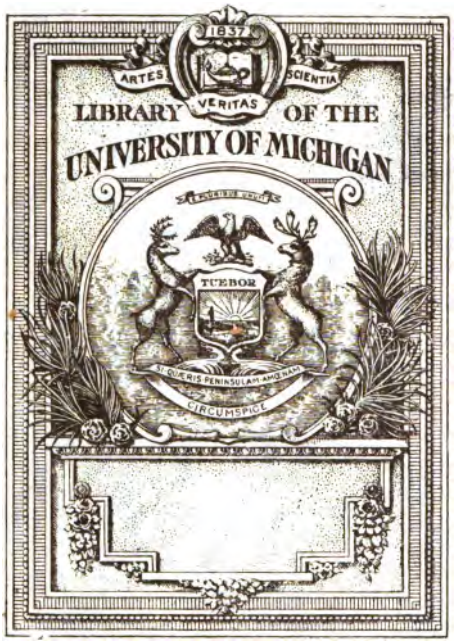

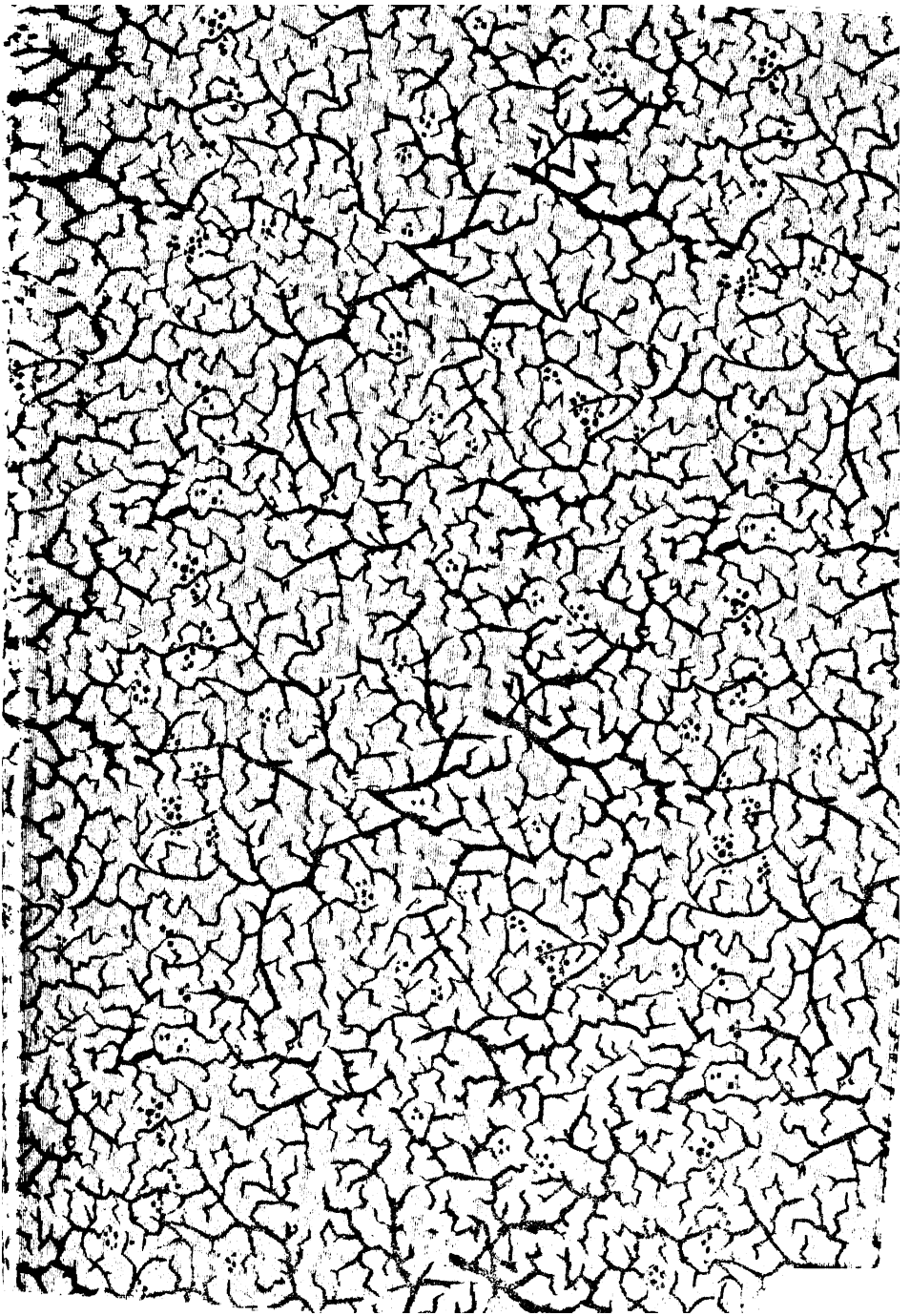

ANGELA

THE FUNERAL OF THE WHITE RABBIT.
Page 37.

ANGELA

A Sketch

BY

ALICE WEBER

Author of "At Sixes and Sevens," "Curly's Victory," etc.

ILLUSTRATED

NEW YORK
E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY
31 WEST TWENTY-THIRD STREET
1891

PRESS OF
Rockwell and Churchill
BOSTON

ILLUSTRATIONS

BY ELIZABETH S. TUCKER.

REPRODUCED BY THE NEW HALF-TONE PROCESS OF
JOHN ANDREW & SON CO.

PART I.

ANGELA.

PART I.

"Rejoice! that man is hurled
From change to change —
His soul's wings never furled!"

R. BROWNING.

CHAPTER I.

"And thou . . . wert in thy measure dear —
And so I owe thee honor, and the tear
Of friendship, and would all thy worth allow."

COWPER.

IT was an old house of grave aspect. Earlier proprietors, of æsthetic tendencies, and with a love of nature, had done all they could in the way of cultivating beauty to soften the angles. Yellow jasmine climbed up the gray walls, Virginian creeper clustered about the piers and buttresses, delicate clematis framed the drawing-room windows, and a creamy

magnolia, with shiny green leaves, smothered the stable gateway. Still, do what they would, the fact remained: it was a house with a grave countenance. Sometimes the face of the human being within seems to be stamped upon the walls without; certainly it might be so with Mohun Court, for behind the gray walls and the severe turrets there lived a grave man behind an inner wall of reserve. A stranger, passing Mohun Court, and asking who lived there, would receive for answer—shortly enough given, as if it were no pleasant subject to be dwelt upon: —

"Mr. Merton. We don't think much o' the loikes o' *he;*" or, "Lives like a snail in a shell. A hermit, a philosopher, a scholar! But no neighbor — scarcely a man."

From the library of that philosopher was written, one summer day, this letter: —

"DEAR VYVYAN: —

"If the world can spare you, leave London press and society fascinations for a few days, and give up those days to your old master. In

the years that have gone by since we met face to face, you may have found the *summum bonum* of existence. To me, all is still vanity — a world of shadows — saving this place and my little Angela. Come and see her, and judge of her for yourself. If you are still susceptible to beauty in every form, Angela and Mohun Court will charm you. Early spring is putting forth all its fascinations in the child; early summer is throwing a glamour of glory over the place. With all old remembrances still fresh in my heart, believe me,

"Yours most faithfully,

"ROGER MERTON."

At the open window there appeared suddenly a small face with lustrous brown eyes, staring in sorrow and astonishment, as the clear, childish treble rang through the wainscoted room: —

"Uncle Roger, my white rabbit — the ill one — my dearest pet of all — is dead! I can't bear to see it lying there so still, with its ears all limp! I am *so* miserable, Uncle Roger!"

The tall figure did not rise from the writing-table; he only raised his face to meet hers, with a rare tenderness in the deep-set eyes, as

he uttered words that were strange enough to say to a child of eight years old: —

"My darling, what were we saying about fortitude last night?"

"Had you ever a pet white rabbit, with a very soft, dear little nose, Uncle Roger? I

don't believe you ever had. So you don't know what it's like when one dies."

"My little girl, I knew all about it a long time ago."

"All about white rabbits!" exclaimed Angela, astonished out of her tears. "*Did* you, Uncle Roger?"

But he was turning away now to a bulky volume, one of many at his side, and Angela interpreted that movement with a true instinct as a wish, unuttered, for solitude and stillness. Slowly, and almost on tiptoe, she turned her steps down the terrace-walk until, rounding an angle of the house, she stood in a gay Italian garden, at a window smiling in flowers and draped in fresh muslin curtains.

"Mrs. Raisins," said Angela, over the window-ledge, "my *pettest* rabbit of all is dead, and Uncle Roger says I must learn forty *something*—what I told you last night; and how *can* I?"

Mrs. Raisins sat in her arm-chair. Twenty pots of strawberry jam had just been covered and tied down; her face was benign; her form

was comfortable; "something attempted, something done, had earned a night's repose," which, however, she was taking at 4.30 P.M. by the deep oak wainscoted bow-window, when Angela appeared on the scene.

"How *can* I learn that forty *something?*" she reiterated, as she stood there in her white frock and broad sash, pushing the soft brown hair out of her eyes, with her elbows leaning on the window-ledge.

Mrs. Raisins, because she had been caught napping, naturally wished to appear wide awake; therefore she made a random shot: "Forty thieves, do you mean, my dear?" she said, beaming upon Angela with that benevolent smile worn by good-tempered people when they are only half awake. "Was it the story of Ali Baba?"

"You were asleep! I am so sorry!" and the pleading penitence that crept over Angela's face might have softened the hardest heart; whereas, in this instance it moved Mrs. Raisins, whose heart was always more or less in a state of liquefaction, into a condition of abject apology.

"My dear little love," she said, rustling forward in her chair and smoothing her apron, "it was the heat and the jam got the better of me. Sleeping in the middle of the day never suits me; and I dare say my cap is all crooked. So your poor little rabbit is dead, my darling."

"I remember now what it was — what I told you last night Uncle Roger told me I ought to have;" and as she spoke, with a tremble about her mouth and a wistfulness about her tearful eyes, Angela looked straight past the old woman's black silk shoulders and white cap at the opposite wall, where, over an old-fashioned bureau, whose brass handles shone in the afternoon sunlight, there hung an old-fashiond sampler, elaborately worked in cross-stitch, and framed. Angela knew that sampler by heart, and her eyes rested on it now mechanically; on the alphabet worked twice over, large and small; on a row of figures up to ten; on a strange design intended for a churchyard, below which was the crowning glory, described by Mrs. Raisins as —

"The text from my grandfather's very own

tomb, Miss Angela, that lies in that very churchyard: —

"'I see that all things come to an end, but Thy commandment is exceeding broad.

"'Jane Hobbs, aged 11 years.' That was my mother, my dear; and she had a beautiful finger for her needle."

In that way had Angela first been made acquainted with this venerable specimen of art-needlework, and through that same form of words did Mrs. Raisins even now often take her, when Angela would as often make the same comment —

"I think I should have liked your mother if she had had a nicer name. I wish the churchyard didn't look so like a toy; and I s'pose I shall understand the words one of these days?"

But her spirit of criticism in no way lessened her admiration and veneration, and so the old sampler had become an essential part of her childish worship and affections, like the beloved china dogs on some nursery mantel-shelves. What piece of sculpture in later days has ever

taken their place in the hearts that never outgrow a conservatism for old associations?

"It was fortitude," went on Angela; "but I do wish Uncle Roger would say easy things sometimes. He says it means being strong and brave when we are unhappy. But when my pet rabbit dies — how can I be?"

She gave it up as hopeless.

Mrs. Raisins, now quite awake to the realities of life, laid a gentle hand on the little dark head, then bounced up out of her chair, and began to open cupboard doors and put away her jam, as she exclaimed —

"It's all very well for your uncle Roger to talk like that, my dear! Them as *talk*, don't *do*. It's not everybody that can be a dried mummy. To them as can he may talk of forti*tood*. But a little girl of flesh and blood — I say *she wants* flesh and blood!"

"If you mean me, Mrs. Raisins, I don't want anything but you and Uncle Roger and my animals, and I've told you so a hundred times!" — the soft brown eyes were flashing now, the hands moving restlessly, — small, delicate

hands with taper fingers. "Of course there *are* other things, other people; of course there are knights somewhere, like King Arthur's Knights; and there are beautiful ladies somewhere, who are always kind to little children — like mother, only not so lovely; and little children too, I s'pose, — *somewhere*, — though I never see them." She was looking puzzled now, and Mrs. Raisins was shaking her head over her store-cupboard shelves; not deploring a deficiency in her jams, but the dreary future of a "dried mummy's great-niece." "And perhaps if I *did* see them," went on Angela, "I shouldn't mind so much when the swallow goes and the winter comes, and I shouldn't be so sorry that my rabbit is dead. I must go now and see about the funeral."

Mrs. Raisins was left alone with her preserves, still shaking her head over the existing order of things; whilst Angela tripped away on to the terrace once more, across the lawn, and up a flight of stone steps leading to a sort of wilderness where her dumb companions lived.

Dumb they were, but none the less dear for that. Angela stepped into the charmed circle that spelt the word "friendship" for her, and looked round upon them all.

In the large hutch before her were two white rabbits — three, there had been yesterday; four guinea-pigs in an adjoining hutch; on the open door of a wicker-cage hanging on the branch of a tree perched a tame magpie, that flew fussily on to her shoulder as soon as it caught sight of her, and rubbed its glossy head against her cheek. Lying on the ground was the dead rabbit. Angela stooped, with the magpie still on her shoulder, and tenderly lifting the furry favorite, laid it in an improvised coffin — a deal box, once devoted to soap by Mrs. Raisins. She sniffed the faded scent critically, and then, as the tears rushed into her eyes, she caressed the long ears, murmuring —

"She won't mind it as she did that day when I had eau-de-cologne on my fingers, because she can't smell now."

With a crash through the bushes, a magnificent black-and-tan collie here bounded on to

the scene, and planted himself at her side, after touching the dead rabbit with the tip of his nose. There was no fear of violence; old friendship and careful education were too strong for primitive instinct, and he sat like a model collie, with a hand that he loved resting on his head, as he looked up into his mistress's face with half-closed and contented eyes, and tongue lolling from his laughing jaws.

"I want to speak to you all," began Angela. "You see, dear Guinevere is dead. She was my dearest friend — after you, Lance" (the dog gave one wag of his tail as a sign that he appreciated this reservation made in his favor). "I used to tell her everything, — her and you, Lance. She never quarrelled for carrots and lettuces whilst I was talking, but used to listen and kiss me with her dear little nose. And I find that you two fat white things are not a bit sorry; when I showed you her dear little dead body, you only poked your noses out for food, and gobbled it all up as soon as you had it; and so you have no hearts. Mrs. Raisins says things with no hearts might as well be

wedgeables. So I shan't talk to you two, Fluff and Pinkie, as I did to dear Guinevere. As to you," she continued, turning to the guinea-pigs, "Uncle Roger says the understanding of guinea-pigs went away with their tails, and I think he's right; for though you did squeak *very* much when I said to you, 'Guinevere is dead,' still I found out you were only thinking of your food; and friends who can forget friends as long as they have something to eat are *wicked.* So you need not think I shall talk to *you* as I did to her." Then the little person, who had made this strange oration to dumb beasts credited by her with an undue amount of intelligence and character, turned her flushed, eager face to the bird on her shoulder, and said, as she laid a caressing hand on its claws, "Touchstone, I don't think you care *very* much; but you are not unkind, and you make me laugh — not now, oh no! not now — its no use!" for the magpie was raising itself on tip-claws, flapping its wings, and craning its neck towards the hutches, as it uttered sounds that might have been wholesale condemnation of all brutes de-

void of intellect and feeling. "You are my dearest friend, Lance," she said, as she took the dog's loving face between her tiny hands, and, gazing down into the depths of his upturned and now wide-open eyes, she stooped still lower, and kissed his broad, smooth head; then, standing erect once more, and dashing away some persistent tears with the back of her hand, she looked round upon them all, and added: "The funeral will be to-morrow, here, at six o'clock, — of Guinevere, — before my tea."

Tenderly she covered up the sad little coffin, and then slowly walked back towards the house, with Lance at her heels.

It was in vain that evening for Mrs. Raisins to suggest games — games which were generally so fascinating to Angela, so exhausting to her elder companion. For, as a matter of fact, that good woman made herself young on every possible occasion for the sake of her little mistress, who, in her opinion, was growing old before her time.

Hide-and-seek in the galleries was a frequent

pastime; that was plain sailing to Mrs. Raisins as compared with scenes from "King Arthur," or from Kingsley's "Heroes." To personate Guinevere had once been Angela's idea; but how could she, when Mrs. Raisins would always stoutly refuse to be anything but what she called a "female"? So it had devolved upon Angela to encase herself in the nearest approach to knightly armor — tea-tray, dish-covers, and anything else that had a ring of metal about it; but when she, as King Arthur, had to address Mrs. Raisins, as Guinevere, in the words, "Queenliest of women!" her powers of imagination gave way, dish-cover and tea-trays collapsed in one peal of laughter, whilst poor Guinevere moaned out —

"My dear, if you could just make this apron you've pinned round my head and face a little looser! And what is it I've got to say to you? Is it 'Your Royal Highness' or 'My dear master'?"

In the same way, it was most difficult to conceive that an Andromeda could ever have been of Mrs. Raisins' build; and yet Angela was

quite sure that the rôle of Perseus would not fit her better.

"It is only so that I may have something to fly to, don't you see?" Angela had said hopefully at first.

"Yes, my dearie," panted that obliging sexagenarian; "and I shan't have to be here long, shall I?" for she was bound by two antimacassars to the curtain-hooks against the window. Then Perseus had winged his saving flight; but

Andromeda spoilt the whole by crying out, "Bless me! who'd have thought of your coming, sir!"

After that, what remained but for Mrs. Raisins to be the sea-monster, which was not less trying to her, as it involved an all-fours arrangement; and Angela must be Andromeda, content with a Perseus existing in her imagination, but so forcible an imagination was it that once or twice the poor old dragon raised her head from the floor, and looking behind her, exclaimed —

"If I didn't think, Miss Angela dear, that you saw somebody really a-coming in at the door!"

But this evening there were no games. Tea was ready in one of a suite of rooms — all Angela's. There was her summer bedroom, and her winter bedroom; the blue room, where the tea-table was now awaiting her, and which was furnished and decorated *à la luxe* — "too extravagant even for my dear little Miss," Mrs. Raisins used to say. From its painted walls and Liberty hangings, its pictures

and its pottery, opened out another large room, comfortably and plainly furnished, once Angela's nursery, now Mrs. Raisins' work-room. Dolls had never been any satisfaction to Angela since babyhood; living animals, soft warm things that would respond to a caress, were so infinitely superior. It must be a *life* to satisfy Angela; and to-day she had known for the first time how *death* can come in and change the face of things; not only that, but it had shown her the character of the survivors in such a painful light, that she was on the point of believing Lance and Touchstone to be the only pets worth cherishing.

Mrs. Raisins watched her solicitously as she pushed away her cup and saucer from her, and, after eating one piece of bread-and-butter with her strawberries, said she wanted "no more;" she was going down to Uncle Roger.

She found him where she knew she would find him — in the library, and he was doing what his housekeeper had done before tea — napping. Angela stole in on tiptoe, and creeping down to a footstool beside him, laid

her head on his knee. When he awoke at her touch, she said softly—

"Don't move, Uncle Roger; let me be here — quite still — for a little while. I think I will mourn thirty days for Guinevere, as the children of Israel used to mourn."

He stroked the little dark head silently.

"My rabbit-hutches look *so* different without her," she said, after a few minutes. "I don't like things dying; I don't like changes!"

"It is a stern law, my darling, that change is inevitable," he murmured. "I mean, that it *must* be so; it cannot be otherwise. But you shall have another rabbit in Guinevere's place next week."

She said not another word. But when he had left her, on dinner being announced, she still sat there; and when she heard the dining-room door safely shut, she laid her head on the arm of the chair and sobbed out—

"No other can *ever* be the same! How *can* Uncle Roger think so?"

For the same reason that he did not see the un-childlike self-control which she exercised all

the evening: walking up and down the terrace with him whilst he smoked, pouring out his coffee for him as usual, playing at draughts with him, till nine o'clock sent her upstairs to bed. There Mrs. Raisins came to her, and was asked this question —

"What becomes of the souls of dead animals?"

"My dear, they *have* none!" was the prompt reply.

"I don't believe that, and I never shall!" answered Angela indignantly. "I know I would rather meet my rabbit in heaven than that cook of Uncle Roger's, who never would make me a cake for Sunday, and always would go to chapel because the seats were more *comfabler* than church!"

"Miss Angela dear, that isn't good of you."

"I *can't* be good when my Guinevere is dead! How *can* I?"

"My dear, I wish you'd ask somebody else your questions. God can make us all good if we ask him."

"And He knows everything, you always say," replied Angela gravely, with her bright eyes fixed on the old woman's face bent over

her; "and so He knows how I loved Guinevere, and He won't expect me to be good before my days of mourning are ended, because He knows how hard it is. And now good-night, Mrs. Raisins."

"Good-night, my precious!" was followed

by an explosive puff at the candle and a hasty retreat to the workroom, where Mrs. Raisins was soon afterwards discovered by the housemaid, wiping her eyes, to whom she expressed herself as follows: —

"If master goes on with this way of bringing up Miss Angela, with ne'er a playmate but me and her animals, he'll drive the poor child to be *that* clever, she'll get quite silly! I've heard of such things in my time. Why, hark to her talking to her rabbits and her dog! I can't think where she gets it all from. And *you* can't think no more than I can, Eliza, so it's no use your casting about for an answer. But I doubt her growing up to be a woman."

CHAPTER II.

"Such a starved bank of moss
Till, that May morn,
Blue ran the flash across:
Violets were born.

. . . . . .

"Till God's own smile came out;
That was thy face!"

R. BROWNING.

LATE afternoon shadows were deepening in a court that was always more or less shady, within the dusky stillness of the Temple precincts. In chambers that were furnished with a fastidious regard for taste, the answer to Mr. Merton's letter was being written. The writer was a man of middle age. Had he been a youth, whose one idea was to witch the world by winning manners, perfect appointment, and a good address, that man of middle age could not have presented a more finished appearance. It was the finish of one who abhorred unfinish,

who aimed at harmony always, having a deep-rooted appreciation of the fitness of things, and who strove every day to attain his ideal standard.

To describe Vyvyan's personal appearance in detail seems a poor way of portraying him, but it may serve towards the realization of the whole man.

His forehead was neither high nor low, but broad and comprehensive; the nose was remarkably fine, nostrils being so delicately cut as to give an idea not only of excessive refinement, but almost fastidiousness; the mouth was large and full-lipped, suggesting a love of sensuous pleasures, counteracted by the corners of the said mouth, where a strong will had set its seal. The eyes, large, dark, and soft, had the sternness and steadiness of a man who had brought himself, after hard practice, to face the facts of life, and there was in them also, at times, the far-sight of a seer who saw those facts but as the semblance of a greater reality. Nor must even his hair be forgotten; for Vyvyan's hair, like all the rest of him, was a

part of the man himself. Black it was at that time, neither cut according to regulation length, nor allowed to fall in sweet dishevelment like the æsthetic hair of the period. It went with a decided wave *here* and a decided wave *there*, with a touch of silver where it met his temples.

"MY DEAR MASTER" (he wrote): —

"You say 'If the world can spare you' — and if it could not, I would come, so invited. But, as the said world has a marvellous facility for ignoring gaps, I can come even without an apology. You imagine that I may have found the *summum bonum* of existence by this time? This I have found: That Life is very full — and London life most *exigeante*. This, too, I have learned —

> 'Unsre Thaten selbst
> Sie hemmen unsres Lebensgang.'

But the elixir of life — that philosopher's stone which all hunt for, and so few, if any, find — is as dim and mysteriously distant as ever. A breathing-space in your sanctuary will be a gain. My law work is not much; I

never meant that it should be. My fastidious taste has not yet learnt to adjust itself to the sophistries that seem to me sometimes inevitable in our courts. You always used to tell me that my organ of conscientiousness was abnormal; in judgment—perhaps; in practice—I fear not, worse luck! My penny-a-lining, for which you may remember I always had a craving, has got me the editorship of the "Stargazer." It affects a liberal tone and a rational moderation in all things, requiring sometimes a spur and a lash lest it should sink into something too tolerant. You think I give it these? I want the spur too much myself; but the greatest want is the old, old want — to *know*. There you have your answer, in spite of the cautious evasion of your question on the first part of this. Let me *see* — give me *light* — let me *know;* and *then* — ask me once more whether I have found the *summum bonum* of living. More in reserve for our meeting on the 6th.

"Yours in all sincerity,

"C. VYVYAN."

The letter was promptly folded, closed, addressed, and stamped. Then more paper was hastily drawn forward, and he wrote three notes concerning cases in which, as an active member of the Charity Organization Society, he was interested; after which he opened a map in front of him, and rapidly sketched out a route for some friends who were starting on a walking tour over ground well known to himself; there was very little ground in Europe that he did not know. Finally he rose, with the words "*Et après?*" and putting on his hat, left his chambers, and in another moment was in the court below. There he paused — arrested by the sight of little children out of the highways and by-ways streaming into the gardens for two hours' play — their breathing-time. Pale faces, little tired brains, half-starved bodies were going to forget all their troubles during this "Children's Hour." Vyvyan, as he walked out into the Strand, was thinking —

"Philanthropy is a force in the present day. A thorough philanthropist might feel no crav-

ings, no restlessness. His life would be so absorbed in the life of others that no casual letter would carry him back on to a long-ago stage, when everything was fresh, with a keen zest about it, — no sight of little children would make him see again a nursery — such a far way back! with his mother in it." But the clock of a neighboring church chimed, reminding him that the present has a stern claim, which demands a rigid service from all faithful men. He was due to dine with a friend at his club, before going together to see Irving in one of his latest and most intellectual conceptions; and criticism was, to Vyvyan, the very spice of life — so his friends said.

. . . . . .

A man may live to middle age, may believe that he has exhausted every sensation, may assure himself that for him there can be no new experience; and yet, suddenly, into one hour may come a hope, or a memory — which is it?

Something apparently born of the present, which yet may be the last glow of a far-away

sunset, or the first streak of a pale dawn, — and the conjurer may be a little child, as it was in Vyvyan's case. For if he lives even beyond the number of years alotted by the Psalmist, he will never forget his arrival at Mohun Court.

He had left the carriage at the first gate that he might enjoy the walk along the steep drive that brings you to the second gate, and through it straight into the front court of the old house. He was struck by the picturesque beauty of the great hill that gave its name to the village; over its side the long evening shadows were creeping gradually, darkening the trees and shrubs that made the setting of Mohun Court. That house on the hill he thought looked marvellously like its owner, gray, solemn, and solitary.

Suddenly a clear, sweet voice fell on the stillness. He stopped and listened. It was plaintive and tuneful; and the voice was the voice of a child.

The tune he supposed to be some hymn tune; but Vyvyan was not in the way of hearing hymns sung.

He waited until it had quite ceased, and then turned in the direction whence it came, up some steps cut in a bank leading to high ground

crowned by a spinny of fir-trees. The bark of a dog announced his approach, much to his vexation, and in an another moment Lance had bounded through the bushes, and Vyvyan was face to face with Angela, who stood, spade in hand, by a freshly-made mound of earth.

Angela was never startled. The dark eyes opened a little wider beneath their lashes, that was all; and she put out her hand, saying—

"How d'ye do? You are Mr. Vyvyan, I s'pose. I've just buried my dead rabbit. Don't let's stay here, or I shall cry, and that wouldn't be nice for you, now you've just come. Shall I take you to Uncle Roger?"

She slipped her hand into his, to Vyvyan's infinite amusement, who was well accustomed to ease of manner, but not to such perfect confidence at first sight.

"How do you know I am Mr. Vyvyan?" he asked, as they went, hand in hand, down the slopes together, Lance following at their heels.

"Uncle Roger told me you were coming to-day; nobody ever comes here — not even the miller who lives down there at the mill," and she pointed, away along the road by which he had just driven, to the yellow roof of the old mill, where the swallows skimmed all day long about the little stone bridge across the stream. "Mrs. Raisins and I had tea at the mill one afternoon, and he is *such* a beautifully

white old man; but Mrs. Raisins says it will all brush off. I asked him to come and see my pets, and to have tea with me in my blue room."

"And did he come?"

"No," she sighed, shaking her head; "nobody *ever* comes. But now you've come, and I'm very glad, because my dear Guinevere is dead. This is Lancelot. Do you know King Arthur's Knights?"

Vyvyan thought he had heard of them.

"Uncle Roger has a big book *full* of them, and sometimes he reads it to me, or tells me about them; and sometimes I read it, curled up on the sofa in his library. Sometimes I think Uncle Roger is like King Arthur was, when he was an old, old man, and tired of everything. I hope *you* aren't tired of everything like Uncle Roger?"

The child's face was raised to her companion's as she suddenly asked the question, and she stood still, obliging him to do the same. They faced one another. She looked as if the fate of a world depended upon his answer.

They were on the lawn just below the terrace, standing in the great shadow thrown by the house, and the heavy branches of a magnificent cedar close by stirred lazily in the softest of summer winds, with that slumbrous "sough," lulling as the wave-break of a very slumbrous sea. Below and beyond them lay a champaign country, golden in misty sunshine; and beyond again lay the grand old hills.

"Uncle Roger doesn't care about things as I do," resumed Angela, "and I do so hope *you* will, for Mrs. Raisins doesn't either. Mrs. Raisins is my mamma's old nurse. Mamma is dead. Oh, please don't squeeze my hand so tight, 'cos there's a bad scratch on it! Mrs. Raisins is Uncle Roger's housekeeper now, and she is my dear old friend. But there's one thing I do get tired of — her caps, 'cos they *are* ugly, and I don't like ugly things, 'cept when they're alive. Here comes Uncle Roger. Oh! but you haven't told me yet, *are* you tired of things as he is?

Once more that earnest appeal in the dark eyes, so unusual, he thought, in such a child.

The question seemed doomed to be answered only by the sighing breeze in the cedar branches, for before Vyvyan could speak, his old master's hand was stretched out to meet his, with a smile which had not yet forgotten to say welcome.

Behind them came the rustle of a feminine skirt, and a troubled voice said —

"Miss Angela, dear! your tea's been a-waiting for ever so; and if that tiresome magpie hasn't flown in at the window and been a-hopping and a-hopping on the table, and left the marks of his claws in the butter, and upset the strawberries!" — here there was a deep courtesy to Mr. Vyvyan — "and you shouldn't be out here in your Sunday frock at this time, my dear. Excuse me, sir; but it's a frock she never wears in the garden, Mr. Merton. Come in my dearie, now; tea's all getting cold."

Angela glanced down at her frock, then up at her uncle, while he and Vyvyan regarded her with interest, and Mrs. Raisins with amusement. There was no blush of self-consciousness on the child's face, as she answered, in perfect simplicity —

"It was for the funeral I put it on."

Then she turned gravely away with her arm through Mrs. Raisins', for Angela was very tall, and Mrs. Raisins very short.

"This is my world, Vyvyan," said Mr. Merton, as they strolled about the grounds together, master and pupil. Master — who had come to the conclusion long ago that all was vanity, and therefore that the highest attainment in life was calm serenity, safely ensured against any possible

chance collision with persons or things; pupil — who had also learnt that all was vanity so far as satisfaction went, and therefore — but he was not always definite about the conclusion deducible from that proposition.

"This is my world, as I told you in my letter," continued Mr. Merton, "and my little Angela is the life of it."

"And hers?" asked Vyvyan quietly.

"Hers?" repeated the other interrogatively.

"Her world, what is it? Has she no playfellows? Does she never go beyond *this?*" and there was an impatient gesture made by Vyvyan as he uttered those last words.

"What else does she want?" was the untroubled answer, serenely given. "She has never known anything more, and she never shall know it. Have I not found enough that was bitter in the world and amongst my own kind, to make me anxious to shield her from suffering in a similar way? If she is never deceived, she will never know the bitterness of misplaced confidence; if she has no opportunity of loving much, she will never lose

much; if she has no chance of making friends, she will never know the pain of a broken friendship, of misconceptions; and have not I known all this? From the trouble and sorrow that must come, sooner or later, to all who live in the world, and which few women are philosophical enough to endure calmly, or, sometimes even to survive, I would screen my little Angela. On the other hand, there is no wish of hers, in reason, that I ever deny her; she has her animals and her pony, every comfort and every luxury; and as to books — ah, Vyvyan, she has a marvellous imagination, that little child! To her, the Arthurian legends are real, the Knights of the Round Table are flesh and blood. She wanders about these grounds with Sir Galahad, and sees Elaine floating down the river there in her barge. She wants no companions — the very air she breathes is filled with them for her!"

"A great mistake! a huge mistake!" testily interrupted the philosopher's friend. "I should like to send her to spend six weeks in my sister's nursery in Hyde Park Square. That

would do her infinite good. Instead of which," — here Vyvyan broke off abruptly, — " have you thought about the end of it all? Supposing you were to die to-morrow, would you leave her to live on alone with Mrs. Raisins, her beasts, and her birds? Forgive me, my dear old master," he added as hastily, taking the old man's hand and pressing it affectionately. I had no right to speak so; I had no intention of paining you."

" It was foolish of me to heed it," replied Mr. Merton, smiling faintly; " but you hit me on my vulnerable point, Vyvyan, the old sore— *change.* I would give my life to screen her from *that;* from the ache of the heart, from the yearning of the soul, that is brought about by change."

There was a momentary silence, in which the " twit " of the wheeling swallows above their heads mingled with the voices of a child and of an old woman from one of the upper windows.

" And you yourself, Vyvyan," resumed Mr. Merton; " you told me that you required the

spur and the lash lest you should sink into quietism at times. Not much rousing required; habitual reserve and studied self-possession more easily broken through than of yore, I perceive."

"In an instant when a child takes possession of me." And as Vyvyan spoke, it seemed that the smile of the child upstairs had transferred itself to his face, and transfigured it.

CHAPTER III.

"*Paracelsus.* I am he that aspired to *know*; and thou?
"*Aprile.* I would *love* infinitely."

R. BROWNING.

"HAVE you any brothers or sisters?" It was Angela speaking from the couch by the drawing-room window, where Vyvyan had found her after dinner, when Mr. Merton told her it was too dewy for her to step out on the terrace as usual, and patrol with him whilst he smoked his cigar. But Vyvyan had thrown himself into the opposite corner of the couch, and Angela was content.

"One sister I have; and she has a nursery full of little children," was the answer.

"Mrs. Raisins says if I had other little children to play with I shouldn't care so much for my pets; but, you see, I've never had any," said Angela reflectively, adding, with a sudden flush of eagerness, "tell me about when you

were a little boy — if you can remember. Had you ever a white rabbit you loved very much indeed, and it died?"

"I lived in London, and so we had no room for rabbits," he replied, stretching out a hand to reach that little hand of hers; "and I had only one sister, much younger than myself, and we had a very cross nurse."

"And had you a mother?" asked Angela softly.

"Yes, I had a mother."

"Mothers love you even more than uncles and housekeepers do, I s'pose," observed Angela. "But do tell me about when you were a little boy — tell me a story."

In the way that thinking elders sometimes relieve their own minds at the expense of the children's, he told her, ramblingly and abstractedly, the story of a boy who was always wanting something more than he had got; school did not give it him, college did not give it him, though his tutor there was his dearest master always, who did his best to make a clever, good man of him.

"But he disappointed everybody, Angela — this restless boy," said Vyvyan, with his head on his hand and his eyes on the child, "because he was never satisfied."

"P'raps if he'd had a white Guinevere," suggested Angela hesitatingly.

"Ah! but then white rabbits die, I thought," replied Vyvyan, just for the sake of seeing what she would say; but he was not prepared for the trembling lip as she murmured —

"*Please* don't talk about it. Well, and then," she went on, with a queer little effort at self-control, "and then, what did the boy do?"

"He wore a fool's cap and bells for some time, and he liked the jingle of it, but he soon got tired of that; then he tried conjuring tricks, but they came to grief; then he went and lived in a very big crowd of people, and if he's not dead, he is living there still."

"Without his mother?"

"Yes, all alone."

"I don't very much care for that story," said Angela contemptuously; "nothing happens in it. Mrs. Raisins can tell far better stories than

that about when she was a child. She was a very different sort of child! And Uncle Roger's stories are — I can't say what!" Angela clasped her hands in a small ecstacy.

"I knew Mrs. Raisins when I was a little boy," said Vyvyan.

"Did you? She wasn't a little girl then, I s'pose?"

"Not quite" — and Vyvyan smiled at the thought of his forty years and Mrs. Raisins' upwards-of-sixty winters.

"And did she ever show you her sampler?" Vyvyan thought not.

"Oh! then you *must* come and see it now!" and Angela jumped off the couch and held out her hand; "it hangs on the wall in her room. She won't be there now. She might not like you to find her sitting without her cap, for she takes it off 'of evenings' as she says, 'cos her head aches sometimes. It won't be too dark. Please *do* come and see it before the coffee comes!" Thus implored, Vyvyan suffered her to lead him across the hall, through the swing baize door, and into the most charming of

western sitting-rooms — an ideal housekeeper's room. Full of "such old things," said Angela; full also of the scent of mignonette growing luxuriantly underneath the open window. The light from a golden sky fell full on that old sampler, before which Angela dragged him, eagerly pointing with her finger as she said: —

"*All* that was worked by Mrs. Raisins' mother, Jane Hobbs, aged eleven years. She was ***much*** nicer than her name, I know. I should have called her Enid Maltravers. When I say so to Mrs. Raisins she *always* says, 'My dear, that would have been quite out of that state of life in which she did her duty' — or 'dooty' she calls it. Isn't that a funny bird? it's not like any I've ever seen. P'raps birds in England were green and orange then, when Jane Hobbs worked it; and p'raps they had no beaks either; but I think they must always have had two legs, and this has only one. And do you think that churchyard is pretty? I don't; but Mrs. Raisins' grandfather is buried there, under that tombstone — do you see? worked in bumpy gray stitches; and those words are

on it — on the real tombstone, and perhaps you can't read them, so I will: 'I—see—that—all —things—come—*tonend*' — (that's how Mrs. Raisins' always says it) — 'but—Thy—commandment—is—ex—ceeding—broad.' And I asked Uncle Roger once what 'exceeding' meant, and he said it means *exceedingly* EXCEEDINGLY."

"Does Uncle Roger ever say those words to you then?" Vyvyan was reading the words in the upturned face, not on the old-fashioned piece of needlework.

"Oh, no," she answered gravely; "Uncle Roger never comes in here — only I asked him. And Mrs. Raisins says I shall understand it when I am older. I s'pose you understand everything?"

What made Vyvyan — the cynic, as some called him — go down on his knees before her then, and kiss her almost reverently? as he made answer —

"I understand *nothing*, little one; I know nothing."

The chink of cups and saucers on a

tray went past the door, and Angela exclaimed: —

"That's the coffee, and I must pour it out for Uncle Roger — I always do; he calls me 'Hebe' then; I told Mrs. Raisins why, and she says it's *heathenish*." Still holding his hand, she hurried him back through the baize door again, across the hall into the drawing-room, now lighted by the pale light of shaded lamps, and scented by the summer breeze with fragrance of evening, as it stole from the garden in at the open windows.

"Uncle Roger, I have been showing Mr. Vyvyan Mrs. Raisins' sampler," explained Angela, as she went to the tea-table with a most perfect self-possession and ease of manner. "And I've been telling him that it means '*exceedingly* EXCEEDINGLY,' 'cos you know everybody doesn't know; and he says he doesn't know anything; p'raps not even what Mrs. Raisins says I shall know when I grow older, about the 'broad commandment.'"

"Little Hebe, make haste and pour out our coffee, and then run off to bed," was her uncle's

answer, as he stood by watching the nimble fingers popping the sugar into the cups. She went up to Vyvyan to say good-night; he was reading the newspaper, and when he let it fall, as her little "Good-night" sounded on the other side of it, once more his face was not as it had been before.

. . . . . .

"Mrs. Raisins," said Angela, as she sat with her long dark hair under the brush that swept from the head to the tips of the tresses slowly and mechanically — a task in which Mrs. Raisins delighted, as being "her dear mamma's hair all over" — "did you know Mr. Vyvyan when he was a little boy?"

"Yes, my dear." Here Mrs. Raisins held an end of ribbon between her teeth and twisted away with the other vigorously and gently round Angela's pigtail.

"Did he know my mamma?" asked Angela, with a light in her eyes and a glow on her cheeks. Mrs. Raisins looked troubled, and, being at the back of Angela's chair, did not attempt to veil her countenance, which grew more

discomposed as Angela continued in a decided tone, "If he did, I shall just ask him to tell me all about her; Uncle Roger never will, and you very often won't."

"Miss Angela, dearie," began Mrs. Raisins, stroking her head with a final smooth, "if I was to tell you a story now, you wouldn't talk about it, would you? and if I tell you, you must promise not to go and ask Mr. Vyvyan about your poor dear ma, will you?"

The immediate prospect of a story bound Angela over to secrecy at once. In her pink flannel dressing-gown, she perched herself upon Mrs. Raisins' lap; the window was thrown wide open, for the heat was great; down below in the grounds and away beyond, over the country, brooded the stillness of a summer evening, broken only by the voices of two on the terrace and the voices of these two upstairs.

"Suppose I tell you a story, my dearie, about a boy, a young gentleman, who lived in the same London square as a little girl, a young lady, and they used to play in the square gar-

den together. Well, it's what many do, ain't it, dear?"

Angela answered that "she believed so, but she didn't know. She had never had children to play with — animals were different."

"Bless your dear little heart! Yes, they are indeed!" came with unction and a hug from the old woman. "But we'll go on; and we agree that it isn't sing'lar so far. But suppose they grew great friends, and when the little girl went to school and the little boy went to school, the first thing they thought of in the holidays was to play their old games together again, till they grew too big for games? Then it was books; and the little boy grew up to be a clever man — such a very clever man, my dear, that Mr. Merton said he was the cleverest young man he knew when he was tutor at one of those clever Oxford colleges."

"Uncle Roger!" cried Angela, raising her head from her old friend's shoulder and facing her.

Mrs. Raisins clicked with her tongue against her teeth from annoyance at this *lapsus linguæ*, then she said gently —

"You mustn't interrupt, my dear. Yes, your Uncle Roger knew him. And whilst he grew cleverer and cleverer, that little girl grew beautifuller and gooder; and all the time she used to read those dreadful clever books that he read, till one day — oh, Miss Angela, dear, there was a day like a dark thunderstorm in a week in June! but it couldn't be helped. It was like this, my dearie: it was as if you had been a-doing or a-saying or a-reading something I knew was not good for you to read, and I was to come and beg of you with tears in my eyes not to do it no more, and as if *you* was to up and say that do it you *would* for all I spoke up."

"But I don't think I ever should."

"My darling, you can't tell till you're tried. I never thought he could have up and spoke to her as he did, but he *did;* and it was only because she was afraid he would hurt himself that she spoke to him, poor dear! It was as if he was playing with a sharp-edged knife, she said, and she begged him to shut it up, and as if he said that he wasn't going to shut it up for

nobody, not even her. And so the little boy and the little girl who had played their games together and read their books together, quarrelled, and then they said good-by." The voice of Vyvyan on the terrace below was just then saying —

"But, my dear sir, granted that life ends with death, therefore why not fill it with human interests to the brim while it lasts? Why not make it a complete end in itself — perfect as far as we apprehend perfection; I, too, hear the *cui bono;* but do you never even imagine a Beyond? You say you see a drama in which every act should be played carefully; do you never dimly perceive a mystery?"

"*Then* what became of them?" sighed the little voice upstairs; "that's why I think animals may be best, 'cos they can't quarrel like children."

"He went away and lived in the world — the great noisy world, my dear. And she married a rich gentleman with a kind heart and delicate lungs, and they had to leave their little girl and their beautiful home to go to them warm parts

that do people good, where they both died. She died of nursing him."

"Is that all?"

"That's the end, my dearie."

"It's rather a sad story, Mrs. Raisins, and a rather old one for a little child. What became of the poor little girl?"

"She was taken care of by her great-uncle; he had loved her mother very much, and so he loved the little girl, almost as much as his books," — this last was said *sotto voce* and with a sort of sniff, — "and so they left their beautiful home and their little girl to him to take care of; and he left his college where he had lived for many, many years; and the little girl's mamma's nurse became his housekeeper, and loved that little girl like the apple of her eye." Here the little figure in pink flannel was hugged more closely by Mrs. Raisins against her ample heart.

"It's like me, rather," said Angela, dreamily; "but I am sleepy now. Mr. Vyvyan's voice sounds like a church-bell out in the garden. I hope he's going to stay a long, long time."

. . . . . .

So it came to pass that a man feared by many for his unflinching principles, which scorned contact with anything mean or base, came down to the sunny level of a little child's meadow-land, and was adored by her. Afraid of him! how could she be! See her one bright morning, when the roses were making it a positive necessity for Vyvyan to be out of doors — see her tripping across the lawn to the spot where he lay smoking and watching her approach. In one hand was her little garden-chair, in the other was a book of fairy stories. She planted herself close beside him, spread her book open before her on her dainty pinafore, pushed behind her ears the intruding locks that did their best to veil her eyes, and then said in an encouraging tone of voice —

"Now I'll begin to read; it is the story of 'The Nightingale.'"

Straight through, from beginning to end, she read it, without once looking off the page, whilst Vyvyan, raised on his elbow with his head on his hand, watched her in half-concealed amusement, as a most rare little study. The

charming story came to an end at last, and then with a great sigh of satisfaction she closed the

book, folded her hands upon it, and looking down into Vyvyan's face, said —

"Do you like it?"

"Very much; but I should think the nightingale didn't like it much when that crabby old emperor told her he could not do without her."

"Why, yes, she *did* — of *course* she did," replied Angela, emphatically, "because she had saved his life by coming back to him; and he *wasn't* crabby — only suffering."

At those words, Vyvyan's expression of amusement merged into tenderness, and he began telling her of some of the hospitals in London which he visited sometimes, of the little children he knew who laid still and suffered so patiently, and of the good doctors and nurses who gave up their lives to them; until at last he stopped, startled into silence by the glow in the child's face before him, and by the light in her eyes, as she sat clasping her hands tightly together, and now exclaimed —

"I should like to have a hospital for everything that's hurt and wounded and ill!

Wouldn't birds and insects find it nice to be kept in a snug little cave in a bank, don't you think? I know where there is one; and Jake would give me some bits of board to keep the wind out, and to keep away all nasty things that might hurt them. I shall look for *everything* that wants taking care of now."

"If I ever get hurt, will you take care of me?"

She shook her head.

"You are a great, strong man," she replied gravely, "and Uncle Roger says that a man must never mind being hurt."

"Uncle Roger is a philosopher," returned Vyvyan.

"What *is* that?" she asked.

"Some one who is always serene, whatever happens — which means that he takes everything quietly."

"Never cries, *whatever* happens?" asked Angela wonderingly; "not even if his pet white rabbit died?"

"Never thinks of such a thing; smiles instead."

"Are *you* one?" she asked, still more wonderingly.

Vyvyan nodded assent, his eyes still fixed on the sweet, earnest little face.

"I shall *never* be like that," she said, with a tremendous sigh, "though I know Uncle Roger would like it. Shall we come into the wood-walk now, and see where I mean to build my hospital?"

He got up immediately and went, her willing slave.

That afternoon Angela, full of a favorite freak of hers, communicated to Mrs. Raisins her intention of carrying it out. Mr. Vyvyan had been telling her how hospital nurses wear a distinctive dress; and although she could not dress herself like one of them, it was in a tone of perfect assurance that she said —

"Mrs. Raisins, I am going to dress up; I am going to be the lady of a hospital."

In a very short time after this announcement, a white muslin skirt, long enough to trail behind her, was unearthed from Mrs. Raisins' hoards, and pinned around her waist, a soft

white Shetland shawl was twisted over her shoulders and about her arms, whilst a long black lace veil was draped most winsomely — hood-like and scarf-like — about her head and shoulders.

"And, please, the lovely locket!" — which meant a certain crystal locket with a little fly inside. Angela's mother had worn it as a girl, and one day, half in jest and half in earnest, had given it to her old nurse as a pledge of the love that was between them, and Mrs. Raisins had kept it. On high days and holy days Angela was allowed to wear it, but never without the premonitory warning —

"You won't drop it, my dearie, or lose it, will you?"

With this precious keepsake sparkling on the black lace, and looking so marvellously like her dead mother that the tears stood in the old woman's eyes as she watched her sweeping along the gallery, she trod the broad staircase, and crossing the hall, tapped at the library door. Mr. Merton was not there, but Mr. Vyvyan sat at the writing-table in the window,

"ONE OF THE HOSPITAL NURSES HAS COME TO SEE YOU."
Page 68.

scribbling hard at his article on "Materialism of the Nineteenth Century" for the "Stargazer."

"Come in," he said abstractedly, without looking off his paper to see who was coming; then, as he heard a little rustle behind him, he turned in his chair. Always serene — always able to smile? Not now, oh my philosopher! not now, when this little miniature of Angela's mother faces you.

"One of the hospital nurses has come to see you," she said with a little stately air, stretching out her hand to him as if she were a queen expecting him to kneel and kiss it. "If you please, sir, do you want anything? do you ache anywhere? have you any bruises?"

Vyvyan was standing now, leaning against his chair and grasping the back of it. As she finished her funny little sentence, he stooped, and lifting her bodily from the ground in his arms, kissed the sweet little face passionately again and again.

"Let me get down, Mr. Vyvyan," she cried vehemently, pulling herself away from him with all the force of her small hands. "You

have twisted my locket all crooked, and you have torn my gathers, and you have pushed my veil off!"

He set her down gently and returned to his writing, while she stood readjusting her ruffled plumes, with an unusual frown on her placid little countenance as she murmured —

"Fancy treating a hospital nurse like *that!*"

The likeness had vanished. Vyvyan was telling himself that none but a fool would allow himself to be so easily disturbed when a certain amount of business had to be transacted before the post went out. But now, on the table at his side, are folded a pair of round white arms, and cushioned on them is a flushed cheek, as the soft eyes are raised penitently to his.

"Are you angry with me?"

"No, little one." He did not raise his head; the pen still travelled rapidly.

"Isn't a philosopher ever angry?"

"Never." Dip went the pen into the ink, then over the paper rapidly again.

"Never angry — never cries — always smiles," she mused, without changing her position.

"Still, I think I'd like to be a hospital nurse best."

The pen stopped, and he was fingering the crystal locket as he said —

"You would soon get tired of the sadness, my little Angela."

"No, I shouldn't, because there'd be so many people to pity and help; and Mrs. Raisins says we must always pity and help one another — for Some One's sake."

"Whose?" asked Vyvyan.

"Don't you know?" came from Angela, almost under her breath, whilst the color rushed up to her very brow, as she stood upright now, facing him with bright, dilated eyes. "I thought only babies didn't know Who!" Then, as if struck by the thought that she had been altogether severe enough for one afternoon, she added coaxingly, "Mrs. Raisins and I are going to have tea under the cedar. Will you come too?"

He promised, and she went away satisfied, for she felt, that little maid of the pitiful heart, that there was a balance due on her side to him.

Had he been in philosophic mood, he might have meditated on the strange connection between a child-spirit and a great woman-soul, who had written that "pity and fairness are two little words which, carried out, would embrace the utmost delicacies of the moral life." But being by nature very human, Vyvyan laid his head on his folded arms, and yearned for his life to be filled with something more than the fulness of benevolence, of knowledge, of culture, of social dues given and received — yearned after a fulness which can defy all the sundry and manifold changes of the world.

An hour later he was pacing the lawn with Mr. Merton. A few yards from them, in the cedar-shadow, sat Mrs. Raisins, sipping her tea from her saucer, and Angela, dispensing crumbs to the birds and cake to Lancelot beside her.

"Does it never strike you," observed Vyvyan, "that little Angela will be an old woman before she is a young one? How can any child live a natural life who sees no other children?" This was no new theme for Vyvyan

since he had been at Mohun Court; but this afternoon he felt more than usually impatient of the existing order of things; every day it grew to him more intolerable, when he viewed it as Angela's world.

"It is very evident to me, Vyvyan," returned Mr. Merton quietly, "that little things vex you more than they did. Once you would have said, 'Why disturb myself over other people's affairs?' *now* I often hear you say, 'This must not be so,' or, 'That must be thus,' with a certain degree of irritability foreign to your nature."

"How can one help it, if one means to make life good for all?" replied Vyvyan with some warmth; "have you forgotten one of your favorite quotations, 'Make sure that those to whom you come nearest be the happier at least by your presence'?"

"But do you do so, my dear Vyvyan, by this disturbing vein?" rejoined his old master, with a courteous smile; "and how about that other quotation, which you used to say you would bind as a phylactery upon your brow, 'Set the

house of thy thoughts in order'? Nay, I do not wish to vex you — we will prove this question. . . . Angela!"

Like a flash of light she was at his side; they stood still in their walk, and the old man laid a hand upon her shoulder as he said —

"My child, would you like other children to live here with you? Would you like to know other children?"

"No," she made answer, shaking her head. "I only want you and Mrs. Raisins, and Mr. Vyvyan and my animals. I don't care even about the miller, now I have Mr. Vyvyan. And my Guinevere back again, I *should* like!" she murmured, as she returned to the tea-table; but they did not hear that little murmur.

"There, Vyvyan!" said Mr. Merton, as they resumed their walk; "why coerce her into a state of life which has no attraction for her, and which might expose her to all the unhappiness from which I would shield her?"

But Vyvyan had to such perfection the divine faculty of entering into other lives, that at times it might have seemed to others that he

saw visions and dreamed dreams, as now, when, with that little girl laughing over the tea-table at the jokes of a cheery old woman, he could yet hear afar off a womanly cry for "some vast necessity of heart and life" — which her guardian had failed to bestow upon her.

CHAPTER IV.

"Grau, theurer Freund, ist alle Theorie,
Und grün des Lebens goldner Baum."

Faust.

ANGELA'S hospital for "things that wanted taking care of" was built before Vyvyan left Mohun Court. He was the architect; Jake, the under-gardener, was builder. Jake, who was described to Vyvyan by Angela as "a dear kind man, with never clean nails, and whiskers like carrot-tops in the autumn. Mrs. Raisins won't let me call them red, 'cos she says 'a gardener feels'; but why should he *feel* red?"

And when the little building of wattle stood firmly wisped together with willow-withes on the woodwalk bank, she thought the combined genius of Vyvyan and Jake was worthy of public recognition. The divisions and subdivisions within, arranged with the help of cardboard,

were marvellous; and it was quite pleasant, Angela thought, the way in which patients came to hand all ready on the opening day.

There was one ward for a frog that was

shaky on his indispensable hind-legs; an adjoining one for an infirm beetle; a corridor for a butterfly with torn wings, and a grasshopper that hopped feebly. It may have been that they considered themselves convalescent; but it was a little disappointing that they one and

all ranged about the buildings, and over the walls in a happy-go-lucky sort of way, independent of wards.

"Poor little Miss Angela," said the servants. "She's as happy with Mr. Vyvyan as if he was her own age! And as for him, it's quite pretty to see him on hands and knees at that hospital of hers every day, and she flitting about him like some little bird. Jake says he's for all the world like a schoolboy with her!"

"Poor little Angela!" said Mrs. Peveril, the Vicar's wife, to Vyvyan himself one afternoon, as he stood apart with her on the Vicarage lawn, whilst young men and maidens were wildly springing on either side of the tennis-net. Vyvyan had a way of meeting with acquaintances wherever he went, hence his intimacy with the Peverils; and in spite of a rooted dislike to the term *popularity*, he was always a most popular man. An habitual reserve of manner was no deterrent, rather the reverse; and there was in him a way of looking at the failings and shortcomings of other men and women with a degree of tenderness — a

way of not expecting more from human nature than was reasonable, which made him agreeable to all.

"Poor little Angela!" repeated Mrs. Peveril. "We try to get her here sometimes, but it is hopeless. *You* know what Mr. Merton is. We have given up calling now. But it is a sad life for a child. If it were not for the excellent Mrs. Raisins, I really don't know what would become of her. And she is the sweetest-looking little thing, but *most* unchildlike — far too old-fashioned. However, what could one expect?"

Vyvyan resented such wholesale condemnation of the strange *régime* at Mohun Court from an outsider. He might say to her uncle that it was not a healthy life for Angela, but to Mrs. Peveril he said —

"Angela is as happy as the day is long. Her uncle is devoted to her. The life she leads is a life of love, given and received. What more would you have for a child who is to grow up into a woman one day?"

"Ah! but — *how* will she grow up? And besides, even children require friction."

"Mr. Merton is of another opinion; and who made me a judge over him?" replied Vyvyan courteously.

"Are you talking of Angela — little Angela?" asked a heated and panting damsel, whose game being over, now came up to them, racquet in hand. "Oh, *do*, Mr. Vyvyan, persuade Mr. Merton to let her come sometimes and play with the children here!"

"The children" were three boys in sailor-suits, whose graduated heights rendered it most convenient for said suits to descend year by year; boys with fair round faces, and eyes of china blue, who sat in a row on the grass watching the tennis, and who looked as if they were accustomed to take the good things of this life unquestionably, whether white rabbits lived or died.

Vyvyan eyed them, and then, with his mind's eye, viewed Angela. He tried to bring the four within the same focus, but failed, with a smile.

To Mr. Merton, in the evening, he repeated those words of Mrs. Peveril's and with an em-

phasis which would have more than reconciled her to his aggravating indifference of the afternoon. The answer came as usual —

"When she wants more, she shall have it. I can deny her nothing that she asks for. Hers is a character of delicate susceptibilities — unusual depth of feeling. Imagine it exposed to the torture of misunderstandings, slights, disappointments, and then those higher mysteries, change — death."

"Good heavens!" broke in Vyvyan, "it must all come sooner or later!"

The old man shook his head.

"Not all," he murmured gently, "with care — with careful discipline."

In his heart the pupil muttered, "Old idiot!" as the stronger love, for the moment, threw the old reverence nowhere; but he went on, almost without pausing to listen to his companion's words —

"You grant that she has the sweet germs of all that is lovely and lovable in woman already, and *yet* you are determined to allow her no scope for them!"

"She has me," said Mr. Merton, still as gently; "and now — she has you."

Vyvyan rose from his seat abruptly, and went to the open window.

"I must be off to-morrow," he said. I told you, if you remember, that I had promised my young friend, Maurice Langford, to start off on a holiday trip with him as soon as he is ready to go. The second post brought me a hurried line from him just now, telling me that he can start to-morrow night, which means, for me, good-by to Mohun Court."

Mr. Merton was silent, and a line of pain was drawn at each corner of the sensitive mouth; but Vyvyan was not looking at him.

"Strange force of habit," he murmured. "I never can say that word 'good-by' — even now — without regret."

"Scarcely strange," returned Vyvyan, with a light laugh. "At least, not where any true love or true friendship exists."

The older man muttered, as if not heeding him —

"'And wilt thou make thy treasure of any

one of these things? It were as if one set his love upon the swallow.'" Then he added, in a changed tone, "You will visit us again, Vyvyan, I trust. There will always be a welcome for you. But you will forgive me if I tell you that I see you altered?"

Vyvyan turned, and faced him with the words:

"Naturally. The alteration from a man of thirty to a man of forty."

"No; not that alone," replied the other quietly. "What I remark is, a most noticeable departure from that 'flawless serenity' which you and I once agreed should be the moral aim of all men, a calm which is unruffled by passion — by desire — by —"

Here he was interrupted by Vyvyan, who, standing once more in the window, turned away from him so that the expression of his face was not seen, only the expression in the tone of his voice could be noted.

"And do you yourself never feel a yearning after a higher satisfaction? Do the old truths, learnt at your mother's knee, never stare out at you reproachfully from that

little child's face? Do you never — though very far away — apprehend a faint music which might tune one's life into a perfect harmony, even here and now? If one's ears were duly strained to catch the rhythm, it might be better than to know; if one's life-pulses beat in time — it might be better than to understand."

"And *this*," said Mr. Merton, with the least possible touch of satire, "from a man who wrote only a fortnight since, that 'the greatest want is the old, old want — to *know*.'"

"And so it will be — to-morrow," returned Vyvyan bitterly, "which reminds me that I have an early start before me, and should be wise to turn in early. If you will allow me, I will say good-night now."

Mrs. Raisins sat with her Bible open on the table before her in the workroom. She had had her supper, had put away her needle and thimble, and now was adjusting her reading-spectacles on her nose, when an unaccustomed step approached the door and entered the room.

"Mr. Vyvyan, sir!" she said, rising suddenly, with a courtesy.

"I am leaving very early to-morrow morning," he explained. "And I thought I might come and say good-by to your little girl now, without waking her. May I take this lamp?"

Silently Mrs. Raisins placed it in his hand.

Something there was about him which kept her in this room whilst he went into that. He set the lamp down in a shady corner, and then at Angela's bedside stooped and kissed her. Bending over her still, he whispered words that he had not shaped for years — words that were the echo of the "faint music which might tune one's life into a perfect harmony" — that were tinged with the pale glow from a dawn, without which all his philanthropy and all his culture would be very dark indeed — the words, "God bless you, darling!"

She stirred, and her eyes opened dreamily, then closed again with a smile and a deep breath, as she relapsed into undisturbed sleep.

"She will be none the wiser to-morrow," he mused, as he returned the lamp to Mrs. Raisins, and went away. "And when I am gone she will have her animals, and her hospital."

Angela stood in the window of the blue room the next morning, and the last button of her pinafore was fastened. Mrs. Raisins,

as she busied herself about the room, glanced at her anxiously from time to time.

"Miss Angela," she said at last, "the breakfast bell has rung, dearie! And Mr. Merton has gone down-stairs, and the hot things have just gone up."

"I know" — and there was the slightest perceptible stamp — "but I don't want any breakfast."

Silence for a few moments; then it was broken by Mrs. Raisins.

"There's such a lovely bowl of roses on the breakfast table this morning, Miss Angela."

No answer.

"You might put some of them in a genteel little box and send them by post to Mr. Vyvyan. He'd be glad of them in his dusty London lodgings."

Vyvyan's chambers would scarcely have recognized themselves so described.

"Mr. Vyvyan doesn't deserve them. He was very unkind to go away without telling me!"

A break in the little voice, and a heave of the shoulders. The breakfast-bell rang again.

"Miss Angela dear! Your poor Uncle Roger always gets so faint if he doesn't get his breakfast."

That appeal to her compassion moved the little maiden, and she went down-stairs to her uncle. She had presided at his breakfast-table ever since she was five years old. As she kissed him and said good-morning, the flushed face and painfully-achieved self-control told him more than any words could have said. There he sat at the opposite end of the table, drinking his tea and eating his toast, abashed, dumbfounded, heart-stricken, with a dim consciousness that his system of bringing up might perhaps fail after all. He was quite glad that the silver urn screened him from the gentle rebuke he imagined in the swimming dark eyes. At last he could bear the painful silence no longer.

"My darling, would you like those three little boys from the Vicarage to come and spend the day with you?"

"No, thank you, Uncle Roger," came in a low tone, and with a tremendous effort to keep back the tears.

"Mr. Vyvyan thought them very nice little boys, dear. They would teach you some new games."

"No, thank you; they would break my hospital, and catch my butterfly, and hurt my animals. Boys are rough and cruel, Mrs. Raisins says. But Mr. Vyvyan is my friend; and oh! Uncle Roger, *why* did he go away?"

Sobs now, as she flung herself into the outspread arms, and laid her head on the kind old heart.

"And why didn't you let me know some little children before?" — sob — "*then* I should have cared for them; but I don't now — p'raps not — 'cos only Mr. Vyvyan understands my hospital."

"My dear! my dear!" he murmured, now patting her gently, now stroking her hair, "where is my patient little girl? Where is my calm little Angela? Fortitude! Fortitude! We must be strong, we must be calm, little Angela!"

"But we must love our friends, too, mustn't we?" And she pulled his handkerchief out of his pocket, and wiped her eyes with it.

His answer was a sigh, as the old problem rose up at this little girl's touch: Love and Loss! If it could but be love without the loss! If it could only be calm resignation to the inevitable!

"Miss Angela," said Mrs. Raisins to her after breakfast, as she stood disconsolately in the window again, "don't you know that everything that happens is God's will?"

"No!" said Angela, turning round and staring at her with wonder in her dark eyes, still wet with tears, "I did *not* know it, Mrs. Raisins. And I wish you had told me before. I will go and feed my rabbits now."

CHAPTER V.

"Then He showed us a mansion unfinished,
With our name on the topmost stone;
And He said, 'It doth wait till your souls are full grown;
Ye reap not until ye have sown.'"

S. WILLIAMS.

TWO men — English tourists — seated one summer morning breakfasting in the balcony of the Hotel Schweizerhof at Neuhausen. A letter in round childish hand on pink paper is brought to the elder of the two. He lets his coffee chill, while he read over and over again the quaint little composition in these words: —

"DEAR MR. VYVYAN: —

"Uncle Roger told me your address. Will you please come back soon? I think rabbits and guinea-pigs are rather stupid — at least, they are not like you. My hospital has a worm

in it now — a bruised worm. The butterfly has gone. Please bring me home any hurt thing you find. Uncle Roger has made my spelling all right in this letter. I am your

" Little friend,

" ANGELA."

Several letters of the same description followed Vyvyan, or awaited him at various inns and hotels during his tour, and the younger man, his fellow-tourist, always noticed how, when any of these letters came to hand, Vyvyan used to look as if a sunbeam had touched him.

. . . . . .

An old man sat alone in his library, with an open letter in an unfamiliar hand before him.

" DEAR SIR " (ran the letter) : —

" My friend Vyvyan was laid up with a fever at Cologne; and although he has sufficiently recovered for me to bring him home, he is desperately low and weak, and nothing rouses him so much as to talk of your little girl.

Could you somehow manage to send her to London with her nurse, and let her pay him a visit? Excuse an abrupt note — I am not good at letter-writing.

"Yours faithfully,

"MAURICE LANGFORD.

"Temple."

A small tap at the door, and Angela came into the room with a glorious "Maréchal Niel" rose in her hand, the only flower Mr. Merton cared to have on his table. He took it mechanically from her, and then kept her hand in his silently.

"Why are you so grave, Uncle Roger?" she asked.

"Because Mr. Vyvyan is ill, and his friend Mr. Langford has written to ask me to let you go up to London to see him."

She asked no questions; she only said quietly —

"Then I must go to him, please; because he said once, if he was ever ill, I must take care of him as I take care of my hospital things."

"But, my dear child, I cannot spare you, I could not let you go away."

"Then why did you have Mr. Vyvyan here, Uncle Roger? He calls me his little friend and so I *must* see him. I can smooth his pillow, and I can give him water to drink, and I can put my little cold hand on his forehead, I dare say it's hot, and he likes that, I know. Then p'raps he'll get better."

"My darling, I think you would be very much in his way."

Then she flushed indignantly, but all she said — and in the softest little voice — was —

"No, I *shouldn't*, Uncle Roger, 'cos we are friends."

He drew her on to his knee, and sat stroking her hair back silently.

"Mrs. Raisins would take me," she went on in a quaint little reassuring way. "I wouldn't trouble *you*, Uncle Roger, 'cos I know you don't like large towns, and London is big. I will come back, you know," she added, pressing his hand caressingly to her cheek.

"Why, yes, child," he said meditatively,

"you will come back — I know that; but what shall I do without you?"

"There is fortitude, you know, Uncle Roger," she replied gravely. It was paying him in his own coin with a vengeance, but it was said in all good faith; for how could she do better than gently remind him of his own unfailing panacea, which she dimly perceived to be something he esteemed highly, although she might never attain to it herself — perhaps not until the day when she should clearly understand those words on Mrs. Raisins' sampler. He held her face between his hands tenderly, as he said —

"Go and tell Mrs. Raisins that I want to speak to her, my darling. You shall go to-day, and she must consult with Williams about trains."

There was something electrifying in the very sound of that last word, and Angela sprang off his knee and vanished. He sat there, after she had left him, wrapt in thought.

"Vyvyan sick — Angela going away — only for a few hours certainly; but still — was it not an epitome of life? 'This hasteth to

be — that other to have been; of that which is now becoming, even now somewhat hath been extinguished. And wilt thou make thy treasure of any one of these things?'"

Mrs. Raisins was ironing a black silk apron for afternoon wear; she had been sponging it with beer, according to an old-fashioned receipt. The sponge was soaking in a little basin of beer; the hot iron hissed along over the odiferous silk; fastidious little Angela stood in the doorway, with both hands over her nose, as she cried out —

"Oh! what a horrid smell of beer! Indeed, you must leave it all, now, please, Mrs. Raisins, because Mr. Vyvyan is ill, and I am going to see him, and you are to go with me; Uncle Roger says so, and he wants to tell you all about it in the library. And *please* do make haste and ask Williams what train is best. And will you ask Mary to give me a pat of fresh butter, and will you give me a pot of jam — and — what else was it Red Riding Hood took to her grandmother? It will go in my little basket."

When Mrs. Raisins had fully grasped the situation, and had obtained corroborative evidence from Mr. Merton, she arrived at two conclusions: firstly, that Mr. Merton was daft, and not fit for anything but books; secondly, that it would be a blessed change for her little mistress. Silk apron, sponge, hot iron, were all put away.

"But you are not coming home the same day, my dearie," she said to Angela. "I told your Uncle Roger that a cousin of mine, Mrs. Purser, retired from the grocery line, a widow for ten years, and never likely to marry again, lets lodgings close by the Temple, and I know she has rooms to spare — and *there* you and I shall bide for the night. Why, you'd be shaken into twenty pieces if you was to come back to-day! Mr. Merton had better be a baby or a mummy at *oncet*. Now I'm going to pack your portmantle, my dear."

"And please put in my favorite books," urged Angela, "for me to read to Mr. Vyvyan. 'The Cuckoo Clock' and 'Line upon

Line'—p'raps he'd like to hear about the plagues of Egypt as much as I do when I have a cold and can't get out. And now I'll go and say good-by to the animals, and Lance, and my hospital, and Uncle Roger."

Into the library and into his reverie stepped dainty little Angela equipped for London.

"Please, will you take care of my hospital till I come back, Uncle Roger?" she said, laying a hand on his as she stood at his knee. "There is a snail with a broken shell in it — I'm not quite sure that it's alive, but don't bury it when I'm away. And there's a caterpillar, too, that's very weak; I think p'raps a bird half swallowed it, and put it out again because it didn't like the taste. Speak cheerfully to them, please. Good-by, Uncle Roger, I'm going now."

They had never been separated before, and the old man felt strangely, shudderingly, the truth of those words, "In every parting there is a shadow of death," as he kissed her again and again. He had speculated over the necessary pain to which we are born,

over the courage and calmness with which we must face both; but he had fondly thought that all practical experience of such disturbing elements in life was over for him long ago. And here it was all once more, in this good-by for a day with a little child.

"Good-by, dear Uncle Roger," she said again, laying her cheek against his caressingly. "Lance will sit with you when I am gone."

"But you are coming back, my child? you are coming back?" said the old man implor-ingly.

"Why, yes! of course I am coming back!" she said, opening her eyes wonderingly.

Mrs. Raisins was heard to cough drily outside, and Williams appeared, saying —

"It is time, sir."

And Angela was gone.

"Coming back." Yes, even he was forced to solace himself with those two little words, before which all his philosophy fell away into the back-ground — Angela was coming back.

The half-closed door was slowly pushed

open, as the sound of carriage wheels died away down the drive, and Lance shambled in shyly, with a half-reluctant wag of his tail. He seated himself beside Mr. Merton's arm-chair, with his nose on his master's knee, and his appealing eyes raised to the face above him. They both missed that little girl sorely. But the dog had the greater fortitude, for the man laid his hand upon the dumb brute's head and wept.

Vyvyan's chambers were turned into a hospital for the nonce. Not so very many days back he had been at Death's door, as the saying is; but Death had closed it fast against him, obliging him to turn the corner sharply; and from this vantage-point, it was a little difficult to retrace his steps along the road out of the valley of shadows into the sunshine of life's level plains once more. His friend Maurice Langford was still with him; his four months' course of study as army medical student at Netley College had terminated before his tour on the Continent with

Vyvyan, and he was now due at Aldershot for two months of riding-school and drill. Vyvyan was many years his senior, but difference in age was no bar, in their case, to a most perfect sympathy between them. These sympathies and friendships are too subtile for analysis, and spring up constantly where there is an utter dissimilarity of character. Vyvyan had met Maurice Langford at Oxford one commemoration week, four years ago, in the rooms of a mutual acquaintance; and when the said Maurice Langford — light-hearted and warm-hearted, clear-headed and strong-headed, thoroughbred to the back-bone — came up to London, for his medical course at St. George's Hospital, Vyvyan looked him up, and grappled him to his side with hooks of steel.

Now, at the present moment in our story, the senior friend is dozing in bed, and the junior is napping in an arm-chair in the adjoining room.

A gentle tap at the door brings Langford to his feet as if it were a gun.

Opening the door, there advanced — before

"I HAVE COME TO SEE MR. VYVYAN."
Page 102.

he could prevent them, if he had so wished it — a most dainty-looking little child, and an urbane, black-satin-clad elderly dame. The latter made a profound obeisance and was preparing an address, but the child — pointing with her hand to the door of communication that stood ajar between the two rooms — said —

"I have come to see Mr. Vyvyan. Angela Mohun, I am. You said he was ill. May I go in and see him now?"

Mrs. Raisins here put in her clause explanatory. Langford was seized by an irresistible desire to laugh, but something about Angela stopped him.

"Mr. Vyvyan is better," he said, "and I am sure it will do him good to see you, if you can be quiet."

Angela immediately sat down on the floor, and took off her boots, greatly to Langford's amusement again; then she rose on her stocking-feet, and picking up her basket, said, with an air of considerable dignity and importance —

"I have brought some butter — and some jam — and some little cakes. May he have them?"

Once more a repressed smile, as Langford dropped on one knee before her, and said that he must — if she would permit — peep in and see the contents of such a fairy basket. Here a slight movement was heard in the next room, and Angela — waiting no longer for Mr. Langford's guidance — went in on tiptoe.

Then Langford was a witness to the marvel of "the little great, the infinite small thing that rules some hours," in our lives.

He saw the sick man who had tossed about for days, restless and feverish, lying perfectly tranquil under the touch of a child's hand. Angela sat at the bedhead, and having drawn off her black silk glove, placed her small hand on his forehead from time to time, with the grave question, "Is that nice?"

Mrs. Raisins had gone to look up the widowed cousin. And Maurice Langford, with something akin to boyish shyness, thought he would not intrude upon such a friendship as

evidently existed between this little girl and the matured man, and so he betook himself to some etching in the adjoining room. But he could not help overhearing scraps of a dialogue from time to time — words that were funny enough, sometimes, to the uninitiated.

"My frog with very weak hoppers ate the little beetle that had lost some legs," said Angela once, "so I couldn't keep him any more — I turned him out."

"Ah! it's lucky that Langford won't have to contend with that sort of thing at Netley," was the response.

"What's Netley?"

"The hospital for soldiers, where he will be doctor some day."

"I *should* like to see that!"

"So you shall some day; I'll take you."

"I wish my sick things could smile at me as you do! It would be so nice. If my worm could only have smiled when I picked it up the other day, and put it on a soft bed of grass in my little hospital!"

Here Vyvyan laughed so uncontrollably, that

Langford came in to mount guard. Angela turned her face towards him, and said, in the same subdued tone which she had adopted ever since she entered the chambers —

"Will you let me come and see your hospital one day?"

"Yes; perhaps Vyvyan will bring you to see me there," he replied, "when I am amongst the sick and wounded. You will come and nurse me then, won't you?"

"I mean to be a hospital nurse," she said composedly, with a sort of "don't-attempt-a-joke" manner.

"And why do you mean to be a hospital nurse?" he asked, amused, as he seated himself on the side of the table, with his hands in his pockets, looking at her.

"Because I *do* pity things that are hurt," she murmured.

"But then every one doesn't get hurt," argued Langford; "and what will those who are well do, if you go away from them all, to be a hospital nurse?"

She raised her eyes to his face, as she said simply —

"I have only Uncle Roger, and Mrs. Raisins, and Mr. Vyvyan — the rest are animals. And now I think I will read to Mr. Vyvyan, and so you mustn't talk any more, please."

Langford still sat there, fascinated by the "funniest little kid" he had ever met, as she read the old nursery stories that he had heard once upon a time before; and he found it difficult to keep grave when the little voice stopped, and the small hand closed the book suddenly with these words —

"The next chapter is too exciting, 'cos you *think* Pharaoh is just going to let them go, and he *doesn't*. Mrs. Raisins never reads me exciting things when I'm ill. And I'm tired, too," she added, yawning.

"*Are* you tired, little one?" said the younger man, bending over her, and taking her gently in his arms, he sat down in a big arm-chair with her on his knee, removed her hat, and drew the drowsy head down on his shoulder, where she fell asleep in a few moments.

There Mrs. Raisins found her when she called for her, and Langford would not have her disturbed, but carried her in his arms to the cousin's lodgings, which were comfortable and cosy, if gloomy and smoky.

"Bring her over to see Mr. Vyvyan again to-morrow," said Langford, with an air of authority, to Mrs. Raisins before leaving the room.

"I must go back to Uncle Roger to-morrow," said Angela, rubbing her sleepy eyes as she sat down to tea, "'cos he's all alone, and Mr. Vyvyan says he is better. I like Mr. Langford. I s'pose other little girls have other little girls for friends; but most little girls are not so kind as Mr. Langford, and not so good as Mr. Vyvyan — are they Mrs. Raisins? Do you think so, Mrs. Purser?"

Mrs. Purser, plump and practical, replied —

"Well! you see there's little girls and little girls, Miss Mohun, my dear — and there's men and there's men; and we must take the world as we find it."

"I find it very happy if Mr. Vyvyan gets

well and my sick things don't kill one another. And I like your hot buttered toast, so much, Mrs. Purser."

Mrs. Raisins and Mrs. Purser exchanged a significant glance, implying what a strangely old-fashioned little mortal they had to deal with.

CHAPTER VI.

" Stars are of mighty use: the night
Is dark and long,
The road foul; and where one goes right,
Six may go wrong.
One twinkling ray
Shot o'er some cloud
May clear much way
And guide a crowd."

H. VAUGHAN.

THE next day was one to be remembered in Angela's child-life. Mr. Vyvyan told her she was to go sight-seeing with Maurice Langford, and therefore could not go home until to-morrow.

" But Uncle Roger! "

" Uncle Roger must accept the inevitable," was the reply; " and Mr. Langford has written to tell him so."

" What *is* that? " asks Angela.

" A large and bitter pill which won't always

go down at one gulp," explained the young army-medical.

Angela looked at him gravely, as if she were not quite sure that he was not laughing at her, and then asked for a pen and paper.

"A nice quill pen, please — for I must send Uncle Roger a letter too."

No quill pen was forthcoming, but Angela thought Mr. Langford's gold pen might do better.

It was as good as a tonic for the invalid to watch the epistolary performance through the door that stood open between the two rooms. He could see Langford standing up against the mantel-piece, smoking a cigarette, with a smile of half-amusement, half-interest, as he watched the expressive little face, changing with the changing thoughts that ran from pen to paper.

"May I read it?" asked Langford gently, whilst she pressed the blotting-paper long and carefully on the last page, with both hands.

"Yes! *do* read it!" she replied earnestly, "and read it as if it was a book, so that Mr. Vyvyan can hear."

Thus challenged, Langford read in sonorous tones —

"DARLING UNCLE ROGER: —

"I will come home to you to-morrow. Mr. Vyvyan wants me to see London to-day with Mr. Langford, who is not a boy and not a man." . . .

"Can you hear, Vyvyan?" broke in the reader.

"Yes," came from the next room.

"Sounds like something of the ape-species — the missing link."

. . . "And he has a horspital, and he is going to tell me all about it. There are no sick worms there, and no broken butterflies, but *shouldiers*. I like Mrs. Raisins' cousin *very* much — she has three curls on each cheek." . . .

Explosion from Langford.

"She has, *really*," protested Angela, reddening, unaccustomed to be laughed at; "and I can't think how she keeps them up, 'cos I can't see any comb."

"Gums them," suggested Langford.

"Go on, Langford!" from the next room.

He returned to the latter.

. . . "She wears a large brooch with a gentleman's face in it, and she says it is her diseased husband." . . .

Here Langford stopped, and with admirable composure and gravity said —

"A 'c' instead of an 's' there — soon altered." He read on —

. . . "And I am going to the Logical Gardens, and to Madame Tooso — and Mrs. Raisins says it is a very nice change for me. Why *don't* you like change, Uncle Roger? I like it so much.

"From your loving

"LITTLE ANGELA."

Some of the busy passengers in London streets that day turned to look at a certain young man who held by the hand "such an uncommon-looking child," as made it worth their while to turn and look again. As for Langford himself, he forgot to smoke, in his

care for her as they crossed the crowded thoroughfares, in his eager desire not to lose a word, as he bent down to catch each question and remark made by the little companion at his side. Nothing was lost upon her, but it was human beings who attracted her most.

"I don't care for these," she said, at Madame Tussaud's; "please don't stay here, unless you like them? They don't move or speak, you see. I like real people best."

Animals too, in spite of her love for them, were as nothing compared with the varied life of the crowded streets, from a Commissionaire to a shoeblack. It spoke volumes for Langford's good heart, or for the fascination of the moment, that he gave up a projected hansom from the Zoölogical Gardens, and victimized himself in an omnibus, for Angela's sake, "because," she said, "there are so many more people." But he was a little scandalized by her reproof to an elderly woman of gigantic proportions, who, pushing her way ruthlessly into the omnibus after her husband, so monopolized his share of space that he presented

a crushed appearance to Angela's steady gaze.

"That is *not* fair!" she cried out indignantly, the sense of justice exceeding all sense of propriety; "it is *not* fair to squeeze; Mrs. Raisins always says so! And he was there first!"

Luckily for Langford's feelings, the omnibus stopped at that supreme moment, and they disembarked; but as she put her hand into his, and trotted along the pavement once more at his side, he said—

"You must not always say what you think, little one."

"But Mrs. Raisins says I must!" said Angela, with wide-open eyes.

"Not in an omnibus."

"Then I *don't* want to ride in one again, please, *ever*"—which was a great relief to the feelings of her guide.

When the faithful Mrs. Raisins, who had floated in and out of those chambers once or twice that day at Vyvyan's request, came in the evening to fetch her young charge, it was a strange picture that met her eyes.

Vyvyan sat in an arm-chair by the open window, where the summer evening dusk peeped in now. On the arm of his chair sat Angela, stroking his hair gently back from

his forehead, as if she were mesmerizing him. Standing in the window, whittling something with his knife out of a piece of wood, was Langford. Down below in the court all was gray shadow and stillness. Outside in the city thoroughfare went the rattle and roar and tramp of a ceaseless traffic — the rush of count-

less interests and hopes, ambitions, loves, hates, despairs.

Angela turned her head when Mrs. Raisins tapped at the door, and greeted her with, "You must please wait till Mr. Langford has finished my ambulance wagon."

"My dear, it is getting late, and we start early to-morrow, and Mr. Vyvyan has been very kind to you to-day, but he must be tired now."

Upon this reminder, Angela slipped down at once, and going up to Langford, said —

"And you have been very kind too! Please may I have that now?"

"Don't be in such a hurry," he replied; "the wheels are not on yet."

"Then I must have it without the wheels," she said, "'cos my friend is tired."

Langford yielded with a comic despair.

"Thank you, *very* much," she said graciously, like some stately little court dame.

"Don't go and put the bilious worm into it," he said; "it might get too much shaken without wheels."

"I don't care quite so much about my hos-

pital now," she said; "but some day" — there she stopped.

"Well?" he said, smiling down into the soft, deep eyes — "some day?"

"Some day will you show me Netley?"

"Some day I will," he made answer; whereupon she stood on tiptoe, and he stooped, and they kissed one another. Then she went back to Vyvyan, who had been dreamily watching her, and throwing her arms round his neck, said —

"I don't like going away! I do love Uncle Roger and my animals; but I wish you and Mr. Langford were coming too!"

"Miss Angela, dear! it's time to be going," said Mrs. Raisins, respectfully, from a shadowy corner where she sat secluded.

"Whenever the time comes it hurts, doesn't it?" murmured Vyvyan to his little friend.

Angela's eyes looked wistful, and she was silent for a minute. Mrs. Raisins had been seized with a spasmodic sneezing-fit, and was now standing outside the door, for it seemed to her indecorous to continue to sneeze in Mr. Vyvyan's chambers.

"Do you know what Mrs. Raisins says?" spoke Angela at length. "*She* says, that everything that comes is God's will."

"'*In la sua Voluntade e nostra Pace*,'" muttered Vyvyan. "Does Mrs. Raisins read her 'Dante'?"

"No, she never calls it that," said Angela solemnly, shaking her head. "She says it is in the Bible; and *everywhere*," she added with emphasis.

"Come, Miss Angela, my dearie!" once more called Mrs. Raisins, venturing her head inside the door, as the sneezing had abated. Then the two men were left alone.

"I don't profess to be fond of children," observed Langford, after a silence, which had lasted unbroken for many moments after Angela had gone, "but *this* one is — well! She is not like most nursery children."

"She has no nursery, there's the pity of it," returned Vyvyan; "but if she had, she might not be so like her name."

CHAPTER VII.

"Ah! Voilà les âmes qu'il fallait à la mienne!"
ROUSSEAU.

DAYS of high wind and scudding cloud were hastening the swallows in their final preparations for departure to the sunny south. The summer had gone. Angela, like all the rest of us, was looking about her for compensation. She had lost her saunters on the terrace with her uncle — shady shrubberies and alleys were now too damp for sunset rendezvous with goodly bands of knights and ladies; but she had, instead, the twilight hour in the library which she loved, when firelight deepened the shadows on the dark oak wainscot, and heightened the red of the curtains, and played on Mr. Merton's delicate features as he told her story upon story, or put questions to her that would have made Mrs. Peveril's hair stand on end, and would

have stirred Vyvyan to interpose with a suggestion of hide-and-seek in the passages.

Angela's hospital had been removed at the change of season to a large tool-house, where her rabbits and other live things were also stowed away; but they were not what they had once been to her.

"Hospitals of people must be such nice places," she said to her uncle one evening.

"Very sad places, dear; full of suffering," he answered.

"Yes; but full of people who want taking care of, and bandaging. Mr. Langford showed me how to bandage a broken leg — and an arm — and oh! so many things he told me!"

And Mrs. Raisins, when she came with her bedtime tap at the library door, would often find the old man's books laid aside whilst he patiently submitted to varied forms of bandaging from Angela's deft little fingers, as she bound his silk handkerchief round imaginary sprains and broken bones.

"My rabbits are no good, they might as well have no limbs — they are all so fluffy!" she

would say to Mrs. Raisins, as they climbed the staircase together, "and Lance never will keep a bandage on and Uncle Roger doesn't really like it, 'cos he has to put his books away, and sometimes he sighs all the while;" little Angela sighed too, there. "It seems to me that I shall never be able to help anybody, Mrs. Raisins, but you and Uncle Roger and the servants and my animals, and *that's* a very small world, isn't it?"

Mrs. Raisins hugged her and said —

"Bless your dear heart!" which was meant to be consolatory, but was scarcely satisfying.

It came to pass one afternoon that Angela went with Mrs. Raisins to call at the mill, and her friend the miller was not so entertaining as usual, for he and Mrs. Raisins fell to discussing parish events in a low and confidential tone. So Angela wandered off a little way along the lane, until she reached the gate of the Vicarage, and from the Vicarage garden proceeded screams — not of wrath, but of pain. Without a moment's hesitation, Angela ran through the gate straight in the direction whence the cries

came. On the garden path stood two of those fat, jolly boys in sailor suits; on the gravel between them rolled the third fat, jolly boy in a sailor suit.

"What *is* the matter?" asked the little angel of mercy, bending over him.

"A bee has just stung him," began the two others vociferously. "It was in his hat half-asleep — and it crawled out and stung his forehead. Pa and ma and nurse are all out, and cook is busy, and the other servants are at tea — and we can't make him move — and we don't know what to do."

Angela stood erect, and spoke like an oracle.

"When I was stung once, Mrs. Raisins put some wet soda on it — can't you get some? I can do him good with that, and I can bandage it, if he will come indoors."

Self-confidence of the simplest kind was stirring that little woman's heart; she saw only two things before her: a creature in pain, and her own power to cure; her great heart of pity was the motive-power. Those two stolid, fair-

haired boys stared; then the stare melted into a smile; finally, the faces beamed like two round moons, as they said —

"Then you will come into our nursery, and play with us at last?"

"No, I can't play this afternoon, 'cos I am a hospital nurse, and Mr. Vyvyan says" —

The roaring boy, who had been silent since Angela appeared, now sat up, and he also stared hard, as he exclaimed —

"Ma knows Mr. Vyvyan!" — then a fresh throb of pain made his hand go up to his forehead once more, and brought down Angela's little ministering hand to his other one, as she said soothingly —

"Boy! I wish you would come with me! Show me your nursery, and I will do you good."

The two boys went off for the soda, and these other two trotted along over the daisies, through the late roses, among the dead leaves, in at the garden door, and up the staircase where the carpet was worn white by the feet of six boys, three being now at school. So An-

gela stepped into the nursery that was hung with pictures, littered with toys, full of charm for the little solitary girl.

"There!" she said, coaxingly, leading him gently along as he pointed the way. "I don't see a sofa, but s'pose you sit in this rocking-chair — and I'll sit beside you — and here's my hank'chief for your eyes."

"That *beastly* bee!" he sobbed, as he violently rubbed each eye.

"Bees are dear, good things, and I love them," returned Angela.

"You wouldn't if they stung you," he blubbered.

"Yes, I should," she replied, with some warmth; "'cos Uncle Roger says everything must suffer, and Mrs. Raisins says we must love everything."

"Not if it hurts you!" — sob.

"Yes, we *must*," said the little nurse authoritatively; but at this crisis entered the two other sailor suits with a saucer of soda and some water. Angela, with the over-zeal of a novice, made a paste large enough for Jasper's entire

forehead, pressing it on with her gentle little hands, and then came the crowning glory. The silk handkerchief round her throat was untied, folded, as she knew how, bound round his head, and secured by a pin. That it was not in the least necessary was not to be thought of, for Angela pronounced it indispensable, and all these three boys already believed in Angela. There followed a golden half-hour — a half-hour of heartburnings and revelations. Boyish possessions, from butterfly-cases down to carpentering tools, were exhibited. She shuddered at the impaled butterflies, and discomfited her hosts by saying softly —

"I s'pose boys must always be cruel."

To them she was a wonderful and rare apparition on their common-place nursery-ground, known by sight to one another all their lives, but never, until now, brought face to face. They really did not know how to do her sufficient honor; they felt so shy and awkward and clumsy, with this graceful little self-possessed person, who always spoke softly, and would sit close beside Jasper as he lay quite

still in the rocking-chair, staring, but obedient, wondering why he might not move, as he felt no pain. But Angela's finger was held up warningly whenever the other two boys raised

their voices, until Jasper began at last to fancy that he must indeed be in a high state of fever.

She was telling them one of her stories, a marvellous piece of mosaic-work, composed partly from the "Arabian Nights," partly from the "Arthurian Legends," and partly from "Hans Andersen's Tales," and they were all

enthralled, when, into the middle of it came their mother. She stared, almost as much as her boys had done, in astonishment, at the unexpected visitor.

"It is Angela Mohun, mother," they said. "She came in to do good to Jasper, because a bee stung him."

"I am a hospital nurse this afternoon," said Angela, as she slipped off her chair and held out her hand. "I am going to be one when I am grown up. Mr. Vyvyan was ill the other day, and I went to him — and Mr. Langford was there, and showed me how he had bandaged the sick soldiers. I don't want to take my handkerchief away with me — he can keep it. But I must go now, because Uncle Roger will be wanting me, and perhaps Mrs. Raisins is looking for me. If they ever hurt themselves again, may I come in like this? I am not noisy, and I never break anything."

Then Mrs. Peveril knelt down, and took her in her arms, and smothered her with kisses. And the boys stood by the door like a guard of honor, the wounded one with his bandage

— oh, Angela! — across his nose and his eye peeping over it. And Mrs. Raisins came in weeping, and went away with her charge rejoicing.

"I like a nursery *exceedingly* EXCEEDINGLY, Uncle Roger," said Angela, as she told him all about it, sitting at his feet by the fireside. "And had *I* a mother once who kissed me like *that*, as Mrs. Peveril kissed me? She smelt of violets, and felt so soft!"

"Yes, darling — once."

"Was it very long ago?"

"No, not so very long, my child — five, six, seven years ago, almost."

Then followed a long silence; not a sound broke it, except a coal falling in the grate as the fire glowed on steadily, and Angela, as steadily, gazed into its magical depths. At last the fire grew dim and indistinct, and there was a little quaver in the voice that said —

"I wish Mr. Vyvyan had a nursery like that!"

"Why do you wish that, Angela!" asked the old man, laying his hand gently on her head.

"I don't know why! 'cos he's good to little children, I s'pose — and 'cos he's all alone — and I wish he had a mother!"

"You don't wish it for yourself?"

"I don't know — I don't know!" She was

sobbing now, with her arms on his knees and her face hidden on them. "I wish everybody knew everybody! and I wish nobody hurt nothing! and that friends all lived together and never said good-by!" It was the essence of that home, with its warm, cheery nursery, and its cuddling mother-love, and its little children, that had entered into the very soul of the little hospital nurse.

Mr. Merton, distressed beyond measure, did his best to soothe her, as only a man can do, whose eyes are gradually opening to the possibility of having been wilfully blind, the possibility of having gone astray in the practical application of a narrowly-conceived theory.

What were all the legends and fairy-tales? What were all the pet animals? What were all the garden-hospitals? Nay! in that moment of childish despair, what was even Uncle Roger himself, set against a nursery of living children?

END OF PART I.

PART II.

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

. . . "It is a flaw
In happiness, to see beyond our bourn."

KEATS.

IF no one else will do it, Mrs. Raisins, *I* will. *Afraid!* I am only afraid of one thing, that the most charming of girls may grow soured by being held out of her natural rights. Shut up here like a nun! A girl who is above the average in every way! By which I mean, Mrs. Raisins, that no one I have ever known is fit to hold a candle to her for sweetness of nature, sweetness of face, sweetness of speech. And she is doomed to waste all this on Mohun Court! She comes to us at the Vicarage, you say? Yes, poor dear child, and has done so for years, ever since that day

when she strayed in, like a ray of light among my wild boys. But who else does she see? What else does she see? Mr. Vyvyan? — once a year. So now, when he writes to me and asks me to take Miss Angela with me to Southampton, that we may go and spend a day with him at Netley, where he happens to be staying now, I am determined it shall be done. What can be more reasonable than that after eighteen years of solitary confinement, she should at last be liberated? Has she ever in her life gone beyond this village?"

The speaker was Mrs. Peveril, in full force, to Mrs. Raisins, who stood deferentially before her, not yet having had the chance of speaking a word.

"Yes, ma'am," she said now; "ten years ago Miss Angela went up to London with me by her own desire when Mr. Vyvyan was ill; we stayed at my cousin's for two days, — she was retired from the grocery business, and let lodgings near the Temple, where Mr. Vyvyan was living, — and it was then Miss Angela told me, with her little face so flushed and her

blessed eyes so bright, that Mr. Langford — that was Mr. Vyvyan's friend — had promised to show her his hospital one day " —

" Exactly so," broke in Mrs. Peveril; " and it is this very Mr. Langford who now holds a staff appointment at Netley, and wishes Mr. Vyvyan to take Miss Angela over. It is for this he has written to me, and I say, Is it to be tolerated that this dear child is to be shut up forever in this dreadful fashion? Is she never supposed to wish for more than she has, because she never murmurs? "

" Mr. Merton will not say 'No' to you ma'am, if Miss Angela wishes it," said Mrs. Raisins respectfully; " but you see she never tells him she wishes for more than she has. Everything in this beautiful drawing-room you see, ma'am, everything in Miss Angela's own suite of rooms upstairs, is for her pleasure — books, pictures, music, birds, comforts " —

" Yes, yes, I know! " interrupted Mrs. Peveril hastily; " gimcracks and fossils of every description; but *we* know, Mrs. Raisins, you and I, and Mr. Vyvyan, in fact, *everybody* ex-

cept Mr. Merton, that she is starving all the while!"

"They are coming now, ma'am — will you step out to them, or will you wait here?" and as she spoke, Mrs. Raisins threw back a French window that opened on to a terrace, and Mrs. Peveril, rising, saw the two figures coming slowly across the lawn together — the tall old man, now slightly bent about the shoulders, and the slender, graceful girl with the strangely unchanged face of ten years ago; then, it was old for her age; now, it is young; only, is it habitual to her, that restless movement of the eyebrows and that forced compression about the mouth, suggesting a painful effort at self-control, or even self-suppression? Just behind Angela walked Lance, old, sedate, and faithful, occasionally thrusting a soft damp nose into the hand that occasionally hung at her side.

"You talk of the great torture-wheel of the world, Uncle Roger," she was saying, "you tell me of 'the necessary sorrow and desolation' that must be, and which is felt all the more keenly by those who are most susceptible;

these, you say, are the highest natures of all. You have told me that the great necessity is *pity* — what your book calls 'a certain general permanent force of compassion.' You say that after all the reason why men and women suffer may be to call forth the good-will of other men and women towards them; that in our love one for another, 'in the meeting of Pain and Pity, there is, in spite of all seeming loss, a grand resting-point, a contact with the Eternal in the midst of all phenomena' (have I not learnt my lesson well?). You say all this; over and over again you have repeated it to me, but — you give me no chance of finding it out for myself among living men and women, so how can I ever know that it is true? *You* know it because you have lived in the world" —

"Nay, my child," he interrupted, "I learn it here every day, through your sweet pity and love for me."

That of which he had learnt the truth by receiving, *she* was burning to learn by giving.

"But you are only *one*, Uncle Roger," she cried, "and the world is so full! If there are

so many in the world who want love and pity, how can I be satisfied with reading and talking about it here with you?"

At this point, Mrs. Peveril stepped out of the window, and, passing down the terrace-steps, met them in the shadow of the cedar with an open letter in her hand, saying, after the exchange of preliminary greetings —

"Don't let me disturb you; but, Angela, my dear, would you kindly go and ask Mrs. Raisins if she can find me her receipt for parsnip-wine?" Then, turning to Mr. Merton, she added, in the tone that brooks no contradiction, which is assumed by some ladies of decided character, in their dealings with those whom they consider obstinate, "I have had a letter of importance which I must discuss with you at once."

Angela found Mrs. Raisins at tea, and the good woman's countenance was troubled as she stirred the contents of the Rockingham teapot. At Angela's request, on Mrs. Peveril's behalf, she rose and pored over a drawer in her old-fashioned, brass-handled escritoire; then, as she

put the lavender-scented receipt into Angela's hand, she looked full into her face with her loving old eyes, saying, still troubled, —

"Do you ever want to go away, Miss Angela, dear, to see foreign parts, perhaps, or London?"

Even Mrs. Raisins, who knew all Angela's phases of mood and expression, was startled by the flash like lightning called forth by that simple question; it flashed out of her eyes and all over her face; it flashed through the tone of her voice with the force of an electric thrill — that passionate yearning for a fuller life — that demand for the full satisfaction of her nature!

"Do I ever want to go away!" she echoed, leaning on the tea-table with both palms, and looking across it to a bright patch of afternoon sunlight on the wall, where hung the old faded sampler; and it was something higher, something diviner than mere human effort of self-control that came creeping over the girl's face, almost like a reflection of light from the glory now illumining those two words "exceeding

broad," as she murmured softly the next minute, —

"Don't ask me, dear; it doesn't do to think about it."

After a silence, during which Mrs. Raisins sat looking into her tea-cup for depths of wisdom which were not forthcoming, Angela added yet more softly, and still with her eyes on the old sampler, —

"It has always seemed to me so strange that Uncle Roger has never — not even when I was a child — spoken to me of things that you have always spoken to me about."

"What things, my dearie?"

"About One who suffered more than we can ever know, and whose one intention was to comfort and to save."

. . . . . .

"She shall herself bring you her answer," were Mr. Merton's parting words to Mrs. Peveril. As soon as he was alone he went indoors, and met Angela crossing the hall with the receipt in her hand. He laid a detaining hand on her arm, and said, —

"You can take that to Mrs. Peveril presently; she is expecting to have an answer from you shortly about a matter upon which I have a few words to say to you."

He led her into the library, where the afternoon sunlight streamed into the shadowy oak-corners, gilding the leather-bound books, flooding the crimson carpet; and when he had seated himself in his arm-chair, she stood at his knee, as she used to stand in her days of lessonhood, whilst he began —

"Do you ever want to go away from here, Angela?"

Why were they all bent upon asking her that question to-day? giving utterance, as it were, to the craving that grew with her growth, and seemed to be asserting itself within her, like a lawful voice to be obeyed — a yearning, not so much to see the world, as to be a-touch with other hearts and souls and characters. A bright flush ran up to her very brow as she murmured in reply —

"Yes, I do."

"Can you tell me why?"

The old man spoke gently, as he always did, but the young girl answered with unusual impatience —

"Oh! I am tired of 'why,' Uncle Roger!" And as she spoke, she moved away from him, and stood in the deep embrasure of the window. "I don't know why! I only know that it is not right — it is not just of you, to make me live the life I lead!'

"In fact, you are longing for change, my child, — change which haunted my life at one time — and the life of some I loved — so relentlessly that I determined to shield you from all the agony it brought me. Have I failed, Angela?"

"Yes, I think you have," she said slowly, still looking out over the lawn, where the dark cedar shadow swept like some great wave backwards and forwards, "because all that we want in life is love, and you shut me out of so much. I should not love you less if I had all that more."

Then she came close up to him again, and sitting on his knee, went on —

"You meant to save me from the pain of loss and disappointment, I know; but are there not some things one would ten times rather lose or be disappointed in than never have known them? Most of all, those things God has given us to love and to pity — our fellow-creatures?"

"But when you are older, my child," he replied, leaning back in his chair and look-

ing into the eyes whose glance — ardent, flashing, tender — was piercing like a two-edged sword into his very soul, "when you are older, Angela, you will begin to see dimly what I have seen clearly for many years. You will see that peace — calm serenity — is the one thing needful. The man or woman who leads a virtuous life out of the world alone can find this."

"But Mr. Vyvyan says it is far grander to live like that in what he calls 'the hurly-burly.'"

"When did Vyvyan say that? he has not been here for months, and he never writes now."

"We have often spoken of it," she said, with a quick, sensitive flush, as from a sudden pain at her uncle's last words. "I thought it must be so, and I asked him one day if all the fine thoughts, all the sympathy, all the love would be of any good in a solitary life; and he said that it would never come to perfection unless it mixed with other lives. He speaks some-

times of losing one's self in a higher consciousness. I think he must mean the same as Mrs. Raisins and the Vicar mean when they speak of giving up one's self for the sake of others; and Sir Galahad meant the same, I think, when he lost himself that he might find himself. Mr. Vyvyan read the whole of the 'Passing of Arthur' to me the last time he was here — and I understand it now. But he says always that I read too much and think too much, because, you see, I am only eighteen. But, Uncle Roger, what else will there be for me to do ever, if I never go farther than Mohun Court?"

She turned her head away from him, and "any one but a mummy," Mrs. Raisins would have said, might have guessed that the ardor and tenderness which had been in her eyes had now resolved themselves into tears. Without a word in reply to her despairing little question, Mr. Merton here put Vyvyan's letter to Mrs. Peveril into her hand and told her to read it; and as he

noted the glow and the sparkle and the quickening breath, with the eager uplook into his face awaiting his verdict when she had finished reading the note, he laid his hand upon her hands, just saying, "You would like to go then, Angela?"

Half-an-hour later she was stepping along the carriage-drive from the Vicarage gate. Mrs. Peveril was snipping away at dead geraniums in garden-gloves, and a useful but becoming garden hat tilted over her eyes. It was a feature of Mrs. Peveril's economy to combine the useful and the ornamental. Mr. Peveril sat smoking in a garden-chair. It was a feature in his economy never to exert himself unless it was absolutely necessary. The three sailor suits have developed into white flannels, and are admirable specimens of the *genus* public-school boy and of sons brought up by an energetic and practical mother. Three elder brothers are out in the world already — one with his regiment in India; another farming in Manitoba; and the eldest of all growing oranges in Florida. If

the six sons have suffered vicariously at their mother's hands for the *dolce far niente* of their father, they will be none the worse men for that.

The schoolboys are not at home now; would they not have been round Angela at the first click of the gate? To say they worship the very ground she treads on is scarcely enough, for they almost think the ground not worthy of her tread. Jasper, though not sentimental, has a certain silk handkerchief, once a bandage, carefully put away in a drawer, together with some hairs from a favorite dead pony's tail.

Down went the garden scissors, out stretched two expansive arms, as Angela advanced.

"My dear child! he will let you come?"

"Yes."

"*Yes!* is that all?" said Mrs. Peveril, smilingly putting one finger under the little round chin and gently raising the face all flushed with excitement. "Imagine what there is in store! But you have no idea, of course, poor child! how should you? A day at Netley means that Mr. Langford will give us a royal enter-

tainment, will show us all over the college and the hospital, to say nothing of the abbey — the dear delightful abbey. Then that view across Southampton water! And Mr. Langford is quite one of your heroes, my dear; he has seen so much active service — been twice wounded. And is now quite idolized by his pupils in the college, and by the sick and wounded in hospital."

"I saw him once when I was a very little girl," said Angela, looking back into an ever-memorable epoch in her life; "it was once when Mr. Vyvyan was ill, and Uncle Roger let me go up to London with Mrs. Raisins to see him. Mr. Langford was nursing him, and was very good to me."

"Yes, poor darling! And you have never been away from Mohun Court since!" said Mrs. Peveril wrathfully. "If you only knew all that Mr. Vyvyan and I say on that subject when he comes down here! By-the-by, why has he not been down this summer? it is months since he has been."

"I don't know why," replied Angela; "one might ask *why* so often every day of one's life.

Mrs. Raisins nods her dear old head, and says, 'My dear, there will be a grand answer for us all one of these days.'"

Mrs. Peveril eyed her lovingly and curiously, until, as the girl looked up from the circle she had sketched on the gravel with her sunshade, she started, and embracing her once more, said with a half-sigh, "It will be the 10 A.M. train on Thursday, my dear girl; and tell Mrs. Raisins to put in your new cream dress with the deep red ribbons, won't you, dear?"

CHAPTER II.

"In these delicate vessels is borne onward through the ages the treasure of human affections." — GEORGE ELIOT.

HOW had it fared with Vyvyan in these ten years? Much the same as with most men of his calibre, you expect, making allowance for the varied circumstances of each man's life. But what of the man himself?

Granted that circumstances do affect the tone and color of the days that make up life; but, there is a color that is given to circumstance — in those who are strong — by the character.

Color and tone of character were strong enough in Vyvyan — they always had been. He had faced the stern facts of life; he had not stood apart in the battle between good and evil, but had come down from the clear, calm heights of thought into the world of struggle

and gain and loss. Though he was what it is the custom to call "a prosperous man," he never for a moment ignored the poverty and distress and need of hundreds of other men and women. In fact, he was appealed to every day for help, and when he could, in very deed, *help*, he did, more often with his brains and clear judgment than with his purse. Society never tired of him. Individuals loved him, because, as has been mentioned, of his large-hearted tolerance towards all men and women — even towards the intolerant.

Ten years in the life of such a man must needs be marked by a series of brilliant successes, you imagine?

But then, success depends so largely on one's idea of success.

Chambers, in his "Etymological Dictionary," gives us the meaning of the word with all the charming triteness of dictionary phraseology: "*Success* — the prosperous termination of anything attempted."

Vyvyan, the successful man, had been yearning all his days after some promise, at least, of

a grand termination at last. Gradually, he had almost brought himself to think that it was folly to expect it; until ten years ago, a little child had led him out at a new door in life; and, ever since, through all these ten years, had she been leading him, unconsciously to himself at first, unconsciously to herself all the while, but none the less sure was the leading.

She rarely spoke of understanding, or. of knowing. Her aim was pity and help; where she could spend most love would be her idea of a prosperous termination to any attempt.

And *this* thought, if widened and deepened, may lead one into the very depths of theology, and out of them, up into the very heights of heaven.

. . . . . .

Seated at the open window of a charming sitting-room in Radley's Hotel were Mrs. Peveril and Angela. They had arrived at Southampton late that afternoon, and were now watching, with considerable amusement and interest, the ceaseless passenger traffic from the South-Western Railway Station across the road.

It seemed to Angela as if all the world were arriving at Southampton that night. If any of those travellers had raised their eyes to the hotel window, it is a question whether they would ever have looked down again. There are some faces we think we have known all our life, until we suddenly see them with entirely new surroundings, and then we are surprised by the sudden revelation of a soul-side we had never seen before. Mrs. Peveril was watching Angela's face, and thinking this thought, until she was startled into an exclamation, as she glanced down below for a moment —

"Here they come! Do you see them, Angela, love? — just under the lamp — what are they stopping for? No! Yes! it *is* they, coming across now! I thought they would call at once! I knew they would be in a hurry to arrange the Netley programme!"

Perhaps the people who lead a more varied and crowded life than our Angela do not remember with such a present vividness what happened years ago; but as Vyvyan and his friend were asking down below for Mrs. Peveril,

Angela was far away back in those chambers at the Temple, writing her little letter to Mr. Merton, under Langford's surveillance. And it was to Mr. Langford she turned instinctively, as the door opened to admit both; for it is

easier to greet a comparative stranger cordially than to welcome an old friend heartily who has not shown himself friendly. Langford returned her greeting with interest; and when she did turn from him to Vyvyan, he was not even looking at her — he was in the window with Mrs. Peveril, already engaged in conversation.

"What a world of change it is, Miss Mohun!" observed Langford, with a laugh, as they, too, sat together in another window; "it must be quite nine or ten years since you and I met in Vyvyan's chambers, when you came up to be a hospital nurse — do you remember? — and you read to us about the plagues of Egypt out of your little Sunday book. We have known a little about plagues in Egypt since then."

"I wonder you can remember anything about that time," said Angela, her face flushing like a creamy rose at dawn, "because you must have seen and done so much since then."

"A little," was the modest answer. "And you yourself?"

"I? I am at Mohun Court, and have been there always. I have never been away from it since that day, until now, so that it has not been a world of change to me."

"Do you never get a run up to London?" She shook her head.

"I sometimes wonder," she replied, "how those people can ever tire of life, — as I suppose some do, — who are free to follow the bent of their own impulse."

"It would be a queer world, and scarcely comfortable, if we all did that," was his reply.

Once more Angela was carried back in thought to Vyvyan's chambers, as she remembered how, even then, child as she was, she had felt hot at the idea that Mr. Langford was laughing at her.

"I mean," she resumed, "impulses for all that is good, and pure, and right; to be able to go out amongst other people and sometimes to be able to enjoy one's self, as I am doing now."

"Are you?" he said, with that boyish laugh of his. "Then I hope you will enjoy yourself still more to-morrow, for Vyvyan and I expect you and Mrs. Peveril to give up the whole day to us at Netley — if you think that will be obeying a good impulse."

"I am not going to *think* at all for these two days," she made answer. And he wondered if she often smiled as she did then; if so, he thought Mohun Court might be a paradise.

"And how about the hospital for sickly

worms and dyspeptic frogs?" he asked. "Has that merged into something larger?"

"There is a cottage hospital now, in our village; it was started by Mrs. Peveril."

"Has it supplanted the reptile-house in your affections?"

"I visit it every day, and I love it."

"Then you still have idea of being a hospital nurse! Miss Mohun, you are not really" — He stopped, for the steady glow that had burned in the eyes of the little girl Angela shone in them now.

"Is there anything higher in life for a woman to do?" she asked.

"I think so," he replied quietly.

"Let me wait until I have seen Netley," she pleaded.

"By all means. But you are not going to pledge yourself to a certain course of life then and there, are you?"

She did not answer; for the idea which the little child had conjured up, ten years ago, of Netley Hospital, at the time that she was saving broken butterflies and crippled caterpillars,

had grown with her growth; and now it was as if on this approaching visit to Netley her life would stand or fall.

"You see there is something else to be thought of in the world besides suffering," went on Langford.

"Uncle Roger always says that it is suffering which makes up the sum of human existence," urged Angela.

"Morbid old gentleman!" muttered Langford.

"And where there is so much pain," went on Angela, "there is also — or there ought to be — so much pity. To be just for those who are oppressed, to be able to give real pitying help to those who are in pain, is my ideal of life."

He looked thoughtful; then the merry light sparkled in his eyes again as he shrugged his shoulders and said —

"*Mais oui* — but still, I maintain that there is something more; there is dancing, there is travel, there is" —

"Langford! we must be going," came from the further window-recess; and Angela, as they

all rose, and the meeting dispersed, felt as if a wintry chill were upon them, for her friend Vyvyan merely took her hand in his, with the words, "Then we shall meet to-morrow. Mr. Merton well? and Lance?" Almost before she could answer, he had slipped his arm through Langford's, who seemed almost waiting for him to take it, and then the two friends passed out.

As soon as they were gone, Mrs. Peveril rang the bell sharply, and ordered coffee of the obliging foreign waiter, who was ready to do anything for them so long as they only would not attend to the injunction in the hotel-bill, "No fees for attendance." Then she turned to Angela, who stood in the window, looking out once more upon the busy traffic to and fro, watching through dimmed eyes the two who had just left them disappearing into the station.

An arm went round her, and a kind voice said —

"Dear child, I am going to put you on the sofa for a little while; we have had a tiring day

and to-morrow will be another. So! let me arrange this cushion. There! — now — why, Angela, love! what is it? Oh, my dear! I am *so* glad to see you can cry! I thought your Uncle Roger had perhaps taught you some stoical antidote. Never mind me, dear. Why, even my big boys cry sometimes, when they are alone with me, and they tell me what is the matter, and then they are better afterwards."

She was sitting in a low arm-chair beside the sofa, and as she spoke, she laid a motherly hand on Angela's arm.

Angela dashed away the annoying tears that would not be controlled at this touch of tenderness, and murmured, as she stretched out a hand to meet her friend's —

"It is nothing; it is only disappointment. Uncle Roger would call it weakness, and so it is — only — we are such friends, and to-day we might have been strangers."

Mrs. Peveril was silent, but she understood, and she said at last —

"I think there is no accounting for anything strange in Mr. Vyvyan, my dear. I have always

thought him, though charming, a little inconsistent. Then you must bear in mind that he is a man of the world, and that you are a dear little solitary woman; *he* is your one great friend — *you* are one of many. With that way he has of snapping his fingers at the world, and not caring a fig for what it says, he fascinates and attracts far more than if he were its slave. He is a man of marvellous capacity and capability. He will never be old, although he is now past middle age, because of his unfailing interest in life and of his unceasing desire to make it full and satisfying for others. There is not a cause advocated on the side of right but what his name is prominent to uphold it; not a word that is likely to spare the oppressed but what he will utter it. The articles that he writes in the "Star-gazer" are the salt of that paper, not because they slash the evil so much as because they make what is good stand out in a shining white light. To be such a man's friend is indeed 'a liberal education.' But my little Angela must not wonder if sometimes such a man is too much

absorbed in wider matters to be to her, on all occasions, what he is when he goes down for a few days' recreation to Mohun Court, where her companionship is just one of the many sweetnesses of the place, after the dust and turmoil of town."

Angela lay still and silent. Coffee came in; the obsequious waiter lighted three gas-burners, which were turned out by Mrs. Peveril as soon as he disappeared.

"The idea of desecrating this twilight by gas!" she exclaimed.

Angela raised herself on her elbow, and, lifting a face with a very moonlight smile on it, said, —

"But not all the worship of the world would make up to me for hurting a friend of ten years. I mean — that in Mr. Vyvyan's place this evening, I would have shown, in some way, that it was a gladness to me to meet my friend again. It would have hurt me dreadfully to have remembered, afterwards, how cold I had been."

"Angela, you are a little woman; he is a man of the world."

"But a man of the world has a soul," cried Angela passionately. "A man of the world is my friend. If other things — other interests — might spoil friendship, it would be making it such a very poor thing, such a hollow worthless thing. It would hurt himself."

Mrs. Peveril put back lovingly the hair that was shaken over the shining eyes, as she made answer —

"Little Angela, that sort of friendship is so rare. Some men know it — some women also; but we live in the world, and there are very few people who live in it, and at the same time can live above it. There is such a ceaseless press and strain; almost every earnest man is obliged in the race and the struggle to sacrifice some of his heart to his brain. Men could never get on if they were the emotional things we women are."

"Friendship without loyalty is nothing," said poor little Angela, "and when one is loyal to a friend, it hurts to be treated with indifference. It is hard to understand."

"That is exactly the point, dear child.

There *are* things in the world which nobody ever understands; society is so complex, circumstances are so contradictory, men are so stupid, women so long-suffering. Now, at Mohun Court everything is simply routine; life is an idyll there; and when Mr. Vyvyan goes down there, his is one of those sympathetic natures that immediately becomes part of its surroundings, and so he becomes idyllic. But one cannot live an idyll always."

Angela said nothing. In the spirit she was, not at Radley's, but in Mrs. Raisins' sitting-room, with the sweet fragrance of mignonette wafting in from the bed just below the deep window-seat, where a little girl sat with a huge collie's head in her lap, discussing many things in heaven and earth with a beloved old woman, who wore always a rustling black silk gown and most unbecoming caps. Angela could hear her saying —

"We can't all be wise, Miss Angela, dear, but we must all be good. And that's what we all — your Uncle Roger and Mr. Vyvyan too — must learn some day, if we don't know it now."

And then Mr. Vyvyan himself had appeared at the window, greatly to Mrs. Raisins' confusion, increased tenfold by the little girl on the window-seat nodding to him gravely as she told him — "Everything that Mrs. Raisins says is true."

On many an afternoon since that one had Vyvyan found his way round to that sweet mignonette-scented corner of the old house. And Angela wondered — was all *that* part of his idyll? To her it had been real life.

But even Mrs. Peverils do not always form a right conclusion. Accurate enough in practical matters, where common-sense is chief factor, they may yet err greatly for want of that rare gift, a sympathetic imagination, without which how is it possible to understand any man or woman?

. . . . . .

Vyvyan and Langford, travelling back to Netley, spoke little; both were thinking, and their thoughts ran along the same line.

"She has not altered one bit," Langford mused, "except in development. I should

not have been surprised if she had looked up in my face with those deep, pitiful eyes, and said the very words which were almost the very last I heard her speak, and which I always thought were the oddest words to have come from a little child's lips" — words that had stood out in some scenes of Langford's life, since that evening, like the writing on the wall; words on which Vyvyan had meditated, thought, argued hundreds of times since that evening; but never had he rested upon them as he did now, in the present moment, when his need of them was very great.

. . . . . .

The light in the library at Mohun Court was burning so late, that Mrs. Raisins came downstairs twice to stand at the door and listen for some sound which might tell her that Mr. Merton was making ready to retire for the night. All was perfect stillness within, however, and the same stillness reigned throughout the house. The servants' hall had been empty for an hour now, and Mrs. Raisins went upstairs again, nervous and anxious, waiting and

listening. There was such a strange solitariness about the place. Mrs. Raisins "wished to goodness" that Lance had elected to spend the evening with her instead of in the library; but, "there! she knew he was lonely too, spite of his books. She shouldn't wonder if he was sitting alone there crying after his little girl — that's why she had gone down and listened outside his door; for, after all, none of his books told him what that there blessed little sampler had told her all her life; they might have to do without their Miss Angela altogether one of these days, and how would his Greek and Latin help him then, poor gentleman?" But the idea of ever having to do without Angela altogether was a rousing one, and not to be faced calmly in a chair. So Mrs. Raisins rose and went into Angela's room, where she set her light down, and began to put away some of the little trinkets and belongings that were lying about. Lovingly and reverently she touched them: it was only a handkerchief, a brooch, a pair of gloves; but they were "Miss Angela's." She was holding one of

the gloves close to her spectacled eyes, examining some necessary repairs, when the door was pushed slowly open, and, as she turned, she faced Mr. Merton with Lance at his heels.

The light from the reading-lamp, held above his head, fell full on the refined, and almost ascetic features.

"Oh, you are here, Mrs. Raisins, are you?" he said half shyly, pausing on the threshold as if caught in the perpetration of some foolishly weak act.

"Yes, sir, I believe I am," she replied, with some asperity. "It is very late — gone one o'clock. Time you was abed, sir."

Had he been a man who was in the habit of making a confidante of an old, faithful servant, he might then and there have spoken out of the fulness of his heart; he might have asked her if she thought with Vyvyan, that all his prudential schemes for averting unhappiness and disappointment from Angela had failed; he might even have asked her whether she thought, as he himself had been thinking this very night, that Angela's love for him was being

"He laid it on the table before him amongst his books."
Page 170.

sapped by an ever-increasing sense of injustice — a daily sense that she was debarred from rights which were her due. But he did not utter these thoughts. All that he said were these few significant words: —

"Let me have that glove, Mrs. Raisins, until Miss Angela comes back."

"It wants mending, sir," was that practical woman's comment, as she gave it up to him.

He carried it away with him into his library, and laid it on the table before him amongst his books — one six-buttoned *gant-de-Suède* of very small dimensions, but suggesting to that reserved and philosophic gentleman what was more than the whole world to him.

CHAPTER III.

"Joy comes and goes, hope ebbs and flows
Like the wave;
Change doth unknit the tranquil strength of men."
M. ARNOLD.

A LITTLE girl once had a hospital in her garden for wounded things, and one evening, in the dusk of a London twilight, she had sat with two men friends and talked to them about it. One of these men was invalided at the time, and the other was very kind to the little girl, and had told her she should see Netley Hospital one day. He had never seen her before, and had never seen her since, until now, when here they were all three together again, threading their way through the hospital corridors, where a strong breeze off Southampton water rushed up and down, as if, like Angela, it had never visited Netley before.

This kind stranger was much more like the old friend, thought Angela, than was her real old friend; for to-day, as yesterday, Vyvyan scarcely spoke to her, but addressed himself entirely to Mrs. Peveril.

Not all the charm and freshness of the scene and of the day could prevent her being conscious of that fact. Langford's breezy lightheartedness opened out a new side of life for her; it was altogether a new world in which she found herself, and she was enchanted; but deep down below all the charm and enchantment there was the consciousness that Mr. Vyvyan was cold and distant. And yet his thoughtfulness for her was unceasing — did the corridor seem more than usually draughty? Angela must put on her shawl. Was she tiring herself too much? for they would have more to see after luncheon. But it was all done through the medium of their host; it was: "Langford, ask Miss Mohun this," or, "Tell her to do that." At one point in their general survey, from which the view across the grounds and over Southampton water was particularly fine, and

they all stood in a knot for a moment, Vyvyan said suddenly: "Have you any mignonette about here, Langford? There is an unmistakable scent of it just now."

"No," said Langford abruptly, as if, for some unaccountable reason, he rather wished the question had not been asked.

"It is Angela's you notice," interposed Mrs. Peveril; "she brought a great bunch of it from her garden, and that is some of it with the rosebuds in her brooch."

Vyvyan turned away as abruptly as Langford had spoken, and merely said—

"Mignonette always recalls Mohun Court."

The passive wearer of his favorite flower marvelled at his lack of observation.

"Shall we let Vyvyan and Mrs. Peveril do the wards together?" suggested Langford during luncheon, "whilst you and I sit out in the grounds?"

"But I came on purpose to see the invalids!" exclaimed Angela.

"Thanks. Vyvyan and I are very much obliged." He was sorry after he had said it,

for she flushed so painfully and silently; but Vyvyan evidently had not noticed, for he never broke off in his conversation with Mrs. Peveril, who was discoursing on one of her pet subjects — ventilation.

"I am not always in earnest, Miss Mohun," resumed Langford, with an irresistible laugh in his eyes; "life would be insupportable if we were all of us in earnest always."

"And yet you must have seen so much of the earnest side of it?"

"Not more than you have. Mohun Court is very much in earnest, isn't it?"

"No. I don't consider thinking and studying being very much in earnest. *That* is not *living*. Where you give your life for others, — your hands and your heart and your brain, — *there* you can live in earnest."

And all the while Vyvyan never once struck into any of these little discussions which were animated and earnest enough, with just that flavor of lightness about them which had been wanting in Angela's home up-bringing, and had always been marked by Vyvyan as such a

grievous want. Still, the satisfaction of an old want did not, any the more, silence the new one; for Angela was sadly wondering through all the sunshiny devotion of her new friend, wherein lay her apparent inability to be any longer the friend of that "man of the world" who, as they left the luncheon table, moved away from her, and followed Mrs. Peveril.

"Uncle Roger is right then," thought Angela; "change and disappointment must come. But still, it does not follow that one must change one's self; only — that seems to make the pain of it."

And this undercurrent of thought went on all the time that she was being conducted round here and there, shown this and that. The Museum was pronounced most interesting by Mrs. Peveril; but Angela had never liked stuffed birds, nor the young Peverils' impaled butterflies. The laboratory gave Mrs. Peveril an opportunity for expounding some of her knowledge in domestic economy over some sample tins of condensed meat and vegetables sent in to be analyzed; Langford set Angela

down to the latest invention in type-writers, and insisted upon her printing a sentence for him to keep as a memento of the day. Then they came to the library; and, passing on, they saw strange old guns, and marvellous old-world head-pieces, and murderous shell and shrapnel and canister in close conjunction with field-ambulances and other mercies.

"Every imaginable appliance to heal and to help every imaginable wound or breakage short of a broken heart," explained Langford. "Now, you are sure you would like to come in?"

The orderly who was going round with them had just thrown a door open; Vyvyan and Mrs. Peveril were passing on down the corridor on their way to the grounds.

"You will come to us there, Angela dear," Mrs. Peveril said; "for I have been over the wards before, and am a little tired, so we will go and sit by the water whilst you see all that Mr. Langford has to show you."

There, through the open door, before her very eyes, were heroes, — so Angela called

them, — men who had laid down their lives for their country.

"And for their pay, too, you must remember," said Langford.

As Angela went through the wards with him, to some of those men lying there, came a vision of womanhood such as had never before been presented to them; whilst to her came an idea of such heroism as she had never before imagined; for, until now, patience had never entered into her dreams of heroism.

There was no grumbling from the invalids in answer to any of the questions put. From bedside to bedside it was — to Angela — a revelation of the horrors of war, and of the glory of its discipline, until at last she whispered —

"May we come out now?"

He led her quickly out into the corridor; then, looking into her face anxiously, he said —

"Are you faint? Have I been a brute to take you through?"

"No; oh no!" she replied, with one of her mighty and successful efforts at self-control — "only — it is almost too much! One's own life is so poor and small. *Your* life, with all this, is so grand and good. I want so much to

hear what you have been doing all these years."

"My dear Miss Mohun," said Langford, with a laugh, "I assure you we take it all as we take our breakfast and our dinner — quite as a matter of course. There are other people on other lines of life who are far more of a hero than I am. Now, there is poor old Vyvyan" —

"Please," interrupted Angela hurriedly, "tell me about yourself."

"But I must just tell you this; he will not tell you himself" —

"Indeed," interrupted Angela again, and this time with such sweet dignity that he was compelled to obey, "there is nothing which Mr. Vyvyan would not tell me himself, that I should care to hear from any one else. We are such old friends."

"And you and I are such new ones," said Langford ruefully, as they turned out into the the grounds, with Southampton water sparkling before them like a great jewel flashing in the sunlight.

"No; I have your little ambulance wagon still," she said, looking up in his face with a winning deprecation in her eyes, which made him long for an opportunity of soon saying something of the same sort again. "And now," she said, "will you tell me all you have seen and done in these ten years?"

"*All!*" he exclaimed; "that is a great temptation to spin out my yarn until Mrs. Peveril and Vyvyan come to look for us at last in despair. I will give you a few facts from my experiences in Zululand."

Wandering about the pleasant lawns and shrubbery paths this summer afternoon with Angela, he recalled the scenes which all came back so vividly into this contrasting scene, and he thought, as he talked on to her—

"What a strange story this life of ours is! *She* does not know how that little girl and her hospital used to come into my mind at night out there, with her soft eyes, and those words of hers about God's will; and now, here we are together again, after all these years. It is like a great big story-book as it is, and my

attempting to tell my part of the story is very feeble compared with it."

In fact, Langford, the light-hearted, became conscious that such a depth of sentiment was threatening subtly to underlie his narrative, that he suddenly dashed off into some practical details about the training of the Army Medical Corps, endeavoring to rivet Angela's attention and interest on such subjects as the early treatment of gunshot wounds, arresting hæmorrhage, exercises in loading and unloading wagons, stretchers, handling the wounded.

"The stores at the advanced depot," he was saying, "should be capable of supplying a large number of men, and should include every kind of battlefield supply — tents, blankets, sheets, lint, medicine, cooking utensils, and concentrated food, milk, and beef" —

Angela interrupted him.

"I don't think I care quite so much for all this," she said honestly. "I liked all that you were telling me before, about what you had seen and done at Isandula, much better."

"It is all over now, for here comes Mrs.

Peveril and Vyvyan, and I must go in and give orders for tea," was his reply.

As a matter of fact, the soldier was not proof against his companion's weapons of sympathy and enthusiasm. He, therefore, took refuge in flight. Angela stood where he had left her, as he turned away towards the College; and then, as the others joined her, she fell into the ranks by Mrs. Peveril's side.

"Is not this quite too rare a day, Angela?" exclaimed that enthusiastic dame. "And what have you done with Mr. Langford?"

As she asked the question, she lingered behind to examine a flowering shrub that attracted her, and Angela passed on with Vyvyan.

"Langford is a very good fellow, isn't he?" he observed. To which came the somewhat irrelevant answer —

"Uncle Roger has never taught me so much about heroism as Mr. Langford has taught me here, at Netley, without meaning it."

"It is not taught in the schools," replied Vyvyan quietly; "it must be lived."

"Does it ever come without personal devotion — loyalty of some sort?" asked Angela.

"I think not."

Something in his tone made her look up in his face quickly; but if Vyvyan were thinking then of a little girl who long ago had asked him if "a philosopher never cried, whatever happened," he did not say so; and now Langford came on the scene again, bearing down upon them in front, whilst Mrs. Peveril hastened to bring up the rear.

"*Le thé est servi*," he announced.

"Oh, you delightful and excellent man!" cried Mrs. Peveril. "In the midst of much that is intellectually and æsthetically interesting, you do not let us forget our creature comforts, and we thank you for it."

"Creature comforts are all I ever think of," returned Langford, which Angela might have combated prettily. Indeed, he quite hoped for a passage of arms with her, then and there — it had been his object in saying it; but Angela had much to think of just then, and to feel, perhaps, even more. It was all a brilliance of

sunlight, a dark shimmer of evergreens, and a sparkling shine of waters, with a new friend found — and an old friend lost.

When they drove to the abbey after tea, Vyvyan helped her out of the carriage, and for a minute lingered with her. Mrs. Peveril was heard discoursing on architectural beauties, and on the Vandalism which had destroyed some. Langford's hearty laugh, aroused by her vindictiveness, rang back to them from vaulted cloisters; and Angela half-timidly said this to her old friend —

"Mr. Langford says that you are in trouble. Once when you were ill, your little friend was conceited enough to think she could do you good. If I can, I would help you now. Won't you tell me what is the matter?"

Instinctively Vyvyan turned his face towards her; but in the next moment it was turned away, as he said sternly —

"Langdon has no business whatever to speak of my affairs. It is a matter that rests entirely with myself, and concerns no one else."

Here another shadow fell across the evening

sunlight, and Langford himself stepped up to them, charged with a message from Mrs. Peveril, who wished to have the benefit of Mr. Vyvyan's architectural knowledge to settle a knotty question of masonry.

"She will not accept my notes from the 'Netley Guide,'" he said; and then he stood by Vyvyan, almost as if he expected him to take his arm. But Vyvyan either did not or would not see it, and moved away from them to Mrs. Peveril in the cloisters.

A very miserable feeling of loneliness made Angela glad to have Langford at her side again, glad to have him bending down and listening to her, as he had done once upon a time before, in London streets.

And Vyvyan, discussing dog-tooth and herring-bone, perpendicular and early English, with that voluble and cultivated Mrs. Peveril, saw himself a sick man, with a little child standing at his knee, and he could feel the touch of the soft childish fingers, and could hear the grave little voice saying, "Do you know what Mrs. Raisins says? *She* says that everything that comes is God's will."

An observation from Mrs. Peveril called him back into the region of present facts, and her voice sounded harsh and dissonant, which really was not the poor lady's fault, but simply the effect of contrast.

"They make a pretty pair, those two. Look at them just passing through that archway out into the sunlight. There is something very pleasing and fresh about Mr. Langford — he is so perfectly unassuming; and he holds a wonderfully good position for so young a man — comparatively speaking — young as compared with you and me. What a different girl Angela would be if she had more of such society! He just wakes up all the life there is in her; and such a sweet wildflower sort of life! So pure and unconventionalized! That crust of the old man's philosophy would soon be broken up and dispersed altogether."

"Has she any of it?" asked Vyvyan quickly.

"No; perhaps I am exaggerating. She has a certain reserve and self-control which he has inculcated, and which often seems to me most unnatural in so young a creature. But as to

philosophy, the lessons taught her in her childhood by dear old Mrs. Raisins have borne riper fruit than any of Mr. Merton's mouldy Senecas and Marcus Aureliuses."

Vyvyan and Langford saw their guests off from the station. Langford stood at the railway-carriage window until the last minute. Vyvyan stood a few paces off.

"Thank you both a thousand times for the most charming day!" cried Mrs. Peveril.

"I wish you could both give us another such treat," said Langford; "but Vyvyan must go back to London to-morrow, and I go with him for a day or two."

"And I must go home to-morrow — back to Mohun Court," said Angela; "and it is no use wishing for impossibilities; but still I wish" —

As she paused for a moment, Vyvyan made a step forward; but the steam was up, and that wish was unexpressed. Langford stepped back to Vyvyan's side; two hats were raised; two faces watched from a window as long as the platform was in sight; the day at Netley was over.

. . . . . .

The following afternoon saw Mrs. Peveril and Angela starting once more on a railway journey, this time from Southampton, homeward bound; and, as Mrs. Peveril remarked: "It is a pity that places do not look alike, at all times and seasons." For, instead of the broad shimmering water's blowing breeze, and brilliant sunshine, there was a foreground of low-tide mud and grayness, there were flapping seagulls wheeling and crying, and hanging over everything was a heavy pall of mist.

In the background, with Angela, there was a sense of something gone — an old friend altered, and a new friend lost sight of. Were these then some of the changes and chances of the world from which her Uncle Roger would save her? They might be, and bitter enough they were; but still, Angela thought there must be one thing infinitely more bitter, and that would be — never to have had a friend at all.

CHAPTER IV.

"The wise and mindful one, heart purified,
Attaineth to the changeless place. . . . "
SIR EDWIN ARNOLD.

THAT "forty something," which, long ago, Angela had learnt in her Uncle Roger's catechism to be the panacea for all evils, and which she had once piteously assured Mrs. Raisins, in heartbroken accents, was of no good at all in the case of a pet rabbit's death — stood her in no stead during the days at Mohun Court that followed upon the days at Southampton. Springs of thought and feeling, hitherto undreamed of, had been called into being; other thoughts and feelings that had been a recognized fact with her for years were chilled, if not frozen; and when a sudden spring and a sudden winter arrive at the same time, can fortitude be sufficient for these things?

As to Mr. Merton, with his customary dreamy content, his eyes followed her as she moved about him once more; she was there — that was enough for him — and the little glove was returned to Mrs. Raisins.

That sensible woman, blest with an intuition far above all philosophies, knew that Angela was troubled, and that she did not wish to be questioned. And "*she* was not surprised — not *she*," when a letter came to her darling next morning that her darling should come to her as she had come once before, saying —

"Mrs. Raisins, will you come up to London with me at once, please? Uncle Roger knows, and he says that we may go. We shall be home this evening."

For straight to her uncle had she taken that letter, written from Vyvyan's chambers by Langford, who may not have been good at letter-writing, but was certainly good at saying what he meant.

"DEAR MISS MOHUN" (he wrote): —

"Forgive the liberty I am taking in ad-

dressing you, but you would not allow me to speak about it at Netley. Poor old Vyvyan is in great trouble. For the last six months his sight has been failing him, and only the week before you came over to Netley he had reason to believe that fears of losing it entirely would very soon be realized. He made me swear not to breathe a word of it to you — he has kept away from Mohun Court so that you might not have the least suspicion of it. Yesterday he had one of the first opinions in London — and there is no hope. It is a form of blindness which is most rapid in its progress, and yet does not affect the appearance of the eye. His whole anxiety the other day was that you should not see him grope at all; he can, as yet, see his way in walking pretty well, but the power of distinguishing faces is gone. He does not know I am writing to you, but I felt convinced you were baffled that day at Netley, and a baffled friendship is no joke. Apologizing for this scribble, believe me, with kind regards, yours ever,

"M. LANGFORD."

"I must go and see him, Uncle Roger," said Angela firmly, as she watched the old man fold the note after reading it, and then look up at her with something of the pathos of a dumb animal in his face. "I cannot bear it if I do not go to him and say, 'God help you' to him, my one great friend!"

"Child!" and as he spoke he stretched out clinging hands to her, "what has been the use of all my care for you?"

"I don't know!" she cried. "I don't know indeed, Uncle Roger. You have tried to teach me here at Mohun Court that all things out in the world are perishable — that everything there must come to an end; but that is only a half truth, isn't it? For I have learnt this already, even from my own experience, that in our clinging human affections we have what is imperishable. You have tried to teach me that in the world change is inevitable; over and over again have you said those words to me: 'And wilt thou make thy treasure of any one of those things?' And I say now, *Yes*, I *would*, Uncle Roger, I would make my treasure

of *any*thing that comes within the range of our human interests and affections. Change may come and must; but over it all is God's great love and care for us — *that* never changes. And I must just say *that* to Mr. Vyvyan — if I can " — there was a break in the passionate utterance there; then, with a touching gentleness and quietness, she added: " I will come back by the next train, so I shall not leave you for long."

. . . . . .

" *His* care, indeed ! " exclaimed Mrs. Raisins, with something between a snort and a sniff when Angela repeated her uncle's words, adding, " I know he *has* been very good to me always, but surely it is the power of giving that makes ' life worth living ' ; and where would loyalty be, if we had friends and did not show themselves friendly? *His* care ! Miss Angela, he has been trying to do what only God Almighty can do — trying to be your providence, my dear; and he has been a very foolish old gentleman all the time ! "

. . . . . .

History repeats itself. Once more across that shady court within the dusky stillness of the Temple precincts come Mrs. Raisins and Angela; once more up the old wooden staircase they pass; and then two friends in Vyvyan's chambers hear a gentle tap at the door. Langford opens it, and as he does so, he exclaims—

"Miss Mohun!"

"I had your letter this morning, and I have come," was all she said as she gave him her hand, and then passed on to where Vyvyan stood. He had risen from his chair, and stood leaning on the back of it, waiting.

Somehow Langford managed mysteriously to disappear; he had put himself into the court below for a smoke. Mrs. Raisins, thanks to the same personal agency, found herself in some adjoining chambers that were empty, where she was politely asked to wait until summoned.

The familiar sweet scent of mignonette was in the air about Vyvyan, and a little hand was on each of his hands, as she knelt on the chair before him.

"I remember once upon a time," she began, "coming to these very rooms when you were ill — such a long, long time ago!" —

"The day when Langford saw you first," interrupted Vyvyan quietly and calmly. And at his words, the fingers, that rested with the warm touch of sympathy and friendship on his, relaxed their pressure involuntarily — only for a moment. It was no lapse in her feeling for him; only a diverted interest, that was all. And Vyvyan was conscious of it.

"Yes, the same day. I thought then, with a little child's self-sufficiency, that I could do you good. And now, Mr. Langford has told me — and I know what all your silence has meant." She was speaking with a strange little catch in her breath, like a sob, still not moving. Nothing was moving there in that still court; but what a tumult was storming within the blind philosopher's heart, and in the young girl's soul! "And I, who can do you no good now, can only say how sorry I am for you — so sorry — more sorry than you can know."

Her voice was choked, and his was not so

steady as he willed it to have been, when he answered —

"My dear child, I never meant you to have known. I had hoped silently to have taken myself out of your little world — your great world of love and pity."

"And I should have thought — as I thought at Netley — that you had changed."

There was a slight movement then on her part, and a fresh whiff from the mignonette at her throat recalled the terraces and lawns at Mohun Court so vividly that Vyvyan, ignoring all the intervening years, saw himself standing in the cedar shadow, heard the sigh of the summer wind through the cedar branches, and an infantine hostess asking him the question: "Do you get tired of things, like Uncle Roger?"

That question reëchoed with a vital intensity now that this other Angela came to him, holding in her hands what would fill the cup of life for him with a new wine which might sparkle like the old, and would glorify his darkness, making his infirmity comparatively easy to be

borne. For, in her loyal tenderness of heart, he might have chosen to see what in a woman of riper years and larger experience would have meant the loyal devotion of a life, he knew that he had but to claim it, and that little girl, kneeling before him, would have rendered it as his due.

Vyvyan knew this; but he knew better. So he replied quietly to her implied reproach—

"Yes, changed, as many others have had to think of other friends; but it would only have been seeming in our case, Angela."

"It would not even have been seeming with me," she said simply. "Why should I have seemed to change, because I thought you had done so? The change would have been in my life; for if I lived to be as old as Uncle Roger, and if I were to see as much of the world as Mr. Langford has seen, my life would never be the same to me if you had gone out of it. Oh, I came to say strong words to you — not foolish ones! But I am so glad, although I am so sorry — so glad that you *are* still the same, not angry or hurt with me, not tired of

your little friend! Don't mind me, please. I can't help it — indeed I cannot!"

Angela's strongest feelings were rushing through her words now, making the tone of her voice low, and her head was bowing low, too, — down to his very hands, — and her tears were raining fast upon them.

"In the silence that followed, a hand was drawn away from Angela's clasp, and gently, falteringly, through the darkness, laid upon her head.

"A philosopher is never angry — never hurt. Can always smile instead of crying. Had you forgotten that?" he asked. "And so you have come all this way to tell me how sorry and how glad you are — sorry for my blindness, glad for yourself; that I am not quite such a bear as I seemed? And now, just give me your hands again, whilst I say one word. If you live to be as old as your Uncle Roger, and if you see as much of the world as Langford, you will never have any idea of how blind I was before I knew that little girl at Mohun Court — the little girl who showed me an old-fashioned sampler as a

great possession, and who, as my hospital nurse, dropped some words when she said good-by, that I have treasured through all the years that have gone by since then. Those and the sampler text were my alphabet, Angela. Under your guidance I have been spelling them out ever since. In my so-called blindness I can read them better than I did. What did I hear you whisper? 'God help you,' did you say?" And reverently Vyvyan added, "He does. Hark! Isn't that poor Langford whistling dismally down below? Do you know he is talking of volunteering to join the ——shire regiment, and, if so, will embark with them for India next month?"

That little *coup* was not the least heroic part of Vyvyan's great renunciation. If he had meant it as a test, it was a sure one, for again Angela's fingers spoke.

"Lead me to the window, Angela — I know Langford's traps are all over the floor — that further one that looks into the court, and we will call him up," said Vyvyan, smiling. "Mrs. Raisins, too, must be wearying for her release.

She shall see the embarkment. We shall be a charming *partie carrée*. And we can put you into a cab from there in time to catch your return train. Do you know I have serious thoughts of invading Mohun Court next week, with Langford as my aide-de-camp? What would Mr. Merton say, I wonder?"

. . . . . .

Mr. Merton said nothing, being fully occupied in setting the house of his thoughts in order.

In the bosky groves and alleys of Mohun Court, Langford's self-effacement down in the Temple Court with his cigar that morning was rewarded more fully than he had then allowed himself to dream of; and — a certain regiment went to India without him. And Mrs. Peveril said she "had seen it *all* that day at Netley; but poor, dear Mr. Vyvyan — well, of course he was to be excused. But these matrimonial speculations never entered his head. He was a man not easy to understand, but marvellously patient now."

Vyvyan astonished even his old master by his

supreme courage and patience under the loss of his eyesight.

"And yet it is what I always said of him," reflected the old man, over his books. "He has reached the highest heights of philosophy — renunciation of self. He has lost self entirely."

Lost — in a way that Mr. Merton would not reach just yet; lost — in the breadth and depth and height of a Divine Commandment which makes all painful things possible, if borne as little Angela once said, "For Some One's sake."