

“ BARBARA JENKYNs.”

The doctor thus addressed, not being better

engaged, obeyed the summons, and was ushered, by the well-instructed William, into the study exactly half an hour before the time at which the *little* whist parties of Westhampton were accustomed to assemble.

CHAPTER III.

DR. WROUGHTLEY had begun his professional life as curate of a small parish in the north of England. But though a small parish, it was a rich rectory, and had, moreover, a very good house upon it; but the rector, who was honourable as well as reverend, found the air too keen for his lungs, and he was, therefore, indulged with a pretty nearly unlimited licence to reside abroad. Young Mr. Wroughtley, however, supplied his place extremely well, having a good-natured nod and smile for every poor body in the parish, and a very tolerable stock of college stories for the Lord of the Manor, with whom he faithfully dined, shot,

played whist, and smoked a cigar, whenever he was invited to do so during the thirty years that he continued to hold the curacy.

At the end of that time, the honourable and reverend rector fell a victim at last to the delicate state of his lungs, and a new incumbent arrived, with the intention of serving his own church, and living in his own house.

Moreover, the new rector, after a few inquiries made, became of opinion, that the parish being so very small a one, he could do the whole duty of it himself, and the more easily as he never shot, was but a rare diner-out, and had never smoked a cigar in his life. The curate, therefore, was dismissed at rather short notice, but with a year's salary.

But the Lord of the Manor was very greatly displeased at his being dismissed at all; the change indeed was disagreeable to him in many ways. The late curate had some particularly clever high-bred dogs, which were always at the Squire's service, but now the dogs were dismissed as well as the curate; nor did the opening the church for the performance of divine service three days in the week, instead

of one, appear to afford any consolation to the Squire for the closing the dog-kennel. In short, the Lord of the Manor was very angry, and, luckily for Mr. Wroughtley, he determined to revenge himself upon the new rector, by proving that he had influence enough to prevent a friend he valued from being "rolled in the mire," (it was thus he described the curate's dismissal,) by any fanatical high priest in the world.

This threat was put in execution by his using his interest with a near relation, who was in the Cabinet, for the appointment of his old companion to a stall; and within six months afterwards, the dismissed curate had become Dr. Wroughtley, and Prebend of West-hampton.

It is not necessary to trace minutely the history of the friendship which existed between this amiable dignitary and his estimable neighbour, Miss Barbara Jenkyns.

From the very first year of his appointment, Miss Barbara had felt that his arrival was an important and most agreeable addition to the society of "the Close." This impression had

never worn out, but, on the contrary, had rather gone on increasing from year to year, till he had become in her estimation, not only the most valuable member of the reverend, and every way admirable, circle, to which he belonged, but decidedly worth at least any three others that could have been named among their most intimate friends.

And here let me beg leave to observe, that if any light jesting be indulged in at the expense of Miss Barbara, under the supposition that she was, or ever had been, in love (as it is called) with the Rev. Dr. Wroughtley, Prebend of Westhampton, the jester so jesting will only expose herself, or himself, to the imputation of utter incapacity in the study of human nature through all its vast and beautiful varieties.

Miss Barbara Jenkyns was not in love with Dr. Wroughtley; she had no such stuff in her thoughts. She felt as certain, or very nearly as certain, that Dr. Wroughtley never would marry, as that her sister, Elfreda, never would marry; and it would have been scarcely pos-

sible in her estimation to have made assurance more sure than that.

No; Miss Barbara was not in love with Dr. Wroughtley; for she did not believe in the least degree, or at any rate in any degree of which she was herself conscious, that she should ever have it in her power to marry him,—and this, in a mind so thoroughly well regulated as hers, very fully justifies the assertion that she was not in love with him.

Nevertheless, there is another fact equally indisputable, and it is one that deserves attention, inasmuch as it throws a curious light upon the workings of the human mind. Dr. Wroughtley was still a bachelor, and had he not been a bachelor, Miss Barbara Jenkyns' feelings towards him would never have been of the exclusive nature that they certainly were.

The young and giddy, the unthinking, or the unphilosophical, may perhaps fancy that they discover a discrepancy between these two statements; but it is not so. In a society constituted like that of Westhampton, or in truth in any other where the same set continue long

together in frequent social intercourse, a gentleman so circumstanced, that is to say, a bachelor of easy fortune, social habits, and agreeable manners, is *sure* of becoming, in the eyes of all the ladies of his circle, a person of more importance than any other who is not a bachelor, even though they may, one and all, conform to and proclaim the belief that "he is not the least in the world likely to marry."

There are so many little things in which a bachelor's freedom from all domestic ties and restraints enables him to be so "perfect a treasure" to all the ladies of his acquaintance!—And the man who knows how to make the most of this, may keep up his value in every party in which he mixes, till he really renounces his success because he is weary of it.

Gentlemen of his own standing in life, as to age, may doubtless also make themselves of consequence in society, even though they are married; for they may give dinners, and balls, and card parties, and may, with great amenity, patronise races and pic-nics, and considerately invite young officers, barristers, and juvenile clergymen, whenever they come in their way.

But this rarely gives much pleasure, or is of any serious importance, save to the younger part of the female population, whose gay little hearts are ready to flutter at a moment's notice, and become tranquil again as suddenly if necessary, without being very much the worse for the emotion. But to that portion of the fair sex who have passed their "piping days" without entering the sobering pale of matrimony, the "confirmed bachelor" is by far a more interesting member of society than the most consequential married man can be.

These ladies, nevertheless, are not in love.—It would be uncivil, irreverend, and very idle to say they were; but so much benignity "doth hedge" a bachelor, that their own natures seem to soften as they approach one who has proved his full right to the interesting title by a sufficiently long avoidance of the marriage yoke.

I have made rather a long digression, in order fully to explain the nature of Miss Barbara Jenkyns' friendship for Dr. Wroughtley, and I now flatter myself that my readers are in no danger of mistaking her. It is true

that she did not, as we have already seen, always escape the sarcastic allusions of her sister Elfreda on the subject. But she was used to this, and did not mind it much. She had the comfort of knowing that Dr. Wroughtley himself did not mistake her; and it was for this reason that she now, as ever, permitted him to see that she considered his opinion as more valuable to her than that of any other individual of her acquaintance.

What his feelings were respecting Miss Barbara, will be easily divined as the narrative proceeds.

“This is very kind of you, my dear Doctor!” said Miss Barbara, as soon as the door of the study was shut upon them by the respectful, and scarcely-at-all-quizzing William, “very kind indeed!”

“How could any man be anything but kind to so charming a lady as Miss Barbara Jenkyns?” returned the worthy prebend, taking her very cordially by the hand, and not relinquishing the said hand till he had placed her commodiously in a chair close beside the fire (for it was a very cold November evening;)

and this chair was at no great distance from the doctor's well-known favorite stuffed friend, which ever stood with open arms, as if ready to receive him, upon the thick Turkey hearth-rug. And the fire now burnt brightly, for Miss Barbara knew that her reverend friend hated a dull-looking fire.

“But upon my word, Doctor, it is something more than kindness that I want now!” said Miss Barbara.

The very slightest twitch in the world of the doctor's left eyebrow might have been perceived by any one who had happened at that moment to be anxiously examining his features. The off corner of this left eyebrow descended a little, and the left corner of the mouth was a little elevated, as if to meet it, while at the same instant the eye that divided them was a little, a very little contracted. The whole manœuvre was instantaneous, and perhaps merely habitual; but it might have been mistaken by an ill-natured, or irreverend person, as indicating a propensity to a sort of merry wink, which would have been as unworthy of a prebend as of a friend.

“Well! Tell me all about it,” he replied, seizing with friendly familiarity the poker, in order to make the fire brighter still. “What can I do for you?”

“Advise me, Dr. Wroughtley! That is what you must do for me,” replied Miss Barbara.

“And on what subject, Miss Barbara?” he returned, warming his extended palms; and then adding, with an air that was perhaps a little too indifferent, “but tell me, first, who have you got to make up our rubber to-night?”

“No, my dear Doctor, I can’t tell you first, I will tell you afterwards; and when you hear what I have got to say, I am sure you will confess that it ought to be attended to first. It is about myself, Dr. Wroughtley, and my sister Elfreda.”

The doctor looked solemn, but nevertheless he raised one of his newly warmed hands to his chin and mouth as if to comfort them, and said, after the interval of a few seconds, “Let me hear, let me hear, Miss Barbara.”

The reader shall be spared the recapitula-

tion of the late Mr. Jenkyns' will, which followed, because he is sufficiently acquainted with it already. But to Dr. Wroughtley the particulars of it were new, and he listened to it with great attention.

“A very sensible, proper will, Miss Barbara,” he said, as soon as she had concluded her statement of its contents; “and to me you will readily believe that it is particularly agreeable, because it seems to assure me of the continued residence among us of valued neighbours, who have long been considered by the whole Close as if they were part and parcel of it.”

“You are very kind to say so, my dear sir,” replied the lady, this time arranging her crape lappets in two decorously straight lines in front of each shoulder; “but I am truly sorry to say,” she continued, “that there has been a difficulty raised by my sister Elfreda, which may make a very great difference as to that. She says now, Doctor, that she hates the place! Just fancy any one who has been born and bred in Westhampton, and lived all her life in the society of the Close, saying

that she hated the place, and would not remain in it one hour longer than she could help!"

"If *you* had said such a thing, Miss Barbara," replied the doctor, "I certainly should have been very much shocked at it. But God has seen fit to make his creatures exceedingly different one from another, and, therefore, we have no right, you know, to complain of that. But I hope you are not going on to tell me that you are thinking of leaving Westhampton?"

"Indeed, Doctor Wroughtley, if there were that to tell, I must have got some other person to undertake the task, for I should not have sufficient strength to announce it myself," she replied. And here there was a pause in the conversation, for Miss Barbara found herself under the necessity of using her pocket handkerchief. But she presently recovered herself, and went on.

"No! If the worst comes to the very worst, I will still live here, if I live at all. But it really is enough to break one's heart, and one's constitution too, to hear a

person talk like Elfreda does! DRONES, my dear Doctor, is her favourite term when speaking of the distinguished society to which we have so long had the honour and happiness of being admitted, while *Stars* and *Lights* are the words she uses when alluding to the heterogeneous tribe with whom she openly declares it is her purpose to associate in London. Is not this terrible?"

"Very," replied the doctor, rather solemnly. "Nevertheless, if I were you, my dear Miss Jenkyns, I don't think I should trouble myself much about it. I do not very clearly see what harm it will do you."

"Certainly not, Dr. Wroughtley, certainly not," returned Miss Barbara. "Her absurd and truly vulgar taste, as regards society, cannot in any way affect me, unless, indeed, it were with a Christian-like feeling of pity. No, my good friend, that is not the point on which I wish to consult you. My sister Elfreda says, Dr. Wroughtley, that under my father's will she has a right to claim half the value of the house and every thing in it; and she proposes to take this value in the

form of *rent* from me. Now I want you to tell me whether you think it would be wisest for me to agree to this, bringing her to the most reasonable terms I can, or to dispute the point in a court of law?"

"Dispute the point in a court of law!" cried the doctor, rising with sudden animation from his chair. "No, no, no, no! Miss Barbara Jenkyns. Ten thousand times NO!"

"Thank you, Doctor, thank you truly for the kind interest you take in the question. I think myself that it would be better to avoid a law-suit if possible."

"I think it would, Miss Barbara," was the rejoinder. "And now tell me, my dear lady, who have you got to make up our rubber? Not more than one gentleman, I hope? Three men would make two partridges look very much ashamed of themselves. Don't you think so?"

"Yes, I do indeed, Doctor!" returned Miss Barbara, with the well-pleased smile with which she always welcomed every little indication of particularly marked confidence and intimacy bestowed upon her by the amiable

prebend. "But I have taken care of that," she added. "It is the Eccleses that are coming, as I told you in my note."

"Good!" replied the doctor, blithely rubbing his hands, and making a step or two towards the door. "If Eccles were fifty times a minor canon I would give my vote for him in preference to almost any man I know at a small supper, and a steady rubber. And as to his wife, you know, she not only plays whist as well as her husband, but she is content to live upon plum-cake and Madeira. So she is never in anybody's way, whether cutting at the whist or the supper table."

"Oh! how droll you are! Nothing ever escapes you!" said Miss Jenkyns, following him to the door.

"At any rate *you* must not escape me, Miss Barbara," said he, gallantly presenting his arm, "for I intend to do myself the honour of leading you to the drawing-room. But let me say a word in your ear, my good lady, before we open the door. There is no sort of occasion, you know, to tell your sister Elfreda that my advice is, that you should have the

property valued, and pay her the half of the valuation to the uttermost farthing rather than go to law about it. There is no occasion to tell her that. You may just mention to her that I said the going to law would be sure to put the whole value of the property, and perhaps a little more, into the pockets of the lawyers. This may frighten her a little, perhaps, and lead her to be moderate in her demands. Nay, it might not be amiss, for a day or two, to make her believe that, notwithstanding all I had said about the danger, you had yourself rather a fancy for trying the question. Do you understand me, Miss Barbara?"

"Perfectly!" replied the lady, with a little pressure upon the gentleman's arm, which seemed to pledge her acceptance of his advice, as well as her comprehension of it. And then they went up stairs into the drawing-room.

CHAPTER IV.

It is not necessary to follow the efforts of the two sisters to settle this affair satisfactorily. Let it suffice to say that it was settled, and very fairly; the annual value of the mansion having been submitted to a valuation, and Miss Barbara covenanting to pay her sister Elfreda annually the half of that sum, amounting to £33. The plate and linen were equitably divided between them; and the elder sister agreed to give, and the younger sister agreed to take, two hundred pounds in full of all demands upon the rest of the plenishing, books included, none of them being of the style,

tone, taste, or age, approved and appreciated by Miss Elfreda.

This really important business was not only soon settled, but the arrangements subsequent upon it were adopted with such hearty good will by both the parties concerned, that before the venerable widow Jenkyns had been consigned above three months to the family vault, her daughters Barbara and Elfreda had divided themselves by a distance of nearly a hundred miles.

But although this transaction was thus speedily brought to a conclusion between the two sisters, nothing followed from it which could justify any suspicion that the feelings upon which they had acted had been hastily conceived, or were at all likely to produce, on either side, anything like regret or repentance. On the contrary, they both commenced their new manner of life in a way so perfectly conformable to all their foregone plans and projects, that it was very clear they were both of them profiting by the meditations and resolutions of many by-gone years.

Miss Jenkyns was a great deal too prudent

to begin her solitary reign by the expenditure of any ready cash in refreshing, or renewing, any of the fading decorations of her respectable, but rather antiquated mansion. She was not at all disposed to forget the fact that she had already made away with a considerable sum in order to obtain the undisputed possession of all that it contained, and after having given a long morning to an exact examination of her finances, and ascertained to a fraction what her annual income would now be, she came to the very wise resolution of not spending a single shilling either in paint, paper, carpets, or curtains, till she had contrived to save the same from her current expenditure.

Then followed an accurate examination of every room in the house, and of every article of furniture it contained ; and the result was another resolution to devote herself, and her two maid servants, to the task of reparation, till every room which she intended to inhabit, or use in any way, was in a state of as perfect repair as the needle and shears, the brushes and brooms, the soap and water at her command could make it.

This done, her next attention was given to the formation of her future establishment. And on this point, much as she had heretofore meditated, she had not yet made up her mind. A very steady and somewhat elderly footman, an excellent cook, and a very active, clever housemaid, had formed the executive of the late mistress of the mansion, and it would have been difficult to find a better-ordered household ; but Miss Barbara remembered that the funds which had supported it had been greatly reduced, and, moreover, that one lady ought not to require as many servants as three, so that it was speedily decided in her well-ordered mind, that one of her three domestics must be discharged. The difficulty lay in the question of which it should be. And this difficulty was of no light nature. That the large, handsome house-door, which had been opened through many generations by a neatly-liveried serving man, should henceforward display, as it retreated before the Prebends and the Prebends' ladies, the undignified form of a housemaid, was a very painful idea to Miss Barbara. The alternative was parting with

the cook ; and to this the prudent inclination of the meditative mistress would decidedly have led her, had it not been for the recollection of the pleasant, cheerful, cheering gusto with which her honoured friend Dr. Wroughtley was wont to laud the bread sauce and the sweet sauce, the scolloped oysters and the lobster salads, by which the social little parties which for many years past had constituted the great delight of her existence, had ever and always been distinguished at their house.

At length, however, it struck her that she might herself be a very important auxiliary, in all such matters ; the maid of all work it would be necessary to install in the joint places of her present head-maidens ; whereas, in the article of opening the door, announcing the company, handing the tea, and waiting at the supper table, she could do herself no service at all.

This consideration decided the question. The cook and housemaid were dismissed, William was retained, and a niece of his very judiciously chosen to supply their places, preventing thereby any little grumbings on his

part, which might otherwise have been troublesome.

The morning of the first day upon which Miss Barbara invited a party after the departure of the cook, was passed by her in considerable anxiety, and considerable activity also. It took her some time to decide of what the supper should consist, upon which the first experiment was to be made; at length she fixed upon a lobster salad, because she could prepare it entirely herself.

It was the custom, in that comfort-loving cathedral city, whenever a party met together for the sole purpose of amusing themselves without any intention of display, to lay the little supper-table (an old-fashioned indulgence found absolutely necessary where people play whist till midnight) in the drawing-room, partly to prevent the unpleasant sort of chill which, during the greater part of the English year, accompanies the passing from one room to another, and partly to save very precious time all the year round.

And on the present occasion the little supper-table was laid exactly as it ought to

have been (for William laid it), and no sooner did he announce that it was ready, than the victors and the vanquished, all hungry alike, uttered in chorus a cheerful "Just in right time," for their sixth rubber was that moment finished.

"What are you going to give us, Miss Barbara?" said the chartered Dr. Wroughtley, who knew that he might ask the question without any fear of offending.

"Lobster salad, my dear sir. I know that is a favourite dish with you."

And Miss Barbara said this cheerfully, for in her heart of hearts she knew that the lobster was a fine lobster, and her conscience told her, moreover, that a more carefully-skilful union of various flavours, in order to produce an exquisite sauce, had never been amalgamated since the luxurious fashion of eating lobsters in salad began.

The well-pleased quartette removed themselves from one four-seated table to the other, and their eight eyes were all simultaneously directed to the well-known and liberal-sized salad-bowl, in which the learnedly concocted

salads of the Jenkyns family had been prepared for the last dozen years. But, alas! of all those eight eyes there was not one which did not withdraw itself with more or less of a disappointed expression. There were the nicely selected pale-tinted lettuce hearts as heretofore, and as heretofore glowed forth, athwart their delicate verdure, the coral-tinted morsels of the fish. Then why did each critical eye droop mournfully? Alas! the cause was but too manifest. Where was the delicious crispness of that lettuce gone?—that fresh aspect of elasticity, that sparkling brightness, which looked as if but half an instant had elapsed since the dew-drops had been shaken from it? Gone! Gone for ever! The enticing dimples that ought to have succeeded to those dewy tears were changed to flaccid flatness! The bright pale green, too, had faded to the dull tint of a cabbage, while the graceful bowl itself, instead of daintily encircling the enticing mass with just ample room and verge enough to avoid all danger of crushing it, even though filled to the very brim, now looked as if so utterly ashamed of the business assigned

to it, as to have stretched itself beyond its usual size in order to let the whole of the limp compound sink down, and so get out of sight.

It has been said by short-sighted half-observers, that we are all inclined to view our own productions with partiality; but the reverse of this is very often the case, and most assuredly it was so on this occasion with respect to the unfortunate Miss Jenkyns. It is true that Dr. Wroughtley was disappointed, and so was Mr. Eccles, and so even was Mrs. Eccles also,—for Miss Jenkyns had not thought it necessary to buy a cake for her, because everybody in the world liked lobster salad. But their disappointment was joy and gladness compared to that of Miss Barbara. She felt that she had placed herself there in double trust—as hostess and as cook,—both strong against such a deed as she had now perpetrated. And most bitterly, good lady, did she reproach herself! It was, as she felt, so completely her own fault—such thoughtlessness!—such absence of all consideration!

Two sources of consolation, however, happily

suggested themselves. The one was, that this was her first experiment, and that she should have both time and opportunity for improvement. And the other was, for the moment perhaps, more soothing still.—She remembered that Dr. Wroughtley had won four rubbers out of the six they had played, and she felt a comforting conviction that he would not feel altogether disgusted with his evening, notwithstanding her unfortunate blunder.

But Miss Barbara deceived herself lamentably, if she supposed that a lady who wishes to entertain satisfactorily an individual so distinguished, and so distinguishing, as Dr. Wroughtley could discard a good cook with impunity.

The winter was now at its height, and woodcocks in their highest perfection. No commentary need be made upon what the feelings of Miss Jenkyns must have been on opening a little basket sent to her by the Dean, and discovering therein three woodcocks. Their long bills seemed to shoot themselves up towards her gazing eyes, like rays of sunshine. She smiled in the face of her faith-

ful William with delight, placed a shilling in his hand to be given to the Dean's messenger, and then threw herself back in her chair to meditate upon the best manner of making use of her treasure.

The time had been when the idea of a snug little clerical dinner would have been suggested by such an acquisition, but Miss Jenkyns was too sensible a woman to permit herself to dwell upon such a thought for a moment—not only had she lost her cook, but she remembered that when all her port wine was gone, it would not be so easy for her to renew her stock, as it had been for her departed mother. So she shook back her lappets, and drove the dangerous idea from her mind, without permitting herself to dwell upon it for a moment.

What then should she do with her woodcocks? Her spirits were at that moment in a state of too much exhilaration to permit her dwelling painfully upon the deficiencies of her cook; she only remembered Dr. Wroughtley's openly avowed partiality to that favoured portion of the winged creation, and speedily

determined that, as he was as partial to small supper parties as to plump woodcocks, the invaluable Mr. and Mrs. Eccles should be again invited; that the trussing, the spitting, and the bread-sauce should be all prepared by her own hand; that the toast should be trusted to William; and that the third woodcock should be immediately despatched, with her kind regards, to her bachelor friend.

It is painful to dwell, even for a moment, on painful scenes: it is too painful to dwell upon them long or often. Let it suffice the reader to be told that, though the disposal of the third woodcock answered completely, inasmuch as it brought her a morning visit, and the loan of the last number of "Punch" as a return for it, the fate of her woodcock supper was to the full as unfortunate as that of the lobster. Had the dainty birds been two tame ducks, they need not have been more thoroughly roasted!

CHAPTER V.

MEANWHILE, Miss Elfreda Jenkyns commenced that long-wished-for period of her life, which was to introduce her to scenes as yet known to her only by description. But, confident in native energy, she felt as little fear about the future as regret for the past.

Miss Elfreda had moreover the advantage of possessing one very intimate friend. About five years before the death of her mother she had been fortunate enough to meet with a lady, whose studies and whose talents were in every way congenial to her own. This lady, by name Miss Tollbridge, was the sister of Major Tollbridge, adjutant to the regiment

which was at that time quartered at Westhampton. She was very nearly of the same age as Miss Elfreda, and both ladies were equally ready to welcome the fortunate introduction which brought them acquainted. For as neither of them was either young or handsome, they were both aware that the meeting with a person able and willing to appreciate the value of superior intellect was a most agreeable accident.

As long as the regiment remained at Westhampton these two ladies were rarely asunder; and after its removal, an epistolary correspondence was established between them, which was punctually maintained on both sides.

They had not met since; but the allusion so constantly made in Miss Elfreda's letters to the precarious health of her mother, and her own firm resolve to profit by her freedom and her fortune when she obtained them, by taking up her residence in London for the rest of her life, had considerably influenced the proceedings of Miss Tollbridge.

Her father and mother were both dead, and she was therefore already in posses-

sion of as much independence as she was ever likely to possess, for her brother, the Major, had long ago got through his tiny patrimony, and now depended wholly upon his commission for a maintenance. He had married a widow lady, whose jointure of two hundred per annum had greatly assisted him, and his sister's income of one hundred, of which she paid him sixty as long as they remained together, had also contributed to keep his head above water. But his wife being dead, and his sister by no means inclined to share with him the sort of unsettled existence which his profession rendered necessary, they had agreed to separate, wisely enough perhaps. But the arrangement on the part of Miss Tollbridge would have been wiser still if she had taken her brother's advice, and placed herself in Devonshire in the house of a cousin, who would have given her a comfortable home for her sixty pounds a-year. But Miss Tollbridge had got it into her head, that if her friend Miss Elfreda Jenkyns really intended to live in London as soon as her mother was dead, the best possible plan would be for her

to keep herself in readiness as an inmate, and as a friend and companion for life; or, at any rate, as long as Miss Elfreda should remain a spinster. Miss Tollbridge, though highly scientific and intellectual, was not a particularly sentimental lady, and whilst her original attachment to Miss Elfreda Jenkyns had been decidedly of a personal character, and produced almost exclusively by the pleasure of being listened to by a person who seemed to know what she was talking about, it would not be doing justice to the variety of intellectual powers possessed by this remarkable woman, if her clear-headed appreciation of the advantages contingent upon a close domestic alliance with a dear friend, possessed of a fortune that more than quadrupled her own, were concealed.

But the same nice judgment which taught her to estimate justly the value of such a scheme, taught her also that it must be angled for with caution; and, therefore, when she replied to Miss Elfreda's letter announcing the death of her venerable mother, and her own intention of immediately fulfilling her long

declared intention of removing to London, she said not a syllable about the probable advantages and certain pleasures which would accrue from their living together, but only offered her services in seeking for lodgings, inquiring for servants, and so forth.

If a strong resemblance in character be a good foundation for friendship, these two enlightened women were singularly well calculated to form a strict and affectionate alliance together, for they had many points of resemblance. In her answer to these cordial offers of service, Miss Elfreda replied by giving her a long and very accurate list of commissions, beginning with instructions to take a small but comfortable lodging for her, for one week, in a house where there was a respectable maid-servant to wait upon her, and ending with a small recapitulation of the most needful commodities which would be necessary to her comfort on arriving.

On entering the tidy little drawing-room prepared for her, the first object which met the eyes of Miss Elfreda was the figure of her friend Miss Tollbridge, which she instantly

recognised, though nearly five years had elapsed since their last meeting. Nothing had been said in the letters which had recently passed between them of any wish on the part of Miss Elfreda, or any intention on the part of Miss Tollbridge, that this very early meeting should take place, and it was with a movement very like starting that the newly-arrived lady pronounced the monosyllable "Oh!" on perceiving her visitor.

"You did not expect to see me, my dear friend, did you?" said Miss Tollbridge, slightly colouring.

"No, I certainly—I never thought, my dear Miss Tollbridge, of asking you to come at such an uncomfortable moment as this; but I shall be delighted to see you to-morrow. If you should happen to have a leisure hour between twelve and two—any time between twelve and two, I shall be most happy to see you."

Miss Elfreda held the hand which her friend had extended to her as she said this, but she made no movement which indicated any intention of sitting down.

"I was in hopes, my dear, that I might be

useful to you," said Miss Tollbridge, very affectionately.

"You are excessively kind, my dear Miss Tollbridge," replied Elfreda; "but I have no idea of bestowing my tediousness upon people, when I am conscious of being tired to death, and as stupid as an owl. Do let me see you to-morrow instead: will you?"

"Oh, my dear Elfreda! You know you can't be stupid if you were to try. It is contrary to your nature. So don't drive me away from you, dearest! It is quite a delight to look at you. I never in my life saw mourning become any one as it does you! You positively must let me stay and make some tea for you."

This was a sort of desperate attempt to take the garrison by storm; but it did not answer.

"Upon my word you shall do no such thing, my dear Miss Tollbridge," replied Miss Elfreda. "I know myself better than you do. You are excessively kind! But you have no idea what a capricious, self-willed creature I am. Good night! Be sure to let me see you to-morrow morning."

As she said this, the resolute Elfreda quietly, but very perceptibly caused her friend to make a backward movement towards the door, a manœuvre which it was by no means difficult to achieve, inasmuch as she still retained the hand of Miss Tollbridge, who could not have resisted the gentle impulse which thus propelled her backwards, without taking more decided measures to do so than she appeared to think advisable.

Having reached the still open door, Miss Elfreda gave the hand of her friend a very affectionate parting squeeze, accompanied by a final and perfectly effectual application of the propelling process, and repeating her cordial "Good night!" placed her on the little door-mat outside, and closed it between them.

Miss Tollbridge decidedly thought that her friend's caprice on this occasion had displayed itself by the most abominable ingratitude for all the trouble she had taken to make her comfortable, and she could not but feel that this being turned out of the door, was but poor encouragement to her project of taking up her abode for ever within it.

But still Miss Tollbridge was not discouraged ; she had great confidence in herself, and returned to her own vastly less comfortable abode with the determination of sharing that of her friend rather strengthened than weakened by what had passed ; for in firmness of purpose Miss Tollbridge as closely resembled Miss Elfreda Jenkyns as if they had been twins, and resolute people always prefer meeting with a little resistance in their projects, in the hope of enjoying the great delight of conquering it.

“I dare say her fortune, by this time, is nearer twenty than ten thousand,” muttered the returned lady, in soliloquy, as she blew a small ‘*dandy*’-full of shavings and cinders into warmth for the purpose of causing the water in her diminutive tea-kettle to boil. For now her only immediate object was the giving that soothing consolation to herself in the shape of a cup or two of tea, which she had fondly hoped would have been given to her in much better style by another : and, truly, she sighed as she sipped it. But she sighed wholly and solely because the tea was bad, and not because

she was discouraged. She was *not* discouraged, no, not a whit; and she presently smiled, while scraping a little bad butter very thinly over her bread, as she thought to herself that the change she meditated was well worth a little more trouble than hiring a lodging, and ordering tea there. So she very resignedly turned to the pages of a philosophical review, and passed the evening as comfortably as any lady could be expected to do under similar circumstances.

And Miss Elfreda passed her evening very comfortably, also; and she likewise meditated a little upon the interview that has been described, as well as her friend.

“Not quite so fast, if you please, Miss Tollbridge,” she murmured inwardly, as she warmed her feet before the blazing fire, and enjoyed her tea and muffins. “You are a sensible woman, and have read a great deal, and I dare say I shall often like to have you; but I won’t be pestered by any body. And I know how to keep people at arm’s length as well as most ladies, I believe. Have I not made Miss Barbara’s darling, notwithstanding

his state, and his stall, look as quiet as a mouse when he suspected that I was going to talk him down? She *has* got everything very nice for me, poor thing, that is quite certain, and I dare say I shall be able to make her useful in many ways. I shall always be ready to employ her as much as she likes, provided she does not haunt me when I don't want her."

And then the independent Miss Elfreda unpacked her night things, examined her comfortable-looking bed with great satisfaction, and the only sigh of regret she breathed during the whole of that solitary evening was towards its close, as she remembered that the philosophy at whose shrine she worshipped forbade the use of the warming-pan.

CHAPTER VI.

THE preliminary measures by which the spinster sisters commenced their respective careers were as different as their characters; Miss Barbara's most earnest wish being to preserve, as nearly as the diminished income which supplied her establishment rendered it possible, the *statu quo* of that highly respectable manner of life which had for so many years obtained for herself and her kindred the honour and happiness of associating upon terms of familiar friendship with the reverend families of Westhampton Close. Whereas the darling wish of Miss Elfreda's heart was to insinuate herself into the acquaintance of as

many people as she could possibly get hold of, requiring little more by way of qualification than that they should be something "new and strange."

The operations of the elder sister, on first setting off upon the manner of life which she had so discreetly and judiciously sketched for herself, were greatly less complicated than those which were rendered necessary by the ambitious projects of her philosophical junior. A weekly little supper at her own house, sacred to Dr. Wroughtley and any two utilities which for the time being he might happen to prefer, (the important error in the cooking department having been speedily remedied by the restoration to office of the invaluable functionary she had so rashly dismissed,) secured to her many other suppers, almost as delightful, at the houses of many of her clerical friends; for not only did all those who enjoyed either her little parties, or her larger ones, scrupulously repay her invitations, but it became so clearly evident that she was a decided favourite throughout the Close, that invitations flowed in upon her from all quarters,

and the life she led was, upon the whole, exceedingly comfortable.

A very few months' experience convinced her that, notwithstanding her costly retinue of three servants, she would be perfectly well able to keep out of debt, and that, too, without ever restricting her invaluable friend Dr. Wroughtley from the enjoyment of a single supper, or a single sauce. Her personal expenses were certainly upon rather a contracted scale, but that was her own affair; and as her servants were really and truly faithful servants, all her minute little economies were kept profoundly secret, and the consequence of Miss Barbara, in the eyes of her acquaintance, was very considerably increased by the solitary absolutism of her dominion.

The greatness achieved, and the influence obtained, by her sister Elfreda, were of a less simple character; being, perhaps, in pretty fair proportion to the complicated machinery of the scene which she had chosen for her experiment, as compared to that in which Miss Barbara was carrying on her peaceful, steady little operations.

The great work of seeking and finding a lodging likely to suit her as a permanent residence was happily achieved, by the choice of a first and second floor in a moderately sized house in Green Street. The rent of this was, however, so fearfully beyond the sum which she was to receive from her sister as her share of the Westhampton house, that it took some time to reconcile her mind to the startling demand. One hundred and twenty pounds a-year for the use of four small rooms and a closet just large enough to hold a little bed for a servant, considering how very scanty and how very dusky was their furniture, might well startle a lady who had been born and bred in such a mansion as that which she had forsaken at Westhampton.

But her industrious researches soon made it perfectly evident, that she could not fulfil her own designs as to the position she intended to hold in society, if she set off by lodging herself too completely out of the reach of those with whom she hoped to associate to leave any chance of their being able and willing to get at her. So the Green Street lodging was taken,

and all very obvious defects in the furniture speedily and courageously supplied, from the sum she had received from her sister for her share of the substantial household goods of the Westhampton dwelling.

On first sketching out the style and manner of her projected London life, Miss Elfreda had proposed for herself the splendid establishment of a male and female servant; but steadfastly determined not to bring upon her courageous, not to say bold, projects for the future, either the ridicule or the reprobation which would inevitably follow her committing the fatal folly of exceeding her income, she no sooner made the above-mentioned disagreeable discovery relative to the price of lodgings, than she began to doubt as to the propriety of indulging herself with so costly a retinue.

On this point, however, she was not troubled by any of the doubts and uncertainties which had so grievously tormented her elder sister. Not all her high-minded adoration of science could enable her to contemplate the idea of having all the hoped-for embassies, transits, and receptions of her future existence per-

formed by A MAID! Rather than this, she would have remained mouldering for ever, as she would have herself expressed it, among the rooks, the records, and the reverends of Westhampton and its cathedral! On this point, therefore, there was no doubt, no shadow of uncertainty; yet still she hesitated a little as to the absolute necessity of departing from her original plan. She did not like the idea of for ever abandoning all the comprehensive refinements and elegances expressed by that most elegant and lady-like phrase, "*my maid*,"—and it was not till the alarming conviction came upon her that she must positively have a new carpet and curtains, (which her landlady as positively refused to furnish,) that she resolutely abandoned it, and took all her subsequent measures accordingly.

During all this busy time, the notable manœuvrings of Miss Tollbridge went on steadfastly and steadily; and Miss Elfreda's equally notable system of resistance to a too familiar encroachment on her domicile, continued equally unshaken. The dogged perseverance of the one, and the sturdy opposition of the other,

would, in most cases, have produced an effectual separation of the parties by means either of a quarrel or a coldness. But it was not so here. Both ladies, after very deliberately estimating each other's value, came to the conclusion that wisdom lay in making as much use as they could of an acquaintance which could be dropped at any time, and might perhaps be made useful while it lasted.

No sooner had they both arrived at this very wise decision, than the worst of struggles between them ceased, and then they went on admirably, Miss Tollbridge never hinting that it would be the most convenient thing in the world for them to live together, nor even making it apparent that she thought it was very odd, and very unkind, if she were not kept to share her darling Elfreda's steak, chicken, or cutlet, two or three times in a week; while Miss Elfreda, on her side, no sooner felt the spur withdrawn than she began moving at a much brisker pace towards the renewal of their former intimacy, than while she found herself goaded onwards by the unskilful jockeyship of her old acquaintance.

No rational reader can for a moment suspect such a woman as Miss Elfreda of having withdrawn herself from the shelter of her native home in order to establish herself in London, unless she had been conscious of having some better chance of obtaining an introduction to the society she had so long been wishing to enjoy than any exertions of Miss Tollbridge could give her. She was, indeed, utterly incapable of any such folly. In the first place, the Dean of Westhampton had a married sister living, not only in London, but in May Fair; and as the late Mrs. Jenkyns had not long before her demise enjoyed the honour of receiving this lady at dinner, during a visit which she was making to her brother the Dean, Miss Elfreda had very little, or rather no doubt of being able at once to inscribe the name of Mrs. Marshdale on her visiting list.

Then there was a first cousin of one of the prebends, whose eldest daughter had frequently been a visitor at Westhampton, and had so often been at the Jenkyns' parties, that the calling upon her and her family was quite a matter of course. The residence of the Davies'

family was not, indeed, in so well-graced a part of the town as Bolton Row, yet Miss Elfreda *almost* preferred their locality, for it was that of Gower Street; for though she certainly would not have chosen to live there herself, she was fully aware of all the inestimable advantages which might accrue to her from an intimate association with those who did. Science seemed to unfurl a score of brilliant banners before her eyes as she thought of it, and visions of lecturers frequenting her pretty *salon*; and partaking of her little literary breakfasts, arose in beautiful abundance to her fancy.

Nor was this all. Perhaps the sheet anchor of her hopes was known to her through a less dignified medium than any other of her intended intimates, for Mr. Carey was only the brother of the Westhampton apothecary; but the London Mr. Carey was a lecturer in Albemarle Street. He, too, had made occasional visits to Westhampton, and he had never done so without his arrival there having been hailed by all the most distinguished families in the town and neighbourhood as

the signal for a close-packed series of dinner parties. Not only, indeed, was no day suffered to pass without a dinner party of the *élite*, given in his honour, but as he never could spare days enough to satisfy the hospitable invitations of all who wished to honour him, breakfasts, and luncheons, and suppers were called in to assist in the expression of a feeling that was universal.

But I must not permit my natural partiality to the Jenkyns' family, to whom I am now devoting myself, to tempt me so to alter facts as to state that they were always, or indeed often, included in the very precious invitations given on those occasions. An old widow lady living in a country town, with two very plain elderly daughters, could scarcely be accounted convenient guests where all the magnates both of town and country would gladly accept a place ; but, nevertheless, opportunities had not been wanting for the Jenkyns' family making acquaintance with that of Mr. Carey, and for very obvious reasons. There was not either in town or country any single family who had been such constant patients to Mr. Carey, and

his father, and his grandfather before him, as the Jenkynses. They were not a particularly sickly race, but they were, and ever had been, rich enough to send for the apothecary, instead of economically dosing themselves ; and as the books of the concern had clearly proved this to be the case through three successive generations, it is by no means extraordinary, taking this circumstance into the account in addition to all their other respectabilities, that Mr. Carey of Westhampton should entertain a feeling of great regard and respect for the Jenkyns' family. The consequence of this was, that he never permitted a visit from his brother to pass over without contriving, in some way or other, to make the Jenkyns' ladies partake the honour and happiness of seeing him. Sometimes he used a little fraternal tyranny in order to induce him to pass an evening with them, when the celebrity would very greatly have preferred passing it with his agreeable relatives in the well-loved little paternal drawing-room at home ; and sometimes the grateful reminiscences of the worthy apothecary would even drive him to

the placing his son and daughter at a side-table, in order to enable him to invite *two* of the Jenkyns' ladies to dinner during the time of his brother's being a member of his family.

All this put together was amply sufficient to justify our *débutante* in setting down the name of Carey of Davies Street on the list of her London acquaintance. But such, and so great, was her wish to secure this advantage, that she did not leave her native city without being furnished with a note from the friendly apothecary to his brother, requesting him very earnestly to repay some of the favours which the Carey race had received from that of Jenkyns, by showing Miss Elfreda all the attention in his power.

There were moreover one or two other houses at which Miss Elfreda thought she should be fully justified in leaving cards, but it is not necessary to enumerate them ; those that have been already mentioned proving amply sufficient as a wedge to enable so able an engineer to make her way into very good society, exactly in the direction in which she

wanted to go. This success was doubtless chiefly owing to her own skill, and to the reflective wisdom with which she had profited by every circumstance that could possibly be turned to good account. But she was ere long favoured also by accident, as well as wisdom, in a manner as unexpected as profitable.

CHAPTER VII.

THIS must be a chapter of Letters.

No. 1.

From Mrs. Maitland to her sister Barbara
Jenkyns.

“ Madras, November 7th, 18—.

“ I had hoped, my dear sister, that the next time I addressed you would have been by voice, and not by pen. But this hope is over. I shall never see my early home again. Failing health and accumulated sorrows have overpowered me, and it is with difficulty that I now write the last lines I shall ever address

to you. You have already been made acquainted with the desolation that has fallen on me. I have no strength left to dwell upon it. My last effort must be for my poor orphan girl, my only remaining child, my dear, thoughtless, kind-hearted Judith. She has a larger fortune than I would wish her to have, but I can only pray that it may not prove a snare to her in any way. I have no power to alter the disposition of the property, or I would willingly divide it with poor Penelope's boy, who I greatly fear will be left very scantily provided for. It would be better for both the children could this large sum of money be divided between them. But I have no power to do this, so it is idle to talk about it. All I can do for my dear girl is to beg my sisters to receive her as kindly as I am sure they would receive me, were my life spared long enough for me to return to them. Everything respecting her fortune has been properly attended to by English lawyers of the highest reputation here. I am told that she will immediately become a ward in Chancery, so you will have no trouble on that score, and all

I have to request is, that you and my dear sister Elfreda will join together in taking personal charge of her till such time as she shall either be married, or come of age. If you continue to live together, I hope she will live with you both; but should you live apart, I would wish her to have the privilege of choice as to which she shall reside with; sometimes perhaps being with the one, and sometimes with the other. I would gladly join my sister Penelope in this personal guardianship, but I do not even know where she is, nor where she is likely to be. This letter, short as it is, has been written at long intervals, and not without great difficulty, so you will excuse its being less clear and precise perhaps than it ought to be. And now I must bid you a long adieu, dear sister, praying you to be kind to my child, and may our heavenly Father be kind to you!

“JUDITH MAITLAND.”

No. 2.

Mrs. Maitland to Miss Elfreda Jenkyns.

“MY DEAR ELFREDA,

It is so long since we parted, that I can hardly hope you still think of me as affectionately as I still think of you ; for no one, I believe, who remains in their own country can preserve the same warm affections for the friends of their youth, as those do who have been so unfortunate as to be banished from it. I write with great difficulty, dear sister, and therefore I will only say, God bless you! My letter to our sister Barbara will explain to you both what my wishes are respecting the dear child I leave behind me. Farewell!” (And this, too, was signed with a trembling hand.)

“JUDITH MAITLAND.”

No. 3.

From Mrs. Maitland to Mrs. Worthington.

“ Though ignorant of your present abode,

my dear Penelope,—for the sad letter which announced the death of your husband only told me that you thought you could not long endure to remain in Rome, where you had been so very happy, and were now so very wretched; though you gave me no hint as to where you were likely to be, still I cannot let the last packet I shall ever send to Europe be made up without addressing one parting word of affection to you. Had I the power, dearest Penelope, I would leave to you and your dear boy some mark of my affection; but my little girl must inherit all my fortune as well as that of her father, the only property I can call my own being some diamonds, rather good ones I believe, which were given me by my dear husband. My Judith shall carry these to England with a charge to find you out, my dear sister, and to deliver them into your hands. The necklace, earrings, and bracelets are for you; the ring which contains the finest stone of all, is for your son Charles. God bless you both!

“JUDITH MAITLAND.”

No. 4

Was only an envelope to the other three. It was addressed, in a trembling character, to her daughter, and contained these words:—

“ Convey these letters to England, my dearest child, but read and transcribe them all before they are delivered. Their contents will inform you more clearly than I have now power to do in any other way, what my wishes are. . . . And now . . . Be happy, my Judith! Be good! good, conscientious, and generous, like your dear father. . . . I need not say be kind to those around you . . . for I think his heart lives again in his child. God, in his mercy, protect and bless you, prays

“ Your dying mother,

“ JUDITH MAITLAND.

“ P.S.—Lose no time in finding your poor dear aunt Worthington,—and be ever kind to her.”

This last letter was written and sealed but a few hours before the still lovely Mrs. Mait-

land breathed her last. It is needless to describe the feelings with which they were perused by her orphan child. They were sad enough. The legal friend who had soothed the last moments of the dying mother, by promising that every possible care and attention should be given to her child, redeemed the pledge very faithfully. He provided the young heiress with an European attendant, herself a widow, wishing to return to her native Scotland, who was in all ways worthy of the trust reposed in her, and he caused poor Mrs. Maitland's testamentary letters to be a second time copied, and the originals preserved for the purpose of being delivered by her child, while the copies were forwarded a month before the departure of Judith, to the address of Miss Barbara Jenkyns, in order that her coming might be expected and prepared for.

These letters to announce her arrived in due time, and so did the young Judith herself; but as this chapter is specially dedicated to letters, it shall contain authentic copies of those which passed between the two maiden

aunts, to whose care she was specially consigned.

The first sensations of Miss Barbara on receiving the large packet addressed to her, were those of irritation, nay almost of indignation, for the postage was heavy; and these feelings were doubtless the stronger from the circumstance of the good lady having had a very remarkable run of bad luck at the card-table during the whole of the last week; moreover, she was beginning to make the disagreeable discovery that, in order to be very comfortable, and able to live in the style that suited her refined taste, her hospitable feelings, and her long established standing in society, she ought to have a little more money.

The postage, therefore, was not paid without a frown.

But, to do her justice, the frown was changed for tears a few minutes afterwards. She had already heard of the death of her brother-in-law, and of that also of two out of the three children he had left; and she had worn mourning, and expressed her sorrow on

the occasion, in a perfectly proper manner, to her neighbours.

But the feelings with which she now learned the death of her sister were very different. For some half hour or so her sorrow was deep and genuine. The eighteen years that had passed since the beautiful Judith Jenkyns had left that house as a bride seemed to contract themselves into so short a span, that the whole scene was before her eyes as if it had happened yesterday. Her beauty, her smiles, her pretty playfulness, were no longer remembered with either envy or contempt. She had never before, during the whole course of those eighteen years, recollected how warmly affectionate had been the last kiss which this youngest sister had impressed upon her forehead a few minutes before her departure, but now she seemed to feel it as if her lips had been that moment withdrawn, and she certainly did cry heartily.

But though these "natural tears were shed, she wiped them soon," an operation quite as natural in her case as the shedding them, for Miss Barbara Jenkyns was in the habit of

thinking a good deal about herself, and the news contained in this packet concerned her nearly. It was so providential, too, as she observed to herself, that such intelligence should have reached her just at the very moment she was thinking that her annual income would never hold out, unless she could hit upon some scheme for saving money. That the said income should be ever increased, unless, indeed, she happened to survive her sister Elfreda, had never entered her head as a thing possible. But now the case was widely different. Her income would be increased, and very greatly increased, too, if she were to have the charge of a young niece, possessed of forty thousand pounds. She had heard, again and again, of very noble allowances being made in such cases by Lord Chancellors, and there could be no reasonable doubt but that so it would be now. It would be six years before her niece would attain her majority, and even when this long interval was passed, who could say how much longer it might be before the dear child might be silly enough to marry?

Of course, as Miss Barbara strongly felt, she

would owe it to herself not to spend the allowance she was about to receive from the Lord Chancellor in any foolishly lavish expenses. Her house and her table were good enough to satisfy any young lady, and all the increased expenditure that would be required could not amount, she thought, at the very utmost, to above fifty pounds a-year, "which would be just enough to enable her to go on with her delightful little parties at home, without running into debt for them : and then it would be her duty to give nice little parties, because every one knew it was exactly the sort of thing young girls liked. Her poor, dear mother, before her, delighted in little parties ! And with *her* good management, fifty pounds more would clear every thing ; and the rest of the allowance, which at the very least must be four or five hundred a-year, would be running up so as to keep her out of trouble, if the dear child was at last silly enough to take it into her head to marry."

It will be perceived, that in all these meditations Miss Barbara appeared entirely to overlook the possibility that her sister Elfreda

might choose to come in for a share of this profitable guardianship. But this was not exactly the case. She could not read the letter addressed to her sister Elfreda, because it was a sealed letter ; but from the circumstance of the packet having been directed to her, joined to her own deep conviction that the Lord Chancellor, if referred to, would instantly perceive the superior propriety of her residence, in the very centre of the prebendal society of Westhampton, as the home of a young girl, to that of a single lady living in the midst of so depraved a capital as London, so completely settled the question, that her thoughts scarcely dwelt upon the idea of her dividing the charge with her as a thing possible.

In truth, at that moment the flutter of her spirits was such as scarcely to leave her the power of thinking much of anything, save the necessity of immediately preparing for the reception of her young charge. She, therefore, lost no time in inclosing the letter addressed to Miss Elfreda, accompanied with the following epistle from herself.

No. 5.

“ MY DEAR ELFREDA,

“ The inclosed letter will announce to you the melancholy intelligence that we have lost our poor sister Judith. In her sad farewell letter to me, she expresses her wish that I should immediately take charge of the only child she has left, and this I immediately intend to do. She will be forwarded to me by the next ship. The poor child is at a very troublesome age ; but I must not mind that, I must do my duty. It is possible that poor Judith’s letter to you may express a natural wish that you, too, should be kind and serviceable to the poor orphan. And you would be ready to be so, my dear Elfreda, I have no doubt, did circumstances permit your doing it. But a residence with a single lady, so young-looking as you are, in such a place as London, is not to be thought of for a moment for a young girl like our niece Judith ; and that you will be of the same opinion yourself, I have no doubt. But this consideration need not prevent your receiving the poor child for a

few days, on her first arrival from India; and I, too, shall be glad to accept a bed at your house when I come up, which I must do for the purpose of meeting her, and of bringing her to her home in Westhampton, in such a manner as the Lord Chancellor will approve, for poor little Judith is to be a ward in Chancery!

“Let me have a line from you to tell me if you can accommodate me with a bed. I believe we may expect Judith in about a month.

“I remain,

“Your affectionate Sister,

“BARBARA JENKYNs.”

Miss Elfreda was a good deal startled by the reception of this letter, and she, too, shed some sisterly tears over the one it inclosed. She might have shed more, perhaps, had not Miss Barbara's communication given birth to a multitude of speculations which rendered it impossible to indulge such tender weakness long.

Miss Elfreda Jenkyns knew what being a

ward in Chancery meant, quite as well as her elder sister. Poor little girls that were bequeathed to the charitable care of maiden aunts never were made wards in Chancery. Moreover, Miss Elfreda was quite aware of the fact, that her sister Judith's fortune had been settled at her marriage upon herself and her children, so that this poor little girl had ten thousand pounds, even if her father, the Colonel, had died without leaving her a *sou*, a contingency which she felt to be by no means probable, inasmuch as she never remembered to have heard her military brother-in-law mentioned but as a highly-esteemed officer and very rising man.

There was a good deal of sarcastic acuteness in the smile which chased her tears, as she remembered all this. The guardianship of a ward in Chancery, bringing a handsome allowance with her, would have been quite as agreeable to Miss Elfreda as to Miss Barbara, and, to give the result of her meditations in a few words, she sat down to answer her sister Barbara's epistle, fully determined to be very civil, but equally so to share in the profitable

business of boarding a wealthy niece with a long minority before her, *or else* to know the reason why.

Her letter was as follows :

“MY DEAR BARBARA,

“It is a grievous thing to hear of the death of a dear sister, and she so young, too! But the will of Heaven be done in this, as in all things. Our poor departed Judith refers me to her letter to you for information respecting all she wishes us to do for her dear child, and I must therefore beg you to forward the said letter to me forthwith. Excuse my not writing to you at greater length, but at this moment I am unfit for any employment save meditating on the melancholy news you have sent me.

“I remain,

“Your affectionate sister,

“ELFREDA JENKYNS.”

To this the return of the post brought the following reply :—

“MY DEAR ELFREDA,

“Poor dear Judith’s letter was too sad a one to be kept without pain: I have therefore destroyed it. But it matters not, for my last despatch tells you quite as much as the letter itself could do. It was very short, being written when she was very near her end.

“You do not answer my question about the bed. Can I be accommodated at your lodgings? Let me know this at once, if you please, because it may make a difference in my arrangements. But I had rather not take a separate lodging, if I can avoid it.”

“Soh! She has destroyed the letter, has she?” murmured Miss Elfreda rather gloomily. “That’s a strong measure, Miss Barbara. But if she really has destroyed it,” pursued the deeply meditative lady, “she has destroyed with it all the exclusive claim which it might give her to the guardianship of our orphan niece, and in that case our claims will be equal.” And then she penned the last letter of the series which this chapter promised to communicate to the reader.

No. 6.

“ MY DEAR BARBARA,

“I am sorry to say that I cannot give you a bed. My lodgings only enable me to furnish *one* for the use of a friend, and upon this occasion you must be aware that it is more important to avoid sending poor little Judith to a strange lodging, than for you to have recourse to it. I hope you did not destroy your Indian letters without making a memorandum of all the particulars they might contain respecting the time and place of our meeting the poor child. The Lord Chancellor will think you an odd sort of guardian, if he hears that you have done this.”

Miss Barbara, however, only smiled at the touch of this blunt little arrow, for no document could possibly be in safer custody than that which had accompanied the letters of poor Mrs. Maitland, and which rehearsed with the greatest accuracy the name and dwelling of the agent who was instructed to superintend the landing of the young orphan and

her effects. But as Miss Barbara fully intended to be in London herself at the time when she was given to understand that it was likely the vessel would arrive, she had not thought it necessary to trouble Miss Elfreda with any observations on the subject.

CHAPTER VIII.

I HAVE already hinted, I believe, that both the unmarried Miss Jenkynses were clever women. They certainly were so; and although the nature of their respective intellects differed in some respects, there were other points in which they greatly resembled each other. They had both of them, for instance, a peculiarly strong antipathy to being "taken in," as it is called, or circumvented in any way by the sharper acuteness of another; and they would either of them have encountered a very considerable degree of trouble and fatigue, rather than have submitted to it.

It was unquestionably in obedience to this

species of instinct that Miss Elfreda Jenkyns, perceiving that her elder sister had no intention of communicating to her whatever intelligence she might have received respecting the precise time and manner of their niece's arrival, determined upon taking advantage of her own residence in London in order to obtain it for herself. She knew she was to come by the "next ship," and she thought she could make this sufficient.

The doing this was attended with some little trouble, but there was less real difficulty in the business than might have been felt by a less active and intelligent inquirer.

Miss Elfreda had been eminently successful in her efforts to enlarge her circle of acquaintance in London, and not even Miss Barbara herself could have denied (though she highly disapproved the bold independence of her measures) that the means she had taken to effect this had so uniformly answered the purposes for which they had been adopted, as to prove that her sister Elfreda was better fitted for the enterprise upon which she had started than most people would have been.

Her pretty, lady-like lodging, her well-appointed footman, her judiciously notorious love of science, and her liberal devotion to the fashionable cause of universal 'go-a-headness,' had given her already a species of second-rate May Fair celebrity, which was more than sufficient to get her through all the difficulties of the inquiry she was so anxious to make.

For who could be so churlish as to refuse a little assistance in such a matter, to one who was so willing to render it upon all occasions? Where could any gentleman who had lecture-loving daughters find a more unexceptionable chaperon for them than Miss Elfreda Jenkyns? So perfectly respectable in every way! Fathers, mothers, sisters, and brothers, were all equally convinced that not a single word of any kind could be said against Miss Elfreda Jenkyns.

She was, moreover, always ready to walk in the Park with young ladies, when the footman of their family was required elsewhere; and no liveried lackey in London had more decidedly the air of being fit to walk behind a party of ladies, than the individual who per-

formed this office to Miss Elfreda. In cases of shopping, also, her services were equally unexceptionable and equally ready; and moreover she had most amiably performed, on more occasions than one, that most laborious effort of female self-sacrifice, the going as deputy mamma with young ladies to a ball, and that, too, in cases where the cotilion was as inevitable as the weary yawning which accompanied it.

The result of all this was, as it most surely ought to have been, that out of four gentlemen to whom Miss Elfreda addressed herself, three undertook to promise that she should receive all the information she wished for, in perfectly good time to prevent any danger that her young niece should get much nearer London than the Downs, before she received notice of her approach.

These promises were as punctually fulfilled as cordially given; for, independently of Miss Elfreda's personal influence, there was certainly something rather interesting in the nature of the commission, and however exact the intelligence received by Miss Bar-

bara, that obtained by her sister was at least equally so.

There were still several days to elapse before the good ship "Neptune" was expected, or could possibly arrive, and this interval was spent by Miss Elfreda in making the little bed-room behind her own as comfortable as possible.

"Miss Barbara has made no reply to my refusing the favour of her company here," thought she, as she occupied herself in arranging the pins on the nicely-laced pincushion which awaited her niece. "So much the better. It saves me the trouble of a rejoinder. I have no doubt that she will be very punctually on the look-out somewhere or other, but she will find that her sentimental destruction of poor Judith's last letter has not exactly answered."

The weather was fine, the light breeze favourable, and the noble Neptune came up the river with the dignity and grace of an accomplished being. Had it not been for this fair weather, favouring breeze, and graceful bearing of the ocean monarch, at least one expectant at the London Docks would have

been disappointed, for the attentive captain offered to obtain a land conveyance from Deal for the young heiress and her attendant ; but Miss Maitland assured him that she liked the ship best, and the ship therefore it was which brought her to London.

An agent employed by Miss Elfreda, and another, whose services had been bespoken by the friendly lawyer at Madras and communicated with by Miss Barbara, came forward together to make inquiries for the person and the luggage of Miss Maitland, passenger from Madras to London. This double demand occasioned some little difficulty, and some little delay, for the captain told the young lady that he thought she had better not go on shore till she had decided to which of these accredited agents he should deliver her luggage.

The young Judith looked harassed and puzzled for a minute or two, but then disposed of the question in a very business-like way by saying, "I dare say both these gentlemen would do equally well ; but don't you think, captain, that it is the one to whom the things are sent who ought to take them ?"

“They are not sent to any one, are they, Miss Maitland?” replied the captain. “They are your property, and all the cases have your name upon them.”

“Yes, sir. But look here,” said the young Judith, pointing to a well-mounted and stout looking-box, which might have been the dressing-case of a gentleman, but which had stood on her own little dressing-table, though unopened, throughout the passage, and which she well knew contained the diamonds which she was conveying to her aunt Worthington. “Look here, sir.”

And she pointed out a scrap of parchment, strongly fastened to one of the handles, and inscribed,

MISS JUDITH MAITLAND,

Passenger by the Ship Neptune.

To the care of Mr. Joseph Atkins,

No. 5, — Street, London Docks.

“Is there the same address on all your packages, young lady?” demanded the captain.

“Yes, sir, I believe so,” replied Judith.

“And you, sir, I believe, are Mr. Joseph

Atkins?" said the captain. The individual he addressed answered in the affirmative.

"Then, sir, you will take charge of this young lady and her effects," said the captain, placing the dressing-case, which he was aware was of value, in his hands.

"Of course," he added, "you have received advice as to what is to be done with them, and where she is to go?"

"I have, sir," responded Mr. Joseph Atkins.

"And so have I, sir," said the gentleman engaged by Miss Elfreda.

"I beg your pardon, gentlemen, but I am very busy, and cannot settle this matter for you. All I can do is to make over the property committed to my charge with this young lady to the agent named on the address by her Madras friends."

And having uttered these words civilly, but with a great deal of rapidity, the captain turned away, and was out of sight in a moment.

The dismissed agent shrugged his shoulders, and moved off without even deigning to tell the young lady that her affectionate aunt, Miss

Elfreda Jenkyns, was at that moment seated in a fly at the dock-yard gates, with the most eager desire to embrace her. In truth, the gentleman was too irate at this abortive termination to all the vehement injunctions he had received from this expectant aunt and her *employés*, to pause for a moment before he turned his back upon the whole affair. Nevertheless, some feeling or other, it might be mischief or it might be mercy, induced him as he left the docks to present his head at the window of Miss Elfreda's carriage, and to say, "Your young lady and her parcels, madam, are consigned to another agent."

Meanwhile Miss Barbara, after giving due notice of her arrival to Mr. Atkins, had taken possession of a private room at the railway hotel at which she had arrived the evening before, and was awaiting the coming of her niece with as much patience and composure as she could master.

Deeply offended by Miss Elfreda's refusal of a bed, she had determined to revenge herself by setting off with her niece to Westhampton the moment she could get possession of her,

and was not without hopes of being able, by the counsel and assistance of Dr. Wroughtley, to obtain an order from the Chancellor for her having the entire personal charge of the young lady, before Miss Elfreda could have received any positive information respecting her arrival.

“She will abuse me famously, I know that,” said the angry lady in soliloquy, as she sat anxiously looking out of the hotel window; “but her letter of refusal to my humble request for a night’s lodging is more than sufficient to justify me in the eyes of the whole world. Her boasted cleverness has not done her much good here.—Never was a more egregious blunder made! Had she consented to take her in, we must have received the child together, and I might have found some difficulty in making the young Judith at once understand the decided superiority of my right to become her guardian. But now the difficulty is thrown into the other scale. I wonder how, and when, Miss Elfreda will find an opportunity of making any personal acquaintance with the young lady? She has given me a

lesson on the subject of sisterly hospitality which I shall certainly treasure in my memory, and this may prove an impediment to any projects she may have conceived of commencing the acquaintance at my house. As to my permitting a young female orphan under my protection to set forth upon an expedition to London,—it is probable that I may consult some of my clerical friends, as well as the Lord Chancellor, before I consent to it.”

Laborious cogitations, and minute arrangements concerning the unknown future, may sometimes furnish a very agreeable occupation, but it must almost always be an idle one.

While the meditations recorded above were passing through the soul of Miss Barbara Jenkyns, the body of her sister Elfreda was actively engaged in a manner admirably well calculated to render all her purposes and intentions abortive.

No sooner had the agent she had employed retreated from the door of the carriage, which he did the instant he had delivered himself of the intelligence which he had thought proper

to bestow, than Miss Elfreda thrust her head out of the window, and ordered her man Robert to let her out. The moment this command was obeyed, she presented a card at the gate with the name of a very influential gentleman upon it, who had been propitiated by the intervention of one of her friends, and who had, with his own hand, written a request that the bearer might receive every attention and assistance for the purpose of immediately joining a young relation, who was expected to arrive as a passenger by "the Neptune."

This card proved a most effectual passport, and at once enabled her, with the additional assistance of Robert as a vanguard, to make her way exactly to the spot where she most wished to find herself—namely, *vis-à-vis* with her niece Judith.

There is often a mysterious sort of family likeness between children of the same parents which makes itself felt, even where the individuals, if accurately described, would appear to be as completely dissimilar as possible. It was probably some resemblance of this sort

which caused Judith to exclaim, the moment Miss Elfreda approached her,

“I am sure you are my aunt! Oh! I am so glad!”

It was impossible at that moment that Miss Elfreda could have listened to words more every way agreeable.

Her niece was found—her sister was not—and the words with which she was greeted by the pretty young creature before her, appeared to promise everything she could wish from the immense advantage of being first in the field.

Nothing could be more cordial on both sides than the embracings which followed, nor was the kindly feeling between them at all likely to be lessened by the tears which started to the eyes of both when Miss Elfreda exclaimed, almost involuntarily, “Alas! poor sister Judith! you are the very image of her!”

This likeness was, indeed, very striking, and might well have softened the aspect and the voice of a harsher nature than that of Miss Elfreda, who, notwithstanding the steadfast firmness with which she had sought what she

loved to call *the centre of science*, was not an ill-tempered woman.

But their emotions, both of joy and sadness, were obliged to yield to the very matter-of-fact observation of Mr. Joseph Atkins upon the absolute necessity which the orders he had received laid him under, of delivering the packages bearing Miss Maitland's name, and the young lady herself also, if she had no very particular objection, into the hands of the lady from whom he had recently received the letter which he held in his hand.

"Have I the honour of speaking to Miss Jenkyns?" said the agent, politely uncovering his head, and bowing to Miss Elfreda.

"Yes, certainly, sir!" she eagerly replied, adding, with no very strong emphasis upon her Christian name, "I am Miss Elfreda Jenkyns."

"I beg your pardon, Miss Jenkyns, a thousand times. Everything is right, then," returned the agent, evidently delighted at having brought his business so speedily to a conclusion. "You, then, are the lady that wrote this letter, and therefore—"

But this was going farther than the discreet Miss Elfreda intended; not to mention that such a deception was by no means absolutely necessary to her purpose; she therefore very quietly replied, "No, sir, I did not write that letter; it was written by my sister Barbara."

"Oh!—But it is just the same thing, aunt," cried Judith, eagerly. "I have got the copies of poor, dear mamma's letters to you both, and it is just the same thing, I do assure you.—Do not let us stand talking about it here any longer. May I not go home with you directly? I do so long to be in a house again! Your man can take that casket, can't he?—And all the rest of the things may be sent after us, you know. I am so glad I have found you, dear aunt!—It is such a comfort!" And again the bright eyes of the young Judith were filled with tears, though she smiled upon her aunt very sweetly at the same moment.

This appeal was answered with all the warmth it deserved, and Miss Elfreda, having taken possession of the arm of her niece, told William to take possession of the dressing-

case, but Mr. Joseph Atkins demurred about giving it up.

“If you are not the lady who did me the honour of writing this letter,” he said, “I am afraid that I shall not be performing my duty in a regular way, if I deliver Miss Maitland’s property to you. Will it not be better for us all,” he added, “to adjourn to the Euston-square Station Hotel, where, as of course you know, the other Miss Jenkyns is waiting for us? and there I may receive fresh orders, perhaps, from all you three ladies at once.”

Miss Elfreda paused for half a moment, but no more. That half moment was quite sufficient to bring her to the conviction that she could by no possibility refuse compliance with this proposal, without getting into a scrape. Besides, she had already done, and already heard, quite enough to satisfy her that she had effectually circumvented her sister’s projects; and as she greatly liked the idea of meeting her under such circumstances, and of proving to her at once, and for ever, that she was not a person to be either deluded or set aside with impunity, she gave a very cor-

dial acquiescence to Mr. Joseph Atkins' proposal, adding that she had a carriage at the gate, which could convey them all very conveniently.

"Then to your carriage, my good lady, I will myself convey this little box," said the agent; "and it may be as well, perhaps, as this lady is rather a young traveller, to give you the same hint which the captain gave me concerning it. He told me that it contained jewels of very considerable value."

Miss Elfreda nodded her head, and endeavoured to look as if she knew all about it, but was entirely defeated in this attempt by Judith's saying,—

"You need not be afraid of my not taking care of that box, sir, for I packed it with my own hands upon poor mamma's bed, and it contains all the diamonds she had; they are all for my aunt Penelope," she added, turning to her newly found relative.

This startling piece of information completely overthrew Miss Elfreda's aspect of composure for a minute or two.

"Your aunt Penelope, my dear? I think

you must have made some mistake, Judith. Your aunt Penelope is the last person in the world, I should think, for any body to send diamonds to. Besides, my dear child, your poor dear mamma would never have given her diamonds away from her own daughter. Perhaps she has left her a ring, or something of that sort; but I am sure I don't know where you are to find her; she never visits now. We have not heard of her for years; she took a miff about something, and cut us entirely."

"She never cut mamma," replied Judith, "and that is the reason, I suppose, why mamma seemed to think so much about her when she was dying. If she is alive, I must find her, for mamma said the diamonds might be useful to her, and that was the reason for her giving them to aunt Penelope, instead of giving them to me. She told me all about it, aunt; and I understood it perfectly."

This conversation took place as they were proceeding towards the dock-gates. But upon Judith's ceasing to speak, Mr. Atkins stopped, and said, "Have you no carpet-bag, Miss, or any thing of that sort, that I might get passed

for you, in case we can't get your luggage cleared directly?"

"Good gracious!—To be sure there is," replied Judith. "The captain told me about taking a carpet-bag, and Mrs. Mills is at this very moment packing it up, I believe. I must go on board again for one minute, aunt, if you please."

Though this reference to Miss Elfreda was made in a manner which seemed to ask for her consent to the measure proposed, it was not waited for. Scarcely did Judith permit herself to finish the sentence, before she was in rapid motion in the direction contrary to that which they had been pursuing, and the next moment she was again upon the deck of "the Neptune," and in half a one after she had dipped down the cabin stairs, and was out of sight.

The agent, Miss Elfreda, and her man William, stood still and waited her return, for there was nothing else to be done, though the complacency of the affectionate aunt was a little disturbed by the elbowing she got from the conflicting streams of goers and comers

which were bustling past her. This did not last very long, however, for quite as soon as it was reasonable to expect her the panting Judith returned, accompanied by a matronly-looking female carrying a carpet-bag, who she introduced to her aunt as "dear, good Mrs. Mills, who had taken as much care of her as if she had been her own child."

No further delay occurred. They reached the carriage, and the carriage reached the Euston Station Hotel without encountering any further impediment.

CHAPTER IX.

ON inquiring for Miss Jenkyns, they were immediately ushered into the presence of the impatient and greatly fatigued Miss Barbara, who had not only taken a very long journey the preceding day, but had nearly worn out her strength, as well as her patience, by the incredible perseverance with which she had been looking out of the window. Yet, after all, poor lady, Miss Elfreda's fly did not approach the hotel by the side that her window commanded, so that it was without the slightest preparation that when, at length, the door of her room opened, the eager glance she directed towards it was answered by a nod of the head,

and a very meaning smile from her sister Elfreda.

“Elfreda!” she exclaimed, almost with a shriek.

“Yes, Barbara! here I am, and I have brought our dear niece with me. She is a sweet girl! and so like her poor mother! . . . But how could you think of sitting in all this style and state up here, sister Barbara, instead of going down to the Docks, as I did, to look after her? Upon my word it was very lucky that I was a little more upon the alert than yourself, or the poor child would have had but a cold reception to the land of her fathers. But here she is, safe and sound, you see.”

However well inclined Miss Barbara might have been to accuse her sister of unauthorized and most impertinent interference, she could not but feel that the doing so at this moment was impossible, and her common sense and discretion enabled her to embrace the young stranger very affectionately.

Neither did she make any inquiries as to the manner in which Miss Elfreda had got possession of her niece, which would so evi-

dently have been a means of enabling that extremely unsisterly and disagreeable individual to detail her manœuvres, and triumph in their success, that she very judiciously avoided the subject altogether.

“I am thankful for seeing you looking so well, my dear, and we ought all of us to be thankful for your having escaped all the perils and dangers of so awful a voyage!” she said, very solemnly, and with a devotional sort of tone, which was intended to account for the remarkable fact of her not taking the slightest notice of her sister.

Miss Elfreda was in a much more sociable and communicative frame of mind, and not only seated herself uninvited, but began chatting away to the lawful occupant of the apartment with a lively fluency that must have been pretty considerably provoking to her demure-looking sister.

But Miss Barbara made no attempt to stop her; she was in fact silently collecting all her powers of mind for the purpose of seizing with an irresistible *tour de force* upon the person of the young ward. Before her

purpose, or rather her project, was ripened in her mind, however, her ruminations were interrupted by Mr. Joseph Atkins.

“I beg your pardon, ladies,” said he, “but there can’t be any doubt but that the young lady must be anxious to get her trunks and packing-cases all cleared through the Custom-house and in her own possession; and her best chance for this is by my taking my leave, and getting back as fast as may be to the Docks. . . . Passengers’ luggage is always first looked to, and I am in good hope we may get through to-day, if I don’t waste my time. And now, Miss Maitland, I will give you back your jewels, and take my leave.”

And so saying, Mr. Joseph Atkins placed the dressing-case, which he still held on his knee, upon a corner of a table, close to which Judith was sitting.

She thanked him, half rose, wished him good morning, and then sat down again, drawing the dressing-case towards her, and placing her arm upon it.

There was something either in Mr. Atkins’ allusion to jewels, or in the manner in which

Judith seemed to take especial charge of the case that contained them, which seemed to rouse the dormant faculties of Miss Barbara.

“Jewels, my dear? Have you got jewels to take care of?” said she. “You had better make them over to my charge, my dear. We shall set out for Westhampton as soon as ever the agent lets us have your luggage; but it won’t do for you to have the trouble of holding them that way till we go. It can’t be before to-morrow, you know: so give them to me, my dear, and I will lock them up.”

“Thank you, aunt,” replied Judith, “but I don’t think I need trouble you. They are locked up, you see, and it is a Bramah lock, so I am quite sure they are safe.”

“Yes, my poor, dear child! I have no doubt that they are as safe as locking can make them; but the case itself, you know, may be taken away,” said Miss Barbara.

“Nonsense, sister Barbara! Why do you put such notions into the dear child’s head? You will make her afraid of her shadow. I dare say the hotel is very respectable, though why you should have troubled yourself to

come here it is not very easy to guess, considering that Judith happened to have an aunt living in London," said Miss Elfreda, with a little laugh.

"Ladies living in London may, perhaps, be less scrupulous in their manner of fulfilling their duties than ladies who live in the country," returned Miss Barbara, with a sigh that had a good deal of pious pity in it.

"I thought I had made you aware, sister Elfreda," she continued, "that I had received a testamentary document from our dear departed sister, written in her last moments, in which she desired me to take the personal charge of her child; and it is hardly to be supposed that after this I would suffer that precious child to arrive in such a place as London without being there myself to take care of her."

"I am sure you must be a very kind person to take so much trouble about me," said Judith, giving her a sweet smile; "but if you happened to read poor mamma's letter when you were more composed than you could be just at first, you would have found out that

she had been too considerate to throw all the trouble that I am likely to give upon any one person. That would be too much to bear, would it not?" she added, playfully. "Have you got mamma's letter with you, aunt Barbara?"

"No, my dear, I have not. It made me too melancholy!" replied Miss Barbara.

"Well! never mind!" rejoined Judith, who was really touched by the look of profound misery expressed by the features of her elder aunt at that moment. "Never mind, aunt." And as she said it, she left her chair, and seating herself on the sofa beside the mournful looking Miss Barbara, took hold of her hand, and kissed her.

Judith was quite right in thinking the expression of sorrow she read on her aunt's features was genuine; but she was quite wrong in her interpretation of the cause. The poor little girl, whose heart was swelling with tenderness towards the sisters of her mother whom she had so fondly loved, really and truly believed that Miss Barbara Jenkyns looked as if she were going to cry, and that

she was in fact very likely to do so, because she was thinking of her dear mamma and of the piteous letter which she had sent to her. Whereas, in truth, Miss Barbara was only exerting all her faculties to get out of the scrape into which her very perilous diplomacy had thrown her.

Miss Elfreda enjoyed the scene exceedingly. Her own manœuvres had been as successful as those of her sister had been the reverse, and she felt her triumph.

“I have no doubt, Barbara, that it was a very sad letter,” she said: “written under such circumstances, how could it be otherwise? I am sure my heart will ache too, when I come to read it. But business is business, you know, and read it I must, painful or not painful.”

“But you can’t read it, I tell you,” returned Miss Barbara, with rather more firmness than sadness in the look she bestowed on her; “you cannot read it, for I have not got it, I tell you.”

“But I have, dear aunt!” cried Judith, in an accent of sweet consolatory assurance.

“My poor mamma made me take copies of all the letters that were sent about me to England in the last ship, for fear anything should happen to them, and that I might find myself at a loss on arriving here as to where I was to go, and what I was to do. That would have been terrible, you know! But dear mamma thought of everything!”

And, furtively dashing away the tears that dimmed her eyes, for she thought it would be too cruel to add to the sorrow of poor aunt Barbara by her own, she crossed the room to the table on which Mrs. Mills had deposited her carpet-bag before she betook herself to the bench on the top of the staircase, and hastily unlocking it, drew from its recesses a packet of papers carefully enveloped in an oil-skin case.

“Now then, dear aunts, we shall see all about it,” said the totally unsuspecting Judith, returning to her seat on the sofa; “and we must all of us try, you know, to do everything that poor mamma wished to be done, and that will be the best way of keeping us from being too melancholy.”

The sight of this packet of papers was decisive. Miss Barbara instantly saw the necessity of backing out of her rashly conceived project of monopoly, and retaining no greater reserve of manner towards her offending sister than might suffice to make her comprehend how deeply she felt her want of sisterly hospitality, she said, "I am very glad, my dear Judith, to see that you are so tidy, and so careful. Let me look at the letters, my dear. I dare say my sister, Elfreda, will like to look at them too, melancholy as they are!"

"Yes," observed Miss Elfreda, drily, "I shall certainly like to see the copy of the letter you have destroyed, sister Barbara, because it is to that I am referred by our sister Maitland for instructions respecting her child. But it is as well that I should peruse it with my own eyes, if you please, for fear your feelings should again overpower you, and lead to your throwing the copy into the fire, as well as the original."

Miss Barbara was, for the moment, completely overpowered, completely subdued—and

she obeyed her sister's behest, and handed the packet to her without replying a word.

Miss Elfreda lost no time in making herself acquainted with the contents, and perused the important document addressed to her sister with the most lively, and most perceptible satisfaction.

“This is exactly what it ought to be,” she said, laying the open letter on the lap of her niece. “You had better read it too, Judith, that there may be no more mistakes.”

“I have not only read it, but written it, dear aunt,” replied Judith, “for it was I, myself, who made the copy. Mamma wished me to know everything she had written, in order that I might conform myself the more easily to her wishes; which were so full of love and kindness for me that—”

And if nobody else was overcome by this testamentary document, poor Judith was, for she now for the first time since her arrival gave way to her sorrow, and wept heartily.

But the burst was as short, as it was

vehement, which will generally be found in all cases of youthful sorrow, where the feeling is perfectly genuine. Should there be any, the very slightest mixture of display, it lasts much longer.

“And which kind aunt will take me first?” said she, hastily pocketing her handkerchief, and looking cheerfully, first into one face, and then into the other.

“I should say that the elder aunt should have the preference,” said Miss Elfreda, who wisely determined to smooth all difficulties, and to enjoy her triumph meekly; “I should certainly say that you ought to go first to my sister Barbara, was it not for the convenience of your staying in town in order to see that all your luggage is right.”

“If aunt Barbara likes to have me first,” said Judith, who felt at that moment that one new place was just as good as another new place, “if aunt Barbara likes to take me home with her, my luggage need not make any difference. I have got a list of it all here, and somebody can be hired, you know, to see that it is all right.”

Miss Barbara looked at Miss Elfreda, and Miss Elfreda looked at Miss Barbara.

The younger sister felt very forcibly that she stood in so very advantageous a position, that she might arrange matters pretty much as she liked, with very little risk of being contradicted. That letter, as well as the destruction (or concealment) of it, must be forgotten before the elder could have any chance of standing upon an equal footing with her; and there was no danger, at present, that any such oblivion should fall upon the transaction.

Miss Elfreda felt this strongly, and so did Miss Barbara too.

But while this weakened the nerves, and almost the faculties of the unfortunate senior, those of the junior were sharpened and invigorated by it, and it took but a few minutes to suggest to her the advantage of letting the young stranger's first abode be in the house of her sister. This would give her time to prepare herself in every way. The child, too, would be six months older, if they divided the year in half, and, perhaps, she might

look a little more womanly ; moreover, the Lord Chancellor would, by that time, have been made acquainted with the real state of the case, and no difficulty of any kind was likely to interfere with a fair and equal division of Judith's company and Judith's income.

Having come to this decision, there was no difficulty in acting upon it.

“ Well, then ! you shall go to your aunt Barbara first, my dear,” said Miss Elfreda, rising to take her leave. “ This is the twenty-first of October ; six months from this time will be the twenty-first of April, and by that time, my dear child, I will take care to be in every way ready to receive you. You need be under no anxiety as to your journey from Westhampton to London, for I shall come down myself in order to escort you up. And now, good bye, my dear. I don't think I can be of any further service to you, just at present ; and my sister Barbara looks as if she had got the head-ache, poor thing. A little agitated, perhaps. All very natural. But every thing will go right now, that

we have got you between us, safe and well, my dear Judith, safe and well! That's the great thing, you know. Isn't it, sister Barbara?"

This appeal was answered by the highly incensed Miss Jenkyns, by her saying, with great solemnity, "It ought to be, sister Elfreda, and therefore I hope it is!"

Judith looked puzzled; but the next moment explained the mystery to herself, by deciding, in her young heart, that they were both of them very kind souls, and only too anxious about her.

"My eldest aunt is, I suspect, rather of a melancholy turn," thought she. "I must try to make her laugh a little sometimes." Her youngest aunt, however, seemed to require no such lesson, for she appeared exceedingly well inclined to laugh already; but by the time she had re-adjusted her shawl, and ascertained, by the help of the looking-glass, that her bonnet was in the right place, she had recovered her gravity sufficiently to say, in a very affectionate tone,

"You will write to me now and then, my

dear Judith; you must not forget that!" And then, having given her a kiss, she nodded gaily to Miss Barbara, and uttering a sort of merry "Good bye!" that might do for both, she disappeared.

CHAPTER X.

THE exit of Miss Elfreda was a triumphal one, and would have been still more so, could she have known how really sorry the young Judith felt at seeing her go away. There were, indeed, several very natural reasons for this. She had been the first to stretch out a friendly hand to her, at the almost awfully anxious moment of first putting her feet upon the new and strange land that was to be her future home. Besides, she had really recalled the idea of her dear lost mother, and that at a moment when she was not in the mood to make any saucy comparisons for the disadvantage of the spinster aunt. Add to which,

Miss Elfreda, though decidedly plain, was not grim-looking. And all this together was quite enough to make Judith feel sorry, when the door closed behind her.

At that moment, however, by far the best friend Judith had was in her own bosom. The little girl had faith in herself. "I shall do very well, I dare say," thought she. "I can read, and I can work, and I can draw, and I can sing. But about the singing, I don't know. Perhaps she would say I was making a noise, and she would not like that, I am sure; and if so, I must go into the fields and sing."

"Do you feel tired, my dear?" said Miss Barbara, wishing to commence a little friendly conversation.

"Oh dear! no, aunt!" responded Judith, with great alacrity, "I am not the least tired in the world; I should like to take a walk with you of all things, if you wish it. You can't think how I long to see everything."

"I don't think we can take a walk here, my dear," returned Miss Jenkyns, rising, and looking once again out of the dismal window. "Young ladies of fashion never, I believe,

walk about the streets of London, unless they have a footman with them. When we get to dear, charming Westhampton, I shall be able to take you out with me without the least scruple."

"There are no such things as palanquins in England, are there aunt?" inquired Judith.

"Oh dear! no, my dear, nothing of the kind. That sort of thing would be considered quite as a trait of savage life here. You will find everything so perfectly regular and proper in England, especially in our part of it, which is one of the finest ecclesiastical establishments in the world, that you may walk about by day, or by night either almost, without there being the very slightest danger or impropriety."

"At night?" said Judith. "Have you no carriages, aunt?"

"Carriages? Oh, yes! there are plenty of carriages, my dear, for those who can afford to keep them," replied Miss Barbara.

"And I suppose everybody, excepting very poor people, can afford that, aunt Barbara?" returned Judith, smilingly.

Miss Jenkyns, instead of replying, stirred the fire. She was, to say the truth, perfectly overpowered by this observation, for it was quite evident from it that Judith expected the accommodation of a carriage; and if so, what was to become of all her plans for saving? Let the allowance be what it might, the expenses of a carriage, horses, and coachman would infallibly swallow the whole. She was terrified, and in order to avoid the subject, began talking of her hopes that the agent would not be very long before he got her luggage through the Custom-house.

“And poor dear Mrs. Mills?” suddenly exclaimed Judith. “I wonder what is become of her! May I go and look for her, aunt Jenkyns?”

“We will ring, my dear, we will ring;” and Miss Barbara Jenkyns did ring; but when the door was opened by the waiter, the only word she uttered distinctly was “carriage.”

“A fly, ma’am, or a cab?” demanded the waiter.

Shocked by her own absence of mind and want of self-command, Miss Barbara Jenkyns

made a great effort to recover herself, and said, "That is not what I rang for. I want to know—this young lady wants to know, where the person who came with her, the servant, I mean,—she wants to know where she is gone to?"

"She is not gone anywhere, ma'am," replied the waiter. "When she left here, she seated herself upon the settee at the top of the stairs, and there she has staid ever since."

"That must be very uncomfortable!" exclaimed Judith, sorrowfully. "Poor dear Mrs. Mills! May I go to her, aunt?"

"Yes, certainly, my dear, if you wish it." Judith did wish it, and accordingly left the room.

"Keep a carriage!" murmured Miss Barbara, the moment she found herself alone. "There is something quite terrifying in the idea. Though, to be sure, nobody can deny that it would be a great comfort, and give great dignity, too. Just what the house deserves. Except Dr. Wroughtley's, ours—mine, I mean, is the only really good house in the place that does not keep a carriage: Dr.

Wroughtley might find it a great convenience. But, in that case, the Chancellor must be made to understand——”

And then, and thenceforward, the very heart and soul of Miss Barbara Jenkyns fixed themselves with indescribable firmness and pertinacity upon the ways and means by which a suitable carriage allowance might be extorted from the Lord Chancellor.

The variety of her stratagems and devices upon the concocting such a document as would best ensure success was by no means exhausted when Judith re-entered the room, followed by Mrs. Mills.

There had been something in the nature of the musing which had occupied Miss Barbara's imagination during her absence that had tended very greatly to increase her affection for her niece, and this was manifested by her springing up to meet her, and by her exclaiming in an animated tone, while stretching out her two hands in an attitude of most affectionate welcome,

“Is there anything, my dear love! that I can do to assist you?”

Judith looked a little surprised, but immediately replied, with a good-humoured smile, "Yes, indeed, aunt! you will assist me very much if you will tell me how I can best manage so as to send my good, kind Mrs. Mills to Scotland."

"To Scotland, my dear child? It is a very expensive journey, Judith, and I don't think the Lord Chancellor will consider it right to make any especial provision for that sort of thing. What was the precise engagement, Judith?"

"The Lord Chancellor?" cried Judith, laughing. "Oh, aunt! I don't think we need trouble the Lord Chancellor about that. And I did not mean to ask you about the cost of it; that is of no great consequence; but I am so ignorant of everything about travelling in England, that I want your instructions as to the manner in which we are to set about obtaining a conveyance for her."

There had been something so youthful, almost so childish, in Judith's manner of presenting herself, that the tone in which she now spoke of that most important business in

life, the spending money, considerably alarmed her prudent and nicely calculating aunt Barbara, and the pause she felt it necessary to make before she replied to her question appeared so long to the impatient heiress, that she turned from her aunt to Mrs. Mills, and said—

“ My dear, good woman! Don't be frightened! I don't believe that you will find either danger or difficulty in getting to your daughter at Glasgow; for I have read a great deal about Scotland, and though I know that you can't be carried along quite as comfortable as we are in India, I am quite sure that there is nothing to prevent your getting there perfectly well. Perhaps, dear aunt, the best way will be to ask the keeper of the hotel something about it?”

“ There is no occasion whatever, my dear child, to give yourself that trouble,” returned Miss Barbara, recovering her self-possession, and by no means wishing that her niece should discover, either on this or any other occasion, that she could do without her assistance. “ I can tell you everything you wish to know

as to the proper manner of sending Mrs. Mills to Scotland. She will go, of course, by a second-class train, and may take her luggage with her to the station when she sets off herself. We are close to it here."

"Really!" exclaimed Judith, looking and feeling exceedingly comforted. "Then we shall both set off together, for we must both wait for our boxes, you know. I wonder, aunt, whether it would be possible for me to have another room here for a few minutes? Mrs. Mills and I have been such dear friends during the voyage that we must not part without having a little *tête-à-tête* by way of leave-taking. Let us go and ask that man that seems always standing at the top of the stairs." And so saying, Judith passed her arm under that of her humble friend, and took her out of the room before Miss Barbara had found time to make up her mind as to the best way of offering her advice and assistance in the matter.

She might have been more prompt, perhaps, had she been fully aware of what the nature of the interview was likely to be. The kind-

hearted, thoughtful, and indulgent friend who had managed all the arrangements for sending the young Judith to her father-land was determined that the poor child, whom he considered as a young thing by no means deficient in understanding, should not be tormented on arriving by finding herself under the immediate necessity of asking the first stranger who claimed relationship with her for money. He had, therefore, placed in her hand at parting a bag containing a hundred English sovereigns, telling her, moreover, that they would not be wanted for the payment of any accommodation on board, as everything of that kind would be amply paid beforehand. Neither was it to be expended for any necessary outlay upon her arrival in England, because her aunts would be sure to take good care that she wanted nothing.

“Then what is it for, my dear sir?” said Judith, laughing.

“You will find out yourself, my dear, quicker than I could tell you; for it might take me a long time, perhaps, to call to mind all the little whims and fancies that may find their

way into such a head as yours, Miss Judith. But yet I am ready to make you a bet, if you will take it, that some day or other you will tell me that I was right."

Judith, however, very discreetly declined the bet, observing, with a very sapient nod of her young head, that she thought it very likely he knew more about such matters than she did. And now she gratefully remembered the words of her kind old friend as she led the gentle observant attendant of her tedious voyage out of the room, with the consciousness that she could make her the happy bearer of a little offering to the industrious mother of the grand-children she had so often talked about during the voyage, without being obliged to trouble her anxious, fidgetty-looking aunt Barbara on the subject.

But although Judith did not at that moment know the value of a golden sovereign so well as she learned to do afterwards, she already began to feel too much respect for it to indulge herself in unmeasured munificence. The very pleasure she felt in putting ten of her precious little counters into the hand of Mrs. Mills

restricted her from putting more, and the look of delight and astonished gratitude with which those were received, gave the young heiress her first practical lesson on the value of the current coin of Great Britain.

She soon discovered, also, that Miss Barbara Jenkyns was quite right in pronouncing that the setting off from London upon a journey to Glasgow was a very easy business. The getting the luggage, too, was easy; everything was easy; and Judith reached Westhampton with the conviction, that though the sky of her ancestors was rather chilling as to its atmosphere, and rather dim as to its light, it approached in many respects most wonderfully to that land of fairy where to will and to do was one and the same operation.

CHAPTER XI.

MISS BARBARA JENKYNs had been a good deal vexed during the interval which had elapsed between her leaving her own mansion and her returning to it; nevertheless, when she found herself seated *tête-à-tête* with her precious young niece over the tea-table on the evening after her return, she felt all the comfort of having done a great deal of business, and having done it well. For after all Miss Elfreda's bustling activity and cunning stratagems, she had been unable to delay for a single hour the arrival of Judith at Westhampton; and possession being as many points of the law as she could reasonably

hope for, had she not the best possible reason to be satisfied ?

As to the pretty Judith herself, and the degrees of possible pleasure or probable pain which she was likely to be impressed with, Miss Barbara had as yet thought little. That the allowance she was to bring with her was the most important part of the business appeared to her a truth so exceedingly obvious, as to have rendered the mixing up any other consideration with it a sort of weakness of which Miss Barbara felt herself to be utterly incapable. The only thoughts or opinions which had as yet suggested themselves to her by looking at her niece, were, first, that she was most wonderfully like her mother ; and secondly, that she looked older, and more nearly grown-up, than she had either expected or wished for. However, she felt certain that, look as she would, she could not possibly be much above fifteen, and therefore, as she really was a child, it signified very little how she looked. There were five or six years of minority before them,—that was the great matter ; and, moreover, she was very deeply

impressed with the value of the adage, "forewarned is fore-armed;" and upon the strength of this she felt considerable confidence in her own power of preventing any such early misadventures as had befallen her sisters.

"No young lady committed to my care will ever marry her drawing-master," muttered Miss Barbara as she concluded her cogitations by comfortably settling her head upon her pillow, preparatory to exchanging her anxious thoughts for the future for a good night's sleep after her journey.

The first sensations of Judith on awaking the next morning were not gay, nor, to say truth, in any way very agreeable. The novelty of the voyage, the vague uncertainty concerning everything that was to come after it, and the bewildering excitement of her arrival, with the novelty of every object that she looked upon, had kept her mind ever since the day of her embarkation in a state of suspense and uncertainty concerning the future, which had effectually prevented her ever having yet made up her mind to think herself either happy or the reverse.

In fact, it would have been quite in vain, had she attempted, to form any judgment as to the future, for no feature of it had as yet become visible to her. Had she been a little farther advanced in age, or possessed only a little more experience concerning the world and its ways, she could scarcely have failed to find food for hoping for a pleasant future in the consciousness of possessing youth, health, wealth, and beauty. But as yet she had reasoned upon none of these good things, any more than upon the sundry other evil things which were likely enough to beset her, as well as many other of her fellow-creatures.

But notwithstanding all this mental blindness, she was quite aware of the fact that the objects upon which she opened her eyes on the morning which succeeded her arrival at Westhampton were very different from all that had welcomed her waking in her eastern home, and, in her opinion, much less agreeable. The shutters of her two rather small sash windows were not closed, but a pair of dingy red moreen curtains had been let down over them, leaving just sufficient light to show her

a dismal, though neat enough, looking room, about sixteen feet square, with a bit of faded carpet before the little toilet table, and a bit of faded oil-cloth before the little wash-stand. There were, moreover, six red-bottomed chairs, and a little round table large enough to sustain a moderate sized work-box ; and though she raised herself and sat upright in her bed, she could see nothing else.

The room in which she remembered to have slept in India, as long as she remembered any thing, was certainly as unlike this as it was well possible for one bed-room, containing the obviously necessary articles of furniture, to be to another which might be said to contain the necessary articles of furniture also. It had never been intended, or thought of, to make the little girl's room in her early home either beautiful or luxurious ; and yet, somehow or other, when compared with that she now looked upon, it seemed to have been both. At any rate, the draperies which formerly surrounded her were of soft muslin instead of stiff moreen, and what was almost darkness in England had only been shade in India,—not

to mention the closet-like size of her present apartment when compared with that she had left. "It cannot be helped!" whispered Judith with a sigh, as she laid herself down again on her too soft pillow. "I am in England now, and should not get back again to poor dear India, if I passed every hour of my life in wishing for it. I wonder whether I am to get up by myself? or whether I am to lie still in this odd-looking bed till somebody comes to take me out of it?"

All doubt on this point, at least, was speedily removed by a little tap at the door, and the appearance immediately afterwards of Miss Barbara's housemaid.

"Are you come to wake me?" said Judith, smiling. "I have been awake a great while, and shall be very glad to get up."

"Can I help you, Miss?" returned Susan, with the cheerful alacrity of a good-tempered girl, delighted at the idea of having something younger and gayer than her old mistress to wait upon and gossip with.

"Indeed you can help me," said Judith.

again jumping up in her bed, but looking round her in a very helpless sort of style, and evidently at a loss as to what she was to do first by way of assisting herself. "I don't see any bath, Susan. Did not aunt Barbara call you Susan?"

"Yes, Miss, my name is Susan. But I don't know what you mean, Miss, by a bath in a bed-room. In this country we always goes down to the sea-side when we wants bathing," replied the laughing girl.

"Nonsense, Susan! You don't mean to tell me that English people never wash themselves excepting in the sea, do you?" said Judith, with an evident inclination to be as merry as the maid.

"Wash? Oh! my goodness forbid that we should not wash!" And so saying, Susan seized upon the little washing-stand, and placed it as nearly as might be in the middle of the room.

"And that's what you call a bath, is it, Susan?" cried Judith rather dolefully: "then I am sure I don't know what is to become of me, for I never got up in my life without

being splashed all over with water from head to foot."

"Well! to be sure! And you such a grown up lady! Why it is enough to make you catch your death, Miss!" returned Miss Barbara's handmaid, shuddering. "My Missis would be frightened out of her seven senses if she could hear you."

"Then we must take care that she does not hear me," said Judith, "for I would not frighten her for the world, if I could help it. But you do not look so—so frightenable as my aunt does; dear Susan; and therefore you must help me—you must indeed!"

"And so I will, Miss, to the very best of my power," returned the girl, eagerly, "only I don't know how. What is it that you want me to do, my dear young lady? Only tell me, and you shall see if I do set about it with right good will. But how to get you splashed all over up here, and that too without Missis finding us out, I don't know, and that's the truth, Miss."

"What is the biggest thing you have got in the house, Susan, that is made to hold water?"

“The boiler, Miss,—yes, it must be the boiler, Miss; out and out, that is the biggest,” replied Susan, with decision.

“But I do not want to be boiled, Susan,” replied Judith, laughing; “I only want to be bathed.”

The conversation then took a graver tone, and Susan was at length made to comprehend enough of the usual habits of the young stranger to enable her to conceive it to be possible that she might, by the exercise of a good deal of ingenuity and the abduction of a washing-tub, be able to render her some assistance; but she would not promise this without receiving another promise in return, by which Judith covenanted that if she were permitted the free use of water for the purpose of “splashing herself all over,” her aunt Barbara should know nothing about it.

Judith gave the promise, though it was not very easy to make her understand the necessity of it; but, at length, the earnest seriousness of poor Susan convinced her that it was no jesting matter, and that, let the mysterious reason be what it might, it would cer-

tainly be a very rash and unwise act were she to give Miss Barbara Jenkyns reason to suspect that she insisted upon having more water to perform her ablutions than this exemplary relative deemed necessary for her own use.

This difficult business being settled, Judith was at length persuaded to remember how much time they had wasted in talking, and that if she did not wish to see "Missis" as cross as two sticks, it would be highly advisable to make her appearance in the parlour with as little farther delay as possible.

I fully intend to make Judith Maitland the heroine of this present chronicle, and I am, therefore, almost ashamed to confess how very much better and happier she felt in consequence of the conversation above described. It is quite impossible that she could have been a "superior minded" girl, for if she had, she could scarcely have felt her "bosom's lord sit lightly on its throne," solely because she had found an opportunity for enjoying an hour's familiar gossip with an ignorant little housemaid, who had nothing on earth to

recommend her but good humour and a laughter-loving vein. Yet so it was.

The heavy misfortunes which had fallen upon Judith during the last few months that she had been resident in India, had been felt by her with all the severity of mental suffering which such bereavements must almost inevitably produce on every human heart. At any rate, they did produce on that of Judith an agony of sorrow first, and a melancholy sense of bereavement afterwards, which, if they had long endured, would probably have caused her to follow to an early tomb the dear ones whose loss had left her so very desolate.

But the daily rising of heaven's glorious sun is not a more assured nor a more benevolent manifestation of the bounteous providence of the Creator, than is the sure yet silent influence of every passing hour in chasing such dark sorrows from our hearts, and restoring us again to hope, and even joy.

So had it been with Judith, although she was scarcely aware that so it was; for had any cruel voice at any moment rehearsed to her the dismal catalogue of her heavy losses, she

would again have wrung her hands and wept in agony, and have felt as ready to declare as at the first hour in which she became certain that the last, worst blow, her mother's death, had fallen upon her, that she never, never could know happiness again.

But whatever faults might be attributed to poor Judith, falsehood was not among them. What she did feel, she might not always have the discretion to conceal with as much prudence as might have been convenient, but no one could justly accuse her of having ever affected to feel what she did not. This is praise; and it is, perhaps, the highest that I could with truth bestow upon her at that period of her existence, for the vehemence of her indignant feelings upon witnessing any thing like injustice, or oppression, towards those whose position exposed them to it, seemed rather like the result of temperament than of virtue: and as for the good-natured propensities which led her to be kind and pleasure-giving to those she liked, though they might be traced to a happy, healthful disposition, could scarcely at this early untried

period of her existence be classed as high moral qualities. Still less, perhaps, can I display as a claim to admiration and esteem that light gaiety of temper which led her, as I have said above, to feel better and happier for her conversation with her aunt Barbara's housemaid.

Nevertheless, I may excuse her for it a little. It was truly the first time she had laughed since her mother's death, and though she did not remember the fact, and would probably have burst into tears had she thought of it, the sensation was pleasant to her. And when she had made her little toilet, though it was done in a great hurry, and under the great disadvantage of finding that everything she wanted was locked up and its place utterly forgotten, she looked so very pretty and so very nice, that even the sedate Miss Barbara could not resist a slight expression of surprise and admiration as she entered the parlour.

“Dear me! how very much better you look, my dear. I suppose that is because you have had such a nice night's rest. A comfortable bed, and a comfortable bed-room, my dear

Judith, are excellent restoratives after all the miseries you must have been exposed to during your long voyage, and I am truly glad to see that you have profited so well by them."

Judith's comical thoughts instantly reverted to the exceeding ugliness of her musty-looking old bed-room, and to the funny little washstand set forth in the middle of it, by way of a bath, by Susan, and she laughed again.

But not even the sensitive Miss Barbara herself could see offence in that laugh. It was so bright, so joyous, so almost child-like in its genuine merriment, that the good lady was very near laughing too. But ere her soberly-mannered lips so far forgot their life-long education as to smile without well-knowing why, a very melancholy thought suggested itself to her, which instantly checked the novel propensity. "Mercy upon me!" she inwardly exclaimed, "what is to become of me if she turns out to be as pretty, or prettier, than her foolish mother, or her still more foolish aunt Penelope? What is to become of the carriage, and Dr. Wroughtley, and all the rest of the comforts I have been thinking

about? But she shan't run off with a drawing master, at any rate. I'll take care of that."

Had Judith stood waiting for the ripening of Miss Barbara's incipient smile, she might have felt herself a good deal puzzled by the sudden change in the expression of her features, but, fortunately, this did not happen, for Miss Barbara Jenkyns possessed a parrot. It was a present from Dr. Wroughtley, and valued accordingly; and just at the moment when the dreadful consciousness of Judith's unwelcome prettiness burst upon her, the bird suddenly rolled himself round by means of the spherical wire contrivance, which was suspended from the roof of his cage, and uttered a very articulate "Good morning!"

This was quite enough to make Judith forget all the aunts in the world, and she was beside his cage in a moment.

"Oh, you beautiful darling!" she exclaimed, which was followed on her part by a series of those inimitable and extraordinary sounds by which parrot lovers constantly propitiate the tribe.

The bird, who was of a somewhat proud

and haughty nature, as the pet parrot of a Miss Barbara might naturally be expected to be, received the first overtures of Judith rather coldly, making its sidelong steps along its fine expanse of perch in a direction exactly contrary to her wishes, which would have brought him in all his splendour towards her, and given his gaily dized head to her caresses.

“Cross bird! cross bird!” cried Judith, and then again she began her clicking and mooing, and offered the tip of her taper finger to scratch him in so very inviting a manner, that he seemed unable to resist any longer, and approached her with a movement considerably more rapid than that by which he had retreated.

“Oh, you darling!” was her next exclamation: upon which the parrot solemnly bent his head, and repeated the word “Darling.” Judith was in ecstasies, and suddenly turning round towards the breakfast table, she darted towards the sugar basin, and seizing upon two of the largest lumps it contained—they were not very large—returned with them to the cage, and presented them to her new acquaint-

ance, with every species of endearment most likely to be acceptable to a parrot.

Up to this point Miss Barbara had been, not an indifferent, but a tranquil spectator of the scene; but Judith had now gone too far.

“No! if you please, ma’am, no!” rather shrieked than said Miss Barbara. “It is what I have never allowed from anybody, since the hour the poor beast was given to me!” And having said this, though not in time to prevent the sugar from entering between the wires of the cage, she set herself down at the breakfast table literally pouting with agitation. Had Dr. Wroughtley himself been the object of Judith’s tender attentions, Miss Barbara could scarcely have appeared more vehemently agitated than she looked and felt at that moment.

“Don’t you like that people should love your parrot, aunt Barbara?” said Judith, with a merry smile, yet not quite without some slight feeling of alarm, lest she should have done that was considered as prejudicial to the favourite’s health.

Miss Barbara made a great effort to control

her feelings, and so far succeeded as to reply, comparatively, with composure—

“Love him, niece Judith? oh dear, no! of course I have no objection that people should love him, and, indeed, I don’t see how any body can help it, such a very beautiful creature as he is. But I don’t choose that any body’s love should interfere with my management of him, my dear. He was given to me by a very particularly dear friend, and I feel it to be a sort of duty that I owe to him, to take the very greatest care that nobody should feed him but myself. It is not everybody that understands the nature of parrots.”

“Then I shall never be able to make him love me, aunt Barbara,” returned Judith; “for though I am rather inclined to be fond of animals, I have generally had the vexation of finding, that the most certain way of making them fond of me in return was by feeding them. They don’t seem to care much for anything else.”

“Well, never mind, my dear. I dare say that some day or other, when you are older, and may have gained the friendship and re-

gard of some one who wishes to please you, it may be your good fortune, or you see it has been mine, to receive the same sort of affectionate present ; and whenever this happens, my dear, you will have the right to do exactly what you like with it. That will be time enough for you to begin studying about the best way of making anything fond of you. Shall I give you some sugar in your tea, my dear ?”

“Yes, if you please, aunt,” replied the young heiress, with a scarcely audible little sigh, generated by the melancholy intimation that it would be necessary to grow old before anything could be fond of her. But though this thought was certainly sad enough to make any young lady sigh, it is probable that the gay and sanguine temper of Judith prevented her giving any very implicit faith to this axiom, for she smiled merrily again the very next moment, as she said, “Did you teach your parrot, aunt, to call you darling? Or did your friend teach it to him beforehand, on purpose to please you ?”

There is a very remarkable difference be-

tween the blush of a young lady, and that of a lady who is no longer young. In the first case, it speaks an immense variety of unutterable things; in the last, it almost always seems mixed with a little indignation, and this was so decidedly the case in the present instance, that Judith must have been positively frightened at the effect of her question, had she not been one of the most fearless little creatures in existence. Miss Barbara recovered herself, however, by a strong effort, and replied, with a very tolerable degree of composure, "Upon my word, my dear, I don't remember anything about it."

Thus ended all discussion about the parrot, for a feeling greatly resembling natural instinct prevented Judith from again interfering, in any way, between Miss Barbara and her bird.

The conversation during the remainder of the time allotted to breakfast, was devoted to descriptive sketches of the admirable society of the Close by the aunt, and a few rather *mal-à-propos* questions from the niece; but, on the whole, it went off very well, for Judith listened with considerable interest to Miss

Barbara's assurances, that, in coming to stay with her, she had ensured to herself the advantage of beginning life by being introduced to the most delightful society, beyond all comparison, that either England, or any other country in the world, could furnish ; and as Judith listened with the unscrupulous faith of perfect ignorance, no observations were offered on her part, calculated to interrupt the charming serenity of spirits with which Miss Jenkyns always dwelt on this subject.

Had Dr. Wroughtley been a few years younger, or Judith Maitland a few years less young, this delightful serenity might, perchance, have been less perfect ; but as it was, the only link of connexion which suggested itself as possible between her friend and her niece, was, that the latter might pay for a carriage, and Dr. Wroughtley might ride in it.

CHAPTER XII.

“WHERE do you keep your books, aunt?” inquired Judith, when at length Miss Barbara rose to quit the breakfast table.

“In my own study, my dear,” was the reply.

“And what room may I sit in? I must not give up working, you know, for I am afraid I am very backward,” said Judith.

“Give up working! No, indeed, that would be a great pity, and I should be very sorry if you thought of such a thing. Nothing is more ladylike, especially for young people, than nice work; and if you really are backward, I think I must get good Mrs. Eccles, who is the very kindest person in the world,

to give you a few lessons. Her tent-stitch is quite perfect."

"But it is not stitching that I mean, aunt," said Judith. "I dare say I can stitch well enough—anybody can do that, you know. But I am behind hand in my reading. You would be frightened if you knew how very, very little I know about history. What will you say to me, if I confess to you that I believe that almost all my notions about English history have been got out of Shakspeare?"

Judith laughed as she said this, but she blushed too, for she was quite in earnest; but, luckily for her, perhaps, Miss Barbara comprehended neither the nature nor the extent of the turpitude thus honestly confessed; if she had, it is more than probable that the imprudent little heiress would have a good many difficulties to contend with, before she again found herself at liberty to follow her own fancy in any of her studies. But Miss Barbara Jenkyns, though she had very often heard Shakspeare mentioned, and moreover possessed, in consequence of her arrangement with Miss Elfreda, a very hand-

some octavo edition of his works,—notwithstanding all this, Miss Barbara knew no more about what a young lady might learn, or might not learn, from his pages, than of what might be found either in Plato or Tom Moore. Controversial divinity was her favourite study, and wherever this happens to be the case, it will be generally found that it renders the mind unapt to enter with any great vivacity upon any other. Her answer, therefore, to the confession of Judith, was a very gentle one.

“Well, my dear,” said she, “all you can do now, you know, is to inquire about the best books that young ladies ought to study upon all subjects; and now you are come to England, and especially now you are come to Westhampton, you will be sure to hear exactly what is most right and proper for you in every way. It will be a very great advantage for you, Judith, to have the honour and happiness of being introduced, as I am sure I shall try that you shall be, to the Dean and the Prebends; but the greatest blessing of all, my dear child, will be for you to know Dr. Wroughtley. There is nothing, no, nothing:

in the whole world, that you could ask his opinion about, that he would not be able to answer in the most superior way. It *will* be an advantage, my dear, won't it, to have such a friend as that to talk to you?"

"Yes, indeed, aunt! It would be an advantage to any one, but especially to a girl as ignorant as I believe I am—only—" said Judith, and there she stopped.

"Only what? Speak out, my dear. Don't be afraid to tell me whatever you may happen to have in your head, particularly about Mr. Wroughtley. Tell me everything, my dear."

"Thank you, aunt; I'm sure you are very kind. What I have in my head now is, that I should think so very clever a man as Dr. Wroughtley would find it a great bore if I asked him to tell me all that I want to know."

"And so he might, my dear,—I dare say he might. I won't pretend to say but that he might think it troublesome," replied Miss Barbara slowly, and with an expression of very deliberate reflection on her features, "if any other young lady, that is to say, any young

lady not so nearly related to me, were to give him this trouble. But Dr. Wroughtley and I are very old friends, Judith, and I feel certain,—at least I am sure I may say that I feel almost certain, of his answering with the very kindest condescension any questions which you will tell me to ask him.”

“Thank you, aunt,” said Judith, bending her head to adjust the ends of the ribbon that encircled her neck, so that her rich brown ringlets almost covered her face. “But I must not keep you standing in this way listening to my idle talk. May I go with you into your study to look for a book to read?—I dare say Susan will help me to unpack my trunks by-and-by, and then I shall get at my drawing things.”

“Do you draw?” demanded Miss Barbara, with a degree of solemnity that nearly approached sternness. “Do you draw, Judith?”

“Yes, I do. I am very fond of it,” replied Judith, looking surprised. “Is it wrong? I am sure I hope not, for I love it dearly.”

“I don’t know about wrong. That’s as it

may be," replied her aunt, knitting her brows. "In any other family, perhaps, it would not so much signify, but to us"—And here Miss Barbara stopped, and very nearly groaned.

Judith was too much startled to stand upon ceremony, and therefore very explicitly demanded what was the matter.

"Matter?—There is nothing the matter, at least I mean there is nothing the matter about you, my dear. But if you do not know it already, I think it is quite right that I should tell you the dreadful mischief that the love of drawing has already produced in this house.—If I had time I should like to ask Mr. Wroughtley about it first; but you look in such a hurry, my dear, that I suppose I must follow my own unassisted judgment in this, and tell you the truth at once.—You have heard of your aunt Penelope, Judith?"

"Heard of her? Heard of my aunt Worthington? To be sure, aunt Barbara, I have heard of her. There was nobody in all England that poor mamma talked so much about, and what she most wished to come back for was, that they might live together. Indeed,

mamma told me more than once, that if aunt Penelope would not come to England to live, she would go herself to Rome rather than not be with her."

"Then I am sure it is a great blessing that,"—began the indignant Miss Barbara. But she was sufficiently discreet to stop just before she had finished the sentence, and only added in a much more tranquil voice,—“In short, my dear, it will be a very great blessing for you if you can get the advice of such a man as Dr. Wroughtley whenever you want it. You will have nothing to do but just to act exactly according as he tells you in all things, and then you at least will be safe from all danger; let you fancy yourself as fond of drawing as you will.”

“But what danger can there be in my being fond of drawing, aunt Barbara, even if there were no such person as Dr. Wroughtley in the world?” said Judith rather sturdily. “I don’t understand you.”

“Sit down again for a few minutes, Judith, and I will tell you. Your poor unfortunate aunt Penelope, my dear, who had exactly the

same fortune that I have, and had just the same power of living like a gentlewoman to the end of her days that I have, unhappily took it into her head that she had a great taste for drawing. Nothing would satisfy her but having a drawing-master, Judith, and in an evil hour my poor dear mother consented, and that most presumptuous of men, young Worthington, was hired to instruct her in that most useless of all accomplishments. You may guess the result, my dear—that was the man she ran away with and married! That was the man who spent all her money and reduced her to absolute penury!—And now, Judith, let me ask you, if you can wonder at my looking terrified at the very mention of a drawing-master?”

“Reduced to penury?” repeated Judith, looking very unhappy. “Do you mean to say, aunt Barbara, that my dear mamma’s beloved sister Penelope is really reduced to penury?”

“Indeed, I think I have full right to say so, after such a letter as the last we got from her. Both my sister Elfreda and myself felt shocked.

and indignant, at the manner in which she wrote about the man who had behaved so shamefully to us all."

"Did my uncle Worthington behave shamefully?" cried Judith. "I am very, very sorry to hear it!"

And the tears which started to her eyes showed the feeling to be genuine.

"Pray do not call that person your uncle, Miss Maitland," returned Miss Barbara with great indignation. "It is a disgrace to us all to hear you allude to him; and as to your crying about it, child, that can do no good to anybody. What is done, cannot be undone, Judith, and all that we can do is to endeavour to bury the whole affair in oblivion."

"But mamma did not think it right to bury it in oblivion," cried Judith. "And before poor papa died, I well remember that they used to talk together about trying to make aunt Penelope and cousin Charles come out to India to live with them. I don't believe that mamma ever knew anything about my uncle Worthington being such a wicked man, and I am quite sure papa never did."

“ You are a great deal too young, Judith, to understand anything about such matters. I have not said one word about Penelope’s husband having been a wicked man. I don’t suppose he was a wicked man, in the sense you mean. When I said he behaved shamefully, of course I meant about his running away with my sister.—And it was most shameful taking advantage so of her youth, and her silly fancy about drawing, and she having ten thousand pounds, and he nothing !”

Judith appeared perfectly satisfied by this explanation. All traces of tears disappeared from her bright eyes, as if by magic, and the said eyes only looked brighter than ever.

“ Thank you, aunt !” said she, in the most cheerful accent imaginable, though she might have been rather at a loss, had she been called upon to explain why she was so grateful. However, the phrase did very well by way of giving an agreeable turn to the conversation, and even Miss Barbara herself seemed so well pleased at having got over the little difficulty of having imputed perhaps rather too much sin and iniquity to one of the most amiable

and excellent men that ever lived, that she positively smiled at Judith in return, and said, in a most amiable manner, "Now then, my dear, we will go into my study, and look for a book."

"If you please, ma'am," returned Judith, following Miss Barbara towards the door. "But before I begin to read it, I must get you to tell me aunt Worthington's present address."

"And that I am by no means able to do, Judith. I shall think you were much more likely to know it than I am, for I believe your mamma did keep up a correspondence with her, and that is what I never did, nor Elfreda either. For what was the good of putting her to the expense of foreign postage, when we knew she had no money to pay for it?—How comes it, my dear, that you do not know her address yourself, if she and your mamma always kept such great friends?"

"Because her last letter said that she and cousin Charles were going to leave Rome immediately, but that they had not quite made up their minds as to where they should go. She mentioned Paris and London as the two

places between which they were doubting, but that will go but a very little way towards finding them out," added Judith, very disconsolately. "What can I do about it, aunt Barbara? I *must* find them out some way or other; for, even independent of my great and longing wish to see them, I have got all those diamonds, you know, to give aunt Penelope; and if they are not rich, that of itself may really be a matter of importance.—Indeed, aunt Barbara, I shall be perfectly miserable till I find them."

"Do not say that, Judith, because it would be very wrong to feel so. God knows always what is best for us all, and if it be his will that you should not find them out, you ought not only to submit to it patiently, but to feel a very comfortable certainty that it will be better for you that you should not."

Having pronounced these words with considerable solemnity, Miss Barbara moved on, and led the way to her study.

Judith followed her, and followed her in silence, for it was certainly evident to the meanest capacity, that nothing which she

could say at that moment would be in the least degree likely to obtain what she wanted. But could Miss Barbara Jenkyns have been made aware of the burning indignation and steadfast determination which were at work in the throbbing heart of the little lady behind her, she might have suspected that the obtaining from the Lord Chancellor an allowance, which might justify even her prudence in keeping a carriage, was by no means likely to prove the most difficult part of the task which lay before her. But she was as unconscious of all this as her pet parrot could be.

CHAPTER XIII.

Miss Barbara Jenkyns' study was not an apartment greatly calculated to enchant the eye, or cheer the spirits, of such a young lady as Miss Judith Maitland. It was precisely twelve feet square, having one window, one door, one fire-place, and one glass-covered book-case on its respective sides. It was dark, because the window was not a large window, and because there was, moreover, a thick green canvass blind to prevent any disagreeable objects, such as washing-tubs, dust-holes, and the like, from being too clearly discerned in the back court upon which it opened. A very

ancient, but not quite ragged Turkey carpet, exactly ten feet square, was placed with scrupulous exactness precisely in the middle of the room, which would have produced a still more chilling effect had not Dr. Wroughtley, upon becoming aware that this apartment was likely to be the scene of all Miss Barbara's privy counsellings, pretty strongly insisted upon the necessity of having a warm hearth-rug, as well as a comfortable arm-chair for the accommodation of the individual (let it be whom it might) whose advice she might deem it advisable to ask for within the shelter of this sombre retreat.

In the middle of the little carpet there was a very substantial table, rather longer than was necessary for the little writing-desk, and the little work-basket which were for ever placed upon it; and there were, moreover, six black horse-hair bottomed chairs, arranged with great attention to symmetry against the walls; and this was all that met the eye on entering the apartment, which for years had been the favourite boudoir of Miss Barbara Jenkyns.

Gay young hearts are not, perhaps, very easily made to feel that most melancholy sensation, which is described by the word "*sinking*," and the heart of Judith was by nature very gay; but it was not this gaiety of temperament which now enabled her to resist the sadly gloomy influence of this retreat, (which Miss Barbara pronounced as she entered to be her favourite sitting-room,) one half so much as the new-born principle of sturdy rebellion, which had been generated by the few words that had passed between herself and her aunt upon the subject of the Worthingtons.

The hearts of the two pretty sisters of the Jenkyns' family had probably been bound together by more intimate sympathies than any which had ever existed between the other members of it, and this may account for the fact that Mrs. Maitland, in talking to her children of her sisters, had inspired them all with a feeling for "Aunt Worthington" much more nearly approaching affection than any which the names of "Aunt Barbara" and "Aunt Elfreda" had ever inspired. Neverthe-

less, the testamentary instructions left by Mrs. Maitland had so decidedly placed her sole remaining child under the care of her unmarried sisters, that this real positive tie would soon have superseded the vague remembrances of childish partiality for a relation personally unknown, had not the ill-advised Miss Barbara produced precisely the effect which she would have most earnestly wished to avoid, by exciting for her unfortunate sister Penelope a deeper interest in the heart of Judith by her harshness and injustice, than was ever likely to be set to sleep again by all the caution, all the care, or all the authority it would be in her power to exercise, though she were ten times her guardian.

But happily for her present peace of mind, she was utterly unconscious, utterly unsuspecting, of the mischief she had done ; and upon turning round to ask her niece if she did not think that little room looked very comfortable, she positively mistook her heightened colour and the dark flashing of her eye for indications of her being in great

spirits, and very much delighted by every thing about her.

“ But this, you must know, my dear, is my own particular snugger, where I do all my little private business about house-keeping, and serious reading, and all that ; and no lady ever comes here without an invitation. However, you will be a favourite, I know that for certain, my dear, and you need not be afraid that I should ever make any objection to your coming in here to borrow a book, or to your sitting down now and then for the sake of our having a little comfortable chat together. But, of course, if you find me engaged, my dear, your own good sense and politeness will make you understand that it will be better to come another time.”

During the whole of this speech the eyes of Judith were resolutely fixed upon the ground. She felt probably something like an instinctive consciousness that she was not in a dutiful humour, and that her aunt might chance to find it out, if she either looked at or attempted to speak to her.

“Now then, my dear child,” pursued the well-pleased and perfectly unsuspecting Miss Barbara, “now you have my free leave and permission to look over all my books, from one end of my library to the other; that is, if you think it will amuse you, for I am not in the least degree averse to young people’s being amused. And more than that, Judith, I shall make no objection whatever to lending you one of them to read, if you fancy it would give you pleasure. Come and look, my dear, and tell me if there is any one of them that you would particularly wish to read.”

Judith approached the book-case in silence, and without bestowing much time in examination of the collection, she put a finger upon that part of the glass door behind which were ranged the works of Massinger, and said, “I will take a volume or two of these, if you please.”

“One at a time, I should like better,” replied her aunt, with a slight contraction of her brow. “One at a time will do, won’t it, my dear? In my opinion, Judith, it is always

best, and most proper, and most convenient too, to keep everything in its right place; and the right place for books, you know, is the book-case." And as she spoke Miss Barbara drew the key from her pocket, and applied it to the door; and then, having slowly and very carefully opened it, she raised her hand, which she held suspended for a moment as if the deed she were about were one not to be performed too hastily, and repeated with considerable solemnity "one at a time."

Judith made no reply, but stood in mute, and as her aunt might think, perhaps, in respectful expectation of whatever degree of indulgence might be accorded to her.

Miss Barbara at length drew forth the first volume of the set; but before she presented it to her niece she opened it, and after gazing upon it for a minute or two, and turning a few of the pages, she said,

"What made you ask for this book, my dear? It is a stage play, is it not? I am almost sure it is, from the manner in

which it is printed ; though I have never made myself very familiar with such paltry sort of reading. It is a stage play, Judith—is it not ?”

“I believe so, ma’am,” replied the rebellious spirit in a tone of great indifference, and turning its naughty head the other way.

“Well, my dear little girl ! it may be perfectly innocent, and perfectly harmless for any thing I know for certain to the contrary, for, as I said before, I have never given myself to the study of such unprofitable reading, nor was it very likely I should, being brought up from the hour of my birth in such a place as this. But still I won’t say but what these ones that you have asked for may be very innocent, and if it should turn out so, I shall have no objection whatever to going on lending you one volume after another, till you have got to the end of the set, if you don’t grow tired first. But I do think, Judith, that it will be my duty to make some little inquiry before you begin, for I am pretty sure that it does sometimes happen that stage plays and

farces, and those sort of things, do sometimes turn out to contain things not altogether such as the Lord Chancellor might approve for you; and in that case you must be aware, my love, that instead of giving them to you it will be my duty to put them as much out of your way as possible. You can understand this, Judith, yourself, I am quite sure."

"The Lord Chancellor?" repeated Judith, in an accent expressive of great astonishment.

"Yes, of course, my dear. You surely cannot be ignorant of the very important fact that you are a ward in Chancery, Judith? Surely some one or other must have told you as much as that, young as you are."

"Yes, aunt, I knew as much as that," she replied. But though very sincerely conscious that she knew less about such matters, and indeed about many others than most girls of her age, she could not help feeling a little inclined to quiz Miss Barbara's solemnity on this occasion; nor could she, despite all the anger that still glowed in her heart, resist a smile at her pomposity as she replied, "I

don't think, aunt Barbara, that the Lord Chancellor is likely to give himself much trouble about what I read."

A slight consciousness of her own absurdity caused Miss Barbara to colour a little at receiving this common-sense sort of remonstrance from her young niece ; but it was not in her nature to plead guilty to this, or any other shadow of blundering, and she replied with well-sustained dignity that it might be so, but that it was always desirable that all ladies, whether young or old, should doubt their own judgment, particularly when they were so fortunate as to have male friends able and willing to give them advice.

Before Miss Barbara had fully delivered this opinion, the thoughts of Judith were far away, and she was meditating so very earnestly on the best means of finding out her aunt Worthington, that both Massinger and the Lord Chancellor were utterly forgotten ; and upon Miss Barbara's finishing her speech by saying, "Don't you think, my dear, that it would be a very good thing to consult my old

friend Dr. Wroughtley about it?" she answered, "Yes, ma'am," without having the slightest idea as to what the proposal was to which she assented.

Now, it had often happened to Miss Barbara Jenkyns to meet with opposition, particularly from her sister Elfreda, when proposing to consult this same estimable divine on domestic matters, and therefore this particularly ready acquiescence on the part of Judith was most welcome to her.

"In that case, my dear love, every thing will go right, and in the mean time you may have this to amuse you," (putting a volume of the "Spectator" into her hand)—"we all know that there is no danger here. It has been a young lady's book from the time it was written."

Judith put out her hand, mechanically, to take the book, and, as mechanically said, "Thank you;" and then, with a much more rapid step than she entered the room, she left it, eager to find herself in the solitude of her own little apartment, in order to meditate upon

the most speedy and effectual means of doing what she was fully determined she would do, let her hard-hearted, unnatural, and most odious aunt Barbara do what she would to prevent her.

The vehemence of her feelings upon this occasion must not, however, be taken as a specimen of her temper—for Judith's temper was neither violent nor vindictive. But all her best and most natural feelings had been roused against the line of conduct that had been dictated to her. Even had she fully understood the nature of the reference which her aunt had suggested to her favourite Prebend and Doctor of Divinity, by which she proposed to make him the arbiter of all her studies, sports, and pastimes, no such vehement feelings of opposition would have arisen within her. She might probably have found some difficulty in concealing the mirth which she would have felt at such a proposal had she understood it; and she might also have been a little inclined to think that it would not much signify, for that if books were to be had she should be sure to read them,

whether the old Doctor approved it or no; but neither anger, or dislike, towards any body would have been brought into action thereby. But now the case was altogether different.

She had never before, perhaps, been conscious herself how perfectly well aware she was that her own dear mother had loved her sister Penelope ten thousand times more than either of her other sisters; but now she longed for nothing so much as a fitting opportunity for proclaiming this to every body that would listen to her.

“ Poor, dear aunt Worthington! And because she was poor, and because she was in distress, and because she loved drawing, and had taste and good feeling enough to love talent, and to give up everything for the sake of being the wife of a man of talent,—because of all this, and for no other reason in the world, she was to be forsaken by her family, and left perhaps to starve, they knew not and cared not where!”

Such were the meditations of Judith as she

stood beside her aunt Barbara before the bookcase, and as she marched up the stairs with a volume of "The Spectator" in her hand, her heart was swelling with rebel resolution.

Miss Barbara, meanwhile, remained in her study, in the most happy frame of mind imaginable.

"I shall have no great difficulty in managing this poor dear child, that's quite clear."

It was thus she pleasantly pondered, as she sat herself down and opened the little writing-desk which, save on the subject of invitations given and received, was sacred to household accounts and Doctor Wroughtley.

"It is always best," she murmured, musingly, "to begin as one means to go on. No woman in the world, either married or single, ought to carry on such important affairs as I have got on my hands now, without getting a masculine judgment to help them—that is, if they have got the privilege to ask for it." And here her love of soliloquy, which she was apt to indulge in a low, but not quite inarticulate murmur, stopped short, while she went to her

desk and penned the following epistle to her friend:—

“ MY DEAR SIR,

“ I am sure you will, with your usual kindness, be glad to hear that I have brought home my young charge safely. She does not look quite so young as I expected, but I suppose that is owing to her having grown up into the same sort of slight tall-looking figure as her poor mother. I think you will be surprised to see how tall she is—*very* nearly as tall as I am! However, she is but a child, nevertheless, in point of age, and I do assure you, my dear sir, that I feel all the weight of my responsibility very heavily. But in this case, as in so many others, I shall hope to enjoy the great advantage of your advice. I do assure you that I never wanted it more, and I feel that the privilege of asking for it is one of the greatest blessings I enjoy.

“ May I, therefore, my dear Doctor, ask you to have the exceeding kindness to call on me, at any hour most convenient to you before

dinner? I have not forgotten that we are to meet this evening at the Dean's, but that will give me no opportunity of asking for your opinion on one or two points in the manner I wish to do. I am afraid that I must not think of taking Judith with me to-night, for I believe it is to be a large party, and she is much too young for that. However, upon this point, as upon many others, I shall decide upon nothing without your advice.

“ Yours, my dear sir,

“ Ever most sincerely,

“ BARBARA JENKYNs.

“ P.S.—I saw some particularly fine French pears at a fruiterer's in London, and I have taken the liberty of bringing you a little offering of half-a-dozen, as I have a notion that you are fond of them.—N.B. I shall not stir till I have had the pleasure of seeing you.”

Dr. Wroughtley was not the man to let so devoted a friend wait vainly for him, unless some very particular engagement, such as the reading a newspaper, or a new number of

“Punch” rendered his obedience to her commands impossible. But nothing of this kind interfering upon the present occasion, he remained no longer in his library after receiving Miss Jenkyns’ note than was necessary for the comfortable eating of two of her pears, and then set off for her mansion.

“This *is* kind of you, dear Doctor!” she exclaimed, as her study door opened, and his stately figure appeared within it. “I am sure I can never thank you enough for all your kindness to me! What should I do in all my little troubles if I had not you?” “Don’t say a word about it, Miss Barbara,” he replied, shaking her by the hand both cordially and condescendingly. “Such old friends as we are should never stand upon ceremony. Your pears are excellent, Miss Barbara. You were quite right as to the sort. Never buy any other.”

Miss Barbara was delighted, and the more so because she had in this instance permitted her judgment to decide for her without any reference to her own likings, or dislikings,

simply selecting the species which was the most costly, without putting herself to the additional expense of testing the excellence of the fruit by the taste.

“Now, then. What have you got to say to me, my dear lady?” said the amiable divine, seating himself in his accustomed place near the fire, for the October air bit shrewdly. “You are going to speak a little prologue, I presume, before you bring your young *débutante* on the scene. But you must let me see her before I go. You must let me be the first to pass judgment on her.”

“You shall, of course, my dear Doctor, you shall; but you must wait a little first. I positively must have your opinion upon one or two points before anything else is thought of,” said Miss Barbara, advancing her own chair till it was opposite to that of her friend, and so near it that their noses were very nearly in contact.

“Begin, then. Let me hear all about it,” said he, half laughing.

“You shall, you shall, never fear! I will

waste as little of your precious time as possible," said she, "but I hardly know where to begin."

"How old is she?" said Dr. Wroughtley, willing to assist her by coming to the most important point at once.

"Oh! how like you that is!" exclaimed Miss Barbara. "You have named one of my greatest difficulties at the very first word. Why the fact is, Dr. Wroughtley," she continued, shaking her head rather dolorously, "she is by no means such a childish looking little thing as I expected to see her. Time does run so fast, dear Doctor! I protest to you that I expected to see a little girl in a white frock, and instead of that she looks, comparatively speaking, quite grown up. And this, you must perceive, makes my task a great deal more difficult."

"Does it? Why so, Miss Barbara? I should think it would be just the contrary. Surely a child is the most troublesome thing one can have belonging to one. At least that's my notion."

Miss Barbara felt it was impossible to object to a sentiment so replete with bachelor wisdom, but nevertheless she ventured to say in addition to the unavoidable, "So it is, to be sure ; but still there is something in a grown-up young lady that is very troublesome too. Don't you agree to that, Dr. Wroughtley ?"

"Well, I declare I don't think so," returned the Doctor with considerable animation, "unless indeed she happens to be ugly. But yours is a handsome family, Miss Barbara. I won't believe that she can be ugly. Come, now, let me see her."

"You shall, Dr. Wroughtley, you shall. I will send for her immediately, and you will find that she is not ugly at all ; I rather believe that most people would think her quite the reverse, though there is something a little odd about her, too. She has got such a queer look with her eyes sometimes. One would think she was going to read one through and through. But I don't suppose she means any thing. But the great difficulty about her being so nearly grown-up is this, Doctor. What am

I to do about taking her out? What do you think it will be my duty to do?"

"Do? Why take her every where, of course. They will only be too glad to have her. A pretty-looking young girl, with piercing eyes, and a handsome fortune, Miss Barbara, will be no very difficult guest to find a welcome for, take my word for it."

"That is very likely, Dr. Wroughtley, but that is not the difficulty. What am I to do about a carriage for her? I am sure I shall not be able to pay for one out of any allowance the Lord Chancellor is likely to make for a girl of her age. Nobody would suppose she could want such a thing."

"I don't know that, Miss Barbara," replied the learned divine, looking very intelligent. "Is the young lady rich enough to keep a carriage for herself, if she were of age?"

"Certainly she is, Dr. Wroughtley," returned Miss Barbara. "By a statement enclosed in the packet which brought me my poor sister Judith's last letter, it appears that a fortune somewhere between forty and fifty

thousand pounds has become the property of this girl, who is her only surviving child. Ten thousand pounds of this was my sister's fortune, settled upon her and her children at her marriage, and this sum remains in the funds, bringing, as we all know but too well, only three per cent. interest; but the remainder of the property, which was all realized by Colonel Maitland while he was in India, is vested in good English mortgages, and brings in a much better return. In short, from the statement sent me, which I could show you any day when you have leisure to look at it, Judith Maitland will have an income of about two thousand a-year, and of course this would justify her keeping a carriage."

"Certainly, if the young lady continued to board with her kind aunt; or if she made in any way a suitable marriage. But not only do Chancellors sometimes say "*I doubt*," but other folks occasionally doubt Lord Chancellors. However, my dear friend, I perfectly agree with you in thinking that a carriage for her

would be very agreeable and very convenient; and if the allowance made for her prove insufficient, it may very likely be increased by means of a memorial. But now let me see her, Miss Barbara. I am really growing quite impatient, and it is positive cruelty in you to keep me waiting so."

"A memorial? That is an excellent idea! And it may be stated that her Indian habits make it particularly necessary. She has been already asking me if all the people do not keep carriages!"

"Poor little lady! That is quite natural, and may, of course, be used to strengthen the memorial. Now, then, for the young lady. If you won't send for her, I must positively go for her myself."

"Upon my word, Doctor, you are as impatient as a school-boy; you shall see her presently. But there is another subject upon which it is absolutely necessary for me to hear your opinion before our present consultation is concluded. You know, I think, all the particulars of my unfortunate elder sister's

imprudent marriage?" said Miss Barbara, with a deep sigh.

"*All* the particulars? I am not quite certain about that. But I know that she ran away with her pretty face and her pretty fortune to a man who had nothing," replied Dr. Wroughtley.

"Exactly so. But do you not know also that the man was a drawing-master?" demanded Miss Barbara, somewhat severely.

"I may have heard so," he replied; "but, upon my honour, I forget all the particulars. But never mind about all that just now, Miss Barbara; it can make no difference to your young ward, you know."

"I beg your pardon, Dr. Wroughtley; that is exactly what I do not know. Almost the only thing which this young Judith has said to me as yet about herself is, that she is very fond of drawing, and wants to have a drawing-master. What ought I to say to her?" cried Miss Barbara, clasping her hands in great agitation.

"Why, if I were you, Miss Barbara," re-

plied her sagacious friend, "I should tell her that I would inquire about it."

"And if I did inquire? And if a drawing-master were to be recommended to us? And if all the same sort of dreadful business were to begin over again?—oh! Dr. Wroughtley! how should I ever forgive myself?"

And Miss Barbara drew her handkerchief from her pocket as she made this touching appeal.

"What sort of a man was your sister's drawing-master?" inquired the Doctor, trying to look as grave as the Lord Chancellor himself.

"He was a very well-looking young man, certainly," she replied, "but his audacity has always made the very idea of him odious to me;" and she shuddered from head to foot as she thought of him.

"Don't agitate yourself, my dear lady, don't upon any account agitate yourself. My advice is that you should comply with the young lady's wishes, and immediately begin looking about for a drawing-master; but there will be

no necessity whatever that you should find one till you are fortunate enough to encounter an artist neither so young nor so handsome as the personage who seems to have caused you so much sorrow. And now, then, what say you to sending for the young lady?"

"Why, Dr. Wroughtley, I say that I *will* send for her. But, upon my honour, you will be very much disappointed if you expect to find her sufficiently charming to justify all this impatience. There is nothing very particular about her, I assure you. Besides, really there is one of the most important questions of all I have not asked yet, and I really cannot call her down till you have heard it."

"Then I am very sorry to tell you, my dear friend, that I must go without hearing it, for I have promised Dr. Sotherton to ride with him at two," said the impatient visitor, rising suddenly.

"Two? Good gracious, Dr. Wroughtley! it is not twelve yet, I am quite sure. Do stay five minutes! only five minutes longer, just to tell me if you think I ought to let

her read plays and farces, and such sort of trumpery?"

"Let me see her, and I will tell you," he replied, looking so greatly inclined to laugh, that poor Miss Barbara felt very nearly as much inclined to cry. But she knew the ways of her excellent friend too well to be seriously angry with him, and too well also to run any risk of making him seriously angry with her. So she rang the bell, and ordered William to tell Susan to inform Miss Maitland, that she would be much obliged to her if she would come to her in the study for a few minutes.

This message found my heroine, it must be confessed, in a frame of mind very little disposed to obedience. There was no fire in her bed-room, and she was as cold as a frog, a sensation to which she, in common with all Indian-born people, had a very particular aversion; and, moreover, poor child, she was so completely overpowered and out of spirits by finding herself totally at a loss where to address herself in order to obtain tidings of her aunt Worthington, that she told Susan,

very gravely, that she did not feel well enough to go down stairs, and that she believed the best thing she could do would be to go to bed.

“Go to bed, my dear young lady! And you looking so bright and beautiful all the time! Mercy on me! If you only but name such a thing to Missis we shall have our doctor, Mr. Carey, sent for in no time, and you won’t like to have physic to take. And after all, Miss, it won’t never cure you of not choosing to go down stairs to your aunt when you like better to stay up in your own room.”

“That is quite true, Susan,” returned Judith, laughing, and losing thereby the worst symptom of her malady, “and therefore I will go down stairs at once, without calling in the assistance of your Mr. Carey. And yet I don’t feel as if I should behave very well when I get there. I feel sure I shall not, Susan.”

“Oh yes, you will, Miss,” said Susan, encouragingly; “that is to say,” she added, “if you will only just be so good as to try.”

“Very true, Susan. Only if——” And

with these words on her pretty curling lip, the young lady turned from the first friend she had made in England, and made her way to the study in a frame of mind little calculated to make any other.

“What a sweet pretty darling she is!” thought Susan as she looked after her. “I wonder how she will get on with our crabbed old Missis! It is like shutting up a snarling old dog and a playful little kitten in the same cage.”

Judith opened the study door very slowly and deliberately, and endeavoured to enter the room with a very womanly air, being, to say the truth, very sturdily determined to find out her aunt Worthington with as little delay as possible, and to behave like the most dutiful and affectionate niece in the world, at least to her. But she was a good deal startled by perceiving a tall and portly gentleman sitting nose and knees with her aunt over the fire, with his eyes eagerly fixed on the door.

“Oh! here you are at last, my dear,” said her aunt; “and now you shall have the honour

and the happiness of being introduced to my excellent friend, Dr. Wroughtley.”

Judith blushed, and bowed, but spoke not.

Dr. Wroughtley looked at her for a moment, and then rising from his chair approached her, and held out his hand with great urbanity of look and manner.

Had not that look and manner been really very gracious and agreeable, Judith was just then quite capable of pretending not to see that he was offering to shake hands with her at all. As it was, however, she quite satisfied the gentleman, and almost satisfied her aunt, by the manner in which she received his civility.

The undeniable fact that it had been the ceaseless study of Dr. Wroughtley's life to make himself comfortable, by no means interfered with another fact, equally incontrovertible, that he knew how to make himself agreeable also. It must indeed be a much duller personage than our senior Prebend of Westhampton who could fail to be aware that the latter helped the former very materially.

Miss Barbara herself, well as she knew him, and well as she knew also all his charming little fascinating ways, was really astonished upon the present occasion to perceive how admirably he contrived to make the young stranger forget her strangeness, and converse with him as if they had been acquainted for years.

As to the reverend gentleman himself, he seemed to have forgotten his engagement with his brother prebend, Dr. Sotherton, if indeed he had ever made it, for he went on very pleasantly for the best part of an hour, talking of India and of England, and of the wide expanse which divided them.

At last, however, his visit came to an end, but not until he had declared that Miss Barbara Jenkyns was a very lucky lady for having been fortunate enough to import so charming an exotic.

“An old man may say what he thinks, though a young one under the like circumstances may not; and I therefore take the liberty of avowing my opinion, that a very

bright star has risen upon the horizon of West-hampton," said he, with a low bow.

Having made this pretty speech, he took himself off, but not till he had given a sidelong glance to Miss Barbara, which she rightly interpreted as a hint that she was to follow him out of the room; and this she did, very carefully shutting the door after her.

Dr. Wroughtley stepped on in silence before her till he reached the door of the dining-room, which he entered, followed by his anxious friend, who actually trembled as she carefully closed that door likewise, so great was her eagerness to learn what it was that the dear Doctor wanted to say to her.

"Sit down, Miss Barbara, sit down," said he, pointing to a chair near the glimmering remains of the breakfast fire. "Sit down for half a moment, and I will give you an answer in full for all the questions you have been asking me, and that is undertaking to do a good deal."

Even had this promise been as valueless as it was the reverse, Miss Barbara Jenkyns

would, with almost equal alacrity, have complied with the command by obedience to which it was to be purchased, for she was never so happy as when obeying the commands of Dr. Wroughtley. So she sat down in the chair to which he had pointed, while he seated himself in another, which he placed close beside it.

“You are a very lucky person, my good friend, let me tell you that,” he began; “a very fortunate person indeed, for you have a fine, intelligent, very handsome young heiress, with doubtless a very handsome allowance too, placed in your hands, with the certainty that your own always valuable society, my dear Miss Barbara, will now be considered as more valuable still, by your having it in your power to bring so brilliant an ornament into every drawing-room.”

“Yes, my dear Doctor, it is certainly very lucky,” she replied. “All that, certainly, is very lucky, and I know it is all very true; and by the help of a little of your kind assistance as to the best way of getting the Lord

Chancellor to allow a carriage, which we should all feel, you know, to be so very convenient, I do think that I shall find myself more comfortable, and be better off, than I ever was in my life. But that does not quite answer all the questions I have asked you about the proper way for me to manage her; you know; and particularly in respect to the manner in which I am to answer her about the books, and the drawing-master, and all that. You really must tell me exactly what I ought to do about all that sort of thing, my dear friend!"

"I will, Miss Barbara," said the Doctor, starting up with unusual agility. "I will answer every possible question of the sort at once, and by the simple injunction of one single law. Let the young lady have her own way in everything."

"Mercy on me, Dr. Wroughtley! What can you mean? But, of course, you are only joking; and yet I am sure you are too kind not to give me your serious advice whenever you think it can be useful to me. Is not that true, my dear Doctor?"

“You do me no more than justice, Miss Barbara,” said he; “and the advice I give you now, I do very seriously believe to be the best I can give. There *is* a look in the young lady’s eye,—she has very handsome eyes, Miss Barbara, very handsome.”

“Yes, I dare say she has,” replied the puzzled lady, utterly at a loss to guess what the Doctor was joking about, though quite sure that he was joking in some very clever way or other.

“Now, then, I will take my leave,” said he. “Of course we shall meet to-night at the Deanery, and I quite envy you the pleasure of introducing your beautiful niece there. Good morning!”

“Then you really think she ought to go?” said Miss Barbara.

“It’s my turn now, my good lady, to suspect a jest,” he replied. “I no more believe you would think of leaving her at home, than of leaving your best cap there. Good bye.”

And the gay Doctor walked off, not to take

a ride with Dr. Sotherton, but to devote the remainder of the morning to making as many visits in the Close as his rather elaborate description of the fair stranger, repeated from house to house, allowed time for.

CHAPTER XIV.

As to Miss Barbara, she was left in a state of the most genuine and complete mystification. That so very superior a man as Dr. Wroughtley should seriously mean to advise that a young girl, not quite sixteen, should "have her own way in everything," was something evidently too absurd to believe; and so, of course, she did not believe it. But as to what he *did* mean she was so completely at a loss, that she at last very wisely determined to think no more about it, persuaded that it could not be very long before he would make himself understood, and determined in the mean while to

study his looks and words with more attention than ever, quite certain that he must be right in judgment, however jocose he might choose to be in the expression of it.

Judith meantime had returned to her uncomfortable room, too completely out of sorts to think much about her new acquaintance, though had she been questioned as to her opinion of him, she would have probably declared, in young-lady phrase, that she thought him "a very nice old man."

But her thoughts were, in truth, otherwise engaged. The idea of her mother's favourite sister, the "dear Penelope," she had so often heard her mention, the idea of her being a widowed wanderer with a fatherless son, poor, neglected, and forsaken by her family, had taken such complete possession of the mind of Judith, that she could not, for she would not, think of anything else.

Having put on a few shawls, she seated herself, her feet being skilfully enveloped in a large travelling mantle, upon one of her trunks which stood at the bottom of her bed, and

folding her soft India wraps closely round her, threw her head back, and fixed her eyes upon the ceiling, determined to think, and think, and think, till she had hit upon some expedient for finding her lost relatives, and to set about putting it in execution at once.

Had she ever happened to see one of those curious advertisements which summon the owner of some given name to disclose themselves, in order to hear of something very greatly to their advantage, it is highly probable that she would have immediately decided upon making the experiment; but she had never heard of the invention, and her own genius did not suggest it.

And vague, indeed, poor child, most painfully vague, were all the methods of giving intelligence which her ignorance suggested.

At one moment she resolved upon writing to her aunt Elfreda, in the hope that she might have been less harsh and less repulsive towards her unfortunate sister; but she was prevented from doing this, by remembering that, in all Miss Barbara's statements, she had

constantly talked of “*we*,” and of “*Elfreda and myself*,” as making common cause against the unforgiven offender. Had she known the name of a single human being in Rome, she might, very likely, have addressed herself to it, whether male or female, young or old, high or low, in the desperate hope of obtaining the intelligence she so ardently wished to obtain ; but she had no such knowledge ; and at last she pretty well made up her mind to believe that the only chance left her, was the writing to her kind Madras friend, Mr. Harvey, to inquire if he, or any one else who had known her poor mother, could remember how her letters to Rome had been directed, or recall any name, or circumstance, which might assist her inquiry.

But not only the uncertainty of success, but the length of time inevitable upon this scheme for getting intelligence, which she so ardently desired to obtain immediately, chilled her to the very heart ; till at length her usually gay and elastic spirit gave way, and the tears began quietly, but steadily, to flow down her

cheeks, without her making any effort to check them, and almost without her being conscious that she wept.

It was in this forlorn-looking condition, with her head still thrown back against the bed, her limbs wrapped round in very mummy-like fashion, and the tears flowing down her cheeks, that Susan found her, upon entering to complete some part of her setting-to-rights work in the young lady's room.

If she had found her lying in a "dead swoon," she could not have looked more shocked and terrified; and, clasping her hands, she exclaimed, "Oh! gracious goodness, be merciful to me! What is the matter? My dear, sweet, young lady! Are you ill? Have you heard any terrible news? Has anything dreadful happened to you?"

"No, dear Susan, no! Nothing terrible has happened to me," replied Judith, a good deal ashamed of having been discovered in so deplorable a condition, though perfectly conscious, at the same time, that it was quite impossible for anybody to guess from merely

seeing her cry how very, very miserable she was. Yet again she repeated, "No, Susan, no; nothing is the matter with me; only I am so very, very cold."

"Then why do you sit up here for, my dear child?" said Susan, tenderly unpacking one of her little hands, and finding that it was indeed as cold as ice. "Why don't you come down to the fire? Missis is sure to have a good fire when the Doctor is here, if she don't at any other time, and he is but just gone, Miss. So come down, there's a dear, and bring yourself to life again."

"But, Susan! I can't always be sitting down there! Oh, I do so hate it!"

"Hate what, Miss?" said the pitying, but puzzled housemaid.

"I hate all and everything here, except you, Susan," said Judith, sobbing.

"But, my dear child, you must not do that," returned the really worthy Susan. It would be better a deal if you hated me—though I should not like that very well, either; but it would be a deal better for you to like every

thing else, and just only hate poor me, because, after all, what can I do to comfort you? It is your aunt Barbara that must be all in all to you just at present, my dear; so, for goodness gracious sake don't think about hating her."

"It is very unlucky, Susan, that I cannot follow your advice, for I have a great notion that you will be my only friend here; but I am sorry to tell you that I don't think I shall do anything else," returned Judith, demurely.

"Anything else than what, my dear?" demanded Susan.

"Thinking about hating my aunt Barbara," said Judith.

"Oh, fie, fie! That is very naughty indeed! and I don't, and I won't, believe a word of it. You only say it to frighten me, and make me wonder at you," returned the maid, shaking her head.

"I shall wonder at *you* a great deal more than you will wonder at me, if you will tell me any reason why I should love her," returned Judith, her playful tone changing for one that expressed deep and painful feeling.

“I am not able to talk to you as I would wish to do, my dear, or I am sure I should say a great many convincing things that I can't think of, because of my ignorance ; but there is one quite certain fact that we all know, and that is, that we are all forbidden to hate any body,” replied Susan, gravely.

“That's all true, and I don't believe that I ever did hate any body, so we will leave hating out of the question ; but you have got to tell me, you know, some excellent good reason why I am to love her.”

“Oh, my dear child ! There are so many. First and foremost, she is your own mother's own sister.”

“And so she is. She is my poor aunt Penelope's own sister ! And a pretty lesson she has been giving me about family love and affection ! Did you ever happen to hear of my uncle Worthington, Susan ?”

“Yes, Miss,” was the succinct reply.

“Did you ever hear of his doing anything wicked, Susan ?”

“Only his being a gentleman as was not

rich, Miss," returned the girl, looking rather ashamed of the plea.

"Now, then, I may say fie upon you, Susan! You are not speaking honestly. You don't, in your heart, think that there is any wickedness in not being rich, do you?"

"No, Miss, I do not," said the girl, very cordially, as if relieved by giving the opinion.

"Very well, then, don't let me ever hear you speak in that foolish way again, and I will try, if I can, not to talk any more about hating my aunt Barbara," said Judith.

"There's a darling!" cried the good-hearted Susan, duly appreciating the merit of this good intention; "and now I must see if I can't make you look a little more comfortable." And without waiting to be questioned, as to her intentions, she left the room with a brisk step.

"Please, ma'am, may I make a fire in the young lady's room?" said she, entering Miss Barbara's retreat, and arousing her thereby from the profound meditation into which she

had fallen concerning Dr. Wroughtley's real meaning, as to giving her young niece the free use of her will in all things.

The brightest thought that had entered her head upon the subject as yet was, that he was not quite in jest, but yet not quite in earnest. Quite in earnest so very sensible a man could hardly be, in telling the guardian of so mere a child that she was in all things to submit her own judgment to that of her ward. But, nevertheless, Miss Barbara thought it very possible that Mr. Wroughtley was too sincerely her friend not to see and appreciate the great advantage which she herself was likely to derive from the trust reposed in her, and meant, by what he had said, to give her a useful hint, about half in jest and half in earnest, upon the necessity of such a degree of indulgence as might make the young heiress desirous of remaining where she was, instead of going to try her chance with Elfreda.

“Yes, yes! Dear good man! that is what he meant,” soliloquized Miss Barbara. “I

understand him perfectly, and I shall act accordingly. Of course that is what he meant. It is always right."—

"What is it you say, Susan?" cried the startled lady, rousing herself from her reverie. "I don't understand you."

"May I make a fire in Miss Maitland's bedroom?" repeated Susan, very distinctly.

"Did she ask for it?" inquired Miss Barbara, sharply.

"No, ma'am, she did not say one word about it," returned the girl, who, frightened by the well-known accent of reprobation, began to fear that she might be doing more harm than good. "She never asked for fire, or anything else."

"Then why should you come here talking such nonsense?" said her indignant mistress, who, excepting in illness, had never indulged herself in such a luxury, even at Christmas. "I desire you won't put any such nonsense into her thoughts. It would be enough to ruin her constitution entirely, and then I should have to answer for it. Fire, indeed, in a bed-

room! Why the leaves are not one-half off the trees yet."

"Very well, ma'am," said Susan, turning back towards the door. But before she could reach it, the anxious spirit of Miss Barbara suggested the possibility that this might be one of the cases in which Dr. Wroughtley would think it more prudent to let the heiress have her own way, and ere the door was opened, she exclaimed,

"What put it into your head, I wonder? She must have said something, or you never would have thought of anything so absurd. What put it into your head?"

"No, sure, ma'am, I don't remember as she said anything about it. I am certain sure indeed that she never named the word fire, but she was wrapt up with shawls and cloaks from top to toe; and yet her hand was as cold as a stone all the time, for I touched it, and she was crying, ma'am, when I went in, so I didn't think that she looked as if she was comfortable. And that's the reason I came."

"Crying? she was crying? Did you ask

her why she was crying?" said Miss Barbara, greatly alarmed. "What was it she said to you? I insist upon it, you tell me every word. And mind this, Susan, if I have even the very slightest reason to believe that you don't tell me truly and exactly everything she says to you, I will turn you out of the house at a minute's warning. Do you hear?"

"Yes, ma'am," returned Susan.

"And will you remember my commands to let me know everything she says to you?"

"Yes, ma'am," repeated Susan, satisfying her conscience in all ways by remembering that she was as little likely to forget the command, as to obey it.

"Now, then, tell me what it was she cried for?" demanded Miss Barbara, sternly.

"Upon my word and honour, ma'am, I can't tell you, unless it was just what I have said already. For when I asked her what was the matter, she answered, 'Nothing! only I am so very cold!'"

"How very extraordinary! And she looking almost like a grown-up woman!" cried

Miss Barbara, with equal vexation and contempt.

“Why, then, does she not sit down stairs? Have I not got a fire in two rooms already? Why does she not come down, Susan?”

“And that, ma’am, again, is what I can’t tell you,” replied the maid, perfectly satisfied that she was speaking the truth; for how was it possible she could tell Miss Barbara that her niece’s acknowledged reason for not coming down stairs was, because she hated her? “I’m sure I can’t tell you,” she repeated. Yet, still, the kind-hearted girl lingered, though quite at a loss how to hit upon any argument that might obtain for her unconscious client the indulgence which was so necessary for her comfort, till, while she stood polishing the top of Miss Barbara’s chair, as if waiting for further instructions, it recurred to her, that William had dilated at considerable length in the kitchen, upon the probable reasons why such a very particular lady, as “Missis,” should like to trouble herself with the charge of a young thing, like “that,” and

that the cook, thereupon, had looked very wise, and said, "Take my word for it, William, she don't do it for nothing. Don't I know Missis? If I don't, I wonder who does? She never spends sixpence, without thinking six times about it. And she isn't going to do so now, take my word for it."

Susan had listened to this reasoning, at the time it was uttered, with a good deal of indifference, but now it struck her, that if each was right, Missis would not affront the young lady about such a trifle as a bit of fire in the grate, and, therefore, preparatory to her departure, she ventured to say, "Well, I suppose the being cold, won't hurt her, for a day or two, and if her nature is so chilly-like, she will most likely be after going to some warmer country, more like that as she came from, so, may be, it will be best to give her no fire."

"Stay, Susan! stay," cried Miss Barbara, eagerly. "What do you run off for in that sort of pettish way? You are extremely impertinent, I think. Go and light a fire in Miss Maitland's room directly. I may be surprised

that she should like a fire in her bed-room, because I do not like it myself, but that is no reason whatever for her not having one ; light it directly ; and if you can find out any other reason about her crying, let me know it instantly ; there is nothing in the world that I wish so much as to make her happy and comfortable. . . . Dear child ! let me know everything she says or does."

Susan was perfectly satisfied that she now understood all about it ; and, all things considered, she may in some degree be excused if she determined, as this conviction came upon her, to turn it to good account.

CHAPTER XV.

THE first result of this magnanimous resolve was the making a bright fire in poor shivering Judith's bed-room, and the next the still bolder enterprise (because for this she had no warrant) of conveying a well-sized Pembroke table, capable of sustaining a writing-desk, a work-box, and two or three books, at one and the same time, and which was stolen, at all risks, from the landing-place outside the drawing-room door, where, for about half a century, it had been used for the purpose of holding a light, and of sustaining the hats of such gentlemen as did not confide the coverings of their

heads to the especial care of the footman, before they mounted the stairs to the drawing-room.

But it certainly was not without a slight tremor that the adventurous house-maid substituted the rickety little thing that had been assigned to Judith in its place. Within an hour after this change had been effected, Miss Barbara perceived it, in passing up stairs to her own apartment, and lost no time in ringing her bell, for the purpose of inquiring why it had been made.

Had the previous interview with her mistress in the study left Susan in any doubt, as to the correctness of the inference she had drawn from what passed there, it would have been removed effectually by the tone in which Miss Barbara replied to her statement, that she had taken it to Miss Maitland's room, because she wanted it for her writing-desk, by the single monosyllable "OH!"

Meanwhile the young heiress was really endeavouring, with great good humour, to reconcile herself to her new quarters. The warmth

of the fire had done much towards this, and Susan's evident wish to make her comfortable still more. Had it not been for these amended feelings, it is more than probable that the young lady would have declined the offered honour of being permitted to accompany her aunt to the Deanery; but, as it was, she suffered Susan to arrange her beautiful dark hair, which persisted in looking beautiful despite the artificer's want of skill, while she sat close to the fire with her feet on a footstool, (the fender being removed at her earnest entreaty,) and remained there while Susan, on her knees, patiently unpacked an enormous trunk, in search of the dress which Judith intended to wear.

There was more than one robe of delicate white muslin, which, as her mother had been dead above six months, Susan declared would be exactly the right thing for her, which was laid aside at her bidding, because there was one quite black, upon which the fancy and the will of the young orphan had fixed in preference.

It was in vain that Susan asked her, if she had observed that her aunt had discarded her mourning altogether; the answer was,—“ Yes, I have observed it; but Aunt Barbara was not mamma’s child, Susan.”

“ That is quite true, Miss; but this black crape is so very deep, Miss Judith,” remonstrated Susan.

“ So much the fitter for me, Susan,” was the reply, and the tone was too grave, not to say mournful, to permit any further discussion on the subject.

So the pretty Judith appeared before her aunt in a dress, elegant enough indeed, as to its material, and made in a style that did no discredit to her Asiatic artist, but so absolutely without any species of ornament to relieve its darkness, that the effect of it was positively startling to Miss Barbara, who was herself clothed very gaily, the predominating colours of her ribbons being scarlet and white.

And yet it would have been difficult even for Miss Barbara to make any objection to the

appearance of Judith, as she thus stood before her.

The simple shape of the dress showed her slight and very graceful form to great advantage, and the delicate complexion, which, though very far from *blonde*, was, as Susan truly said, as "white as cream," could not possibly have been more favourably displayed.

"Well, my dear," said her aunt at length, after contemplating her for a few minutes in silence, "you do look very nice, to be sure; I cannot deny that. And yet, Judith, considering the time, I think it would be better if you were not in such very deep mourning. I think it would be a great improvement if you had a white flower."

Judith's only reply was an almost imperceptible shake of the head, which was gently turned away as if to avoid a painful subject. Whether it might be attributed to Dr. Wroughtley's advice, respecting the desirability of letting Miss Maitland have her own way, or to the look of steadfast composure into which her features had settled themselves

while she thus, perforce, stood forth to be scrutinized, may be doubtful; but, whatever the cause, the fact is, that Miss Barbara made no farther objection to her appearance, and her next speech was more than usually amiable.

“I am glad I have ordered a carriage,” said she, “for I think you will find it very cold, walking.”

But the said carriage was not quite so punctual as it ought to have been, and the consequence of this was, that the handsome drawing-room at the Deanery was already as full as a country drawing-room could reasonably expect to be, when Miss Jenkyns and Miss Maitland were announced. This delay had been very trying to the feelings of Miss Barbara, for she was desperately afraid, knowing the somewhat impetuous temperament of her reverend friend, that Dr. Wroughtley’s whist party would be made up before her arrival.

But she perceived, to her great delight, that it was not so. So far from it, indeed, that Doctor Wroughtley, instead of being seated, as

was his wont at this advanced hour of the evening, in the most comfortable chair at the most comfortable table, in the most comfortable corner of the room, was still standing on the rug, with his back to the fire, his eyes anxiously fixed upon the door, and every feature in his face denoting expectation.

Miss Jenkyns had studied that face too long to mistake its meaning; she saw in an instant that he was eagerly waiting for her arrival, and she smiled upon him, and upon everybody, as she walked up the room, with ineffable satisfaction.

But neither Doctor Wroughtley, nor anybody else, saw her smiles, for every eye was immediately fixed upon the fair young thing beside her.

It was lucky for Judith, as far as the suffrages of the Westhampton beau monde were concerned, that she not only looked pretty, but that her appearance was a little out of the common way upon this occasion. Had it been otherwise her *début* would have been a failure; for Doctor Wroughtley, the greatest

delight in whose life was to be listened to on all subjects as an authority, had dined at the Deanery, and had prepared not only the dinner guests, but all who had arrived afterwards, to expect something rather extraordinary, as well as very admirable, in the rich orphan-niece of their good friend Miss Jenkyns.

Pretty and graceful as she was, therefore, it is probable that neither her prettiness, nor her grace, would have availed to avert a feeling of disappointment, had not her dress and aspect had something out of the common way—for the look and the manner, which had struck the Doctor as so very remarkable in the morning, had completely passed away, and she now looked as quiet and subdued as she had seemed to be the contrary during the conversation of the morning.

Nevertheless, no feeling like disappointment was the result. There *was* something extraordinary and out of the common way about her. The elderly gentlemen thought they had never seen anything so youthfully delicate, and yet so very nearly every thing that a beautiful

woman ought to be. The elderly ladies perceived at once that she was modest, well-behaved, and lady-like; and even the young ladies of the society were not disposed to be very severe. They declared to each other, however, that they did not think her at all handsome, she was much too pale for that; but there certainly was something elegant-looking about her, and perhaps, when she left off her very deep mourning, and looked a little more like other people, she might improve. But certainly she was not handsome.

The portion of the company who judged her pretensions to being charming with the greatest severity, were decidedly the young men.

They declared that she was totally without animation, and looked either too shy, or too stupid, for anything.

“I see at once,” whispered the most sprightly amongst them, “what sort of partner she would be in a waltz. I’ll be hanged if I would not almost as soon waltz with her aunt.”

This sally was very successful, for it enabled all the young gentlemen who had fine teeth

to show them, and attracted a pleasant degree of attention from the young ladies, who remarked to each other that they were sure those creatures were quizzing her, and that wicked monster Frederic Jones setting them on. Upon which the beauty par excellence of the set murmured, with a gentle sigh, "I am sure I pity her! I had rather walk over burning ploughshares, like Queen Emma, than run the gauntlet for the first time before a set of men, with Frederic Jones at their head!"

One young gentleman, however, gave evidence of his perspicuity by remarking that she had "a devilish pretty foot," and, thus encouraged, another ventured to hint that he thought her head was rather well set upon her shoulders. So that, upon the whole, Judith Maitland's first appearance in European society might fairly be considered as successful.

Had any other individual done upon this occasion what Doctor Wroughtley ventured to do, a very vehement degree of indignation would have been excited, and probably expressed by Miss Jenkyns; but he was so every

way privileged a person in her estimation, that when he stepped forward and, taking Judith by the hand, led her up to the mistress of the house and presented her to the Dean's lady, instead of permitting Miss Barbara to perform this ceremony, for which she was preparing herself with more than usual animation, she only coloured a little, and still smiled on him benignly, and felt sure that he had some good reason for it.

Mrs. Chilbert, who was in every way a most charming person, received the young stranger very graciously, and having welcomed the aunt also, she attempted to make her over to Doctor Wroughtley by saying,

“ My dear Miss Jenkyns, I shall trust to you and Doctor Wroughtley to make up your own rubber ;” and having said this, she placed Judith on the sofa from which she had herself just risen, and prepared to sit down by her, with a very flattering air of attention.

But Doctor Wroughtley now rebelled against her authority, as boldly as he had before done against etiquette, for instead of handing off

Miss Barbara in his usual gallant style, he only replied,

“ Presently, presently,”

And left her standing very conspicuously alone, while he turned the front of his large person towards the sofa, and asked Judith to repeat to Mrs. Chilbert the description she had given him, in the morning, of the pretty little gale, and the sea-monsters it had given to her view, during her voyage.

Judith coloured, and looked embarrassed, as it was very natural she should do, for a group of gentlemen was gradually increasing round the sofa, all looking as if they were exceedingly well inclined to listen to her description of the sea-monsters.

She raised her eyes to the Doctor's face, and the glance very unequivocally expressed displeasure; but she turned from him to Mrs. Chilbert, and almost whispered in her ear, “ I am sure you will excuse my telling you any thing about it now.”

The Dean's lady laid her hand, by way of answer, with a gentle pressure on that of

Judith, and then again rising from the sofa, she passed her arm under that of Dr. Wroughtley, and led him off, saying to his agitated adorer, as she passed, "Come, my dear Miss Jenkyns! I cannot let you waste your time in this way. You are so fashionably late this evening! There has been a table waiting for you for hours."

A little soothed, a little comforted, Miss Barbara followed in the direction in which Mrs. Dean led, and in about three minutes afterwards was almost herself again, for she was seated at the whist table, and Dr. Wroughtley was her partner.

Whatever shades of difference there might be in the opinions formed, and spoken concerning Judith by the company in general, there was not one among them whose admiration was so cordially excited as that of the charming hostess herself. Though the wife of a Dean, and though fifteen years Judith's senior, she was still a young woman, and had still enough of imagination and enthusiasm left about her, to feel herself completely fasci-

nated by the charm of the young stranger's look and manner, set off as it was by the striking contrast of her aunt's dress, countenance, and demeanour, and by the singular mixture of confiding friendliness with which she addressed her, and the almost haughty glance with which she had repulsed the advances of poor Dr. Wroughtley.

The secret of this sudden liking on both sides was not so much owing to the fact that both ladies, though the younger knew it not, were physiognomists, as to the undoubting faith with which they both applied the science to their practical intercourse with their fellow creatures. With Judith this was done as yet, unconsciously, but with Mrs. Chilbert it was the result of several years of speculation, study, and experience.

If Judith had been asked to explain why it was that she felt at the first glance so greatly inclined to love Mrs. Chilbert, she would have replied vaguely, but very truly, "because I could not help it." And she might probably have added, "I often feel at the very

first time of seeing people, that I either like them, or dislike them, without knowing why ; and I don't think it ever happens to me that I make any very great mistakes in that way. I generally go on liking or disliking, as I began, only of course it happens sometimes, that one gets intimate, and sometimes that one does not—that is all accident ; but the feeling about being able to like one person and not another, never changes.”

Had the elder and more instructed lady been called upon to explain the causes which led her also so often to like and dislike, almost at a glance, she certainly would have referred the seeming caprice to principles which she considered to be as well-founded, and unchangeable, as the judgment which the eye pronounces on the strength of a well-developed muscle.

But as Mrs. Chilbert was not in the habit of discussing these notions with her acquaintance, the flattering notice which she bestowed upon Miss Barbara's niece was considered as being very complimentary to that lady

herself, and the little irritation subsequent upon her first entering the room, was fully atoned for, by being repeatedly told in the course of the evening that it must certainly be exceedingly gratifying to her to see the Dean's lady take such particular notice of her niece.

In order to make the value of this compliment fully understood, it must be observed, that the Lord Bishop of Westhampton being a daughterless widower, the Dean's lady was to all intents and purposes the Queen of the Close, a sovereignty that was disputed by none.

And Mrs. Chilbert, though she never abused her power, knew extremely well how to use it; the result of which was that in her drawing-room people were found oftener in their right places than at most others, unless, indeed, some whim interfered to prevent it.

The Dean's lady loved music, and, for that especial reason, it was very rarely introduced at her evening parties; and again, this seeming contradiction was accounted for by another, for decidedly the reason why Mrs. Chilbert so

rarely proposed the opening her piano-forte was, that almost all the young ladies of the society were, more or less, musicians. And poor Mrs. Chilbert's susceptibility on this point was, as she was very painfully aware, exceedingly injurious to that even tenour of strict propriety by which it was her wish, poor lady, to guide herself in all things.

Not only did the Dean's lady suffer much—considerably more, it must be confessed, than she could endure with unflinching patience—when harmony was sinned against in her presence, but she also experienced a degree of pleasure from listening to music when it deserved the name, which she occasionally felt some difficulty in restraining within perfectly discreet and reasonable bounds—and this last offence sometimes brought her into worse scrapes than the first.

Unfortunately for Mrs. Dean the only really good voice, and the only really fine musical taste to be found in the whole chapter were combined in the person of a good-for-little minor canon, whose exquisitely melodious

manner of chanting had been in truth the sole cause of his appointment, the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop at that period having as sensitive an ear as even Mrs. Chilbert herself.

But this musical Bishop was promoted to another see, and then the Dean's lady was the only inhabitant in the Close who cared a single straw whether minor canons chanted in tune, or out of tune.

Still less, if possible, was it a matter of any interest to them that Mr. Saunders, whose nails were dirty, and whose coat was thread-bare, had a voice which might have rivalled that of Rubini in his best days, with a finished perfection of manner that he seemed to have caught as a lake catches the reflection of the scenery around it. He had occasionally heard good singing, and was as incapable (when he was sober) of blundering when attempting the like himself, as water (when calm) of distorting the images it repeats.

Had this dirty, idle, and most unclerical divine been blessed with a nice, notable, pains-taking wife, who would have kept his house

and children clean, and given the Dean's lady an excuse for being very kind to her, the difficulties of Mrs. Chilbert would have been greatly lessened, for the hope of being useful to so estimable a person might have justified the endurance of her husband in society ; but most unfortunately poor Mrs. Saunders was the very reverse of all this, being as indolent, and almost as dirty as her spouse, without a shadow of merit of any kind, excepting that species of constitutional good humour which led her to make a jest of all her husband's faults.

This laughing, scrambling, idle pair were the parents of half a dozen children, the four eldest of whom were girls between the ages of fourteen and twenty, and a speculative student of character might have found a good deal of amusement in watching Mrs. Chilbert's persevering hopes that each successive Miss Saunders might justify, by some quality or other, the kindness which it would have been so convenient to her musical taste to bestow upon the family.

But this somewhat selfish benevolence, though eternally in action, was productive of little good, for the young ladies were precisely every thing that the offspring of such parents were likely to be, excepting, indeed, that only one of them had any musical talent at all, and even that was so choked by inveterate indolence, that any thing like perseverance in the cultivation of it was perfectly out of the question.

Yet upon this, such as it was, the Dean's lady was fain to rest her excuse for so perpetually permitting the familiar approach of "those queer Saunderses" to her presence. And greatly did the gossips wonder at it; and, on the whole, it was certainly fortunate, as far as this excellent lady's character for prudence was concerned, that no single individual of the whole reverend society ever guessed at the real state of the case.

Mr. Carey, the apothecary, however, who was a very clever man, had hinted that their good Mrs. Dean was probably looking forward to the time when those unfortunate Saunders'

girls would be obliged to do something to help themselves; and perhaps she flattered herself, good lady, that Miss Sophia, on account of her fine voice, might some day or other be able to do something in the way of giving singing lessons.

Lessons! If Miss Sophia could have sold her accurate ear, and her harmonious throat, she might have got something for them; but of her teaching what she had never learned, Mrs. Dean, with all her fanaticism, had never entertained so wild a hope. However, the surmise was very useful to her in the Close, though she was not herself aware of it.

It was not very extraordinary, under these circumstances, that Mrs. Chilbert, notwithstanding her really passionate love of music, should rarely or never propose it for the amusement of an evening party, so large and miscellaneous as that which met at the Deanery on the evening of Judith's first visit there.

It is true, that having scrutinized her young face with an experienced and scientific glance,

she felt little or no doubt that she should melt with sympathy in this suddenly elected favourite, as well in music as in many other matters, but not for this did she feel at all the more inclined to ask any of the young ladies present to perform for her gratification. She only whispered in her ear the fond inquiry, "Are you fond of music?" To which Judith, after a moment's consideration, oddly answered, "I am not quite sure."

"Not quite sure, my child? What do you mean?"

"I really mean that I am not quite sure," replied Judith very gravely. "For sometimes, though not very often, I have heard a tune or a song that gave me very great pleasure indeed, so as almost to make me ashamed of saying how very much I liked it; but a great, *great* deal oftener, when I have heard people play and sing, I would a great deal rather that they should have let it alone.—So I don't suppose I can be very fond of music."

"Do you sing, or play, yourself?" inquired Mrs. Chilbert.

“Oh! I believe you would be frightened if you could hear me! I never had a lesson in singing in my life, and I know no more about it than a cow or an elephant! And sometimes when I have been singing to myself, I have positively been frightened at the noise I made.”

“Do you play?” demanded the anxious lady.

“Oh, yes!” replied Judith, “every body plays, I believe, and I, like all the rest. But I don’t think I know much about it.”

“Do you like dancing?”

“Yes, I am very fond of it,” was the frank, and cordial reply.

“Then we will see if we cannot manage to have a waltz to-night,” returned Mrs. Chilbert, using an eye-glass which her short sight rendered very necessary in order to reconnoitre her guests. We muster strong in cavaliers this evening, and I think we shall be able to manage it.”

It was only now and then that Mrs. Dean indulged her young friends with this sort of

impromptu waltzing; she had no child of her own as yet old enough to enjoy it, and though there be many, a dozen years her seniors, who still hope that they have many years of waltzing joys before them, she had given up the pleasant exercise from the time of her marriage, though she greatly excelled in it. But she declared in answer to the solicitations addressed to her on the subject, that she felt as if she should be dancing out of time if she attempted it.

“You dance out of time?” said her sister, who was near her. “Yes, Mary, out of time, out of tune it would be, and out of place too, were the reverend Mrs. Chilbert to dance at all.”

Nevertheless, this reverend personage, as she chose to call herself, still liked well to see others dance, and if this favourite resource against *ennui* among the young was not oftener resorted to at her frequent parties, it was only because she did not choose that it should be always expected.

But now she led the way into an adjoining room, in which there was a piano-forte and no

card-tables, and giving a hint to one or two young men as she passed, that if they would find partners she would play to them, she singled out the identical Mr. Frederic Jones, who had so decidedly expressed his belief that Judith was as unfit for waltzing as her aunt Barbara, and introduced him to her as a partner.

As Judith was fond of dancing, and had a good ear, it is possible that she was held in higher estimation by the dancing gentlemen at the end of the evening than at the beginning of it; but be this as it may, it was not her dancing which produced the greatest effect upon this her first appearance in an European drawing-room.

After very willingly accepting two or three successive volunteer partners, it occurred to Judith that Mrs. Chilbert, admirably as she played, could not be absolutely insensible to the fatigue of continuing at the instrument so long, and she asked her partner, during a pause in the quadrille, whether some of the other ladies could not assist her.

“I don’t know, I am sure,” was the reply. “But I suppose not, or else they do not choose to do it, for nobody ever plays for us here but Mrs. Chilbert herself.”

This notion of not choosing to assist a person who was doing so much for their enjoyment, did not suit Judith’s notions of what was right and proper ; and at the end of the quadrille she rather abruptly left her partner, and approached the piano-forte.

“Is there nobody here who can play for a little while, that you may rest yourself ?” said Judith, with the freedom of an old acquaintance.

Mrs. Chilbert looked up at her, and smiled.

What did that smile mean ? It meant that Mrs. Chilbert greatly preferred being fatigued by playing herself, than by listening to the performance of any of the ladies to whom Judith had alluded ; but as she only shook her head and said nothing, this occult meaning was not even guessed at, and fancying that she only meant to indicate, by this shake of

her head, her belief that there was nobody who would choose to play, Judith suddenly took courage, and said, "I wish you would let me try."

"Very well, my dear, I will let you try," replied the Dean's lady, immediately resigning her seat. "I should not have liked to ask you, but I am very glad you have offered."

Confirmed by these words in her belief that Mrs. Chilbert only persevered in playing for them, because no one else would take the trouble of doing it, Judith set about making herself useful, with a degree of zeal and animation which communicated itself with characteristic spirit to her fingers, and she played a Polka as those only can play in whom music is a part of nature.

The air was as gay as the performance of it was brilliant; but yet the first emotion or sensation of the Dean's lady on hearing it, brought tears to her eyes. She might certainly have said, like Miranda:

"I am a fool to cry for what I'm glad of,"

for she was glad—very glad to discover that the pretty little creature, whom at a glance her fancy had endowed with so many good gifts, possessed one which was so peculiarly welcome to her. And that she did possess this gift was very evident. Nobody in the room knew Mrs. Chilbert well enough to comprehend, in the least degree, why it was that she sat down behind her young deputy, but very close to her, and remained there without moving an inch till the dance was over.

It would have been such a good opportunity for her to say a few civil words to the ladies who were sitting out! Still less could any of the dancers comprehend why, or wherefore, it could possibly be, that just at the very time when she had found somebody to help her play she should put a stop to the dancing altogether, by getting up, giving her arm, in the most intimate manner possible to the young lady in black, that nobody had ever seen before, and then lead her off to the sofa in the card-room, and begin talking to her as

if she did not remember that there was anybody else in the room, or that they were all standing still, staring at each other, and not knowing the least in the world what they were to do next, or whether they were to go away, or to stay.

As to Judith herself, she would have been quite as much puzzled as the rest, had she not in her heart believed that Mrs. Chilbert did not think she played well enough to make it desirable for her to go on. And this thought might have vexed her a little, could it have dwelt upon her mind ; but that was impossible, for never before had it happened to her to find herself so completely engrossed and amused by conversation as she now was. And as to Mrs. Chilbert, no child with a new toy was ever more delighted. And though she was talking very fast, and uttering a variety of very lively, kind, and amusing speeches, her thoughts were galloping more rapidly still, and before the party broke up, she had invented about a dozen very clever devices, which would

enable her from time to time to get possession of the enchanting little creature, whose features, at the very first glance, she had read so ably.

CHAPTER XVI.

THIS might certainly be reasonably considered as a very favourable début for the half-educated Judith, but it may be doubted whether, on the whole, it did her more good or more harm. Had Mrs. Dean taken no more notice of her than she did of the general run of young ladies who could neither play a Polka after the manner of the piper at Anster Fair, nor yet display, by every movement of her pretty head, some developement that promised material for future friendship, she might have danced herself into the good graces of all the young gentlemen, and, perhaps, chatted

herself into favour with some of the young ladies ; but, as it was, the judgment passed upon her was, that she gave herself great airs, was exceedingly odd-looking, and not at all agreeable. That the sudden liking of Mrs. Chilbert for her became reciprocal before they parted, is quite certain ; and the feeling would have been stronger still, for her gratitude would have equalled her admiration, had she been aware of the position which her new friend held in the society of Westhampton.

Any one less ignorant of society and its ways, might easily have found this out ; for Mrs. Chilbert was both courted and feared by pretty nearly every individual who approached her ; and whenever this is the case, the effect is generally perceptible enough, either for good or for evil, on both sides.

But Judith understood nothing of all this. The point-device respect, and the eager alertness with which all she did, and all she said, was received and listened to, never struck Judith at all, for it seemed to her so very impossible that anybody could help liking Mrs.

Chilbert, that it never occurred to her that any other but the most kindly feelings were the cause of either. But poor little Judith was greatly mistaken as to the motive, and the value of these manifestations.

It was at rather an early hour on the following morning that Dr. Wroughtley repeated his visit to his friend, Miss Barbara; but early as it was, Judith had already left her aunt tête-à-tête with her parrot, feeling greatly more inclined to assist Susan in the stowing away some troublesome portions of her superabundant luggage, than to sit at the breakfast table and hear the spinster and the parrot call one another "darling."

"Has your young lady done breakfast already, Miss Jenkyns?" said he, in an accent that spoke disappointment.

"Darling!" screamed the parrot.

The Doctor laughed immoderately.

"Now is not that curious, Miss Barbara?" he said. "Would not one think that the creature knew who we were talking about? And she is a darling, no doubt about that, my

good friend. Did you observe the impression she made at the Deanery ?”

“I don’t exactly know what you mean about impression, Dr. Wroughtley. Mrs. Chilbert received her very civilly, and so I suppose she would think it proper to do, let me present who I would to her. Mrs. Chilbert gives herself a good many airs, we all know that,—nobody who lives in Westhampton, I presume, wants to be told *that*; but she knows better, it is to be hoped, than to be rude to any of our family or connexions.”

Dr. Wroughtley perceived that something had gone wrong with his faithful friend and ally, but at that moment he felt less of sympathy than of alarm. He particularly wished just then that *nothing* should go wrong. He had taken it into his head that there ought to be, and that there must be, a series of fêtes and festivals in honour of Judith’s arrival, and his early visit was for the express purpose of hinting to his ever obedient friend the absolute necessity of her

being first in the field with her invitations for a large evening party.

Miss Barbara Jenkyns was at that moment in a very painfully uncertain state of mind; not indeed as to whether she should receive or reject the advice of the senior Prebend, there could be no doubt in her mind upon such a question as that; but the truth was that she did not know whether to be pleased or displeased.

She had been a little startled, and perhaps a little annoyed, by seeing the young heiress, her niece, snatched away from her at the very moment when she was bridling with importance at the idea of presenting her to the Dean's lady before all the Westhampton world. But a thought so healing mixed itself with her annoyance as almost to turn it into pleasure. It was so friendly, so very intimate on the part of Dr. Wroughtley that it *must* have struck everybody. "Dear, kind creature! If it had been his own niece he could not have appeared more anxious about her!"

So that passed off very well.

But there was something in the way in which Mrs. Chilbert had distinguished Judith afterwards that she could not comprehend at all. It was very decidedly flattering, and the more so, certainly, because all the society must have remarked it; but nevertheless she could not help feeling that there was a great mixture of impropriety in it.

That way of walking twice across the room with her arm in arm, for the observant Miss Barbara had seen it all, was quite too much of a good thing, considering the child's age; and that, as far as Miss Barbara could recollect, Mrs. Chilbert had never been seen to do such a thing before with anybody. And then, what could be so strange as to see the Dean's lady get up and take an ice from the tray almost the moment it entered the room, and hand it herself to that young thing before any one of the Prebend's ladies had taken any? Then the extraordinary eagerness with which those two sat talking together, while the dancers were all standing still because there was nobody to play to them! All these

things were done so completely in defiance of propriety, that till Miss Barbara went to sleep she could think of nothing else, and when she awoke in the morning the same disagreeable feeling respecting all that had happened recurred to her, and made her feel as if she had passed through something strange.

It was, therefore, if possible, with even more pleasure than usual that she recognised the well-known step of her invaluable friend as he approached the parlour door, for she could not doubt that he must have remarked all these strange circumstances as well as herself, and it would indeed be a comfort to hear his opinion about it all. If HE thought that Mrs. Chilbert's unaccountable manner of treating Judith was likely to spoil or injure the poor child in any way, she was perfectly prepared to assert and exercise the power confided to her by the Lord Chancellor, and for the next year or two, at least, to plead her youth, and the necessity of taking care of her health, as reasons for refusing to let her go into com-

pany, and thus save her from the repetition of such absurdity.

But her very first glance into the face of her valued friend sufficed to convince her that she was not likely to hear from him any observations tending to prove his sympathy with her feelings on this subject, for there was something so gaily triumphant in his manner of declaring the young lady to be a "darling," that it was clearly in vain to hope that he would express anything like disapproval, because the Dean's lady had appeared to be of the same opinion.

So finding that the melancholy mood was not likely to answer, she at once decided upon thinking upon this subject, as well as upon every other, exactly as he thought, and relaxing the frown of her pensive brow, and exerting herself to the very utmost to produce a smile as she added to her first rather sour remark the acknowledgment that "Mrs. Chilbert certainly intended to be very civil."

"Civil? my dearest Miss Barbara! Is that all you can say for her?" replied the Doctor

indignantly. "Just tell me this, Miss Jenkyns: did you ever happen during the seven years that she has been here, to see Mrs. Chilbert behave to anybody as she did to your niece last night? Just tell me that, if you please?"

"No, certainly, my dear Doctor, I never did," replied Miss Jenkyns, determined to be pleased, and looking at him most affectionately.

"Very well, then, don't let us quarrel with our bread and butter, my good lady, for if you do, depend upon it I shall take myself off to the Deanery, and say to Mrs. Dean all that I was going to say to you," said Dr. Wroughtley, holding up a threatening finger.

"Oh, don't talk so! I was only frightened for fear of spoiling the dear child; but if you think there is no danger, depend upon it, I shall see none," returned Miss Barbara, meekly.

"That is just as it ought to be, and now I'll tell you exactly how the matter stands. It is a great thing for you, my dear friend, to have such an assistance to your income as this child

will bring you. You were saying something about a carriage the other day, and my opinion is that she decidedly ought to have a carriage, and she must pay for it too, of course ; but it won't be a bit the less your carriage for that. We shall soon know what the allowance is to be, and if we don't think it sufficient, I will put you in the proper way to memorialize."

Miss Barbara's heart beat, as she perhaps had never felt it beat before.

Surely her ears did not deceive her ? She really had heard him say " WE."

" Had he not said it twice ?"

" What did it mean ? What could it mean ? She was not of an age, neither was she of so silly a character, as to judge the less kindly of a man for thinking that a woman might be worth marrying under some circumstances, who might not be worth marrying under others. A carriage WAS a comfort. And a comfort that if they were to marry now, they could well afford. There must be some reason for his looking so very gay, so very happy. What reason could there be but one ?"

At an early period of this narrative I assured my readers that Miss Barbara Jenkyns was not in love with Dr. Wroughtley, and the state of her mind at that period was, to the best of my knowledge and belief, exactly what I described it to be. She was not in love with him. Never did the words of a poet more fitly become a proverb than in the case of that well-known line,

“None without hope e'er loved the brightest fair.”

And at the time to which I refer, Miss Barbara Jenkyns had no hope, ergo, she was not in love.

But now her case was widely different. It clearly appeared to her that Dr. Wroughtley was an altered man, and the consequence of this was that she became an altered woman also.

For a moment her feelings almost terrified her; the lively consciousness of a change in their relative situation impressed itself upon her soul in a manner that for an instant almost overpowered its functions. But happily she

possessed sufficient strength of mind to prevent her betraying any feeling she might wish to hide. The most smiling and amiable complaisance, and the most yielding compliance with his judgment in all ways were not among these, and the lively old gentleman had, therefore, every reason to be well satisfied by the effect of his eloquence upon her, yet still without his becoming in the least degree conscious of the new-born hopes of his old acquaintance.

On the contrary, he only thought that there was something particularly business-like and reasonable in the manner in which she nodded her approval, and said, "If you will undertake to manage the Lord Chancellor for me, I shall have no further doubt about the matter."

"That's all right, then, Miss Barbara, and we shall be able to drive her about a little, you know, and make her clerical quarters quite gay enough to content her. And as to spoiling her, for goodness sake don't get any of that sort of nonsense into your head. You may take my word for it, my dear friend, that

pretty young ladies with two thousand a-year must be spoiled, and will be spoiled, all the world knows that. All you have to do is to make her happy and comfortable, and, of course, to take good care that she does not throw herself and her thousands away upon the first gay spark that presumes to make love to her. That's the danger we must guard against."

"Make love to her! Mercy on us, my dear Doctor, don't talk of such a thing! And she but just sixteen! Can one fancy anything so shocking! But what did you mean about saying something to Mrs. Dean that I would not hear? You need not do that, Dr. Wroughtley. What was it? I am ready to hear anything!"

Luckily for Miss Barbara Jenkyns, Dr. Wroughtley was one of the least suspicious men alive. Had it been otherwise, he could scarcely have failed to perceive the more than usual softness, both of voice and manner, with which these words were spoken. But, as it was, he saw nothing of the kind, and answered

her jovially, "Why the putting her up to something gay and frolicsome, to be sure, if I could not put you up to it yourself."

"Frolicsome! he! he! he! I am sure you may put me up to anything, Dr. Wroughtley."

"Come! I shall see that presently. What shall you say to me, Miss Barbara, when I tell you that, in my opinion, you ought to give a ball?"

"A ball? Oh! Dr. Wroughtley! You think I should give a ball!"

It would take more words than the information would be worth were I to rehearse all the thoughts that this proposal gave birth to in the brain of Miss Barbara. Suffice it to say that she felt in the very centre of her soul that it meant something.

It was so new, so perfectly unlike anything he had ever proposed to her before, that a sort of natural logic forced upon her the conviction that it must mean something that he had never meant before! She felt, too, that her own situation *was* critical! In her inmost heart she believed that the man who now sat

in comely clerical dignity before her eyes, and on whom she had never yet dared to look as a possible husband, was in the very act of making up his mind whether he should become a married man or no! Had he said anything so wildly new under any other circumstances which had ever occurred to them? NEVER! The inference, therefore, was clear, and presented itself to her in a moment. Something new had got into his head which it was impossible for her to doubt would, in process of time, be explained more clearly.

Meanwhile it was already clear, beyond the possibility of doubt, that she owed it both to herself and to him, not to say or do anything that might in any way offend or check him. CHECK HIM!!! Was there any woman alive who could be capable of such madness? At any rate, she thanked Heaven that she was not such an one; and thereupon she smiled, as, perhaps, only elderly ladies under such circumstances can smile, and replied, after the impassioned sounds, "Oh, Dr. Wroughtley!" had again passed her lips, by saying,

“I will send out invitations for a ball to-morrow, if you like it.”

“Well said, my dear Miss Barbara! I shall make something of you, at last, I see that,” he exclaimed, rising; and then added, preparatory to leaving the room, “As soon as I saw Miss Judith, I perceived that I must set to work to put you in the right way of managing so lively a genius, unless I meant that she should slip through your fingers, which would not suit my politics at all, I assure you; for she, and her fine fortune together, is exactly the sort of thing that was wanted to stir us up a little.”

Miss Barbara shook from head to foot.

“Now, then, I shall leave you to write your invitations: I have a monstrous mind to make you fix the day, at once.”

“Fix the day?” gasped Miss Barbara.

“Well, well! my dear good soul, do not look so terrified. I must not frighten you out of your wits, by talking about *at once*, or your doors will be shut against me, I suppose.”

“Oh! don't, don't talk so, Dr. Wroughtley!” murmured the greatly agitated lady.

The worthy Doctor looked at her with astonishment and alarm. She really had turned quite pale, and he began to think that his novel proposal had frightened her very seriously. Instead of leaving the room, therefore, as he was preparing to do, he came back to the chair he had occupied, and, drawing it close to hers, he took her hand very kindly in his.

There was a vast deal of genuine good-nature in Dr. Wroughtley, and though he had perhaps, the rather common fault of loving himself best, he joined to it the redeeming quality of loving others too. For instance, he loved Miss Barbara Jenkyns very sincerely; not exactly, perhaps, in the way and manner that she would have best liked, poor lady, but as a good-natured person is pretty sure to love those who have been kind to them.

Now Miss Barbara Jenkyns had always been very kind to Dr. Wroughtley, and he, accordingly, really loved her; and there he sat

close to her, holding her hand in his, and looking very kindly in her face, she, the whole time, believing firmly that he was her lover. It is a very common saying amongst us poor weak human beings, that we never know what we can bear till we have been tried.

Had any fortune-telling gipsy told Miss Barbara Jenkyns that she could have thus sat, without falling from her chair in a fainting fit, she would have called her an impostor.

Nevertheless, Miss Barbara did not either fall or faint; but, on the contrary, schooled herself very severely, for giving way so to her feelings. She was conscious that it was enough to make so superior-minded a man as Dr. Wroughtley tremble at the idea of having so nervous a wife, and rousing herself from the effect of the tender emotion which had so nearly overpowered her, she determined to hear, and answer, in a proper lady-like manner, all that he might choose to say to her, let it be what it might.

“Come, now! That’s right!” said he, look-

ing laughingly in her face; "your colour is coming back again, Miss Barbara. I will bet a guinea that you were frightened out of your seven senses because you did not know how to get beaux enough. Come! Tell the truth; is not that the fact?"

"Well! perhaps it is, Dr. Wroughtley," she replied, turning her head away from him, and perfectly convinced in her heart that he saw, understood, and pitied the inevitable embarrassment of her feelings under such circumstances as those in which he had placed her, and sorely did she blame herself for having betrayed a degree of weakness that called for a forbearance on his part which might for weeks, perhaps, retard that full declaration of his sentiments which she had given him such good reason to believe she had not strength of nerve to bear.

Had she not, even at that very moment, been soothed by the thought that he must perforce love her the better for feelings so truly delicate and feminine, she would not have been able to endure this cruel delay so

heroically as she did ; but, as it was, she really behaved most admirably.

“ Think no more of my folly, Doctor,” said she, recovering herself by an effort that did her infinite honour, and, at the same time, bestowing a smile on him, kind enough to have consoled the disappointment of any reasonable man ; “ let us talk of nothing now but the ball. I must confess, however, that I don’t think I ever should have had courage to set about it without your help, but now, I really don’t think I should be afraid of any thing.”

“ Capital !” cried the doctor, quite elated by his success ; “ that is exactly the point that I wanted to bring you to, my dear friend. I tell you that it is a great object for you, a very great object, to have this rich young niece living with you. There is no need for her to be married for half a dozen years yet, and I should not at all wonder if you were to get six or seven hundred a-year with her. It is really worth having. But I can tell you, in your ear, my dear,” (and here, by the unfortu-

nate necessity of blowing his nose, he stopped short, with what effect upon the feelings of Miss Barbara, may be more easily imagined than described,) "I can tell you, in your ear, my dear Miss Barbara, that the very first moment I set my eyes upon the young lady, I became perfectly well acquainted with her character: One does not see such eyes as hers very often, Miss Barbara; but, nevertheless, it is easy enough to read what they say, at least, I confess I found it so."

"What *can* you mean, my dearest friend?" cried Miss Barbara, almost wildly, for a whole host of conflicting suspicions rushed upon her at once. But the monster thought which swallowed up all the rest was, that Judith had perceived their attachment, and meant to oppose it.

"Nay, don't frighten yourself again, Miss Barbara, don't frighten yourself. You look exactly as if I had told you that the young lady was going to set fire to your house," said Dr. Wroughtley, looking in her agitated face, and laughing heartily; "my discoveries fall far

short of that. What I mean is this, Miss Barbara : I mean, that I think your pretty Miss Judith is a young lady who will like to have her own way ; and as the own way of all the pretty girls I ever heard of is very decidedly in favour of balls and amusements of all sorts, I am of opinion that the best thing you can do, in order to keep her here, will be to give a ball, not only for the sake of that ball itself, but of all the other balls which will be sure to follow after."

Miss Barbara became calmer, much calmer, upon hearing these words, yet something like the coldness of disappointment followed. She had thought that the great, the important words were so very near ! But now, it was evident, that she had still to wait for them.

Well ! they were worth waiting for, and she would, in the mean time, do so exactly every thing he told her to do, as should effectually prevent his having any doubts about her future obedience as a wife. There was something very sweetly soothing in this !

"I have no doubt you are right !" she re-

plied, fixing her eyes full upon his face, as worshippers always do fix their eyes upon the idols, whether saints or virgins, to whom they are vowing obedience. "All I ask is, that you should tell me what I am to do, and you may be very sure I'll do it, Dr. Wroughtley!"

"That's right," he replied. "Now, then, just sit down and invite all your acquaintance for—for to-morrow fortnight, let us say, and write the word "*dancing*" on the corner of your note. Do you understand? That will settle the thing at once. It will be a real ball, you see, and no mistake, and all the party-giving people must do the same thing. And about the dancing gentlemen, if you don't know them all, I can help you there. The great object, remember, is to prevent our little heiress from turning her hopes and her wishes towards her London aunt, because the country one is not gay enough for her. Do you see? Do you understand my motive and object?"

Miss Barbara smiled expressively, nodded

her head, received a parting shake of the hand from her friend in return, and was in the next moment alone, absolutely alone with her own thoughts. Alone? Could she indeed be said to be alone? Where were the beings to be found (Dr. Wroughtley not being amongst them) who could have produced effects equally overpowering to those occasioned by the crowd of new ideas which now assailed her? And as if he had not said enough before, that last little parting pronoun *OUR*, prefixed to the mention of her niece, was left ringing in her ears!

To doubt his being in earnest was impossible. To doubt his honour, by imagining it possible he could change the purpose he had so clearly indicated, was equally so. Nevertheless, she told herself, with the wisdom of ripened years and characteristic prudence, that Dr. Wroughtley was not a man to make an imprudent match. He had sufficiently proved this by having waited for so many years without declaring his wishes; and therefore, that the result of all her hopes so late, so newly

born, depended wholly upon herself, and upon her conducting herself in such a manner towards Judith as might teach her to believe that Westhampton was a perfect paradise, and herself the gentlest of guardian angels.

CHAPTER XVII.

DR. WROUGHTLEY was by no means a stupid man, but had he been, what he certainly was not, the most acute observer of human character, and of all the complex impulses by which it is acted upon, he could not have conducted matters in a more skilful manner for attaining the object he had in view than he had done. That he had attained something more, and that this something was what he was as far from wishing, as from expecting, could not fairly be charged against him as a defect in his operations, for it was the peculiar state of Miss Barbara Jenkyns' feelings which

produced it, and that with a sort of spontaneous vehemence of combustion which, as he could not have foreseen, so neither could he take any measures to prevent.

The good-natured Prebend's good-natured object had been to make the young Judith's home in the house of her very dull old aunt as gay and as happy, as circumstances would permit. He had been greatly delighted both with the beauty and the intelligence of Judith, and the accident of her appearing before him at a moment when her feelings had been strongly excited by what had passed respecting her aunt Worthington, had led to his forming rather an exaggerated estimate of the vivacity of her temper. But, excepting on this point, he really had not blundered at all.

He knew that a pretty girl, with a large fortune, was not likely to find much satisfaction in such a manner of life as that of Miss Barbara; he knew, also, that the stipend which would be paid for her board would be a very convenient addition to his old friend's income; and though he was not the sort of

man to take any advantage of an absent adversary, as in a little quiet, social way Miss Elfreda had ever acknowledged herself to be, (chiefly on account of his marked indifference to every science save whist,) yet still he did not like the idea of her running away with the pretty heiress, merely because poor dear Miss Barbara did not know how to set about giving a party.

It was with the same object, too, that he chose to volunteer his assistance in presenting the young lady to Mrs. Chilbert. For some reason or other, for which she might herself perhaps have been greatly at a loss to account, she seemed upon more easy and intimate terms with Dr. Wroughtley than with any other of the Prebends. Perhaps it was because he happened to have a pleasant tone of voice in speaking, for she was just the sort of person to be influenced by such an accident; or it might be because he often saved her a great deal of trouble at her parties by undertaking the arrangement of her whist tables. Whatever the cause, such, however, was the fact,

and Dr. Wroughtley knew it, and, therefore, thought, reasonably enough, that by bringing forward the young stranger as his especial protégée, he should be doing her a service at the Deanery.

And it might have done her service, had any such service been wanted; but Mrs. Dean had an eye for a picture, as well as an ear for a tone, and there was something in the contour of Judith's slight form, in the classic shape of her small head, and the striking effect of colour produced by the contrast of her dress and complexion, which immediately superseded the necessity of any introduction at all. In going into a picture-gallery Mrs. Chilbert did not turn to her catalogue, but was sure to take up her station before the best picture within the reach of her glass. This was not from any critical knowledge of the art, for, practically speaking, she had none, but it was a species of instinct which never led her wrong.

It was, however, very fortunate for Mrs. Chilbert that her marriage with the Dean of

Westhampton had placed her in a position which called so decidedly for a somewhat dignified demeanour as to make her feel, without reasoning upon the matter, that there would be something wrong, something that she would have called want of keeping, and want of harmony, had she not adopted it. Without some such restraint it is very possible she might have done many more imprudent things than she actually did, and many things still more imprudent than any which as yet she had really achieved. Nevertheless, she might still be, and certainly was, occasionally accused of doing "odd things," though nothing assuredly that her own conscience could have accused her of believing to be wrong.

The fancy she had taken for Judith was by no means momentary, for she not only remembered it the next morning, but it determined her to make a morning call upon Miss Jenkyns, which, to say truth, was an event of very rare occurrence. Fortunately for Miss Barbara, the hour chosen for this rare and highly valued compliment was not an early

one, or it might have found her still too vehemently affected by her interview with Dr. Wroughtley to have received it properly.

By a lucky chance, however, Mr. Saunders, the harmonious minor canon, and his rich-voiced daughter Sophia, happened to call at the Deanery just as Mrs. Chilbert was in the very act of walking down the steps to her carriage; and no sooner did she perceive them, than her purpose changed, and ordering the carriage to wait, she re-entered the house.

Holding in her delicately-gloved fingers the dirty-beavered hand of Miss Sophia, she led her up the stairs, and still held her fast, till she had deposited her in a chair close to the piano-forte.

It was in vain that Mr. Saunders civilly expressed his fears that they had prevented her from taking a drive; she assured him, and very truly, that she had rather hear him and his daughter Sophy sing, either or both, some of her favourite airs, than take all the drives in the world.

It may seem improbable, perhaps, that a

lady in Mrs. Dean's position should find any difficulty in obtaining the musical assistance of Mr. Saunders and his daughter whenever she wished for it; such, however, was the fact, for the indolence of both father and daughter was such, that it was far from being often that they could both agree to take the trouble of making themselves a little more presentable than ordinary, in order to appear at the Deanery.

Rarely, or never indeed, did they make this effort, that they did not, both of them, enjoy their visit, and invariably say to each other, as they walked home, that they certainly would keep their promise this time, and go there again very soon.

But the promise was as invariably broken; for if one was ready and willing, the other was not; and as filial obedience made no part of their domestic code, the young lady, who, of the two, enjoyed these musical mornings the least, was of course the one who impeded them the most.

Had it been for musical evenings instead of

musical mornings, the case might have been different, for then Miss Sophia, as well as her mamma and her sisters, would have had to make themselves fine instead of tidy, a very different sort of business, and which had in it sufficient attraction to counteract all the *vis inerticæ* of their indolence.

But this did not suit Mrs. Dean.

The having to entertain Mrs. and the four Miss Saunderses, not to mention the having to wait for her reward till their papa had swallowed about four cups of tea, and as much cake as came within his reach, was more than she could endure, and, therefore, all she could do was to endeavour to make them understand, that if the favoured *two* did not choose to come to her now and then of a morning, she should not choose to invite the entire *six* in an evening; and it was, in fact, for the purpose of impressing this important truth upon their minds that she had omitted them in her invitations for the preceding evening.

The hint, as it seemed, had been understood, for the first words spoken by Mr.

Saunders on now reaching the drawing-room, were to apologize for their having been so long without calling on her.

“Long, indeed!” replied Mrs. Chilbert, at once opening the piano-forte, and sitting down before it; “and now you must make up for it by singing ‘Angels bright and fair,’ for me, Miss Sophy; and your papa shall pay his fine by—”

But here she suddenly stopped. A new idea had entered her head, which she hastened to make profitable in the following manner.

“By the way, Mr. Saunders,” said she, “it seems to me that we are very stupid people never to have arranged a better mode of indulging our musical fancies than by my dragging you both out in the morning, when perhaps you might be better occupied at home. Why should we not have our little singing coterie in an evening?”

The somewhat heavy countenance of Miss Sophy brightened up immediately.

“Oh dear! yes,” she exclaimed. “We should all of us like that so much!”

“Stop, stop, my dear! That is not what I mean,” returned Mrs. Chilbert, running her fingers over the keys. “I know all young ladies like parties, and if I oblige them by occasionally giving them an opportunity of dancing, as they did here till near one o’clock this morning, I think it is but fair that they should oblige me by singing to me when I ask them to do it.”

“Oh dear, certainly!” again exclaimed the now almost animated Sophia. “I am sure I and papa should always be ready to sing before the dancing began. Should we not, papa?”

“Before or after, either or both, my dear lady,” said Mr. Saunders, who loved a ball, and a ball-supper, exceedingly.

“Thank you; but that is not what I want,” said Mrs. Chilbert very distinctly. “But if you will listen to me patiently for a minute or two, I will explain myself. When all your family come here with you, Mr. Saunders, it is quite impossible, you know, for me to sit down as I like to do when we are by ourselves, and

accompany you through as many songs as you will be good enough to sing for me.—It would be so very rude to Mrs. Saunders, and your other daughters.”

“Oh! I assure you, for that matter, they would not mind it at all, but quite the contrary, if they were to dance afterwards,” said Miss Sophia.

Mrs. Chilbert *looked* at her; but if she meditated a rebuff she changed her mind, and quietly said,

“But every one else in the room would think it extremely rude were I to take no notice of them as they came in, because I was amusing myself. No, my dear young lady, that won't do. When I want you to sing for me, I must have you and your papa by yourselves; and if you will agree to come in that way, Mr. Saunders, only bringing Miss Sophy with you, I will promise to make you as comfortable as I can; and you may tell your sisters, my dear, that if they and your mamma will spare you to me about once a week in that manner, I will promise in return not to have a single dance

during the whole winter without inviting you all to it."

The great glee which was expressed at this proposal by both father and daughter, caused Mrs. Chilbert to reproach herself with considerable severity for not having had the common sense to make it before.

"What on earth was I afraid of?" thought she. "But I owe the inspiration now to that enchanting little creature who will enjoy the fruit of it with me."

This important arrangement made, song after song followed, till the delighted *fanatica* was recalled to a consciousness of the disagreeable fact that Time will not pause for a moment, even to listen to good singing, by hearing the great cathedral clock strike three.

The piano-forte was closed in a moment. Mrs. Chilbert had some dim recollection of having heard that good Miss Jenkyns dined very early, and a sudden dread came upon her that she might find her at table, and be thus prevented at last from achieving the great

object which she had in view since she first opened her eyes in the morning.

Her guests were now dismissed a little in the Lady Macbeth style of "Go at once," yet not without so clear, yet brief a recapitulation of their newly-arranged compact, as produced a cordial assent from both father and daughter.

"By the way," said Mrs. Chilbert, as she followed them down stairs, "Why should we not begin to-morrow?"

"Will you give another dance to-morrow?" ejaculated Miss Sophia, suddenly standing still, with her right foot on one stair and her left on another. "To-morrow?" she repeated. "How very delightful!"

"You would not find it delightful at all, Miss Sophy," replied the clever Mrs. Dean, "for I should not be able to get three dancing men together at such short notice. They will have made up their shooting parties, you know, and all that sort of thing. This is such a sporting neighbourhood, that it is absolutely necessary to give notice a week beforehand, if you want

to secure half a dozen dancing men. We all know that."

"Oh! then, don't let it be to-morrow!" returned Miss Sophia, with great *naïveté*.

"No, my dear, it shall be to-morrow week; and remember, I invite you *all*.—And you and your papa must come to me exactly at eight o'clock to-morrow evening. Is it a bargain?"

The engagement was eagerly ratified, and at length the Dean's lady found herself at Miss Jenkyns' door.

Miss Barbara's dinner hour was half past three, and it was easy to perceive on the expressive countenance of her man William, the moment it appeared at the door, that he was by no means certain whether he ought to say "no" or "yes," in reply to the footman's question, "Is Miss Jenkyns at home?"

Before either could be spoken, Mrs. Chilbert was herself endeavouring to open the carriage door.

"But one moment. I will not detain her more," cried the eager visitor, scarcely per-

mitting the steps of the carriage to be let down; and before the startled William had articulated "yes," or "no," Mrs. Dean was in the hall.

But though this activity on her part had settled the question of to enter, or not to enter, it had by no means relieved William from his perplexity; for the Dean's lady was a great personage in Westhampton, as Deans' ladies always are where there are no Bishops' ladies resident, and this faithful servant of the Jenkyns family could not endure the idea of ushering her into Miss Barbara's little back parlour. Yet what could he do? In the drawing-room there was no fire, and in the dining-room there was the table-cloth!

Mrs. Chilbert, however, again settled the question for him. She had never been in any other rooms but the dining and drawing-rooms, and being in much too great a hurry to waste time in meditating on the possibility of there being any other, she ran up the stairs, and entering the large cold state-room at the top,

found it, greatly to her disappointment, untenanted.

“Where are the ladies?” she said, turning round and meeting the perplexed eyes of poor William, who with all his efforts had not been able to reach the landing-place in time to open the drawing-room door for her.

“I only want to see them for a moment. If Miss Maitland is disengaged, let me see her.”

“If you will please to be seated, madam, I will bring her this minute,” returned William, rushing out of the room, but pausing when he had closed the door behind him, uncertain whether he ought to summon the old lady or the young one.

But Miss Barbara herself had heard the authoritative ring of the Deanery footman; and putting her nose out of her retreat, not only perceived the well-known colours of this functionary, but perceived also the richly-laced cloak of his elegant mistress walking up the stairs towards the drawing-room with no fire in it. “Oh! William! William!” murmured

the vexed lady as she passed her blameless servant on the stairs.

“Am I to fetch the young Miss?” cried William, actually extending his audacious hand to prevent her escaping him till he had received her orders on this important point. “The lady has asked for her.”

“No!” returned Miss Barbara, in her eager wish to shorten Mrs. Dean’s stay in the cold drawing-room.

But ere the man had fairly passed her, she remembered that her visitor was the gayest lady in Westhampton, and that it might be of the most vital importance to her own tenderest interests that Judith should become well known to her, in order that she might profit by her invitations, which were universally acknowledged to be the most sought for in the town.

“Yes, William! yes!” she now said, almost close to his ear, with startling eagerness. “Go up to her room, William, and tell her that she must come down to the drawing-room this moment,—that is if she

has no objection. Be sure to say if she has no objection."

This was said with her hand on the lock of the drawing-room door, and in the next moment she stood before her graceful visitor, pouring forth apologies for the coldness of the room, and complaints of her extraordinary ill-luck in having been so busily occupied in the study all the morning in writing letters, that she had never thought of ordering the drawing-room fire to be lighted.

"I am not in the least degree cold, I thank you," said Mrs. Chilbert; "but where is your charming niece? I would not let the day pass without paying my compliments to her. How lucky you are, Miss Jenkyns, in having so amiable a ward sent you."

"I am!—indeed I feel it, Mrs. Chilbert. I am most wonderfully lucky, if I can but make the place agreeable to her, Mrs. Chilbert! But young girls, you know, do sometimes expect so much in the way of gaiety, that I'm sure there is no saying whether she will like Westhampton or not."

“Oh, she will be sure to like it, Miss Jenkyns, if we are all kind to her,” replied the Dean’s lady. “And I declare to you,” she added, with great cordiality, “that if you will give me leave to help you, Miss Jenkyns, in trying to make her like it, I will do all I can to render the place and the people agreeable to her.”

Miss Jenkyns felt as if she would have liked to kneel down and kiss her feet.

“Nobody in the whole world, Mrs. Dean, not the Queen’s Majesty upon the throne, could have more perfect power in that way than you have, and I have no words to say the gratitude I shall feel for every bit of civility you will be pleased to show her.”

This eager reception of her offered kindness to the young heiress was as unexpected as it was agreeable; for Miss Barbara Jenkyns, though acknowledged by everybody to be one of the most respectable ex-Close inhabitants of Westhampton, was nevertheless considered to have that peculiarity of temper which is generally expressed by the word *touchy*, and

Mrs. Chilbert was not without some fear (reasonable enough under the circumstances) that Miss Barbara might feel herself a little affronted if any very marked eagerness were manifested by her for the society of her niece, inasmuch as no such eagerness had ever been expressed for her own.

But this fear vanished completely before the words and the accent of Miss Barbara, the sincerity of which it was quite impossible to doubt, and there was something absolutely joyous in the manner of Mrs. Chilbert as she replied, "Well then, my dear Miss Jenkyns, we shall all be made happy by her arrival. She plays so very nicely on the piano that it will be quite a pleasure for me to have her, not only when we have company, but when I am alone, for we can play together, and I rather think, from something she said last night about her wanting practice, that she will enjoy this quite as much as I shall. And this, you know, may prevent your ever feeling her in the way when you wish to have one of your little snug rubbers at home : it is always

awkward to have one person left out, is it not?"

Might not any one have thought that Mrs. Dean knew every secret of Miss Jenkyns' heart, and was speaking accordingly?

But Miss Barbara neither thought nor suspected any such thing; she only felt at the very bottom of her heart that it was *providential*, and she was still in the act of expressing her approval and her thankfulness when Judith entered.

If Miss Barbara herself had not been a great deal too happy and too agitated to think much of anything else, she might have been a little puzzled and surprised at the greeting between the two ladies who were so very nearly strangers to each other. Judith entered almost with a bound, whereupon Mrs. Dean made very nearly as eager a movement to meet her. And when they met, they seized, evidently by mutual consent, each on both hands of the other, and in the next moment, stranger still, they embraced, actually kissed each other, though less than twenty-four hours

ago neither of them had ever beheld the other!

Yet still Miss Barbara only looked delighted; but her secret thoughts, notwithstanding her pious propensities in favour of Providence, suggested the idea that Dr. Wroughtley *MUST* have had something to do with it. He certainly *must* have said or done something to put it into Mrs. Dean's head that it would be a good thing for the society of the Close if Judith could at once be made to think it very delightful.

But Mrs. Chilbert, notwithstanding her great satisfaction at seeing that the complexion of her newly-elected favourite was more exquisitely delicate by day than by candle-light, and the satisfaction, greater still, of perceiving that the pleasure of this second meeting was mutual, was too really well-bred to forget that the mistress of the house was probably wishing her out of it; she therefore lost not a moment in saying, as if in conclusion of what had passed before Judith entered, "May I hope then, that, if Miss Maitland

kindly agrees to it, you will have no objection to her passing a very quiet evening with me to-morrow?"

"Objection! Oh, dear! what a word! Instead of that, I shall be delighted!" replied Miss Barbara, bowing and curtsying most graciously.

"Then I will send the carriage for you, at eight, my dear," said the confiding lady, without thinking it necessary to wait for any consent from Judith herself, beyond what her eyes had already given. Judith only smiled and nodded, for she too seemed to think that words were quite unnecessary.

And then Mrs. Dean departed, leaving the young lady greatly pleased, but the elder one in a state of exalted happiness, which could by no means be justly described by any such temperate phrase.

No sooner was the hall door shut, with its sonorous slam, upon the Dean's lady, than Miss Barbara, in a frisky sort of manner, took her niece by the arm, and led her down stairs into the study. They passed William in the

hall, who, still dreading a reprimand for having admitted company, and such company too, at such a moment, was passing with a rapid step towards the kitchen in order to get out of the way ; but the sunshine of Miss Barbara's heart, at that moment, was like that of heaven ; it fell on the guilty as well as the innocent, and William felt himself basking therein when he heard himself ordered, in a tone of unmistakeable contentment, to "bring up dinner directly."

"But let him be as quick as he will," she added, turning to Judith, "there will be still time enough for you to go into my study for one moment. I want you to see, my dear, how I have been passing my morning, and then you will perceive, I think, that the very first object I have in the world is to please you, and make you happy."

It instantly occurred to Judith, that her aunt (the aunt, too, that she had been so unjustly taking an aversion) had been passing the interval since they parted, in endeavouring to discover some clue to the present residence,

or at least to the present address, of her aunt Worthington. To obtain this was so much beyond all things else the first wish of her heart, that it seemed impossible for any one who knew as much about it all as aunt Barbara did, could talk of making her happy in any other manner.

On entering the study, and seeing the table covered with what looked like notes, or letters, this idea was confirmed, and she had all but thrown herself into the arms of her aunt to thank her for her exceeding kindness, when she was stopped by hearing her say, "Look there, my dear Judith! There are no less than twenty-three notes of invitation, written already, for a ball I am going to give to-morrow fortnight, in honour of your arrival."

Judith will be accounted a very childish girl of sixteen if I confess that, heroine as she was, she was very near bursting into tears at this disappointment. However, it was only very near, the tears did not come. But the preventing this disgrace to her womanhood was quite as much as she could achieve in the

way of good behaviour on that occasion ; the pretending to be pleased, or making any acknowledgment in the way of thanks, was quite beyond her power. Miss Barbara tried to look at her face, but that was impossible, for Judith was blowing her nose, though, thanks to a great effort, it was not necessary for her to wipe her eyes. But this silence was too mysterious, too cruel, too ungrateful to be borne, and, after meditating upon it for a minute or so, Miss Barbara said, in a piteous tone,—“Are you not pleased, my dear ? Don't you like balls ? I hope to heaven you are not a Methodist ! are you ?”

“No, aunt, no ; I am not,” said Judith, appearing to think this a good opportunity for letting her tears flow. “I am not a Methodist. But I am very unhappy !”

“Unhappy because I am going to give a ball in honour of your arrival ? What can you mean, Judith ?”

“Nothing about the ball. I don't mean anything about the ball, aunt. I like balls very much, I believe. But I shall never be

really happy till you find out for me where my aunt Worthington and my cousin Charles are. The last command my dear mamma gave was, that I should love them, and be kind to them. And how can I, if I am never to be told where they are?"

"Your aunt Worthington, and your cousin Charles?" repeated Miss Barbara, almost wildly.

"Yes, aunt Barbara, my aunt Worthington and my cousin Charles; and I must and will find out where they are. And, if there is no other way of doing it, I will go to Rome myself. Mamma often talked of going to Rome to see them. And if she could do it, why may not I?"

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