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THE VICAR'S DAUGHTER

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VOL. II.



# THE VICAR'S DAUGHTER

An Autobiographical Story

By GEORGE MAC DONALD, LL.D.

AUTHOR OF "THE SEABOARD PARISH," ETC.

THREE VOLS.—II.

LONDON

TINSLEY BROTHERS, 18, CATHERINE STREET, STRAND

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*J. M. Merrill*

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## CHAPTER XIX.

### MISS CLARE'S HOME.

WE had now arrived at the passage. The gin-shop was flaring through the fog. A man in a fustian jacket came out of it and walked slowly down before us, with the clay of the brick-field clinging to him as high as the leather straps with which his trousers were confined, garterwise, under the knee. The place was quiet. We and the brickmaker seemed the only people in it. When we turned the last corner, he was walking in at the very door where Miss Clare had disappeared. When I told my father that was the house, he called after

the man, who came out again, and standing on the pavement, waited until we came up.

“Does Miss Clare live in this house?” my father asked.

“She do,” answered the man curtly.

“First floor?”

“No. Nor yet the second, nor the third. She live nearer heaven than ere another in the house 'cep' myself. I live in the attic, and so do she.”

“There is a way of living nearer to heaven than that,” said my father, laying his hand, ‘with a right old man’s grace,’ on his shoulder.

“I dunno, 'cep' you was to go up in a balloon,” said the man, with a twinkle in his eye, which my father took to mean that he understood him better than he chose to acknowledge; but he did not pursue the figure.

He was a rough, lumpish young man,

with good but dull features—only his blue eye was clear. He looked my father full in the face, and I thought I saw a dim smile about his mouth.

“You know her, then, I suppose?”

“Everybody in the house knows *her*. There ain't many the likes o' her as lives wi' the likes of us. You go right up to the top. I don't know if she's in, but a'most any one 'll be able to tell you. I 'ain't been home yet.”

My father thanked him, and we entered the house, and began to ascend. The stair was very much worn and rather dirty, and some of the banisters were broken away, but the walls were tolerably clean. Half-way up we met a little girl with tangled hair and tattered garments, carrying a bottle.

“Do you know, my dear,” said my father to her, “whether Miss Clare is at home?”

“I dunno,” she answered. “I dunno who you mean. I been mindin’ the baby. He ain’t well. Mother says his head’s bad. She’s a-going up to tell grannie, and see if she can’t do suthin’ for him. You better ast mother.—Mother!” she called out—“here’s a lady an’ a gen’lem’.”

“You go about yer business, and be back direckly,” cried a gruff voice from somewhere above.

“That’s mother,” said the child, and ran down the stair.

When we reached the second floor, there stood a big fat woman on the landing, with her face red, and her hair looking like that of a doll ill stuck on. She did not speak, but stood waiting to see what we wanted.

“I’m told Miss Clare lives here,” said my father. “Can you tell me, my good woman, whether she’s at home?”

“I’m neither good woman nor bad

woman," she returned in an insolent tone.

"I beg your pardon," said my father; "but you see I didn't know your name."

"An' ye don't know it yet. You've no call to know my name. I'll ha' nothin' to do wi' the likes o' you as goes about takin' poor folks's childer from 'em. There's my poor Glory's been an' took atwixt you an' grannie, and shet up in a formatory as you calls it; an' I should like to know what right you've got to go about that way arter poor girls as has mothers to help."

"I assure you I had nothing to do with it," said my father. "I'm a country clergyman myself, and have no duty in London."

"Well, that's where they've took her—down in the country. I make no doubt but you've had your finger in that pie. You don't come here to call upon us for the

pleasure o' makin' our acquaintance—ha! ha! ha!—You're allus arter somethin' troublesome. I'd advise you, sir and miss, to let well alone. Sleepin' dogs won't bite, but you'd better let 'em lie—and that I tell you."

"Believe me," said my father quite quietly, "I haven't the least knowledge of your daughter. The country's a bigger place than you seem to think—far bigger than London itself. All I wanted to trouble you about was to tell us whether Miss Clare was at home or not."

"I don't know no one o' that name. If it's grannie you mean, she's at home, I know—though it's not much reason I've got to care whether she's at home or not."

"It's a young—woman, I mean," said my father.

"'Tain't a young lady then?—Well, I don't care what you call her. I daresay

it'll be all one, come the judgment. You'd better go up till you can't go no further, an' knocks yer head agin the tiles, and then you may feel about for a door and knock at that, and see if the party as opens it is the party you wants."

So saying she turned in at a door behind her and shut it. But we could hear her still growling and grumbling.

"It's very odd," said my father, with a bewildered smile. "I think we'd better do as she says, and go up till we knock our heads against the tiles."

We climbed two stairs more—the last very steep, and so dark that when we reached the top we found it necessary to follow the woman's directions literally, and feel about for a door. But we had not to feel long or far, for there was one close to the top of the stair. My father knocked. There was no reply, but we heard the sound

of a chair, and presently some one opened it. The only light being behind her, I could not see her face, but the size and shape were those of Miss Clare.

She did not leave us in doubt, however, for, without a moment's hesitation, she held out her hand to me, saying, "This *is* kind of you, Mrs. Percivale;" then to my father, saying, "I'm very glad to see you, Mr. Walton. Will you walk in?"

We followed her into the room. It was not very small, for it occupied nearly the breadth of the house. On one side, the roof sloped so nearly to the floor that there was not height enough to stand erect in. On the other side the sloping part was partitioned off—evidently for a bedroom. But what a change it was from the lower part of the house! By the light of a single mould candle, I saw that the floor was as clean as old boards could be made, and I

wondered whether she scrubbed them herself. I know now that she did. The two dormer windows were hung with white dimity curtains. Back in the angle of the roof, between the windows, stood an old bureau. There was little more than room between the top of it and the ceiling for a little plaster statuette with bound hands and a strangely crowned head. A few books on hanging shelves were on the opposite side by the door to the other room, and the walls, which were whitewashed, were a good deal covered with—whether engravings or etchings or lithographs I could not then see—none of them framed, only mounted on cardboard. There was a fire cheerfully burning in the gable, and opposite to that stood a tall old-fashioned cabinet piano, in faded red silk. It was open, and on the music-rest lay Handel's *Verdi Prati*—for I managed to glance at it as we left. A few

wooden chairs and one very old-fashioned easy chair, covered with striped chintz, from which not glaze only but colour almost had disappeared, with an oblong table of deal, completed the furniture of the room. She made my father sit down in the easy chair, placed me one in front of the fire, and took another at the corner opposite my father. A moment of silence followed, which I, having a guilty conscience, felt awkward. But my father never allowed awkwardness to accumulate.

“I had hoped to have been able to call upon you long ago, Miss Clare, but there was some difficulty in finding out where you lived.”

“You are no longer surprised at that difficulty, I presume,” she returned with a smile.

“But,” said my father, “if you will allow an old man to speak freely——”

“Say what you please, Mr. Walton. I promise to answer *any* question *you* think proper to ask me.”

“My dear Miss Clare, I had not the slightest intention of catechising you, though, of course, I shall be grateful for what confidence you please to put in me. What I meant to say might indeed have taken the form of a question, but as such could have been intended only for you to answer to yourself—whether, namely, it was wise to place yourself at such a disadvantage as living in this quarter must be to you.”

“If you were acquainted with my history, you would perhaps hesitate, Mr. Walton, before you said I *placed myself* at such disadvantage.”

Here a thought struck me.

“I fancy, papa, it is not for her own sake Miss Clare lives here.”

“I hope not,” she interposed.

“I believe,” I went on, “she has a grandmother, who probably has grown accustomed to the place, and is unwilling to leave it.”

She looked puzzled for a moment, then burst into a merry laugh.

“I see,” she exclaimed. “How stupid I am! You have heard some of the people in the house talk about *grannie*: that’s me! I am known in the house as grannie, and have been for a good many years now—I can hardly, without thinking, tell for how many.”

Again she laughed heartily, and my father and I shared her merriment.

“How many grandchildren have you then, pray, Miss Clare?”

“Let me see.”

She thought for a minute.

“I could easily tell you if it were only

the people in this house I had to reckon up. They are about five-and-thirty; but unfortunately the name has been caught up in the neighbouring houses, and I am very sorry that in consequence I cannot with certainty say how many grandchildren I have. I think I know them all, however, and I fancy that is more than many an English grandmother, with children in America, India, and Australia, can say for herself."

Certainly she was not older than I was; and while hearing her merry laugh and seeing her young face overflowed with smiles, which appeared to come sparkling out of her eyes as out of two well-springs, one could not help feeling puzzled how, even in the farthest-off jest, she could have got the name of grannie. But I could at the same time recall expressions of her countenance which would much better

agree with the name than that which now shone from it.

“Would you like to hear,” she said, when our merriment had a little subsided, “how I have so easily arrived at the honourable name of grannie—at least all I know about it?”

“I should be delighted,” said my father.

“You don't know what you are pledging yourself to when you say so,” she rejoined, again laughing. “You will have to hear the whole of my story from the beginning.”

“Again I say I shall be delighted,” returned my father, confident that her history could be the source of nothing but pleasure to him.

## CHAPTER XX.

### HER STORY.

THEREUPON Miss Clare began. I do not pretend to give her very words, but I must tell her story as if she were telling it herself. I shall be as true as I can to the facts, and hope to catch something of the tone of the narrator as I go on.

“My mother died when I was very young, and I was left alone with my father, for I was his only child. He was a studious and thoughtful man. It *may* be the partiality of a daughter, I know, but I am not necessarily wrong in believing that diffidence in his own powers alone prevented

him from distinguishing himself. As it was, he supported himself and me by literary work of, I presume, a secondary order. He would spend all his mornings for many weeks in the library of the British Museum—reading and making notes; after which he would sit writing at home for as long or longer. I should have found it very dull during the former of these times, had he not early discovered that I had some capacity for music, and provided for me what I now know to have been the best instruction to be had. His feeling alone had guided him right, for he was without musical knowledge: I believe he could not have found me a better teacher in all Europe. Her character was lovely, and her music the natural outcome of its harmony. But I must not forget it is about myself I have to tell you. I went to her, then, almost every day for a time—but how long that was, I

can only guess. It must have been several years, I think, else I could not have attained what proficiency I had when my sorrow came upon me.

“What my father wrote I cannot tell. How gladly would I now read the shortest sentence I knew to be his! He never told me for what journals he wrote, or even for what publishers. I fancy it was work in which his brain was more interested than his heart, and which he was always hoping to exchange for something more to his mind. After his death I could discover scarcely a scrap of his writing, and not a hint to guide me to what he had written.

“I believe we went on living from hand to mouth, my father never getting so far ahead of the wolf as to be able to pause and choose his way. But I was very happy, and would have been no whit less happy if he had explained our circumstances, for

that would have conveyed to me no hint of danger. Neither has any of the suffering I have had—at least any keen enough to be worth dwelling upon—sprung from personal privation, although I am not unacquainted with hunger and cold.

“My happiest time was when my father asked me to play to him while he wrote, and I sat down to my old cabinet Broadwood—the one you see there is as like it as I could find—and played anything and everything I liked—for somehow I never forgot what I had once learned—while my father sat, as he said, like a mere extension of the instrument, operated upon, rather than listening, as he wrote. What I then *thought*, I cannot tell. I don't believe I thought at all. I only *musicated*, as a little pupil of mine once said to me, when, having found her sitting with her hands on her lap before the piano, I asked her what she was

doing: 'I am only musicating,' she answered. But the enjoyment was none the less that there was no conscious thought in it.

"Other branches, he taught me himself, and I believe I got on very fairly for my age. We lived then in the neighbourhood of the Museum, where I was well known to all the people of the place, for I used often to go there, and would linger about looking at things, sometimes for hours before my father came to me; but he always came at the very minute he had said, and always found me at the appointed spot. I gained a great deal by thus haunting the Museum—a great deal more than I supposed at the time. One gain was, that I knew perfectly where in the place any given sort of thing was to be found, if it were there at all: I had unconsciously learned something of classification.

“One afternoon I was waiting as usual, but my father did not come at the time appointed. I waited on and on till it grew dark, and the hour for closing arrived, by which time I was in great uneasiness; but I was forced to go home without him. I must hasten over this part of my history, for even yet I can scarcely bear to speak of it. I found that while I was waiting, he had been seized with some kind of fit in the reading-room, and had been carried home, and that I was alone in the world. The landlady, for we only rented rooms in the house, was very kind to me, at least until she found that my father had left no money. He had then been only reading for a long time, and, when I looked back, I could see that he must have been short of money for some weeks at least. A few bills coming in, all our little effects—for the furniture was our own—were sold, without bringing

sufficient to pay them. The things went for less than half their value, in consequence, I believe, of that well-known conspiracy of the brokers which they call *knocking out*. I was especially miserable at losing my father's books, which, although in ignorance, I greatly valued—more miserable even, I honestly think, than at seeing my loved piano carried off.

“When the sale was over, and everything removed, I sat down on the floor, amidst the dust and bits of paper and straw and cord, without a single idea in my head as to what was to become of me, or what I was to do next. I didn't cry—that I am sure of—but I doubt if in all London there was a more wretched child than myself just then. The twilight was darkening down—the twilight of a November afternoon. Of course there was no fire in the grate, and I had eaten nothing that day; for, although

the landlady had offered me some dinner, and I had tried to please her by taking some, I found I could not swallow, and had to leave it. While I sat thus on the floor, I heard her come into the room, and some one with her, but I did not look round, and they, not seeing me, and thinking, I suppose, that I was in one of the other rooms, went on talking about me. All I afterwards remembered of their conversation was some severe reflections on my father, and the announcement of the decree that I must go to the workhouse. Though I knew nothing definite as to the import of this doom, it filled me with horror. The moment they left me alone, to look for me, as I supposed, I got up, and, walking as softly as I could, glided down the stairs, and, unbonneted and unwrapped, ran from the house, half-blind with terror.

“ I had not gone farther, I fancy, than a

few yards, when I ran up against some one, who laid hold of me, and asked me gruffly what I meant by it. I knew the voice: it was that of an old Irishwoman who did all the little charing we wanted—for I kept the rooms tidy, and the landlady cooked for us. As soon as she saw who it was, her tone changed, and then first I broke out in sobs, and told her I was running away because they were going to send me to the workhouse. She burst into a torrent of Irish indignation, and assured me that such should never be my fate while she lived. I must go back to the house with her, she said, and get my things; and then I should go home with her until something better should turn up. I told her I would go with her anywhere, except into that house again; and she did not insist, but afterwards went by herself and got my little wardrobe. In the meantime she led me

away to a large house in a square, of which she took the key from her pocket to open the door. It looked to me such a huge place!—the largest house I had ever been in; but it was rather desolate, for, except in one little room below, where she had scarcely more than a bed and a chair, a slip of carpet and a fryingpan, there was not an article of furniture in the whole place. She had been put there when the last tenant left, to take care of the place, until another tenant should appear to turn her out. She had her house-room and a trifle a week besides for her services, beyond which she depended entirely on what she could make by charing. When she had no house to live in on the same terms, she took a room somewhere.

“Here I lived for several months, and was able to be of use; for, as Mrs. Conan was bound to be there at certain times to

show any one over the house who brought an order from the agent, and this necessarily took up a good part of her working time; and as, moreover, I could open the door and walk about the place as well as another, she willingly left me in charge as often as she had a job elsewhere.

“On such occasions, however, I found it very dreary indeed, for few people called, and she would not unfrequently be absent the whole day. If I had had my piano, I should have cared little; but I had not a single book, except one—and what do you think that was? An odd volume of the *Newgate Calendar*. I need hardly say that it had not the effect on me which it is said to have on some of its students; it moved me indeed to the profoundest sympathy, not with the crimes of the malefactors, only with the malefactors themselves, and their mental condition after the deed was actually

done. But it was with the fascination of a hopeless horror, making me feel almost as if I had committed every crime as I perused its tale, that I regarded them. They were to me like living crimes. It was not until long afterwards that I was able to understand that a man's actions are not the man, but may be separated from him; that his character even is not the man, but may be changed, while he yet holds the same individuality—is the man who was blind though he now sees; whence it comes that, the deeds continuing his, all stain of them may yet be washed out of him. I did not, I say, understand all this until afterwards, but I believe, odd as it may seem, that volume of the Newgate Calendar threw down the first deposit of soil from which afterwards sprung what grew to be almost a passion in me for getting the people about me clean—a passion which might have done as much harm

as good, if its companion patience had not been sent me to guide and restrain it. In a word, I came at length to understand in some measure the last prayer of our Lord for those that crucified him, and the ground on which he begged from his Father their forgiveness—that they knew not what they did. If the *Newgate Calendar* was indeed the beginning of this course of education, I need not regret having lost my piano, and having that volume for a while as my only *Aid to Reflection*.

“My father had never talked much to me about religion, but when he did, it was with such evident awe in his spirit and reverence in his demeanour, as had more effect on me, I am certain, from the very paucity of the words in which his meaning found utterance. Another thing which had still more influence upon me was, that, waking one night after I had been asleep for some time,

I saw him on his knees by my bedside. I did not move or speak, for fear of disturbing him; and, indeed, such an awe came over me, that it would have required a considerable effort of the will for any bodily movement whatever. When he lifted his head, I caught a glimpse of a pale, tearful face; and it is no wonder that the virtue of the sight should never have passed away.

“On Sundays we went to church in the morning, and in the afternoon, in fine weather, went out for a walk; or, if it were raining or cold, I played to him till he fell asleep on the sofa. Then, in the evening, after tea, we had more music, some poetry, which we read alternately, and a chapter of the New Testament, which he always read to me. I mention this, to show you that I did not come all unprepared to the study of the Newgate Calendar. Still, I cannot think that, under any circumstances, it could

have done an innocent child harm. Even familiarity with vice is not necessarily pollution. There cannot be many women of my age as familiar with it in every shape as I am; and I do not find that I grow to regard it with one atom less of absolute abhorrence, although I neither shudder at the mention of it, nor turn with disgust from the person in whom it dwells. But the consolations of religion were not yet consciously mine. I had not yet begun to think of God in any relation to myself.

“The house was in an old square, built, I believe, in the reign of Queen Anne, which, although many of the houses were occupied by well-to-do people, had fallen far from its first high estate. No one would believe, to look at it from the outside, what a great place it was. The whole of the space behind it, corresponding to the small gardens of the other houses, was occupied

by a large music-room, under which was a low-pitched room of equal extent, while all under that were cellars, connected with the sunk story in front by a long vaulted passage, corresponding to a wooden gallery above, which formed a communication between the drawing-room floor and the music-room. Most girls of my age, knowing these vast empty spaces about them, would have been terrified at being left alone there even in mid-day. But I was, I suppose, too miserable to be frightened. Even the horrible facts of the Newgate Calendar did not thus affect me, not even when Mrs. Conan was later than usual, and the night came down, and I had to sit, perhaps for hours, in the dark—for she would not allow me to have a candle for fear of fire. But you will not wonder that I used to cry a good deal, although I did my best to hide the traces of it, because I

knew it would annoy my kind old friend. She showed me a great deal of rough tenderness, which would not have been rough had not the natural grace of her Irish nature been injured by the contact of many years with the dull coarseness of the uneducated Saxon. You may be sure I learned to love her dearly. She shared everything with me in the way of eating, and would have shared also the tumbler of gin and water with which she generally ended the day, but something, I don't know what, I believe a simple physical dislike, made me refuse that altogether.

“One evening I have particular cause to remember, both for itself and because of something that followed many years after. I was in the drawing-room on the first floor, a double room with folding doors and a small cabinet behind communicating with a back stair, for the stairs were double all

through the house, adding much to the eeriness of the place as I look back upon it in my memory. I fear, in describing the place so minutely, I may have been rousing false expectations of an adventure, but I have a reason for being rather minute, though it will not appear until afterwards. I had been looking out of the window all the afternoon upon the silent square, for, as it was no thoroughfare, it was only enlivened by the passing and returning now and then of a tradesman's cart; and, as it was winter, there were no children playing in the garden. It was a rainy afternoon. A great cloud of fog and soot hung from the whole sky. About a score of yellow leaves yet quivered on the trees, and the statue of Queen Anne stood bleak and disconsolate among the bare branches. I am afraid I am getting long-winded—but somehow that afternoon seems burnt into me in enamel.

I gazed drearily without interest. I brooded over the past; I never, at this time, so far as I remember, dreamed of looking forward. I had no hope. It never occurred to me that things might grow better. I was dull and wretched. I may just say here in passing that I think this experience is in a great measure what has enabled me to understand the peculiar misery of the poor in our large towns—they have no hope, no impulse to look forward—nothing to expect; they live but in the present, and the dreariness of that soon shapes the whole atmosphere of their spirits to its own likeness. Perhaps the first thing one who would help them has to do, is to aid the birth of some small vital hope in them; that is better than a thousand gifts, especially those of the ordinary kind, which mostly do harm, tending to keep them what they are

—a prey to present and importunate wants.

“It began to grow dark, and, tired of standing, I sat down upon the floor, for there was nothing to sit upon besides. There I still sat, long after it was quite dark. All at once a surge of self-pity arose in my heart. I burst out wailing and sobbing, and cried aloud—‘God has forgotten me altogether!’ The fact was I had had no dinner that day, for Mrs. Conan had expected to return long before; and the piece of bread she had given me, which was all that was in the house, I had eaten many hours ago. But I was not thinking of my dinner, though the want of it may have had to do with this burst of misery. What I was really thinking of was—that I could do nothing for anybody. My little ambition had always been to be useful. I knew I was of some use to my father, for I kept

the rooms tidy for him, and dusted his pet books—oh, so carefully ! for they were like household gods to me. I had also played to him, and I knew he enjoyed that : he said so, many times. And I had begun, though not long before he left me, to think how I should be able to help him better by and by. For I saw that he worked very hard—so hard that it made him silent ; and I knew that my music-mistress made her livelihood, partly at least, by giving lessons ; and I thought that I might, by and by, be able to give lessons too, and then papa would not require to work so hard, for I too should bring home money to pay for what we wanted. But now I was of use to nobody, I said, and not likely to become of any. I could not even help poor Mrs. Conan, except by doing what a child might do just as well as I, for I did not earn a penny of our living ; I only gave the poor old thing time

to work harder, that I might eat up her earnings! What added to the misery was that I had always thought of myself as a lady—for was not papa a gentleman—let him be ever so poor? Shillings and sovereigns in his pocket could not determine whether a man was a gentleman or not! And if he was a gentleman, his daughter must be a lady. But how could I be a lady if I was content to be a burden to a poor charwoman, instead of earning my own living, and something besides with which to help her? For I had the notion—*how* it came I cannot tell, though I know well enough *whence* it came—that position depended on how much a person was able to help other people; and here I was, useless, worse than useless to anybody! Why did not God remember me, if it was only for my father's sake? He was worth something, if I was not! And I would be

worth something, if only I had a chance!—  
'I am of no use,' I cried, 'and God has forgotten me altogether!' And I went on weeping and moaning in my great misery, until I fell fast asleep on the floor.

"I have no theory about dreams and visions; and I don't know what you, Mr. Walton, may think as to whether these ended with the first ages of the church; but surely if one falls fast asleep without an idea in one's head, and a whole dismal world of misery in one's heart, and wakes up quiet and refreshed, without the misery, and with an idea, there can be no great fanaticism in thinking that the change may have come from somewhere near where the miracles lie—in fact, that God may have had something—might I not say everything?—to do with it. For my part, if I were to learn that he had no hand in this experience of mine, I couldn't help losing

all interest in it, and wishing that I had died of the misery which it dispelled. Certainly, if it had a physical source, it wasn't that I was more comfortable, for I was hungrier than ever, and, you may well fancy, cold enough, having slept on the bare floor without anything to cover me, on Christmas-Eve—for Christmas-Eve it was. No doubt my sleep had done me good, but I suspect the sleep came to quiet my mind for the reception of the new idea.

“The way Mrs. Conan kept Christmas-Day, as she told me in the morning, was—to comfort her old bones in bed until the afternoon, and then to have a good tea with a chop; after which she said she would have me read the Newgate Calendar to her. So, as soon as I had washed up the few breakfast things, I asked if, while she lay in bed, I might not go out for a little while, to look for work. She laughed at the notion

of my being able to do anything, but did not object to my trying. So I dressed myself as neatly as I could, and set out.

“There were two narrow streets full of small shops, in which those of furniture-brokers predominated, leading from the two lower corners of the square down into Oxford-street; and in a shop in one of these, I was not sure which, I had seen an old piano standing, and a girl of about my own age watching. I found the shop at last, although it was shut up, for I knew the name, and knocked at the door. It was opened by a stout matron, with a not unfriendly expression, who asked me what I wanted. I told her I wanted work. She seemed amused at the idea—for I was very small for my age then, as well as now—but, apparently willing to have a chat with me, asked what I could do. I told her I could teach her daughter music. She asked me

what made me come to her, and I told her. Then she asked me how much I should charge. I told her that some ladies had a guinea a lesson, at which she laughed so heartily, that I had to wait until the first transports of her amusement were over before I could finish by saying that for my part I should be glad to give an hour's lesson for threepence, only, if she pleased, I should prefer it in silver. But how was she to know, she asked, that I could teach her properly? I told her I would let her hear me play; whereupon she led me into the shop, through a back room in which her husband sat smoking a long pipe with a tankard at his elbow. Having taken down a shutter, she managed with some difficulty to clear me a passage through a crowd of furniture to the instrument, and with a struggle I squeezed through and reached it; but at the first chord I struck, I gave a cry

of dismay. In some alarm she asked what was the matter, calling me *child* very kindly. I told her it was so dreadfully out of tune I couldn't play upon it at all; but if she would get it tuned, I should not be long in showing her I could do what I professed. She told me she could not afford to have it tuned, and if I could not teach Bertha on it as it was, she couldn't help it. This however, I assured her, was utterly impossible; upon which, with some show of offence, she reached over a chest of drawers, and shut down the cover. I believe she doubted whether I could play at all, and had not been merely amusing myself at her expense. Nothing was left but to thank her, bid her good morning, and walk out of the house, dreadfully disappointed.

“Unwilling to go home at once, I wandered about the neighbourhood, through street after street, until I found myself in

another square, with a number of business-signs in it—one of them that of a pianoforte firm, at sight of which, a thought came into my head: the next morning I went in, and requested to see the master. The man to whom I spoke stared no doubt, but he went, and returning after a little while, during which my heart beat very fast, invited me to walk into the counting-house. Mr. Perkins was amused with the story of my attempt to procure teaching, and its frustration. If I had asked him for money, to which I do not believe hunger itself could have driven me, he would probably have got rid of me quickly enough—and small blame to him, as Mrs. Conan would have said; but to my request that he would spare a man to tune Mrs. Lampeter's piano, he replied at once that he would, provided I could satisfy him as to my efficiency. Thereupon he asked me a few questions

about music, of which some I could answer and some I could not. Next he took me into the shop, set me a stool in front of a grand piano, and told me to play. I could not help trembling a good deal, but I tried my best. In a few moments, however, the tears were dropping on the keys, and when he asked me what was the matter, I told him it was months since I had touched a piano. The answer did not however satisfy him; he asked very kindly how that was, and I had to tell him my whole story. Then he not only promised to have the piano tuned for me at once, but told me that I might go and practice there as often as I pleased, so long as I was a good girl, and did not take up with bad company. Imagine my delight! Then he sent for a tuner, and I suppose told him a little about me, for the man spoke very kindly to me as we went to the broker's.

“Mr. Perkins has been a good friend to me ever since.

“For six months I continued to give Bertha Lampeter lessons. They were broken off only when she went to a dress-maker to learn her business. But her mother had by that time introduced me to several families of her acquaintance, amongst whom I found five or six pupils on the same terms. By this teaching, if I earned little, I learned much; and every day almost I practised at the music-shop.

“When the house was let, Mrs. Conan took a room in the neighbourhood, that I might keep up my connection, she said. Then first I was introduced to scenes and experiences with which I am now familiar. Mrs. Percivale might well recoil if I were to tell her half the wretchedness, wickedness, and vulgarity I have seen, and often had to encounter. For two years or so we

changed about, at one time in an empty house, at another in a hired room, sometimes better, sometimes worse off as regarded our neighbours, until, Mrs. Conan having come to the conclusion that it would be better for her to confine herself to charing, we at last settled down here, where I have now lived for many years.

“You may be inclined to ask why I had not kept up my acquaintance with my music-mistress. I believe the shock of losing my father and the misery that followed made me feel as if my former world had vanished; at all events I never thought of going to her until Mr. Perkins one day, after listening to something I was playing, asked me who had taught me; and this brought her back to my mind so vividly that I resolved to go and see her. She welcomed me with more than kindness—with tenderness, and told me I had

caused her much uneasiness by not letting her know what had become of me. She looked quite aghast when she learned in what sort of place and with whom I lived; but I told her that Mrs. Conan had saved me from the workhouse, and was as much of a mother to me as it was possible for her to be, that we loved each other, and that it would be very wrong of me to leave her, now especially that she was not so well as she had been; and I believe she then saw the thing as I saw it. She made me play to her, was pleased—indeed surprised, until I told her how I had been supporting myself—and insisted on my resuming my studies with her, which I was only too glad to do. I now of course got on much faster, and she expressed satisfaction with my progress, but continued manifestly uneasy at the kind of thing I had to encounter, and become of necessity more and more familiar with.

“When Mrs. Conan fell ill I had indeed hard work of it. Unlike most of her class, she had laid by a trifle of money, but as soon as she ceased to add to it, it began to dwindle, and was very soon gone. Do what I could for a while, if it had not been for the kindness of the neighbours, I should sometimes have been in want of bread; and when I hear hard things said of the poor, I often think that surely improvidence is not so bad as selfishness. But, of course, there are all sorts amongst them, just as there are all sorts in every class. When I went out to teach, now one, now another of the women in the house would take charge of my friend; and when I came home, except her guardian happened to have got tipsy, I never found she had been neglected. Miss Harper said I must raise my terms; but I told her that would be the loss of my pupils. Then she said she must see what

could be done for me, only no one she knew was likely to employ a child like [me, if I were able to teach ever so well. One morning, however, within a week, a note came from Lady Bernard, asking me to go and see her.

“I went, and found—a mother. You do not know her, I think? But you must one day. Good people like you must come together. I will not attempt to describe her. She awed me at first, and I could hardly speak to her—I was not much more than thirteen then, but with the awe came a certain confidence which was far better than ease. The immediate result was that she engaged me to go and play for an hour five days a week, at a certain hospital for sick children in the neighbourhood, which she partly supported. For she had a strong belief that there was in music a great healing power. Her theory was that all healing

energy operates first on the mind, and from it passes to the body, and that medicines render aid only by removing certain physical obstacles to the healing force. She believes that when music operating on the mind has procured the peace of harmony, the peace in its turn operates outward, reducing the vital powers also into the harmonious action of health. *How much* there may be in it, I cannot tell ; but I do think that good has been and is the result of my playing to those children—for I go still, though not quite so often, and it is music to me to watch my music thrown back in light from some of those sweet pale suffering faces. She was too wise to pay me much for it at first. She inquired, before making me the offer, how much I was already earning, asked me upon how much I could support Mrs. Conan and myself comfortably, and then made the sum of my weekly earnings up to

that amount. At the same time, however, she sent many things to warm and feed the old woman, so that my mind was set at ease about her. She got a good deal better for a while, but continued to suffer so much from rheumatism, that she was quite unfit to go out charing any more; and I would not hear of her again exposing herself to the damps and draughts of empty houses, so long as I was able to provide for her—of which ability you may be sure I was not a little proud at first.

“I have been talking for a long time, and yet may seem to have said nothing to account for your finding me where she left me; but I will try to come to the point as quickly as possible.

“Before she was entirely laid up, we had removed to this place—a rough shelter, but far less so than some of the houses in which we had been. I remember one in which I

used to dart up and down like a hunted hare at one time—at another to steal along from stair to stair like a well-meaning ghost afraid of frightening people; my mode of procedure depending in part on the time of day, and which of the inhabitants I had reason to dread meeting. It was a good while before the inmates of this house and I began to know each other. The landlord had turned out the former tenant of this garret after she had been long enough in the house for all the rest to know her, and, notwithstanding she had been no great favourite, they all took her part against the landlord; and fancying, perhaps because we kept more to ourselves, that we were his *protégées*, and that he had turned out Muggy Moll, as they called her, to make room for us, regarded us from the first with disapprobation. The little girls would make grimaces at me, and the bigger girls would

pull my hair, slap my face, and even occasionally push me down stairs, while the boys made themselves far more terrible in my eyes. But, some remark happening to be dropped one day, which led the landlord to disclaim all previous knowledge of us, things began to grow better. And this is not by any means one of the worst parts of London. I could take Mr. Walton to houses in the East-end, where the manners are indescribable. We are all earning our bread here. Some have an occasional attack of drunkenness, and idle about; but they are sick of it again after a while. I remember asking a woman once if her husband would be present at a little entertainment to which Lady Bernard had invited them: she answered that he would be there if he was drunk, but if he was sober, he couldn't spare the time.

“Very soon they began to ask me after

Mrs. Conan, and one day I invited one of them, who seemed a decent though not very tidy woman, to walk up and see her ; for I was anxious she should have a visitor now and then when I was out, as she complained a good deal of the loneliness. The woman consented, and ever after was very kind to her. But my main stay and comfort was an old woman who then occupied the room opposite to this. She was such a good creature ! Nearly blind, she yet kept her room the very pink of neatness. I never saw a speck of dust on that chest of drawers, which was hers then, and which she valued far more than many a rich man values the house of his ancestors—not only because it had been her mother's, but because it bore testimony to the respectability of her family. Her floor and her little muslin window curtain, her bed and everything about her, were as clean as lady could desire. She

objected to move into a better room below, which the landlord kindly offered her—for she was a favourite from having been his tenant a long time and never having given him any trouble in collecting her rent—on the ground that there were two windows in it and therefore too much light for her bits of furniture. They would, she said, look nothing in that room. She was very pleased when I asked her to pay a visit to Mrs. Conan, and as she belonged to a far higher intellectual grade than my protectress, and as she had a strong practical sense of religion, chiefly manifested in a willing acceptance of the decrees of providence, I think she did us both good. I wish I could draw you a picture of her coming in at that door, with her all but sightless eyes, the broad borders of her white cap waving, and her hands stretched out before her—for she was more apprehensive than if she had

been quite blind, because she could see things without knowing what, or even in what position they were. The most remarkable thing to me was the calmness with which she looked forward to her approaching death, although without the expectation which so many good people seem to have in connection with their departure. I talked to her about it more than once—not with any presumption of teaching her, for I felt she was far before me, but just to find out how she felt and what she believed. Her answer amounted to this, that she had never known beforehand what lay round the next corner, or what was going to happen to her, for if Providence had meant her to know, it could not be by going to fortune-tellers, as some of the neighbours did ; but that she always found things turn out right and good for her, and she did not doubt she would find it so when she came to the last turn.

“By degrees I knew everybody in the house, and of course I was ready to do what I could to help any of them. I had much to lift me into a higher region of mental comfort than was open to them, for I had music, and Lady Bernard lent me books.

“Of course also I kept my rooms as clean and tidy as I could, and indeed if I had been more carelessly inclined in that way, the sight of the blind woman's would have been a constant reminder to me. By degrees also I was able to get a few more articles of furniture for it, and a bit of carpet to put down before the fire. I whitewashed the walls myself, and after a while began to whitewash the walls of the landing as well, and all down the stair, which was not of much use to the eye, for there is no light. Before long some of the other tenants began to whitewash their rooms also, and contrive to keep things a little tidier.

Others declared they had no opinion of such uppish notions; they weren't for the likes of them. These were generally such as would rejoice in wearing finery picked up at the rag-shop; but even some of them began by degrees to cultivate a small measure of order. Soon this one and that began to apply to me for help in various difficulties that arose. But they didn't begin to call me grannie for a long time after this. They used then to call the blind woman grannie, and the name got associated with the top of the house, and I came to be associated with it because I also lived there and we were friends. After her death, it was used from habit, at first with a feeling of mistake, seeing its immediate owner was gone; but by degrees it settled down upon me, and I came to be called grannie by everybody in the house. Even Mrs. Conan would not unfrequently address me, and speak of me

too, as grannie, at first with a laugh, but soon as a matter of course.

“I got by and by a few pupils amongst tradespeople of a class rather superior to that in which I had begun to teach, and from whom I could ask and obtain double my former fee; so that things grew, with fluctuations, gradually better. Lady Bernard continued a true friend to me—but she never was other than that to any. Some of her friends ventured on the experiment whether I could teach their children; and it is no wonder if they were satisfied, seeing I had myself such a teacher.

“Having come once or twice to see Mrs. Conan, she discovered that we were gaining a little influence over the people in the house; and it occurred to her, as she told me afterwards, that the virtue of music might be tried there with a *moral* end in view. Hence it came that I was beyond

measure astonished and delighted one evening by the arrival of a piano—not that one, for it got more worn than I liked, and I was able afterwards to exchange it for a better. I found it an invaluable aid in the endeavour to work out my growing desire of getting the people about me into a better condition. First I asked some of the children to come and listen while I played. Everybody knows how fond the least educated children are of music; and I feel assured of its elevating power. Whatever the street organs may be to poets and mathematicians, they are certainly a godsend to the children of our courts and alleys. The music takes possession of them at once, and sets them moving to it with rhythmical grace. I should have been very sorry to make it a condition with those I invited, that they should sit still: to take from them their personal share in it, would have been

to destroy half the charm of the thing. A far higher development is needful before music can be enjoyed in silence and motionlessness. The only condition I made was, that they should come with clean hands and faces, and with tidy hair. Considerable indignation was at first manifested on the part of those parents whose children I refused to admit because they had neglected the condition. This necessity however did not often occur, and the anger passed away, while the condition gathered weight. After a while, guided by what some of the children let fall, I began to invite the mothers to join them; and at length it came to be understood that, every Saturday evening, whoever chose to make herself tidy would be welcome to an hour or two of my music. Some of the husbands next began to come, but there were never so many of them present. I may just add that although the

manners of some of my audience would be very shocking to cultivated people, and I understand perfectly how they must be so, I am very rarely annoyed on such occasions.

“I must now glance at another point in my history—one on which I cannot dwell. Never since my father’s death had I attended public worship. Nothing had drawn me thither; and I hardly know what induced me one evening to step into a chapel of which I knew nothing. There was not even Sunday to account for it. I believe, however, it had to do with this—that all day I had been feeling tired. I think people are often ready to suppose that their bodily condition is the cause of their spiritual discomfort, when it may be only the occasion upon which some inward lack reveals itself. That the spiritual nature should be incapable of meeting and sustaining the body in its troubles, is of itself sufficient to

show that it is not in a satisfactory condition. For a long time the struggle for mere existence had almost absorbed my energies; but things had been easier for some time, a reaction had at length come. It was not that I could lay anything definite to my own charge; I only felt empty all through; I felt that something was not right with me, that something was required of me which I was not rendering. I could not however have told you what it was. Possibly the feeling had been for some time growing; but that day, so far as I can tell, I was first aware of it; and I presume it was the dim cause of my turning at the sound of a few singing voices, and entering that chapel. I found about a dozen people present. Something in the air of the place, meagre and waste as it looked, yet induced me to remain. An address followed from a pale-faced, weak-looking man of middle age,

who had no gift of person, voice, or utterance to recommend what he said. But there dwelt a more powerful enforcement in him than any of those—that of earnestness. I went again and again ; and slowly, I cannot well explain how, the sense of life and its majesty grew upon me. Mr. Walton will, I trust, understand me when I say, that to one hungering for bread, it is of little consequence in what sort of platter it is handed him. This was a dissenting chapel—of what order, it was long before I knew—and my predilection was for the Church-services, those to which my father had accustomed me ; but any comparison of the two to the prejudice of either, I should still—although a communicant of the church of England—regard with absolute indifference.

“ It will be sufficient for my present purpose to allude to the one practical thought which was the main fruit I gathered from

this good man—the fruit by which I know that he was good.\* It was this—that if all the labour of God, as my teacher said, was to bring sons into glory, lifting them out of the abyss of evil bondage up to the rock of his pure freedom, the only worthy end of life must be to work in the same direction—to be a fellow-worker with God. Might I not then do something such, in my small way, and lose no jot of my labour? I thought. The urging, the hope grew in me. But I was not left to feel blindly after some new and unknown method of labour. My teacher taught me that the way for *me* to help others, was not to tell them their duty, but myself to learn of him who bore our griefs and carried our sorrows. As I learned of him, I should be able to help them. I have never had any theory but just to be

\* Something like this is the interpretation of the word: “By their fruits ye shall know them,” given by Mr. Maurice—an interpretation which opens much.—G.M.D.

their friend—to do for them the best I can. When I feel I may, I tell them what has done me good, but I never urge any belief of mine upon their acceptance.

“It will now seem no more wonderful to you than to me, that I should remain where I am. I simply have no choice. I was sixteen when Mrs. Conan died. Then my friends, amongst whom Lady Bernard and Miss Harper have ever been first, expected me to remove to lodgings in another neighbourhood. Indeed, Lady Bernard came to see me, and said she knew precisely the place for me. When I told her I should remain where I was, she was silent, and soon left me—I thought offended. I wrote to her at once, explaining why I chose my part here; saying that I would not hastily alter anything that had been appointed me; that I loved the people; that they called me grannie; that they came to me with

their troubles ; that there were few changes in the house now ; that the sick looked to me for help, and the children for teaching ; that they seemed to be steadily rising in the moral scale ; that I knew some of them were trying hard to be good ; and I put it to her whether, if I were to leave them, in order merely, as servants say, to better myself, I should not be forsaking my post, almost my family ; for I knew it would not be to better either myself or my friends : if I was at all necessary to them, I knew they were yet more necessary to me.

“ I have a burning desire to help in the making of the world clean—if it be only by sweeping one little room in it. I want to lead some poor stray sheep home—not home to the church, Mr. Walton—I would not be supposed to curry favour with you. I never think of what they call the church. I only care to lead them home

to the bosom of God, where alone man is true man.

“ I could talk to you all night about what Lady Bernard has been to me since, and what she has done for me and my grandchildren ; but I have said enough to explain how it is that I am in such a questionable position. I fear I have been guilty of much egotism, and have shown my personal feelings with too little reserve. But I cast myself on your mercy.”

## CHAPTER XXI.

### A REMARKABLE FACT.

A SILENCE followed. I need hardly say we had listened intently. During the story my father had scarcely interrupted the narrator. I had not spoken a word. She had throughout maintained a certain matter-of-fact, almost cold style, no doubt because she was herself the subject of her story; but we could read between the lines, imagine much she did not say, and supply colour when she gave only outline; and it moved us both deeply. My father sat perfectly composed, betraying his emotion in silence alone. For myself, I

had a great lump in my throat, but in part from the shame which mingled with my admiration. The silence had not lasted more than a few seconds, when I yielded to a struggling impulse, rose, and kneeling before her, put my hands on her knees, said, "Forgive me," and could say no more. She put her hand on my shoulder, whispered, "My dear Mrs. Percivale!" bent down her face and kissed me on the forehead.

"How could you help being shy of me?" she said. "Perhaps I ought to have come to you and explained it all; but I shrink from self-justification—at least before a fit opportunity makes it comparatively easy."

"That is the way to give it all its force," remarked my father.

"I suppose it may be," she returned. "But I hate talking about myself; it is an unpleasant subject."

“Most people do not find it such,” said my father. “I could not honestly say that I do not enjoy talking of my own experiences of life.”

“But there are differences, you see,” she rejoined. “My history looks to me such a matter of course, such a something I could not help, or have avoided if I would, that the telling of it is unpleasant, because it implies an importance which does not belong to it.”

“St. Paul says something of the same sort — that a necessity of preaching the gospel was laid upon him,” remarked my father; but it seemed to make no impression on Miss Clare, for she went on as if she had not heard him.

“You see, Mr. Walton, it is not in the least as if living in comfort I had taken notice of the misery of the poor for the want of such sympathy and help as I could

give them, and had therefore gone to live amongst them that I might so help them: it is quite different from that. If I had done so, I might be in danger of magnifying not merely my office but myself. On the contrary, I have been trained to it in such slow and necessitous ways, that it would be a far greater trial to me to forsake my work than it has ever been to continue it."

My father said no more, but I knew he had his own thoughts. I remained kneeling, and felt for the first time as if I understood what had led to saint-worship.

"Won't you sit, Mrs. Percivale?" she said, as if merely expostulating with me for not making myself comfortable.

"Have you forgiven me?" I asked.

"How can I say I have, when I never had anything to forgive?"

“ Well then I must go unforgiven, for I cannot forgive myself,” I said.

“ Oh Mrs. Percivale, if you think how the world is flooded with forgiveness, you will just dip in your cup and take what you want.”<sup>1</sup>

I felt that I was making too much even of my own shame, rose humbled, and took my former seat.

Narration being over, and my father's theory now permitting him to ask questions, he did so plentifully, bringing out many lights, and elucidating several obscurities. The story grew upon me, until the work to which Miss Clare had given herself seemed more like that of the Son of God than any other I knew. For she was not helping her friends from afar, but as one of themselves—nor with money but with herself; she was not condescending to them, but finding her highest life in companion-

ship with them. It seemed at least more like what his life must have been before he was thirty than anything else I could think of. I held my peace however, for I felt that to hint at such a thought would have greatly shocked and pained her.

No doubt the narrative I have given is plainer and more coherent for the questions my father put; but it loses much from the omission of one or two parts which she gave dramatically, with evident enjoyment of the fun that was in them. I have also omitted all the interruptions which came from her not unfrequent reference to my father on points that came up. At length I ventured to remind her of something she seemed to have forgotten.

“When you were telling us, Miss Clare,” I said, “of the help that came to you that dreary afternoon in the empty house, I think you mentioned that something which

happened afterwards made it still more remarkable."

"Oh, yes," she answered; "I forgot about that. I did not carry my history far enough to be reminded of it again.

"Somewhere about five years ago, Lady Bernard, having several schemes on foot for helping such people as I was interested in, asked me if it would not be nice to give an entertainment to my friends, and as many of the neighbours as I pleased, to the number of about a hundred. She wanted to put the thing entirely in my hands, and it should be my entertainment, she claiming only the privilege of defraying expenses. I told her I should be delighted to convey *her* invitation, but that the entertainment must not pretend to be mine; which, besides that it would be a falsehood, and therefore not to be thought of, would perplex my friends, and drive them to the

conclusion either that it was not mine, or that I lived amongst them under false appearances. She confessed the force of my arguments, and let me have it my own way.

“She had bought a large house to be a home for young women out of employment, and in it she proposed the entertainment should be given: there were a good many nice young women inmates at the time, who, she said, would be all willing to help us to wait upon our guests. The idea was carried out, and the thing succeeded admirably. We had music and games, the latter such as the children were mostly acquainted with, only producing more merriment and conducted with more propriety than were usual in the court or the street. I may just remark, in passing, that had these been children of the poorest sort, we should have had to teach them, for one of the saddest things is that such, in London at

least, do not know how to play. We had tea and coffee, and biscuits in the lower rooms, for any who pleased, and they were to have a solid supper afterwards. With none of the arrangements however had I anything to do, for my business was to be with them, and help them to enjoy themselves. All went on capitally, the parents entering into the merriment of their children, and helping to keep it up.

“In one of the games, I was seated on the floor with a handkerchief tied over my eyes, waiting, I believe, for some gentle trick to be played upon me, that I might guess at the name of the person who played it. There was a delay—of only a few seconds—long enough however for a sudden return of that dreary November afternoon in which I sat on the floor too miserable even to think that I was cold and hungry. Strange to say it was not the picture of it

that came back to me first, but the sound of my own voice calling aloud in the ringing echo of the desolate rooms that I was of no use to anybody, and that God had forgotten me utterly. With the recollection, a doubtful expectation arose which moved me to a scarce controllable degree. I jumped to my feet, and tore the bandage from my eyes.

“Several times during the evening I had had the odd yet well known feeling of the same thing having happened before; but I was too busy entertaining my friends to try to account for it: perhaps what followed may suggest the theory that in not a few of such cases the indistinct remembrance of the previous occurrence of some portion of the circumstances may cast the hue of memory over the whole. As—my eyes blinded with the light and straining to recover themselves—I stared about the

room, the presentiment grew almost conviction that it was the very room in which I had so sat in desolation and despair. Unable to restrain myself, I hurried into the back room: there was the cabinet beyond! In a few moments more, I was absolutely satisfied that this was indeed the house in which I had first found refuge. For a time I could take no further share in what was going on, but sat down in a corner and cried for joy. Some one went for Lady Bernard, who was superintending the arrangements for supper in the music-room behind. She came in alarm. I told her there was nothing the matter but a little too much happiness, and if she would come into the cabinet, I would tell her all about it. She did so, and a few words made her a hearty sharer in my pleasure. She insisted that I should tell the company all about it, 'for,' she said, 'you do not know

how much it may help some poor creature to trust in God.' I promised I would, if I found I could command myself sufficiently. She left me alone for a little while, and after that I was able to join in the games again.

“At supper I found myself quite composed, and at Lady Bernard’s request stood up, and gave them all a little sketch of grannie’s history, of which sketch what had happened that evening was made the central point. Many of the simpler hearts about me received it, without question, as a divine arrangement for my comfort and encouragement—at least, thus I interpreted their looks to each other, and the remarks that reached my ear; but presently a man stood up—one who thought more than the rest of them, perhaps because he was blind—a man at once conceited, honest, and sceptical; and silence having been made for

him—‘Ladies and gentlemen,’ he began, as if he had been addressing a public meeting, ‘you’ve all heard what grannie has said. It’s very kind of her to give us so much of her history. It’s a very remarkable one, I think, and she deserved to have it. As to what upset her this very night as is—and I must say for her, I’ve knowed her now for six years, and I never knowed *her* upset afore—and as to what upset her, all I can say is, it may or may not ha’ been what phylosophers call a coineydence; but, at the same time, if it wasn’t a coineydence, and if the Almighty had a hand in it, it were no more than you might expect. He would look at it in this light, you see, that maybe she was wrong to fancy herself so down on her luck as all that, but she was a good soul notwithstanding, and he would let her know he hadn’t forgotten her. And so he set her down in that room there, wi’ her eyes like

them here o' mine, as never was no manner o' use to me—for a minute, jest to put her in mind o' what had been, and what she had said there, an' how it was all so different now. In my opinion, it were no wonder as she broke down, God bless her! I beg leave to propose her health.' So they drank my health in lemonade and ginger-beer, for we were afraid to give some of them stronger drink than that, and therefore had none. Then we had more music and singing, and a clergyman, who knew how to be neighbour to them that had fallen among thieves, read a short chapter and a collect or two, and said a few words to them. Then grannie and her children went home together, all happy, but] grannie the happiest of them all."

"Strange and beautiful!" said my father. "But," he added, after a pause, "you must have met with many strange and beautiful

things in such a life as yours; for it seems to me that such a life is open to the entrance of all simple wonders. Conventionality and routine and arbitrary law banish their very approach."

"I believe," said Miss Clare, "that every life has its own private [experience of the strange and beautiful. But I have sometimes thought that perhaps God took pains to bar out such things of the sort as we should be no better for. The reason why Lazarus was not allowed to visit the brothers of Dives, was that the repentance he would have urged would not have followed, and they would have been only the worse in consequence."

"Admirably said," remarked my father.

Before we took our leave, I had engaged Miss Clare to dine with us while my father was in town.

## CHAPTER XXII.

LADY BERNARD.

WHEN she came we had no other guest, and so had plenty of talk with her. Before dinner I showed her my husband's pictures, and she was especially pleased with that which hung in the little room off the study, which I called my boudoir—a very ugly word, by the way, which I am trying to give up — with a curtain before it. My father has described it in the Seaboard Parish: a pauper lies dead, and they are bringing in his coffin. She said it was no wonder it had not been sold, notwithstanding its excellence and force; and asked if I

would allow her to bring Lady Bernard to see it. After dinner Percivale had a long talk with her, and succeeded in persuading her to sit to him; not however before I had joined my entreaties with his, and my father had insisted that her face was not her own, but belonged to all her kind.

The very next morning she came with Lady Bernard. The latter said she knew my husband well by reputation, and had, before our marriage, asked him to her house, but had not been fortunate enough to possess sufficient attraction. Percivale was much taken with her, notwithstanding a certain coldness, almost sternness of manner, which was considerably repellent—but only for the first few moments, for when her eyes lighted up, the whole thing vanished. She was much pleased with some of his pictures, criticising freely, and with evident understanding. The immediate re-

sult was that she bought both the pauper picture and that of the dying knight.

“But I am sorry to deprive your lovely room of such treasures, Mrs. Percivale,” she said, with a kind smile.

“Of course I shall miss them,” I returned; “but the thought that you have them will console me. Besides, it is good to have a change, and there are only too many lying in the study, from which he will let me choose to supply their place.”

“Will you let me come and see which you have chosen?” she asked.

“With the greatest pleasure,” I answered.

“And will you come and see me? Do you think you could persuade your husband to bring you to dine with me?”

I told her I could promise the one with more than pleasure, and had little doubt of being able to do the other, now that my husband had seen her.

A reference to my husband's dislike to fashionable society followed, and I had occasion to mention his feeling about being asked without me. Of the latter Lady Bernard expressed the warmest approval; and of the former, said that it would have no force in respect of her parties, for they were not at all fashionable.

This was the commencement of a friendship for which we have much cause to thank God. Nor do we forget that it came through Miss Clare.

I confess I felt glorious over my cousin Judy; but I would bide my time. Now that I am wiser and I hope a little better, I see that I was rather spiteful; but I thought then I was only jealous for my new and beautiful friend. Perhaps having wronged her myself I was the more ready to take vengeance on her wrongs from the hands of another—which was just the

opposite feeling to that I ought to have had.

In the meantime our intimacy with Miss Clare grew. She interested me in many of her schemes for helping the poor—some of which were for providing them with work in hard times, but more, for giving them an interest in life itself, without which, she said, no one would begin to inquire into its relations and duties. One of her positive convictions was that you ought not to give them anything they *ought* to provide for themselves, such as food or clothing or shelter. In such circumstances as rendered it impossible for them to do so, the *ought* was in abeyance. But she heartily approved of making them an occasional present of something they could not be expected to procure for themselves—flowers, for instance. “You would not imagine,” I have heard her say, “how they delight in flowers. All the

finer instincts of their being are drawn to the surface at the sight of them. I am sure they prize and enjoy them far more, not merely than most people with gardens and greenhouses do, but far more even than they would if they were deprived of them. A gift of that sort can only do them good. But I would rather give a workman a gold watch than a leg of mutton. By a present you mean a compliment; and none feel more grateful for such an acknowledgment of your human relation to them, than those who look up to you as their superior."

Once when she was talking thus I ventured to object, for the sake of hearing her further.

"But," I said, "sometimes the most precious thing you can give a man is just that compassion which you seem to think destroys the value of a gift."

"When compassion itself is precious to a

man," she answered, "it must be because he loves you, and believes you love him. When that is the case, you may give him anything you like, and it will do neither you nor him harm. But the man of independent feeling, except he be thus your friend, will not unlikely resent your compassion, while the beggar will accept it chiefly as a pledge for something more to be got from you; and so it will tend to keep him in beggary."

"Would you never, then, give money or any of the necessaries of life, except in extreme and, on the part of the receiver, unavoidable necessity?" I asked.

"I would not," she answered; "but in the case where a man *cannot* help himself, the very suffering makes a way for the love which is more than compassion to manifest itself. In every other case, the true way is to provide them with work, which is itself a good thing, besides what they gain by it.

If a man will not work, neither should he eat. It must be work with an object in it, however; it must not be mere labour, such as digging a hole and filling it up again, of which I have heard. No man could help resentment at being set to such work. You ought to let him feel that he is giving something of value to you for the money you give to him. But I have known a whole district so corrupted and degraded by clerical alms-giving, that one of the former recipients of it declared, as spokesman for the rest, that threepence given was far more acceptable than five shillings earned."

A good part of the little time I could spare from my own family was now spent with Miss Clare in her work, through which it was chiefly that we became by degrees intimate with Lady Bernard. If ever there was a woman who lived this outer life for the sake of others, it was she. Her inner

life was, as it were, sufficient for herself, and found its natural outward expression in blessing others. She was like a fountain of living water that could find no vent but into the lives of her fellows. She had suffered more than falls to the ordinary lot of women, in those who were related to her most nearly, and for many years had looked for no personal blessing from without. She said to me once that she could not think of anything that could happen to herself to make her very happy now—except a loved grandson, who was leading a strange wild life, were to turn out a Harry the Fifth—a consummation which, however devoutly wished, was not granted her, for the young man died shortly after. I believe no one, not even Miss Clare, knew half the munificent things she did, or what an immense proportion of her large income she spent upon other people. But, as she said her-

self, no one understood the worth of money better ; and no one liked better to have the worth of it ; therefore she always administered her charity with some view to the value of the probable return—with some regard, that is, to the amount of good likely to result to others from the aid given to one. She always took into consideration whether the good was likely to be propagated, or to die with the receiver. She confessed to frequent mistakes, but such, she said, was the principle upon which she sought to regulate that part of her stewardship.

I wish I could give a photograph of her. She was slight, and appeared taller than she was, being rather stately than graceful, with a commanding forehead and still blue eyes. She gave at first the impression of coldness with a touch of haughtiness. But this was, I think, chiefly the result of her inherited physique ; for the moment her individuality

appeared, when her being, that is, came into contact with that of another, all this impression vanished in the light that flashed into her eyes, and the smile that illumined her face. Never did woman of rank step more triumphantly over the barriers which the cumulated custom of ages has built between the classes of society. She laid great stress on good manners, little on what is called good birth; although to the latter, in its deep and true sense, she attributed the greatest *à priori* value, as the ground of obligation in the possessor, and of expectation on the part of others. But I shall have an opportunity of showing more of what she thought on this subject presently, for I bethink me that it occupied a great part of our conversation at a certain little gathering, of which I am now going to give an account.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### MY SECOND DINNER-PARTY.

FOR I judged that I might now give another little dinner: I thought that, as Percivale had been doing so well lately, he might afford, with his knowing brother's help, to provide, for his part of the entertainment, what might be good enough to offer even to Mr. Morley; and I now knew Lady Bernard sufficiently well to know also that she would willingly accept an invitation from me, and would be pleased to meet Miss Clare, or indeed, would more likely bring her with her.

I proposed the dinner, and Percivale con-

sented to it. My main object being the glorification of Miss Clare, who had more engagements of one kind and another than anybody I knew, I first invited her, asking her to fix her own day, at some considerable remove. Next I invited Mr. and Mrs. Morley, and next Lady Bernard, who went out very little. Then I invited Mr. Blackstone, and last of all Roger—though I was almost as much interested in his meeting Miss Clare as in anything else connected with the gathering. For he had been absent from London for some time on a visit to an artist friend at the Hague, and had never seen Miss Clare since the evening on which he and I quarrelled—or rather, to be honest, I quarrelled with him. All accepted, and I looked forward to the day with some triumph.

I had better calm the dread of my wifely reader by at once assuring her that I shall

not harrow her feelings with any account of culinary blunders. The moon was in the beginning of her second quarter, and my cook's brain tolerably undisturbed. Lady Bernard offered me her cook for the occasion, but I convinced her that my wisdom would be to decline the offer, seeing such external influence would probably tend to disintegration. I went over with her every item of every dish and every sauce many times — without any resulting sense of security, I confess ; but I had found that, odd as it may seem, she always did better the more she had to do. I believe that her love of approbation, excited by the difficulty before her, in its turn excited her intellect, which then arose to meet the necessities of the case.

Roger arrived first, then Mr. Blackstone ; Lady Bernard brought Miss Clare ; and Mr. and Mrs. Morley came last. There were

several introductions to be gone through—a ceremony in which Percivale, being awkward, would give me no assistance; whence I failed to observe how the presence of Miss Clare affected Mr. and Mrs. Morley; but my husband told me that Judy turned red, and that Mr. Morley bowed to her with studied politeness. I took care that Mr. Blackstone should take her down to dinner, which was served in the study as before.

The conversation was broken and desultory at first, as is generally the case at a dinner party—and perhaps ought to be; but one after another began to listen to what was passing between Lady Bernard and my husband at the foot of the table, until by degrees every one became interested and took a greater or less part in the discussion.

“Then you do believe,” my husband was saying, “in the importance of what some of the Devonshire people call *havage*?”

“Allow me to ask what they mean by the word,” Lady Bernard returned.

“Birth, descent—the people you come of,” he answered.

“Of course I believe that descent involves very important considerations.”

“No one,” interposed Mr. Morley, “can have a better right than your ladyship to believe that.”

“One cannot have a better right than another to believe a fact, Mr. Morley,” she answered with a smile. “It is but a fact that you start better or worse according to the position of your starting-point.”

“Undeniably,” said Mr. Morley. “And for all that is feared from the growth of leveling notions in this country, it will be many generations before a profound respect for birth is eradicated from the feelings of the English people.”

He drew in his chin with a jerk, and

devoted himself again to his plate, with the air of a "Dixi." He was not permitted to eat in peace however.

"If you allow," said Mr. Blackstone, "that the feeling can wear out, and is wearing out, it matters little how long it may take to prove itself of a false, because corruptible nature. No growth of notions will blot love, honesty, kindness, out of the human heart."

"Then," said Lady Bernard archly, "am I to understand, Mr. Blackstone, that you don't believe it of the least importance to come of decent people?"

"Your ladyship puts it well," said Mr. Morley, laughing mildly, "and with authority. The longer the descent——"

"The more doubtful," interrupted Lady Bernard, laughing. "One can hardly have come of decent people all through, you know. Let us only hope, without inquiring

too closely, that their number preponderates in our own individual cases."

Mr. Morley stared for a moment, and then tried to laugh, but unable to determine whereabouts he was in respect of the question, betook himself to his glass of sherry.

Mr. Blackstone considered it the best policy in general not to explain any remark he had made, but to say the right thing better next time instead. I suppose he believed, with another friend of mine, that "when explanations become necessary, they become impossible," a paradox well worth the consideration of those who write letters to newspapers. But Lady Bernard understood him well enough, and was only unwinding the clue of her idea.

"On the contrary, it must be a most serious fact," he rejoined, "to any one who like myself believes that the sins of the fathers are visited on the children."

“Mr. Blackstone,” objected Roger, “I can’t imagine you believing such a manifest injustice.”

“It has been believed in all ages by the best of people,” he returned.

“To whom possibly the injustice of it never suggested itself. For my part, I must either disbelieve that or disbelieve in a God.”

“But, my dear fellow, don’t you see it is a fact? Don’t you see children born with the sins of their parents nestling in their very bodies? You see on which horn of your own dilemma you would impale yourself.”

“Wouldn’t you rather not believe in a God than believe in an unjust one?”

“An unjust god,” said Mr. Blackstone, with the honest evasion of one who will not answer an awful question hastily, “must be a false god, that is no God. Therefore I

presume there is some higher truth involved in every fact that appears unjust, the perception of which would nullify the appearance."

"I see none in the present case," said Roger.

"I will go farther than assert the mere opposite," returned Mr. Blackstone. "I will assert that it is an honour to us to have the sins of our fathers laid upon us. For thus it is given into our power to put a stop to them, so that they shall descend no further. If I thought my father had committed any sins for which I might suffer, I should be unspeakably glad to suffer for them, and so have the privilege of taking a share in his burden, and some of the weight of it off his mind. You see the whole idea is that of a family, in which we are so grandly bound together, that we must suffer with and for each other. Destroy this con-

sequence, and you destroy the lovely idea itself, with all its thousandfold results of loveliness."

"You anticipate what I was going to say, Mr. Blackstone," said Lady Bernard. "I would differ from you only in one thing. The chain of descent is linked after such a complicated pattern, that the non-conducting condition of one link, or of many links even, cannot break the transmission of qualities. I may inherit from my great-great-grandfather or mother, or some one ever so much farther back. That which was active wrong in some one or other of my ancestors, may appear in me as an impulse to that same wrong, which of course I have to overcome; and if I succeed, then it is so far checked. But it may have passed, or may yet pass to others of his descendants, who have, or will have to do the same—for who knows how many generations to come—before it shall

cease. Married people, you see, Mrs. Percivale, have an awful responsibility in regard of the future of the world. You cannot tell to how many millions you may transmit your failures or your victories."

"If I understand you right, Lady Bernard," said Roger, "it is the personal character of your ancestors, and not their social position, you regard as of importance."

"It was of their personal character alone I was thinking. But of course I do not pretend to believe that there are not many valuable gifts more likely to show themselves in what is called a long descent, for doubtless a continuity of education does much to develop the race."

"But if it is personal character you chiefly regard, we may say we are all equally far descended," I remarked; "for we have each had about the same number

of ancestors with a character of some sort or other, whose faults and virtues have to do with ours, and for both of which we are, according to Mr. Blackstone, in a most real and important sense accountable.”

“Certainly,” returned Lady Bernard; “and it is impossible to say in whose descent the good, or the bad, may predominate. I cannot tell, for instance, how much of the property I inherit has been honestly come by, or is the spoil of rapacity and injustice.”

“You are doing the best you can to atone for such a possible fact, then, by its redistribution,” said my husband.

“I confess,” she answered, “the doubt has had some share in determining my feeling with regard to the management of my property. I have no right to throw up my stewardship, for that was none of my seeking, and I do not know any one who has a better claim to it; but I count it only a

stewardship. I am not at liberty to throw my orchard open, for that would result not only in its destruction, but in a renewal of the fight of centuries ago for its possession ; but I will try to distribute my apples properly. That is, I have not the same right to give away foolishly that I have to keep wisely."

"Then," resumed Roger, who had evidently been pondering what Lady Bernard had previously said, "you would consider what is called kleptomania as the impulse to steal transmitted by a thief-ancestor?"

"Nothing seems to me more likely. I know a nobleman whose servant has to search his pockets for spoons or forks every night as soon as he is in bed."

"I should find it very hard to define the difference between that and stealing," said Miss Clare, now first taking a part in the conversation. "I have sometimes wondered

whether kleptomania was not merely the fashionable name for stealing.”

“The distinction is a difficult one, and no doubt the word is occasionally misapplied. But I think there is a difference. The nobleman to whom I referred, makes no objection to being thus deprived of his booty, which, for one thing, appears to show that the temptation is intermittent, and partakes at least of the character of a disease.”

“But are there not diseases which are only so much the worse diseases that they are not intermittent?” said Miss Clare. “Is it not hard that the privileges of kleptomania should be confined to the rich? You never hear the word applied to a poor child, even if his father was, in habit and repute, a thief. Surely when hunger and cold aggravate the attacks of inherited temptation, they cannot at the same time

aggravate the culpability of yielding to them ? ”

“ On the contrary,” said Roger, “ one would naturally suppose they added immeasurable excuse.”

“ Only,” said Mr. Blackstone, “ there comes in our ignorance and consequent inability to judge. The very fact of the presence of motives of a most powerful kind renders it impossible to be certain of the presence of the disease ; whereas other motives being apparently absent, we presume disease as the readiest way of accounting for the propensity. I do not therefore think it is the only way. I believe there are cases in which it comes of pure greed, and is of the same kind as any other injustice the capability of exercising which is more generally distributed. Why should a thief be unknown in a class, a proportion of the members of which is capable of wrong,

chicanery, oppression, indeed any form of absolute selfishness?"

"At all events," said Lady Bernard, "so long as we do our best to help them to grow better, we cannot make too much allowance for such as have not only been born with evil impulses, but have had every animal necessity to urge them in the same direction; while, on the other hand, they have not had one of those restraining influences which a good home and education would have afforded. Such must, so far as development goes, be but a little above the beasts."

"You open a very difficult question," said Mr. Morley: "what are we to do with them? Supposing they *are* wild beasts, we can't shoot them, though that would, no doubt, be the readiest way to put an end to the breed."

"Even that would not suffice," said Lady

Bernard. "There would always be a deposit from the higher classes sufficient to keep up the breed. But, Mr. Morley, I did not say *wild* beasts; I only said *beasts*. There is a great difference between a tiger and a sheep-dog."

"There is nearly as much between a Seven-Dials-rough and a sheep-dog."

"In moral attainment, I grant you," said Mr. Blackstone; "but in moral capacity, no. Besides, you must remember, both what a descent the sheep-dog has, and what pains have been taken with his individual education, as well as that of his ancestors."

"Granted all that," said Mr. Morley, "there the fact remains. For my part, I confess I don't see what is to be done. The class to which you refer goes on increasing. There's this garrotting now. I spent a winter at Algiers lately, and found even the suburbs of that city immeasurably safer

than any part of London is now, to judge from the police-reports. Yet I am accused of inhumanity and selfishness if I decline to write a cheque for every shabby fellow who calls upon me pretending to be a clergyman, and to represent this or that charity in the East-end !”

“ Things are bad enough in the West-end, within a few hundred yards of Portland Place, for instance,” murmured Miss Clare.

“ It seems to me highly unreasonable,” Mr. Morley went on. “ Why should I spend my money to perpetuate such a condition of things ? ”

“ That would in all likelihood be the tendency of your subscription,” said Mr. Blackstone.

“ Then why should I ? ” repeated Mr. Morley with a smile of triumph.

“ But,” said Miss Clare, in an apologetic tone, “ it seems to me you make a mistake

in regarding the poor as if their poverty were the only distinction by which they could be classified. The poor are not *all* thieves and garrotters, nor even all unthankful and unholy. There are just as strong, and as delicate distinctions too, in that stratum of social existence as in the upper strata. I should imagine Mr. Morley knows a few, belonging to the same social grade with himself, with whom however he would be sorry to be on any terms of intimacy."

"Not a few," responded Mr. Morley, with a righteous frown.

"Then I, who know the poor as well at least as you can know the rich, having lived amongst them almost from childhood, assert that I am acquainted with not a few who, in all the essentials of human life and character, would be an honour to any circle."

“I should be sorry to seem to imply that there may not be very worthy people amongst them, Miss Clare; but it is not such who draw our attention to the class.”

“Not such who force themselves upon your attention certainly,” said Miss Clare; “but the existence of such may be an additional reason for bestowing some attention on the class to which they belong. Is there not such a mighty fact as the body of Christ? Is there no connection between the head and the feet?”

“I had not the slightest purpose of disputing the matter with you, Miss Clare,” said Mr. Morley—I thought rudely, for who would use the word *disputing* at a dinner-table?—“On the contrary, being a practical man, I want to know what is to be done. It is doubtless a great misfortune to the community that there should be such sinks

in our cities, but who is to blame for it?—that is the question.”

“Every man who says: Am I my brother's keeper? Why, just consider, Mr. Morley: suppose in a family there were one less gifted than the others, and that in consequence they all withdrew from him, and took no interest in his affairs: what would become of him? Must he not sink?”

“Difference of rank is a divine appointment—you must allow that. If there were not a variety of grades, the social machine would soon come to a stand-still.”

“A strong argument for taking care of the smallest wheel, for all the parts are interdependent. That there should be different classes is undoubtedly a divine intention, and not to be turned aside. But suppose the less-gifted boy is fit for some manual labour; suppose he takes to carpentering, and works well, and keeps the house tidy, and every-

thing in good repair, while his brothers pursue their studies and prepare for professions beyond his reach: is the inferior boy degraded by doing the best he can? Is there any reason in the nature of things why he should sink? But he will most likely sink, sooner or later, if his brothers take no interest in his work, and treat him as a being of nature inferior to their own."

"I beg your pardon," said Mr. Morley, "but is he not on the very supposition inferior to them?"

"Intellectually, yes; morally, no; for he is doing his work, possibly better than they, and therefore taking a higher place in the eternal scale. But granting all kinds of inferiority, his *nature* remains the same with their own, and the question is whether they treat him as one to be helped up or one to be kept down; as one unworthy of sympathy or one to be honoured for filling his

part: in a word, as one belonging to them or one whom they put up with only because his work is necessary to them."

"What do you mean by being 'helped up'?" asked Mr. Morley.

"I do not mean helped out of his trade; but helped to make the best of it and of the intellect that finds its development in that way."

"Very good. But yet I don't see how you apply your supposition."

"For an instance of application then:—how many respectable people know or care a jot about their servants, except as creatures necessary to their comfort?"

"Well, Miss Clare," said Judy, addressing her for the first time, "if you had had the half to do with servants I have had, you would alter your opinion of them."

"I have expressed no opinion," returned Miss Clare. "I have only said that

masters and mistresses know and care next to nothing about them."

"They are a very ungrateful class, do what you will for them."

"I am afraid they are at present growing more and more corrupt as a class," rejoined Miss Clare; "but gratitude is a high virtue, therefore in any case I don't see how you could look for much of it from the common sort of them. And while some mistresses do not get so much of it as they deserve, I fear most mistresses expect far more of it than they have any right to."

"You *can't* get them to speak the truth."

"That I am afraid is a fact."

"I have never known one on whose word I could depend," insisted Judy.

"My father says he *has* known one," I interjected.

"A sad confirmation of Mrs. Morley," said Miss Clare. "But for my part I know

very few persons in any rank on whose representation of things I could absolutely depend. Truth is the highest virtue, and seldom grows wild. It is difficult to speak the truth, and those who have tried it longest best know how difficult it is. Servants need to be taught that as well as everybody else."

"There is nothing they resent so much as being taught," said Judy.

"Perhaps; they are very far from docile; and I believe it is of little use to attempt giving them direct lessons."

"How then are you to teach them?"

"By making it very plain to them, but without calling their attention to it, that *you* speak the truth. In the course of a few years they may come to tell a lie or two the less for that."

"Not a very hopeful prospect," said Judy.

“Not a very rapid improvement,” said her husband.

“I look for no rapid improvement so early in a history as the supposition implies,” said Miss Clare.

“But would you not tell them how wicked it is?” I asked.

“They know already that it is wicked to tell lies; but they do not feel that *they* are wicked in making the assertions they do. The less said about the abstract truth, and the more shown of practical truth, the better for those whom any one would teach to forsake lying. So at least it appears to me. I despair of teaching others except by learning myself.”

“If you do no more than that you will hardly produce an appreciable effect in a life-time,” said Mr. Morley.

“Why should it be appreciated?” rejoined Miss Clare.

“I should have said on the contrary,” interposed Mr. Blackstone, addressing Mr. Morley, “—if you do less—for more you cannot do—you will produce no effect whatever.”

“We have no right to make it a condition of our obedience that we shall see its reflex in the obedience of others,” said Miss Clare. “We have to pull out the beam, not the mote.”

“Are you not then to pull the mote out of your brother’s eye?” said Judy.

“In no case, and on no pretence, *until* you have pulled the beam out of your own eye,” said Mr. Blackstone—“which I fancy will make the duty of finding fault with one’s neighbour a rare one, for who will venture to say he has qualified himself for the task?”

It was no wonder that a silence followed upon this; for the talk had got to be very

serious for a dinner-table. Lady Bernard was the first to speak. It was easier to take up the dropped thread of the conversation than to begin a new reel.

“It cannot be denied,” she said, “whoever may be to blame for it, that the separation between the rich and the poor has either been greatly widened of late, or, which involves the same practical necessity, we have become more aware of the breadth and depth of a gulf which, however it may distinguish their circumstances, ought not to divide them from each other. Certainly the rich withdraw themselves from the poor. Instead, for instance, of helping them to bear their burdens, they leave the still struggling poor of whole parishes to sink into hopeless want, under the weight of those who have already sunk beyond recovery. I am not sure that to shoot them would not involve less injustice. At all

events he that hates his brother is a murderer.”

“But there is no question of hating here,” objected Mr. Morley.

“I am not certain that absolute indifference to one's neighbour is not as bad. It came pretty nearly to the same thing in the case of the priest and the Levite, who passed by on the other side,” said Mr. Blackstone.

“Still,” said Mr. Morley, in all the self-importance of one who prided himself on the practical, “I do not see that Miss Clare has proposed any remedy for the state of things concerning the evil of which we are all agreed. What is to be *done*? What can *I* do now? Come, Miss Clare.”

Miss Clare was silent.

“Marion, my child,” said Lady Bernard, turning to her, “will you answer Mr. Morley?”

“Not certainly as to what *he* can do; that question I dare not undertake to answer. I can only speak of what principles I may seem to have discovered. But until a man begins to behave to those with whom he comes into personal contact as partakers of the same nature, to recognize, for instance, between himself and his tradespeople a bond superior to that of supply and demand, I cannot imagine how he is to do anything towards the drawing together of the edges of the gaping wound in the social body.”

“But,” persisted Mr. Morley, who I began to think showed some real desire to come at a practical conclusion, “suppose a man finds himself incapable of that sort of thing—for it seems to me to want some rare qualification or other to be able to converse with an uneducated person——”

“There are many such, especially amongst

those who follow handicrafts," interposed Mr. Blackstone, "who think a great deal more than most of the so-called educated. There is a truer education to be got in the pursuit of a handicraft, than in the life of a mere scholar. But I beg your pardon, Mr. Morley."

"Suppose," resumed Mr. Morley, accepting the apology without disclaimer,—“Suppose I find I can do nothing of that sort, is there nothing of any sort I can do?”

“Nothing of the best sort, I firmly believe,” answered Miss Clare; “for the genuine recognition of the human relationship can alone give value to whatever else you may do, and indeed can alone guide you to what ought to be done. I had a rather painful illustration of this the other day. A gentleman of wealth and position offered me the use of his grounds for some of my poor friends whom I wanted to take

out for a half-holiday. In the neighbourhood of London, that is a great boon. But, unfortunately, whether from his mistake or mine, I was left with the impression that he would provide some little entertainment for them; I am certain that at least milk was mentioned. It was a lovely day; everything looked beautiful; and although they were in no great spirits, poor things, no doubt the shade and the grass and the green trees wrought some good in them. Unhappily, two of the men had got drunk on the way, and, fearful of giving offence, I had to take them back to the station—for their poor helpless wives could only cry—and send them home by train. I should have done better to risk the offence and take them into the grounds, where they might soon have slept it off under a tree. I had some distance to go, and some difficulty in getting them along, and when I got back I found

things in an unhappy condition, for nothing had been given them to eat or drink—indeed, no attention had been paid them whatever. There was company at dinner in the house, and I could not find any one with authority. I hurried into the neighbouring village, and bought the contents of two bakers' shops, with which I returned in time to give each a piece of bread before the company came out to *look at* them. A gaily dressed group, they stood by themselves languidly regarding the equally languid but rather indignant groups of ill-clad and hungry men and women upon the lawn. They made no attempt to mingle with them, or arrive at a notion of what was moving in any of their minds. The nearest approach to communion I saw was a poke or two given to a child with the point of a parasol. Were my poor friends likely to return to their dingy homes with any great feeling

of regard for the givers of such cold welcome?"

"But that was an exceptional case," said Mr. Morley.

"Chiefly in this," returned Miss Clare, "that it was a case at all—that they were thus presented with a little more room on the face of the earth for a few hours."

"But you think the fresh air may have done them good."

"Yes; but we were speaking, I thought, of what might serve towards the filling up of the gulf between the classes."

"Well, will not all kindness shown to the poor by persons in a superior station, tend in that direction?"

"I maintain that you can do nothing for them in the way of kindness that shall not result in more harm than good, except you do it from and with genuine charity of soul—with some of that love, in short, which

is the heart of religion. Except what is done for them is so done as to draw out their trust and affection, and so raise them consciously in the human scale, it can only tend either to hurt their feelings and generate indignation, or to encourage fawning and beggary. But——”

“I am entirely of your mind,” said Mr. Blackstone. “But do go on.”

“I was going to add,” said Miss Clare, “that while no other charity than this can touch the sore, a good deal might yet be effected by bare justice. It seems to me high time that we dropped talking about charity, and took up the cry of justice. There now is a ground on which a man of your influence, Mr. Morley, might do much.”

“I don't know what you mean, Miss Clare. So long as I pay the market value for the labour I employ, I do not see how

more can be demanded of me—as a right, that is.”

“We will not enter on that question, Marion, if you please,” said Lady Bernard.

Miss Clare nodded and went on.

“Is it just in the nation,” she said, “to abandon those who can do nothing to help themselves, to be preyed upon by bad landlords, railway-companies, and dishonest tradespeople with their false weights, balances, and measures, and adulterations to boot—from all of whom their more wealthy brethren are comparatively safe? Does not a nation exist for the protection of its parts? Have these no claims on the nation? Would you call it just in a family to abandon its less gifted to any moral or physical spoiler who might be bred within it? To say a citizen must take care of himself *may* be just where he *can* take care of himself, but cannot be just where that is

impossible. A thousand causes, originating mainly in the neglect of their neighbours, have combined to sink the poor into a state of moral paralysis: are we to say the paralysed may be run over in our streets with impunity? *Must* they take care of themselves? Have we not to awake them to the very sense that life is worth caring for? I cannot but feel that the bond between such a neglected class and any nation in which it is to be found, is very little stronger than, if indeed as strong as, that between slaves and their masters. Who could preach to them their duty to the nation, except on grounds which such a nation acknowledges only with the lips?"

"You have to prove, Miss Clare," said Mr. Morley, in a tone that seemed intended to imply that he was not in the least affected by mistimed eloquence, "that the relation is that of a family."

“I believe,” she returned, “that it is closer than the mere human relation of the parts of any family. But, at all events, until we *are* their friends it is worse than useless to pretend to be such, and until they feel that we are their friends it is worse than useless to talk to them about God and religion. They will none of it from our lips.”

“Will they from any lips? Are they not already too far sunk towards the brutes to be capable of receiving any such rousing influence?” suggested Mr. Blackstone with a smile, evidently wishing to draw Miss Clare out yet further.

“You turn me aside, Mr. Blackstone. I wanted to urge Mr. Morley to go into parliament as spiritual member for the poor of our large towns. Besides, I know you don’t think as your question would imply. As far as my experience guides me, I am

bound to believe that there is a spot of soil in every heart sufficient for the growth of a gospel seed. And I believe, moreover, that not only is he a fellow-worker with God who sows that seed, but that he also is one who opens a way for that seed to enter the soil. If such preparation were not necessary, the Saviour would have come the moment Adam and Eve fell, and would have required no Baptist to precede him."

A good deal followed which I would gladly record, enabled as I now am to assist my memory by a more thorough acquaintance with the views of Miss Clare. But I fear I have already given too much conversation at once.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### THE END OF THE EVENING.

WHAT specially delighted me during the evening was the marked attention, and the serious look in the eyes, with which Roger listened. It was not often that he did look serious. He preferred, if possible, to get a joke out of a thing; but when he did enter into an argument he was always fair. Although prone to take the side of objection to any religious remark, he yet never said anything against religion itself. But his principles and indeed his nature seemed as yet in a state of solution—uncrystallised, as my father would say.

Mr. Morley, on the other hand, seemed an insoluble mass, incapable of receiving impressions from other minds. Any suggestion of his own mind as to a course of action, or a mode of thinking, had a good chance of being without question regarded as reasonable and right: he was more than ordinarily prejudiced in his own favour. The day after they thus met at our house, Miss Clare had a letter from him, in which he took the high hand with her, rebuking her solemnly for her presumption in saying, as he represented it, that no good could be done except after the fashion she laid down, and assuring her that she would thus alienate the most valuable assistance from any scheme she might cherish for the amelioration of the condition of the lower classes. It ended with the offer of a yearly subscription of five pounds to any project of the wisdom of which she would

take the trouble to convince him. She replied thanking him both for his advice and his offer, but saying that, as she had no scheme on foot requiring such assistance, she could not at present accept the latter ; should, however, anything show itself for which that sort of help was desirable, she would take the liberty of reminding him of it.

When the ladies rose, Judy took me aside, and said—

“ What does it all mean, Wynnie ? ”

“ Just what you hear, ” I answered.

“ You asked us, to have a triumph over me, you naughty thing ! ”

“ Well—partly—if I am to be honest ; but far more to make you do justice to Miss Clare. You being my cousin, she had a right to that at my hands. ”

“ Does Lady Bernard know as much about her as she seems ? ”

“She knows everything about her, and visits her too in her very questionable abode. You see, Judy, a report may be a fact, and yet be untrue.”

“I’m not going to be lectured by a chit like you. But I should like to have a little talk with Miss Clare.”

“I will make you an opportunity.”

I did so, and could not help overhearing a very pretty apology ; to which Miss Clare replied, that she feared she only was to blame, inasmuch as she ought to have explained the peculiarity of her circumstances before accepting the engagement. At the time it had not appeared to her necessary, she said ; but now she would make a point of explaining before she accepted any fresh duty of the kind, for she saw it would be fairer to both parties. It was no wonder such an answer should entirely disarm cousin Judy, who forthwith begged she

would, if she had no objection, resume her lessons with the children at the commencement of the next quarter.

“But I understand from Mrs. Percivale,” objected Miss Clare, “that the office is filled to your thorough satisfaction.”

“Yes; the lady I have is an excellent teacher; but the engagement was only for a quarter.”

“If you have no other reason for parting with her, I could not think of stepping into her place. It would be a great disappointment to her, and my want of openness with you would be the cause of it. If you should part with her for any other reason, I should be very glad to serve you again.”

Judy tried to argue with her, but Miss Clare was immovable.

“Will you let me come and see you then?” said Judy.

“With all my heart,” she answered.

“You had better come with Mrs. Percivale, though, for it would not be easy for you to find the place.”

We went up to the drawing-room to tea, passing through the study, and taking the gentlemen with us. Miss Clare played to us, and sang several songs—the last a ballad of Schiller's, *The Pilgrim*, setting forth the constant striving of the soul after something of which it never lays hold. The last verse of it I managed to remember. It was this:—

Thither ah! no footpath bendeth ;  
Ah! the heaven above, so clear,  
Never, earth to touch, descendeth ;  
And the There is never Here !

“That is a beautiful song, and beautifully sung,” said Mr. Blackstone; “but I am a little surprised at your choosing to sing it, for you cannot call it a Christian song.”

“Don’t you find St. Paul saying something very like it again and again?” Miss Clare returned with a smile, as if she perfectly knew what he objected to. “You find him striving, journeying, pressing on, reaching out to lay hold, but never having attained—ever conscious of failure.”

“That is true; but there is this huge difference—that St. Paul expects to attain—is confident of one day attaining; while Schiller, in that lyric, at least, seems—I only say seems—hopeless of any satisfaction: *Das Dort ist niemals Hier.*”

“It may have been only a mood,” said Miss Clare. “St. Paul had his moods also, from which he had to rouse himself to fresh faith and hope and effort.”

“But St. Paul writes only in his hopeful moods. Such alone he counts worthy of sharing with his fellows. If there is no hope, why, upon any theory, take the

trouble to say so? It is pure weakness to desire sympathy in hopelessness. Hope alone justifies as well as excites either utterance or effort."

"I admit all you say, Mr. Blackstone; and yet I think such a poem invaluable; for is not Schiller therein the mouth of the whole creation groaning and travailing and inarticulately crying out for the sonship?"

"Unconsciously then. He does not know what he wants."

"*Apparently* not. Neither does the creation. Neither do we. We do know it is oneness with God we want, but of what that means we have only vague though glowing hints."

I saw Mr. Morley scratch his left ear like a young calf, only more impatiently.

"But," Miss Clare went on, "is it not invaluable as the confession of one of the

noblest of spirits that he had found neither repose nor sense of attainment ?”

“But,” said Roger, “did you ever know any one of those you call Christians who professed to have reached satisfaction ; or if so, whose life would justify you in believing him ?”

“I have never known a satisfied Christian, I confess,” answered Miss Clare. “Indeed, I should take satisfaction as a poor voucher for Christianity. But I have known several contented Christians. I might in respect of one or two of them use a stronger word—certainly not *satisfied*. I believe there is a grand, essential unsatisfaction—I do not mean dissatisfaction—which adds the delight of expectation to the peace of attainment ; and that, I presume, is the very consciousness of heaven. But where faith may not have produced even contentment, it will yet sustain hope—

which, if we may judge from the ballad, no mere aspiration can. We must believe in a living ideal before we can have a tireless heart—an ideal which draws our poor vague ideal to itself—to fill it full and make it alive.”

I should have been amazed to hear Miss Clare talk like this, had I not often heard my father say that aspiration and obedience were the two mightiest forces for development. Her own needs and her own deeds had been her tutors; and the light by which she had read their lessons was the candle of the Lord within her.

When my husband would have put her into Lady Bernard's carriage as they were leaving, she said she should prefer walking home; and as Lady Bernard did not press her to the contrary, Percivale could not remonstrate.

“I am sorry I cannot walk with you,

Miss Clare," he said. "*I* must not leave my duties, but——"

"There's not the slightest occasion," she interrupted. "I know every yard of the way. Good night."

The carriage drove off in one direction, and Miss Clare tripped lightly along in the other. Percivale darted into the house and told Roger, who snatched up his hat, and bounded after her. Already she was out of sight, but he, following light-footed, overtook her in the crescent. It was however only after persistent entreaty that he prevailed on her to allow him to accompany her.

"You do not know, Mr. Roger," she said pleasantly, "what you may be exposing yourself to, in going with me. I may have to do something you wouldn't like to have a share in."

"I shall be only too glad to have the

humblest share in anything you draw me into," said Roger.

As it fell out, they had not gone far before they came upon a little crowd, chiefly of boys who ought to have been in bed long before, gathered about a man and woman. The man was forcing his company on a woman who was evidently annoyed that she could not get rid of him.

"Is he your husband?" asked Miss Clare, making her way through the crowd.

"No, miss," the woman answered. "I never saw him afore. I'm only just come in from the country."

She looked more angry than frightened. Roger said her black eyes flashed dangerously, and she felt about the bosom of her dress—for a knife, he was certain.

"You leave her alone," he said to the man, getting between him and her.

"Mind your own business," returned the

man in a voice that showed he was drunk.

For a moment Roger was undecided what to do, for he feared involving Miss Clare in a *row*, as he called it. But when the fellow, pushing suddenly past him, laid his hand on Miss Clare and shoved her away, he gave him a blow that sent him staggering into the street; whereupon, to his astonishment, Miss Clare, leaving the woman, followed the man, and as soon as he had recovered his equilibrium, laid her hand on his arm and spoke to him, but in a voice so low and gentle that Roger who had followed her could not hear a word she said. For a moment or two the man seemed to try to listen, but his condition was too much for him, and turning from her he began again to follow the woman who was now walking wearily away. Roger again interposed.

“Don't strike him, Mr. Roger,” cried Miss Clare; “he's too drunk for that. But keep him back if you can, while I take the woman away. If I see a policeman, I will send him.”

The man heard her last words, and they roused him to fury. He rushed at Roger, who, implicitly obedient, only dodged to let him pass and again confronted him, engaging his attention until help arrived. He was however by this time so fierce and violent that Roger felt bound to assist the policeman.

As soon as the man was locked up, he went to Lime Court. The moon was shining, and the narrow passage lay bright beneath her. Along the street people were going and coming, though it was past midnight, but the court was very still. He walked into it as far as the spot where we had together seen Miss Clare. The door at

which she had entered was open, but he knew nothing of the house or its people, and feared to compromise her by making inquiries. He walked several times up and down, somewhat anxious, but gradually persuading himself that in all probability no further annoyance had befallen her; until at last he felt able to leave the place.

He came back to our house, where, finding his brother at his final pipe in the study, he told him all about their adventure.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### MY FIRST TERROR.

ONE of the main discomforts in writing a book is, that there are so many ways in which everything, as it comes up, might be told and you can't tell which is the best. You believe there must be a *best* way, but you might spend your life in trying to satisfy yourself which was that best way, and, when you came to the close of it, find you had done nothing—hadn't even found out the way. I have always to remind myself that something, even if it be far from the best thing, is better than nothing. Perhaps the only way to arrive at the best

way is to make plenty of blunders, and find them out.

This morning I had been sitting a long time with my pen in my hand thinking what this chapter ought to be about—that is, what part of my own history, or of that of my neighbours interwoven therewith, I ought to take up next, when my third child, my little Marion, aged five, came into the room, and said—

“Mamma, there’s a poor man at the door, and Jemima won’t give him anything.”

“Quite right, my dear. We must give what we can to people we know. We are sure then that it is not wasted.”

“But he’s so *very* poor, mamma!”

“How do you know that?”

“Poor man! he has *only* three children. I heard him tell Jemima. He was *so* sorry! And *I*’m very sorry too.”

“But don’t you know you mustn’t go to

the door when any one is talking to Jemima?" I said.

"Yes, mamma. I didn't go to the door; I stood in the hall and peeped."

"But you mustn't even stand in the hall," I said. "Mind that."

This was, perhaps, rather an oppressive reading of a proper enough rule; but I had a very special reason for it, involving an important event in my story, which occurred about two years after what I have last set down.

One morning Percivale took a holiday in order to give me one, and we went to spend it at Richmond. It was the anniversary of our marriage, and as we wanted to enjoy it thoroughly, and, precious as children are, *every* pleasure is not enhanced by their company, we left ours at home—Ethel and her brother Roger (named after Percivale's father), who was now nearly a year old, and

wanted a good deal of attention. It was a lovely day, with just a sufficient number of passing clouds to glorify—that is, to do justice to—the sunshine, and a gentle breeze, which itself seemed to be taking a holiday, for it blew only just when you wanted it, and then only enough to make you think of that wind which, blowing where it lists, always blows where it is wanted. We took the train to Hammer-smith; for my husband, having consulted the tide-table, and found that the river would be propitious, wished to row me from there to Richmond. How gay the river-side looked, with its fine broad landing stage, and the numberless boats ready to push off on the swift water, which kept growing and growing on the shingly shore! Percivale, however, would hire his boat at a certain builder's shed, that I might see it. That shed alone would have been worth coming

to see—such a picture of loveliest gloom—as if it had been the cave where the twilight abode its time! You could not tell whether to call it light or shade—that diffused presence of a soft elusive brown; but is what we call shade anything but subdued light? All about, above, and below, lay the graceful creatures of the water—moveless and dead here on the shore, but there—launched into their own elemental world and blown upon by the living wind—endowed at once with life and motion and quick response.

Not having been used to boats, I felt nervous as we got into the long, sharp-nosed, hollow fish which Percivale made them shoot out on the rising tide; but the slight fear vanished, almost the moment we were afloat, when, ignorant as I was of the art of rowing, I could not help seeing how perfectly Percivale was at home in it. The oars in his hands were like knitting-needles

in mine, so deftly, so swimmingly, so variously did he wield them. Only once my fear returned—when he stood up in the swaying thing—a mere length without breadth—to pull off his coat and waistcoat; but he stood steady, sat down gently, took his oars quietly, and the same instant we were shooting so fast through the rising tide that it seemed as if *we* were pulling the water up to Richmond.

“Wouldn’t you like to steer?” said my husband. “It would amuse you.”

“I should like to learn,” I said, “—not that I want to be amused; I am too happy to care for amusement.”

“Take those two cords behind you, then,—one in each hand, sitting between them. That will do. Now, if you want me to go to your right, pull your right-hand cord; if you want me to go to your left, pull your left-hand one.”

I made an experiment or two, and found the predicted consequences follow: I ran him aground, first on one bank, then on the other. But when I did so a third time—

“Come! come!” he said; “this won’t do, Mrs. Percivale. You’re not trying your best. There is such a thing as gradation in steering as well as in painting, or music, or anything else that is worth doing.”

“I pull the right line, don’t I?” I said; for I was now in a mood to tease him.

“Yes—to a wrong result,” he answered. “You must feel your rudder, as you would the mouth of your horse with the bit—and not do anything violent, except in urgent necessity.”

I answered by turning the head of the boat right towards the nearer bank.

“I see!” he said, with a twinkle in his eyes. “I have put a dangerous power into your hands. But never mind. The queen

may decree as she likes ; but the sinews of war, you know——”

I thought he meant that if I went on with my arbitrary behaviour, he would drop his oars ; and for a little while I behaved better. Soon, however, the spirit of mischief prompting me, I began my tricks again: to my surprise I found that I had no more command over the boat than over the huge barge which, with its great red-brown sail, was slowly ascending in front of us ; I couldn't turn its head an inch in the direction I wanted.

“ What does it mean, Percivale ? ” I cried, pulling with all my might, and leaning forward that I might pull the harder.

“ What does what mean ? ” he returned coolly.

“ That I can't move the boat.”

“ Oh ! It means that I have resumed the reins of government.”

“But how? I can't understand it.”

“And I am wiser than to make you too wise. Education is *not* a panacea for moral evils. I quote your father, my dear.”

And he pulled away as if nothing were the matter.

“Please, I like steering,” I said remonstratingly.

“And I like rowing.”

“I don't see why the two shouldn't go together.”

“Nor I. They ought. But not only does the steering depend on the rowing, but the rower can steer himself.”

“I will be a good girl, and steer properly.”

“Very well; steer away.”

He looked shorewards as he spoke; and then first I became aware that he had been watching my hands all the time. The boat now obeyed my lightest touch.

How merrily the water rippled in the sun and the wind! while so responsive were our feelings to the play of light and shade around us, that more than once when a cloud crossed us, I saw its shadow turn almost into sadness on the countenance of my companion—to vanish the next moment when the one sun above and the thousand mimic suns below shone out in universal laughter. When a steamer came in sight, or announced its approach by the far-heard sound of its beating paddles, it brought with it a few moments of almost awful responsibility; but I found that the presence of danger and duty together, instead of making me feel flurried, composed my nerves, and enabled me to concentrate my whole attention on getting the head of the boat as nearly as possible at right angles with the waves from the paddles; for Percivale had told me that if one of any size struck us on the side, it

would most probably capsize us. But the way to give pleasure to my readers can hardly be to let myself grow garrulous in the memory of an ancient pleasure of my own. I will say nothing more of the delights of that day. They were such a contrast to its close, that twelve months at least elapsed before I was able to look back upon them without a shudder; for I could not rid myself of the foolish feeling that our enjoyment had been somehow to blame for what was happening at home while we were thus revelling in blessed carelessness.

When we reached our little nest, rather late in the evening, I found to my annoyance that the front door was open. It had been a fault of which I thought I had cured the cook—to leave it thus when she ran out to fetch anything. Percivale went down to the study, and I walked into the drawing-room, about to ring the bell in

anger. There, to my surprise and further annoyance, I found Sarah, seated on the sofa with her head in her hands, and little Roger wide awake on the floor.

“What *does* this mean?” I cried. “The front door open! Master Roger still up! and you seated in the drawing-room!”

“Oh, ma’am!” she almost shrieked, starting up the moment I spoke, and, by the time I had put my angry interrogation, just able to gasp out—“Have you found her, ma’am?”

“Found whom?” I returned, in alarm both at the question and at the face of the girl; for through the dusk I now saw that it was very pale, and that her eyes were red with crying.

“Miss Ethel,” she answered, in a cry choked with a sob; and dropping again on the sofa, she hid her face once more between her hands.

I rushed to the study door, and called Percivale; then returned to question the girl. I wonder now that I did nothing outrageous, but fear kept down folly, and made me unnaturally calm.

“Sarah,” I said, as quietly as I could, while I trembled all over, “tell me what has happened. Where is the child?”

“Indeed it’s not my fault, ma’am. I was busy with Master Roger, and Miss Ethel was down stairs with Jemima.”

“Where is she?” I repeated sternly.

“I don’t know no more than the man in the moon, ma’am.”

“Where’s Jemima?”

“Run out to look for her.”

“How long have you missed her?”

“An hour. Or perhaps two hours. I don’t know, my head’s in such a whirl. I can’t remember when I saw her last. Oh ma’am! What *shall* I do?”

Percivale had come up, and was standing beside me. When I looked round, he was as pale as death ; and at the sight of his face, I nearly dropped on the floor. But he caught hold of me, and said, in a voice so dreadfully still that it frightened me more than anything,¹

“Come, my love ; do not give way, for we must go to the police at once.” Then, turning to Sarah—“Have you searched the house and garden ?” he asked.

“Yes, sir ; every hole and corner. We’ve looked under every bed, and into every cupboard and chest—the coal-cellar, the box-room—everywhere.”

“The bath-room ?” I cried.

“Oh, yes, ma’am ; the bath-room, and everywhere.”

“Have there been any tramps about the house since we left ?” Percivale asked.

“Not that I know of ; but the nursery

window looks into the garden, you know, sir. Jemima didn't mention it."

"Come then, my dear," said my husband.

He compelled me to swallow a glass of wine, and led me away, almost unconscious of my bodily movements, to the nearest cabstand. I wondered afterwards when I recalled the calm gaze with which he glanced along the line, and chose the horse whose appearance promised the best speed. In a few minutes we were telling the inspector at the police-station in Albany Street what had happened. He took a sheet of paper, and asking one question after another about her age, appearance, and dress, wrote down our answers. He then called a man, to whom he gave the paper, with some words of direction.

"The men are now going on their beats for the night," he said, turning again to us.

"They will all hear the description of the

child, and some of them have orders to search.”

“Thank you,” said my husband. “Which station had we better go to next?”

“The news will be at the farthest before you could reach the nearest,” he answered. “We shall telegraph to the suburbs first.”

“Then what more is there we can do?” asked Percivale.

“Nothing,” said the inspector, “—except you find out whether any of the neighbours saw her, and when and where. It would be something to know in what direction she was going.—Have you any ground for suspicion? Have you ever discharged a servant? Were any tramps seen about the place?”

“I know who it is!” I cried. “It’s the woman that took Theodora! It’s Theodora’s mother! I know it is!”

Percivale explained what I meant.

“That’s what people get you see, when they take on themselves other people’s business,” returned the inspector. “That child ought to have been sent to the work-house.”

He laid his head on his hand for a moment.

“It seems likely enough,” he added. Then after another pause—“I have your address. The child shall be brought back to you the moment she’s found. We can’t mistake her after your description.”

“Where are you going now?” I said to my husband, as we left the station to re-enter the cab.

“I don’t know,” he answered, “except we go home and question all the shops in the neighbourhood.”

“Let us go to Miss Clare first,” I said.

“By all means,” he answered.

We were soon at the entrance of Lime Court.

When we turned the corner in the middle of it, we heard the sound of a piano.

“She’s at home!” I cried, with a feeble throb of satisfaction. The fear that she might be out had for the last few moments been uppermost.

We entered the house, and ascended the stairs in haste. Not a creature did we meet, except a wicked-looking cat. The top of her head was black, her forehead and face white; and the black and white were shaped so as to look like hair parted over a white forehead, which gave her green eyes a frightfully human look as she crouched in the corner of a window-sill in the light of a gas-lamp outside. But before we reached the top of the first stair we heard the sounds of dancing as well as of music. In a moment after, with our load of gnawing fear and

helpless eagerness, we stood in the midst of a merry assembly of men women and children, who filled Miss Clare's room to overflowing. Although it was only Friday night, they were for some reason gathered for their weekly music.

They made a way for us, and Miss Clare left the piano and came to meet us, with a smile on her beautiful face. But when she saw our faces, hers fell.

"What *is* the matter, Mrs. Percivale?" she asked in alarm.

I sunk on the chair from which she had risen.

"We've lost Ethel," said my husband quietly.

"What do you mean? You don't——"

"No, no; she's gone; she's stolen. We don't know where she is," he answered with faltering voice. "We've just been to the police."

Miss Clare turned white; but instead of making any remark, she called out to some of her friends whose good manners were making them leave the room,

“Don’t go, please; we want you.” Then turning to me, she asked, “May I do as I think best?”

“Yes, certainly,” answered my husband.

“My friend, Mrs. Percivale,” she said, addressing the whole assembly, “has lost her little girl.”

A murmur of dismay and sympathy arose.

“What can we do to find her?” she went on.

They fell to talking among themselves. The next instant, two men came up to us, making their way from the neighbourhood of the door. The one was a keen-faced elderly man, with iron-grey whiskers and clean-shaved chin; the other was my first acquaintance in the neighbourhood, the

young bricklayer. The elder addressed my husband, while the other listened without speaking.

“Tell us what she’s like, sir, and how she was dressed—though that ain’t much use. She’ll be all different by this time.”

The words shot a keener pang to my heart than it had yet felt. My darling stripped of her nice clothes, and covered with dirty, perhaps infected garments! But it was no time to give way to feeling.

My husband repeated to the men the description he had given the police, loud enough for the whole room to hear; and the women in particular, Miss Clare told me afterwards, caught it up with remarkable accuracy. They would not have done so, she said, but that their feelings were touched.

“Tell them also, please, Mr. Percivale, about the child Mrs. Percivale’s father and

mother found and brought up. That may have something to do with this."

My husband told them all the story, adding that the mother of the child might have found out who we were, and taken ours as a pledge for the recovery of her own.

Here one of the women spoke.

"That dark woman you took in one night—two years ago, miss—she say something. I was astin' of her in the mornin' what her trouble was, for that trouble *she* had on *her* mind was plain to see, and she come over something, half-way like, about losin' of a child; but whether it were dead, or strayed, or stolen, or what, I couldn't tell; and no more, I believe, she wanted me to."

Here another woman spoke.

"I'm 'most sure I saw her—the same woman—two days ago, and no furrer off than Gower Street," she said. "You're too good by half, miss," she went on, "to the

likes of sich. They ain't none of them respectable."

"Perhaps you'll see some good come out of it before long," said Miss Clare in reply.

The words sounded like a rebuke, for all this time I had hardly sent a thought upwards for help. The image of my child had so filled my heart that there was no room left for the thought of duty, or even of God.

Miss Clare went on, still addressing the company, and her words had a tone of authority.

"I will tell you what you must do," she said. "You must, every one of you, run and tell everybody you know, and tell every one to tell everybody else. You mustn't stop to talk it over with each other, or let those you tell it to stop to talk to you about it, for it is of the greatest consequence no

time should be lost in making it as quickly and as widely known as possible. Go, please."

In a few moments the room was empty of all but ourselves. The rush on the stairs was tremendous for a single minute, and then all was still. Even the children had rushed out to tell what other children they could find.

"What must we do next?" said my husband.

Miss Clare thought for a moment.

"I would go and tell Mr. Blackstone," she said. "It is a long way from here, but whoever has taken the child would not be likely to linger in the neighbourhood. It is best to try everything."

"Right," said my husband. "Come, Wynnied."

"Wouldn't it be better to leave Mrs. Percivale with me?" said Miss Clare. "It

is dreadfully fatiguing to go driving over the stones."

It was very kind of her; but if she had been a mother she would not have thought of parting me from my husband; neither would she have fancied that I could remain inactive so long as it was possible even to imagine I was doing something; but when I told her how I felt, she saw at once that it would be better for me to go.

We set off instantly, and drove to Mr. Blackstone's. What a long way it was! Down Oxford Street and Holborn we rattled and jolted, and then through many narrow ways in which I had never been, emerging at length in a broad road, with many poor and a few fine old houses in it; then again plunging into still more shabby regions of small houses, which, alas! were new and yet wretched! At length, near an open space, where yet not a blade of grass could

grow for the trampling of many feet, and for the smoke from tall chimneys, close by a gasometer of awful size, we found the parsonage, and Mr. Blackstone in his study. The moment he heard our story he went to the door and called his servant. "Run, Jabez," he said, "and tell the sexton to ring the church-bell. I will come to him directly I hear it."

I may just mention that Jabez and his wife, who formed the whole of Mr. Blackstone's household, did not belong to his congregation, but were members of a small community in the neighbourhood calling themselves Peculiar Baptists.

About ten minutes passed, during which little was said: Mr. Blackstone never seemed to have any mode of expressing his feelings except action, and where that was impossible they took hardly any recognizable shape. When the first boom of the

big bell filled the little study in which we sat, I gave a cry, and jumped up from my chair: it sounded in my ears like the knell of my lost baby, for at the moment I was thinking of her as once when a baby she lay for dead in my arms. Mr. Blackstone got up and left the room, and my husband rose and would have followed him; but, saying he would be back in a few minutes, he shut the door and left us. It was half an hour—a dreadful half hour, before he returned, for to sit doing nothing, not even being carried somewhere to do something, was frightful.

“I’ve told them all about it,” he said. “I couldn’t do better than follow Miss Clare’s example. But my impression is, that if the woman you suspect be the culprit, she would make her way out to the open as quickly as possible. Such people are most at home on the commons; they are

of a less gregarious nature than the wild animals of the town. What shall you do next?"

"That is just what I want to know," answered my husband.

He never asked advice except when he did not know what to do; and never except from one whose advice he meant to follow.

"Well," returned Mr. Blackstone, "I should put an advertisement into every one of the morning papers."

"But the offices will all be closed," said Percivale.

"Yes; the publishing, but not the printing offices."

"How am I to find out where they are?"

"I know one or two of them, and the people there will tell us the rest."

"Then you mean to go with us?"

"Of course I do—that is, if you will have me. You don't think I would leave

you to go alone? Have you had any supper?"

"No. Would you like something, my dear?" said Percivale turning to me.

"I couldn't swallow a mouthful," I said.

"Nor I either," said Percivale.

"Then I'll just take a hunch of bread with me," said Mr. Blackstone, "for I am hungry. I've had nothing since one o'clock."

We neither asked him not to go, nor offered to wait till he had had his supper. Before we reached Printing-house Square, he had eaten half a loaf.

"Are you sure," said my husband, as we were starting, "that they will take an advertisement at the printing-office?"

"I think they will. The circumstances are pressing. They will see that we are honest people, and will make a push to help

us. But for anything I know it may be quite *en règle*."

"We must pay, though," said Percivale, putting his hand in his pocket, and taking out his purse. "There! Just as I feared! No money!—Two—three shillings—and six-pence!"

Mr. Blackstone stopped the cab.

"I've not got as much," he said. "But it's of no consequence. I'll run and write a cheque."

"But where can you change it? The little shops about here won't be able."

"There's the Blue Posts."

"Let me take it, then. You won't be seen going into a public-house?" said Percivale.

"Pooh! pooh!" said Mr. Blackstone. "Do you think my character won't stand that much? Besides, they wouldn't change it for you. But when I think of it, I used

the last cheque in my book in the beginning of the week. Never mind; they will lend me five pounds."

We drove to the Blue Posts. He got out, and returned in one minute with five sovereigns.

"What will people say to your borrowing five pounds at a public house?" said Percivale.

"If they say what is right, it won't hurt me."

"But if they say what is wrong?"

"That they can do any time, and that won't hurt me either."

"But what will the landlord himself think?"

"I have no doubt he feels grateful to me for being so friendly. You can't oblige a man more than by asking a *light* favour of him."

"Do you think it well in your position

to be obliged to a man in his?" asked Percivale.

"I do. I am glad of the chance. It will bring me into friendly relations with him."

"Do you wish then to be in friendly relations with him?"

"Indubitably. In what other relations do you suppose a clergyman ought to be with one of his parishioners?"

"You didn't invite *him* into your parish, I presume."

"No; and he didn't invite me. The thing was settled in higher quarters. There we are anyhow; and I have done quite a stroke of business in borrowing that money of him."

Mr. Blackstone laughed, and the laugh sounded frightfully harsh in my ears.

"A man—" my husband went on, who was surprised that a clergyman should be so liberal—"a man who sells drink!—in

whose house so many of your parishioners will to-morrow night get too drunk to be in church next morning !”

“ I wish having been drunk were what *would* keep them from being in church. Drunk or sober, it would be all the same. Few of them care to go. They are turning out better, however, than when first I came. As for the publican, who knows what chance of doing him a good turn it may put in my way ?”

“ You don't expect to persuade him to shut shop ?”

“ No; he must persuade himself to that.”

“ What good, then, can you expect to do him ?”

“ Who knows ? I say. You can't tell what good may or may not come out of it, any more than you can tell which of your efforts, or which of your helpers, may this night be the means of restoring your child.”

“What do you expect the man to say about it?”

“I shall provide him with something to say. I don't want him to attribute it to some foolish charity. He might. In the New Testament, publicans are acknowledged to have hearts.”

“Yes ; but the word has a very different meaning in the New Testament.”

“The feeling religious people bear towards them, however, comes very near to that with which society regarded the publicans of old.”

“They are far more hurtful to society than those tax-gatherers.”

“They may be. I dare say they are. Perhaps they are worse than the sinners with whom their namesakes of the New Testament are always coupled.”

I will not follow the conversation further ; I will only give the close of it. Percivale

told me afterwards that he had gone on talking in the hope of diverting my thoughts a little.

“What then do you mean to tell him?” asked Percivale.

“The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth,” said Mr. Blackstone. “I shall go in to-morrow morning, just at the time when there will probably be far too many people at the bar—a little after noon. I shall return him his five sovereigns, ask for a glass of ale, and tell him the whole story—how my friend, the celebrated painter, came with his wife—and the rest of it, adding, I trust, that the child is all right, and at the moment probably going out for a walk with her mother, who won't let her out of her sight for a moment.”

He laughed again, and again I thought him heartless; but I understand him better now. I wondered, too, that Percivale *could*

go on talking, and yet I found that their talk did make the time go a little quicker. At length we reached the printing-office of *The Times*—near Blackfriars Bridge, I think.

After some delay, we saw an overseer, who, curt enough at first, became friendly when he heard our case. If he had not had children of his own, we might perhaps have fared worse. He took down the description and address, and promised that the advertisement should appear in the morning's paper in the best place he could now find for it.

Before we left, we received minute directions as to the whereabouts of the next nearest office. We spent the greater part of the night in driving from one printing-office to another. Mr. Blackstone declared he would not leave us until we had found her.

“ You have to preach twice to-morrow,” said Percivale : it was then three o'clock.

“ I shall preach all the better,” he returned.—“ Yes ; I feel as if I should give them *one* good sermon to-morrow.”

“ The man talks as if the child were found already !” I thought with indignation. “ It's a pity he hasn't a child of his own !—he would be more sympathetic.” At the same time if I had been honest I should have confessed to myself that his confidence and hope helped to keep me up.

At last, having been to the printing-office of every daily paper in London, we were on our dreary way home. Oh, how dreary it was !—and the more dreary that the cool, sweet light of a spring dawn was growing in every street, no smoke having yet begun to pour from the multitudinous chimneys to sully its purity ! From misery and want of sleep, my soul and body both felt like a

grey foggy night. Every now and then the thought of my child came with a fresh pang—not that she was one moment absent from me, but that a new thought about her would dart a new sting into the ever-burning throb of the wound. If you had asked me the one blessed thing in the world, I should have said *sleep*—with my husband and children beside me. But I dreaded sleep now, both for its visions and for the frightful waking. Now and then I would start violently, thinking I heard my Ethel cry; but from the cab-window no child was ever to be seen, down all the lonely street. Then I would sink into a succession of efforts to picture to myself her little face—white with terror and misery, and smeared with the dirt of the pitiful hands that rubbed the streaming eyes. They might have beaten her! she might have cried herself to sleep in some wretched hovel—or, worse,

in some fever-stricken and crowded lodging-house, with horrible sights about her and horrible voices in her ears ! Or she might at that moment be dragged wearily along a country road, farther and farther from her mother ! I could have shrieked and torn my hair. What if I should never see her again ? She might be murdered, and I never know it ! O my darling ! my darling !

At the thought a groan escaped me. A hand was laid on my arm. That I knew was my husband's. But a voice was in my ear, and that was Mr. Blackstone's.

“Do you think God loves the child less than you do ? Or do you think he is less able to take care of her than you are ? When the disciples thought themselves sinking, Jesus rebuked them for being afraid. Be still, and you will see the hand of God in this. Good you cannot foresee will come out of it.”

I could not answer him, but I felt both rebuked and grateful.

All at once I thought of Roger. What would he say when he found that his pet was gone, and we had never told him?

“Roger!” I said to my husband.  
“We’ve never told him!”

“Let us go now,” he returned.

We were at the moment close to North Crescent.

After a few thundering raps at the door, the landlady came down. Percivale rushed up, and in a few minutes returned with Roger. They got into the cab. A great talk followed, but I heard hardly anything, or rather I heeded nothing. I only recollect that Roger was very indignant with his brother for having been out all night without him to help.

“I never thought of you, Roger,” said Percivale.

“So much the worse!” said Roger.

“No,” said Mr. Blackstone. “A thousand things make us forget. I daresay your brother all but forgot God in the first misery of his loss. To have thought of you and not to have told you, would have been another thing.”

A few minutes after, we stopped at our desolate house, and the cabman was dismissed with one of the sovereigns from the Blue Posts. I wondered afterwards what manner of man or woman had changed it there. A dim light was burning in the drawing-room. Percivale took his pass-key and opened the door. I hurried in and went straight to my own room, for I longed to be alone that I might weep—nor weep only. I fell on my knees by the bedside, buried my face, and sobbed and tried to pray. But I could not collect my thoughts, and, overwhelmed by a fresh

access of despair, I started again to my feet.

Could I believe my eyes! What was that in the bed? Trembling as with an ague—in terror lest the vision should by vanishing prove itself a vision—I stooped towards it. I heard a breathing! It was the fair hair and the rosy face of my darling—fast asleep—without one trace of suffering on her angelic loveliness. I remember no more for a while. They tell me I gave a great cry and fell on the floor. When I came to myself I was lying on the bed. My husband was bending over me, and Roger and Mr. Blackstone were both in the room. I could not speak, but my husband understood my questioning gaze.

“Yes, yes, my love,” he said quietly; “she’s all right—safe and sound, thank God!”

And I did thank God.

Mr. Blackstone came to the bedside with a look and a smile that seemed to my conscience to say, "I told you so." I held out my hand to him, but could only weep. Then I remembered how we had vexed Roger, and called him.

"Dear Roger," I said, "forgive me, and go and tell Miss Clare."

I had some reason to think this the best amends I could make him.

"I will go at once," he said. "She will be anxious."

"And I will go to my sermon," said Mr. Blackstone, with the same quiet smile.

They shook hands with me, and went away. And my husband and I rejoiced over our first-born.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### ITS SEQUEL.

**M**Y darling was recovered neither through Miss Clare's injunctions nor Mr. Blackstone's bell-ringing. A woman was walking steadily westward, carrying the child asleep in her arms, when a policeman stopped her at Turnham Green. She betrayed no fear, only annoyance, and offered no resistance, only begged he would not wake the child, or take her from her. He brought them in a cab to the police-station, whence the child was sent home. As soon as she arrived, Sarah gave her a warm bath and

put her to bed, but she scarcely opened her eyes.

Jemima had run about the streets till midnight, and then fallen asleep on the doorstep, where the policeman found her when he brought the child. For a week she went about like one dazed, and the blunders she made were marvellous. She ordered a brace of cod from the poulterer, and a pound of anchovies at the crockery shop. One day at dinner, we could not think how the chops were so pulpy, and we got so many bits of bone in our mouths: she had powerfully beaten them as if they had been steaks. She sent up melted butter for bread sauce, and stuffed a hare with sausages.

After breakfast, Percivale walked to the police-station, to thank the inspector, pay what expenses had been incurred, and see the woman. I was not well enough to go

with him.—My Marion is a white-faced thing, and her eyes look much too big for her small face.—I suggested that he should take Miss Clare. As it was early, he was fortunate enough to find her at home, and she accompanied him willingly, and at once recognized the woman as the one she had befriended.

He told the magistrate he did not wish to punish her, but that there were certain circumstances which made him desirous of detaining her until a gentleman, who, he believed, could identify her, should arrive. The magistrate therefore remanded her.

The next day but one my father came. When he saw her, he had little doubt she was the same that had carried off Theo; but he could not be absolutely certain, because he had seen her only by moonlight. He told the magistrate the whole story, saying that, if she should prove the mother

of the child, he was most anxious to try what he could do for her. The magistrate expressed grave doubts whether he would find it possible to befriend her to any effectual degree. My father said he would try, if he could but be certain she was the mother.

“If she stole the child merely to compel the restitution of her own,” he said, “I cannot regard her conduct with any abhorrence. But if she is not the mother of the child, I must leave her to the severity of the law.”

“I once discharged a woman,” said the magistrate, “who had committed the same offence, for I was satisfied she had done so purely from the desire to possess the child.”

“But might not a thief say he was influenced merely by the desire to add another sovereign to his hoard?”

“The greed of the one is a natural affection ; that of the other a vice.”

“But the injury to the loser is far greater in the one case than in the other.”

“To set that off, however, the child is more easily discovered. Besides, the false appetite grows with indulgence, whereas one child would still be the natural one.”

“Then you would allow her to go on stealing child after child until she succeeded in keeping one,” said my father, laughing.

“I dismissed her with the warning that if ever she did so again, this would be brought up against her, and she would have the severest punishment the law could inflict. It may be right to pass a first offence, and wrong to pass a second. I tried to make her measure the injury done to the mother by her own sorrow at losing the child, and I think not without effect.

At all events, it was some years ago, and I have not heard of her again."

Now came in the benefit of the kindness Miss Clare had shown the woman. I doubt if any one else could have got the truth from her. Even she found it difficult; for, to tell her that if she was Theo's mother, she should not be punished, might be only to tempt her to lie. All Miss Clare could do was to assure her of the kindness of every one concerned, and to urge her to disclose her reasons for doing such a grievous wrong as steal another woman's child.

"They stole my child," she blurted out at last, when the cruelty of the action was pressed upon her.

"Oh, no!" said Miss Clare; "you left her to die in the cold."

"No, no!" she cried. "I wanted somebody to hear her and take her in. I wasn't

far off, and was just going to take her again, when I saw a light, and heard them searching for her. Oh dear! Oh dear!"

"Then how can you say they stole her? You would have had no child at all but for them. She was nearly dead when they found her! And in return you go and steal their grandchild!"

"They took her from me afterwards. They wouldn't let me have my own flesh and blood. I wanted to let them know what it was to have *their* child taken from them."

"How could they tell she was your child, when you stole her away like a thief? It might, for anything they knew, be some other woman stealing her, as you stole theirs the other day. What would have become of you, if it had been so?"

To this reasoning she made no answer.

"I want my child; I want my child,"

she moaned. Then breaking out—"I shall kill myself if I don't get my child!" she cried. "O lady, you don't know what it is to have a child and not have her! I shall kill myself if they don't give me her back. They can't say I did their child any harm. I was as good to her as if she had been my own."

"They know that quite well, and don't want to punish you. Would you like to see your child?"

She clasped her hands above her head, fell on her knees at Miss Clare's feet, and looked up in her face without uttering a word.

"I will speak to Mr. Walton," said Miss Clare, and left her.

The next morning she was discharged at the request of my husband, who brought her home with him.

Sympathy with the mother-passion in her

bosom had melted away all my resentment. She was a fine young woman of about five and twenty, though her weather-browned complexion made her look at first much older. With the help of the servants, I persuaded her to have a bath, during which they removed her clothes, and substituted others. She objected to putting them on, seemed half-frightened at them, as if they might involve some shape of bondage, and begged to have her own again. At last Jemima, who, although so sparingly provided with brains, is not without genius, prevailed upon her, insisting that her little girl would turn away from her if she wasn't well dressed, for she had been used to see ladies about her. With a deep sigh, she yielded, begging however to have her old garments restored to her.

She had brought with her a small bundle, tied up in a cotton handkerchief, and from

it she now took a scarf of red silk, and twisted it up with her black hair in a fashion I had never seen before. In this head-dress she had almost a brilliant look, while her carriage had a certain dignity hard of association with poverty—not inconsistent however with what I have since learned about the gipsies. My husband admired her even more than I did, and made a very good sketch of her. Her eyes were large and dark—unquestionably fine; and if there was not much of the light of thought in them, they had a certain wildness which in a measure made up for the want. She had rather a Spanish than an eastern look, I thought—with an air of defiance that prevented me from feeling at ease with her; but in the presence of Miss Clare she seemed humbler, and answered her questions more readily than ours. If Ethel was in the room, her eyes would be

constantly wandering after her, with a wistful, troubled, eager look. Surely the mother-passion must have infinite relations and destinies !

As I was unable to leave home, my father persuaded Miss Clare to accompany him and help him to take charge of her. I confess it was a relief to me when she left the house, for though I wanted to be as kind to her as I could, I felt considerable discomfort in her presence.

When Miss Clare returned the next day but one, I found she had got from her the main points of her history, fully justifying previous conjectures of my father's, founded on what he knew of the character and customs of the gipsies.

She belonged to one of the principal gipsy families in this country. The fact that they had no settled habitation, but lived in tents like Abraham and Isaac, had nothing

to do with poverty. The silver buttons on her father's Sunday clothes, were, she said, worth nearly twenty pounds; and when a friend of any distinction came to tea with them, they spread a table-cloth of fine linen on the grass, and set out upon it the best of china, and a tea-service of hall-marked silver. She said her friends—as much as any gentleman in the land—scorned stealing; and affirmed that no real gipsy would “risk his neck for his belly,” except he were driven by hunger. All her family could read, she said, and carried a big Bible about with them.

One summer they were encamped for several months in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh, making horn-spoons and baskets, and some of them working in tin. There they were visited by a clergyman who talked and read the Bible to them and prayed with them. But all their visitors

were not of the same sort with him. One of them was a young fellow of loose character, a clerk in the city, who, attracted by her appearance, prevailed upon her to meet him often. She was not then eighteen. Any aberration from the paths of modesty is exceedingly rare among the gipsies, and regarded with severity; and her father, hearing of this, gave her a terrible punishment with the whip he used in driving his horses. In terror of what would follow when the worst came to be known, she ran away, and, soon forsaken by her so-called lover, wandered about, a common vagrant, until her baby was born—under the stars, on a summer night, in a field of long grass.

For some time she wandered up and down, longing to join some tribe of her own people, but dreading unspeakably the disgrace of her motherhood. At length, having found a home for her child, she associated

herself with a gang of gipsies of inferior character, amongst whom she had many hardships to endure. Things however bettered a little after one of their number was hanged for stabbing a cousin, and her position improved. It was not however any intention of carrying off her child to share her present lot, but the urgings of mere mother-hunger for a sight of her, that drove her to the Hall. When she had succeeded in enticing her out of sight of the house, however, the longing to possess her grew fierce, and, braving all consequences, or rather, I presume, unable to weigh them, she did carry her away. Foiled in this attempt, and seeing that her chances of future success in any similar one were diminished by it, she sought some other plan. Learning that one of the family was married and had removed to London, she succeeded through gipsy acquaintances, who

lodged occasionally near Tottenham Court Road, in finding out where we lived, and carried off Ethel with the vague intent, as we had rightly conjectured, of using her as a means for the recovery of her own child.

Theodora was now about seven years of age—almost as wild as ever. Although tolerably obedient, she was not nearly so much so as the other children had been at her age—partly, perhaps, because my father could not bring himself to use that severity to the child of other people with which he had judged it proper to treat his own.

Miss Clare was present with my father and the rest of the family when the mother and daughter met. They were all more than curious to see how the child would behave, and whether there would be any signs of an instinct that drew her to her parent. In this, however, they were disappointed.

It was a fine warm forenoon when she came running on to the lawn where they were assembled—the gipsy mother with them.

“There she is!” said my father to the woman. “Make the best of yourself you can.”

Miss Clare said the poor creature turned very pale, but her eyes glowed with such a fire!

With the cunning of her race, she knew better than to bound forward and catch up the child in her arms. She walked away from the rest, and stood watching the little damsel, romping merrily with Mr. Wagtail. They thought she recognized the dog, and was afraid of him. She had put on a few silver ornaments which she had either kept or managed to procure notwithstanding her poverty; for both the men and women of her race manifest in a strong degree that

love for barbaric adornment which, as well as other their peculiarities, points to an eastern origin. The glittering of these in the sun, and the glow of her red scarf in her dark hair, along with the strangeness of her whole appearance, attracted the child, and she approached to look at her nearer. Then the mother took from her pocket a large gilded ball, which had probably been one of the ornaments on the top of a clock, and rolled it gleaming golden along the grass. Theo and Mr. Wagtail bounded after it with a shriek and a bark. Having examined it for a moment, the child threw it again along the lawn, and this time the mother, lithe as a leopard, and fleet as a savage, joined in the chase, caught it first, and again sent it spinning away—farther from the assembled group. Once more all three followed in swift pursuit; but this time the mother took care to allow the child

to seize the treasure. After the sport had continued a little while, what seemed a general consultation of mother, child, and dog, took place over the bauble; and presently they saw that Theo was eating something.

“I trust,” said my mother, “she won’t hurt the child with any nasty stuff.”

“She will not do so wittingly,” said my father, “you may be sure. Anyhow, we must not interfere.”

In a few minutes more the mother approached them, with a subdued look of triumph and her eyes overflowing with light, carrying the child in her arms. Theo was playing with some foreign coins which adorned her hair, and with a string of coral and silver beads round her neck.

For the rest of the day they were left to do much as they pleased, only every one kept good watch.

But in the joy of recovering her child, the mother seemed herself to have gained a new and childlike spirit. The more than willingness with which she hastened to do what, even in respect of her child, was requested of her, as if she fully acknowledged the right of authority in those who had been her best friends, was charming. Whether this would last when the novelty of the new experience had worn off, whether jealousy would not then come in for its share in the ordering of her conduct, remained to be shown; but in the meantime the good in her was uppermost.

She was allowed to spend a whole fortnight in making friends with her daughter, before a word was spoken about the future, the design of my father being through the child to win the mother. Certain people considered him not eager enough to convert the wicked: whatever apparent indifference

he showed in that direction, arose from his utter belief in the guiding of God, and his dread of outrunning his designs. He would *follow* the operations of the spirit.

“Your forced hothouse fruits,” he would say, “are often finer to look at than those which have waited for God’s wind and weather, but what are they worth in respect of all for the sake of which fruit exists?”

Until an opportunity, then, was thrown in his way, he would hold back; but when it was clear to him that he had to minister, then was he thoughtful, watchful, instant, unswerving. You might have seen him during this time, as the letters of Connie informed me, often standing for minutes together watching the mother and daughter, and pondering in his heart concerning them.

Every advantage being thus afforded her,

not without the stirring of some natural pangs in those who had hitherto mothered the child, the fortnight had not passed before to all appearance the unknown mother was with the child the greatest favourite of all. And it was my father's expectation, for he was a profound believer in blood, that the natural and generic instincts of the child would be developed together; in other words, that as she grew in what was common to humanity, she would grow likewise in what belonged to her individual origin. This was not an altogether comforting expectation to those of us who neither had so much faith as he, nor saw so hopefully the good that lay in every evil.

One twilight, he overheard the following talk between them. When they came near where he sat, Theodora, carried by her mother, and pulling at her neck with her

arms, was saying, "Tell me; tell me; tell me," in the tone of one who would compel an answer to a question repeatedly asked in vain.

"What do you want me to tell you?" said her mother.

"You know well enough. Tell me your name."

In reply she uttered a few words my father did not comprehend, and took to be Zingaree. The child shook her petulantly and with violence, crying,

"That's nonsense. I don't know what you say, and I don't know what to call you."

My father had desired the household, if possible, to give no name to the woman in the child's hearing.

"Call me mam, if you like."

"But you're not a lady, and I won't say ma'am to you," said Theo, rude as a child

will sometimes be when least she intends offence.

Her mother set her down, and gave a deep sigh. Was it only that the child's restlessness and roughness tired her? My father thought otherwise.

"Tell me, tell me," the child persisted, beating her with her little clenched fist. "Take me up again, and tell me, or I will make you."

My father thought it time to interfere. He stepped forward. The mother started with a little cry, and caught up the child.

"Theo," said my father, "I cannot allow you to be rude, especially to one who loves you more than any one else loves you."

The woman set her down again, dropped on her knees, and caught and kissed his hand.

The child stared; but she stood in awe of my father—perhaps the more that she had

none for any one else—and, when her mother lifted her once more, was carried away in silence.

The difficulty was got over by the child's being told to call her mother *Nurse*.

My father was now sufficiently satisfied with immediate results to carry out the remainder of his contingent plan, of which my mother heartily approved. The gardener and his wife being elderly people, and having no family, therefore not requiring the whole of their cottage, which was within a short distance of the house, could spare a room, which my mother got arranged for the gipsy, and there she was housed, with free access to her child, and the understanding that when Theo liked to sleep with her, she was at liberty to do so.

She was always ready to make herself useful; but it was little she could do for some time, and it was with difficulty that

she settled to any occupation at all continuous.

Before long it became evident that her old habits were working in her and making her restless. She was pining after the liberty of her old wandering life—with sun and wind, space and change, all about her. It was spring; and the reviving life of nature was rousing in her the longing for motion and room and variety engendered by the roving centuries which had passed since first her ancestors were driven from their homes in far Hindostan. But my father had foreseen the probability, and had already thought over what could be done for her if the wandering passion should revive too powerfully. He reasoned that there was nothing bad in such an impulse—one doubtless which would have been felt in all its force by Abraham himself, had he quitted his tents and gone to dwell in a city

—however much its indulgence might place her at a disadvantage in the midst of a settled social order. He saw too that any attempt to coerce it would probably result in entire frustration; that the passion for old forms of freedom would gather tenfold vigour in consequence. It would be far better to favour its indulgence, in the hope that the love of her child would, like an elastic but infrangible cord, gradually tame her down to a more settled life.

He proposed, therefore, that she should, as a matter of duty, go and visit her parents, and let them know of her welfare. She looked alarmed.

“Your father will show you no unkindness, I am certain, after the lapse of so many years,” he added. “Think it over, and tell me to-morrow how you feel about it. You shall go by train to Edinburgh, and once there you will soon be able to find

them. Of course you couldn't take the child with you, but she will be safe with us till you come back."

The result was that she went, and having found her people, and spent a fortnight with them, returned in less than a month. The rest of the year she remained quietly at home, stilling her desires by frequent and long rambles with her child, in which Mr. Wagtail always accompanied them. My father thought it better to run the risk of her escaping than force the thought of it upon her by appearing not to trust her. But it came out that she had a suspicion that the dog was there to prevent, or at least expose any such imprudence. The following spring she went on a second visit to her friends, but was back within a week, and the next year did not go at all.

Meantime my father did what he could to teach her, presenting every truth as some-

thing it was necessary she should teach her child. With this duty, he said, he always baited the hook with which he fished for her;—"or, to take a figure from the old hawking days, her eyes is the lure with which I would reclaim the haggard hawk."

What will be the final result, who dares prophesy? At my old home she still resides—grateful, and in some measure useful, idolizing, but not altogether spoiling her child—who understands the relation between them, and now calls her mother.

Dora teaches Theo, and the mother comes in for what share she inclines to appropriate. She does not take much to reading, but she is fond of listening, and is a regular and devout attendant at public worship. Above all, they have sufficing proof that her conscience is awake, and that she gives some heed to what it says.

Mr. Blackstone was right when he told me that good I was unable to foresee would result from the loss which then drowned me in despair.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### TROUBLES.

IN the beginning of the following year, the lady who filled Miss Clare's place was married, and Miss Clare resumed the teaching of Judy's children. She was now so handsomely paid for her lessons that she had reduced the number of her engagements very much, and had more time to give to the plans in which she laboured with Lady Bernard. The latter would willingly have settled such an annuity upon her as would have enabled her to devote all her time to this object; but Miss Clare felt that the earning of her bread was one of the natural

ties that bound her in the bundle of social life, and that in what she did of a spiritual kind, she must be untrammelled by money-relations. If she could not do both—provide for herself and assist others—it would be a different thing, she said, for then it would be clear that Providence intended her to receive the hire of the labourer for the necessity laid upon her. But what influenced her chiefly was the dread of having anything she did for her friends attributed to professional motives instead of the recognition of eternal relations. Besides, as she said, it would both lessen the means at Lady Bernard's disposal, and cause herself to feel bound to spend all her energies in that one direction, in which case she would be deprived of the recreative influences of change and more polished society. In her labour she would yet feel her freedom, and would not serve even Lady Bernard for

money, except she saw clearly that such was the will of the one master. In thus refusing her offer, she but rose in her friend's estimation.

In the spring, great trouble fell upon the Morleys. One of the children was taken with scarlet-fever; and then another and another was seized in such rapid succession—until five of them were lying ill together—that there was no time to think of removing them. Cousin Judy would accept no assistance in nursing them beyond that of her own maids, until her strength gave way and she took the infection herself in the form of diphtheria, when she was compelled to take to her bed, in such agony at the thought of handing her children over to hired nurses, that there was great ground for fearing her strength would yield.

She lay moaning, with her eyes shut, when a hand was laid on hers, and Miss

Clare's voice was in her ear. She had come to give her usual lesson to one of the girls who had as yet escaped the infection—for, while she took every precaution, she never turned aside from her work for any dread of consequences; and when she heard that Mrs. Morley had been taken ill, she walked straight to her room.

“Go away,” said Judy. “Do you want to die too?”

“Dear Mrs. Morley,” said Miss Clare, “I will just run home, and make a few arrangements, and then come back and nurse you.”

“Never mind me,” said Judy. “The children! the children! What *shall* I do?”

“I am quite able to look after you all—if you will allow me to bring a young woman to help me.”

“You are an angel!” said poor Judy. “But there is no occasion to bring any one

with you. My servants are quite competent."

"I must have everything in my own hands," said Miss Clare; "and therefore must have some one who will do exactly as I tell her. This girl has been with me now for some time, and I can depend upon her. Servants always look down upon governesses."

"Do whatever you like, you blessed creature," said Judy. "If any one of my servants behaves improperly to you, or neglects your orders, she shall go as soon as I am up again."

"I would rather give them as little opportunity as I can of running the risk. If I may bring this friend of my own, I shall soon have the house under hospital regulations. But I have been talking too much. I might almost have returned by this time. It is a bad beginning if I have hurt

you already by saying more than was necessary.”

She had hardly left the room before Judy had fallen asleep, so much was she relieved by the offer of her services. Ere she awoke, Marion was in a cab on her way back to Bolivar Square, with her friend and two carpet bags. Within an hour, she had entrenched herself in a spare bedroom, had lighted a fire, got encumbering finery out of the way, arranged all the medicines on a chest of drawers, and set the clock on the mantel-piece going, made the round of the patients, who were all in adjoining rooms, and the round of the house, to see that the disinfectants were fresh and active, added to their number, and then gone to await the arrival of the medical attendant in Mrs. Morley's room.

“Dr. Brand might have been a little more gracious,” said Judy; “but I thought

it better not to interrupt him by explaining that you were not the professional nurse he took you for."

"Indeed there was no occasion," answered Miss Clare. "I should have told him so myself, had it not been that I did a nurse's regular work in St. George's Hospital for two months, and have been there for a week or so several times since, so that I believe I have earned the right to be spoken to as such. Anyhow, I understood every word he said."

Meeting Mr. Morley in the hall, the doctor advised him not to go near his wife, diphtheria being so infectious; but comforted him with the assurance that the nurse appeared an intelligent young person, who would attend to all his directions; adding,

"I could have wished she had been older, but there is a great deal of illness about, and experienced nurses are scarce."

Miss Clare was a week in the house before Mr. Morley saw her, or knew she was there. One evening she ran down to the dining-room, where he sat over his lonely glass of Madeira, to get some brandy, and went straight to the sideboard. As she turned to leave the room, he recognized her, and said, in some astonishment,

“You need not trouble yourself, Miss Clare. The nurse can get what she wants from Hawkins. Indeed I don’t see——”

“Excuse me, Mr. Morley. If you wish to speak to me, I will return in a few minutes; but I have a good deal to attend to just at this moment.”

She left the room, and, as he had said nothing in reply, did not return.

Two days after, about the same hour, whether suspecting the fact, or for some other reason, he requested the butler to send the nurse to him.

“The nurse from the nursery, sir ; or the young person as teaches the young ladies the piano ?” asked Hawkins.

“I mean the sick-nurse,” said his master.

In a few minutes Miss Clare entered the dining-room, and approached Mr. Morley.

“How do you do, Miss Clare ?” he said stiffly, for to any one in his employment he was gracious only now and then. “Allow me to say that I doubt the propriety of your being here so much. You cannot fail to carry the infection. I think your lessons had better be postponed until *all* your pupils are able to benefit by them. I have just sent for the nurse, and,—if you please——”

“Yes. Hawkins told me you wanted me,” said Miss Clare.

“I did not want you. He must have mistaken.”

“I am the nurse, Mr. Morley.”

“Then I *must* say it is not with my ap-

proval," he returned, rising from his chair in anger. "I was given to understand that a properly qualified person was in charge of my wife and family. This is no ordinary case where a little coddling is all that is wanted."

"I am perfectly qualified, Mr. Morley."

He walked up and down the room several times.

"I must speak to Mrs. Morley about this," he said.

"I entreat you will not disturb her. She is not so well this afternoon."

"How *is* this, Miss Clare? Pray explain to me how it is that you come to be taking a part in the affairs of the family so very different from that for which Mrs. Morley—which—was arranged between Mrs. Morley and yourself."

"It is but an illustration of the law of supply and demand," answered Marion. "A nurse was wanted; Mrs. Morley had strong

objections to a hired nurse, and I was very glad to be able to set her mind at rest."

"It was very obliging in you, no doubt," he returned, forcing the admission; "but—but——"

"Let us leave it for the present, if you please; for while I am nurse, I must mind my business. Dr. Brand expresses himself quite satisfied with me so far as we have gone, and it is better for the children, not to mention Mrs. Morley, to have some one about them they are used to."

She left the room without waiting further parley.

Dr. Brand, however, not only set Mr. Morley's mind at rest as to her efficiency, but, when a terrible time of anxiety was at length over, during which one after another, and especially Judy herself, had been in great danger, assured him that, but for the vigilance and intelligence of Miss Clare,

joined to a certain soothing influence which she exercised over every one of her patients, he did not believe he could have brought Mrs. Morley through. Then indeed he changed his tone to her—in a measure, still addressing her as from a height of superiority.

They had recovered so far that they were to set out the next morning for Hastings, when he thus addressed her, having sent for her once more to the dining-room.

“I hope you will accompany them, Miss Clare,” he said. “By this time you must be in no small need of a change yourself.”

“The best change for me will be Lime Court,” she answered, laughing.

“Now pray don’t drive your goodness to the verge of absurdity,” he said pleasantly.

“Indeed I am anxious about my friends there,” she returned. “I fear they have not been getting on quite so well without me. A bible-woman and a Roman

Catholic have been quarreling dreadfully, I hear."

Mr. Morley compressed his lips. It *was* annoying to be so much indebted to one who, from whatever motives, called such people her friends.

"Oblige me, then," he said loftily, taking an envelope from the mantel-piece, and handing it to her, "by opening that at your leisure."

"I will open it now, if you please," she returned.

It contained a banknote for a hundred pounds. Mr. Morley, though a hard man, was not by any means stingy. She replaced it in the envelope, and laid it again on the chimney-piece.

"You owe me nothing, Mr. Morley," she said.

"Owe you nothing! I owe you more than I can ever repay."

“Then don’t try it, please. You are *very* generous; but indeed I could not accept it.”

“You must oblige me.—You *might* take it from *me*,” he added almost pathetically, as if the bond was so close that money was nothing between them.

“You are the last—one of the last I *could* take money from, Mr. Morley.”

“Why?”

“Because you think so much of it, and yet would look down on me the more if I accepted it.”

He bit his lip, rubbed his forehead with his hand, threw back his head, and turned away from her.

“I should be very sorry to offend you,” she said, “and believe me, there is hardly anything I value less than money. I have enough, and could have plenty more if I liked. I would rather have your friendship

than all the money you possess. But that cannot be so long as——”

She stopped; she was on the point of going too far, she thought.

“So long as what?” he returned sternly.

“So long as you are a worshipper of Mammon,” she answered, and left the room.

She burst out crying when she came to this point. She had narrated the whole with the air of one making a confession.

“I am afraid it was very wrong,” she said; “and if so, then it was very rude as well. But something seemed to force it out of me. Just think:—there was a generous heart clogged up with self-importance and wealth! To me, as he stood there on the hearth-rug, he was a most pitiable object—with an impervious wall betwixt him and the kingdom of heaven! He seemed like a man in a terrible dream from which I *must* awake him by calling aloud in

his ear—except that, alas! the dream was not terrible to him, only to me! If he had been one of my poor friends, guilty of some plain fault, I should have told him so without compunction, and why not, being what he was? There he stood—a man of estimable qualities—of beneficence if not bounty—no miser, nor consciously unjust—yet a man whose heart the moth and rust were eating into a sponge!—who went to church every Sunday, and had many friends, not one of whom—not even his own wife—would tell him that he was a Mammon-worshipper, and losing his life. It may have been useless, it may have been wrong, but I felt driven to it by bare human pity for the misery I saw before me.”

“It looks to me as if you had the message given you to give him,” I said.

“But—though I don’t know it—what if I was annoyed with him for offering me that

wretched hundred pounds—in doing which he was acting up to the light that was in him?”

I could not help thinking of the light which is darkness, but I did not say so. Strange tableau, in this our would-be grand nineteenth century—a young and poor woman, prophet-like rebuking a wealthy London merchant on his own hearth-rug, as a worshipper of Mammon! I think she was right—not because he was wrong, but because, as I firmly believe, she did it from no personal motives whatever, although in her modesty she doubted herself. I believe it was from pure regard for the man and for the truth, urging her to an irrepressible utterance. If so, should we not say that she spoke by the Spirit? Only I shudder to think what utterance might with an equal outward show, be attributed to the same spirit. Well—to his own master every one

standeth or falleth, whether an old prophet who, with a lie in his right hand, entraps an honourable guest, or a young prophet, who, with repentance in his heart, walks calmly into the jaws of the waiting lion.\*

And no one can tell what effect the words may have had upon him. I do not believe he ever mentioned the circumstance to his wife. At all events there was no change in her manner to Miss Clare. Indeed I could not help fancying that a little halo of quiet reverence now encircled the love in every look she cast upon her. She firmly believed that Marion had saved her life and that of more than one of her children. Nothing, she said, could equal the quietness and tenderness and tirelessness of her nursing. She was never flurried, never impatient, and never

\* See the Sermons of the Rev. Henry Whitehead, vicar of St. John's, Limehouse; as remarkable for the profundity of their insight as for the noble severity of their literary modelling.—G. M. D.

frightened. Even when the tears would be flowing down her face, the light never left her eyes nor the music her voice ; and when they were all getting better, and she had the nursery piano brought out on the landing in the middle of the sick-rooms, and there played and sung to them, it was, she said, like the voice of an angel come fresh to the earth with the same old news of peace and good will. When the children—this I had from the friend she brought with her—were tossing in the fever, and talking of strange and frightful things they saw, one word from her would quiet them, and her gentle command was always sufficient to make the most rebellious take his medicine.

She came out of it very pale, and a good deal worn. But the day they set off for Hastings, she returned to Lime Court. The next day she resumed her lessons, and soon recovered her usual appearance. A change

of work, she always said, was the best restorative. But before a month was over I succeeded in persuading her to accept my mother's invitation to spend a week at the Hall, and from this visit she returned quite invigorated. Connie, whom she went to see—for by this time she was married to Mr. Turner—was especially delighted with her delight in the simplicities of nature. Born and bred in the closest town-environment, she had yet a sensitiveness to all that made the country so dear to us who were born in it, which Connie said surpassed ours, and gave her special satisfaction as proving that my oft-recurring dread lest such feelings might be but the result of childish associations, was groundless, and that they were essential to the human nature, and so must be felt by God himself. Driving along in the pony-carriage—for Connie is not able to walk much—Marion would re-

mark upon ten things in a morning that my sister had never observed. The various effects of light and shade, and the variety of feeling they caused, especially interested her. She would spy out a lurking sun-beam, as another would find a hidden flower. It seemed as if not a glitter in its nest of gloom could escape her. She would leave the carriage and make a long round through the fields or woods; and when they met at the appointed spot, would have her hands full, not of flowers only, but of leaves and grasses and weedy things, showing the deepest interest in such lowly forms as few would notice except from a scientific knowledge of which she had none: it was the thing itself—its look and its home that drew her attention. I cannot help thinking that this insight was profoundly one with her interest in the corresponding regions of human life and circumstance.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### MISS CLARE AMONGST HER FRIENDS.

I MUST give an instance of the way in which Marion—I am tired of calling her *Miss Clare*, and about this time I began to drop it—exercised her influence over her friends. I trust the episode, in a story so fragmentary as mine, made up of pieces only of a quiet and ordinary life, will not seem unsuitable. How I wish I could give it you as she told it to me!—so graphic was her narrative, and so true to the forms of speech amongst the London poor. I must do what I can, well assured it must come far short of the original representation.

One evening, as she was walking up to her attic, she heard a noise in one of the rooms, followed by a sound of weeping. It was occupied by a journeyman house-painter and his wife, who had been married several years, but whose only child had died about six months before, since which loss things had not been going on so well between them. Some natures cannot bear sorrow; it makes them irritable, and instead of drawing them closer to their own, tends to isolate them. When she entered, she found the woman crying, and the man in a lurid sulk.

“What *is* the matter?” she asked, no doubt in her usual cheerful tone.

“I little thought it would come to this when I married him,” sobbed the woman, while the man remained motionless and speechless on his chair, with his legs stretched out at full length before him.

“Would you mind telling me about it? There may be some mistake, you know.”

“There ain’t no mistake in *that*,” said the woman, removing the apron she had been holding to her eyes, and turning a cheek towards Marion, upon which the marks of an open-handed blow were visible enough. “I didn’t marry him to be knocked about like that.”

“She calls that knocking about, do she?” growled the husband. “What did she go for to throw her cotton gownd in my teeth for, as if it was my blame she warn’t in silks and satins?”

After a good deal of questioning on her part, and confused and recriminative statements on theirs, Marion made out the following as the facts of the case.

For the first time since they were married, the wife had had an invitation to spend the evening with some female friends. The

party had taken place the night before, and although she had returned in ill-humour, it had not broken out until just as Marion entered the house. The cause was this: none of the guests were in a station much superior to her own, yet she found herself the only one who had not a silk dress: hers was a print, and shabby. Now when she was married, she had a silk dress, of which, she said, her husband had been proud enough when they were walking together. But when she saw the last of it, she saw the last of its sort, for never another had he given her to her back; and she didn't marry him to come down in the world—that she didn't!

“Of course not,” said Marion; “you married him because you loved him, and thought him the finest fellow you knew.”

“And so he was then, grannie. But just look at him now!”

The man moved uneasily, but without bending his outstretched legs. The fact was that since the death of the child he had so far taken to drink that he was not unfrequently the worse for it, which had been a rare occurrence before.

“It ain’t my fault,” he said, “when work ain’t a-goin’, if I don’t dress her like a duchess. I’m as proud to see my wife rigged out as e’er a man on ’em—and that *she* know! and when she cast the contrary up to me, I’m blowed if I could keep my hands off on her. She ain’t the woman I took her for, miss. She ’ave a temper!”

“I don’t doubt it,” said Marion. “Temper is a troublesome thing with all of us, and makes us do things we’re sorry for afterwards. *You’re* sorry for striking her—ain’t you now?”

There was no response. Around the sullen heart, silence closed again. Doubt-

less he would have given much to obliterate the fact, but he would not confess that he had been wrong. We are so stupid that confession seems to us to fix the wrong upon us, instead of throwing it, as it does, into the depths of the sea.

“I may have my temper,” said the woman, a little mollified at finding, as she thought, that Miss Clare took her part, “but here am I slaving from morning to night to make both ends meet, and goin’ out every job I can get a-washin’ or a-charin’, and never ’avin’ a bit of fun from year’s end to year’s end—and him off to his club, as he calls it!—an’ it’s a club he’s like to blow out my brains with some night when he come home in a drunken fit; for it’s worse *and* worse he’ll get, miss, like the rest on ’em, till no woman could be proud, as once I was, to call him hers. And when do go out to tea for once in a way, to be

jeered at by them as is no better nor no worse'n myself, acause I 'ain't got a husband as cares enough for me to dress me decent!—that do stick i' my gizzard. I do dearly love to have neighbours think my husband care a bit about me, let-a-be 'at he don't, one hair; and when he send me out like that——”

Here she broke down afresh.

“Why didn't ye stop at home then? I didn't tell ye to go,” he said fiercely, calling her a coarse name.

“Richard,” said Marion, “such words are not fit for *me* to hear—still less for your own wife.”

“Oh! never mind me; I'm used to sich,” said the woman spitefully.

“It's a lie,” roared the man; “I never named sich a word to ye afore. It do make me mad to hear ye. I drink the clothes off your back—do I? If I hed the money,

ye might go in velvet and lace for ought I cared !”

“*She* would care little to go in gold and diamonds if *you* didn't care to see her in them,” said Marion.

At this the woman burst into fresh tears, and the man put on a face of contempt—the worst sign, Marion said, she had yet seen in him—not excepting the blow—for to despise is worse than to strike.

I can't help stopping my story here to put in a reflection that forces itself upon me. Many a man would regard with disgust the idea of striking his wife, who will yet cherish against her an aversion which is infinitely worse. The working man who strikes his wife, but is sorry for it, and tries to make amends by being more tender after it—a result which many a woman will consider cheap at the price of a blow endured—is an immeasurably superior hus-

band to the gentleman who shows his wife the most absolute politeness, but uses that very politeness as a breast-work to fortify himself in his disregard and contempt.

Marion saw that while the tides ran thus high, nothing could be done—certainly at least in the way of argument. Whether the man had been drinking she could not tell, but suspected that must have a share in the evil of his mood. She went up to him, laid her hand on his shoulder, and said—

“You’re out of sorts, Richard. Come and have a cup of tea, and I will sing to you.”

“I don’t want no tea.”

“You’re fond of the piano, though. And you like to hear me sing, don’t you?”

“Well, I do,” he muttered, as if the admission were forced from him.

“Come with me, then.”

He dragged himself up from his chair, and was about to follow her.

“You ain’t going to take him from me, grannie, after he’s been and struck me?” interposed his wife, in a tone half pathetic, half injured.

“Come after us in a few minutes,” said Marion in a low voice, and led the way from the room.

Quiet as a lamb Richard followed her up stairs. She made him sit in the easy-chair, and began with a low plaintive song, which she followed with other songs and music of a similar character. He neither heard nor saw his wife enter, and both sat for about twenty minutes without a word spoken. Then Marion made a pause, and the wife rose and approached her husband. He was fast asleep.

“Don’t wake him,” said Marion; “let him have his sleep out. You go down and

get the place tidy, and a nice bit of supper for him—if you can.”

“Oh! yes; he brought me home his week’s wages this very night.”

“The whole?”

“Yes, grannie.”

“Then weren’t you too hard upon him? Just think:—he had been trying to behave himself, and had got the better of the public-house for once, and come home fancying you’d be so pleased to see him; and you——”

“He’d been drinking,” interrupted Eliza. “Only he said as how it was but a pot of beer he’d won in a wager from a mate of his.”

“Well, if, after that beginning, he yet brought you home his money, he ought to have had another kind of reception. To think of the wife of a poor man making such a fuss about a silk dress! Why,

Eliza, I never had a silk dress in my life ; and I don't think I ever shall."

"Laws, grannie ! Who'd ha' thought that now !"

"You see I have other uses for my money than buying things for show."

"That you do, grannie ! But you see," she added, somewhat inconsequently, "we 'ain't got no child, and Dick he take it ill of me, and don't care to save his money ; so he never takes me out nowheres, and I do be so tired o' stoppin' indoors, every day and all day long, that it turns me sour, I do believe. I didn't use to be cross-grained, miss. But laws ! I feels now as if I'd let him knock me about ever so, if only he wouldn't say as how it was nothing to him if I was dressed ever so fine."

"You run and get his supper."

Eliza went, and Marion, sitting down again to her instrument, improvised for an

hour. Next to her New Testament, this was her greatest comfort. She sung and prayed both in one then, and nobody but God heard anything but the piano. Nor did it impede the flow of her best thoughts that in a chair beside her slumbered a weary man, the waves of whose evil passions she had stilled, and the sting of whose disappointment she had soothed, with the sweet airs and concords of her own spirit. Who could say what tender influences might not be stealing over him, borne on the fair sounds; for even the formless and the void was roused into life and joy by the wind that roamed over the face of its deep? No humanity jarred with hers. In the presence of the most degraded, she felt God there. A face, even if besotted, *was* a face only in virtue of being in the image of God. That a man was a man at all, must be because he was God's. And this man was far indeed

from being of the worst. With him beside her, she could pray with most of the good of having the door of her closet shut, and some of the good of the gathering together as well. Thus was love, as ever, the assimilator of the foreign, the harmonizer of the unlike; the builder of the temple in the desert, and of the chamber in the market-place.

As she sat and discoursed with herself, she perceived that the woman was as certainly suffering from *ennui* as any fine lady in Mayfair.

“Have you ever been to the National Gallery, Richard?” she asked, without turning her head, the moment she heard him move.

“No, grannie,” he answered with a yawn. “Don’a’most know what sort of a place it be now. Waxwork, ain’t it?”

“No. It’s a great place full of pictures,

many of them hundreds of years old. They're taken care of by the government, just for people to go and look at. Wouldn't you like to go and see them some day?"

"Donno as I should much."

"If I were to go with you now, and explain some of them to you? I want you to take your wife and me out for a holiday. You can't think, you who go out to your work every day, how tiresome it is to be in the house from morning to night, especially at this time of the year when the sun's shining, and the very sparrows trying to sing!"

"She may go out when she pleases, grannie. I ain't no tyrant."

"But she doesn't care to go without you. You wouldn't have her like one of those slatternly women you see standing at the corners, with their fists in their sides and their elbows sticking out, ready to talk to anybody that comes in the way."

“*My* wife was never none o’ sich, grannie. I knows her as well’s e’er a one, though she do ’ave a temper of her own.”

At this moment Eliza appeared in the doorway, saying—

“Will ye come to yer supper, Dick? I ha’ got a slice o’ ham an’ a hot tater for ye. Come along.”

“Well, I don’t know as I mind—jest to please *you*, Liza. I believe I ha’ been asleep in grannie’s cheer there, her a playin’ an’ a singin’, I make no doubt, like a werry nightingerl, bless her, an’ me a snorin’ all to myself, like a runaway locomotive! Won’t *you* come and have a slice o’ the ’am, an’ a tater, grannie? The more you ate, the less we’d grudge it.”

“I’m sure o’ that,” chimed in Eliza. “Do now, grannie; please do.”

“I will, with pleasure,” said Marion; and they went down together.

Eliza had got the table set out nicely, with a foaming jug of porter beside the ham and potatoes. Before they had finished, Marion had persuaded Richard to take his wife and her to the National Gallery, the next day but one, which, fortunately for her purpose, was Whit Monday, a day whereon Richard, who was from the north, always took a holiday.

At the National Gallery, the house-painter, in virtue of his craft, claimed the exercise of criticism, and his remarks were amusing enough. He had more than once painted a sign-board for a country inn, which fact formed a bridge between the covering of square yards with colour and the painting of pictures; and he naturally used the vantage-ground thus gained to enhance his importance with his wife and Miss Clare. He was rather a clever fellow, too, though as little educated in any other direc-

tion than that of his calling as might well be.

All the woman seemed to care about in the pictures, was this or that something which reminded her, often remotely enough I dare say, of her former life in the country. Towards the close of their visit they approached a picture—one of Hobbima's, I think—which at once riveted her attention.

“Look, look, Dick!” she cried. “There's just such a cart as my father used to drive to the town in. Farmer White always sent *him* when the mistress wanted anything and he didn't care to go hisself. And, oh Dick! there's the very moral of the cottage we lived in! Ain't it a love now?”

“Nice enough,” Dick replied. “But it warn't there I seed you, Liza. It wur at the big house where you was housemaid, you know. That'll be it, I suppose—away there like, over the trees.”

They turned and looked at each other, and Marion turned away. When she looked again, they were once more gazing at the picture, but close together, and hand in hand like two children.

As they went home in the omnibus, the two averred they had never spent a happier holiday in their lives ; and from that day to this, no sign of their quarrelling has come to Marion's knowledge. They are not only her regular attendants on Saturday evenings, but on Sunday evenings as well, when she holds a sort of conversation-sermon with her friends.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

MR. MORLEY.

AS soon as my cousin Judy returned from Hastings, I called to see her, and found them all restored, except Amy, a child of between eight and nine. There was nothing very definite the matter with her, but she was white and thin, and looked wistful; the blue of her eyes had grown pale, and her fair locks had nearly lost the curl which had so well suited her rosy cheeks. She had been her father's pride for her looks, and her mother's for her sayings—at once odd and simple. Judy that morning reminded me how, one night,

when she was about three years old, some time after she had gone to bed, she had called her nurse, and insisted on her mother's coming. Judy went, prepared to find her feverish; for there had been jam-making that day, and she feared she had been having more than the portion which on such an occasion fell to her share. When she reached the nursery, Amy begged to be taken up that she might say her prayers over again. Her mother objected, but the child insisting, in that pretty petulant way which so pleased her father, she yielded, thinking she must have omitted some clause in her prayers, and be therefore troubled in her conscience. Amy accordingly kneeled by the bed-side in her night-gown, and having gone over all her petitions from beginning to end, paused a moment before the final word, and inserted the following special and peculiar request:—"And, p'ease

God, give me some more jam to-morrow-day, for ever and ever. Amen."

I remember my father being quite troubled when he heard that the child had been rebuked for offering what was probably her very first genuine prayer. The rebuke however had little effect on the equanimity of the petitioner, for she was fast asleep a moment after it.

"There is one thing that puzzles and annoys me," said Judy. "I can't think what it means. My husband tells me that Miss Clare was so rude to him the day before we left for Hastings, that he would rather not be aware of it any time she is in the house. Those were his very words. 'I will not interfere with your doing as you think proper,' he said, 'seeing you consider yourself under such obligation to her; and I should be sorry to deprive her of the advantage of giving lessons in a house like

this ; but I wish you to be careful that the girls do not copy her manners. She has not by any means escaped the influence of the company she keeps.' I was utterly astonished, you may well think ; but I could get no further explanation from him. He only said that when I wished to have her society of an evening, I must let him know, because he would then dine at his club. Not knowing the grounds of his offence, there was little other argument I could use than the reiteration of my certainty that he must have misunderstood her. 'Not in the least,' he said. 'I have no doubt she is to you everything amiable, but she has taken some unaccountable aversion to me, and loses no opportunity of showing it. And I *don't* think I deserve it.' I told him I was so sure he did not deserve it, that I must believe there was some mistake. But he only shook his head and

raised his newspaper. You must help me, little coz."

"How am I to help you, Judy dear?" I returned. "I can't interfere between husband and wife, you know. If I dared such a thing, he would quarrel with me too—and rightly."

"No, no," she returned, laughing; "I don't want your intercession. I only want you to find out from Miss Clare whether she knows how she has so mortally offended my husband. I believe she knows nothing about it. She *has* a rather abrupt manner sometimes, you know; but then my husband is not so silly as to have taken such deep offence at that. Help me now—there's a dear!"

I promised I would, and hence came the story I have already given. But Marion was so distressed at the result of her words, and so anxious that Judy should not be

hurt, that she begged me, if I could manage it without a breach of verity, to avoid disclosing the matter; especially seeing Mr. Morley himself judged it too heinous to impart to his wife.

How to manage it I could not think. But at length we arranged it between us. I told Judy that Marion confessed to having said something which had offended Mr. Morley; that she was very sorry, and hoped she need not say that such had not been her intention; but that, as Mr. Morley evidently preferred what had passed between them to remain unmentioned, to disclose it would be merely to swell the mischief. It would be better for them all, she requested me to say, that she should give up her lessons for the present; and therefore she hoped Mrs. Morley would excuse her. When I gave the message Judy cried, and said nothing. When the children heard that Marion was

not coming for a while, Amy cried, the other girls looked very grave, and the boys protested.

I have already mentioned that the fault I most disliked in those children was their incapacity for being petted. Something of it still remains, but of late I have remarked a considerable improvement in this respect. They have not only grown in kindness, but in the gift of receiving kindness. I cannot but attribute this, in chief measure, to their illness and the lovely nursing of Marion. They do not yet go to their mother for petting, and from myself will only endure it, but they are eager after such crumbs as Marion, by no means lavish of it, will vouchsafe them.

Judy insisted that I should let Mr. Morley hear Marion's message.

“But the message is not to Mr. Mor-

ley," I said. "Marion would never have thought of sending one to him."

"But if I ask you to repeat it in his hearing, you will not refuse?"

To this I consented; but I fear she was disappointed in the result. Her husband only smiled sarcastically, drew in his chin, and showed himself a little more cheerful than usual.

One morning about two months after, as I was sitting in the drawing-room, with my baby on the floor beside me, I was surprised to see Judy's brougham pull up at the little gate—for it was early. When she got out, I perceived at once that something was amiss, and ran to open the door. Her eyes were red, and her cheeks ashy. The moment we reached the drawing-room, she sunk on the couch and burst into tears.

"Judy!" I cried, "what is the matter? Is Amy worse?"

“No, no, cozy dear; but we are ruined. We haven't a penny in the world. The children will be beggars.”

And there were the gay little horses champing their bits at the door, and the coachman sitting in all his glory, erect and impassive.

I did my best to quiet her, urging no questions. With difficulty I got her to swallow a glass of wine, after which, with many interruptions and fresh outbursts of misery, she managed to let me understand that her husband had been speculating, and had failed. I could hardly believe myself awake. Mr. Morley was the last man I should have thought capable either of speculating, or of failing in it if he did.

Knowing nothing about business, I shall not attempt to explain the particulars. Coincident failures amongst his correspondents had contributed to his fall. Judy said

he had not been like himself for months, but it was only the night before that he had told her they must give up their house in Bolivar Square, and take a small one in the suburbs. For anything he could see, he said, he must look out for a situation.

“Still you may be happier than ever, Judy. I can tell you that happiness does not depend on riches,” I said, though I could not help crying with her.

“It’s a different thing though, after you’ve been used to them,” she answered. “But the question is of bread for my children, not of putting down my carriage.”

She rose hurriedly.

“Where are you going? Is there anything I can do for you?” I asked.

“Nothing,” she answered. “I left my husband at Mr. Baddeley’s. He is as rich as Cræsus, and could write him a cheque that would float him.”

“He’s too rich to be generous, I’m afraid,” I said.

“What do you mean by that?” she asked.

“If he be so generous, how does it come that he is so rich?”

“Why, his father made the money.”

“Then he most likely takes after his father. Percivale says he does not believe a huge fortune was ever made of nothing without such pinching of one’s self and such scraping of others, or else such speculation, as is essentially dishonourable.”

“He stands high,” murmured Judy hopelessly.

“Whether what is dishonourable be also disreputable depends on how many there are of his own sort in the society in which he moves.”

“Now, coz, you know nothing to his discredit, and he’s our last hope.”

“I will say no more,” I answered. “I hope I may be quite wrong. Only I should expect nothing of *him*.”

When she reached Mr. Baddeley’s, her husband was gone. Having driven to his counting-house, and been shown into his private room, she found him there with his head between his hands. The great man had declined doing anything for him, and had even rebuked him for his imprudence, without wasting a thought on the fact that every penny he himself possessed was the result of the boldest speculation on the part of his father. A very few days only would elapse before the falling due of certain bills must at once disclose the state of his affairs.

As soon as she had left me, Percivale not being at home, I put on my bonnet, and went to find Marion. I must tell *her* everything that caused me either joy or sorrow; and besides, she had all the right that love

could give to know of Judy's distress. I knew all her engagements, and therefore where to find her; and sent in my card, with the pencilled intimation that I would wait the close of her lesson. In a few minutes she came out and got into the cab. At once I told her my sad news.

“Could you take me to Cambridge Square to my next engagement?” she said.

I was considerably surprised at the cool way in which she received the communication, but of course I gave the necessary directions.

“Is there anything to be done?” she asked, after a pause.

“I know of nothing,” I answered.

Again she sat silent for a few minutes.

“One can't move without knowing all the circumstances and particulars,” she said at length. “And how to get at them? He

wouldn't make a confidante of *me*," she said, smiling sadly.

"Ah! you little think what vast sums are concerned in such a failure as his!" I remarked, astounded that one with her knowledge of the world should talk as she did.

"It will be best," she said, after still another pause, "to go to Mr. Blackstone. He has a wonderful acquaintance with business for a clergyman, and knows many of the City people."

"What could any clergyman do in such a case?" I returned. "For Mr. Blackstone, Mr. Morley would not accept even consolation at his hands."

"The time for that is not come yet," said Marion. "We must try to help him some other way first. We will, if we can, make friends with him by means of the very Mammon that has all but ruined him."

She spoke of the great merchant just as she might of Richard, or any of the bricklayers or mechanics whose spiritual condition she pondered that she might aid it.

“But what could Mr. Blackstone do?” I insisted.

“All I should want of him would be to find out for me what Mr. Morley's liabilities are, and how much would serve to tide him over the bar of his present difficulties. I suspect he has few friends who would risk anything for him. I understand he is no favourite in the City; and if friendship do not come in, he must be stranded.—You believe him an honourable man—do you not?” she asked abruptly.

“It never entered my head to doubt it,” I replied.

The moment we reached Cambridge Square she jumped out, ran up the steps, and knocked at the door. I waited, won-

dering if she was going to leave me thus without a farewell. When the door was opened, she merely gave a message to the man, and the same instant was again in the cab by my side.

“Now I am free!” she said, and told the man to drive to Mile End.

“I fear I can’t go with you so far, Marion,” I said. “I must go home—I have so much to see to, and you can do quite as well without me. I don’t know what you intend, but *please* don’t let anything come out. I can trust *you*, but——”

“If you can trust me, I can trust Mr. Blackstone. He is the most cautious man in the world. Shall I get out and take another cab?”

“No. You can drop me at Tottenham Court Road, and I will go home by omnibus. But you must let me pay the cab.”

“No, no; I am richer than you: I have

no children. What fun it is to spend money for Mr. Morley, and lay him under an obligation he will never know!" she said, laughing.

The result of her endeavours was that Mr. Blackstone, by a circuitous succession of introductions, reached Mr. Morley's confidential clerk, whom he was able so far to satisfy concerning his object in desiring the information, that he made him a full disclosure of the condition of affairs, and stated what sum would be sufficient to carry them over their difficulties; though, he added, the greatest care, and every possible reduction of expenditure for some years, would be indispensable to their complete restoration.

Mr. Blackstone carried his discoveries to Miss Clare, and she to Lady Bernard.

"My dear Marion," said Lady Bernard, "this is a serious matter you suggest. The man may be honest, and yet it may be of no

use trying to help him. I don't want to bolster him up for a few months in order to see my money go after his. That's not what I've got to do with it. No doubt I could lose as much as you mention, without being crippled by it, for I hope it's no disgrace in me to be rich, as it's none in you to be poor; but I hate waste, and I will *not* be guilty of it. If Mr. Morley will convince me and any friend or man of business to whom I may refer the matter, that there is good probability of his recovering himself by means of it, then, and not till then, I shall feel justified in risking the amount. For as you say, it would prevent much misery to many besides that good-hearted creature Mrs. Morley and her children. It is worth doing if it can be done—not worth trying if it can't."

"Shall I write for you, and ask him to come and see you?"

“No, my dear. If I do a kindness, I must do it humbly. It is a great liberty to take with a man to offer him a kindness. I must go to him. I could not use the same freedom with a man in misfortune as with one in prosperity. I would have such a one feel that his money or his poverty made no difference to me; and Mr. Morley wants that lesson, if any man does. Besides, after all, I may not be able to do it for him, and then he would have good reason to be hurt if I had made him dance attendance on me.”

The same evening Lady Bernard's shabby one-horse-brougham stopped at Mr. Morley's door. She asked to see Mrs. Morley, and through her had an interview with her husband. Without circumlocution, she told him that if he would lay his affairs before her and a certain accountant she named, to use their judgment regarding them in the hope of finding it possible to serve him,

they would wait upon him for that purpose at any time and place he pleased. Mr. Morley expressed his obligation—not very warmly, she said—repudiating however the slightest objection to her ladyship’s knowing now what all the world must know the next day but one.

Early the following morning, Lady Bernard and the accountant met Mr. Morley at his place in the City, and by three o’clock in the afternoon £15,000 were handed in to his account at his banker’s.

The carriage was put down, the butler, one of the footmen, and the lady’s-maid were dismissed, and the household arrangements fitted to a different scale.

One consequence of this chastisement, as of the preceding, was, that the whole family drew yet more closely and lovingly together; and I must say for Judy that after a few weeks of what she called poverty, her spirits

seemed in no degree the worse for the trial.

At Marion's earnest entreaty no one told either Mr. or Mrs. Morley of the share she had had in saving his credit and social position. For some time she suffered from doubt as to whether she had had any right to interpose in the matter, and might not have injured Mr. Morley by depriving him of the discipline of poverty; but she reasoned with herself that, had it been necessary for him, her efforts would have been frustrated; and reminded herself that, although his commercial credit had escaped, it must still be a considerable trial to him to live in reduced style.

But that it was not all the trial needful for him, was soon apparent; for his favourite Amy began to pine more rapidly, and Judy saw that, except some change speedily took place, they could not have her with them

long. The father, however, refused to admit the idea that she was in danger. I suppose he felt as if, were he once to allow the possibility of losing her, from that moment there would be no stay between her and the grave: it would be a giving of her over to death. But whatever Dr. Brand suggested was eagerly followed. When the chills of autumn drew near, her mother took her to Ventnor; but little change followed, and before the new year she was gone. It was the first death beyond that of an infant they had had in their family, and took place at a time when the pressure of business obligations rendered it impossible for her father to be out of London; he could only go to lay her in the earth, and bring back his wife. Judy had never seen him weep before. Certainly I never saw such a change on a man. He was literally bowed with grief, as if he bore a material burden upon his back.

The best feelings of his nature, unimpeded by any jar to his self-importance or his prejudices, had been able to spend themselves on the lovely little creature; and I do not believe any other suffering than the loss of such a child could have brought into play that in him which was purely human.

He was at home one morning, ill for the first time in his life, when Marion called on Judy. While she waited in the drawing-room, he entered. He turned the moment he saw her, but had not taken two steps towards the door, when he turned again, and approached her. She went to meet him. He held out his hand.

“She was very fond of you, Miss Clare,” he said. “She was talking about you, the very last time I saw her. Let by-gones be by-gones between us.”

“I was very rough and rude to you, Mr. Morley, and I am very sorry,” said Marion.

“But you spoke the truth,” he rejoined. “I thought I was above being spoken to like a sinner, but I don’t know now why not.”

He sat down on a couch, and leaned his head on his hand. Marion took a chair near him, but could not speak.

“It is very hard,” he murmured at length.

“Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth,” said Marion.

“That may be true in some cases, but I have no right to believe it applies to me. He loved the child, I would fain believe, for I dare not think of her either as having ceased to be, or as alone in the world to which she has gone. You do think, Miss Clare, do you not, that we shall know our friends in another world?”

“I believe,” answered Marion, “that God sent you that child for the express purpose of enticing you back to himself; and if I

believe anything at all, I believe that the gifts of God are without repentance."

Whether or not he understood her she could not tell, for at this point Judy came in. Seeing them together, she would have withdrawn again, but her husband called her, with more tenderness in his voice than Marion could have imagined belonging to it.

"Come, my dear. Miss Clare and I were talking about our little angel. I didn't think ever to speak of her again, but I fear I am growing foolish. All the strength is out of me, and I feel so tired—so weary of everything!"

She sat down beside him, and took his hand. Marion crept away to the children. An hour after Judy found her in the nursery, with the youngest on her knee, and the rest all about her. She was telling them that we were sent into this world to learn to be good, and then go back

to God from whom we came, like little Amy.

“When I go out to-morrow,” said one little fellow, about four years old, “I’ll look up into the sky vevy hard, wight up; and then I shall see Amy, and God saying to her, ‘Hushaby, poo’ Amy! You bette’ now, Amy?’ Shan’t I, Mawion?”

She had taught them to call her Marion.

“No, my pet; you might look and look all day long, and every day, and never see God or Amy.”

“Then they *ain’t* there!” he exclaimed indignantly.

“God is there anyhow,” she answered; “only you can’t see him that way.”

“I don’t care about seeing God,” said the next elder; “it’s Amy I want to see. Do tell me, Marion, how we are to see Amy. It’s too bad if we’re never to see her again; and I don’t think it’s fair.”

“I will tell you the only way I know. When Jesus was in the world, he told us that all who had clean hearts should see God. That’s how Jesus himself saw God.”

“It’s Amy, I tell you, Marion—it’s not God I want to see,” insisted the one who had last spoken.

“Well, my dear, but how can you see Amy if you can’t even see God? If Amy be in God’s arms, the first thing in order to find her, is to find God. To be good is the only way to get near to anybody. When you’re naughty, Willie, you can’t get near your mamma, can you?”

“Yes, I can. I can get close up to her.”

“Is that near enough? Would you be quite content with that? Even when she turns away her face and won’t look at you?”

The little caviller was silent.

“Did you ever see God, Marion?” asked one of the girls.

She thought for a moment before giving an answer.

“No,” she said. “I’ve seen things just after he had done them; and I think I’ve heard him speak to me; but I’ve never seen him yet.”

“Then you’re not good, Marion,” said the free-thinker of the group.

“No; that’s just it. But I hope to be good some day, and then I *shall* see him.”

“How do you grow good, Marion?” asked the girl.

“God is always trying to make me good,” she answered; “and I try not to interfere with him.”

“But sometimes you forget, don’t you?”

“Yes, I do.”

“And what do you do then?”

“Then I’m sorry and unhappy, and begin to try again.”

“And God don’t mind much, does he?”

“He minds very much until I mind; but after that he forgets it all—takes all my naughtiness and throws it behind his back, and won't look at it.”

“That's very good of God,” said the reasoner,—but with such a self-satisfied air in his approval, that Marion thought it time to stop.

She came straight to me, and told me, with a face perfectly radiant, of the alteration in Mr. Morley's behaviour to her, and what was of much more consequence, the evident change that had begun to be wrought in him.

I am not prepared to say that he has as yet shown a very shining light, but that some change has passed is evident in the whole man of him. I think the eternal wind must now be getting in through some chink or other which the loss of his child has left behind. And if the change were

not going on, surely he would ere now have returned to his wallowing in the mire of Mammon, for his former fortune is, I understand, all but restored to him.

I fancy his growth in goodness might be known and measured by his progress in appreciating Marion. He still regards her as extreme in her notions; but it is curious to see how, as they gradually sink into his understanding, he comes to adopt them as, and even to mistake them for, his own.

END OF VOL. II.









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