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M-L. Neal

[Manning, Anne]

SOME ACCOUNT

OF

~~MS.~~ CLARINDA SINGLEHART.

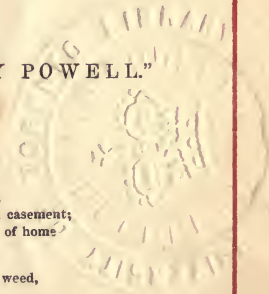
BY

THE AUTHOR OF "MARY POWELL."

" No human figure stirr'd, to go or come ;
No face look'd forth from shut or open'd casement ;
No chimney smoked ; there was no sign of home
From parapet to basement.

" The flower grew wild and rankly as the weed,
Roses with thistles struggled for espial,
And vagrant plants of parasitic breed
Had overgrown the dial.

" For over all there hung a cloud of fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The house is haunted."—Hood's *Haunted House*.



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SOME ACCOUNT *of* MRS. CLARINDA
SINGLEHART.

CHAPTER I.

A HOUSE TO LET.

SEVERAL years ago, on a fine mellow spring afternoon, the host of the "Yew Tree" stood at the door of his venerable little house of entertainment, and looked down the main street of Crompton Wimborne. There was nothing doing in it, but that was not an unusual circumstance.

Every one who has seen Crompton Wimborne must know the "Yew Tree," which probably looks very much the same now that it did a

hundred years ago. The ivy and wood-nogs keep it from falling quite to pieces; but the driving of a single strong nail into any part of it would bring a cloud of crumbling rubbish into the hammerer's eyes; and if he persisted in his operations, the tenement would shortly bury him under its ruins. The only thing to be done is to leave it *in statu quo* as long as it will hang together, looking very picturesque, and reminding one of the heavy-roofed, high-gabled taverns painted by Teniers.

Presently the shadow of a man round the corner at the end of the street was seen advancing, and presently the man himself appeared, walking at a brisk, cheerful pace, with the warm March sun shining on his shoulders, and his face set against the east wind.

“That's the gentleman,” thought the landlord, “who left his hack here this morning; and, after ordering his dinner to be ready at one o'clock, stepped over to lawyer Timms, who presently went out with him down street, and has not yet

come back, though *he* dines at one o'clock, too, or ought to do so, which is the same thing."

By this time, the stranger had reached the "Yew Tree;" he was undeniably a gentleman, who might probably not have put on his best black coat, to travel along dusty roads, where nobody knew him: if it *were* his best coat, it was not a very new one. It was difficult to guess his age, because he had that fresh, blooming complexion which, if some one had told you he was thirty, would have made you say, "Well, I should have thought him younger;" and that thoughtful and sometimes dreamy look which, if you were told he was five-and-twenty, would have made you say, "Well, I should have thought him older." His blue, well-opened eye bespoke sweetness and intelligence, and an indescribable air of simplicity and single-mindedness struck you in his look, his voice, and in his whole demeanour.

"Landlord, is dinner ready?" were his first quiet words.

“Quite, sir,” returned his host, immediately opening the door of a low-ceilinged, uneven-floored, neat little chamber, where a huge bunch of evergreens occupied the place of a spring beaupot, and, as story-tellers frequently say, “a clean though coarse cloth covered the board.” The landlord quickly placed a roast fowl on the table, and lingered for further orders. A pint of sherry being called for and produced, he still tarried, according to the fashion of the last century, to have a little chat with his guest.

“This seems a quiet little town of yours,” the stranger presently remarked.

“Very, sir,” replied the landlord.

“Good,” rejoined the other, as if mechanically; “no coach runs through it or near it, I understand?”

“No, sir, I am sorry to say,” replied the landlord, sighing.

“All the better,” observed the stranger. “No society, I suppose, in the neighbourhood? Nothing going on?”

“ Nothing at all, sir,” still more heavily responded his host.

“ Capital !” ejaculated the traveller, filling his glass, and swallowing its contents with gusto. After continuing to eat his dinner for a few minutes in silence, he resumed, “ Do you know Mr. Timms’ house ?”

“ Mr. Timms’ house, sir ? Why, bless you, sir, I have seen it every day and all day long ever since I was born, sir !”

“ I mean the house he has to let.”

“ *The haunted house*, sir !” hastily ejaculated the landlord.

“ The *haunted* house !” re-echoed the other, quickly, and letting his cheerful, guileless face assume a humorous expression ; “ Oh, ho !”

“ Upon my word, sir,” cried the landlord, “ I had not the least intention in the world of spoiling Mr. Timms’ bargain : he’s had plague enough, poor man, about that house already. The word escaped me ; only, the story being so generally spread, and the character of the premises so well

known—you mean the moated house, I conclude, sir?”

“ I mean the *haunted* house, I am quite sure,” returned the other laughing; “ and that’s the reason, I see now, why this excellent dwelling-house, with fifty acres of arable, meadow, and pasture land; garden, orchard, and granary attached; two small messuages, or tenements; three tumbril carts, two rollers, three ploughs, four sets of harrows, and I know not what all, is to be had for—”

“ A mere song,” said the landlord.

“ Ah, but a song that I shall not sing,” rejoined the traveller, “ if—”

“ If the ghost is let with the premises, sir?” suggested the host. “ Very reasonable, sir, certainly; only you see—”

“ Never mind the ghost,” interrupted the other, “ I was going to say, unless a friend of mine at home, rather more practical than myself, likes my account of the premises.”

“ Your lady, I presume, sir,” said the host.

“ A natural presumption,” returned the stranger, absently. “ So, ho ! *live and dead stock* ! Which head, I wonder, does the ghost come under ? ”

“ Sir,” said the innkeeper, “ if there is a lady in the case— ”

“ There is,” returned the traveller, “ therefore, you see, it will not do to go precipitately into this affair, much as I like the place and its price. Come, now, I ask you as one honest man may ask another, do you know of any nuisances inseparable from this moated grange ? ”

“ *Nuisances*, sir ! ” repeated the landlord, almost bereft of breath, “ why, sir—— ”

“ Oh ! I don’t call a ghost a nuisance worth mentioning,” returned the other, cheerily. “ He does not walk now, I suppose ? if he does, we can tie him by the leg, and keep him to guard the house. He will eat less than a mastiff, and frighten beggars as well, or better.”

“ Upon my word, sir,” rejoined the innkeeper, “ I know of no other nuisance ; I don’t believe there is one. The water has indeed come through

the roof, I understand, in several places, for want of being looked after."

"Timms has engaged for all that," interrupted his companion, "he has promised to put the place in tenantable repair; so that, if my sister likes my account of it, which I am pretty sure she will do, you may chance to have us settled in the next parish to you by Lady-day."

"Ladies are timorsome and humorous," observed the landlord, with a shake of the head. "If the lady in question be to have the casting-vote in the matter, I think, sir, I should just keep the ghost out of sight as long as I could—*perdu*, as folks say."

"Indeed, I shall tell her of it the very first thing," returned the other, gaily; "she is neither timorsome nor humorous, and will enjoy the story, if it be a good one, amazingly. So now, as I may look upon the ghost as all but my own, bought and paid for, let me hear his true history, told as circumstantially as you can; though it seems a pity we should discuss it in this ripe,

invigorating sunshine, instead of at twilight, over a smouldering fire."

"Indeed, I think it much better as it is," returned the landlord; "for, to tell you the truth, I am never over fond of dismal stories at dusk, I'm so apt to dream of them afterwards; not that I am at all cowardly, or given to fancy strange sights and sounds where they don't exist; for *this* house, I am happy to say, is not haunted—"

"Though the moated grange *is*," interrupted the stranger, smiling.

"Beg pardon, sir, 'the moat-house,' it always is called—leastways *was* always called, till it got a worse name. The sooner it loses its present one the better; and as you, perhaps, are in the church, tho' that's no security neither—it wasn't in this case—you shall hear the matter set down in better words than I can pretend to; for, saving your presence, sir, I do believe you're a bit of a sceptic."

So saying, he unlocked an old walnut cabinet,

and selected a small printed document from a roll of old papers, which he read as follows :—

“ ‘ At the moat-house near Crompton Wimborne in Surrey, dwelt Thomas Price, farmer, his wife and child, a man-servant, and a maid-servant. About the beginning of August last, on a Monday, about nine or ten at night, all being gone to bed except the maid with the child, the maid being in the kitchen, and having raked up the fire, took a candle in one hand, and the child in the other arm, and, turning about, saw one in a black gown walking through the room—’

“ I should tell you,” said the innkeeper, interrupting himself, “ that a country parson, not of the best character, had formerly lodged in the house.”

“ That should have been put in,” returned his auditor; “ but go on.—Here he is, in full canonicals, apparently. ‘ Through the room—’ ”

“ ‘ Through the room,’ ” pursued the reader, “ ‘ and thence out of the door into the orchard. Upon this the maid, hasting up-stairs, having

recovered but two steps, cried out: on which the master and mistress ran down, found the candle in her hand, she grasping the child about the neck with the other arm. She told them the reason of her crying out. She would not tarry another hour in the house, but removed to another, belonging to a neighbouring farmer, where she cried out all night from the terror she was in; and she could not be persuaded to return any more to the moat-house on any terms.

“ ‘ On the morrow (*i. e.* Tuesday), the tenant’s wife came to me—’ ”

“ Me! who is me?” put in the listener.

“ The parish curate,” returned the landlord; “ at that time lodging in this very town.

“ ‘ She came to me to desire my advice, and have consult with some friends upon it. I told her I thought it was a flam. She bade me come up to the house and see. I told her I would willingly come and sit up or lie there (for, then, as to all stories of ghosts and apparitions, I was

an infidel). I went thither, and sate up the Tuesday night with the tenant and man-servant. About twelve or one o'clock, I searched all the rooms in the house, to see if anybody were hid there to impose upon me. At last we came into a lumber-room, where I, smiling, told the tenant that I would call for the apparition, if there was any, and oblige him to come. The tenant then seemed afraid ; but I told him I would warrant him from all harm ; and then repeated *Barbara celarent Darii, &c.* jestingly. On this, the man's countenance fell, and he was ready to drop down with fear ; so then I told him I perceived he was afraid, and I would bid the spirit keep his distance, which I feigned to do with *Baralipton, &c.* Then he recovered his spirits pretty well, and we left the room and went down into the kitchen, and sate up there the remainder of the night, with no disturbance.

“ ‘Thursday night, the tenant and I lay together in one room, and the man in another room, and he saw something walk

along in a black gown, and place itself against a window, and there stand, and then, after a time, walk off. Friday morning, the man relating this, I asked him why he had not called me, and told him I thought it was a trick or flam. He replied that the reason he had not called me was, that he could neither speak nor move. Friday and Saturday nights we lay as before, and had no disturbance.

“ ‘ Sunday night I lay by myself in one room (not that where the man saw the apparition), and the tenant and his man in another ; and betwixt twelve and two the man heard something walk in their room at the bed’s foot, and whistling very well ; at last it came to the bedside, drew the curtain, and looked in. After a time it moved off ; then the man came to me, desiring me to come, for that there was something in the room that went about whistling. I asked him whether he had any light, or could strike one ; he told me no ; then I sprang out of bed, went out of my room, and along a gallery to the door, which I found

fastened. I desired him to unlock the door, which he did, and returned immediately into his bed. I went in three or four steps, and, *it being a moonshiny night*, I saw the apparition move from the bedside, and clap up against the wall that divided their room from mine. I went and stood directly against it, within my arm's length of it, and asked it in the name of God what it was that made it come disturbing of us. I stood for some time expecting an answer; and, receiving none, and thinking it might be some fellow hid in the room to fright me, I put out my arm to feel it, and my hand went seemingly through the body of it, and felt no manner of substance till it came to the wall—'

"What do you think of *that*, now?" said the innkeeper, interrupting himself.

"Think!" repeated his auditor, bursting into a hearty fit of laughter, "why, that I never in all my life heard a more graphic account of *a man's being frightened at his own shadow!*"

"Frightened!" repeated the innkeeper, in

high dudgeon, "he was anything but that, I can tell you! Mark what comes next—'Till now, I had not had *the least* fear, and even now had very little. Then I adjured it to tell me what it was; when I said those words, it, keeping its back towards the wall, moved gently along towards the door, and it, going out at the door, turned its back towards me; it went a little along the gallery, and it disappeared where there was no corner for it to turn, and before it came to the end of the gallery, where were the stairs. Then I felt myself very cold—' "

"Poor young fellow, I dare say he did," said the traveller. "Never mind his feelings, Mr. Innkeeper; they would be much the same as those of any man, half dressed and frightened out of his wits. I never heard a clearer case of moonshine in my life. You see, for all his youthful bragging and levity at first, he had in reality sensitive nerves; was probably a little anxious about the result of his own incantations;

was unused to night watching, which, with fasting and mental excitement, has subjected many a black-letter saint to diabolical assaults; had a couple of cowardly and superstitious companions; and we know that fear is catching, and may guess what formed the staple of the conversation with which they kept themselves awake at their post; then, after nearly a week of this harass, the curate thinks to have a night's rest, falls asleep, and dreams, no doubt, of ghosts, is awoke by a fearful cry, and a summons he is hardly prepared to meet so suddenly, gropes his way—in *the dark*—along the gallery, and finds himself, as soon as the door is opened, in the white moonlight, with his own shadow thrown against the wall! Well, he asks it what it does there; and the wonder would be if he had had an answer: but he is serious, now; and, I think, frightened. Rely on it, his heart was beating, just then, like a sledge hammer. He puts his arm through the shadow to the wall—he moves, it moves. Ah, my friend, I remember some

lines by an immortal poet, describing something of the same impression which was conveyed to a beautiful woman — our first mother. ‘ *Till* now, said he, ‘ I had had no fear :’ but he owns he was frightened then ; at what ? at his own shadow not speaking to him. It preceded him along the gallery, to the verge of the moonshine, and then disappeared ; on which he felt very cold.”

“ Well, sir, you shall have it all your own way, especially as you will shortly have the opportunity of making your own observations,” said the inn-keeper. “ But what will you say to another party, noways connected with the others, who, on his return from a fair, passed the deserted house at between nine and ten o’clock at night, and saw lights in most of the rooms of the house ?”

“ I should say, either that the moonlight was glittering on the casements,” returned the other, “ or that the house was *not* deserted by those who knew how to turn its bad name to account.”

“ He saw a dark, shadowy figure following

him," pursued the landlord, "and heard it scratching against the palings and making a hideous noise."

"And I daresay," returned his impracticable listener, "that if you or I had sufficient motive for it, *we* could scratch against the palings and make a hideous noise."

"Ah, sir," said the landlord, smiling and shaking his head, as he tied up the papers, "I see you're a waggish sort of a gentleman."





CHAPTER II.

BROTHER AND SISTER.

SOME years before this dialogue, William Singlehart had carried home his college friend, John Burrell, one summer afternoon, to drink tea with his mother and sister at Chelsea.

It was August: the young men had dined together at a chop-house, and taken boat at the nearest stairs. Having landed beneath a row of tall elms, they made their way along a row of antiquated brick edifices with stone dressings, having steep roofs, tall, narrow windows, and doors with heavy, carved architraves, till they

reached one that had a ponderous iron gate facing the Thames, and a double flight of shallow stone steps before the door. William's knock, being well known, as that of every loved master and son of a family is, was immediately answered, not by a maid-servant, but by his sister Clarinda, who was passing through the hall, and who was expecting him though not his companion. Thus John Burrell had the privilege of seeing her first frank, joyous look of welcome to her brother, which he never forgot.

She was dressed in a chintz muslin, of what we should now call an old fashion, with a few carnations in her bosom, and her hair in *negligé*—that is, smooth-parted, and tied low behind with a broad black ribbon ;—but why should we dwell on her dress? whatever she had worn, it would have been the same—the drapery of the picture. There was the oval face, clear brown skin, sweet mouth, good forehead, fine eyebrow, serene eye ; but, after all, there was nothing so remarkable in the face as in the soul that shone through it.

These three young persons proceeded through a hall, with a ceiling painted by Verrio, into a small, lofty sitting-room, where sate a very infirm-looking lady in black, near a small table on which was a small tea-equipage. There was a happy meeting between the relations; John Burrell soon found and felt himself like one of the family; and after the fragrant tea, rich seed-cake, and wafer-like slices of buttered-roll had received honour due, the young persons walked out by the pleasant river-side.

It was dusk ere they returned; the careful, kind mother had the supper-table spread; and, as the evening wore on, John Burrell remarked how serious an expression Clarinda's face had assumed; he had yet to learn that the grave expression was its habitual one.

The father of the young Singleharts might have been a wealthy man, but for an inordinate passion for luxuries that did not belong to his sphere.

He died, leaving his wife straitened and in broken health; his eldest son Sylvanus adding very little to her independence or comfort, and his son William studying hard at college, on a very moderate allowance.

William was desirous of entering the church; there were two bars, however, to his being entirely eligible for it, which he never troubled himself to consider. He was very absent and occasionally nervous; and when his nervous shyness came on, he had a hesitation in his speech which almost amounted to stammering. Like many secretly shy persons, he could sometimes assume a very frank, off-hand way which deceived even the penetrating; and as to his fits of absence, they were laughed at by his companions and himself.

John Burrell, who continued to visit at the house, told Mrs. Singlehart, in confidence, that William was universally liked and respected at Oxford by his intimates, though they occasionally smoked him; meantime, the more this young man saw of Clarinda, the more he admired her;

he knew not by what processes her mind had been formed—he only became interested and captivated by what it was.

Her little library reminded him, in its arrangement, of that of Leonora in the *Spectator*. In a recess facing the parlour-door were several shelves, the lower range containing the *Arcadia*, the *Faery Queen*, early editions of Shakspeare, Milton, Cervantes, and Defoe, and some weighty treatises on divinity, flanked by a couple of China jars filled with dead rose-leaves. A pair of similar vases, but of a smaller size, stood sentries over the prose works of Addison, Cowley, Shenstone, &c.; and a couple of tea-cups, of the most delicate porcelain, inverted in their saucers, bounded the duodecimos, among which were sundry small volumes that have now quite dropped out of mind.

It was part of Mrs. Singlehart's daily occupation to dust these precious relics with an old, but extremely fine cambric handkerchief, as well as the Dresden figures on the high

mantelpiece ; after which she attended to her birds, dormice, and squirrel ; and then sate down, pretty nearly exhausted, to read the Psalms and Lessons for the day. Some fancy-knitting was always at hand on her little japan table, to take up when visitors dropped in ; but her real pleasure was in making clothes for the juvenile and infant poor, which she was singularly dexterous in contriving out of fragments. Clarinda read beside her, and sometimes read her to sleep, when she generally left her in charge of a faithful servant, while she took a little exercise ;—she then returned to her post.

She was not weary, sitting within view of the Thames and of the groups of people sauntering under the tall trees. If she worked, she had the vicissitudes of a short but troubled life to muse upon,—hasty journeys, wasting suspenses, divine helps, family bereavements, dissensions, affections that sometimes recurred to her so vividly as to make her cast down her work, and plunge into one of the many books that the rector's

kindness placed at her command. For Clarinda was not stinted to the three little rows between the china jars; she was a book-devourer, and sometimes tried her hand at writing—all in a quiet way.

William was ordained deacon, and on the eve of preaching his first sermon at a village within an easy ride from his college. John Burrell was spending the evening with him, in alternate conversation and silence.

“ I am thinking, young man,” said John, rather abruptly, “ that I should like to hear you to-morrow, if it won’t make you nervous.”

“ Nervous? not at all,” returned William; “ I mean to take things very quietly. I have written out my sermon in a large, plain hand, and have read it over two or three times—I’ll read it to you now, if you like.”

“ No, thank you,” said Burrell, dryly.

“ Oh, very well,” said William, composedly,

“no offence taken. By-the-bye, what an advantage those dissenting fellows who extemporize have over us! I could find it in my heart to make trial of it if there were not a prejudice against it.”

“Better try the other first,” said Burrell.

“Yes, of course; but what is there in this” lazily stretching his hand to his sermon which lay on the table behind him, and which he reached at last by tilting his chair with considerably more trouble than if he had risen. In the execution of this manœuvre he obtained the sermon case, but not its contents, which fell in loose sheets on the floor. Burrell laughed ironically as William rose, with a groan, to collect the scattered papers.

“What is there in these?”—resumed he.

“Aye; what, indeed!” rejoined Burrell. “I’ll tell you what there *ought* to be—a string, or ribbon, or something of that sort, or they will get you into trouble. Hand me over that case; a present from your sister?”

“ From my mother,” said William.

“ Oh!—Well, here is what I expected to find in it, a proper security for your vagabond compositions.”

“ What is there in them,” began William a third time, “ which I might not say extempore, quite as much to the purpose?”

“ Why, that’s the thing that remains to be proved,” said Burrell. “ There’s an old saying, however, which I should bear in mind, in your place.”

“ What is it?” said William.

“ Well, never mind,” said Burrell, who had *his* fits of shyness sometimes, too. But when they parted for the night, he muttered—“ ‘ *Bene precasse est bene studuisse.*’ If you’ve *heard* that saying before, just *remember* it.”

Next morning, when William mounted the village pulpit, the first straightforward look he gave into the body of the church encountered a pair of the brightest eyes in the world; eyes that he admired exceedingly, but which he had

supposed and hoped were, on this particular day, a hundred miles off. He felt distressed ; but, looking a little askance, he next met the steady, serious eye of John Burrell, and, after a momentary struggle, regained his composure.

The next shock he received was a severe test of self-command. In his hand he held his little Bible and sermon-case ; both of them gifts of his mother. On opening the case, he found it empty. The scattered sheets had never been replaced ! His colour mounted to his temples ; the hymn had been sung, the prayer offered ; the people were waiting : with a desperate effort he recalled the text, the opening sentence, and the general scheme. All that he had said overnight about extempore preaching occurred to him in a moment of time ; and, with a dart of ejaculatory prayer for assistance, he began his sermon with a steadiness which none of his hearers knew the cost of. With his eyes fixed on vacancy, he got safely through the exordium : well would it have been for him if he could have continued gazing

into empty space ; but, first came the consciousness that those bright eyes were fixed upon him ; then an irresistible impulse to see if it were so ; he lost his painfully sustained chain of thought, and a desperate fit of stammering was only escaped by his coming to a full stop.

Burrell said afterwards, that the look William gave him would remain with him for life. After two or three minutes of entire silence, the young man resumed at the very sentence he had left off, and went on to the end without the slightest hesitation.

But his nervous system had received a shock that it did not recover for years ; and he felt and said that no inducement could persuade him again to enter a pulpit. He became a quiet student, betraying very little of his self-disappointment.

Burrell, who was a young man of family and fortune, though a younger brother, left college at the end of the term. There was no occasion why he should take London in his way home ;

however, he did so, and the first news he received there was of the death of his elder brother, which, besides shocking him very much, made considerable difference in his prospects.

He contrived, nevertheless, to find his way to Chelsea, before he started on his homeward journey. He saw Clarinda, told her with much agitation of his loss, then paused. The subject nearest his heart stuck in his throat, and the time to speak of it seemed ill-chosen ; yet, if he saw his father before he had plighted his faith, all might be opposed and overruled.

His soul was trembling on his lips, when visitors were announced. The opportunity was gone ; he waited in vain. At length, deeply disappointed, he rose to depart, saying in a low voice to Clarinda—

“ I dare not delay my journey—forgive me if I write.”

She looked surprised, but he was gone. Many thoughts, hopes, fears, occupied her gentle bosom during the remainder of the day, but William was

expected home, and her mother was unusually suffering. Before their early tea-hour arrived, a letter was put into Clarinda's hands. It had been written at a coffee-house, by Burrell; it expressed his long-cherished love, and his certainty of being able to offer her a suitable home; it expressed doubts and fears, but they were coupled with an earnest entreaty that she would let him go down into the country *engaged*. He would wait her early answer the next morning; if it contained a shadow of encouragement, he hoped to be at her side in a few weeks; but, at all events, she should hear from him constantly. If she wrote a repulse, or did not write at all, he must strive to forget her, though he felt it would be impossible.

With what a tumultuously beating heart did Clarinda leave her chamber to welcome William, who had meantime arrived! He was tapping at her door, in the dusk, when she opened it.

“Why, Clary! my little sister! how long I have been here, and you have never come near

me! Is it of no concern to you that I am come home?" and his arm was put round her.

"Oh, yes, William!" and she hid her wet eyes on his shoulder.

At night, when she had helped her feeble mother to bed, and made all her arrangements for the night, she yet lingered, holding her thin hand, and warm tears fell on it.

"Why, Clary love, why is this? I am better, dear, now that I have seen dear William; a little over-fatigued, that is all, but I shall sleep all the more quietly for it. His return has fluttered and overcome you."

"No, mother, these are happy tears;" and Clarinda told her all, and showed her the letter, shading the night-light for her with her hand all the while she read.

"Thank God!" said Mrs. Singlehart, devoutly, as she returned it. "If I were to die this night, I should die happy. I have no longer an anxiety for the welfare of my precious child. Kiss me, Clary, and go, love; we will

talk more of it to-morrow. You must write your answer early."

"To-night, mother."

Clarinda's answer was very simple—very short. She read it over many times, then sealed it, and laid it with other letters on the hall-table, for the early post. She lay awake, in happy, though anxious thought, for many hours; at length slept, and slept late.

Contrary to her wont, Clarinda indulged, for a quarter of an hour, in a waking dream, far sweeter than Belinda's, when

Her eyes first opened on a billet-doux.

Nor peers, nor dukes, nor all their sweeping train, had any place in that pleasant vision; nor would she "have viewed with scorn two pages and a chair," save for the simple reason that she was quite content to go on foot through the world with John Burrell. She went through the duties of her simple toilette with mechanical

neatness, but a pre-occupied mind—there was not even William to dress for, as he had promised to breakfast with Dr. Mede. She stepped out of her chamber—and with the first step across the threshold ended the happiness of that day and of many days.

Mrs. Singlehart was dying; the servants were dispersed for aid that Clarinda felt would arrive too late. And so, she and her mother passed through that dread scene, as women often do, *by themselves*; and then, when the doctor, and the pastor, and the pale, trembling sons arrived, nothing remained but to comfort the survivor.

Clarinda never had so good an opinion of her brother Sylvanus, as when, on entering the parlour, she found him crying bitterly. He had caused his mother many tears, so these were justly her due; but his sister felt unaffectedly grateful and gratified. William, however, was her grand consoler, as much by what he said as by his sympathetic silence; but there was a source of pain which, as time passed

on, wore away her heart, of which he knew nothing. She received no news of John Burrell. She framed various excuses, none of them very satisfying, which one by one ceased to excuse him any longer. Then she thought his father must disapprove of the match, and have prevailed on his son to give it up. She became very unhappy.

Servire e non gradire,
Star in letto e non dormire,
Aspettare, e non venire,
Son' tre cose da far morire !

Clarinda had a nobleness of nature that could trust and could wait; but yet, the effects of suspense were beginning to make themselves observed as well as felt; and William, whose attention to them was called by Dr. Mede, was urgent with her to try change of scene. This was very unpalatable to her; she was still listening for Burrell's knock; expecting every letter to be in his hand; and she made

one objection after another to any removal from the house, till the term for which it had been taken should expire.

One afternoon, Sylvanus came down to ask her if she would like him to lay out a little of her money for her to the greatest advantage. On her telling him that she had promised her mother neither to lend nor speculate with it, he said she was a goose to stand in her own light. She knew she was right, however, and was not to be persuaded.

Some days after this, as good Dr. Mede was sitting down to a morning's luxurious, yet hard work, in his quiet study, the door opened, after a prefatory tap, and Clarinda, kindling with some as yet unknown excitement, hastily entered.

“Doctor,” said she, smiling, and putting her hand in his, “I come to say good-bye. We cross to Calais to-morrow.”

“My dear girl, I rejoice to hear it, for I have been recommending your going somewhere all

along, and the very prospect of it makes you look better already ; but this is somewhat sudden, is it not ?”

“ Quite sudden ; you must not tell a soul, but from you we have no secrets. Poor, guileless, unbusiness-like William has put his name to a bill of Sylvanus’s, which is due to-morrow. Sylvanus has merely sent him a line, to say he cannot meet it, and is off to the Isle of Man, recommending William, if he is in the same case, to follow his example. It seems disgraceful, dishonourable ; but what can we do ? It is not *our* fault, and—”

“ Not *William’s* fault ?” groaned Dr. Mede.
“ Well, my dear, go on. It is not *your* fault, at any rate.”

“ So we are going to France,” pursued Clarinda, rapidly ; “ to Abbeville first, and you shall hear if we remove. Everything is arranged, for I have been up all night ; and you know you wanted me to go, and I’m going, so all will be for the best ; and—oh, Dr. Mede, don’t think

hardly of William!—nor of Sylvanus, if you can help it.”

“ I can’t help *that*,” said the doctor; “ but I will think as indulgently of William as I can, knowing him to be a downright baby in such matters. Have you money enough for present needs, my poor, dear child ? ”

“ Plenty, doctor, and I’m going to take care of it, and be pay-mistress, and commander-in-chief all the while we are away.”

“ So best ! ”

“ We shall have but little at our journey’s end, it is true, till my dividends are due—and I am going to get you to remit them to me; but William is going to write a book, which will eventually, perhaps, make money.”

“ A good *perhaps*, Clary; even if he ever finishes it ! ”

“ Well, but dear Dr. Mede, if you speak so slightingly of what *he* is doing or intending to do—he who is so much cleverer than I am—how can I find courage to tell you what I have done ? ”

“What have you done, dear child? Come, out with it.”

She blushed and smiled as she put a little packet into his hand.

“Only think of *my* having had the assurance to try my hand at authorship! Ah, you may well lift up your eyebrows! I knew you would. I have not done it lately, of course, but when my dear mother was a little better, or when I thought her so; sometimes when she was dozing, you know, doctor,—by fits and snatches.”

“I understand, my love,” he replied, gently pressing her hand, as she cast down her filling eyes; “I shall read your little packet with pleasure, and if I find anything in it ‘lovely and of good report,’—anything saleable, in fact,—I will do with it the best I can for you.”

“But oh, doctor! don’t expect it to be very clever.”

“Of course I shall not,” returned he, roguishly; “I have never urged you, I suppose, to try your hand at scribbling?”

“ It is all your fault : so you must be very lenient.”

“ Never fear.”

“ And don't fancy I can't bear to be told it won't do.”

“ Is my knowledge of you of yesterday, Clary ? I think I have some knowledge of what you can or cannot bear—hey ?”

“ Well, I don't know. . . . In *some* things you have.”

“ And in some things I have not ? You smile, and yet this is a hot tear which has fallen on my hand, Clary. God bless you, my love ; God bless you ! He is probably blessing you in this very dispensation which seems so gloomy. Beware of contravening any decree of his, or of feeling any impatience of the *intermediate* passages of this life, however wearisome and unprofitable they may seem. And, my dear, remember you are going to a strange land — you will be debarred from your old, accustomed ordinances ; but make out some

little plan for yourself, and when you have done so, keep close to it. You may not do all you wish, but you will do more than if you made no systematic effort at all."

One of their fellow-passengers was a gentleman of saturnine complexion, restless eyes, hollow cheeks, and exceedingly flexible eyebrows, wrapped to the chin in a travelling cloak. Clarinda's appearance struck him; he soon framed some pretext for conversing with William, and found out he had never yet crossed the Channel.

"Don't go to Abbeville," said he; "come on with me to an old cathedral town of great beauty, with charming boulevards, provisions fabulously cheap, courteous natives, and an agreeable little knot of English. Six months ago my physician ordered me to the south of France; but being detained on the road by indisposition, I found myself in such pleasant quarters, that my wife, daughter, and I, have remained there ever since.

Towards winter we may go south, but at present we have an excellent house, well furnished, with a pretty court towards the town, a large, well-stocked garden and offices, for, how much do you think? Thirty pounds a-year. Our English friends pop in upon us at all hours without formality; and, when I want to be out of hearing of their voices, and of my girl's practising, I have a little study on the ground-floor, where I can sit and scribble without interruption. We have a charming summer-house, where we often take coffee, send for the fiddles, and see the young folks dance on the grass. As winter comes on they will perhaps get up a play; but it shall be a piece that my only daughter might read to her great-grandmother. In fact, I am filling up the outline of a little thing that will exactly suit the purpose—*pour passer le temps.*"

In short, the Rev. Augustus Selfe, who was a gentleman, a scholar, and a clever man, though with very little of the clergyman about him, set forth the advantages of his "old cathedral town"

to such purpose, as to induce the Singleharts to deviate a little from their route, of which Clarinda failed not to send early notice to Dr. Mede.

They soon found themselves in pleasant lodgings, and on friendly terms with the English residents. Clarinda took an early opportunity of asking Julia Selfe, a pretty girl of seventeen, how they kept Sunday.

“ Well,” said Julia, “ I am afraid we don’t make much difference it seems very shocking at first, but one gets used to it in time. Papa’s lungs are too much affected to allow of his reading to us, so we make the day out with reading good books, you know, and writing letters, and walking with the Winterfloods, and so forth.”

“ Ah, that won’t suit me,” said Clarinda, decidedly ; “ I shall try some other course.”

So, on the Sunday morning, just as William was going to ask her what she meant to do, she suddenly laid her hand on his shoulder, and said,

“ William, you will read to me this morning, will not you ? ”

“ To be sure,” said he, taken by surprise ;
“ what would you have me read ? ”

“ Why, the English church service.”

“ Certainly, and a sermon too, if you like it, dear Clary—you know it will not be one of my own. Ah, but here is Miss Selfe coming in.”

“ Never mind, she will like to stay—she is in hopes of your reading ; and only think how bad for so young a girl to live in her present neglect of ordinances ! Dear William, we shall be ‘ two or three gathered together.’ ”

He made no opposition, and Julia entering quietly, the little ‘ church in the house ’ was thus suddenly and simply established. But Clarinda did not rest, having once broken the ice, till she induced her brother and Mr. Selfe to get a room licensed for Protestant worship, which, in the end, they did. Mr. Selfe’s flexible eyebrows worked a good deal, but he rather admired

her spirit, and occasionally found himself well enough to do duty. As for William, he had been surprised out of his nervous fit, and she took good care he should not relapse into it.

Dr. Mede enjoyed the report of this feat amazingly. Meantime he sent her thirty guineas for her little story, which paid the bills nicely while William was pondering over his great book. He was quite startled and delighted when she at length put a copy of her tale into his hand; he read it with fond pleasure and pride, and she began to think the fruits of authorship very sweet.

After this, while he was still plodding on at his *opus magnum*, she used to send to Dr. Mede, from time to time, little sketches of French domestic life, in which a sunburnt peasant, his pretty wife in a tall, white cap, or a country girl of eighteen, a postilion, and a white-headed old man, made up the usual *dramatis personæ*; but there was always something so fresh and natural about them, with some pure

but unobtrusive moral underneath, that when her style once became known, Dr. Mede had no trouble in disposing of her little manuscripts. Thus, while William was toiling for distant fame, she, as the saying goes, *paid the piper*.

One day, happening to take up an English newspaper, she read in it the marriage of John Burrell. A cloud seemed to darken her eyes, there was a ringing sound in her ears, she was on the point of fainting, but just escaped it. It happened that no one came near her for some hours. She had time for the first stunning effects of the blow to pass off; time to pray, to weep, to bend under the stroke, to submit to it.

When William, in the course of the afternoon, happened to take up the paper, he exclaimed, "Why, Clary, John Burrell is married!"

She made no answer; and, looking round at her in surprise, he saw her averted cheek, as she stooped over her work, burning red—which grew pale even while he looked at it. With some dim consciousness that she had

not been insensible to the merits of his friend, he averted his eyes, and alluded to him no more.

“By-the-bye,” thought he casually, as it afterwards occurred to him, “what a nice thing it would have been if Burrell had thought of Clary!”



CHAPTER III.

THE OLD CATHEDRAL TOWN.

THE play that Julia might read to her grandmother advanced so slowly, and it was so difficult to find any other to which the same praise might apply, that the young Winterfloods grew tired of waiting, and began to rehearse one, the name of which has not been preserved; but which contained a Sir John, and a Lady Jane, and a Dorinda, and a Bellairs, and an Irishman, and a witty footman. With so many good characters, every one was sure to be pleased with their cast; indeed, there were *no* subordinate characters, which inclines me

to suppose it must have been written with a view to private performance in genteel life. The servants, indeed, had quite the best of it, and shone fully as much as their masters and mistresses: the jokes throughout being poor, and such as, after the first hearing, would have been insufferable to any auditor but a Mr. Winterflood. He, being an invalid of irritable temperament and no resources, always cross except while amused, luckily enjoyed the fiftieth rehearsal of this piece nearly as much as the first; except at a certain, or rather uncertain, point, when his interest would suddenly flag, and he would leave the play in the midst, declaring it terrible stuff.

Thus the autumn stole away, and the little community divided itself into two smaller parties, the Selfes attaching themselves to the Singleharts. Mrs. Selfe liked them because they were quiet, Mr. Selfe liked them because they were intellectual; and Julia, who still did not give up the gayer set, spent mornings with Clarinda,

when they read and worked together, and talked of books, things, and people.

What a subtle thing is influence! That a brave-hearted, beautiful young woman should possess it over a nervous brother, an impulsive sentimentalist, and an unformed, good-natured girl, was less surprising than that the quiet phlegmatic William should exercise something of the same power over Mr. Selfe. Nussy Winterflood would gladly have become one of Clarinda's intimates, but was rather discouraged by Julia, who liked keeping her to herself. Miss Pershore, the governess, let it be felt that she would join the quiet set if she dared; and Tom and Jack, who were at first mad for theatricals, had a rupture, and Tom fell off to Clarinda, partly incited thereto by Mr. Selfe's clapping him on the shoulder one day, and saying, "You lucky rogue!—do you know you have been walking with the finest woman in C——?"

Unfortunately, there were temptations and attractions in the green-room *coterie*, which

Clarinda's absence from it did not permit her to suspect, and Mr. Selfe, who was beguiling languor by a sentimental composition, was so often shedding tears over distresses of his own creation as to have little leisure for thinking of his daughter. One morning, when William entered his study, he said to him—

“Cléante has just taken leave of Sophie, who has been bitten by a mad cat! This is the second cambric handkerchief I have literally steeped!”

“I am sorry to hear it,” said William, “since it will make you less inclined to listen to a case of real distress I have just found out.”

“A case of real distress!” cried Mr. Selfe, pulling out his purse with great impetuosity; “let me haste to relieve it!”

“Ah!” said William with feeling, “there are some cases that money won't relieve!”

“And, even if this were not one of them,” said Mr. Selfe, “my purse unfortunately proves to be empty. But where then is this pitiable object?”

where this angel in distress? The minor affliction instantly yields precedence to the greater. Let us go forth, my friend, and you shall relate the circumstances to me as we go along."

"I am afraid they will seem dreadfully commonplace to you," said William, "after the exciting scene you have just been writing; therefore, as there is no hurry, I will reserve them for a more promising occasion. However, if you are for a turn in the open air, I am quite ready to accompany you."

"I am, indeed," said Mr. Selfe, hastily putting away his papers; "and we will find out some sequestered alley—"

"And talk over the affair of the cat," said William.

Mr. Selfe burst into a fit of laughter. "After all," said he, "what is life without a little sentiment?"

"Well, we will argue that as we go along," said William.

"Let us," said Mr. Selfe; "for though I am

full fifteen years your senior, my feelings have all the freshness of eighteen."

"What a pity you don't turn them to more account then!" said William. "Such a scholar too as you are! I can't bear to see you hanging about here, like a strong soldier in a peaceful garrison."

"Look at me!" cried Mr. Selfe, stopping short, and extending his arm in fine, oratorical action; "me, a poor, shattered invalid—banished from my home—from my ministerial duties—transplanted to an alien soil—liable to be cut off in my prime at any moment! How intolerably should I be hypped—to the great delay of my recovery—if I did not amuse the passing hour!"

"Then you were only crying over the cat for your amusement?" said William.

"For the lady bitten by the cat," said Mr. Selfe. "Suppose that should have been all?"

"Well, I am very happy to suppose it," said William; "for I would ten times rather believe

you were laughing behind your white pocket handkerchief, than crying at imaginary distresses."

"My dear friend," said Mr. Selfe, "many people laugh behind their white pocket handkerchiefs. Garrick does, I can tell you—and cry too. But come, let us take a turn in Julia's favourite alley."

"You spoke of amusing the passing hour," said William, as they walked along, "now, I don't think it quite a safe amusement of yours, this laughing behind your white pocket handkerchief. Because there are some people, I suspect, who think you really are crying, and who learn to cry too."

"Well, and what if it be so?" said Mr. Selfe. "All the more interesting."

"Yes, but there is danger in some kinds of interest," said William; "and, even if it be harmless to yourself—which I don't believe—you ought not to excite it if it be hurtful to others."

“ Whom do I hurt ? ” said Mr. Selfe.

“ You know well enough,” said William.
“ You know better than I do. And if, as you say, you are prevented at this particular season from doing good in your vocation, you ought at all events to abstain from doing harm.”

“ My dear friend,” cried Mr. Selfe, “ so far from doing harm, I sincerely believe this dispensation is enabling me to be of more good to some whom I could name, than if I were among them. ‘ For his letters,’ say they, ‘ are weighty and powerful ; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.’ ”

“ Ah !—those letters ! ” said William.

“ I don’t suppose, now,” pursued Mr. Selfe, “ though you are a reading man, that you ever happened to look into the life of a Mr. John Howe, one of the Nonconformist ministers who were so hardly dealt with about the year 1685. He was obliged to leave his country at such short notice, that he had not time to bid farewell

to his flock, to whom, therefore, from this side the water, he addressed a primitive epistle, superscribed, 'To such in and about London, among whom I have laboured in the work of the Gospel.' Though it is a good while since I looked into it, I believe I could give you the entire substance of the letter; for it is very profitable reading. However, I will only now say, that he stirred up their pure minds in the way of remembrance more effectually perhaps when absent in the body and present in the spirit, than when he had been among them: albeit he had, saith his biographer, a good presence and a piercing but pleasant eye, and there was that in his looks and carriage that discovered he had that within that was uncommonly great, and tended to excite veneration."

"What an excellent memory you have, Mr. Selfe!" said William.

"Well," replied he, rather pleased, "it has been better than it is now. I could say off nearly the whole Psalter when I was a little

boy—thanks to my grandmother; and yet now it would cost me some trouble to get one of the speeches in the Winterfloods' comedy by heart."

"A good thing there is no need of it," said William.

"Only by having them so frequently dinned into my ears, I actually know most of them piecemeal, and can, at a pinch, play prompter without book."

"Tell me your company, and I'll tell you what you are," said William.

"Sir!" said Mr. Selfe.

"The case too commonly is," pursued his imperturbable companion, "that the better party takes the colour of the worse, the stronger of the weaker, than the reverse. I would sooner see the Winterfloods learning something of you, than you of them."

"We must be all things to all men," said Mr. Selfe.

"Not *all* things," said William. "We must

not stretch the Apostle's meaning. But now I shall wish you a good afternoon; for my sister is alone, and not very well."

"Shall I accompany you," said Mr. Selfe, "and try to cheer her up a little?—*consolez les affligés.*"

"No, thank you," said William; "I think we shall get on better by ourselves this evening."

"Well then, adieu," said Mr. Selfe; "and present my devotions to Mrs. Clarinda, who, between ourselves, is little short of an angel."

"I believe you are right," said William; "and your wife and daughter seem to be of the same way of thinking. I am sure I can never sufficiently express how gratefully I feel the kindness you have shown, all along, to a couple of strangers—"

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

"Mrs. Selfe," pursued William, "has shown the kindness of a mother to my sister; and you, of a father."

"Hum!" said Mr. Selfe; "I believe I am

not quite old enough to be the father of Mrs. Clarinda."

"Why," said William, "she is only—"

"Stop—stop!" cried his companion impetuously; "don't tell me how old she is! We are obliged to allow—when the truth is forced upon us—that youth is not perpetual; but if I knew her to be only eighteen to-day, I should be forced to admit, ten years hence, that she was twenty-eight: and I like to think those I take any interest in, as incapable of growing old as are the angels."

Julia, winding her arms about Clarinda in her extra-affectionate way, was meantime saying with a deep sigh, "Papa and mamma think you perfection I wish they thought me so; or that I were even as good as they think me."

"What particular sin have you to confess just now?" said Clarinda. "You ought to

have lived in the old times, when the Roman Catholic women had female confessors The custom was abandoned, William says, because they asked so many superfluous and troublesome questions before they would grant one another absolution! But you save all trouble on my part, for I know directly when you have anything on your conscience, and am quite sure to learn it without asking."

"Why," said Julia, "I am more than half engaged to be married, without saying anything of it to papa or mamma! and I don't know how I shall ever have courage to tell them."

"You have found courage to tell me, whom you do not love so dearly," said Clarinda. "Tell them to-night."

"To-night!—oh, I cannot! We are to have company, and . . . I am sure we shall none of us be in the cue for such a disclosure. Papa's power of satire is so terrible!—and his anger is worse! And I know how angry he will be when

he finds how long this has been going on, and who the person is. He will never consent—never forgive me!”

“Then break it off at once,” said Clarinda, decidedly. “Here comes William, so I can say no more; but I shall cease to respect you, Julia, unless you adopt one course or the other. And delay will only increase your difficulty.”

“How young you are to be so wise!” said Julia, sighing. “But you speak like a bystander, who condemns without having felt.”

Julia herein uttered one of those false declarations which are continually so recklessly expressed. Clarinda had felt and struggled severely, whereas *she* had felt little and not struggled at all; but in Clarinda’s heart “the strong man armed” had encountered another yet stronger, that could cast him out. At first, submission was a duty she acknowledged, but could not *receive*. After a time, she found herself resorting to *old* helps, with benefit. Many a good mother of a family keeps a book of tried receipts and

prescriptions—why should we not do something like this for the *mind*?

Lady Russell says in one of her earlier letters :
“ I will not injure myself to say that I offer my mind any inferior consolation to supply my loss.” Neither did Clarinda offer her mind any inferior consolation, whether in the way of asceticism, or gay company, or the hope of finding some one to supply Burrell’s place. She resisted the grosser and the subtler sources of consolation, and fled to Him who was pre-eminently acquainted with grief, yet who neither held himself aloof from his friends, nor from the world, nor from plain hospitality, nor betrayed any symptoms of melancholy or low-spiritedness.

As Julia seemed to shun her, Clarinda concluded she had wanted courage to follow her advice. She was thinking of seeking her one morning, when Mr. Selfe entered the room in a state of dismay.

“ Oh, my friends !” cried he with unaffected anguish, “ I have lost my child ! While I have

been immersed in a too engrossing correspondence, and a too selfish watchfulness over my health, she has become the prey of an adventurer! Her mother is in fits! Go to her, I beseech you, Clarinda!"—(taking advantage of his distress to call her by her Christian name; for, alas! this incorrigible man could never be quite natural, nor yet quite artificial)—“while I hasten after the fugitives, and reclaim my child, if possible, ere it be too late! And oh! William, that you would go with me, and save me from any imprudence, for I am hardly master of myself! My chaise is at the door—”

William instantly consented; and as soon as they had driven off, Clarinda, reproaching herself for not having sooner sought Julia, hastened to condole with the afflicted mother.

Towards evening the two friends returned; Mr. Selfe looking heart-broken.

“They are married!” said he; “I will never see her more!” And throwing himself into his easy chair he shed genuine, undeniable tears,

and refused to be comforted. That is, he *said* he would not be comforted; but even in the depth of his natural and reasonable grief, he could not refuse to listen to, and be partially consoled by the gentle voices of William and Clarinda; and Mrs. Selfe, with her eyes almost closed with weeping, brought him mulled wine and toast of her own preparing, which he could not refuse, though he said his tears should be his meat and drink day and night. So, as the poor Scotchman said, "I've grat all the morning for my wife, and noo I'm supping my brose, and by-and-by I'll fall to and greet again."

In a few days the little circle broke up. The Winterfloods started for Tours, and the Selfes for Nice. Mr. Selfe did not let the friends he had left forget him; for he wrote them a letter full of dashes and interjections, beginning—"You ministering angels!" at the end of his first day's journey. Afterwards he sent a document, avowedly to Clarinda, though directed to William, beginning with "Madam," and ending

with "Oh, Clarinda!" It gave a very good description of his travels, which she deputed William to thank him for. William, who had rather strong views of epistolary influence, readily undertook the commission; but in his hands the correspondence gradually languished.

Julia wrote once to Clarinda. There had been a *scene* between her and her father; but the reconciliation had been followed by estrangement: as Adolphe, who had been much mortified—poor fellow!—to find she was only to have a monthly allowance for her own pocket-money, had expressed himself uncomfortably. Indeed, the dear fellow's temper had been much soured by it, and they could hardly pay their way: "But you know, Clarinda," she added, "I never was expensive; so that by stinting myself in one thing or another, I contrive to let him have nearly half of what papa meant for my sole and separate use."

When the brother and sister had passed two quiet years in their old cathedral town, they were

summoned home by Sylvanus, who had smoothed all difficulties by marrying the heiress of an opulent pin-maker.

They found him and his bride established in an expensive house—which they were kindly desired to make as much their home as if it were their own. William, after certain business transactions, started for Oxford, leaving Clarinda behind him.

There was little congeniality between her and the gay young wife; and she longed for William's return, which was delayed beyond her expectations. Her choice, therefore, lay between visiting certain high-born, distant relatives, with whom she had always been on terms of the utmost formality, or making herself as comfortable as she could in Sylvanus's house, and she preferred the latter.

It soon became tacitly understood between her and her sister-in-law that she preferred remaining

quietly at home while Mrs. Singlehart fulfilled her numerous gay engagements; and when this was settled, they went on quite smoothly and independently, though Clarinda still looked anxiously forward to William's affording her a home somewhere in the country, now that he was in full orders.

One day Sylvanus casually observed, "I met an old friend of William's this morning—John Burrell; I dare say you remember him, Clarinda?"

"Certainly I do," she replied, with a little tremor; "what did he say?"

"Well, nothing particular that I can call to mind; except," said Sylvanus, laughing, "that he asked if you were Clarinda Singlehart still."

Unmanly—ungenerous, thought Clarinda.

"And so, as he was an old friend of William's and of yours, I did the handsome thing, and asked him to dinner. He has left his wife in the country. Who was she?"

"I forget," said Clarinda, absently. Her soul

was troubled at the prospect of so soon and so abruptly meeting him. Other guests arrived; John Burrell came last; and, after a few civil nothings to Clarinda, took down Mrs. Singlehart, while Clarinda sat below him, with some persons placed between them, so that they were as little under each other's observation as possible. Her next companion thought her quiet and rather stiff; she was listening to all she could catch that was said at the upper end of the table. Mrs. Singlehart was not a hostess capable of drawing out a guest of Burrell's stamp, but he took the lead pretty much without assistance; spoke of his wife and child in terms which Clarinda unhandsomely thought were rather ostentatiously affectionate, and described their continental life. It appeared that between his marriage and his father's death he had chiefly resided abroad, and that Mrs. Burrell's ill-health rendered it probable they should soon return to Italy. He did not join the ladies after they returned to the drawing-room; and Clarinda

went to bed that night with a severe headache, and the consciousness that the meeting had been very unpleasant to both, and to her very painful.

A few days afterwards she was sitting alone, reading, or trying to read, when William suddenly entered, looking so bright and sunny that all her mental clouds were dispersed in a moment.

“ Well ! ” cried he, after cordially embracing her, “ I have news, good news, glorious news for you, Clary—for us both ! First, you know I’m M.A.”

“ Yes, that is *not* news, but I am very glad of it.”

“ Secondly, I’ve seen Burrell.”

“ Well, so have I.”

“ Stay, Clary, don’t look so disappointed at what you think the bathos of my announcement, the best has not come yet. He has given me the living of Maplestead ! ”

“ Oh, delightful ! that really *is* good news ! ”

and she started up and kissed him. "That really *is* well done of Mr. Burrell," said she, drawing a deep breath.

"Yes, very kind, very generous," repeated William; "and conferred in the handsomest, heartiest way. It has been long in the family; and he was to have had it, if he had continued a younger brother, and had had a vocation for the church. It's worth about three hundred a-year; the parish is scattered; the population by no means numerous—just enough for me, in fact."

"I have often heard him speak of it. It is near Crompton Wimborne, in Surrey; and his own seat, White Canons, is in Maplestead parish. It came into his father's possession late in life—on the death of an old bachelor uncle or cousin."

"Just so; I know all about it, and have seen it."

"Seen White Canons! Oh, what is it like?"

"A fine old mansion enough; but Burrell

does not live there, even when in England, for he has a finer place in right of his wife. I posted off to have a glimpse of Maplestead, because I thought it would be so pleasant to tell you everything at once. The village is quite secluded, in a woody, hilly district; the church good, but somewhat out of repair; the rectory house let to a large family unwilling to turn out of it."

"What are we to do, then?"

"I travelled with a lawyer who, as good luck would have it, had a house to let hard by Maplestead church. So we went over it together, and the bargain is made, if it meets your approval: but, O Clarinda, what will you say? the house is haunted!"

"A haunted parsonage!" exclaimed she, laughing; "what a comical idea!"

"It is *not* the parsonage, you know, and must not be called so, though built on priory land, with P. L. built into its walls. It is an exceedingly old farm-house or grange, that once

belonged to the priory of Maplestead. It is backed by a wood, and surrounded by a palisaded moat, within which is a garden run to waste, and a yew-tree arbour."

"But the house—"

"Is grey and overgrown with moss, and stonecrop, and wild snapdragon—a very weedy, seedy place indeed, yet one that I know you will like—with all manner of queer gables, and an odd little square tower that contains the staircase. There is a large stone kitchen, running right up to the roof, with a fireplace where you might roast a whole sheep. The other rooms, which are all oak-panelled, are small and cozy, connected by rambling passages. It will be a labour of love for you and Patty to fit up the old place with my mother's quaint furniture. Do you think you shall like it?"

"My dear William, I feel we may be perfectly happy in it, and do a great deal of good. Don't you?"

“Certainly. The poor people have been much neglected, and will be grateful to us for showing them kindness. I had a few qualms at first about responsibility and unfitness; but I knew your first word and look would disperse them to the winds; and as long as you are with me to back me up, I won’t give way.”

“You are an excellent fellow, William; but go on, I want to hear more of the house.”

“There is land attached to it, but a man wants it; and then, when we have let that off, we shall get the house for next to nothing, because of the ghost.”

“Tell me something about the ghost.”

“It seems, the clergy of Maplestead have always been partial to this house, for one of them died and—left his ghost in it, and after him came another, who could not lay him. Do you feel afraid?”

“Not in the least; I think it very diverting.”

“Yes, by daylight, and in London; but, on

a dark December night, with only me for your companion, the wind rattling the old casements, the furniture stretching itself and gaping, a mouse, perhaps, behind the wainscot, and a cricket on the hearth — only fancy, Clarinda !”

“ I fancy myself prodigiously comfortable !” exclaimed she ; “ you are a famous house-painter, William. But now tell me something about White Canons.”

“ The Hall, the poor people call it. At present, it is in the occupation of a kind of solitary or recluse, of misanthropical habits, who lives on vegetables and cold water, and never sees man nor woman ; but Mr. Timms told me that, as he chiefly keeps his chamber, the servants would probably let me see the entrance hall, if I used Timms’ name. So I went boldly up, through a park road overgrown with chickweed and hemlock, to the entrance, which opens on a fine, though ruinous old terrace ; and, by making friends with the old man who answered

the bell, I obtained sight not only of the hall, but of one of the saloons. The hall, which has a large folding-door at each end, has a wide chimney on the left, and a stately staircase on the right, running straight up, and then branching off right and left, to a gallery or balcony that runs all round. The ceiling and walls are covered with elegant scroll-work, representing fruit, flowers, musical instruments, and so forth; evidently much more recent than the pavement, which is diamonded with black and white marble. The old man pointed out to me a small brass-plate let into one of the stones, on which was inscribed, ‘Three bodies in white cassocks, white rochets, and long white cloaks, were found interred underneath this pavement.’”

“Oh, then that is how the place came to be called White Canons.”

“The saloon was panelled; and each panel, as well as the ceiling, contained a spirited oil-painting by Antonio Tempesta. But it was

totally disfurnished; not even carpetted; and the shutters only partially unclosed."

"Singular! What a pity Mr. Burrell should not keep it up! Could you learn anything of the solitary?"

"Nothing beyond what I have told you, except that he is constantly writing. We shall not depend much on our neighbours; except among the poor."

"And they will depend upon *us*. Our support will be mutual. I trust we shall soon establish a good understanding with them."

"By-the-bye, there's a queer little room I design for myself, which I intend to call my trapezium."

"Your trapezium! What is that?"

"A mathematical figure, the four sides of which are neither equal nor parallel. The fireplace is in a corner, cutting off an angle—just as in the old room in which Sir Isaac Newton was born;—I can fancy myself very dozy and cozy in it."

“ Don’t believe, Mr. William, that I’m going to let you sink into a dozy, prosy parson.”

“ Have not I often told you, Clary, that the continued exercise of volition drives the blood to the brain; which cannot bear the pressure without occasional rest? I *won’t* study all day!”

“ I don’t want you to study all day—I mean you to be a working clergyman, always looking after your poor people.”

“ Ah, Clary, my unfortunate infirmity!”

“ Fie, brother, you must leave off shying at shadows if you are going to live in a haunted house. What is that hanging out of your pocket? Why, I do believe, it is a damask table-napkin!”

“ Ha, ha, ha! The property of mine host of the ‘Yew Tree!’ I hope he has not set me down as a swindler. I have left him a good cambric handkerchief in exchange.”

“ One of your old absent fits—I had hoped you had outgrown them!”

“ Don’t be hard upon me—my head has been full, and too full, of this business. I can fancy you, Clary, quite in your element, making gruel for one, a pudding for another, cutting out flannels, knitting stockings, collecting eggs, feeding turkeys—”

“ Why, you are making me out a complete old maid! Are you quite sure of becoming an old bachelor?”

“ Ah, Clary, I could tell something, but I shall not!”

“ Come, you may just as well. Why not?”

“ *Why not*, indeed! Do *you* tell me everything? No, you know you don’t! I met Sylvanus just now, and he told me that since you had been in town, you had had two or three good—”

“ Oh, nonsense, they were *not* good, or you should have heard something about them.”

“ Well but, Clary, you are but young yet, to think of burying yourself for life in a haunted

house. Twenty-seven, are not you? Here, you see many people,—have many advantages—”

“None of which I prize as advantages,” interrupted she, with decision. “My mind is quite made up. You spoiled me for London society, brother, during the two happy years we spent together in France.”

“Well, I won’t argue against myself, for you are my right hand. So I’ll write to Timms at once, and tell him to get all ready for us; and, as there are really more rooms than we want, he can have the haunted chamber nailed up.”

“*Nailed up!*” cried Clarinda, looking unaffectedly alarmed, “no, now you have proposed something that I really cannot stand! We all have our weak points, I suppose—I should never have a night’s sleep in a house with a nailed-up room; and, indeed, to be quite on the safe side, I believe I shall prefer sleeping in it myself.”

“Well,” said William, laughing immoderately,

“ you *have* found a way of laying a ghost! You will have the best room in the house, I can tell you, and, after the first night will, I dare say, sleep as well in it as anywhere else. So now I’ll write to Timms, and tell him to have everything made right and tight, especially the gutters from the roof, which run through the ceilings of the upper rooms, and at present admit both wind and rain.”

“ And tell him, William, to have the kitchen-garden dug and stocked at once; and, above all, to put in several rows of the best peas; for I have always had a notion that I should like now and then to shell peas in an arbour.”

William’s induction took place amid the ringing of bells and the cordial welcomes of his flock, who, having been much neglected by his predecessor, were disposed to be grateful to him for speaking to them cheerfully, and coming to live among them.

In a few days he and Clarinda took possession of their new home, accompanied by an old and a young maid-servant; and Clarinda soon found herself in an atmosphere of dust, surrounded by a litter of straw, hay, crates of glass and china, wine hampers, books, boxes, bedsteads, and all the appliances of a grand removal.

“Dear me, madam,” said the prim Mrs. Patty, who had lived with the Singleharts ever since they were children, “there’s the oddest-looking little store-closet opening off the staircase, with shelves and presses quite convenient, and a wooden lattice looking down into the kitchen, through which you may give your orders as you come down from your own chamber, without the trouble of descending below. Many a lady, I’ll warrant her, has had a peep at her servants through that lattice without their knowledge; for mistresses in former times, I’ve heard say, madam, used to peep and pry a good deal. And there’s a

niche, madam, over the kitchen fire-place, where an image has doubtless stood in the times of the deluded papists, that we read of in *Foxe's Martyrs*; and a little closet half-way up the chimney, wherein a rogue might secrete himself, if so be he didn't mind the smoke. But the rats, madam, are beyond belief! Priscilla hung a pair of new stockings before the fire, and, if you'll credit me, she found one of them all be-gnawn, and half-dragged into a rat-hole in the washhouse floor!"

"We must have a rat-catcher, Patty."

"Truly, madam, I think we must. I hope you were able to get some sleep last night in your new chamber; but certainly, for my part, I heard the awfulest sounds that ever were heard, just under my bed. It seemed as though a giant in hobnailed shoes was continually stamping them on in the bakehouse below. I found this morning that the donkey had spent the night there, the door being off its hinges. Also, at supper time, Priscilla and

I heard as it were the sound of an immense counterpane, or table-cloth, being shaken by two pair of hands outside the house, by the apple-room window, and what it was we cannot divine. But the pump-handle must be greased, for it screeches enough to raise up the dead; and that man (*boy* he calls himself, though he's thirty if he's a day!) says he may come at all times and seasons to draw water for the great house, if so minded, because the squire fancied it for the table, and that it's in the covenant of the lease!"

"I understand it is so, Patty; but that won't signify to us; especially as the squire is dead."

"True, madam; and yet the great house (White Canons, or the Hall, whichever they call it) is in the occupation of a gentleman who, being fanciful in many respects, may be particular in his drink."

"Well, would you deny him a cup of cold water?"

“Certainly not, madam, and therefore Hodge may come and go as he likes for me; and maybe, if we’re civil to him, he may prove good company, and undertake an errand to the town now and then of a rainy day. I hope, madam, that master will remember not to forget to bid the carpenter come over, for we can’t put up the bed-furniture till the bedsteads are screwed together. He volunteered to go instead of the lad. Do you think we may depend on him, madam?”

“Well, Patty, it is rather a doubtful matter.”

Just at this moment William looked in. “Well,” said he, briskly, “how are you getting on?”

“Pretty well, though all looks confusion; but we are in sad want of the carpenter. By-the-bye, William, do you know that moat is anything but a nosegay? the water is quite stagnant.”

He looked grave. “Would some ducks keep it in order?”

“I fear not. No, we must have it drained,

I believe, or we shall have fevers. Allow me to ask, *did* you remember the carpenter?"

He smote his forehead. "I'll be off to him this minute! The exercise will do me good."

"William—William!—stay!" but he was off.

"And the town a good mile off!" groaned Mrs. Patty. "What a pity master didn't let his head save his heels!"

"Let us repay him for his kindness," said Clarinda, "by getting his room ready for him as soon as we can."

In fact, by dint of working as busily as either of her servants, and by an entire postponement of the arrangements conducive to her own comforts, Clarinda did contrive that William on his return should find his trapezium, as he called it, tolerably furnished, and the tea ready for him in the parlour. The afternoon had set in wet, which made a bright little wood-fire very seasonable; and while the carpenters' hammers were heard in full exercise overhead, the brother and sister

sat cozily over their evening meal, talking over their prospects.

“Do you like the look of the place, Clary?” said William.

“Exceedingly; it is quaint and picturesque beyond my expectation; but at present the venerable dust and dirt molest me. As for your trapezium, it gives me a headache to look at it; all the lines run the wrong way, and there’s no making the furniture fit straight.”

They broke up their sitting at last; he to look after his books, she to return to her multitudinous duties. Late at night, she began to think of her own comforts, and was proceeding to her room, the *haunted* room, along the oaken gallery, when her candle blew out. As the moon was shining brightly, she went on; but stopped short with a little thrill as she approached the open door of her chamber.

A dark, masculine figure stood a little within it, turned sideways towards her, with the right

arm and hand impressively raised, which, the next minute, began slowly to saw the air.

“ Here is something there ought not to be,” thought she, hurriedly; and, stepping back to the head of the stairs, she leant over the banisters, and fearfully called out, “ William !”

“ Here I am ! what is it ?” cried William, from the haunted room.

“ Why, William, who in the world would have thought of finding you in my room ?” exclaimed she, rather indignantly, and breathing fast. “ I declare you gave me quite a turn !”

“ I beg your pardon a thousand times, Clary,” replied he, unconscious of the alarm he had occasioned; “ it was a great liberty to take, I know, but, passing the door, and seeing the moonlight stream in, the temptation to enter and verify my theory about the ghost was irresistible. I think I’ve cleared it up quite satisfactorily now. Come in and see—no, don’t stand too close to me, or your shadow will

blend with mine—keep near the door. Now then!—see my shadow. What do you think of it?”

“That it looks for all the world *like* your shadow,” said Clarinda, a little perversely; her recent fright having made her less inclined to give into his whims than usual.

“No, but see You are not giving your mind to it.”

“That’s just the thing, dear William; I have too many realities to attend to, just at present, to be quite at leisure for shadows.”

He laughed, and moved off.

“Please to ring the great bell, when it is prayer-time,” cried she, after him. “And desire Priscilla to bring me a light.”

Waiting for which, she remained calmly at her window, looking out on the little moated court in the white moonlight, without feeling at all afraid of ghosts.

“ Pray,” said Clarinda to Mrs. Patty, who brought the lighted candle, “ what does this black box contain? It does not belong to me, nor do I remember the look of it.”

“ Well, madam, I think it’s one that master brought with him to Chelsea from Oxford, and that has some old clothes in it.”

“ Let us open it and see. If old clothes, they are probably full of moths. Hark, there’s the prayer-bell—we will leave the examination till to-morrow, Patty; you are tired, and will be glad to go to bed.”

Mrs. Patty chose, however, to finish unfastening the cord before she followed her mistress; and, there being no lock, she satisfied her curiosity just so much as to raise the lid and peep in, after which she left it with the complacent ejaculation, “ I was in the right on’t,” thought, though not uttered.

When Clarinda went to bed, the moon had set, but the stars were bright. She and William had had a satisfactory talk: they were great

castle-builders in their way, and their castles did not frown menacingly on each other, but were mutual supports and ornaments.

Clarinda was not insensible to the pleasure of their having a house of their own: her thoughts were summoned from their altitudes by her stumbling over William's black box. "Patty might have pushed this a little out of the way," thought she; and, attempting to do so herself, the lid became displaced. She somewhat idly took up what lay uppermost, to satisfy her curiosity, as her maid had done before her. It was indeed the coat William had laid aside to go into new mourning for his mother; and out of the pocket fell two or three letters. As Clarinda picked them up, she observed with some surprise that they were *sealed*; she turned one over to look at the address; it was in her own hand, directed to John Burrell! How long she sat there on the ground, to which she might otherwise have fallen, she never knew.

Then John Burrell had never received her acceptance of his offer! John Burrell had waited for it in vain! John Burrell had endured all the pangs of hope deferred, suspense, misgiving, the fever-fit of impatience, the chill-cold fear, disappointment, anger, despair, which she had thought only her own portion! John Burrell would not have married his present wife had he received this letter! The story of what their lives *might* have been together starting up before her like a picture brought tears to her relief. She wept bitterly.

When her head cleared a little, she began to wonder how it was this letter never had been sent; how came it to be in William's pocket? There was no post-mark. She looked at the others — one was in her own handwriting, addressed to a bleacher and dyer; another, from her mother to a humble friend long since dead. By a sudden effort of memory, Clarinda remembered the writing of both these letters the day before Mrs. Singlehart's death.

There had been some little trouble in hunting up the bleacher's address; she and her mother had consulted together how best to relieve the necessities of the humble friend. The letters had been laid on the hall-table overnight for the servant to post the next morning: Clarinda had afterwards come down from her own room with her letter to Burrell, and placed it with the others.

William had left the house early that morning, to breakfast with Dr. Mede. In passing the hall-table, he had probably noticed the letters, and, with that superfluous obligingness which people sometimes provokingly manifest to save servants some minute portion of their daily round, which they themselves are less likely to execute punctually and fitly, he had doubtless pocketed the letters, saying to himself, "I shall pass the post-office, and can drop them in."

The more she thought of it, the more she became convinced that this had been the case. That William, having once possessed himself

of those letters should forget to post them, was, alas! too likely a thing to be worth a doubt.

Could she say anything to him about it? Impossible! Should she try to recal any of the circumstances to the minds of the servants? To what good? John Burrell was *married!*

Clarinda shed no more tears. She remained cast half recumbent on the ground, her arms listlessly resting on the trunk, the letters lying in her lap, a sensation at her heart as if a cord were tightly tied round it—the very image of despair!

She started when the clock struck one. A man's step, too, was on the stair—the unconscious author of her woe having had a sound, refreshing nap in his arm-chair, was coming up to bed. With a shiver, she rose at once from her self-abandoning posture: there was a feeling of repulsion in her gentle heart—for the first time in her life—against that guileless brother. She did not love him at all at

that moment; exceedingly disliked the thought of the next sight of him; felt she must show her resentment in some way—speak bitter words about household trifles—be cross, unpleasant to him!

His foot has reached the last stair. “God forgive me!” she says to herself; and tears, heaven’s own dew, moisten her burning eyes. She goes to her window. Those holy stars that have shone over all human troubles since the first awful night after the Fall, are shining all above—and there, too, are one or two pale, untwinkling planets. “O Lord our Governor! how excellent is thy name in all the earth! thou that hast set thy glory above the heavens! When I consider the heavens, even the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained—*what* is man, that thou so regardest him? the son of man, that thou visitest him?”

“O God, thy will be done,” thought she, “on earth as it is in heaven!” And hastily

gathering up the letters and pushing aside the box, she threw open her door just as William approached it, crying, "Do come in for a moment, William, and help me to admire Sirius."

She put out her light as she spoke, and he left his in the gallery and shut it out. They stood together in the dark at that old oaken window, with its deep window seats and small lozenge-panes, looking out in perfect silence, he with his arm round her waist.

"How solemn, how peaceful the night is!" said he at length. "But you must be very tired, dear Clary. Do you know that it is very late?"

"It *is* late," said she, with all her accustomed sweetness, "and I own I am tired; so I will now go to bed. Good night."

"Good night."



CHAPTER IV.

THE HAUNTED HOUSE.

IT was a blessed thing that Clarinda won that victory over herself before the stars set upon her anger! It was not that her soul had ceased to be troubled, for, though she went to bed, she could not sleep; and at length she arose, lighted her candle, unlocked her *scrutoire*, and found and re-read John Burrell's letter, so often read and wept over already.

She had not, then, been treated with contumely. He was still as worthy of esteem as ever. A tear or two fell; but, after gazing

on the letter awhile, as if in a dream, she locked it up again, returned to bed, and slept peacefully till roused by the 'larum of the lark.

It was a blessed thing, I say, that she had gone to bed at peace with William,—for the next day he was laid up with an illness which soon brought him to death's door. The fetid vapours from the stagnant moat, added perhaps to other and unascertained causes, brought on a fever, through which Clarinda nursed him for two or three weeks with the tenderest affection.

It was a sorry commencement of their house-keeping! He had thought so much of preaching his first sermon in Clarinda's hearing . . . and she had thought so much of going round with him to all the cottages *at once*, and making out a regular scheme of visitation.

Instead of this, the only new acquaintance they made was the apothecary from Crompton Wimborne!

Clarinda did not await William's recovery

to give orders for draining the moat: it was undertaken at once, and neatly turfed, and sown with flower-seeds which were sure to flourish well. She also wrote and opened letters for William. Among those he received was a cheerful one from Burrell, laughing at him for setting up in the haunted house, and inquiring whether Clarinda had any fears of the whistler.

Just as William was recovering, she fell ill; perhaps from over-fatigue and malaria combined. Her illness did not last so long; but he was just as watchful over her as she had been over him, though less efficient. Thus the cords of love, which for a moment had nearly been rudely snapped, drew them closer together than ever.

Meanwhile, he had preached for the first time since his induction; *not* the sermon he had meant Clary to hear, and which was, if the truth be told, rather too laboured for rustic sympathies; it seemed cold and trite to him now that she lay wan and weak between life

and death; so he hurriedly and under some excitement penned another, on "In the midst of life we are in death."

"My friends," began he, "this is a mournful subject to begin with; but late events" Here a tear rolled down his cheek; one or two compassionate wives and mothers began to find their eyes grow misty; a general feeling of pity and kindness ran through the congregation; he recovered himself, went on bravely, and, after that day, never felt the least embarrassment in facing his people.

As soon as she was convalescent, Clarinda proposed accompanying him on a house-to-house visitation, that they might know and become known to all, while expressing thanks for the many little kindnesses they had received during their illness.

Winter arrived; cold, but not dreary. Clarinda, in spite of her deprecation of the offices William

had assigned her when he first told her of the haunted house, was literally fulfilling them—clothing the ragged, feeding the hungry, and visiting the sick. Christmas-day had passed, but Christmas fare was not exhausted; their larder yet boasted game, poultry, and even venison; and Mrs. Patty had mince-pies and a jolly plum-pudding in store for the opening of the new year. And why should they not drink the sweet and eat the fat, when they had sent so many portions unto them for whom nothing was prepared? Clarinda was not the least of an epicure, but had a hereditary passion for providing all things in their due season; and though she did not turn her money when the new moon came in, nor throw salt over her shoulder when any was spilt, she had even her little superstitions, and was as punctual in having goose at Michaelmas, turkey at Christmas, and pancakes on Shrove Tuesday, as though her financial prosperity during the year really depended on observing the good old rules.

She was listening to certain of Mrs. Patty's requisitions for candied orange-peel and citron, raisins and brandy (a New-Year's supper impending in the kitchen), when that prim domestic suddenly exclaimed,

“ Law! master's bringing a stranger home to dinner!” adding, with the utmost precipitance, “ then we'll have the best china service to-day, madam. What a lucky thing—the only dish broken when we moved has just been riveted!”

Clarinda looked up, and was less fluttered than Mrs. Patty at seeing John Burrell coming up the rimy path with William. In fact, her heart scarcely beat faster than with a purely pleasurable emotion, on seeing one who was dear and agreeable to her coming in suddenly. Nor was there any of the stiffness and awkwardness she had experienced in town when she now went up to him, with a soft sweet colour mantling her cheeks, her eyes frankly meeting his, and her hand extended in hospitable greeting.

John Burrell—we have never described him

yet. It is not to be supposed, however, that our Clarinda's heart had been won by an unworthy, ignoble conqueror. John Burrell, then, who was now a man bordering on thirty, had always had a handsome comely presence of his own, rather inclining to tall, robust, and ruddy, yet with a dash of the scholar to qualify the squire; a fine, thoughtful brow, dark hazel eye, and a mouth expressing sweet temper and decision.

He, meeting Clarinda's advance fully half-way, shook her warmly by the hand, (that hand he had been wont, in earlier times, to liken to Juliet's "white wonder,") and gaily congratulated her on having bravely faced the terrors of the haunted house. She, on her part, ascribed their present comfortable settlement to his kind remembrance of William; and William being just then opportunely called out of the room for a few minutes, Burrell warmly inquired, on whom could the living have been better bestowed? To which Clarinda smilingly replied that, of course, *she*

thought him just the person for it; and then, she added, with great pleasure, that his old nervousness was quite conquered, and he made his way among the people extremely well; they treated him respectfully and affectionately, sought and followed his advice, and seemed to find nothing amiss in him. To all this did John Burrell listen with pleased interest; question led to rejoinder; one remark to another; and when William returned, they were chatting quite comfortably.

It appeared that Burrell had come down on business, and had just put up his chaise at the "Yew Tree" in Crompton Wimborne, but was quite willing to accept William's offer of a dinner and a night's quarters, if it would not put out Clarinda.

Not at all, she assured him; it was a privilege to obtain an old friend for a guest in a lone house in the winter, and a double privilege for William to have a man now and then to talk to.

William here observed that *she* was as good company to him as a man, any day of the year.

Oh, that was very kind of him to say, and pleasant to her to hear; but it was not good for a man to be exclusively confined to female society, however contented he might be with it.

But he *wasn't* confined, he maintained; he was talking with poor men many hours every day.

Talking *to*, rather than *with* them; besides, they were not educated men, not improving companions.

Yes, they were, *very* improving; opening to him many a new page of the human heart. There was nothing he liked better than sitting on the top of a gate, chatting with some of them. He often learnt more than he taught.

From John Brown, for instance?

Yes, from John Brown. That fellow was so thoroughly illogical, that he taught him, beyond anything else, the value of logic.

What did he think of Harry Peters?

Harry Peters and he had had a tremendous argument the very last week, all the way from

Crompton Wimborne to Maplestead, which had ended in their shaking hands cordially, on the conclusion that there was much to be said on both sides.

Ralph Hardcastle?

Ralph Hardcastle mingled politics too much with religion. He had let him talk himself out of breath again and again, and had then quietly set him down; but to no purpose, he was afraid. Ralph always ended with, "You may say what you like, parson, but I won't give in."

Asahel Sinclair?

Asahel was not to be scoffed at; the lending library had been the making of him. He now never went to the ale-house, but spent the evening at home reading. He was now deep in the unabridged *Robinson Crusoe*, and aspiring to *Don Quixote*.

Burrell here put in—did he call these good books for the working classes?

Certainly, William returned. The Bible was the bread of life; but though bread is the staff of

life, it is not the sole food provided for us by our generous Father, who has given us all manner of meats and fruits that are nutritious and pleasant to the taste, in addition to bread. He has likewise given imaginations as well as understandings to the poor as well as to the rich; and the poor man's imagination requires its food as well as the rich man's; therefore we must look to it, that it be wholesome as well as pleasant. "But come," added William, "dinner will soon be on table, and I have promised you a peep inside the church."

So they went off together, and Clarinda availed herself of their departure to make a few additions to her dessert, look to the arrangements of her guest-chamber, and, finally, pay a little extra attention to her toilette.

She was just clasping a hair bracelet when she heard William and Burrell in the gallery; they were talking about the ghost.

"I solve half the mystery at a stroke," said Burrell, "by setting down the man-servant for

a rogue, who first frightened the maid by dressing up and personating a ghost in the kitchen, and afterwards pretended a spectre opened his curtains and walked about whistling. The curate's testimony is the most difficult to get over."

"And I dispose of that," said William, "by maintaining that he was frightened at his own shadow. Nay, I can *prove* it to my own satisfaction, and would to yours, only that Clarinda occupies the room at present. I suppose, Clary, you couldn't indulge us, could you, with a moment's invasion of your premises?"

"Certainly not: I wonder at you!" said she, with a little rising prudery.

"Unquestionably not," said Burrell, moving away.

"Oh, surely not, if they are not quite in company order," said William.

"Company order!" repeated Clarinda, provoked into immediately throwing her door open, in the proud consciousness that the king himself might have walked in. "I hope my room is

always in company order," said she, quietly walking away.

"Now then," said William, unceremoniously availing himself of the licence, "here stands the curate . . . just come in."

"On no account," said Burrell, pausing reverently at the threshold, but not scrupling to take in at a glance the details of the little sanctuary—the bright wood-fire on the hearth; the easy-chair, covered with flowered chintz, drawn close up to it; the less luxurious chair at the little writing-table; the Dresden figures on the high chimney-piece; the framed engravings, profiles in wax and in hair, book-shelves, &c., on the dark panelled walls; the tambour-frame; the toilette-table; the flowers.

"No, it's of no use," said William, "because we want the moon; the firelight is not enough, nor in the right direction. So I'll show you your own room, and we'll talk over the ghost after dinner."

“ How surprised I was,” cried Burrell, as he carved the turkey for Clarinda, “ when I first heard of your living abroad !”

“ Oh, that’s an old story,” said William.

“ How came it about ?” said Burrell.

“ Family arrangements,” said William, briefly; and then, like one of the people that cannot let well alone, he added, “ Clarinda was not very well.”

“ *That* had nothing to do with it,” cried Clarinda, briskly.

“ It had not, Clary.” And he seemed to be saying *mea culpa* to himself.

“ You had better have stuck to the family arrangements,” said Burrell, laughing.

“ If you’re *both* going to fall upon me,” said William, “ I shall grow restive. Clarinda was not very well : she knows she wasn’t.”

“ How came you to be absent from your home on New-Year’s day, Mr. Burrell ?” said Clarinda.

“ Family arrangements,” said he, laughing; and then told her what they were.

“ And when you have seen to all that,” said William, “ you’ll be off again to Nice?”

“ As soon as possible; though you seem so snug and cozy here that you make me hanker uncommonly for old England. But, my wife’s health will not permit it. Besides, she really likes Nice, and some of the people there. By-the-bye, we have an English clergyman and his wife there, who knew you formerly—the Selfes.”

“ Is he there still?” cried William. “ What a lazy, pleasant, sentimental fellow it is! Has he any lacrymose novel in hand now?”

“ No; I think he is editing some Greek play. And he writes scores of letters.”

“ Funny ones they are, too!” said William.

“ Do you mean humorous?”

“ Well, half humorous, half pathetic.”

“ He does not write pathetic letters to *you*, I presume?”

“ No, only under cover to me, to Clarinda. Pathetic and sentimental too.”

“ Hum!” said Burrell.

“ William! he only did so once,” cried Clarinda.

“ Twice, at any rate, Clary. More-by-token, the first began, ‘ You ministering angels!’ and the second, ‘ Madam.’ ”

“ Well, that was a long while ago, and *you* answered them.”

“ Curtly, I should think,” said Burrell; “ else, why the falling off in the warmth of the second address? ‘ Madam’ was a great descent from ‘ You ministering angel.’ ”

“ ‘ Angels,’ ” put in Clarinda.

“ How came he to include William?” said Burrell.

“ Because William had been very kind to him during some family distresses.”

“ Family arrangements?” said Burrell: and they all laughed.

“ His daughter had contracted a marriage he didn’t approve,” said William; “ ran away, in fact.”

“ Which disarranged the family. Well, they

are all living together now, at any rate; but the young man is good for little, and his wife slatternish."

"Yes, I answered his letters," said William, musingly, as he carved the ham mechanically. "He began with 'Madam,' but he ended with 'O Clarinda!'"

"Ah! that required to be stopped."

"What nonsense!" said Clarinda, laughing.

"The fact is," pursued William, "I could never bring him into my views of the responsibility of persons who exercise epistolary influence. We had many an argument upon it. I've talked to him by the yard."

"What *are* your views?"

"Well—firstly, there's an old proverb, '*What is written, remains.*' It remains, sometimes, a good deal longer than the writer intended or wished. How often has a letter that was meant to be read and then tossed into the fire, been hoarded up, printed, and read in cold blood by all the world?"

“ Yes, there’s a good deal of lawlessness in these things.”

“ Unpardonable lawlessness.”

“ Why should people write what they are ashamed of having read ?” said Clarinda.

“ ‘ Ashamed ’ has a large meaning,” said William. “ We ourselves should not like our confidence to be thus abused.”

“ Certainly not.”

“ For instance : suppose Mr. Selfe were to die, and his daughter and wife, to turn a penny, were to print his letters *and their answers* ; you and I should not like to figure in that way.”

“ Horrible ! Certainly not.”

“ And yet the thing might be done—*has* been done in similar cases. So, what I say is, Take heed what you write, for ‘ what is written, remains.’ ”

“ If you push that too far, though,” said Burrell, “ you destroy all the pleasure of unreserved correspondence ; and there are many who can tell their minds better and more pleasantly with

their pens than with their tongues. Therefore, I amend your axiom by saying—‘Take heed to whom you write.’”

“We will add that to the other,” said William.

“Yes,” said Clarinda; “I never could bear to have to weigh every word I wrote to a person I loved or even liked, with the view of suppressing it if it could possibly be distorted and misconstrued. I would rather not write at all.”

“Ah, but not writing at all is another great fault,” said William.

“A *very* great fault!” said Burrell, wincing.

“For it often gives unimaginable pain,” pursued William, “to those to whom we are dear, and who may justly claim to hear from us. ‘Out of sight out of mind,’ is the utter extreme of rudeness as well as of selfishness.”

“But how often,” cried Burrell, “does a letter keep the promise to the eye and break it to the heart! We are separated, for instance, from those who were very dear and pleasant to us.

Perhaps the only cause we have for a secret dissatisfaction with our present condition is, that it places a barrier between us. They promised we should hear from them. At length a letter comes—a full filled sheet; but is it *well* filled? Is there a single thought in it that deserves to live—a single observation or reflection that can stand by itself—a spark of wit—an indication of genuine feeling—a trace, however casual, of Christianity—an allusion that shall warm the heart? No: it contains a most commonplace relation of the things we least care to know—without a consolation, an encouragement, or a counsel—without a single grain of salt to relish and purify the mass.”

“ I hope you would not convert letters into themes,” said Clarinda.

“ No; but yet I would have something sound, wholesome, and cordial; some proof that my friend has dug up fresh mould for me, and perhaps thereby turned up for me a coin or a flower-root.”

“ Some people only turn up grubs and earth-worms,” said William, “ Won’t you have sweet-sauce ?”

“ Thank you. You used to be always fond of sweet things.”

“ As a wasp.”

“ You might say a bee,” said Clarinda. “ I am sure you are as industrious.”

“ If I’m not busy, I’m buzzy. I wish some cottages I could name were as sweet as flowers.”

“ All in good time, William. Mr. Burrell must come and see us a year hence.”

“ That’s putting me off for a long time,” said Burrell, laughing.

“ As soon as you will, then,” said she, with a frank smile ; “ and to make yourself more welcome, bring Mrs. Burrell and your little boy with you.”

“ Ah, I should like it so much !”

“ He’s a fine little chap, that of yours, I suppose ?” said William.

“ Well as times go,” said Burrell, with

a smile of fatherly affection. "I should like you to see him," rather diffidently, to Clarinda.

"I am sure I should like to see him," returned she, heartily; "do bring him next time."

They were all silent a little while; perhaps in justice to the merits of Patty's pudding. Burrell, resuming, started quite another subject.

"I can't help thinking," cried he, "that *Don Quixote* is an odd book for your cottage library."

"What can we do? It is a sterling book of its class, at any rate; they can't keep always at the *Pilgrim's Progress* and *Quarle's Emblems*."

"No, but they want something else."

"I can certify they do, sir. They have Mrs. More's books; but they want something else—something higher."

"Somebody ought to supply the demand."

"Ask that lady. *She* can."

"Nonsense," said Clarinda, laughing, as Burrell looked towards her rather doubtfully.

"Have you no disposition to try?" said he.

"She *has* tried, and succeeded," said William.

“ William! I really wonder at you.”

“ Well, Clary, you know you have. Where’s the good of colouring so?”

“ It makes her really uncomfortable,” said Burrell, “ so don’t tease her any more.”

This humane speech was accompanied by an inward vow to ask more questions when Clarinda left the room. This she presently did, saying as she rose, “ Shall I ring for candles before I go?”

“ By no means on my account,” said Burrell; “ I like sitting by fire-light.”

When she was gone, “ William,” said he, with feeling, “ you seem so happy here that I more and more regret I cannot settle at White Canons; but Letitia’s health forbids it; and I have just let the place, as I was telling your sister before dinner, to an old acquaintance of yours, Mr. Winterflood, for seven years.”

“ Winterflood! The hypochondriacal man with the large, noisy family?”

“ Ah, he has not a large, noisy family now;

they are married, dead, or dispersed; all except Nussy, the youngest daughter."

"Well . . . they were no great favourites of mine, but I'll try to be neighbourly."

"Do. Try to do the old man good. He'll die some of these days."

"He will. I will attend to your recommendation."

"This is not very good wine of yours, William."

"Well, I think it must be. I had it from Sylvanus, and he's a better judge than I am."

"Perhaps a roguish wine-merchant changed it when he packed it for travelling. I'll send you a few dozen you'll like better; and this will do for your village goodies. Your church certainly wants an organ."

"Ah, you might say so if you heard our singing!" said William, sighing. "Clarinda is drilling a new choir, but the old choir keeps its ground yet, and there's a chief singer who really squeals like a pig."

“ If you had an organ, do you think you could find an organist ? ”

“ Certainly. Clarinda.”

“ You must let me see that book of hers by-and-by, William. Give it me snugly, when I go to bed.”

“ I will. You may run through it in a couple of hours.”

“ What is it about ? ”

“ Oh, it's a simple little tale—I won't spoil the interest.”

“ It's a happy thing for you, William, that she has never married.”

“ It is. It hasn't been for want of asking.”

“ Indeed ! ” with sudden interest.

“ She had two or three good offers while she was staying with Sylvanus ; said ‘ No ’ to them all.”

“ What can make her so fastidious, I wonder ? ”

“ Can't say. Perhaps she has an ideal set up too high for any poor mortal to come up to the mark.”

“That’s unreasonable,” said Burrell, biting his lip. “And how comes it, William, *you* have never settled?”

“I *am* settled. But I know what you mean. No, I shall never marry. I am too happy now. I do not say I have been always;” and he checked a little sigh.

“Come, out with it!” said Burrell, pulling his chair closer to him and looking eager. “Who with?”

“*With whom*, you should say.”

“With whom?”

“Do you remember that old manor-house at D——, the place where I preached my first sermon?”

“Squire Farrer’s? Yes.”

“Do you remember the squire’s daughter?”

“No. You visited there; I did not.”

“Well, I didn’t go there often; I was not on sufficiently intimate terms. But I saw enough of Lydia Farrer to feel that, if ever

I married, she was the woman I should wish to make my wife."

"Well?"

"You know there was a good deal of difference between us. The squire looked higher for his daughter—I think she looked higher for herself; but, to me, she did not seem looking out for herself at all; I knew of no competitor in the field; she seemed to like me; she avowed a partiality for the Church. I thought I might rise in it, and win her some day or other; I resolved to try."

"All right. Go on."

"There was a good deal of innocent *persiflage* about her, which attracted and yet embarrassed me. I was always a little afraid of her. Like Clarinda, she had a quick sense of the ridiculous."

"*Has* Clarinda?"

"Certainly—do you need to be told it at this time of day? Well, I went on in a kind of fool's paradise till I came to preach that unlucky sermon. She had often rallied me

about my first attempt, and said she should like to hear it; I had secretly resolved she should not. At that time she was staying in London, so I thought I was quite safe. Directly I mounted the pulpit and glanced towards the squire's pew, there she was! This annoyed me at starting, but I struggled against it. I got on pretty well to a certain point, and then, some spirit of evil—no, my own faltering, unsteady, sinful heart drew my eyes towards hers. I fancied there was malice in her look. I lost my presence of mind. *Your* steady eye, Burrell, recalled me to myself. I blundered on, I knew not how; but I felt I had disgraced myself and my calling."

"No, you hadn't."

"Yes, I had; and that I could not—*ought* not to invade the sanctuary again till I had more self-command, more power of casting myself entirely on One mightier than myself. That I have attained this at length is mainly owing to Clarinda."

His voice faltered a little, but he went on.

“ I could not go to the manor-house ; I felt so certain of being laughed at. I thought I would first go home. My mother and sister reassured and strengthened me, and wanted me to make a second and more successful trial. While I was in all the pain of irresolution, I heard of Lydia’s marriage ! That threw me back again. Then came my mother’s death, and Clarinda’s loss of health and spirits, and Sylvanus’s in short, we went abroad, and stayed till—we came back.”

“ Why did Clarinda lose her health and spirits ? ”

“ Can you ask ? My mother had died.”

“ True. How could I ? And yet—”

“ You don’t know her. Her feelings are very deep. My mother and she were all in all to one another. And there were many painful circumstances attending my mother’s illness, though not just at last, till the stroke actually

fell. They met it together — alone, in each other's arms."

"Well," said Burrell, brushing his eyes with his hand after a pause, "I suppose we may join your sister now."

And making his way, half in the dark, to Clarinda's little parlour, whither William did not immediately follow him, he opened the door, and, in the uncertain fire-light, at first thought the room was empty. But she was sitting on the hearth-rug, musing, with her eyes fixed on the fire: and, hearing him enter, she arose—not with any hurry or scramble from what would, to some, have been an awkward position, but easily, slowly, and gracefully; looking, to Burrell's rather vivid fancy, as the flickering light played on the glossy folds of her silver-grey silk, like a beautiful ghost, resolving itself into human form from a wreath of vapour.

“ Shall I tell you what I should like of all things ?” said Burrell, taking possession of William’s specially comfortable arm-chair.

“ Pray do,” said Clarinda, who had been musing—not uselessly and dangerously, of days long gone—but on their pleasant dinner-chat, which she, like sundry clear-headed persons who give their full attention to what they hear, had the happy power of recalling word for word, and enjoying over again.

“ I should like to be settled at White Canons, and for you and my wife to be particularly good friends,” said Burrell.

“ Oh, how much good might be done in the parish if we all were labouring together !” cried Clarinda. “ You and Mrs. Burrell with your influence and your money, William with his preaching and teaching, and—”

“ And you with your example,” said Burrell.

“ Yes, that was clearly what she meant to say, if a little modesty had not crept in,” said

William, who had just taken up his position between them. "What a fire for roasting chestnuts!" cried he, presently.

"How you bring us back from dream-land!" said Clarinda; "I was picturing a new school-house in the embers."

"What manner of school-house might it be?" said Burrell.

"Elizabethan, with steep, deep roofs; not too much ornamented; built of brick, with stone dressings, or else of rubble, with those pretty intersections of wood-nogging; two gables, with a roof connecting them, over a good, large airy play-room, or hall, for bad weather. A boys' school in one wing, a girls' school in the other; dwelling rooms for the teachers above. A long table in the middle hall, at which the little ones, who bring their dinners tied up in basins and red handkerchiefs, may dine. Three or four shelves full of books, that the young men of the parish may read in the winter evenings; good fire and candles for them; and a desk at

one end, from whence William may occasionally deliver little lectures."

"Well done!" said William.

"Stay," said Clarinda, "I have not quite done yet. In front of this school-house is a garden, gay with sweet common flowers, and herbs with poetical names, such as we find in Shenstone's *Schoolmistress*—euphrasy and rue, rosemary and marjoram, tansy—"

"Which smells horribly, and so does rue!" cried William.

"Sweet-pea, wall-flower, and stock."

"Roses and sweet-briar too, I hope," said Burrell.

"Yes; and Aaron's rod, balm of Gilead, and Solomon's seal. Also, hollyhocks, sun-flowers, flags, and peonies; beehives too, and a good pump."

"And where do you see this famous school-house?" said Burrell.

"Close by the church—the church and school-house should always be near one another, like

wife and husband. There—the roof has fallen in!”

“What a pretty poem that is of the *School-mistress*,” said Burrell.

“The prettiest thing Shenstone ever wrote,” said William.

“I like some of his little prose essays, though,” said Clarinda. “I like that one in which he says, had he a fortune of eight thousand pounds a-year, he would build himself a neighbourhood of pretty country cottages, and fill them with favourite friends.”

“Ah, that fancy was worked out whimsically enough, on paper,” said Burrell, “by a humourist who wrote *Shenstone Green; or, the New Paradise Lost*, in which he showed how universal philanthropy ended in general anarchy. *Must* we have candles?” as Priscilla brought them in, and then introduced the tea-service.

“What is that?” said Clarinda to her maid, as a tremendous shrieking was heard through the open door.

“ Please, madam, it’s Sam Brown has dressed hisself up to play the ghost.”

“ Oh, that is going too far. He will frighten the children. Tell Sam Brown I disapprove of ghosts.”

“ I remarked a good deal of whistling going on at intervals,” observed William, as the servant closed the door. “ You must know, Burrell, we have a supper-party in the kitchen. Last night we closed the old year with a prayer-service, and this evening we have snapdragon and forfeits.”

“ Capital! You remind me of the old days, when my grandfather lived at White Canons. What a wild place this was in his young days! There was then only a bridle-road to the town; and the farmers used to carry their corn to market on horses. As to coaches, not ten passed through Crompton Wimborne in the course of a year, except my grandfather’s, and he always had six of the strongest horses he could find, to pull him from London to Maplestead.”

Wil. Your grandmother left a dole of bread, to the value of five pounds, to be distributed to the poor every Christmas in the church porch.

Bur. Ah, she might well do that. The old lady did not spare money on herself. She bought a gown at fifty pounds a yard, which the queen had declined as too expensive. Her portrait at the Hall represents her in it. When the queen heard of the purchase, she said she thought she might as well have had it as the brewer's daughter.

Wil. The story goes that there is an underground passage from the Hall to the town. Do you believe it?

Bur. I think it simply impossible, because it would have to pierce solid rock, as well as sand, fuller's-earth, and clay; and the ground is all hill and valley, with many springs. I have pursued the passage, however, but I think it only went to the old priory, where, in case of danger, the family might take sanctuary.

The water dripped through it so as to make it unsafe, therefore I had the entrance built up.

Cla. I think Crompton Wimborne owes its grammar-school to one of your ancestors.

Bur. Yes; "a miserable old cheesemonger," I have seen him described in black letter. However, he left the means for twelve poor boys to have a liberal education free of charge, six from the town, and six from the foreign, for ever. And five pounds each to bind them apprentices at the proper age.

Wil. An excellent old cheesemonger! But there have been knights among your ancestors, Burrell? There are the effigies of two in our church; one with his legs crossed, and one with a dog at his feet.

Bur. To signify he was an idle dog, and did not go to the Holy Land! Ah, I'm afraid I'm descended from *him*! The knight with his legs crossed founded a chantry for the good of his soul; but his line became extinct in the third generation. When the lesser monasteries were

dissolved, the priory to which this endowment was attached was destroyed, and the land given to the old cheesemonger who founded the school, and built the Hall. Before that, he lived in this house.

Wil. Which must have been a grange, I think, belonging to the priory. You know P. L. is built into the walls; and there is a bit of a cornice round the tower, representing cats' heads with the tongues hanging out, that corresponds with the cornice of the priory ruin.

Bur. I dare say Mrs. Clarinda has sketched that ruin, has not she?

Cla. Oh yes. But you had another knight or baronet in your family, I think, Mr. Burrell—Sir Evelyn?

Bur. Ah, don't name him! *His* direct male descent too, I'm happy to say, is extinct. Poor Sir Evelyn! Some queer stories of him still linger at Crompton Wimborne, I'm afraid. He used to get tipsy at the "Yew Tree," and other taverns, and have music to play him all the way

home to the Hall, till not one of the publicans would credit him with a pint of beer. When he had spent all, want sobered him ; he shut up his house, and kept a little school in a neighbouring hamlet, where her ladyship took in washing, and went out nursing and charing. One of the sons became an exciseman ; the other used to deal in horses and ready-made clothes. You laugh, but it's quite true. Sir Evelyn got to be one of the poor knights of Windsor, and survived both his sons.

Cla. Poor Lady Burrell ! I hope she was not of very high extraction. But there is the prayer-bell. The servants generally come in here ; but to-night we are so large a party that we must go into the best kitchen.

Bur. You have two then ?

Cla. Yes ; the maids prefer sitting in the smaller one when they are by themselves.

She led the way along a stone-paved, matted passage, to the large vaulted kitchen, warm, and well lighted, where the rustic guests were ranged in an orderly manner on oaken benches against

the walls. She went round, speaking to them in turn, as did Burrell, their landlord. Arm-chairs were placed for them next the fire; the long table was cleared for the large Bible and Prayer-book. There was an idiot among the company, also there were two blind persons, and a cripple; the rest were buxom, healthy country-people of various ages.

William read a psalm, and briefly commented on it; making some seasonable, stirring remarks on the coming year. Then he read a hymn, Clarinda pitched the tune, and the old coved roof resounded with sweet and sacred song. Then came the prayer—fervent, pithy, and not too long. All arose, and the company were preparing for dispersion, when a knot of lads, Clarinda's choristers, began—faltering at first, and then in right earnest—to carol forth an old English ditty—

“God rest you, merry gentlefolks;
Let nothing you dismay—
For Jesus Christ our Saviour
Was born on Christmas-day.”

When this roundelay was concluded, good nights were cordially spoken, and the "gentry" returned to their warm parlour, while the villagers, well cloaked and great-coated, sallied home through the snow.

When Burrell retired for the night, it was with Clarinda's little book in his pocket. He found a blazing fire on his hearth, and an easy-chair before it—as if she had guessed his intended reading, and planned his having it comfortably. A folding-screen, papered with engravings illustrative of Sir Charles Grandison, protected him from the draught which even the curtains of snow-white dimity did not entirely exclude from the unshuttered lattice. The walls were panelled oak; and the bed, though quaint in form, was snug and tempting; the carpet, of warm, cheerful crimson and green, glowed in the fire-light, but yet the small portion of uncovered flooring looked exceedingly dark and old, and there was an air of antiquity which struck Burrell all the more for being indicative of *a haunted house*. He raised

his candle to the various prints and other decorations of the walls, which amused him by their entire want of connexion with each other. An old black engraving of "the great ship Harry," in a narrow black frame, flanked a group of the young Angersteins with a bird's-nest, by Sir Joshua; two crayon heads by Cipriani represented, the one a Madonna, the other Peace, with a dove in her bosom. "Captain Cook," coloured and glazed, kept guard over a beautiful lady, name unknown, in a Turkish dress, playing a tambourine; there were also Hogarth's "Election," and his "Inn-yard of the Old Angel."

Over the chimney-piece hung a pair of Chinese shoes and an old sword. The mantel-shelf was decorated with a pair of Indian screens, a shell farm-house, a pair of small Dresden vases, and two coffee-cups and saucers of delicate French porcelain; one of which was painted with a group of dancing shepherds and shepherdesses, the other portrayed a lady with two feathers in her head, playing on a harpsichord in the open air,

with flute and violoncello accompaniment. Also there were a few stalactites and stalagmites, and a piece of talc.

Between the fire-place and window stood a beautiful cabinet of ebony and red tortoise-shell, lined with looking-glass, and containing numerous drawers, now appropriated for flower-seeds, methodically labelled. Over it was a very curious old clock, that wheezed, sneezed, and coughed in a startling and alarming manner before it struck the hour. Under it were an old guitar-case and a jar of dead rose leaves. The shaving and washing department was ornate, but very compact, having been the camp equipage of some old military officer.

On the other side of the fire-place was a cupboard-door, which, having the key in it, Burrell had the unpardonable curiosity to open, "just to see there was not a thief in it;" and he had a good fright for his pains: for, immediately descending from this warm, snug, comfortable little room, was a break-neck little winding-stair,

plunging down into the blackness of darkness, and against the dark wall of this stair pressed what Burrell in his momentary flutter thought was—a *man*, and then a coffin! but which was only some old outlandish gaberdine, or garment, which Mrs. Patty had hung up there to be out of the way.

So Burrell shut the door softly, lest his inquisitiveness should be betrayed to any wakeful ear; and the door being one that preferred a sudden to a lingering compulsion, gave a peevish little screech under his hand, which made him close it with a snap. He wondered Clarinda did not have it nailed up, and thought the ghost might have turned it to his purposes.

Having thus made himself just sufficiently *eerie*, John Burrell sat down to enjoy Clarinda's book comfortably. But, directly he opened it, all spirits and hobgoblins of the night vanished, as if at the cock's shrill clarion. First, there was something in the costly binding William had bestowed on it that pleased his fancy; then the

small, marbled leaves, with their large type and broad margins ; the book-marks of purple ribbon and dried flower-sprigs ; and the pithy, pencilled annotations, answered and combatted here and there by the fair author—so that he had, as it were, a little dialogue between brother and sister.

Then, when he began the little story he forgot them both, so innocently wily was the hand that guided him through a little maze of plot, character, and speculation. 'Twas a simple thing enough, and yet *sui generis* ; standing as completely alone as *Rasselas* or the *Vicar of Wakefield* ; provoking no comparison, disarming criticism by its very slightness.

And yet there were thoughts in it, here and there, that would bear revolving. Burrell felt that it would be, for a time, his pocket-classic. In one thing he was disappointed—there was nothing in it to give him any insight into Clarinda, in so far as the turn of her thoughts might any way relate to himself. There was no character bearing any evidence of self-perturbation, or veiled

complaint, or confession. Her fancy had run off to a new, untrodden field, where it could gather fresh flowers at its will ; only leaving the traces of its whereabouts like the gipsies—

“You may tell where we have been
By the burnt spot on the green,”

—that is, by quotation and allusion to things he knew she had read of, talked of, and studied.

So he sat and mused on it a good while, till the invalid old clock began to cough and scrape its throat before striking one. And just as he started up and pushed aside his chair, he heard the rustic choristers, who had been to the Hall in the interim, striking up a parting stave beneath some distant window—

“God rest you, merry gentlefolks,
Let nothing you dismay.”



CHAPTER V.

CLARINDA AND HARRY.

SEVEN years have fled, and witnessed important changes. Firstly, with regard to William, no longer a merely speculative student, but a missionary labourer, acting under a solemn consciousness of a great work to be done, and done at once, which left no room for desultory habits or nervous misgivings.

His time, talents, affections, were unreservedly and cheerfully given to the one great care of carrying his people to heaven. At every fresh success, he said within himself, "There's another gained!" and proceeded with increased alacrity

to the next. Strange to say, he had no enemies ; he himself alone entertained a strong opinion of his own unworthiness ; but as he looked on himself as an implement in the hand of another, he was content to be used as long as he was privileged to be useful.

There was a corresponding change among his people ; not merely an outward one, though there was that too ; but, in many, a change of purpose ; in many, a spiritual growth. The outward manifestations of these were cleanliness, kindliness, sobriety, industry, and a homely courtesy. There were still incorrigible offenders and slothful listeners, but the prevailing feeling was against them.

Then, for Mrs. Clarinda—such was now her affectionate title from one end of the parish to the other ; just as in Italy, the surname is dropped among intimates, and even inferiors speak of superiors as *il signor Giorgio, la signora Elisa, &c.*, while among each other they are *il rosso, il tondo*, and so forth.

Mrs. Clarinda, then, was in exceeding good looks; and yet she had not grown younger. Still, she was a beautiful creature; not in the early May-time, but the June or July of existence; her eye as clear, her brow as smooth, her skin as soft, her smile as sweet as ever. Dear was that smile in every cottage; dreaded that penetrating eye, that seemed to read the heart; loved that white hand, that smoothed many a pillow and administered many a cordial and healing draught. For Mrs. Clarinda considered that to her fell the cure of bodies as decidedly as to her brother the cure of souls.

One day, she was returning from her morning rounds, with a light straw basket, now emptied of its contents, on her arm, when a village lass, who was under her and Patty's training, (they had a succession of them whom they fitted for service, and for good wives and mothers of families,) told her that a gentleman with a little boy had come to see master, and were then in the parlour.

A slight colouring of pleasure rose on Mrs. Clarinda's cheek; she instantly guessed who the visitor was, and dropping her basket, she briskly opened the parlour door, and, as she had surmised, saw Mr. Burrell.

He instantly threw down the books he was dipping into, and cordially greeted her.

"William will be in directly," said she, gladly; "this is your little boy, I am sure."

"My son and heir," said Burrell, smiling, as he drew forward a little fellow about eight years old, with evident pleasure and pride. "Go and shake hands with Mrs. Clarinda, Harry."

Harry immediately obeyed, and they looked each other full in the face, with an evident inclination to be better acquainted. He was brown as a nut; with large, lustrous, stag-like eyes, such as only children have; hazel eyes, well open, truthful, ardent, and believing. There was much character in his ruddy, chubby face, that was like and yet unlike Burrell's. Clarinda

supposed it might be a mixed likeness of father and mother.

“ So you are Harry,” said she, “ and you are come to England at last. Are you going to school ? ”

“ Yes, that is why we have brought him home,” said Burrell. “ His mother could not bear to be far apart from him. So we are in town now, and are going to take up our quarters at Westlake as soon as the old place can be made ready for us. Meantime, Master Harry is to be handed over to Dr Curtis, at Brighton ; are not you, Harry ? ”

Here William came in, with a very harassed look, which brightened directly he saw his old friend. As soon as he had shaken hands with him, however, he exchanged looks with Clarinda.

“ Gone ? ” said she softly.

“ All over,” he quietly replied, and the harassed look again appeared.

“ Who’s that ? ” said Burrell.

“Your old acquaintance, Winterflood,” said William. “Don’t you remember saying to me, seven years ago, ‘Look after that old man a little; he’ll die some of these days?’ Well, I *have* looked after him, and now he *is* dead.”

“Dear me,” said Burrell. “And were your pains thrown away on him, do you suppose?”

“Who can tell? There wasn’t much promise. He always evaded me so; would think of a hundred ingenious devices to get off to anything else. Sometimes I would keep away from him; then, after a while, he would send for me. But could never get beyond a mere slavish desire of escape from immediate danger; there was no soil in which the seed of life could *grow*. What could I do?”

“Strange,” said Burrell.

“Not at all, nothing less so,” said William. “All the beauty and grandeur of Christian doctrine won’t secure its practice when the doctrine itself goes beyond the stretch of the mind to which it is presented. Well, but how

came you here? how long have you been in England?"

While Burrell was satisfying his inquiries, Clarinda was addressing herself to Harry.

"So you are going to school," said she, "to learn things that every boy must learn, if he wants to be a wise and clever man. You will soon learn to like it. At first, you will think there is too much work and too little play; but after a time, one gets tired of nothing but play, just as one would tire of always eating gooseberry-fool."

"What's gooseberry - fool?" says Harry, opening his eyes very wide; "I never tasted it!"

"Bless the child!" cried Mrs. Clarinda in surprise. "William, only think, he never tasted gooseberry-fool!"

But William did not attend to her.

"Are we going to sleep here to-night?" said Harry, confidentially, to his new friend.

"Well," said she, "I've heard nothing about it yet. We have plenty of room for you."

“ Because,” said Harry, lowering his voice, “ Papa didn’t *quite* order beds at the “ Yew Tree :” and if we do sleep here, I wish you’d let me be in the haunted room.”

“ Why, you rogue, that is *my* room,” said Mrs. Clarinda, laughing ; “ do you want to turn me out ? ”

“ No,” said he, looking disappointed. “ But what a pity ! Papa said it was such a pretty room.”

“ Well, if your papa will let you stay, you shall have another pretty room, and a nice little bed that has white curtains and ball-fringe. Will that do ? ”

“ Oh yes, anywhere, so that I may stay here and be with you,” said he, taking and stroking her hand.

“ You think we shall be good friends, then ? ”

“ If you will be friends with *me*.”

“ I will,” said she, stooping down and kissing him.

“ Clary,” said William, “ I am going to take

Burrell round to see the improvements,—you will have his room ready for him when he comes back.”

“ Certainly, brother,” with a little stiffness.

“ I fear I shall intrude,” said Burrell, seeing it in a moment.

“ Oh no ! no ! ” with perfect heartiness.

“ But my little boy—”

“ He shall be my companion while you go on your rounds.”

“ Thank you ! Thank you ! ”

“ But, William,” (detaining him for a moment and lowering her voice,) “ should not I go to Nussy ? ”

“ Not to-day. I proposed it, and she said somewhat impatiently, ‘ To-morrow, to-morrow ! ’ You know her singular mind—it won’t do to *force* even sympathy on her. Very likely she will now send for Miss Pershore.”

“ Well, as you think best. Only, I can’t bear to think of her, at a time like this, weeping all alone.”

“ Nor I. I named you to her, but she shrank from seeing you.”

“ I must leave it alone, then ” (sighing). “ We will meet you at the school-house. Ah, Mr. Burrell ! ” (brightening up again) “ how thankful William and I and all the parish are to you for that school-house.”

“ Well, you know it was *your* suggestion. You saw it in the fire.”

“ She didn't see the organ in the fire, though,” said William.

“ No ! Oh, how obliged to you we are ! Go with us to church this evening. William always has full evening service and a lecture on Wednesdays.”

“ Certainly, I will ; I want to hear him preach.”

“ Something more too, I trust,” said William ; “ preaching comes after praying, my good friend.”

“ Now then, Harry,” said Mrs. Clarinda, “ when you have finished that piece of cake,

you and I will go and hunt up some green goose-berries, that we may have a gooseberry-fool!"

Seven years of friendly and Christian attention had not sufficed to make the Winterfloods entirely cordial with William and Clarinda; and yet they would have been hurt and affronted had their good offices been intermitted, and in every difficulty or trouble they constantly looked to them for support. Nussy had, even in childhood, been called "a little old woman;" as she grew up, the applicability of this designation became less apparent, but still there was a formality of manner which was not compensated for by any engaging warmth of heart.

Yet she was very desirous to fulfil her duty; and she had held it a very imperative part of it to let her father know that she considered him in a dangerous state, both of body and soul. As

this was very disagreeable information to Mr. Winterflood, he laid it all to the charge of Miss Pershore, the governess, whom he forbade the house, and would willingly have forbidden to correspond with Nesy, had he believed it would be of any use. Poor Nesy's life being very dull and unvaried, she threw herself into this correspondence with all the more fervour from her being in constant expectation of its being cut off. It was an outlet for egotism and pent-up feeling; and a few common-places on religion and morals gave it the air of being improving. So she made Miss Pershore the confidant of sundry home-passages, very much in the style of some in the diary of a certain Countess of Warwick: "My lord very contentious and violent—I to my closet, in prayer."

Nesy had a treasure within her reach, without knowing it. She might have been with Clarinda half the day, without offence to Mr. Winterflood; she would have found in her a companion who would have cheered, enlightened, and strength-

ened her ; but she, perversely or blindly, neglected the privilege, and restricted herself to formal calls from time to time, wondering why Mrs. Clarinda should not content herself with visit for visit.

“ Harry, run forward and open that gate,” said Clarinda.

“ Oh, it’s too heavy for me to move,” said he.

“ No, it is not.”

So he ran on and opened it.

“ Good boy! now I will give you a ride on the top of it. Six swings, and no more. Count!”

“ Are you going straight among those cows?” said he, rather apprehensively.

“ Certainly I am. Are not you?”

“ I suppose I must, if you do.”

“ What! a *boy*, and *afraid*?”

“ No, not much ; though their horns are very large.”

“ How sweet their breath is! Did you ever

hear the story of Guy of Warwick, who killed the great dun cow?"

"No! will you tell it me?"

"Certainly I will." And she told the story.

"Tell me some more about the Holy Land," said Harry. So they talked about the Holy Land for about half a mile.

"You're a capital one for stories!" said he, looking up at her admiringly.

"Ah, you should hear me in the winter, when the village boys and girls come to me every Saturday evening at dusk, and we sit round the fire in the great kitchen, telling stories, till they are called to their tea and gingerbread."

"Do they *all* come?"

"All who can. Some are great, bouncing boys, that were as little as you when they first came; and I tell them they must soon make way for the younger ones; but they beg so hard, that I continue to let them come as long as we can find room for them."

“ What sort of stories do they tell ? ”

“ Stories about Gideon, and Joshua, and David, and Daniel. Then I tell them stories about the Holy Land, and the Crusades, and the wild Arabs in the desert, and the Old Man of the Mountain.”

“ What else ? ”

“ Stories about the Romans, the Saxons, and the Danes. About King Lear and his three daughters, about the Hallelujah victory, about Hengist and Horsa, and good King Alfred, and King Canute, and King Harold.”

“ Any more ? ”

“ Yes ; those are true stories. Sometimes I tell them make-believe stories, about St. George and the Dragon, and Una and the Lion. Also about Shylock and the pound of flesh ; and Prospero in the desert island.”

“ Oh, how I should like to hear them all ! ”

“ While we tell stories, the girls knit, and plait straw for their summer bonnets, and the boys make cabbage-nets,—some of them, that is ; but the little ones do nothing. Any who like it,

snip up old bits of rag and paper as fine as pulp, and my maids afterwards stuff nice tick pillow-cases with them, for poor sick people."

"What else do you do?"

"We sing a good many songs, and hymns, and carols. At half-past six the schoolmaster comes, and takes them safe home."

"How sorry they must be when half-past six comes! I should put back the clock."

"Ah! I should not let you!"

"I should wish the schoolmaster had tumbled down and hurt himself."

"Poor man, that would not be a kind wish. He is a very good man, is Mr. Jones."

"But, Mrs. Clarinda! why don't you make *all* the children work?"

"Why, Harry, are you always at work?"

"No; but I'm not a poor person."

"Are poor persons in Italy always at work?"

"No, they play morra, and castanets, and guitars, and dance under the trees, and mamma says it's very idle of them."

“ But people who work hard, may be a little idle sometimes, if they do not get into mischief. It does them good ; just as it does cart-horses good to be turned out into a sweet meadow of grass. If you should ever be a man—”

“ I *shall* be a man, a *rich* man, some of these days.”

“ If you live,” said Mrs. Clarinda, coolly, “ and if your papa dies.”

“ Ah, I don't want that—”

“ I should think not, Harry.” Just then they reached a very neat cottage in a lane, where a woman was gardening, inside a sweet-briar hedge.

“ Mrs. Meadows,” said Clarinda, cheerfully, “ I'm come begging !”

“ Law, Madam, is it you ? I'm sure it will be an honour to give you anything you want !” cried Mrs. Meadows, standing erect, and staring straight into Clarinda's face, as if it were a positive pleasure to look at her.

“ Your gooseberries are forwarder than ours,

or than any in the parish ; and if you can gather me a quart, I shall be very much obliged to you."

" To be sure, Madam, though they're quite in the wood yet. I was thinking they'd be fine by Whitsunday."

" Ah, by Whitsunday ours will be fine enough to gather, and then you shall have a quart of them, and welcome ; but I want these for a particular occasion."

" Then I'll gather them directly," cried Mrs. Meadows, with alacrity. While Clarinda was speaking, the good woman's admiring eyes had roved from her face to her dress. There was a little bit of straw hanging to the black lace of her mode cloak. Mrs. Meadows disengaged it reverently, and then settled the lace with an affectionate little pat, just because it was a pleasure to touch anything belonging to Mrs. Clarinda.

" We'll help you to gather them," said Clarinda. " Come, Harry ! " And they made such

merry work of it, that he thought there was no fun equal to gathering green gooseberries, and was quite sorry when the basket was filled. Meanwhile, Mrs. Meadows had served the office of the Daily Courant, or General Advertiser to Clarinda, by telling her many pieces of village news, all of which she turned to practical account in their due season.

Then they returned homewards, very merry, carrying the basket by turns; and, having made it over to Mrs. Patty, were proceeding to the school-house, when a livery-servant of Mrs. Winterflood's came up, and, touching his hat, said in a low voice, that Miss Nussy was in a bad way, and the housekeeper hoped Mrs. Clarinda would be so good as to step over directly.

“Certainly,” said she, “I will; but take this young gentleman to Mr. Burrell.” And a few minutes' fast walking brought them to the school-house, where Burrell and William were still continuing their examinations. They turned to her

with smiling faces; but she briefly mentioned the summons she had received, and committing Harry to his father's charge, hastily walked off, without any apparent consciousness of fatigue, though she had been on foot all the morning.

It was so habitual to her to rejoice with those who rejoiced, and weep with those who wept, that her thoughts were readily transferred from the cheerful party she had left, to the house of mourning. By the time she reached the old Hall, which, with its grey stone balustrades, terraces, and mullioned windows draped with creeping plants, had always such an air of quiet cheerfulness, she had completely thrown herself into Nussy's place, and realized what she should have felt under a similar loss. The blinds and shutters were almost universally closed, and the gloom of the house and of the servants' faces as she entered, and silently followed the housekeeper to Nussy's room, had a solemnising effect, which harmonised with the

event that had just deprived the family of its head.

Mrs. May, who seemed most thankful to see any one who would relieve her from some part of her responsibility, answered Clarinda's hushed inquiry, "How is she now?" by the ominous words, "Like a stone." In fact, the poor girl was found in a state resembling catalepsy, sitting bolt upright in a chair in the middle of her room, rigid, marble-cold, and unconscious. Clarinda, who had never seen a person in that state before, did not however lose her self-possession, but caused the shutters and windows to be thrown open, loosened her dress, sprinkled her with water, and chafed her hands. Presently one of the hands suddenly moved and pressed her left side, as if it were in pain; then both hands began to toss about in wild spasmodic action, and violently to grasp her throat. Screams and wild laughter succeeded; the maids fell back aghast, and would probably have fled in their

fright, but for Clarinda's composure and steadiness. In the midst of the paroxysm entered Mr. Crewe, the apothecary, who coolly put a folded handkerchief between her teeth, to prevent her biting her tongue, dashed a glass of water in her face, and ordered the maids to apply hot bottles to her feet. At length a violent burst of tears and loud sobs announced to his professional ear, though not to the alarmed women, that the fit of hysteria was passing off; they carried her to a hard sofa, and laid her nearly flat, Clarinda tenderly supporting her head on her arm and wiping away the streaming tears. These at length ceased to flow; she gave a look of recognition at those about her, and then closed her eyes, and resolutely kept them closed, yielding now and then to great fits of yawning. Mr. Crewe then gave her a little sal volatile, and Clarinda held salts to her nose. Presently Nussy opened her eyes and fixed them on her with a frigid look. They were small and lightish grey, and never

had much expression in them; and though Clarinda felt herself chilled by that cold look, she secretly chid herself for it, till Nussy, in a voice hardly above a whisper, said, "I thought I had desired you not to come till to-morrow."

The colour rose in Clarinda's cheek in spite of herself, especially as she felt that every syllable of that hard, deliberate, unthankful little speech had been heard by Mr. Crewe. She looked quickly at Nussy, to see if there could be any mistake; but that formal, pinched little face spoke its meaning well enough, and said as clearly as her whisper, "Your presence is un-called-for and obnoxious."

Despite the painful circumstances in which they were placed, Mr. Crewe could not refrain from smiling, as he said to Clarinda, across Nussy, "You seem no longer wanted."

To make sure, however, of this, she bent over her, and said in her kindest manner, "You are very lonely and very ill,—shall I

not stay with you? I will be perfectly quiet and still, unless you want me."

"No!" almost inaudibly.

"Wouldn't you like me to read to you?"

"No, thank you."

"Dear Nussy, I have been with many in sickness and sorrow."

The hand made a repellent movement this time; and Clarinda, sighing, went away.

Mr. Crewe remained behind; however, he came up to Clarinda, driving fast, before she reached home, and offered her a seat in his gig.

"Thank you, I am quite near home," she said, raising her sweet eyes, which were a little wet.

"Don't walk too fast, however; you are overtired already, I can see, and all for nothing."

"Oh, no! not for nothing."

"Well, you have the satisfaction of knowing you have tried to do good, and that God will bless you for it. Don't fret about it."

"Oh, no! I was feeling sorry for *her*."

“ Poor thing! She’s a singular character. She don’t take to you; therefore you can do her no good. She has sent already for her favourite Miss Pershore, who will give her all the comfort she is capable of receiving. Adieu!” And he drove off.

And now little Harry came springing towards her from the gate. “ We have been waiting and watching for you so long,” cried he, clasping her hand, “ and your maids said dinner would be quite spoilt.”

“ That would have been a pretty business,” cried she, immediately bracing herself up to “ rejoice with them that rejoiced.” “ And now, I suppose, you will hardly allow me time to wash my face and comb my hair, and put on my sky-blue-scarlet gown, that I keep for company.”

“ Oh, this gown is much prettier than that can be,” said he, looking admiringly on the rose-buds and pansies of her chintz, “ and your face is not dirty!”

Burrell burst out laughing. He and William were standing at the edge of the moat, looking uncommonly like two men waiting for their dinner.

“ Give me but five minutes,” said she gaily, as she ran past them.

“ Ten,” cried William ; and she took ten and no more. Harry eyed her gown as she placed herself at table. It was sky-blue, shot with white, not with scarlet. She smiled at Burrell.

“ One should never tell untruths to children, even in sport,” said she ; “ Harry’s trust in my veracity is shaken.”

“ Oh, I thought it was a piece of fun,” said Harry.

Grace was said ; and thus, in desultory guise, they spake—

Wil. How did you find Nesy ?

Cla. Very sadly, poor creature !

Wil. Was she glad to see you ?

Cla. I’ll tell you by-and-by. We won’t spoil our dinner.

Wil. (to himself.) I know she wasn't.

Bur. Singularly enough, poor Mr. Winterflood had just taken on the house for another term. Perhaps his daughter won't want it now, and may be glad to have it taken off her hands. I must get Timms to inquire about that, after the funeral.

Wil. Poor Nussy! no, I should not think she would want to stay. Then we shall have you among us.

Bur. Peradventure.

Cla. Don't let us talk of it while the poor man is above ground.

Wil. You are right. We will not. Pray, Burrell, how did you get on among the continental churches? I am afraid you must have returned upon us a sorry sort of Protestant.

Bur. I'm afraid that remark of yours shows a sorry sort of charity.

Cla. (to herself.) After spending the whole morning, too, in looking after your church and school! Abominable.

Bur. (continuing.) Do you remember what Sir

Thomas Brown said of those churches? that we have separated *from* them, not *against* them; and that at the sight of a cross or crucifix he could dispense with his hat, but scarce with the thought or memory of his Saviour.

Cla. I like that.

Wil. Don't be too sure you do, Clary; it may carry you further than you think.

Bur. Pshaw!

Wil. No pshaw at all. He would have thought it an indifferent matter to burn a handful of incense before Cæsar's statue.

Bur. No, he wouldn't. He said there was no church whose every part so squared with his conscience, whose articles, constitutions, and customs seemed to him so consonant to reason and so framed to his particular devotion, as the Church of England, to whose faith he was a sworn subject.

Cla. I like that too.

Wil. Clary, you're liking everything Burrell likes; what's that for? It isn't fair.

Cla. I am only liking his quotations from an author I know nothing of.

Wil. Ah, Sir Thomas Browne has said some queer things about something or other, I very well know, though I don't remember what they are.

Bur. Then it is not fair to cite them in that vague general way. He said a fine thing about predestination.

Wil. To what effect?

Bur. Too long to quote before ladies.

Wil. You are afraid Clarinda will walk off like Eve, and leave us to ourselves like Adam and the angel.

Bur. Milton made the *fallen* angels bewilder themselves about predestination and free will.

Cla. Harry dear, you won't like artichokes; you had better have asparagus, and you may have toast and melted butter all the same.

Har. I *should* like them, but I don't mind. People shouldn't say what they like, but take what's given them.

Wil. That's philosophy!

Cla. Think of his coming out with a general observation!

Bur. Who taught you that, Harry?

Har. Nurse said so.

Bur. Oh!

Har. I like her very well; but she oughtn't to order me about so, for mamma says she's quite a low person.

Bur. Hallo, Harry! Little boys should be seen and not heard.

Cla. (*aside.*) Let him go on; he's very amusing.

Bur. No, it will do him harm, not good. You do a vast deal in your parish, William, by combination.

Wil. Certainly we do. Combination under a legitimate head is one of the finest acting principles in the world. Look at the Christian Church. Look at every constitutional government. Clarinda put me up to this with her Dorcas-meetings, and penny subscriptions, and

music-parties. Now, we have a dozen different associations, from our Bible and Prayer-book club down to our coal-and-bread and madrigal clubs.

Bur. That last may lead to too much conviviality.

Wil. Not while it is carried on in the parson's kitchen. Clarinda always gives them a cold-meat supper. What think you of a *Don Quixote* club?

Bur. Hum! It carries rather a hair-brained sound with it.

Wil. It is not a hare-brained thing, though. Don't you remember, when you were here last, seven years ago, I told you of Asahel Brown's wanting to read *Don Quixote*? You doubted it's being good reading for him, and made me doubt too; however, the thing had been promised on certain conditions, which were fulfilled. One evening, our doctor, Mr. Crewe, was passing through our village, when he heard a burst of laughter from a cottage-kitchen. Without more

ado, he raised the latch and walked in ; and there were some half-dozen young fellows grinning over the humours of Sancho, which were being doled forth by Asahel, by the light of a cotton dip. Mr. Crewe said, " Come, my lads, I don't mind if I give you a spell." So he sat down and gave them Gines de Passamonte in capital style, (for he's a first-rate reader,) and laughed himself, he afterwards told me, as much as the rest. When he had finished the chapter, " Come," said he, " let's form a Don Quixote club ; and when you have got through this book, we'll have another. Subscriptions five shillings a-year ; here are my five shillings to begin with. I'll be president, and choose or approve the books. Asahel shall be librarian and treasurer." They have gone on swimmingly ever since, ascending in the scale of reading. They have now many profitable as well as pleasant books on their shelves.

Bur. I must make a donation, in books as well as cash.

Wil. We shall be much obliged to you. There are two or three honorary subscribers.

Bur. And they still call themselves the Don Quixote club?

Wil. Yes, that name sticks by them, and they are partial to it. I understand they have dubbed themselves by the names of the principal characters, as the Licentiate, the Curate, the Barber, and so forth. But they are deep in Bligh's Voyage now, and have just got an old copy of Lord Anson.

Bur. Voyages and travels are better for them than fiction.

Wil. Why, yes,—and yet a good deal that is high and ennobling is to be found in Chaucer, Spenser, and Shakspeare. Mr. Crewe, I understand, has made them acquainted with King John and Richard the Third; but he finds much explanation necessary.

Cla. Have any of the Heaths joined?

Wil. No, the Heaths belong to a different category. They adhere to the well of Scripture undefiled.

Bur. All the better.

Wil. Heath is an excellent fellow.

Bur. Who is he?

Wil. Don't you remember, when you were last here, (seven years ago,) I asked you to give a poor man a piece of ground on the hill-side, that was too steep to plough, and covered with stones?—telling you that though it was worthless to you, it would be a great boon to him?

Bur. Perfectly.

Wil. Well, the *Hillside estate* is now brought under cultivation.

Bur. How so?

Wil. Heath had six small children, all of whom, girls as well as boys, he set to help picking up the stones and removing them. Then he set to work with his spade, aided by as many children as were strong enough; and what he dug, he sowed with corn, getting more and more land under cultivation every year, till at length, the *whole* brought forth its increase, chiefly in corn, but partly in potatoes and other vegetables.

Clarinda had, at starting, given him a dozen apple-trees, which bore the second year. Meantime the family fared hardly enough, drinking nothing but water, and feeding chiefly on apple-pasties, baked in potatoe crust. On market-days, however, Heath frequently bought a sheep's-head and pluck for a shilling, which kept his family in butcher's meat for three days.

Bur. Capital fellow! Such a man as this, William, deserves to be encouraged.

Wil. Burrell, the blessing of God is on him! He has never had a doctor in his house, except when his wife was confined, since his marriage. He has often been found, on winter nights, threshing out his own corn by the light of a lantern. His children regularly come to school, though they are three miles from it; and on Sunday, he himself, in a clean carter's frock, with a big Bible under his arm, heads the little procession to church, be the weather foul or fair.

Bur. That man is an honour to his country. I must see him.

Wil. He will be at church this evening.

Cl. Shall you be able to keep your eyes open at church to-night, Harry?

Har. Oh, yes; I'm not such a very little boy! Besides, you're going to play the organ.

Cl. Will you come with me in the organ-loft, or sit with your papa?

Har. I should like to be with you.

Bur. You must be a very good boy, then, Harry.

Har. Yes, papa.

William here took a piece of twine out of his pocket (the table being cleared), and having knotted the two ends together, invited Harry to a game of cat's cradle. After which, Mrs. Clarinda carried him off to her own dominions, where they amused themselves and each other in various ways not consistent with the dignity of history to mention.

When church-time came, William and Burrell, Clarinda and Harry, set forth, followed by Patty and Priscilla, who locked the doors, and left the

haunted house to take care of itself. Burrell asked Clarinda if she had no fears of house-breakers. She said no, she had faith. He offered her his arm, but she assured him she did not require it; and William, smiling, told Burrell in an undertone, that, in that primitive neighbourhood, to walk "lock-in-lock" was considered tantamount to an announcement that the parties were engaged.

There was a gorgeous sunset; and Harry, with a laugh, remarked that the clouds were sky-blue scarlet.

Little knots of parishioners, trooping to the church, continually greeted them with smiles and bows or curtseys as they passed along—William striding on in advance, Burrell falling back to Clarinda. They parted at the church-door; she taking Harry with her up a dark little winding stair, he passing on up the aisle to the old oaken pew in the chancel, much like a cathedral-stall, where many generations of his ancestors had knelt and prayed before him, and where he was

surrounded by sundry of their stone effigies and tablets, now dyed in prismatic hues, as the last sunbeams streamed through the old painted windows.

On one of these monuments, immediately facing him, he read, in old English characters, "God is lighte; and in Him is no darknesse at alle;" and, singularly enough, the red, blue, and yellow rays that just then fell on the inscription, melted into pure white light, the three in one, as he mused on it.

Just at the same moment, a low, stealing sound of music breathed so softly and solemnly from the organ, that it was almost difficult to say whether it came from

"Above, around, or underneath."

Burrell was well acquainted with much of the finest Italian church-music, but found himself impressed and affected by this grand and simple old piece of Orlando Gibbons', which Clarinda had chosen, not to show off her own playing, but to raise the hearts of her hearers to heaven.

Burrell noted in the front row of the free seats a stalwart labourer, approaching perhaps to fifty, whose sunburnt, ruddy cheek, straight nose, firm yet pleasant mouth, deep-set eye, and hair "sable-silvered," came exactly up to his idea of what John Heath was likely to be ; especially as he had a quarto Bible on his knee, and was accompanied by four or five ruddy lads and lasses, poorly but neatly clad.

William soon entered the reading-desk, and the service was conducted with a homely, affectionate fervour that carried Burrell's heart along with it. The Lessons, which happened to be of Saul and the witch of Endor, and the first chapter of St. James's Epistle, were, to Burrell's mind, given in a masterly manner : it seemed as if he had hardly known what was in them before. When the responses were to be made, *every* one responded ; when the hymns were sung, nearly every one sang ; and it seemed to Burrell that a few plain professional rules must have been made familiar to them, because their articulation

was distinct and emphatic, and yet no one seemed trying to outdo his neighbours by mere strength of lungs. There was a body of sound when they lifted up their voices as one man, and sang—

“Ye saints and servants of the Lord,
The triumphs of his name record!”

and again, when in softer harmonies they joined in—

“How vast must their advantage be,
How great their pleasure prove,
Who live like brethren, and consent
In offices of love!”

Burrell remembering how, in his young days, most of them used to set their teeth fast before they started off, so as to convert “Awake, my soul,” into “N-awake, my soul,” was quite enchanted with the improvement, and soon found himself contributing a hearty bass.

When William began the prayer before the sermon, his voice and manner seemed changed, Burrell scarcely knew how, since his leaving the reading-desk; but he *felt* an increase of spirituality communicated from William’s soul to his

own, and, doubtless, to those of others, more subtilly than any incense or perfume could instil itself into the earthly sense.

As soon as the sermon began, Burrell remembered Clarinda had told him, that on week-day evenings William was going through a regular course of Old Testament expositions with his people. He had begun with Genesis when he first came among them, and was now in the middle of the histories of Saul and of David. He had contrived it so as to bring this evening's exposition into connexion with the first Lesson; consequently it was on the last dark transaction of Saul's unhappy life.

The subject and the novelty of its treatment, riveted Burrell's attention. Instead of saying, with Matthew Henry, "Never did Saul look so mean, as when he went sneaking to a sorry witch to know his fortune," there was a terrible grandeur in William's view of him. The woman of Endor became an awful sybil,—a woman endowed, perhaps, at first, with all that could endear

her to others, and make her happy in herself; but severed, it might be, by some disappointed affection or evil passion, from communion and sympathy with her kind, and impelled, by her own disordered longings, to penetrate into the unknown, to deal in forbidden arts and unholy incantations. Even if frustrated in her expectations, and unable to deceive herself, she had not hesitated to deceive others. Doubtless there went abroad a strange and ominous report of her, and she was perhaps conscious of some gratification in knowing herself the object of mingled fear and veneration.

After some practical remarks on the utterly forlorn, wretched condition of Saul, which could lead him to seek her *at all*, the next great point was the unlooked-for apparition of Samuel. Matthew Henry hesitates not to conclude that Satan personated the prophet for the express purpose of bidding the unhappy king despair and die. William, on the other hand, assumed that Samuel was literally disquieted and brought up, not by

reason of the power of the witch, but to be the minister of God's purposes : not roused from a sleep of the soul, that would otherwise have lasted till the soul was reunited to the body at the day of judgment, but summoned back to earth from the abode of departed spirits, where it was existing in a state of blissful consciousness. While Burrell was brooding over this, and considering whether he agreed or disagreed with it, he lost the thread of the argument ; and when he recalled his scattered faculties, he found William pouring forth his thoughts on the state of separate spirits, and on the resurrection of the body.

We could form no distinct conception, he said, of the state of a soul apart from its fleshly tabernacle ; but we had sufficient knowledge of its nature to be satisfied that in a state of peaceful, wakeful rest, it might be in the enjoyment of exquisite pleasures, of which it had had a foretaste even here. For what were, even in this world, the deepest, purest, most captivating enjoyments of the human soul ? Were they not

found in itself, and in communion with spirits similarly constituted? in memory, in hope, in adoration, in the consciousness of appreciated and returned affection? *Action*, alone, was denied; and the soul, possessed of such sweet solaces in the intermediate state, might well await eternity for that!

The preacher ceased, but still in Burrell's ear, so charming left his voice, or rather the thoughts it had uttered, that he started to find him no longer speaking. The doxology was sung, the blessing given, and the little flock began to disperse from the darkened church; for it was long past dusk, and William needed no lights. Clarinda was still making "soft music *breathe*" amid the old walls; and, waiting to hear the last note, with his soul perturbed, and yet exalted and comforted by images of those he had loved and lost, participating wakeful, blissful consciousness, he remained in deep reverie till roused by William's coming out of the vestry and passing through the chancel. He joined him, and they met Clarinda

leading sleepy little Harry down the dark stair, down which, without her aid, he certainly would have fallen. The fresh night air soon wakened him up, and he ran forward, rejoicing in the moonlight.

Burrell started the next day for Westlake Park, to make preparations for his wife, leaving Harry with Clarinda till Saturday, at the urgent instance of both.

Clarinda did not forget Nussy's desiring her "not to come till to-morrow;" and though that ungracious speech could hardly be construed into a wish to see her on the morrow, and her gentle temper was not altogether proof against some umbrage at having her kind offices so little valued, yet she had only to think of the forlorn orphan facing her desolation alone in that great, rambling house, to feel drawn towards her with the tenderest desire to administer in any way to her consolation. Therefore, though quite uncertain

whether her sympathy might be construed into officiousness, she left Harry in charge of Mrs. Patty in the afternoon, and proceeded to the house of mourning.

A return chaise—the old red chaise of the Yew Tree—was driving out through the great iron gates as she passed through them. The butler admitted her into the darkened hall in ominous silence, and ushered her into the dining-room, where a stout, short lady, in shabby black, was seated with her back to her, pouring an unusual quantity of thick cream into a cup of strong coffee, and eating cold chicken and buttered roll, very fast.

Miss Pershore—for it was she—rose somewhat in confusion at Clarinda's entrance, and said something about "this painful occasion of renewing acquaintance," with a mouth so full as to have something ludicrous, utterly at variance with time and place. She had had a hurried journey, was hungry and thirsty, fond of good things, and possibly expecting a weary time of it when she

joined Nesy; all of which must be taken as her excuse, since no others can be found.

Swallowing her buttered roll at the great peril of choking, and looking very red, whether from that or from her journey, Miss Pershore hastily said, "I am going to our dearest Nesy this minute—I was quite overcome—I will let you know immediately whether she is equal to seeing you."

Clarinda bent her head, and sat down, while the waiter cleared away the débris of the repast. She said to him, in a low voice, "Are any of the family expected, Richard?"

"We suppose Mr. Thomas will be down this evening, Ma'am," he replied; "but Miss Pershore is to do everything. Miss Nesy only wrote a single line to her brother; so I understand."

Here Miss Pershore entered, quite restored to her self-possession; and in a voice lowered so as to be scarcely audible, and with many movements of the features to supply the lack of words, informed Clarinda that "Dear Nesy—quite pros-

trate—unequal to the excitement—would see her after the funeral.”

Clarinda, therefore, set her face homewards.

She met Mr. Crewe near the lodge. “What!” said he, with a meaning smile, “another bootless errand?”

“Even so. But it is better to seem officious than to be unkind. Now, however, I have no more to do; I leave her in the charge she likes best.”

He shrugged his shoulders. “The Squire is gone, I hear,” said he, “and has left his little boy with you. Don’t let him go down *Wincent’s* Lane, they have the measles.”

“I wish I had known that yesterday! I wonder Mrs. Meadows did not tell me of it; she told me everything else, I think!”

“Oh, Mrs. Meadows did not know it herself till the children came home from school, very heated and with headaches. She only guessed it then; but I’ve just ascertained it. Good morning.”

“ There can't be any danger of Harry,” thought Clarinda, “ he scarcely went into the cottage.” However, she walked home, feeling rather uncomfortable.

Harry was having a fine game of play with William in the garden.

“ Don't make the child overheat himself,” said she, rather nervously.

“ Oh no ; the exercise will do him good. He was as dull as a dormouse without you.”

Presently she called to him from the window.

“ Harry dear, come in now !”

“ Oh, presently, please, Mrs. Clarinda !”

“ No, no, dear, I want you now. I will comb out your hair for dinner, and tell you a story. You must be obedient, Harry !”

“ I suppose I must,” said he, rather reluctantly, as he went in.

• “ Oh Mrs. Clarinda, we were having such a nice game of play !”

“ Yes, Harry dear, but you have made yourself a great deal too hot. Only look in the glass, and

you will see how red your face is ; and your throat too."

" What a curious frame the looking-glass has ! I should think it was a thousand years old ; or, at any rate, a hundred."

" Does your head ache, Harry ? "

" Oh, no ! "

" Come away from the open window and cool by degrees : you frighten me, dear ! I'll tell you about Robin Hood."

And by the time her story was ended, and he had cooled gradually, the dinner-bell rang.

After dinner, she gave him a large portfolio of prints, which he spread out on the carpet, to view at his ease. Meanwhile, she told William about her reception at the Hall.

By-and-by, Harry got up, and stood at her knee. " My head aches now," said he quietly.

" I knew it would," cried she, turning pale ; " now then, Harry dear, you must come to bed."



CHAPTER VI.

MAPLESTEAD AND ITS GLORY.

WHEN Burrell arrived at the haunted house on the following Saturday, his fatherly heart was chilled at not seeing his little black-eyed boy spring out to meet him. In place of this, he was silently admitted by Priscilla, who looked unusually dull; and shown into Clarinda's parlour, which was empty.

Presently Clarinda came in, looking worn and harassed; and, when he advanced to meet her, her lips quivered and her eyes filled with tears.

“Something is the matter,” cried he, hastily; “where's Harry?”

“ Harry is not very well, Mr. Burrell. I have thought it best to keep him in bed. In fact,—” Here she began to cry quietly but bitterly.

“ The boy’s ill ! ” cried he, impetuously ; “ where is he ? let me see him ! ”

“ You shall, this moment ; but pray compose yourself and come up to him quietly, for he is now asleep. When I pressed you so urgently to let him remain with me, I did not know the measles had appeared in the village. We fear, but are not quite sure, that he has taken the infection. To be on the safe side, we have kept him in bed, and Mr. Crewe has seen him twice daily. I can assure you that if he *has* taken the disorder, it is attacking him very lightly.”

Burrell had turned from red to pale while she spoke. He now followed her upstairs without a word, to his child’s bed-side.

Harry was still sleeping ; his long, black eye-lashes were resting on cheeks of too deep a carmine for perfect health, and his feverish hands were spread out to cool on the snowy coverlet ; but he was as lovely a little fellow as

a fond father could gaze upon. As Burrell leant over him a tear fell upon Harry's face and woke him.

“ Ah, papa,” cried he, gladly.

“ My dear little boy! My own dear Harry! Why, how came you to be ill? This is an unfortunate business, is not it?”

“ No!” said Harry, decidedly; “ I like being ill, for I have all manner of nice things, and lie in bed as long as I like, and Mrs. Clarinda tells me no end of stories What a number of treats I am having, to be sure! You see she has given up her own room to me, because mine had no fire-place, so I'm in the haunted room, after all!—and I think she sits with me all night, for I saw her whenever I opened my eyes.”

“ Hush, Harry; you must not talk so.”

“ I don't much want to get up,” pursued he; “ my head aches so, and I've pains all over me; but I lie still and think of many pretty things. All about fairies and angels and so on—”

“ Hush! now, Harry—”

“ I have gone all through the life of a fairy, I think—it was so amusing ! To see them dine on a mushroom-head, with a dock-leaf table-cloth ; and they had a blue-bell for a dinner-bell ! ”

“ Ah, that comes of your lullaby song of Queen Mab,” said William softly to his sister, who looked much dismayed.

“ That old man at the foot of the bed made faces at me during the night ; but Mrs. Clarinda put a handkerchief over him. I think she knows how to drive away all bad things.”

“ Now, Harry, your papa is a little tired with his journey, and he will go down stairs with William to have a glass of wine, and I will sing you to sleep again.”

“ I can't leave him yet,” whispered Burrell ; “ do you trust him awhile to me, and go to take a little of the rest you so much need.”

She saw he really wished it, and said quietly, “ Well, then, I will leave you a little while, and we will then change places. You will not talk much, Harry ? ”

“ No, Mrs. Clarinda—it's so pleasant to lie

looking at papa—only, my eyes are so hot and heavy. But I can feel his arm under my head, so I don't mind lying still."

When they were left to themselves, however, he said he hoped his hair would not all come off when he got well, for he should not like to wear a wig.

"What will it signify?" said Burrell.

"Oh, papa! So uncomfortable and ugly!"

"Why, you're no great beauty now, are you? Boys and men don't mind their looks."

"Not as long as people love them," said Harry, doubtfully.

"Why, who will love you less for wearing a wig? Your mamma and I shall not, nor will Mrs. Clarinda."

"Ah, then, I sha'n't care, even if people do stare at me. Only, mamma always calls me 'her pretty boy.'"

"She means, her good boy, her dear boy. That's all."

"Oh, is it?" And good little Harry shut his eyes and was satisfied.

“By-the-bye,” said he, just as his father thought he was falling asleep, “the first day I came here, I said such a foolish thing to Mrs. Clarinda!”

“What was it, Harry?”

“It was wrong, too, I’m afraid. I said, ‘I shall be a man, a rich man, some of these days.’”

“That savoured of bragging, certainly, Harry.”

“Yes, papa, only I have so often been told so. And what do you think she said? ‘If you live, and if your papa dies.’ But I don’t want you to die, papa, and so I told her.”

A tear rolled down poor Harry’s face.

“I’m sure you don’t, my boy,” said Burrell, kissing him.

“And when she said, ‘if you live,’ I felt quite sure of living, but it doesn’t seem so sure now!”

Burrell did not feel very much obliged to Clarinda for the suggestion.

“However,” pursued Harry, comforting himself, “we must all die soon or late, you know ;

and from what I hear of heaven from Mrs. Clarinda, besides what you have all along told me, papa, I know I shall like it very much, if I am so fortunate as to get there, which I'm quite sure to do if I believe in Jesus Christ. And *I do!*"

Ah, thought Burrell, as he kissed him again, what words of gold!

"There's no middle place, I think?" said Harry.

"No, Harry. Why do you ask?"

"Because I don't feel quite good enough for the very best of all; and a good many people I know don't seem good enough for it either. Then, suppose they don't get there!"

"We must pray for them; we can all do that."

"Yes, and 'the fervent, effectual prayer of a righteous man'—I've lost the rest! Mr. Singlehart is a righteous man, papa!"

"Yes, Harry."

"And he'll pray for me, *I* know! So will mamma, I dare say, if you write and tell her how

ill I am. But I think you had better not, it will frighten her so."

"Well, if you will lie quiet a little while, I'll think it over."

Clarinda now came in, accompanied by Mr. Crewe; with whom, after his examination of his little patient, Burrell went down stairs.

Mr. Crewe now was clear that Harry had not the measles, but a feverish attack from which he would probably recover in a few days.

Burrell, greatly relieved, communicated this intelligence as guardedly as he could to his wife, adding, that he thought it best to remain with the boy; but that if she wished to join him, he would return to accompany her to Maplestead, where Mrs. Clarinda would do all in her power to make her comfortable. He sent his letter off at once, by his own man.

William, communicating this to Clarinda in private, concluded with, "But I don't think she'll come."

"Why not?" said Clarinda; "rely on it she will."

“ Well, I think not.”

“ Unless very ill, she surely will. Have you any reason for thinking she will not ? ”

“ No, none ; only an impression.”

“ Oh, well ; one impression is as good as another, and mine is that she will and must come if she can. I shall prepare for her reception accordingly.”

“ No harm in that,” said he, smiling, as she went away.

William and Burrell were left pretty much to entertain each other during the long, quiet evening. They sat without candles as long as they could, talked over old college friends, and seemed for ever recurring to the ominous sentence, “ Oh, he’s dead.”

“ Ah, is he indeed, poor fellow ? And what has become of so-and-so ? ”

“ Oh, *he’s* dead.”

Then they talked of Mr. Winterflood, and speculated on Nussy’s continuing in the house. From the rich man’s death-bed, William reverted

to the last scenes of sundry poor men, and related many pathetic and interesting circumstances. Then he withdrew to his study for a while, and Burrell sat alone and wondered whether his wife would come, and thought how desolate he should feel if he lost little Harry. Clarinda would not resign her night-watch to him, and he felt Harry was best off under her care ; but yet he could not invite sleep while she was watching his child in danger, and he resolved within himself to keep vigil in his own room.

Clarinda came down to supper and prayers, and then took leave of them for the night. Burrell tried to cheat the time as long as he could in William's company, till he saw him suppressing a yawn ; and then he, too, retired, but with a book under his arm. Mrs. Patty, noiselessly quitting Harry's room as he passed, put her finger on her lips : he glanced in, and saw Clarinda bending over his sleeping little boy, and thought something about "ministering angels."

Harry was better on Sunday ; and Burrell was able to accompany William to church with a

lightened heart ; but it had been rendered sensitive enough by recent events, including his night's vigil, to be unusually receptive of devotional impressions ; and he prayed, perhaps, more fervently than he had ever prayed before. In the afternoon the servant returned from town with a letter from Mrs. Burrell. William presently afterwards called his sister out into the matted gallery.

“ She don't come,” said he, quietly.

“ She does not come ? Why ? ”

“ She is not equal to the exertion, and has full confidence that you will do all you can for the best.”

“ She may have that,” said Clarinda, with considerable indignation at what she thought the mother's apathy. However, she did not express what she felt.

In a few days little Harry was convalescent ; and the grateful father departed with him, after expressing his feelings to the brother and sister with a warmth that had no simulation in it. About the same time, Mr. Winterflood was buried.

Clarinda hemmed away a little sigh, as she turned into the house after watching the chaise out of sight, with Harry kissing his hand to her from the window. Who knows not the temporary feeling of dullness and flatness when pleasant guests have departed? But the best way is to battle with it, as Mrs. Clarinda did. Having cleared away sundry childish litters of half-painted prints, horses and dogs cut out of paper, &c., she tied on her large straw hat, put on her janty little mode cloak, drew her long gloves well up over her beautifully formed arms, and sallied forth to the rectory.

It always did Clarinda good to go there. When she and William first arrived in Maplestead, its occupants, Mr. and Mrs. Medicott, were youngish people, with a more numerous young family starting up around them than poor Mrs. Medicott seemed very well to know how to contend with. Parties of children in arms and on donkeys, with couples of nurse-maids, were continually to be met with in the lanes and in the village; and if Clarinda called at the rectory, she was sure to

hear long details of nursery affairs. It was a capital house for Mr. Crewe; he was scarcely ever out of it: the children were always catching everything there was to catch, taking it violently, bustling through it, and getting as well as ever. During the course of seven years, they had secured immunity from disorders that can only be had once, by having them all; and now they were springing up into fine, manly boys, and blooming, graceful girls, living in amity and cheerfulness.

When Clarinda went there, she was sure to find them scattered, in half-a-dozen parties, about the house; one sister giving a music-lesson to another, one nursing the baby, two or three busy concocting some dead secret that was not to transpire till somebody's birth-day, and one, perhaps, shut up alone, with half-a-dozen books, doing something tremendous in the way of composition or translation.

Erasmus would have said it was the way of this family to begin with kissing, end with kissing, and kiss in the interim; insomuch that Clarinda once proposed they should say "preamble supposed!"

to one another when they met, and begin talking without it. But this was declared so unsociable and unfriendly and absolutely cruel, that she was obliged to yield ; only stipulating that the boys, at any rate, should give it up after their first " half " at school. Likewise, she entreated that not more than two would talk to her at once, and that each should have their turn, herself included. So, at last, it came to pass, that her laws for good order became a regular code ; known, not as the Constitutions of Clarendon, but the Constitutions of Clarinda.

These young people had good tempers, good memories, and ready fancies ; so that there was a constant interchange of harmless repartee among them, besides an accumulating store of good old family jokes, that were frequently referred to and served up afresh ; and that strangers would sometimes have been amazed to find were considered any jokes at all. For some of them applied pretty pungently to their own little misfortunes, blemishes and infirmities ; but though they laughed at themselves, it was subscribed to in the Consti-

tutions of Clarinda, that no satire was to be levelled at one another.

Family politeness was a fine feature in this code : they rarely encroached on the privileges of one another, contradicted flatly, or answered tartly. Neither were their meal-times seasons of dullness in the absence of guests ; they felt and made it a duty to contribute to the general small-talk ; which sharpened their wits and promoted digestion.

Of course, there was no favouritism shown by father or mother ; nor was competition or emulation encouraged—but little feats of industry, ingenuity, &c. were frequently and sometimes handsomely rewarded. Mr. and Mrs. Medlicott were accustomed to talk over their affairs with perfect openness before the children ; and there was a total absence of petty concealments and mysteries among the young people themselves, except in the aforesaid case of birth-day presents.

As there were many mouths to feed out of a moderate income, plain food and apparel were very much in vogue ; and whenever a little dainty

came to table, it was surprising how far Mrs. Medlicott would make it go, so that each should have a taste. A cake or tart that most would be unable to divide handsomely into more than eight, she would distribute among twelve or fourteen, with such beneficence of manner, that each would consider their fraction affluence. But there was no sense of injustice if she could not or did not make it go round; for it was not a Constitution of Clarinda that she should give a reason why she did a thing, or why she did it not.

Ironed ribbons, cleaned gloves, and mended lace, were thought no scorn of by these good girls; nor were the lads always straightening themselves and arranging their hair before the looking-glass. When William returned from visiting the rectory, he would often say that he was sure the account of Sir Thomas More's family was no fable.

These girls were content to be called, according to the custom of the day, by the abbreviations of their names; as Nancy, Bessy, Livy, Kitty, &c.; all except Polly, who, aspiring to be known by her second name, which was Agnes, had been

honoured by her brothers with a compound appellation, and was dubbed Pollyagnes.

To these persons did Mrs. Clarinda now betake herself; and in hearing all they had to say, and entering into all they were doing, her mind presently recovered its tone, and she left them, strong and refreshed, to pay her visit of condolence to Nussy.

Burrell shortly wrote to William from the seaside, to repeat his own and his wife's thanks for the kindness experienced by little Harry; and he added that he had received an intimation from Mr. Winterflood, jun., that Miss Winterflood intended to continue her occupation of the Hall.

Clarinda sighed at the dispersion of a little day-dream. Mr. Burrell's next letter, about two months later, recorded that Harry, braced by the sea-breezes, had been committed to Dr. Curtis's charge to commence his school career. Then a pause ensued; and Mr. and Mrs. Burrell were presumed to be at Westlake Park.

One autumn day, Burrell unexpectedly appeared at the Moat House, and with a face full of trouble. Harry had been returned on his hands, ill, nervous, spirit-broken, and pronounced unfit for roughing it at school till he was a bigger boy. What should he do? Look out for a clergyman who would take charge of him, everybody said. Would William?—

Yes, William would, with joy; if Burrell could trust him with him.

Trust him? Aye, indeed! But would Mrs. Clarinda—?

“Ask her,” William said. “Here she comes.”

The very mention of Harry's being nervous and spirit-broken made the tears start into Clarinda's eyes. In everybody's moral constitution, there is, it appears to us, a certain provision made beforehand for every possible domestic relation, whether to be called forth or not. Thus, there may be the affections of a wife, mother, and aunt, lying dormant in many who have neither children, nephews, nieces, nor a husband; and, in the present instance, Clarinda, who had the making

of a very excellent aunt in her, felt precisely towards Harry as if he had been her very dear nephew. It is true, Sylvanus had a little girl whom Clarinda would gladly have become closely acquainted with ; but Sylvanus and his lady kept up very little communication with their country relatives, except in the way of exchanging turkeys and barrels of oysters at Christmas. Clarinda had only once been to town since William's induction into his living, which was on the occasion of her little niece's christening. She was one of the godmothers ; but the child was not named after her, but after a richer sponsor, from whom Mrs. Singlehart had expectations, and whose baptismal name was Lucy. Sylvanus's name was memorialized on the occasion by the addition of Sylvia, which did not chime very well with the other. He tried to make Sylvia the current name, but his wife chose it should be otherwise ; so the little maiden was called " baby " as long as she could be, and then became known as Lucy. Mrs. Singlehart had once paid a visit of curiosity to the haunted house, but fancied exhalations

from the moat, though it had long been turfed, and would by no means allow her child to be sent there. Wherefore Clarinda's affections, denied their natural outlet as an aunt, were all the more disengaged and ready to settle on Harry.

Thus, nothing could be more delightful to her than the prospect of having the charge and oversight of the little fellow; and when Burrell, colouring a good deal, said something in an embarrassed way about terms, it seemed to her and William quite absurd and unfriendly to think of accepting any. What would he cost them? Nothing, beyond the trouble, which was a pleasure. On the other hand, Burrell averred that no sum within reason could be too great for the benefit they were about to confer, and hinted the many calls William must have on him for money, in his labours among the poor. In a few minutes, a very equitable arrangement was made, each party thinking the other too liberal; and Burrell, much relieved, sat down with them to their early dinner.

“What are your views, Mr. Burrell,” said Cla-

rinda, "with regard to the system of Harry's education?"

Bur. Hum! I am not conscious of having any, except of your making him a good boy. I leave the details to you, with perfect confidence.

Cla. I am not so certain I feel obliged to you for such entire confidence. Surely you must have some plans?

Bur. That he should be religious, truthful, honest, self-denying and self-relying. Won't that do? Something between John Evelyn and Philip Sidney.

Wil. Well done, Burrell.

Bur. I should like him to be a good Latinist; but yet, more given to Greek than Latin. Hebrew I don't care for, as he is not intended for the Church. Harry may, some day, stand for the county. I confess I should like to hear him thunder in the senate.

Cla. I don't think thundering speeches do a bit of good to the country.

Bur. You don't!—Who would have expected a lady to prefer logic to rhetoric?

Cla. To rhetoric which comes from the *head*. . .
When a man's cause is good, then I like the rhetoric of the heart; and he is sure to carry his auditors along with him.

Bur. That's the secret of William's pulpit-eloquence.

Wil. I have none. I never aim at it.

Bur. You do not; but you have it, nevertheless.—Well, I should like my boy to be something of a rhetorician as well as a good logician. Mathematics may be followed up or not, according to his bent.

Wil. You are speaking of the urchin as if he were twelve or fourteen.

Bur. Well, but your sister was tempting me to scheme. I know we must be content, as yet, with little Latin and less Greek. French and Italian he already has a child's smattering of, and probably will speedily forget.

Cla. O no! Not if they are kept up. Leave that to me!

Bur. I may. English is the grand thing!

Cla. Ah! how few are sensible of that!

Bur. I own, I should like him to be a thorough master of his own language. Let him drink deeply, if you can make him, of the pure well of English undefiled.

Wil. Odd! that the line you quote should have been applied to one whose English was interlarded with French, which, indeed, had scarcely ceased to be the spoken language among the educated. English only began to be adopted into general use in Edward the Third's time.

Bur. Still, Chaucer will always carry that title with him,—as long as Shakspeare remains gentle Will, and Sidney noble Sidney, and Jonson rare Ben Jonson.

Cla. And Spenser, England's arch-poet.

Bur. Who calls him so?

Cla. He stands so on the title-page of his own Faery Queen, in my old edition of 1617.

Wil. You forget to add Dryden as glorious John.

Cla. Ah, I always grudge him that title—it should have been given to Milton.

Bur. How we love our poets! I know not of

any country but ours having given many of theirs pet names. Chaucer, Spenser, Shakspeare, Milton! England's four great lights!

Cl. I have some insight, now, into Harry's studies; but there is something else we must include—the book of *nature*. All these great men were learned in flowers, herbs, animals, and stars.

Wil. Well, I think we have chalked out enough for Master Harry to do at present. You must like this wine, Burrell, for it's your own.

Bur. What! any left of those few dozen? No wonder it is turning sour. I must send you some more.

Wil. Thank you; but I really can't accept so many good things. Moreover, I'm a water-drinker, except to grace a friend.

Bur. Pshaw!

Wil. Milton was.

Bur. Are you Milton?

Wil. That don't signify. He knew how to keep a clear head. So did Sir Thomas More.

Bur. How?

Wil. Both alike. By the four great rules—Early to bed, early to rise; plain eating, and water-drinking.

Bur. To their immortal memories! Don't rise, Mrs. Clarinda; I must run away as soon as my chaise is brought round, and I want to walk round this old place first:—a mixture of Boscobel and Hendlip Hall!

Cla. On a very small scale.

Bur. Your moat is uncommonly pretty now. So is your clipped yew arbour.

Wil. And the green peacocks.

Cla. Ah, they harbour so many snails!

Bur. You have bee-hives too, I see. Poultry?

Cla. No, they are such bad gardeners. And poultry is so cheap.

Bur. I have known my mother buy a goose and three chickens for half-a-crown. The Hall has never been kept up in the style I sometimes dream of yet. Perhaps it may be in Harry's days—never in mine.

Burrell hemmed away a sigh, and observing that his chaise would appear in a few minutes,

asked Clarinda to join them in a turn round the garden, to which she willingly consented. When its various merits and attractions had been well looked into, they sat down in the yew-arbour, which commanded a bird's-eye view of the Hall.

“ May I ask what you meant, just now,” said Clarinda, “ when you said that the Hall had never yet been kept up as you sometimes dreamed of it? How do you see it in your dreams?”

Bur. Oh, something like Penshurst in the olden times, which, as Ben Jonson tells us, was not built for envious show, and could boast neither gilded roofs nor polished pillars, but was the abode of genial, unaffected hospitality. You remember his description of it?

Cl. No.

Wil. Give it us, Burrell.

Bur.

“ Here comes no guest, but is allow'd to eat
Without his fear, and of my lord's own meat,
Where the same bread and beer and selfsame wine,
That is his lordship's shall be also mine.”

Wil. Hum! poor Ben had been put off with

inferior cates, seemingly, at some other rich men's tables.

Cla. What next, Mr, Burrell ?

Bur. Then he goes on to describe the rustic court held by my lord and lady, in the great hall, where, seated on the dais at the upper end, they received the visits of their tenants—

“And no one empty-handed, to salute
My lord and lady, though they have no suit.
Some bring a capon, some a rural cake ;
Some, nuts ; some, apples ; some, that think they make
The better cheeses, bring 'em, or else send,
By their ripe daughters, whom they would commend
This way to husbands, and whose baskets bear
Apt emblem of themselves in plum or pear.”

Cla. Pretty ! I know scarcely anything of Ben Jonson. Can you give me any more of him ?

Bur. Well, no. I hardly think I can. He lauds the park at Penshurst, and says—

“Thou hast thy walks for health as well as sport,
Thy mount, to which the Dryads oft resort,
Where Pan and Bacchus their high feasts have made
Beneath the broad beech and the chestnut shade.”

It may have been under one of those old Penshurst oaks, measuring a hundred and fifty feet from outbranch to outbranch, (I know them

well,) that in the fulness of a father's grief for his
"early ripe," he wrote—

"It is not growing, like a tree,
In bulk, doth make man better be,
Or standing long, an oak three hundred year,
To fall a log at last, dry, bald, and sere—
A lily of a day
Is fairer far in May,
Although it fall and die that night,
It was the plant and flower of light !
In small proportions we just beauties see,
And in short measures life may perfect be."

Cla. Beautiful.

Wil. His epitaph on his little boy, Burrell !
Come !—

Bur.

"Farewell, thou child of my right hand, and joy !
My sin was too much hope of thee, loved boy !
Seven years were lent to me, and I thee pay,
Exacted by thy fate, on the just day.

"Rest in soft peace ! and, ask'd, say here doth lie
Ben Jonson his best piece of poetry,
For whose sake, henceforth, all his vows be such,
As what he loves he ne'er may like too much."

Cla. (*softly.*) Rare Ben Jonson !

Bur. There's my chaise. Farewell, dear
friends !

He grasped William's hand, kissed Clarinda's,

and was gone. They looked after him, as their custom was, till the turn of the road concealed him from their sight, and then returned in-doors; the one to her dressing-room, the other to his study.

Clarinda, who was very methodical, entered the heads of the arrangement respecting Harry into her summary of remarkable events. Afterwards, in turning over the contents of her scrutoire, her eye fell on John Burrell's momentous letter. She looked at it steadily without unfolding it, mused over it a few minutes with calmness and sweetness, and then deliberately burned it, and saw it consumed to ashes without a sigh.

When Harry arrived, he flew into her arms, all rosy with pleasure, so that she did not immediately perceive the poor boy looked ill. An easy mind and plenty of air and exercise were the remedies she intended for him. To this end, she began by sending him on small errands of charity and kindness, and gave him a little plot of garden ground, which she told him he might call the Poet's

Corner, and plant with every flower and herb praised by the English poets.

“ Can you think of any one ? ” said she.

“ Oh yes ! ” says Harry—

“ How fair is the rose,
What a beautiful flower ! ”

“ Well, ” said she, smiling, “ that will do for a beginning. I will give you a nice rose, and show you how to plant it. ”

“ Where shall I find the names of other flowers ? ”

“ In some of the books in the parlour. It is raining now, which will make the ground nice and soft for planting, and meanwhile you can hunt for some other names. Go and see if you can find Milton’s poems. ”

Har. (*presently bringing her a thin folio.*) These are Milton’s Poems.

Cla. Look for one called Lycidas.

Har. Here it is.

Cla. See if you can find any flower-names.

Har. (*in course of time.*) Here are prim-roses, pansies, pinks, crow-toes—what a funny name ! What are crow-toes ?

Cla. Crowfoot; wild ranunculus, What you, Harry, call buttercups.

Har. Ah, I shall not want them. But here are violets, musk-roses, woodbines, cowslips,—ah ha! my garden will be soon full—daffodillies and amaranthus.

Cla. I cannot give you the last. It signifies an imaginary flower that never fades. However, there is a real garden flower to which the name has been given, though it is not what Milton meant. He desired to strew his friend's grave with a flower that should never die, as well as with others that would resemble him by dying soon. Lycidas was drowned when a very young man. His real name was King.

Har. I like his other name best.

Cla. Is this your list? Well, but, Harry, this is not very good writing. And amaranthus is not spelt with a double m. Look and see.

Har. No, it is not. I'll alter it.

The list, in course of time, was greatly extended. This was the incidental kind of teaching with which Harry's regular studies were inter-

dispersed, and which, through Clarinda's skill, he scarcely felt to be teaching at all.

She noticed that he had a great deal of money for so young a boy, and observed to him that it might be the means of procuring a great deal of pleasure for himself and others.

"What others?" said Harry. "Oh! you and Mr. Singlehart!"

"No, Mr. Singlehart and I have enough already. There are many ways of doing good with it, if you look about and try to find them out."

Shortly afterwards, he told her he had observed some old people at church, kneeling on the cold stones—might he give them hassocks? He also found out that one of them was unable to read his small-print Bible without great difficulty. He bought him one that was in large print.

Some of little Harry's projects for doing good were chimerical and impracticable, but he soon became thoroughly in earnest; and, at Clarinda's instigation, he kept a little journal of the success or failure of his schemes and labours.

When it became known that William had taken a pupil, Mr. and Mrs. Medicott expressed a great desire that he should undertake the charge of their two youngest boys, who were a little older than Harry. William hesitated, from a conscientious fear of attempting more than he could perform, as well as of imposing too much trouble on Clarinda, who, it must be owned, was fagging at Latin quite as hard as Harry, in order to simplify his exercises; besides undertaking his reading, writing, arithmetic, and geography, and continually speaking French and Italian with him.

However, Clarinda thought a couple of unexceptionable companions like these fair-haired little Saxons such decided advantage to Harry, that, after a short deliberation, the young Medicotts were received as day-boarders. And as they were a good deal ahead of Harry in classical attainments, William soon found himself obliged to give up so much time to them, while his parochial plans were extending yet more and more, that at the year's end he found it desirable to take a curate. Accordingly, he engaged the

services of the Rev. Jasper Newball, a docile, pious young bachelor of arts, with whom he found himself able to cooperate most harmoniously.

How should they all go on otherwise than well under the influence of Mrs. Clarinda? She sometimes made charming little sketches of the boys at their play, something after the fashion of Godfrey Mind.

Miss Pershore, once established at White Canons, exercised over Nesity the influence of Leonora Galigai over Anne of Austria—the power of a strong mind over a weak one. Fortunately, the direction this influence took was in a benevolent direction, though exerted in a bigoted, sectarian spirit. It displayed itself in religious exercises and in care of the poor, with a zeal that the Singleharts could only regret was in uniform disregard of, and frequent opposition to, their own views.

The only break to the peaceful monotony of their lives, was the sudden death of Sylvanus, who was thrown from a spirited horse. William and

Clarinda hastened to town, and found him sensible, but speechless. His affection for his little girl was affectingly expressed by his looks, while he retained consciousness ; but a few hours terminated his earthly account. After the funeral William and Clarinda returned to the country ; and as Mrs. Singlehart kept up no correspondence with them, they only knew that she had returned to the society of her early friends, till, in the course of a couple of years, they received news of her second marriage. After this, all connexion between them ceased, though Clarinda occasionally thought of her little niece with wistful affection.

A fine sunset is dyeing the western skies with hues of scarlet, amber, and amethyst—a dusty chaise is slowly gaining the summit of a steep, chalky hill, which suddenly reveals a broad, wide stretch of undulating champaign, dotted with villages, intersected with rivulets, and diversified with grey fallows, daisy-dappled meadows, and barley fields pranked in their early green. Farm-

houses, barns, hay-stacks, and one or two country-seats peep through the trees ; also a church-tower near at hand, and a church-steeple afar off. The hawthorn is in blossom : that marks the month ! The rooks are returning home, and the cows answering the milkmaid's call ; that shows the hour ; and two or three young lads are cricketing on the patch of common near the haunted house ; that tells the place.

“ How charming ! ” exclaimed a traveller, as the chaise reached the brow of the hill, and the postilion was about to remount his tired horse. “ Why should not we walk down the hill, Julia ? Let us ! — Here, my good fellow, let us out. ”

The postilion obeyed, and the gentleman assisted his companion to alight, while a slight, active boy sprang out after her like a harlequin.

“ Charming ! charming ! ” repeated the traveller, looking about him with exquisite enjoyment. “ How dear, how lovely, is one's native land ! I experience profound emotion in contemplating it. ”

“ And see, papa, that lovely hawthorn ! Listen to the song of birds ! See, the rooks are returning to yon old rookery. And here comes a group of young peasants, bearing garlands and peeled willow-wands.”

“ How picturesque ! Can this be England ? ”

“ We only want dear mamma, to realize perfect felicity.”

“ Mamma is very well and very comfortable where she is,” said papa, taking a pinch of snuff. “ She would hardly enter into the sentiment of this scene, being somewhat insensible of the finer emotions.”

“ Ah, papa ! as we grow older, we become more obtuse.”

“ Well, thank goodness, *I* do not. We will accost one of these young peasants, and learn the meaning of their baskets of flowers.—Tell me, my pretty girl, where are you going ? ”

“ To Maplestead, please, sir. To-morrow’s th’ anniversary of the Friendly Society.”

“ Ha ! A rural festival dedicated to friendship ! Is it possible ? Attend to this, Julia and Eugene ;

we are about to hear something vastly interesting. A *friendly* society you say, my good girl—pray, what may that be?”

“ Why, sir, you see, there’s three classes in it—the men, the women, and the children—each give what they can ; that’s to say, the men eighteen pence a-month and seven shillings entrance—then they receives six or eight shillings a-week when they’re ill ; the women pay one shilling a-month and five shillings entrance—they gets six shillings a-week when they are ill ; we children pay a penny a-month, and one shilling entrance, and have eighteen pence a-week when we’re ill. That’s it, sir, please.”

“ Hum ! You must all have very good health, I should think, or your society would soon be bankrupt. Who’s your financier ?”

“ Sir ?”

“ Who takes and manages your money concerns ?”

“ The parson, sir.”

“ And has he gone on long with it ?”

“ Oh yes, sir, these five years !”

“ And do all the poor people subscribe ? ”

“ No, sir, he won't let the bad ones have anything to do with it. ”

“ Then *your* belonging to it is a proof you are a good one ! ”

“ We're not always good, sir. When we do wrong, we are admonished ; and when we've been admonished three times, and don't mend, parson turns us out. ”

“ Have *you* ever been admonished ? ” said Eugene suddenly, looking full at her.

“ No, sir ; none of us. ”

“ A girl that has been admonished more than once is looked down upon ! ” broke in one of the others.

“ And those that have never been admonished, like Rose Heath, ” cried another eagerly, “ are always sure of good places ! ”

“ And good husbands, ” added a little boy. Whereon Rose blushed very red.

“ This is lovely ! ” cried the traveller, stopping short. “ It quite affects me. ”

“ Here comes father, ” said Rose, hastily, as a

sunburnt labourer strode down a steep hill-path ;
“ he can tell you more, sir, than I can.”

And she shyly fell back.

“ Good evening, friend,” said Mr. Selfe ; “ are you a native of this place ?”

“ Yes, sir, man and boy, I’ve lived in Maplestead parish fifty years come Michaelmas.”

“ You must have seen many changes in that time.”

“ Country ways don’t change fast, sir. We go on day by day, just with the seasons. I should oftentimes be puzzled to tell when this or that thing happened if I didn’t keep a bit of reckoning.”

“ A diary !”

“ A dairy ? Well, sir, my score’s behind the dairy door, that’s a fact, on the white-washed wall : my dame would hold it untidy if’t were anywhere else.”

Eugene here gave a furtive look of ridicule at his mother, who smiled a little, but not ill-naturedly.

“ Where your space is so limited, my friend,”

said Mr. Selfe, " you will only, I should think, record remarkable events."

" Just so, sir—such as births and deaths, awful storms, casualties, and variations of seasons ; rise and fall of prices, and the texts of our parson's sermons."

Eugene here gave a second look at his mother, which was met by a little frown and nod.

" Ha, they must encroach more on your dairy wall than all the rest, if you are a regular church-goer, that is."

" I and mine never miss, sir ; wet or fine."

" My good friend, that is much to your credit."

" *Credit*, sir ! Well, I can't see as one can take much credit to himself for going where he may hear glad tidings. People take it in a wrong point of view, sir, that fancy there's any."

" Humph ! You have been taught by a skilful teacher."

" O sir, he *is* that ! You may say so."

" I like the scheme of your friendly society that your daughter has been telling me about."

“ Well, sir, I hear tell they’re forming in many parts. The butter-badger says so.”

“ Butter-badger! what’s that?” cried Julia.

“ The man that comes round to the lone houses, miss, to take the surplus butter off the women’s hands, in exchange for tea, sugar, raisins, soap, shoes, or anything of that sort.”

“ Whose seat is that, my friend, peering through the trees, with the leaded roof and balustrades?”

“ Squire Burrell’s, sir; ’tis let to Miss Winterflood. White Canons, the name is.”

“ Nessy’s place!” exclaimed father and daughter, simultaneously.

“ She made us promise, years ago,” said Julia, “ to visit her, if we came near her.”

“ And there cannot be a better opportunity,” said Mr. Selfe: “ we can sleep at White Canons instead of at Crompton Wimborne. Is there likely to be accommodation there for us, my friend?”

“ Plenty, sir, surely, since there are but two ladies in the house. And good ladies they be,

too, in a way, though they do sometimes run counter to Mrs. Singlehart."

"Bless me," cried Mr. Selfe, "is the good parson you have been talking of named Singlehart?"

"Indeed, he is, sir."

"And his sister?"

"Mrs. Clarinda? She lives with him, sir—the blessing of the place!"

"Wonderful! wonderful!" cried Mr. Selfe, as they reached the bottom of the hill. "Well, we will now re-enter the chaise, and proceed direct to White Canons. Adieu, my good friend. Quite an adventure this, my Julia! To think of our stumbling on two old friends at once!"

"And Clarinda *must* be growing old by this time, papa; must not she?"

"Hush, my love. I do not wish my pleasant reverie to be disturbed by any unwelcome images."

"No, only we shall soon see her, so it *must* be disturbed shortly; and we are all descending into the vale of years."

"The vale of tears would sound more affecting,

Julia, and he, in most cases, equally applicable. But tears have nothing to do with reminiscences of Clarinda. What a fine creature she was !”

“ And *is*—see, see, papa, she is coming out of that old house with the tower ! Oh, do tell the man to stop ! We *must* speak to her, for she was always very kind to me ! Stop him, Eugene !”

With Eugene’s head out of one window, and Mr. Selfe’s out of the other, it was not long before the postilion understood he was to draw up. The whole party speedily sprang or scrambled out of the chaise, just as Clarinda, all smiles, with a flower-basket on her arm, was issuing forth in the warm evening sunlight, with the three merry boys trooping round her.

“ Not altered in the least,” ejaculated Mr. Selfe ; and then, precipitating himself towards her with the air of a young man of twenty-five, “ Clarinda !” cried he.

The soft colour mantled on her smiling face on hearing herself thus addressed ; but, though taken by surprise, she instantly recollected him. “ What pleasure !” said she, cheerfully giving him her

hand—"Julia, too!" and she instantly kissed her.

"Dear Clarinda!" cried Julia, with eyes quite full of tears. "And here is another, as yet unknown to you—my boy, Eugene."

And she drew forward the little fellow, who, like a true Frenchman, had stood in an attitude all this while, contemplating the scene. He was sallow and slender, with his mother's delicate features, and large dark eyes; but there was something about him which she had not, and which can only be expressed by the terms *fin, espiègle, spirituel*. When accosted by Clarinda, he raised his hat in a slanting direction, high above his head, with his left hand, and took hers with his right, raising it to his lips with an air of gallantry and devotion to the sex, and then falling back and gracefully folding his arms.

"Did you ever see anything like that?" whispered Giles Medlicott to Harry Burrell, eyeing the new-comer with intense disapproval and contempt as he spoke. Harry, however,

who had lived in foreign countries, and seen other little boys in silk coats and laced shirts, thought no scorn of Eugene, either on the score of his aping the airs and dress of a little man, or of his homage to Mrs. Clarinda. On the contrary, he felt rather impelled to draw near him, take his hand, and say something friendly to him in French.

William, meanwhile, had come forth, and, after the first surprise, given his old acquaintance a hearty welcome. Mr. Selfe had felicitated, congratulated, complimented, and declared himself the subject of the liveliest emotion. Julia's eyes had expressed unabated affection for Clarinda, and Clarinda had inquired after Mrs. Selfe.

Mr. Selfe then rapidly related that his own health had been so much restored by a lengthened trial of a mild climate, that he had found himself able to return to his country and his duty just as he had been offered an excellent living by a nobleman, whose acquaintance he had cultivated on the continent. Instead of among the Lincolnshire fens, his home would now be in one of the healthiest localities in England; Mrs. Selfe had

already proceeded to it to make all ready, and he was following more leisurely with Madame Vernet and his—his—

“Grandson,” put in William.

“Bah!” cried Mr. Selfe. “Why do we ever grow old while we feel young?”

“But come in! come in!” cried William, drawing him towards the little moat-bridge, “and let the chaise be dismissed. You have come to stay, of course.”

“My dear friend, I did not even know you to be in this part of the world till I learnt it by happy chance as we came down the hill. We are going on to Miss Winterflood.”

“Miss Winterflood is in the school-house now, helping the young people to decorate it with flowers, and we were on our way thither to assist. But come in, come in! We will have tea first and join them afterwards. You will still be in time to keep your dinner-engagement with Nessy.”

“We have none!”

“Oh, then you are fairly our prizes, and must

not run away. We can pack you all in, somewhere. Can we not, Clarinda?"

Clarinda rapidly considered possibilities. Mr. Burrell was expected, but only for one night; the Selfes were not to her what he was; but they had been very kind to her and William in France, and should she let the first opportunity of being hospitable to them escape her? Mr. Selfe was on his way to a new field of duty, with recruited health, and much depended on a first start—an insight into William's pastoral labours might be of advantage to one so susceptible of impressions.

All this darted through her head; and she cordially said, "To-morrow our best bed is pre-engaged; but to-night I can engage to take you all in, and I hope you will stay with us as long as you can."

"You are kindness itself," said Julia; "but," looking towards her father, "what will mamma say?"

"Mamma will be disappointed," said he; "but we must make it up to her afterwards, for

I protest I cannot forego such a treat as this will be."

In short, the chaise was sent off to the very small hostelry known as the "Barley-mow," which was the only house of public entertainment in Maplestead, and the whole party entered the haunted house, the name of which strongly excited Mr. Selfe's desire to know its history.

William graphically recited the legend, to which Harry Burrell, who always thrilled a little when he heard it, listened with great attention; while Eugene treated it with well-bred incredulity, and raised his eyebrows exactly like his grandfather.

Meanwhile, Clarinda, who was showing the sleeping-rooms to Madame Vernet, was secretly wondering whether she were a widow, which her dress hardly implied, though it was of rich black silk, extremely well made.

"How time passes on!" cried Julia; "it seems but yesterday since I last saw you."

"And yet your little boy shows the lapse of

time," said Clarinda. "What a handsome little fellow he is!"

"Like his father, don't you think so?" said Julia, faltering. "Poor Adolphe!"

"My dear Julia, in this quiet out-of-the-world little place, the news of your loss never reached me."

"Don't talk of it," said Julia, faintly colouring. "Adolphe is not dead, he has only run away; and my dear father, who had really been very generous and forbearing to him all along, was so indignant at this last stroke, that he undertook to give me and Eugene a home only on the understanding that I should never see Adolphe again. You may suppose the subject is distressing, so we will not allude to it any more. Dear papa is very kind to me."

While awaiting the hospitable country meal, in which tea, though it took the lead, formed by no means the most prominent part, they all set forth for the school.

Here, though the sun had already set, they found groups of busy happy children decorating

the walls with flowers and greens under the direction of Mr. Newball, Miss Winterflood, and Miss Pershore. The scene was cheerful and picturesque enough to awaken all Mr. Selfe's enthusiasm; and Nussy's greeting was so cordial that though he rejoiced he was pre-engaged by the Singleharts for the first night, he cheerfully agreed to spend the second at White Canons, which all parties thought a very nice arrangement.

The following morning, when Clarinda looked forth from her lattice on the flower-beds glowing in the early sunshine and sparkling with dew,— she saw a very pleasant sight, — Mr. Burrell sauntering along the turf-walk with his arm half round Harry's neck and his hand on his shoulder. Burrell looked up, and smiling kissed his hand to her; thinking, as she stood framed as it were in the quaint old window, how much better a subject she would have been for Mieris's elaborate finishing, than any of the Dutch beauties in velvet jackets trimmed with fur he was so fond of perpetuating.

Just then, William's head was popped forth from the trapezium, and Mr. Selfe made his appearance from under the porch. Clarinda, finding herself not quite so much ahead of other early risers as usual, pinned on her last knot of lilac ribbon, and descended fresh as a nosegay to the breakfast-room.

The clock struck eight as they rose from family prayers, and at the same instant the village bells began to ring merrily. Between nine and ten o'clock, several of the neighbouring clergy and gentry began to assemble; and, of course, the Medicotts and Mr. Crewe were not absent. Nussy, who under some unexplained influence of Mr. Newball, was just beginning to fall into all the Singleharts' plans, was entering into this festival with all her soul, and had invited many guests to dine at White Canons after the public feast had taken place. The three branches of the club, duly marshalled, and carrying willow-wands with knots of blue, pink, and green ribbons, and headed by the clergy in their gowns, walked in procession to the church, where Mr. Selfe gladly

took part in the full service. William preached a capital sermon, to the great delight of all, especially of Burrell and Clarinda. Then they marched back to the school-room, huzzaing themselves occasionally, while the schoolmaster played the violin obligato and the bells resumed their merry clamour. The school-room was large and airy, with a raftered ceiling following the form of the roof, and the centre beam was wound round with a wreath of flowers, while other garlands and streamers twined about the doors and windows and festooned the white-washed walls, which were further adorned by the staves of the clubs disposed symmetrically against them like halberts in an armoury. Not only had the village gardens been ransacked on this occasion, to supply roses, pinks, violets, daffodils, pansies, flags, stocks, and wall-flowers, but Clarinda's and Nussy's gardens had likewise contributed their floral stores; so that, affluence and good taste being united, the effect of their arrangement was prettier than can readily be described. Moreover, creature-comforts formed no mean feature in a feast, which, in the article

of plenty, promised to vie with Camacho's wedding-dinner. There were four long tables covered with fair white cloths; the upper one for the gentry, the side ones for the men and women, the lower one for the children. The school-bell was rung to announce dinner; seats were merrily taken, grace reverently said, and the grand consumption of roast-beef and plum-pudding commenced.

It should be said, that while William and his clerical brethren and a few of the distant gentry sat regularly down to the repast, Clarinda, Nussy, Miss Pershore and some of the young Medicotts, acted as stewardesses at the lower tables, and saw that all were duly served. There was plenty of talking and laughing; indeed, Harry said he thought it was a good thing the doors and windows were all open, or the noise might have blown the roof off.

After dinner, grace was sung by the whole company standing, to one of Clarinda's pretty chants, and then speech-making began, in conjunction with a moderate circulation of wine at the upper

table, ale at the sides, and oranges and nuts at the lower end.

First, Mr. Burrell proposed the healths of William and Clarinda, for their attention to the interests of the club, and went pretty largely and with great energy into the various blessings to the place of which they had been the instruments, and the duty and interest of all to further their good purposes in all things to the utmost of their several abilities.

Then William returned thanks, and enumerated the obligations of the parish to their good landlord. He reverted to the "good old times," as they are commonly called, and drew a graphic picture of them, showing wherein they were worthy of imitation, and in what respects our own times had the advantage, and might have yet more, if all would pull together and pull in the right direction. He mentioned his little failures, and successes in his attempts to promote the welfare of his parishioners, and brought forward several interesting cases.

Then the rector of Crompton Wimborne made

an impressive and practical moral address, exhorting the members to industry, self-denial, and mutual support.

Then Mr. Selfe electrified the auditory with an encomiastic declamation, enriched with tropes and illustrations; and, as he grew more in love with his subject and less occupied with himself, concluded with really valuable contrasts between the state of continental and English parochial life, to the great advantage of the latter.

To conclude, Mr. Crewe made a funny speech, showing how his practice had fallen off, since people had left off being as ill as they ought to be; and Mr. Newball made a neat speech, containing statistical particulars of the society.

The meeting, which had been conducted with so much cheerfulness and good order, then broke up; and the complacent members descended into communion with those less favoured individuals, who, clustering about the doors and windows, heard and saw all they could, and longingly surveyed the plum-puddings.

Nessy carried off the Selfes to White Canons;

Burrell, Mr. Crewe, the Medlicotts, and some others, drank tea at the haunted house ; and, when all the guests had dispersed and Harry had gone to bed, Burrell, William, and Clarinda drew their chairs together for a cosy chat on things in general.

This was the first hour of the day that Burrell and his friends had been left together. He now drew from his pocket a small pasteboard-box, which he gave to Clarinda, saying it was a little present from his wife of her own work, in grateful recollection of her kindness to Harry.

The box had a delicate odour of ottar-of-roses, and proved to contain a collection of beautiful lace sprigs. Clarinda, who was no mean amateur of lace, and had an elegant pillow and bobbins of her own, was very much pleased with this little present ; and Burrell, who was utterly ignorant of its value, felt gratified to see his wife's work admired.

Bur. How came my young rogue to think of turning the first book of the Death of Abel into blank verse ?

Cl. Ask yourself, Mr. Burrell, why you loved, at his age, to climb a tree? For the pleasure of exercising his young strength. Gessner's idyl, with all its imperfections, is always a favourite with children and maid-servants.

Bur. The urchin had put in a line here and there that was not bad, neither. Of course they were yours.

Wil. Unmistakeably. They had even her own phrases.

Cl. You are both of you out. I was as much surprised as yourselves.

Wil. Now, Clary!

Cl. I was! Of course, I may have now and then suggested, in an indirect, general sort of a way.—

Bur. Quite enough!

Wil. Clarinda has written a better *Antigone* than *Sophocles*, Burrell.

Cl. William! Mr. Burrell, you know his weakness.

Bur. Oh yes, we won't take notice.

Wil. Fact, though.

Bur. Where is it? Seeing is believing.

Wil. Ah, you'll never see it, for it is burnt.

Bur. Why did you permit that?

Wil. How could I help it? She said my approval was enough. Besides, comparisons are odious; and they might have been made.

Bur. What is Harry reading now?

Cl. Rollin, with me, for task—Spenser and Hoole's Tasso for play. We are very pugnacious, and fight the battles over again in our walks and talks, not sparing Argantes and Tancred a single blow or thrust.

Bur. Why do you get up my young monkey's themes?

Cl. You really do him injustice, Mr. Burrell. To hear you and William, one would not think Harry had a grain of sense.

Wil. *Me?*

Bur. *Me?*

Cl. The fact is, he is far beyond the average, full of fancy and imagination; and, having a good general knowledge of English romantic history and other histories, his mind supplies illustrations

of abstract subjects far more readily than the Medicotts, though they are older.

Bur. Not only that, but he writes good English,—now he is in leading-strings. But I fear he will never learn to do anything of himself while you do so much for him.

Cla. Never fear. How did he learn English history?

Bur. In a wonderful way, I confess. He had the substance of Bede and Geoffrey of Monmouth, Froissart and Clarendon, at his fingers' ends, without having read a word of them.

Cla. I can assure you he has read many a word and many a page of each. He only needs to be shown his way through them.

Bur. Is it a good thing to pick out plums?

Cla. Why, we don't eat the leaves of real plums, do we?

Wil. No, but we eat the whole plum bun, Clary, without picking out the fruit. That's what Burrell meant. Don't be put down by her, Burrell.

Cla. Harry's worst point is his writing. I

can't think why boys always *will* write so badly.

Bur. Nay, I think he writes particularly well, though too much like a lady. His hand is the very *moral* of yours.

Wil. So now your mouth is stopped, Clary. Hey—ho!

Cl. My dear William, what a yawn! You will set me yawning too.

Wil. I have had a fatiguing day.

Bur. You have. A very satisfactory day, though.

Wil. Very. How well everything went off! What an enormous quantity of pudding children can eat!

Bur. Mr. Peach was rather prosy.

Wil. Yes, but Mr. Selfe came out very strong. One can't help liking that comical fellow. I hope he'll go on straight when he gets to his new parish.

Cl. Hammer your own plans well into him, William, while he is here.

Wil. Oh, my plans have nothing particular. Indeed, I have but one.

Bur. What is that?

Wil. To do the best I can, seeking the continual blessing of God.

Bur. Ha!

Wil. By-the-bye, I'm not very quick-sighted into my neighbours' concerns; but I can now and then see as far into a mill-stone as others; and I *really do think*

Cla. What?

Bur. What is it you really do think? Come, William, don't fall quite asleep before you are tucked up in your trapezium.

Wil. I really do think Nussy Winterflood will marry Jasper Newball some of these days.

Cla. Ha, ha, ha!

Bur. Ha, ha, ha! Well, good night!

“Julia,” said Mr. Selfe to his daughter the next morning as they strolled together on the terrace at White Canons before Nussy had descended to breakfast, “I find myself quite penetrated at learning what this excellent fellow

Singlehart has effected since he settled in this modest retirement. We never classed him among shining lights and first-rate geniuses; and yet, could one have the satisfaction of doing even the same amount of good in a large sphere that he has done in a small one,—'twould be something!"

"It would indeed, papa; and I never took so poor an estimate of Mr. Singlehart's abilities as you appear to have done. As for Clarinda, I esteem it a privilege to know her. And it would be a duty to imitate her, if one could. To rival her would be impossible."

"You speak modestly, my love,—and yet with reason."

"Ah, papa, we are entering on a new home—no one knows anything about us, everybody will be inclined to like and respect us at setting out. What an advantage that will give us! How delightful it will be to emulate Mr. Singlehart in good works; what a motive, what a spirit it may impart to our daily lives! You as a preacher are more eloquent than he is; and if you'll aid me, dear papa, from the very first, in going about

among the poor,—I'll try to be something like Clarinda."

"Julia! this endears you to me beyond expression. Let me kiss away this tender tear."

"Ah papa! you are so good! But I fear—."

"What, my darling child?"

"That I shall never be able to be to Eugene what Clarinda is to Harry Burrell. He is getting quite beyond me already; and I fear we spoil him too much. My own information is too superficial to enable me to keep a-head of a clever boy of ten years old, and *you* will have far too many and too important claims on your time and thought to admit of your undertaking his tuition."

"I? My dear Julia, I would as soon set about squaring the circle! No, I believe we must send the youngster to a boarding school very soon. You sigh; but Julia, it will be for your good as well as his own; for the good of all the house. By-the-bye, what a capital thing it would be if we could prevail on Mr. Singlehart to take him as pupil!"

“ Ah, that would be delightful ! I should not mind parting with him.”

“ Well, you can sound Mrs. Clarinda on the subject while you are together ; and, if opportunity offers, I will name it to her brother. Otherwise, I will write to him about it when we get home. There’s no good in being precipitate.”

As Mr. Selfe’s practice was singularly at variance with his theory, it is not surprising that he broached the subject to William during their next interview ; and as William, without any more idea of being a *schoolmaster* than Milton had, was finding both a theoretical and practical pleasure in training young minds for heaven, he accepted the charge of Eugene without a moment’s reluctance ; subject only to the approval of Clarinda, —which was granted.

The Selfes are gone, — Eugene remains, — Burrell has returned to Westlake Park, —and Maplestead has resumed its usual routine of quiet activity. A hum of boys’ voices is heard during

given hours, in William's study; then they sally forth, trooping round Clarinda, on long country walks, sometimes taking a basket of eatables with them and not returning home till evening.

One night, when Harry had gone to bed, and William was reading aloud to Clarinda, who was lace-making, a ring at the gate disturbed and surprised them, and presently Priscilla brought in a letter which Mr. Burrell's own man had ridden post to deliver.

Clarinda's heart beat with vague apprehension as William broke the seal: the moment he glanced at the contents, he turned rather pale, and summed them up in four words to his sister, uttering in a low voice—

“Mrs. Burrell is dead!”

Clarinda turned very white. “Poor Harry!” exclaimed she. “How can I tell him?”

“Burrell wants the boy—he wants me to take him—she died at four o'clock this morning. Franks must have ridden hard. See to his getting some refreshment. A chaise must be at the door at daybreak. We need not wake Harry to-night.”

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“No, oh no.” And she took the letter he handed her, which conveyed little more than he had already told, and then, clasping her hands on her knees, sat the picture of sorrow.

Suddenly starting, she rang the bell, desired Franks might have refreshment offered him immediately, and found her wishes had been forestalled. Then she went to him in the kitchen, and heard all he had to tell; then returned to repeat what she had gathered to William; and then they sat and talked of Mrs. Burrell’s long and ill-understood sufferings, of Harry’s loss, of Burrell’s sorrow, as only such true friends could.

When they retired for the night, Clarinda stole into Harry’s room and stood by him as he lay in rosy sleep, with the “Arabian Nights” peeping from under his pillow.

She breathed a prayer, and dropped a tear.



CHAPTER VII.

ABROAD AND AT HOME.

BURRELL, deeply affected by the loss of his wife, to whom he was sincerely attached, once more left England, with the intention of remaining a considerable time abroad, and then returning home and settling there for life. He therefore arranged his affairs, sent Harry back to Maplestead as soon as the funeral was over, and started for the East.

The East! that magical word! calling up, at a monosyllable, the early story of the world, from the first sin and the first grief! emblazoned, as the scroll unfolds, with the deeds of patriarchs,

lawgivers, judges, prophets, and martyrs—consecrated by the footprints of Jesus—hallowed by the labours of apostles and early disciples—invested with terrible majesty by the resolution of the beleaguered Jews, when the abomination of desolation stood in the Holy Place—when the land was desolated by the Moslem, rescued by the Crusaders, and left, at length, dispeopled, desolated, to enjoy its forlorn Sabbaths, till the fulness of the Gentiles should be gathered—Who, without a thrill, can hear mention made of the East?

To say nothing of those lands round about,—Asshur, and the land of Shinar, the country that is beyond Euphrates, and that lieth round about Damascus—Edom, and Sin, and the Kenite that set his nest in a rock—the country that is called desert—Arabia and Saba—Egypt, that shadoweth with wings, and the land of Ethiopia—the black river Nahal, or Nile, that signifieth black—Tadmor, among its lonely palm-trees—Ophir, famous for gold, precious stones, and algum-trees—the hundred and twenty and seven provinces over

which reigned Ahasuerus—Elam, and all her multitude; Mesech, Tubal, and all their multitudes, their kings and their princes, and their companies, all of them slain, fallen by the sword, whose graves are set in the sides of the rock, though they caused terror in the land of the living—buried with their weapons of war, *with their swords under their heads, and their iniquities upon their bones*, though they were the terror of the mighty in the land of the living!—bones now being disinterred, mummies unrolled, weapons exhumed, inscriptions interpreted, for the more perfect understanding of the wonderful ways of God!

Well, all this, or as much of it as he could, Burrell set forth to see, and to muse over, and to profit by. Meanwhile, his little son flourished in all the early promise of future goodness and excellence, like a garden-flower under a southern wall. I have not the smallest doubt that the married life is the best, the most useful, and, in some instances, the most happy; nevertheless, I pronounce without hesitation, that William and

Clarinda were at this time in the possession of deep, unalloyed felicity, that, in this state of existence, hardly admitted of increase. Their position, occupations, characters, motives, hopes, and wishes, were, in some measure, peculiar—their reward was peculiar too.

When Burrell had been absent several months, Clarinda became uneasy about Harry's health, and kept a watchful eye over him lest some latent disease might be impending, or his mental powers be taxed beyond his strength. He was one of those boys who require keeping back rather than urging forward; always zealous, always eager about something, athirst for knowledge, hungry for the why and wherefore of things natural and things spiritual—impulsive, imaginative, and sensitive.

The two Medlicotts always treated him with a kind of affectionate indulgence as their junior, never taunting or teasing him; Eugene, who was nearer his own age, would do both, and yet was fond of him too, and would often saunter with him or sit reading out of the same story-book,

with his arm round his neck. His disposition was capricious, however, and his nature was not open.

Sometimes they would have boyish quarrels. Thus, when Harry had accomplished with great pains a copy of verses in celebration of Clarinda's birthday, which he was especially anxious should be kept a dead secret till that event came off, Eugene, from downright want of reticence, betrayed the existence of what he considered a very grand performance, and thereby made Harry very angry; much more so, Eugene thought, than the occasion demanded; and his resentment continued silently to smoulder long after Harry's had exploded.

It was soon after this that Clarinda began to have apprehensions concerning Harry's health. One evening, when in the course of Scripture reading the portion selected by William for family service was the chapter in the book of Job which contains the vision of Eliphaz the Temanite, Harry burst into tears. Eugene stole at him one of his furtive looks of irony, and Clarinda, when

the service was over, dismissed him to bed with no more notice of the occurrence than additional tenderness in her tone as she gave him her hand and her blessing ; but when the lads were gone, she commented on it to William with uneasiness, and said, "That boy is getting over-sensitive and over-wrought—he has become unnaturally exciteable and tender-spirited, he grows pale, and yet his hands burn with fever; so do his eyes."

"Has he caught anything?" said William.

"No; what is there for him to catch? he has gone through the round of childish diseases. You must not fag him too hard, nor promote anything like emulation or competition."

"There's no need, I assure you, Clary; his grand antagonist is *himself*."

"Early ripe," said she, softly. "Perhaps to be early gathered." And she sat for two or three minutes with her hands folded on her knees, in mental prayer.

Then she arose, went up-stairs, and along the matted passage, to Harry's room,—the room

Burrell had slept in whenever he came to Maplestead.

“Who’s there?” cried Harry, quickly, as she softly entered. “Oh, Mrs. Clarinda! is it *you*?”

“Who should it be, Harry?” and she sat down beside him on the edge of the bed—“and why did I find you awake and sitting up?”

“I was . . . praying.”

“Good Harry! God loves the breath of his children’s prayers.”

“Oh no, Mrs. Clarinda, I’m not good Harry!—you should not call me so.” And a hot tear rolled down his cheek.

“Why not, Harry? Have you any particular sin on your conscience just now?”

“No! I give you my word I have not—only we’re *all* sinners—we have all done those things we ought not to have done.”

“Quite true, Harry, and left undone those things we ought to have done. If Jesus Christ had not made atonement for us all, in what a bad case we should be! He is so noble, so gentle! No earthly benefactor to compare with him!

No hero, no conqueror to name in the same day with him! And yet he condescends to be the close bosom-friend of all who will accept him for such. Oh Harry, what goodness!"

"Go on talking, dear Mrs. Clarinda, I love to hear you—you comfort me so!"

"Why, dear Harry, do you need comfort so much, just now?"

He shuddered a little, and remained silent.

"Come, Harry!"—in her softest, most melting accent.

He suddenly started up, and flung his arms about her neck.

"Do you believe," whispered he, hurriedly, "in bad spirits?"

"Oh yes, Harry, in dozens of them! The spirit of ill-humour, the spirit of caprice, the spirit of obstinacy!—and many more to boot. What mischievous little sprites they are, dear Harry!" and she laughed.

"Hush! don't laugh, dear Mrs. Clarinda, or I can't say a word more." And he paused.

"Well, Harry, I am perfectly serious. Tell

me what is on your mind, my dear—or stay, let me tell *you*. Let us talk about spirits a little. It is hardly possible to read the Bible without perceiving that a great deal is attributed to them.”

“ That’s just what I feel !”

“ As *instruments*, Harry, in the hand of God, to do what He sees fit and no more. You know Satan was permitted to destroy Job’s flocks and herds and afflict him with a sore disease, but not to touch his life. And it was for a great and good purpose he was allowed any agency *at all*, and it only ended in his own defeat. Let us just consider it literally, without evading any difficulties. On a set day, Satan intruded himself among the obedient spirits in heaven, and was asked by God what he did there. The best account he could give of himself was, that he had been wandering up and down on the earth. Then God asked him, ‘ Didst thou see my servant Job there ? that perfect and upright man, whom there is none equal to in all the earth ? ’—as though we might say to a traveller, ‘ You have been in such and such a

place, did you see such and such a dear friend of mine there? ”

“ Go on, dear Mrs. Clarinda, please.”

“ Satan, like a bad, sneering spirit as he is, answers to this effect—‘ Does Job serve thee for nought? His perfectness and uprightness are mere seeming; and if he be, according to thine own word, the best and most faithful servant thou hast in the world, I can show that *thou hast not one at all*, for as soon as he finds he gets nothing by serving thee, in the way of earthly advantage, he will show himself in his true colours.’ This was the great controversy between the powers of light and darkness; and, Harry, the question was so important, that I have not the smallest doubt that Job, if he could have known the momentous purpose of his sufferings, would have accepted them with joy.”

“ He would! I feel it! But oh, I am not like Job!”

And she felt him thrill.

“ You are not in his position, Harry. Luckily, great tests are only exacted of great people.”

“That’s true; yet lesser tests may be as hard for inferior people—lesser temptations.”

“Still harping on temptations, Harry. You believe yourself to be tempted.”

He was silent.

“Harry! hear me. I do believe, my dear boy, that satanic temptations are even in these days permitted, for God’s own good and wise purposes; and what does it signify whether a tree is driven to the ground by a strong wind, or bent down by a spiritual being tugging at its branches? But I solemnly assure you that I think trials are often attributed to the author of evil, which, on the contrary, proceed direct from the Author of Good. He tests us, he proves us, to show others and ourselves (for He already knows) what is in us. Come, I will give you a little bit of personal experience, Harry. I was once in circumstances of great trouble and difficulty. I was obliged to sacrifice much nightly rest, to undergo great suspense, and great bodily as well as mental fatigue. When the occasion for all this ceased, there was a lull, and then a reaction. My spiritual supports seemed

withdrawn, and I felt as if left on the strand of life, a soulless, worthless, powerless thing, ready to fall a prey to the first distress that should overtake me. Well, in this condition, I had a great exercise of the inner being. It nearly drove me beside myself, for I really felt and believed it to be a satanic attempt to shake my faith in God. But, Harry, at this distance of time, when I look back on that dark season and see what benefit my soul received from the discipline, I am ready to cry Hosanna! for I distinctly recognise in it the good hand of my God!"

"Oh, Mrs. Clarinda, how I love you! Beautiful! You know how to give true comfort. Wish me good night, now, for I can sleep in peace!"

"First, let us pray."

And she knelt down beside him, and offered up a fervent prayer; then kissed him and left him in peace.

Harry, still wide awake, calmly lay revolving her sweet and strengthening words, and the text she had uttered as she left him, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose soul is stayed on

thee!" The room was almost, but not quite dark; a faint dim moonlight penetrated through the close-drawn lined window-curtains, hardly amounting to a "clear-obscure." Through this chiaro-scuro, as Harry lay with his wide open eyes fixed on the end of the room facing him, he was convinced he saw a shadowy form stealing, vague, dark, fearful. Suddenly remembering a test he had provided himself with before getting into bed, to prove whether the haunting spirit were palpable or not, brave little Harry plucked an apple from behind his pillow and sent it driving with full force against the ghost, who, taken by surprise, applied its hand to the part assaulted. Harry involuntarily uttered a cry of exultation, and was about to start from his bed, when Mrs. Clarinda, who had heard the apple thump against the wall, against which it had rebounded, re-appeared in her long white dressing-gown, which, if it made her look somewhat spiritual, gave her only more the appearance of Harry's good angel than ever.

"There's some one in the room," cried Harry, greatly excited.

“We’ll catch him then,” said Mrs. Clarinda, coolly shutting the door and setting down the light. At the same moment, however, the candle was blown out, and some one rudely rushed past her, bounced out at the door, banged it after him, and ran away along the passage.

“It’s Eugene,” cried she. “I’ll go to him directly. There’s nothing to fear, Harry.”

“No, nothing,” cried Harry eagerly; “you needn’t mind leaving me in the dark. What a shame!”

She groped her way to her own room, re-lighted her candle, and repaired to Eugene’s little sleeping-closet. He was curled up in bed, breathing very hard, and his eyes shut very tight, but his eyelids could not help twinkling a little; and, on her turning the bed-clothes down from his shoulders, she found he had jumped into bed in his clothes.

When he found himself detected, he opened his eyes, but only met hers for a moment, and then turned his face down on his pillow in dogged obstinacy.

She did not mean this to serve him. She set down her light, sat down by him, and insisted on his confessing his deed and why he had done it.

Eugene remained as mute as Cardinal Beaufort.

She then arose and calmly told him, that, his offence being manifest, she was quite resolved not to keep such an impenitent character another twenty-four hours in the house ; but should send him home to his grandfather the next morning, directly after breakfast.

This was more summary and severe punishment than Eugene had reckoned on ; and he knew her too well to doubt whether she would inflict it. He had already repented of having tormented Harry, while listening in the dark closet to the dialogue between him and Mrs. Clarinda, and had been attempting to steal off, unseen, to his room, when Harry hit him with the apple. He now burst into tears, and begged Clarinda not to send him home in disgrace.

Clarinda's heart melted, but she resolved not to arrest judgment till assured of the culprit's penitence. To this end, she showed him his

fault till she made him hate it and feel thoroughly ashamed of himself ; then she spoke more gently to the humiliated boy of the incorrigible evil of the human heart till it is broken with a sense of its own sinfulness and freely given to God ; more and more gently she spoke till the sweet tears of real repentance wetted his cheeks ; then she prayed with him, blessed him, and left him a wiser and a better boy.

At Harry's door she just looked in and said cheerfully, " All right, Harry. God bless you ! "

" God bless *you*, dear Mrs. Clarinda ! "

Through the whole of which transaction, the Reverend William Singlehart enjoyed repose as balmy as when—

" The nurse sleeps sweetly, hired to watch the sick,
Whom, snoring, she disturbs."

The next day, Eugene looked sheepish and shy of Harry, who could hardly preserve the prudent silence Mrs. Clarinda had enjoined. She took them out with her after lessons, and they had a fine hill-ramble, ending with a race down the hill. Clarinda's foot slipped, and she fell into

a dry ditch at the bottom of the hill, wrenching her ankle, and striking her head against a tree, so as to produce temporary giddiness. When she re-opened her eyes there were the two boys, white as paper, vainly endeavouring to raise her; one lugging at her heels, the other at her head. She burst out laughing, which promptly relieved them, and giving each a hand, bade them help her up, which they speedily did. Then, with a hand on the shoulder of each, she cheerfully proceeded homewards, limping a little, and thanking both of them for their good care of her. From that time, they were all on their old, unrestrained, harmonious footing together.

Burrell's delightful general epistles, addressed to his "Dearest friends, especially including dear Harry," were sources of the greatest pleasure, and kept him continually in their thoughts during his absence. Harry would come flying from the post-office at Crompton Wimborne (at which *dépôt* letters might be obtained some hours earlier than by waiting for Miss Winterflood's boy to drop

them at the haunted-house,) and he would signalize his good luck by waving his handkerchief from afar to Mrs. Clarinda, who was very often on the look out from the pepper-box tower.

If Mr. Selfe's letters were fuller of feeling than of thought, Mr. Burrell's were fuller of thought than of feeling, though there was an under-current of the latter too. He seemed to find opportunities rather than to make them, of telling his mind on every subject under the sun; many a historic allusion was put in for Harry, many a poetical thought for Clarinda, many a logical deduction for William. His partial readers found it almost as delightful to read what he wrote as to hear what he said.

At length he talked of coming home, and *for good*. Meanwhile, there had been sundry marriages in Maplestead. To begin with the humblest. Priscilla had enriched with her hand and heart the pious pleasant-spoken clerk, whose home had been very cheerless during the two years that intervened between the death of his first wife and his espousal to his second. Under Priscilla's management the

pretty cottage became quite a model of neatness and order ; and even Mrs. Patty was reconciled to her loss, as it made way for an orphan niece of her own, named Eunice, whom she was very thankful to take under her eye : on the terms insisted on by her master, that she should call the girl Eu-ni-ce, not Unis.

Next, there were two marriages in the Medlicott family. Livy and Kitty, who were engaged to a nephew of Mr. Crewe's and a son of the rector of Crompton Wimborne, chose to be married on the same day ; and it was quite "a wedding among the flowers," for their path was strewn with roses, and they wore garlands of blush roses under their long white net veils ; and all the other sisters, who were bridemaids, wore garlands of moss roses, and muslin-dresses and net veils, or rather lappets, that were as pretty as they were inexpensive. This was a charming double wedding, all smiles and kisses, and hardly any tears.

We rise in grandeur as we proceed. Miss Nesity Winterflood bestows her hand and fortune on that lucky man, the Rev. Jasper Newball, who

has already, through her interest, been presented to a good living in Wiltshire. Of course, Miss Pershore was in great joy ; and as Mr. Newball, during the protracted courtship, had fallen rather slack in his peculiar duties, William, who had taken all the real fagging, found himself so little hurt by it that he resolved not to look out for another help.

Here, then, was White Canons empty and quite ready for Burrell just before he returned to England ; and often was it visited by his loving friends and son in the interim, to see that everything was made ready for his arrival. Clarinda delighted to stray about it, loitering before the old pictures, contemplating the views from the different windows, pacing the terrace, or sitting with Harry on the leaded and balustraded roof, from whence a sweetly pastoral prospect was to be seen.

This is not going to be a love story. No : I have no clumsy catastrophe impending, of a marriage late in the day, between an elderly spinster and widower. Burrell and Clarinda are the dearest of friends, but are not going to be any

more to each other to the end of their cheerful, tranquil, well-spent days. Friends at a distance will please to accept of this notice.

Well, the landlord, the father, and the friend has arrived—the bells have rung, his happy boy has sprung into his arms, he is seated with him and his two friends beside a cheerful fire of ash logs. Famous wood, ash, for burning! So quiet, warm, and steady!

Eugene is away for the holidays. How they talk! How they laugh! How they scheme for the future!

Bur. You must be packed off soon, Master Harry, for Eton.

Har. Ah no, papa, please not!

Bur. Please not? What an idiom! ‘Papa,’ too, you big fellow! Do you think I choose to have a great boy like you hanging about me and calling me papa?

Har. Yes, I do.

Cla. Well said, Harry!

Bur. Mrs. Clarinda must be quite tired of you by this time.

Cla. Wait till I say I am.

Bur. And you must be getting beyond Mr. Singlehart.

Har. Oh papa, what a shame! You are teasing me now, and trying to make me feel how little I know.

Bur. Nothing will make you feel that like a public school, Harry. Here they love and cocker you too much.

Wil. What a slander! We *don't*, Burrell. And if you'll take my advice like a sensible man as you are, you'll just let the boy *be*; under your eye and mine and Clarinda's, till he's ready for college.

Bur.

“When will that be?
Say the bells of Step-ney.”

Wil. When he's eighteen. I promise you he shall be. He has been getting on very well indeed, Burrell, since you were away. He needs no competition nor emulation.

Bur. This to the urchin's face?

Wil. Yes, for he deserves and can stand it.

Hold up your head, my little chap. Run off, Harry, and bring me the essay you wrote last week.

Har. Oh, Mr. Singlehart!

Wil. Off, I say! (Harry goes.)—Burrell, he's the finest little fellow in life. It is not only what he *does*, but what he *is*, that endears him so to us. He has real character: truth, honesty, honour, heavenly-mindedness, generosity, self-denial—

Cla. Thoughtfulness; feeling; fancy; imagination.

Bur. God bless you both for all the good you have put into him!

Cla. We have only fostered and directed. Through God's grace, the good is in him.

Bur. Hush, here he comes. Well, my boy, what is this? “*On the English National Character.*” By the way, Harry, I am much pleased with the improvement that has gradually taken place in your handwriting. You now write a manly, elegant, and extremely legible hand. I can read this off like print; and what an advantage

this is to your composition! Style is the voice in which thought speaks, but neither thought nor style have fair play if buried in bad writing.

Har. I'll remember that, father.

Bur. What makes you call me father, sirrah?

Har. That I mayn't go to Eton.

Bur. Why, Harry! have you no spirit? Have you no wish to see a little of life?

Har. O papa! The life to be found among school-boys! No, I have not. Certainly, I should like to see life, not merely a little, but a good deal of it, some of these days; but I can wait till I go to college, and till I travel; if *you* can, papa.

Bur. Well, we'll think it over.

Wil. There's a year's work for you at White Canons, Burrell, now that your old steward is dead.

Bur. A year's work! I hope to find a good many more. I shall put Westlake out to nurse for Harry, and spend the best of my time here.

Wil. The old man was faithful, but excessively old-fashioned, and set his face obstinately against new improvements. You'll find the whole estate

requires draining; the timber, too, will bear judicious thinning—

Cla. Ah!—let it be *very* judicious, Mr. Burrell. You may cut down a tree easier than set one up again.

Wil. Clary always fancies she hears the Dryad squeak inside when the woodman's axe first goes in.

Bur. Well, I have a reverence for old trees myself, and will not sign the death-warrant of any one of mark or likelihood, without first consulting Mrs. Clarinda.

Burrell had really some vague notion of sending Harry to Eton, in a year or two, under an impression of its "making a man of the boy;" but there was a lurking reluctance to part with him, a consciousness of some evils that had counter-balanced some advantages in his own experience, a tender recollection of his wife's wishes, and a present disposition to defer, in some degree, to those who had already done so much for Harry, which prevented his being very bigoted in the

matter. Then, when he found how Harry could ride, and shoot, and swim, and skate, and play cricket,—how much general information he combined with classical and mathematical attainments, how much spirit and firmness he possessed, how well he spoke, and how perfectly good were his manners, he was still more inclined to “let the boy *be*.” The finishing stroke to this decision was his coming unseen, one morning, upon Clarinda and Harry in a garden alley, Harry running up to her brimful of some important piece of local intelligence, seizing her hand and passing her arm round his neck, while he looked up at her with all his soul glowing in his eyes,—which *she* returned with a look so sympathetic, that Burrell’s inward exclamation was—“No, I don’t part them any sooner than I can help it.”

This decision being very shortly mentioned casually, completed the entire happiness of the party. Burrell’s home was now White Canons; and not only his nights, but the greater part of his active or studious days were spent there; but a day rarely passed in which he did not either drop in at

the haunted-house for a morning chat, or spend the evening there. The young Medlicotts had already completed their studies, and were sent out into life. Eugene, grounded in much that was good and worthy to be praised, formed a connecting link between Clarinda and his mother, who occasionally spent a few weeks at the haunted house, though Clarinda could never be prevailed on to return her visits. It appeared that Mr. Selfe had really made a good start in his new sphere of action; and though it never could be predicted with certainty from what he was one day, what he would be the next, yet his eccentricities shot out in harmless directions, and he was admired and liked by a great many, while judged with some causticity by the censorious few. Finally, Eugene was sent to Eton; while Harry became more and more his father's companion in his walks and rides, till such time as he was sent to Oxford.

Disparity of years makes comparatively little difference where tastes fully accord. As long as we can enjoy the same active exercise, the same scenery, the same books, the same pictures, the

same music, the same rural sports, the same benevolent, enlightened pursuits, the same friends, the same religion, the same God, the same hope of heaven,—we don't make very bad companions for one another.

Harry is gone ; yet his presence awhile seems to remain ; like that of the coin, which, impressed on our hand, we seem still to hold after it has been removed.

At length, however, even Clarinda ceases to look round for him when the door opens, or to fancy his voice and his step, or to put the extra spoonful of tea into the filigree silver tea-pot on his account ; even William ceases to say, “ Shut the door, Harry,” and to wonder what the youngster has done with his paper-knife ; even Eunice ceases to bring in the supernumerary bed-candlestick, and to lay the cloth for three.

Burrell, who had great power of abstraction, felt Harry's loss less than those under whose roof he had been fostered. Burrell was writing a book on things in general ; which, if the product of an

original, reflective, observant mind, affords to those who are neither galloping after statistic information, nor athirst for history, nor ploughing deep in polemics, nor wild for poetry, nor hungry for romance,—the most delightful of reading.

A great treat was in preparation for Clarinda, in this book, at some future day; something which she would prize above Cowley, Sir William Temple, Evelyn, and Addison. Meanwhile, her daily path seemed to have lost its sunshine: she pined for the lost music of young voices; and, when she sought for them at the Rectory, she saw a dim, unacknowledged shadow creeping over that house.

For there was the unrecognised presence of death! Agnes, sweet Polly Agnes, the stay and darling of them all, was drooping from some unascertained cause. Clarinda guessed the latent mischief first, and spoke of it confidentially to Mr. Crewe: he gently broached the subject to the mother; the parents' fears were aroused, the cause was ascertained, the fate was decided!

The moment Agnes knew her doom, she

accepted it cheerfully. Instead of needing comfort, she became the comforter; the grace of God was so manifestly bestowed on her, that, after the first shock, repining was out of the question, regret needless.

It only remained for her affectionate family to emulate each other in their tender offices, and to enjoy with her such communion as the near approach of a forgiven spirit to the gates of God's kingdom can alone bestow. It imparted celestial sweetness to their intercourse, and Clarinda shared it as often as she could. They loved her, and she loved them more than ever. No friends like friends journeying the same road, whose hearts burn within them as they take counsel together by the way. "They shall be mine, saith the LORD, in the day when I make up my jewels!"

Still, there was a sadness in the sweetness of mood in which Clarinda would quit the couch of the dying girl; and tears such as angels might weep often rose to her eyes as she pursued her homeward path, praying that not one unnecessary

pang might be inflicted, and that preventing grace might render every pang unnecessary.

At this juncture she received a formal, chilly answer to a letter she had written some time previously to her brother Sylvanus's widow, now Mrs. Fortescue. In it, Mrs. Fortescue mentioned that her daughter Lucy was out of health or out of spirits, she could hardly say which,—out of sorts, at any rate.

Clarinda's heart yearned towards her young niece—Sylvanus's only child—now a girl of about sixteen ; a solitary orphan, neglected perhaps by her mother for a set of rude, romping boys, the offspring of her second marriage, who teased and tyrannised over their tender-spirited sister. She thought how she should like to have Lucy with her, and she wrote a warm invitation to her, addressed to her mother.

The answer, of grateful acceptance, came from Lucy herself, who only awaited a safe escort to perform her journey.

An opportunity offered sooner than she had hoped, and Lucy was conveyed to within a stage

of Maplestead, and then entrusted with her own safeguard in a post-chaise, which brought her to the moated-house early on a fine summer morning, rather sooner than she was expected.

The young girl was not in a very happy frame of mind. She was conscious of tastes and dispositions that did not harmonize with those at home; she had felt herself oppressed and neglected, had become nervous about her health, and wounded that no one seemed to care whether she were ill or well.

A change was therefore very acceptable to Lucy, and as her lot had never hitherto cast her into a pretty part of the country, and yet she had an innate taste for fine scenery, she was delighted to travel through a district which became more and more charming the nearer she approached her journey's end. The hedgerows were gay with hawthorn and honeysuckle, the banks with cowslips and blue-bells; the fields were green with barley, the apple and pear-trees in blossom; the cuckoo was heard in the distant wood, and the

gay lark overhead ; all nature seemed welcoming her to Maplestead.

Lucy was rather shy, however ; she had never been brought forward, nor had she heard her uncle and aunt often spoken of ; therefore they were rather formidable persons to her, and she thought less of " what shall I think of them ? " than " what will they think of me ? "

She was nervously settling her dress and drawing up her gloves a little tighter, when, the chaise reaching the top of a hill it had slowly ascended, there burst on her, oh, such a view !

Lucy, forgetting self-consciousness altogether, stretched her head out of the window as far as it would go, and looked about her in transport.

" This is a lovely place ! " thought she. " Those who live in it *must* be nice people ! "

Though this was not exactly a *sequitur*, yet Lucy was not far out. The chaise rattled down the hill, whirled along the lane, jingled past the church, and drew up short before the little bridge-gate of the haunted house.

Lucy thought she had never beheld such a

delightfully old-world-looking place in her life. She alighted, made her way up to the old porch smothered in roses, followed by the postilion bearing her trunk, and was received with sundry curtseys by Eunice, who told her that master was out, and Mrs. Clarinda in the garden.

Lucy, having settled with the postilion, entered the house, and was going to await her aunt's appearance in the quaint, charming little room known as "Mrs. Clarinda's parlour," when Eunice inquired whether she would like to join Mrs. Clarinda in the garden.

"Oh yes!" cried Lucy with a sudden impulse; and she followed Eunice to the glass-door, which opened on a broad turf-walk bordered with stocks, sweet-peas, and larkspurs, and having a sun-dial half-way between the house and the bee-hives at the end. She thought Eunice was going to be her mistress-of-the-ceremonies, instead of which, that industrious damsel, who had been called off from clapping her mistress's fine laces, said, "You'll find her in the *harbour*, miss," and went her ways.

Lucy, with a pleasing kind of dread, stole along the green alley, till she reached the sun-dial, and then came suddenly to a winding-path on the left which brought her close upon the yew-tree arbour, in which sat a most benign, heavenly-looking old lady (say half-way between forty and fifty) shelling peas.

Sometimes we feel impelled towards, and yet fearful of approaching an unknown friend or benefactor, whom, the moment we see face to face, eye to eye, we feel that we shall love and revere for ever. Thus it will be the instant we enter a better world.

Mrs. Clarinda's smooth-parted hair, still worthy of being "the glory of a woman," was arranged under a half-handkerchief of the most delicate Flanders lace, fastened under the chin by a small pearl broach. Her green-tea-coloured Chantilly-dress of rich soft silk that you might have drawn through a ring, flowed open over an ample underskirt of worked jaconot. Instead of having —

A sable stole of Cyprus lawn,
Over her decent shoulders drawn,

a shawl of transparent black lace, closed at the throat by a small diamond pin, shaded without concealing the finest line in the female form. Her dress was not so absurdly long as altogether to hide a beautiful foot, cased in Lisle thread and purple morocco; nor were her small plaited ruffles and lace mitts calculated to disfigure her fine hands. A cambric handkerchief spread over her lap, supported a small bowl of rare old china, into which she was shelling the peas which she took from a light wicker basket at her side; and, as she shelled, she hummed—

And Lucy at her wheel shall sing,
In russet gown and apron blue.

Looking up, she became aware of a real Lucy in the slender young girl, pliant and delicately tinted as a sweet-pea, who timidly stood, uncertain whether to pause or advance, under the pink and white blossomed apple-tree.

The next moment they were kissing one another; and Lucy could hardly help dropping her head for a moment on that soft bosom, and yield-

ing to the feeling that she had, for the first time, found a real mother.

Presently they were walking down the turf-walk together, with Clarinda's arm round Lucy's waist; and, just as they reached the sun-dial, they came upon two gentlemen, one of whom Lucy thought the handsomest, most dignified-looking person she had ever seen; and the other, with his sweet, deep-blue eyes and thoughtful brow, she knew at once for her uncle William, by the mark that nature, the God of nature, had set in the left cheek of all the Singleharts—a dimple.

Meanwhile Mrs. Patty had set out such a luncheon as Lucy had never seen before, even in a dream; comprising, one would think, all the dainties young people love, from ham and chicken to gooseberry tart, and custard, and strawberry-cream. Half of the large lattice was open, to admit the balmy air of June; a passion-flower peeped in, and a nightingale sang its day-song of "Philoma-gee," which, let the uninitiated learn, is quite different from the music it discourses towards midnight, when confidentially

talking over the affairs of the day, and thanking God for all his mercies.

This was William's birthday; they were going to dine at four o'clock, and Burrell was to be their guest, wherefore Mrs. Clarinda had gathered her first green peas full early. The strawberries and pine were from the White Canons hot-house, and Clarinda had already sent half of the former to Agnes Medlicott, by William, who went to pray with her daily.

Good conversation opens a completely new world to a young, well-directed mind that has been accustomed to pen up its sweet, vague thoughts and fancies amid the dreary, disjointed chat of those who talk and yet say nothing. Lucy, entranced, turned from one to another as playful and serious sayings fell, or rather flowed, from each, and began to have some dim idea of a secondary and earthly "communion of saints."

Now, knowing Mrs. Clarinda as we do, there is no need whatever to detail how she and Lucy got on together during the next two months; how her niece's youth, beauty, and cheerfulness dispersed

the sense of loss occasioned by the departure of Harry; how they roamed over the hills and through the lanes; gathered, dried, and conned the names and properties of wild flowers; sketched, gardened, visited the poor, read Shakspeare, Milton, and Spenser, Jeremy Taylor, and Matthew Henry, together; and visited Agnes, till the "wedding among the flowers" was repeated at her funeral; when young girls in white dropped blush-roses over her grave.

Harry is soon to be looked for; and Clarinda, dearly as she loves Lucy's society, thinks it will be as well to let her visit terminate before Harry arrives at White Canons. She remembers her own young heart, and thinks Mr. Burrell may perhaps look higher for Harry than he did for himself. Besides, they are as yet such children!

Woman proposes; Heaven disposes. Among the old-fashioned *properties* of the old-fashioned house, was a beautifully carved dark mahogany spinning-wheel, which had been Clarinda's grandmother's, and which she used now and then, just because she loved old, affectionate, poetical asso-

ciations, and liked the hum of the wheel, in certain moods of the mind. Lucy took a fancy to this wheel, especially as it was connected with her own name in the pretty song of "Mine be a cot beside the hill," which her aunt was singing when she first came upon her in the arbour. Everything Clarinda did, Lucy liked to try to do, whether lace-making, organ-playing, shelling peas, or painting the pictures of story-books for the village children. Of course, spinning came into the category; and Lucy, though neither in russet gown nor blue apron, was briskly revolving her wheel, when some one, as light as a roe, came flying through the wide, low, open lattice, crying, "Aha, Mrs. Clarinda!—" and then stopped short.

It would be difficult to say which of these two very good-looking young persons coloured most deeply at this first introduction. Luckily, Clarinda came in to greet her dear Harry, which prevented any awful consequences, and she and he were soon talking as fast as possible together, and arranging about having tea in the hay-field, at White Canons.

The next week passed away pleasantly. At the end of that time, Lucy, with eyes like violets wet with dew, took her last tearful kiss of Clarinda, somewhat consoled by the promise of being invited to spend Christmas at the haunted house; and then mounted the queer old gig in which William was going to drive her to Crompton Wimborne, with Harry on his bay hunter at their side.

At Crompton Wimborne William was going to engage a post-chaise, and accompany her the first stage. He would not return home before dark.

Clarinda waved her handkerchief till the gig turned the corner, and re-entered the house with two of the Medlicotts, who had looked in just as the travellers were starting. They soon left her to pursue their walk. Harry was to be looked for in a couple of hours, with some netting-silk she had commissioned him to bring her on his way home. However, he came not, and she mused, "Can the young rogue have gone on with them? . . . What must be, must."

With which very philosophical decision, she sat down to her pillow and bobbins. Afterwards

she went out and gathered flowers ; then came in and dined alone ; then read a good many of Lady Russell's letters ; then, as evening closed in, resumed her lace-making, till it grew too dark for anything but idling.

Though the morning had been fine she had been driven in-doors by the rain, and the evening was rather chilly. As William loved the sight, smell, and warmth, of a wood-fire, she caused one to be lighted, and, having drawn his easy-chair close to it and set his worked-slippers to warm, she established herself in the opposite corner, with her feet on the foot-stool, a Chinese fire-screen in her hand, and her eyes fixed on the embers, where she made out Lucy kissing her hand to her from an old red post-chaise, with Harry galloping beside her.

She hears some one coming in ; it is Harry, the rogue, with her netting-silk !— No, it is Harry's father ; come, no doubt, to inquire what has become of Harry.

So Mr. Burrell entered ; but he did not seem at all surprised Harry had not returned ; for he

said the youngster had told him he should go on with the travellers if they would let him.

Clarinda said, this was abominable of Harry, for he had not dropped a word of his intention in her hearing; nay, she was sure he had sedulously avoided doing so, for he had undertaken her commission with glee, and had let her suppose she should have her silk in a couple of hours.

Burrell burst out laughing and said, "You and I were young once; you must have mercy on him; he does not see such a pretty girl every day. You are not afraid of his running away with her, are you?"

"Certainly not. Still, . . ."

"What?"

"Nothing."

"You *are* afraid!"

"No, I'm not. She *is* a very pretty girl, as you say. The prettiest girl I ever saw, though I am her aunt who say so."

"Hum! *Not* the prettiest girl, I think, I ever saw, though you are her aunt who say so."

“ Well, I don’t expect others to think so.”

“ No, Clarinda, you must not expect others to think so ; . . . though you were not pretty ;— you were beautiful !”

“ Fie, Mr. Burrell.”

He answered never a word ; but sat looking into the fire.

“ These ash logs burn well,” said he, rousing, “ I’ll send you some more.”

“ Thank you, but there really is no need. You know we only have a fire occasionally, but they will be very acceptable at Christmas.”

“ You shall have some oak logs then. There are often rainy afternoons in August, and William is a chilly mortal,—always was, of old.”

“ Always.”

“ *Of old!* What memories those two little words conjure up !”

“ They do indeed, Mr. Burrell.”

“ Do you think youth the happiest period of one’s life ?”

“ It may be of *one’s* life, and yet not of another’s. Harry and Lucy can hardly be happier

than they are now. William and I are happier now than we were then."

"So am I, Clarinda."

It was the second time he had called her so. Like Mr. Selve, he had taken advantage. However, she let it pass in silence. He was so different, in himself, from the other; their relative positions were so different. Those two words "of old" had called up such touching, softening associations, that could do her no harm now: she owed him some compensation; at least, any one knowing what *he* did, and *not* knowing what she did, might so naturally think so. She stood to him in the position of a woman he had once deeply loved, to whom he had paid the highest compliment that can be paid by man, and which, he had had reason to suppose she had received with neglect, contumely, and ingratitude.

Without any explanation to soften and efface this galling impression, he had, as time had skinned over the wound, forgiven her supposed offence, become reconciled to her, friendly with her, deferential to her judgment, partial to her

tastes, obedient to her most slightly expressed wishes, and partial to her society beyond that of all others, enriching her with the highest, purest, most delightful friendship that one human being could bestow on another.

Clarinda revolved all these thoughts in deep and almost melancholy silence, but a melancholy that had a luxury in its submissiveness that no worldly cheerfulness could bestow. Burrell sat equally immersed in thought.

Suddenly, he said, starting from his recumbent posture and inclining towards her, "Clarinda! you seem to like me *now*. Why did not you *then*?"

The deep, honest feeling in his tone penetrated her soul, and removed every barrier but that of a dignified modesty not incompatible with frankness.

"I always *did* like you, Mr. Burrell."

"Then, why—why—" half starting up, and in great agitation, "did you never answer my letter?"

After a short pause, "I *did* answer it," said she, sweetly smiling.

He started up. "Then why did I never receive your answer?"

"Hush, Mr. Burrell—sit down again. All is over now—has been over, between us, long ago. Dear, good, malaprop William pocketed it without my knowledge, intending doubtless to post it;—and forgot to do so. I found it in his old coat-pocket with the seal unbroken, the first night I came to Maplestead.—

—"John!—John Burrell! what mean you, to weep and break my heart? God overrules all second causes! Only think how happy and comfortable we all are, together!"

THE END.

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