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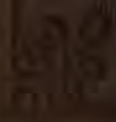
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A

SCHOOL OF LIFE.

BY

ANNA MARY HOWITT, *New York*

Author of 'An Art-Student in Munich.'

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TO

MY BELOVED BROTHER ALFRED,

THESE COLLECTED PAPERS,

WHICH,

IN THEIR ORIGINAL FORM,

WERE READ BY HIM

IN THE WILDS OF AUSTRALIA,

ARE AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.

LET CONSCIENCE BE CLEAR IN DISCERNMENT AND SUPREME IN  
ACTION. — *Washington.*

# A SCHOOL OF LIFE.

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## CHAPTER I.

How could those money-bags see east or west? — JOHN KEATS.

Oh, take heed, mother,  
Heaven hath a spacious ear, and power to punish  
Your too much love with my eternal absence. — JAMES SHIRLEY.

THE clockwork routine of Michael Stamboyse, the great German hosier and laceman of Nottingham, was disturbed on the morning of the 15th of December, 1830. It was past eleven o'clock, and still no Michael Stamboyse had entered the dusky counting-house. The foreman, the clerks, the very 'hands,' as they are technically termed, bringing in their work to the warerooms, were seized with amaze, as the surprising fact of the old merchant's absence was whispered about. As soon might the name of the respectable house of Stamboyse and Stamboyse be seen in the *Gazette*, as that Michael Stamboyse should be found absent from his post in that dingy counting-house. Such an occurrence had not been known for the last

fifteen years. Was the merchant dead?—ill? Apparently no such explanation could be given for his absence. No extraordinary bustle had been observed in his quiet mansion adjoining the extensive warehouses; no doctor had been seen entering that large old door, which opened so rarely to any but Michael Stamboyse himself. The old housekeeper had been seen to issue forth to market by the back gate at her usual hour; the servant-boy, in his canary-colored jacket, had been seen quietly cleaning the windows; the barber from Peck-lane, who had regularly shaved the old merchant for ten years past, every morning, winter and summer, at half-past seven o'clock, had been seen quietly to arrive and depart again in five-and-twenty minutes. Could it be that either of the other two inmates of the quiet mansion was ill or dead? That would never have prevented the punctual Michael Stamboyse from occupying his old arm-chair before his ink-stained, ledger-crowned desk. Four years before this eventful fifteenth of December, Leonard Mordant, his sister's son, one of these two inmates of his house, had been sick to death; still Michael's regular heavy tread had, each morning as the Exchange clock and the clock of St. Mary's tolled nine, been heard entering his counting-house.

But in an outer room stood another unoccupied desk, could this be significant of the merchant's absence? So at least thought Andrew Gaywood, the confidential

clerk, as sadly he glanced towards it through the glass door, and quietly the little, thin, gray-haired, deformed man, sighed to himself, shaking his head mournfully. In his hand he held a thick packet of letters; they were letters arrived that morning from the Continent, from India, and from China, for the house of Stamboyse and Stamboyse was a great house, and had its branches all over the world. Andrew Gaywood had known that place vacant before, and to him a tall horsehair-bottomed office-stool standing unoccupied upon a week-day, near noon, was always an unpleasant sight. But to see this especial office-stool standing stupidly useless, was not only unpleasant but painful; so painful, that a half-whispered remark from the outer room reaching him, he grasped the packet of letters convulsively in his bony hand, and struck it violently on the ink-stained desk of Michael Stamboyse, stamping his foot with nervous irritation, and exclaiming bitterly through his clenched teeth —

‘I’d rather a thousand times have given my fifty pounds, that I would, than that that dear young lad should have gone and done it. If he had but the application of Mr. Ellis Stamboyse, — that is a young lad indeed — but — my God —’

Andrew Gaywood stood suddenly petrified; his thin old face grew white as ashes, and his knees began to tremble under him; he heard a stern voice thunder through the outer room —

‘Remove that desk — that young fool will never more darken these doors. Remove it, do you hear?’ And a silence as of death fell upon the warerooms, through which came suddenly and painfully the dull roll of carriages from the distant street, and the clock in the counting-house ticked with an unnatural loudness. Michael Stamboyse opened the glass door, and stood before his trembling clerk. But the vision of the methodical, orderly old merchant, attired in a morning-gown instead of wearing his ordinary dapper array of blue coat, buff waistcoat, and snowy shirt-frill, was no vision calculated to reassure the anxious, nervous little old man.

We have said that Michael Stamboyse had been shaved as usual at half-past seven o’clock that morning by the barber from Peck-lane. As usual he had descended, as the clock upon his mantel-piece chimed eight, wrapped in his morning-gown to breakfast. But not as usual that morning had a slender, melancholy, restless lady, his sister Ursula Mordant, been awaiting him at the breakfast-table, her fingers upon the coffee-pot handle the instant that he opened the door. No ceremonious, ‘Good morning, brother Michael,’ had greeted him. Michael Stamboyse had looked round the room somewhat astonished and displeased at the absence of Mrs. Mordant. He had rung the bell violently; the sound pealed through the silent house but no one came. Again he rang, and this time more

violently. A piercing shriek resounded through the house as the reply; down the stairs reeled wild footsteps; there was a fumbling upon the handle of the door, and before the somewhat heavy merchant could turn round from the fire, upon which he had been moodily gazing, Mrs. Mordant flung widely open the door, and stood before him, wrapped in a loose morning-gown, her long gray hair falling from beneath a lace handkerchief which was tied over her head, and her face on fire with excitement. Michael's instantaneous idea was, that his sister had suddenly become insane.

'Michael!' cried she, 'he is gone! You—you it is who have driven him away—who will have destroyed him! His blood be upon your head! My God! my God! my boy! my boy! You've been cruel as sin to him! you have been a very Nero!—my noble, my beautiful boy!—I will pray for vengeance—night and day, each hour, each moment will I invoke Heaven! Every saint shall listen and aid me! The Madonna will listen to a mother's pleadings! Michael, you are a man without one atom of human love in your soul—the only son of your only sister! Think!—think, and you have turned the mother against the son—the fiery sin be yours!—My handsome, handsome boy; my Leonard, Leonard.' And bursting into violent, passionate weeping, Mrs. Mordant sank upon the floor before her brother, her



whole frame shivering, tears streaming through her long white fingers, the veins swelling like azure cords upon her temples and hands.

Michael Stamboyse stood unmoved as a rock, except that a darker sternness gathered over his brow and severely-chiselled mouth. He did not speak, but looked coldly, almost contemptuously, upon the weeping woman.

‘Michael!’ cried she, suddenly springing to her feet, ‘to your dying day will I hate you!—Upon your death-bed will I only remember my boy, my Leonard, and ——’

‘Ursula, you are crazed!’ interposed Stamboyse, coldly, grasping his sister’s hands with an iron strength. He held her at arms’ length, fixing his clear, deeply-set, gray eyes upon her excited countenance. She fell upon his arm, broken, and weeping again.

‘Michael, my brother; my dear, dear brother!’ moaned she, ‘you cannot, oh, you cannot be so hard upon him, and upon me — he was *my* Leonard! he is just the age that you were when you were ill at Limburg, and when our mother wept herself blind over you! He is so like you when you were ill! I’ve often thought so. And I love him as I loved you then; as our mother loved you. I’ve never, never liked to goad, to drive him to his work. God help me! I’ve been *made* to make him hate me! Oh, you are so very cruel. Michael, my curses be

upon you — you've killed him! killed him!' — and she writhed upon his arm.

Michael Stamboyse, still holding her in his iron grasp, forced her down upon a chair; and still holding her, spoke slowly, with a deep, quivering of anger running through his voice. As if an electric shock had passed through Mrs. Mordant, she sat like one transfixed, her lips apart, and her large shining eyes motionless as mirrors, gazing upon her brother.

'Ursula,' spoke he, 'that he is YOUR son I forget, and will ever forget; but I will not forget that he is the son of a certain Augustus Mordant! a POET *you* called him — a trumpery, beggarly spendthrift and scamp, I call him. This I shall *not* forget. Neither shall I forget that this poet, this fiddler, this painter, this beggar, led you a life worse than the life of a dog — a dog? worse than the life of a galley-slave! This I will NEVER forget! Neither will I forget, that, because my sister loved the son of this scamp, I took him, for her sake, to bring him up like a man, and to teach him to earn his mother's bread and his own bread honestly — to end the curse which you have drawn wilfully upon yourself, Ursula. But the mad blood of that poet, that trumpery beggar, runs in his veins. When I have seen him, seated at his desk, pull out behind my back his puling plays, have seen him scribbling rubbish over honest invoices, have seen him bringing with him into my house his rubbishing weeds and trash,

his paint, his music, I could have many a time felled him to the earth, and I should have done it, but for you. You've been a brave woman, Ursula, and have done what you could do to bend him to my will; but now let him go — go to the gallows, an' he will! He'll bring only misery upon you, upon himself. Never more speak to me of him, Ursula; never more bring him here — or you quit my house.'

Michael Stamboyse gazed fixedly and silently upon his sister, then ungrasped her shoulder, and leaving her still transfixed upon her chair, like one in a trance, he moved sternly and coldly towards the breakfast-table. He began imperturbably to pour himself out coffee, his lips more firmly compressed than ever; his whole countenance looking as if cast in bronze.

But Ursula could not have continued long seated thus impassive; her pleadings, her upbraidings must have been vehemently renewed, and her brother must have been wrought up to a surprising state of anger, both with his sister and her son, since nearly four hours later, we still find him so far oblivious to ordinary routine, as to enter his counting-house in the manner which we have already described.

Following Ursula, we find her rapidly talking aloud to herself, and pacing up and down that chamber which, for five long years, until this morning, had been her son's. It was an attic in the roof; a dormer window looked down into a smoke-dried town-garden;

before the window stood a table, upon which lay a few books, a heap of lichens, and a number of sheets of coarse cartridge-paper, covered with rough, but spirited sketches. Two figures of singular character were sketched in charcoal upon the whitewashed wall. One, a large-winged angel with hair blown backwards from his solemn brows, with upraised hands, inciting to action a sluggish human being bowed at his feet, and and yet throned upon a sphere; around, in wide sweep, stretched a band of stars, wending in rapid speed along their rejoicing courses. Beneath was written, 'Arise! join thy kindred stars.'

The narrow bed, covered with its white Marseilles quilt, stood across the room undisturbed by a sleeper during the night. A drawer, emptied of its contents, stood open in the chest of drawers; a small book-case hanging against the wall, seemed also to have been rifled.

Ursula, blinded with her tears, wrung her hands convulsively upon the bed, pressing the pillow to her lips, to her heart, then starting up, she hurried to the table, searching wildly for some lines traced by the beloved hand, some last words of consolation, but there were none; gazing around the room in mute despair, her eyes rested upon a nail above his pillow, there had hung a sketch of her, made a few weeks ago by Leonard, it was gone. The unhappy mother flung herself upon her knees, and with a calmer grief

in her sad face than we have yet seen there, ejaculated, 'Holy mother of God, I bless, I glorify thee; my Leonard has forgiven my horrible words of last night; he has forgiven, he loves me!'

Leonard Mordant meanwhile was seated up high on the gypsum cliffs at Clifton-grove, a lonely wood overhanging the river Trent, some five miles from Nottingham. It was a wild, yet nevertheless a cheerful scene that December morning. The river, which in summer glides so peacefully along beneath the bowery trees, was now partially frozen; large masses of ice were borne along by the wintry current; the trees of the grove were glittering with hoar-frost, as were the tangles of creeping plants which festooned portions of the precipitous cliff, along the bare riven face of which gleamed amid the red earth, snowy sparkling strata of gypsum. It had always been an especially favorite haunt of Leonard Mordant, this bold cliff, with its legend of the 'Fair Maid of Clifton,' and the memories attaching to it of the young poet, Kirk White, and of various other local writers both of prose and poetry. The sun gleamed out joyously, and from amid the frosted branches birds flew to and fro, scattering around them the silvery rime, and uttering sharp, clear winter notes.

Leonard had started with earliest dawn from the old attic in the house of his uncle, with bitterest anger boiling within his soul both against his uncle and his

mother. ' Why must any human being forsooth, yield up his soul, his life, to a career which was abhorrent to his nature? What were the mere ties of nature, of blood, in comparison to the yearning love which had impelled him again and again to seek out for himself an abode amongst forms of beauty, of strength, of gentleness? There was a world, he knew, where what he aspired to do and to become was a thing worshipped, applauded, crowned with bay and with myrtle; and oh, ungoaded, untaunted, to yield himself up, body and soul, to the service of a divine art — what bliss! His spirit would clear itself of all bitterness, all contempt and anger, all would be harmonious, easy; he could then believe in a God of love; his soul must involuntarily sing each day deepest hymns and praises to the God who had created such wonders of loveliness. Might he but steep his heart in this beauty, this calm! His poets all sang the praises of this divine something in the world; he had seen at times forms of marble and of clay, or forms traced upon canvas or upon paper, which had thrilled him like the sound of organs and of trumpets; his hand quivered to create some tangible expression of what burnt within him, and to electrify other human beings who groaned like himself under slavish bonds. Oh! to be up and doing that which would be to him *life*, full, true life. God scatters his wondrous poetry upon every bough, every blade of grass, every feather of a

bird, every scale of a fish, every leaf of a flower ; yet if he sought to love this God as he alone could love him, as the awful Poet, the awful Painter, he was upbraided in cruelest terms, he was subjected to punishments which would be indignities to a child. Was he a child ? No ; a man's heart he felt beat warmly, indignantly, in his breast ; a man's determination curved his youthful lips into a sternness scarcely less severe than that which now sate upon Michael Stamboyse' mouth. What were lace, and stockings, and ledgers, and invoices and money to him ? To sell his whole youth, his manhood, his age to them — better a thousand fold, he thought, be dead, be dust, such as he trampled beneath his feet ! And to be upbraided by his own mother, month after month, year after year, by his mother, who did know something of that world to which he was akin ; to have his every impulse thwarted, turned into miserable reproof ; to hear a certain Ellis Stamboyse, the cold-hearted, the prosaic Ellis, held up over him as the pattern, the ideal upon which he must mould himself ; to eternally hear his father's memory reviled, his every action held up as a deadly warning ! Oh, that was worse, bitterer than aught else ! The crisis of his fate had come ; he would be — he was free !'

With such thoughts fermenting within him, this youth of sixteen set forth to seek his fortune. A few clothes, the sketch of his mother, his palette, paint-box,

an old flute, and three favorite books, an odd volume of a diamond edition of the 'Arabian Nights' Entertainments,' an odd volume of 'Percy's Relics,' and 'Schiller's Ballads,' in the original, books purchased and read by stealth, Leonard had packed up with burning heart and trembling hands. He now bore upon his shoulder, by means of an old fishing-rod, his precious treasure, formed into a considerable bundle; money he also had in his waistcoat-pocket to the amount of ten shillings. His whole appearance would have reminded any one familiar with Germany of a travelling '*Handwerksbursch*,' or journeyman; the German blood in his veins might to a degree account for this, and might account also for the German character of his face, with its dreamy eyes, and for the more than ordinary length which he had allowed his rich brown hair to attain. His tall, slender, boyish figure was arrayed in a surtout, his uncle having early dressed him as a man. As Leonard, after an hour-and-half's rapid walking, flung himself down upon the brink of the precipitous cliff, it would be difficult to say whether, at that moment, intense joy or intense bitterness was strongest in his soul.

The cheerful peacefulness of the place smote upon his spirit with a strange tenderness, and hot tears chased each other down his animated youthful face. In the silence of the wintry solitude, with the intoxicating sense of freedom within him, his soul forgave his



mother her bitter words : — ‘ Mother, you shall yet be proud of me ; you shall forgive my father’s injuries ; and acknowledge his genius through me — *my triumphant success shall be my revenge !* You shall alone hear of me, you, Michael Stamboyse, laceman and hosier, whom I renounce, and you, mother, whom I adore, when to know me is to be honored ! Dear woods and river, who to me have been tenderer friends than they, listen and record my vow ! you were last night the innocent cause of my offence, you are the cause of my new-born freedom of to-day ; in presence of you I dedicate myself to Art as to a divine service. I consecrate myself as in a holy temple ; I will celebrate in presence of you my triumph.’

Leonard flung his arms round the stem of a giant beech tree which overhung the chasm ; at its feet was a soft cushion of velvety moss, which shone out vividly from the snow and rime. Upon this he knelt ; he pressed his burning lips upon the smooth rind of the great tree’s bole ; his burning tears fell upon the moss, and he prayed fervently, enthusiastically, an artist’s prayer to the Great Creative Artist. Do not smile at poor Leonard’s enthusiasm : his art was his religion ; he staked his all upon it ; he offered up at this moment, to his idol, his worldly hopes, his human love.

To him the only true world was the world of the poets. No external symbol of devotion would to his soul — half child’s, half man’s soul — have appeared absurd or extravagant.

At this moment Ursula, at the bed-side in the attic, was praying. Upon her idol she had staked her all ; and she had registered a vow, a vow to the Virgin, to reclaim her son, were it at the cost of her very life, of her eternal welfare.

Michael Stamboyse, at the same hour in his counting-house, registered a vow, utterly to root out human love from his upright, honorable, though somewhat narrow soul.

How these three vows were kept, we will trace out in our story.

Leonard's prayer, breathing up through the frosty air and silvery branches, 'like pious incense from a censer old,' was ended now. He rose from his knees, resumed his bundle, and retraced his steps through the grove. His face beamed with a joy fresher than the morning sunshine ; his, at this moment, was a transfigured countenance, such as young Raphael's inspired hand might have immortalized as the countenance of a seraph. He hastened along towards the great high-road leading towards London, with the step and speed of a Mercury.

It was with special intent that Leonard had chosen Clifton Grove as the scene of his consecration. As he had observed, this beautiful spot had been the cause of his freedom ; in what manner the cause, we must inform our readers.

Michael Stamboyse, though a severe disciplinarian,

was not what might be called a hard guardian towards Leonard. Leonard had his small allowance of pocket-money, and also, what he valued much more, a certain allowance of time at his own disposal. But both of money and time his uncle demanded always the exactest account. This had often become the cause of miserable bickerings between uncle and nephew, between mother and son, Mrs. Mordant always siding against her son, though she passionately loved him. Leonard was not naturally very conscientious, and his temperament of a dreamer fostered his disinclination to punctuality, and to such homely virtues. Thus, on the afternoon of the 14th of December, his uncle having, in voluntary good faith, given him permission to enjoy an hour or two's skating, the ice being this winter remarkably good, and Michael Stamboyse being an advocate for all manly exercises, Leonard had left home in the highest spirits. But by a certain hour, before the warehouses were closed for the evening, Leonard must punctually return; this was the condition of the holiday. To insure punctuality in Leonard, his uncle, upon his last birth-day, had given him a handsome silver watch, but the injunctions accompanying the birth-day present had greatly destroyed his pleasure in the gift.

Leonard, in the silence of the woods, gliding rapidly along over the icy mirror, his frame exhilarated by the delightful exercise, his fancy revelling in worlds of

beauty which each frozen bank, each passing cloud, revealed to him, how could he be expected to remember the flight of time or business? When the crescent moon showed herself in the peach-colored heavens on the one hand, whilst on the other the sun was sinking through a glowing gush of roseate light, and the leafless trees raised their myriad delicate twigs and branches through the frosty air, weaving marvellous tracery of slenderest lines athwart the translucent sky, he was still amidst the woods. And even upon his homeward path, when his skates hung in one hand, with the other he was picking up tufts of moss, or quaint branches, covered with lovely lichens, golden, green, and hoary, as with venerable age; or now he paused to admire a tangle of wild spear-grass, encrusted with frost: or watched a pert robin-redbreast, pecking about upon the mossed footstool of some giant of the wood; or a timid woodmouse, rustling amidst the red, fallen beech-leaves. And when gentle stars twinkled down through the darkling network of branches, and the hush of night was over the woods, and fields, and river, he was still far from home.

As he neared his uncle's house, and the prosaic voices of the town were around him, a dreariness and dissatisfaction fell upon his spirit and cried out within him, 'Why, then, is the strongest passion of my soul to be ever crushed and turned into poison and sin! Why cannot, and should not, duty and happiness be synonymous!'

Alas! poor Leonard, you have not yet learned that there is a statute by which each human soul is necessitated to *renounce* before it can *enjoy*! Alas! poor Leonard, you have not learned that every human soul, be it endowed with the rarest gifts of intellect, of imagination, must bow submissively to those laws of ordinary duty laid down by God for the gifted as well as for the ungifted; and that the more glorious the gifts, the more awful is the responsibility, the more terrible the expiation! Alas! poor Leonard, no one has as yet taught you this lesson; how will you learn it? how will you profit by it, if ever learnt? Can you read the moral of your miserable father's life, can you profit by that? Have you not seen how he sank himself and his beautiful endowments into deepest contempt, sullyng his genius and his mission in the world by his miserable moral weaknesses, and causing many upright and honorable men to confound genius and infamy, an old and sickening tale in the world's history! Oh, Leonard! might it be granted to you, his son, to teach the world a wiser tale. Oh, Leonard! might it be granted to you to develop the germ of conscience implanted within your breast, so that her large wings should ever enfold you; that her severe, but divine words, should ever guide you, for without her your genius must be a curse, an intensest curse, to yourself, and to all loving, to all admiring you!

When Leonard entered the hall of his uncle's house, his dissatisfaction with himself increased in a tenfold

degree, and he was stealthily ascending the staircase towards his chamber, when he heard his uncle calling to him in a voice more than ordinarily stern. Leonard opened the door of the sitting-room, where his uncle sat at an escritoire which was scattered over with papers. A glance at his uncle's countenance showed Leonard that he had little mercy to expect for his transgression, slight as it appeared in his own eyes. He little knew that another and more heinous crime was about to be brought up against him, which would throw his smaller transgression of unpunctuality into the background entirely.

'Leonard, did not I desire you to countermand the consignment of goods, on the 30th of April last, to Lomere and Monado, of Valparaiso?' demanded his uncle.

'Yes, sir, you did,' replied Leonard clearly, but nevertheless with a great horror creeping over him.

'Good,' said Stamboyse, his countenance relaxing something of its severity and displeasure; 'and you did so, of course; this is better than I could have hoped.'

'But I did *not* countermand the consignment, sir,' returned poor Leonard, growing suddenly intensely hot, and his words chasing each other rapidly over his tongue.

'Good heavens! you did *not* countermand the consignment, Leonard, when I had expressly commanded

it! Pray what excuse can you offer for so extraordinary an action? Do you know that your disgraceful negligence will have caused our house a loss of at least several thousand pounds? and this through so pitiful, so disgusting a blunder of yours, that I have not words to express my contempt of you. How was it, Leonard, that you so strangely disobeyed my commands? Speak!

‘The day you first desired me to write I omitted to do so; I forgot, sir; and then I delayed to write till the time of the next mail arrived, and then I again forgot, and then as it was so long after date, I——’

‘You are the most confounded simpleton that ever set foot in my premises!’ thundered the irate merchant. ‘You are running as fast as you can the career of your contemptible father, your head is stuffed with nothing but trash and tomfoolery; if you would only have taken example by Ellis when he was here. Do you hear me, young sir? Once for all, unless I see you this very night before my eyes destroy all your trumpery plays, pictures, and rubbish, and unless you humble yourself before me, your uncle and sole protector, I will turn you out a beggar into the streets as I took you. Miserable young coxcomb as you are, is not an honest invoice more honorable than all the silly trash with which your head is crammed? Bring me this instant your books; do you hear me? I’ll teach you to show contempt and disobedience!’

‘I shall do no such thing, sir, as bring my books to you,’ replied Leonard, proudly, somewhat disrespectfully even, his face flushing scarlet, and his voice and whole frame quivering with excitement. ‘I beg your pardon, sir, for what I have done wrong, and I will endeavor in future to do better; but I can do no more, and I will *not* bring my books.’

‘You will *not*, Leonard,’ exclaimed his uncle, with ever-rising excitement,’ then begone with you out of my sight, miserable boy, lest I should be tempted to forget myself; and the old merchant waved his hand towards the door.

Leonard retired with a proud bearing, and with eyes flashing keen anger. Upon the stairs his mother beset him with bitter reproaches, and prophecies that he would run a career miserable as that of his father. Leonard pushed violently past her, rushed up stairs, and locked himself in his chamber.

But we must return to the poor youth whom we left commencing his pilgrimage towards the great metropolis, with a vast intoxication in his heart of mingled freedom and ambition.

As he wended his way, Leonard’s mind, in its excited state, seemed to compass whole years to come, and whole years of his past career, in a manner almost magical. Pictures of past realities and pictures of the imaginary future teemed in increasing succession through his fertile brain. Now, he had



attained to the knowledge and practical experience of a great painter, and, standing in a lofty studio, surrounded by hushed silence, was tracing out upon a canvas of colossal size, a composition of surpassing beauty, and fraught with a deep symbolic meaning. It was but one composition out of a vast cycle, which he called the 'Religion of the Nations.' Upon one figure he was working, and so beautiful was it that he himself stood awe-stricken before it, and felt as though not *his hand*, but the hand of an angel had traced it for him, the tears of joy and excitement glowed upon his cheeks ; now, suddenly, he was back again in the attic in his uncle's home, it was an early summer morning, the house was silent as the studio of his imagination, he had started with sudden joy from his pillow ; it was to look at a sketch which last night he had made, and which he had placed upon a chair at the foot of his bed. . Was that then really *his* sketch ? how charming it looked in the morning light ! What love, what compassion he felt for that sweet, deserted Annie of Locroyen ; he was no longer in the heart of a busy trading town, but away among the stern, wild scenery of Scotland, transported back into the ages of romance. He knew well enough that there was no portion of the sketch which did not proclaim his want of skill, his ignorance of the material portion of his art, but the soul ! the soul was there ! the sea foamed and dashed upon the desolate beach, the sea-mews

skimmed in careering circles above the retreating waves and storm-clouds, the lonely, magnificent bark of the deserted lady, tossed upon the boiling sea in the far distance, and the poor white corpse had been flung in fury, like a wreath of foam, upon the rocky steps of her cruel lover's tower, the tower that shone like silver. The joy of that early morning had in it the vernal freshness of a first love, it was an hour Leonard would never forget, let him live till he were a hundred years or more.

Or days still further removed from the present were with him in imagination. He was scarcely more than an infant, surely he was so very small ; it seemed to him that he sate upon his mother's lap, how beautiful she was then in her pale, amber-colored silk, with a long string of jet beads, which he loved to play with, hanging round her neck. She pressed him so violently to her heart, straining him so painfully against the string of beads and large jet cross she wore, that he cried out with pain, and even raised his little hand, and in childish passion struck her!—and she had dashed him off her knees, uttering strange words he could not understand, and flung herself wildly before a picture in her little room, an old, strange picture of the Crucifixion, with folding wings, upon which glowed in hues rich as the lines of sunset, quaint figures of saints and martyrs. The whole scene was present to him, the very shadows of the late summer's evening in the

little room, the scent of clematis pouring in from the verandah in richest gushes, the sounds of gay laughter rising from the room beneath. And now the door was opened, it seemed to him so suddenly ; but he must have fallen asleep upon the floor, for there he lay, his head close to his mother's harp, and all was dark in the room, and his mother was gone ; but the room was full of light instantaneously, and there was his father, looking so gay and handsome, and there were several gentlemen with him, men whose names, child as he was, he had been taught to honor with a romantic reverence, but how taught, or wherefore, he scarcely knew ; and all was so brilliant and beautiful instantly ; he was wide awake ; he had been picked up by his father, who said something which made all his friends laugh very much, and he, little Leonard, laughed very much, and then the gentlemen laughed still more ; and one gentleman, Mr. Pierrpoint, Leonard seemed to call him, had patted him on the head and said he would be as brilliant a wit as his father : and Leonard sate upon his father's knee, and flung his arms round his neck and kissed him, and then he had sung a little song to the gentlemen, whilst his father accompanied him on the piano, and his father had sung a song of his own writing, and there had been such a grand, beautiful night.

And the memories of that time were all a strange mingling of brilliancy, beauty, bitter distress and con-

tention between his unhappy parents. The gayer, the more brilliant was his father, the more unhappy was his mother. But there had been, he remembered, times, too, when his father was *not* gay, and those to Leonard had been much the most horrible times ; times when his father had sat with his head for hours bowed upon his knees, and when his eyes had such a wild look of despair in them, that Leonard had once hidden himself for hours underneath the sofa, to avoid looking at his father ; but still, when he crept out again, there his father still sate before the fire, gazing as intently and horribly as ever at it ; his feet in their scarlet Turkish slippers set upon the fender, just as he had sat when Leonard had last looked at him ; and his hands, which were white as the marble of Chantrey's bust of him, which stood on a bracket above the side-board, trembling so violently that the heavy purple cord and tassel of his velvet dressing-gown, grasped in them, vibrated like a pendulum. Oh, what strange alterations there seemed to have been in Leonard's childhood. There were times when his father had lavished money upon every one who came near him, upon his mother, upon himself ; what lovely beautiful dresses had not his father purchased for them, what groups of alabaster Nymphs and Venuses, Apollos and Mercuries, had arrived for the drawing-room, what richly-bound books and engravings for the library, what grand suppers and pic-nics had been given to all the

charming gay gentlemen, what a deal of champagne been drunk, what sparkling words been uttered ! Then there were terrible times when not a shilling was in the house. He remembered well, how once his mother had hidden herself in a closet of her dressing-room, behind a cloak hanging upon the wall, because a quantity of fruit and flowers had been brought by Mr. Pierrpoint's servant for her, and she would not be found because she had no half-crown, no shilling even, to give the bearer of the present. He remembered times when people with bills beset the house from early morn till midnight ; he remembered people coming and sitting hours and hours in the hall, refusing to leave the house without the something which they came for ; he remembered, too, how more than once a stranger had come, to all appearance a gentleman, and made himself at home most wonderfully, acting most wonderfully, for, after an angry altercation with Leonard's father, the stranger had locked the master of the house up in his own study, and, putting the key in his pocket, had taken possession of the dining-room adjoining for the whole day, reading the newspapers and writing there, and eating and drinking there most comfortably, and never unlocking the study-door till evening, when he went in and returned with many written sheets of paper in his hand, all written by his prisoner, who now came out, also, laughing, rubbing his hands with glee, and clapping his jailer on his back

as though they were the heartiest of friends. But Leonard's mother cried and wrung her hands bitterly when the stranger, laughing also, had driven away in a fine, close carriage which came for him.

Then there were times yet still more miserable : when the beautiful little house was filled with rude men, carrying away the lovely books, pictures, statuettes ; when Chantrey's bust went, when the harp and piano went, when Leonard's father was gone where no one knew, and Leonard's mother lay all night and day weeping and weeping on her bed ; and little Leonard, with no one to think of him, had played all day long among the rose-bushes and white lilies in the little garden with the greyhound Silvio. And then all brilliancy and beauty had passed out of Leonard's childhood, and a dull, ashy grayness had settled down over him and his unhappy mother, who was grown so very thin, and wore such faded dresses, dresses as faded as herself ; and they went on dull days, in a dull, moody way, to a dull, strange place, where his father, faded as themselves, but not as melancholy, was always found now among numbers of other faded men, in a place from which he never went forth, until dreary death, upon a dull November night, opened to him the gates.

Leonard's head fell upon his breast, from which burst forth a moan, as these sad, dreary pictures swam before his tearful eyes, for it was towards the scene of

all this misery, great London, that he was now plodding his weary way. What future lay before him, asked his heart; was it a future drear as this? He looked around him. It was already twilight, cold and cheerless twilight. Leonard's heart fainted within him with a sickness which only strengthened as the sounds of village life broke upon his ear, the blacksmith's cheerful hammer ringing through the twilight, and the shouts of children still playing on the green.

## CHAPTER II.

Each to each we are mysteries ;  
Nor can we guess what we may be,  
Except by what a glance can seize.

HENRY SUTTON.

It would be a curious surprise to us, could we see, laid out before us as on a chart, the intermingling lines of life, of dearest friends, of deadliest foes, of lovers, of future wives and husbands. Up to a certain point their destinies have appeared to the superficial looker-on, to themselves even, as widely separate ; yet in many an instance, could we but obtain the secret clue to the two lives, they have, unconsciously to each other, wandered on side by side, or crossed and re-crossed each other in their separate orbits with a marvellous pertinacity.

Thus Leonard Mordant was quite unconscious, as he passed through the picturesque village of Wilford, on his way to Clifton-grove, that he, in a rosy-faced urchin of some thirteen years old, encountered an individual whose fate would in years to come be singularly linked together with his own.

This important individual was opening the shutters



of one of those singularly picturesque little thatched cottages of that quaint, old-fashioned village. There was something so fresh and pleasing in the whole scene, in the bright, youthful face of the boy, with his clear, frank eyes and golden hair, as he looked out of the dusky cottage window, whilst putting back the gray shutters, in the long, dagger-like icicles hanging down from the thick eaves, with the rays of the uprising sun glittering upon them, in the pure, untrodden snow, which brought out the fresh coloring of the lad's face all the richer and brighter from contrast, that they fixed themselves deeply in Leonard's artist-soul as one of those exquisite combinations which nature is unceasingly weaving for the delight of poets and painters. Leonard observed the lad's face with an almost unconscious interest, and then sank back again into his absorbing speculations regarding his own fate.

The boy's countenance looked bright enough in the glowing beams of the morning sun ; but had Leonard chanced to pass the same little cottage some five hours later, he would have seen upon it a very different expression. He would have seen a cloud of the most decided ill-temper overshadowing those frank, clear eyes ; he would have seen that sweet mouth pouting with most unmitigated crossness ! And all that he would have remembered would have been how a little country bumpkin had bounced out of a cottage, mut-

tering in a very surly manner between his clenched teeth, and pulling very hard at a grand new red and green comforter which was tightly tied round his throat. Had Leonard cared to watch this exhibition of childish rage, he would have observed how the boy, having advanced several paces from the cottage, pulled off the comforter, striking it violently upon the ground, and exclaiming —

‘The nasty thing! I hate it, I can’t abide it — I can’t abide worsted things, they tickles one so! And that grandmother knows, *that* she does! I’d like to tear it, that I would!’

And Leonard might have seen, had he still cared to watch the lad, how the door of the little cottage again flew open, and how a tidy old woman, also very cross, appeared, shouting at the pitch of her voice, and shaking her fist at him —

‘Johnny! Johnny! I saw thee, that I did! thou bad lad! thou ungrateful, bad chap! I’ll never knit thee any more comforters — see if I will!’

‘Don’t, then, grandmother, I hate ’em! they tickles a body so!’ — and he would have seen how Johnny hereupon stamped with his heavy old shoes upon one end of the nice new comforter, pulling the other end up with his hands till he tore it in earnest. And then he would have seen how the old grandmother rushed out, and, beginning to box Johnny’s ears, ended by crying bitterly; and how Johnny, vouchsafing the

poor old soul no other comfort than the torn comforter, doggedly trudged off towards Nottingham.

It is grievous to relate such a change in the bright-faced little lad of the morning, but such, nevertheless, was the scene which occurred before the pretty thatched cottage, about one o'clock of the eventful 15th of December, 1830. And as this 15th of December is a day of considerable importance to the said little Johnny, or John Wetherley, as we must later on in our story respectfully call him, let us inquire further into the origin of this quarrel.

Johnny usually worked for a farmer of the village, but the severe frost having put an end to all out-door labor for the present, Johnny had a holiday until the frost should break up again. Johnny and his grandmother, Sally Wetherley, lived alone, and Johnny being what is usually called 'a handy lad,' made himself in his holidays so extremely useful to the old woman, that some twenty times a day she exclaimed, laughing, that she 'only wished she could keep Johnny always as her servant of all work, and live like a lady.' This very morning, after opening the shutters at seven o'clock, how busy he had been! You would never have fancied Johnny could go into a pet, had you only watched him setting the breakfast-things for his dear merry old grandmother out upon that funny black tea-tray, that stood upon the little walnut-stand before the fire, or toasting her a bit of bread, which he *buttered* with

dripping! And then, both having breakfasted, he eating 'dry bread and pull-it,' as he called it, instead of toast and dripping, he had washed up the breakfast-things like the tidiest of little servants, had chopped the wood, brought it in, fetched water from the river, had swept out the house, and peeled the potatoes for his and his grandmother's dinner, and now having been in a very great hurry to finish every thing, he said:—

'Grandmother, I've attended to all the little jobs, and I want *you* now to do something for me—will you, dear old granny?' asked the lad, coaxingly, and laying his cheek upon his old grandmother's head, as she sat warming her feet at the fire, 'I want you, grandmother, to sit quietly in your arm-chair a bit, as you do on Sundays, for I want to try to make a picture of you. I want to try to make one with the colors Mr. Brewster gave me, the day after he laughed so much at my painting the view of the church with your powder-blue and mustard!'

'Make a pictur of *me*, lad!' returned his grandmother. 'Bless thee, lad! do'st thou relly think, then, thou could'st make a *pictur* of me? But thou 'd'st better try thy hand, Johnny, upon something handsomer than my wizen old face, it's all so full of crows'-feet, and such like!'

'Now, I think, grandmother,' replied Johnny, looking up from an old tea-chest which stood in the win-

dow, and out of which he was bringing with much care a new juvenile paint-box, and several sheets of cartridge paper, 'now, I think, grandmother, that you have a very nice, dear, old face, a very *pretty* face, that I do;' and Johnny, setting down his paint-box, began kissing his grandmother upon her eyes and her cheeks, and even upon her double chin, till the merry old woman laughed so heartily, that she nearly fell off her chair. 'Yes, I do indeed think you *very* pretty, grandmother,' said the lad, still more coaxingly and affectionately; 'and you must just sit still a bit, now won't you?'

But the old woman declared so vehemently that it was not 'her natriment to sit still upon her chair,' and that 'she could n't believe it were Sunday,' that Johnny would never certainly have persuaded her to let him take her picture unless a brilliant idea had struck him, and this was to give his grandmother her knitting. And so away he ran to the drawer in an old press where the old dame kept her knitting. However, before he could open the drawer, his grandmother was after him, and pushing him away, cried, 'Get off with thy imperance, get off with thee! Thou must na come here; every one keep to their own consarns.' And Johnny, who in reality cared more about his picture than about the old woman's private drawer, and seeing her quietly take out her stocking to knit, arranged his paper and colors very contentedly, and

Sally Wetherley sitting down at last with her knitting, the important picture was commenced.

It was a clever, spirited likeness of the old woman that the lad traced upon his coarse paper; there were all the curious lines and markings of the face indicated, though most rudely, yet with such life-like expression, that the young artist glanced with surprise as he saw the success of his attempt.

‘Why, grandmother!’ cried he, ‘your face looks really, only it’s colored, like one of the three pictures in black frames that Mr. Brewster has hanging up in the room where he writes his sermons! I wish you’d only see them, grandmother. I’d a good look at them t’other night when he gave me those Penny Magazines.’ And in truth the sketch *did* resemble these pictures, which were fine etchings by Albert Dürer. The hand and eye of little Johnny were the rare hand and eye of a born-artist; but how richly endowed the lad was, neither he nor his poor old grandmother had as yet the faintest idea.

Johnny Wetherley was holding up his sketch for the wondering admiration of the good old woman, when a knock at the door suddenly disturbed them, and the door opening, there stood before the curtseying, surprised grandmother and the bashful boy-artist, a commanding-looking gentleman, and by his side a slender girl of twelve or thirteen.

‘So here we find our young *Giotto* in the very act,

Honoria !' said the gentleman, turning to his youthful companion.

'Will not his honor be seated! Johnny, Johnny, why doesn't thou run for a cheer, thou idle lad; doesn't thou see the young lady has no cheer?' ejaculated poor old Sally Wetherley, in a very great flurry, letting her knitting fall, and rubbing down her own arm-chair with her apron to offer it to 'his honor.'

But 'his honor,' who was in fact no less a personage than the Honorable Jasper Pierrpoint, of the Hellings, unobservant of all this attention, had taken up Johnny's sketch, and was examining it very attentively.

'This really is very surprising, Honoria!' observed Mr. Pierrpoint to his daughter, addressing her as though she were his equal in age; and then turning towards the old woman: 'Is it true,' he demanded kindly, yet somewhat severely, 'what you have assured Mr. Brewster, that except for the few cheap prints which Mr. Brewster has given your grandson, he has had no instruction in drawing whatsoever?'

'Bless your honor, Mester Pierrpoint, my Johnny never has had no larning but i' the Sunday-skule! Mester Brewster, sure enow, give Johnny some picturs, but what for I know na!' responded Sally Wetherley, briskly.

'Honoria,' pursued Mr. Pierrpoint, again addressing the little girl, who stood holding Johnny's sketch with a sort of proud contempt, and lowering his voice con-

siderably ; ‘Honorina, we must be careful in removing this lad out of the sphere in which destiny has placed him ; it seems certainly to me, that there is extraordinary genius in this rude sketch. *If* all be as we are assured by our excellent friend, Mr. Brewster (and these people seem honest, simple folks, incapable of deceit), we will endeavor to place the lad where he can obtain proper instruction. But we must be cautious, Honorina ; and as you so warmly desired to seek out the young Giotto, I will do all, my Honorina, in your name.’

‘But, papa, I do *not* think him a Giotto.’ And with an indescribable *hauteur*, the young lady laid down the little artist’s sketch. ‘I am disappointed, papa. I think Mr. Brewster has exaggerated ; but, if *you*, papa, think him a Giotto,’ pursued she, smiling beautifully and lovingly at her father, ‘I shall believe, of course, that I am wrong to be disappointed !’ and she laid her slender hand within the arm of her father, as he, having again taken the sketch, was once more examining it.

Johnny had undergone, during the last five minutes, extraordinary sensations. That bit of cartridge paper which had given him such pleasure when only his own eyes and the eyes of his good old grandmother had rested upon it, and upon those rude lines which had appeared to him the ‘very moral’ of his grandmother, became, the instant the eyes of these two



strange, grand, gentlefolks fell upon them, objects of horror; he wished his paper were in the fire; his cheeks burned hot as flame, he caught a sight of the sketch, and oh, it was not a *bit* like his grandmother *now!* It was like nothing; it was a muddle of blots; oh, why was he standing there! and his mouth felt so dry, and his eyes so hot; if he were only in the turnip-field at work! 'It is really very surprising, Honoria!'—the words rang through him down to his very finger and toe ends! Was his sketch extraordinary? Did these grand, clever people, who knew all about pictures, say his sketch was extraordinary! And the Honorable Jasper Pierrpoint, of the Hellings, had pictures that had been spoken of in his 'Penny Magazines!' Yes, it was like his grandmother, he saw it now, it was! it *was* like her, and he could make the pictures of every thing he saw upon paper, *that* he could, if he might only try, instead of working in the turnip-field and straw-yard! Every word reached his ear, let Mr. Pierrpoint lower his voice ever so much. *Genius!* he'd read of genius, but what was it? *Remove him?* Mr. Brewster? honest? oh, yes, *they* were honest!—*instruction?*—oh, thought he, would they only let him have instruction, he'd work night and day, he'd never go to bed, if he might only be instructed to paint and make pictures! But a Giotto! what did that mean? And then the beautiful young lady looked so proud, and *she* did not like the little

picture; and she was *quite* right! Oh dear, he wished he had never made it; he wished the ground would open under his feet and swallow him up; he felt quite 'badly like' and so confused, that when he saw his old grandmother curtseying again, and almost crying with joy, and Mr. Pierrpoint rolling up the sketch, and then holding out a golden half-sovereign towards *him* — little Johnny Wetherley! he thought he was dreaming, and in his dream could neither move nor speak, only grew hotter and hotter! and felt his grandmother pushing his elbow, and exclaiming, 'the lad's soft! the silly lad's downright soft!' And the grand folks were gone, and his picture was gone, and he had a golden half-sovereign in his hand. But, someway, he was more ready to cry than to do any thing else.

John Wetherley had begun to learn one of the many painful lessons in the artist's 'School of Life,' — a lesson which, with its bitter alternation of joy and of self-contempt, of hope, courage, and despondency, must be repeated, with many an unrelenting severity, before John Wetherley can stand forth the humble, yet self-reliant and perfect man and painter!

Poor little Johnny! he actually did sit on the ground and cry, holding the money in his hard little hand, such queer feelings were in his heart! He wanted his little picture, to look at it again; he cared more, after all, for it than he did for the half-sovereign, and yet that was very fine, and he could buy some beautiful

paper and paints with it, and a picture or two, perhaps, out of a print-shop window in Nottingham. But oh, the beautiful young lady had looked so disdainful! Poor Johnny's vanity was wounded, and the tears streamed down faster than ever.

'Why, Johnny, Johnny! where art te lad, where art te?' cried the delighted grandmother, as she came running back from the end of the garden where she had been watching the 'gentlefolks' drive away in their carriage, which all the time had been waiting for them at the end of the elm-tree avenue. 'Why thou't never a crying, thou big booby! thou'st got such a heap o' money! Let's see, lad! bless thee! but thou't a born soft'un I do believe! Let a body look at the money!' and, kissing and hugging her grandson, who stood silent, looking very unhappy all the time, she snatched the money out of his reluctant hands, and looking at it sideways as she held it towards the light, continued, in the highest glee: 'But thou't a rare un, Johnny, bless thee! I'd never a thought any body 'ud a given a half-sovereign for thy bits o' painting o' my old face. But they gave it thee, lad, out o' charity like; they seed we were getting very bare, Johnny, and Mester Brewster, he's always a thoughtful gentleman, had told 'em of us, that's it, lad! And now, Johnny, thou mun really buy thyself a pair o' stout ankle-boots, thine is got too bad, thou patched 'em up on Wednesday, I seed thee myself, with an 'oud end

o' packthread, but they 're really done for; them will be five shillings, may happen five and sixpence; and then, Johnny, I mun have a bit o' flannel for my rhu-  
matis, and that will be fifteen pence — thou 'll get good stout flannel for fifteen pence a yard, thou can go to Cook's, middle o' th' Long Row, or to Manlove's, that's not such a big shop, and they are very civil folks; and that will make, let me see, six shillings say th' boots, and mind lad, thou gets 'em big enough, with good stout nails in 'em, and them thou canst get i' Goosegate, thou knows: but stop, I've lost my reckon-  
ing; six shillings th' boots, fifteen pence th' flannel, that's seven and threepence; and bring us two ounces o' tea from Mester Fox's, the quaker's, his tea's th' best for th' money; and half a pound o' soap, and half a pound o' sugar, and that 'll make — let me see! sixpence tea, twopence th' soap, sugar threepence, that's elevenpence, that 'll make eight and twopence; and thou can buy thyself a pen'worth or two o' marbles, and a bit o' Giberalta rock if thou likes — and stop! we may as well ha' two or three candles, and that 'll make up about nine shil-  
lings, and the other shilling we 'll lend poor old Dolly White, she's so badly, and Samwel out o' work, and that 'll bring thee, lad, a blessing upon thy money! and them 're honest folks, and 'll pay it back as soon as she can go out a washing again. But really, Johnny, thou mun be downright soft, that thou mun, to look so glum, and thou so rich! Thou mun set off right sharp

for Nottingham, the taters are just biled, and here they are wi' a pinch a salt to 'em; come, make a good dinner and be off with thee! Bless thee, lad, for thou art a good 'un!' And the chattering, happy old woman, totally oblivious to her grandson's state of mind, bustled about, all the time her tongue going as fast as possible.

'I don't want no dinner, grandmother,' pettishly ejaculated Johnny, roughly brushing away from the old woman as she pressed him to eat; 'I don't want no dinner; and I wish you'd let me alone, that I do!'

'The Lord ha' mercy! bless us and save us! what's come all on a sudden to th' lad! Why he seems quite upset wi's luck. Lord, ha' mercy! The thought of's new boots has fair upset him, sure enough, and taen 's appetite. Johnny, lad! I'll tell thee what, I'm so proud and upset myself by th' good luck, that I think I mun e'en tell thee a secret, that I've had iver so long in my head, and that's *this* — lok'e, Johnny!' And with much bustle and delight she pulled out of her private drawer the splendid new comforter, all so gorgeous in its scarlet and green. 'There, lad, there! isn't it fine? and I've knitted it all i' hidlings for thee, to give thee at Christmas; but to-day's good as Christmas, it's so uncommon lucky! just look, and it's so warm, and thou can wrap thyself up in it ever so fine! I *do* think now —' soliloquized the grandmother, re-

garding her handiwork with undisguised pride, — ‘I *do* think, Johnny, it’s the very handsomest comforter as ever I set eyes on! But the lad’s gone clean off his head, I *do* believe; he never even looks at the comforter, and’s a putting on’s hat to set off, and without ever having taken bit or sup! Well, I never would ha’ thought of thee, Johnny, that thou could ha’ been so queer, never! And I have knitted this beautiful comforter for thee—I wish I’d never been fool enough—but if thou’st got the mully-grubs, I can’t help it now. Here, lad, let’s tie th’ comforter tightly round thy throat, and be off with thee, and forget none of the things, and there’s the money.’ Saying which, Sally Wetherley, knotting the ungraciously received present round Johnny’s throat till he could scarcely breathe, she opened the door, and pushing Johnny’s ill-tempered looking shoulder, forth he bounced.

And that too, as we have seen, in a tremendous rage! What a ferment was Johnny Wetherley in, of wounded vanity and a strange and galling sense of injustice which had sprung up and increased to a mighty degree within his breast, whilst his poor old grandmother was so comfortably disposing of his own especial money; a vague sense of a world, magnificent and beautiful, to which he himself did not belong, and which had now first dimly dawned upon his startled imagination, these were the chief causes of agitation. He could have wept, he could have laughed,

and could equally have gone into a passion, which was what he finally did, as we have seen, venting his strange discomfort upon the innocent comforter!

Johnny's pride rose, as his grandmother boxed his ears, to such an unusual degree, that though the sight of her tears of vexation at another moment would have broken his heart, he trudged off towards Nottingham, wishing fervently that he might enlist, might run away, might do anything, in short, desperate and bad, to punish his good old grandmother!

But the more violent Johnny's rage, the sooner it was over; and before he had reached the town he was quite surprised to find his old grandmother assuming an amiable aspect again. 'It was too bad of her though,' mused he, 'to want me to spend all my money upon her things; and to say that Mr. Pierrpoint gave us—gave *me*—that half-sovereign out of charity. He gave it *me* for my drawing, and he thinks something of my little picture, or else he would not have talked to that beautiful young lady about my having instruction!'

At the remembrance of this, Johnny's countenance cleared up so suddenly, that in an instant his face was that of the bright, fresh, innocent little lad of the morning, who opened so cheerily the window-shutters to the up-rising sun. 'Poor old soul! it was too bad of me though about the comforter! I was very nasty-tempered. I'll buy her all her things, that I will, sure

enough ; but my boots I really can't buy. I must buy those pictures, that I must, and some more paper and pencils, and then I'll make more pictures — and then, perhaps——.' But we won't follow Johnny through all his 'castles in the air;' suffice it to say, that he transacted all his business very much to his satisfaction ; and, with a yearning after his grandmother in his heart, which lent wings to his feet as he returned from the town, he entered the village as twilight was closing in.

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## CHAPTER III.

Ah, children, children ! never grieve those you love ; never lose an opportunity of doing a kindness to those you love ; never give way to bitterness and hardness, else you will lay up a punishment for yourselves which will pursue you as with a whip of scorpions ! — MARY HOWITT.

BUT how was this ? Before the cottage stood a crowd of people, and lights gleamed from the casements in an unusual manner ! Johnny's breath seemed snatched from him, his heart to stand suddenly still, all to grow dark around him, and he wildly rushed through the crowd, which sought to detain him ! ' Poor little chap ! ' rang through his ears, as if it were the voice of the crowd. He stood, he knew not how, in his grandmother's chamber. Moaning, she lay upon her bed ; her face was very white and strange ! There stood Mr. and Mrs. Brewster, there stood the doctor — oh, Johnny knew him so well ! Johnny uttered a wild cry, and clasping his hands, fell upon his knees beside the poor old woman. She had broken her leg.

Poor old woman ! *her* heart had gone through a process of remorse for her sharpness and testiness, pretty much as Johnny's had done ; and praying ' the Lord

to forgive her for being so very hard upon th' poor little chap,' she determined 'to have the kettle boiling and the tea ready by his return,' and 'she's werrit him na' more about th' comforter,—she ought t' have thought on't, that he couldna' bide worsted!'

In order, therefore, to have a regular feast upon this lucky day, she put on her cloak, and trudged off to Stafford's to buy a loaf and half a pound of treacle. It was growing dusk, and she never noticed a slide, upon which the boys of the village had been very active all day, and which was close to the shop. Down she came with a terrible shock, cutting her hand sadly with a cup which she was carrying for the treacle, and, which was much worse, breaking her leg. Her scream, as she fell, brought out Mr. Stafford and all the neighbors. She was picked up terribly hurt, as we have seen, and borne home upon a door. What an end was this to so promising a day!

We will not dwell upon the earlier portion of poor Sally Wetherley's illness. It was a season of bitter sorrow to poor little Johnny; but the time of trial brought its sweet as well as its bitter fruit. The kind clergyman, Mr. Brewster, and his wife, watched over the old woman's sick-bed like guardian spirits. Johnny was kept at home the whole winter as his grandmother's nurse. And before you found such another tender, cheerful little nurse as Johnny was, you might have sought both far and wide. Mrs. Brewster, who

had her eyes and motherly heart wide open to all that passed in the village, noticed Johnny's gentle, loving care of the old woman; and her husband having long since noticed Johnny's talent for drawing, the good old lady determined to turn it to account. Thus, one day on her visit to Sally Wetherley, she gave Johnny a quantity of card-board, some delicate camel's-hair pencils, and beautiful colors out of her own well-stocked color-box, together with a pair of handscreens, upon which were painted clusters of roses and pansies; and she told Johnny that if he would paint her similar groups of flowers upon the card-board, she would buy them from him; and that if he succeeded, as she was sure he would, she would procure him many customers, and that thus he might make a deal of money, as much, if not more, than if he were at work in the turnip-fields. You may imagine what a delight this was to the poor lad!

He was always drawing and painting now, whenever his poor old grandmother or his little domestic duties did not require his attention. The little table that stood in the window was generally covered with his work, and he would sit drawing for hours, and talking to the dear old invalid. When she began to recover, as she lay in her bed she was able to read, and she would read aloud sometimes to her grandson, the book propped up before her upon pillows. It was generally 'the best of books' that she read, or Pil-

grim's Progress. She read very slowly, it is true, and miscalled names somewhat, but Johnny in those days was no critic: the slowness only perhaps impressed the beautiful, affecting histories of the Bible, and the quaint marvels of the Pilgrim's Progress, the more deeply on his memory. Many a time in after-life did these readings recur to him; he heard the lovely blessed words falling from the dear lips of the good old woman, and they seemed words of heaven uttered in a heaven. The two hearts were wondrously knit together by this affliction and its accompanying joy. Without clearly defining it to themselves, they both felt how God often bestows the truest happiness, or rather *blessedness*, upon his children through means which appear the very opposite to happy. In the then state of their hearts, to have quarrelled about the comforter would have been impossible. Johnny never remembered that unhappy morning without a terrible pang, and yet he always *wished* to remember it; and as a lesson to himself, he hung the comforter on a nail near the window, so that it might constantly be before his eyes.

The painting of the screens succeeded marvellously, and, besides screens, Johnny painted for Mrs. Brewster and her friends needle-books and card-racks, and the pasteboard sides for bags, or *reticules* as they were called in those days. Mrs. Brewster brought Johnny a number of her own drawings of flowers; and from

these Johnny composed extraordinarily intricate groups, and borders, and arabesques : he quite astonished himself ! He used to dream at night of nothing but bouquets, of forget-me-nots, and of garlands of roses and violets. And then, when the snowdrops began to peep out of the dark mould in the parsonage garden, and there was a flush of violet crocuses in the meadows lying between Wilford and the town, and the orange crocuses in the cottage-gardens opened wide their burnished chalices, then Johnny painted flowers from nature, and was so astounded at the beauty of these lovely stars of earth, which now first revealed their wonders to him, that he was at times fairly like one intoxicated with joy and surprise.

But, though the winter was past and gone, and the joyous spring was arriving, it had not passed without its anxieties, and among them was a secret, private one, locked up in the little artist's breast. The Honorable Jasper Pierrpoint of the Hellings, and the beautiful young lady, had evidently quite forgotten him, and their intention of giving him instruction. After the first dreadful anxiety about his grandmother was over, he had so often thought about them and their words, and speculated upon them, and listened — oh, a thousand times — for their coming, and pictured to himself what they would do and say ; but they never came ! Neither did Mr. Brewster, nor yet Mrs. Brewster, speak of them. Johnny wished at times he could

forget all about them ; but this he could not, do whatever he would.

One gusty February afternoon, when all the country was dreary with the swollen waters of the Trent ; when the pale feeble rays of a struggling sun, breaking through a sky heavy with leaden clouds, gleamed mournfully upon the vast expanse of muddy waters which covered the meadows lying between the village and the town ; when there was a melancholy drip, drip, from the heavy cottage eaves, and the trees, and hedges, and gardens, had as dank and hopeless an air as in November, old Dolly White, looking in towards twilight for a gossip with Johnny's grandmother, began dilating upon the great funeral of old Lady de Callis, which her son had seen wending its way along the miry road from Nottingham towards the little village of Pierrpoint-cum-Hellings, in the church of which, built by her grandfather, would now repose the corpse of Honoria Ethelgiva Cowdery, Baroness Cowdery, Dowager Countess de Callis.

' Lord 'a mercy,' exclaimed Sally Wetherley, raising her hands piously, ' and may He give th' oud lady a seat in his blessedness, and may she taste o' His tender mercies ! And would you think, Dolly, we was born on the self-same day — th' oud Lady de Callis and me ! — that we was. And I mind me well, Dolly, when a' the country side was feasted at her wedding — my old man and me was a-courting in those days —

and we'd a fine holiday like at the wedding and merry-making up at th' Hellings. But, bless me, Dolly, you mun remember all as well as me !'

' Oh, bless you !' returned Dolly White, ' that I do ; and above all, what a fuss there was some few years later, when she left her husband up i' the north, and came back with her youngest babby — Mester Jasper — eh, Sally ? What a waste o' years lies 'tween them times and these ! and th' Hellings was all a-stir again, and what queer ways she had, with all her rearing o' Mester Jasper — th' wonder is he ever was reared at all ! She were a queer un, depend on 't. She led the oud lord an uneasy life, I's warrant ye, Sally !'

' Folks allers said,' interrupted Johnny's grandmother, who was now sitting up in her bed quite excited with her reminiscences, ' that Mester Jasper took marvellous after the old lady, and they say he's th' outlandishest ways, and's a bringing up Miss Honoria to be quite th' moral of her grandmother — bless the poor lass ! but she wanted a father to be always a-caring for her, having no mother, poor thing ! I hears she's nothing but men to teach her, and that she can shoot and ride like a lad — but she looks like a young lady, and a very handsome young lady any how ! don't she, Johnny ?' appealed the grandmother to her little grandson, who had been listening most attentively to every word of the discourse between the two old gossips.

That evening, as Johnny sat painting a bunch of forget-me-nots, he asked his grandmother to tell him all the stories about the strange old Lady de Callis and the Pierrpoints that she could remember. He had often heard things which had greatly excited his imagination, and to-night his grandmother grew quite eloquent upon a theme which was always interesting to her. And whilst she talked, Johnny arranged in his mind a scheme, and this was to make a little present to the beautiful Miss Honoria of the forget-me-not needle-book he was painting. He had heard, in the gossip of the two women, that she and her father had been away in London all the winter, and this had considerably soothed the slight irritation which he had felt whenever the name of Pierrpoint fell upon his ear. Yes, he would paint her the loveliest little needle-book, and telling kind Mrs. Brewster whom it was for, beg her to make it up for him in the prettiest way she could, with rose-colored ribbon and gold thread, as she made them up for her friends, and then, when Honoria returned from London, he would go to the Hellings and endeavor to see her.

And now a month has passed since this gusty February afternoon. The brisk winds of March have blown through the country, clearing the heavens and dyeing them with deepest azure, and summoning forth buds and bells from the vigorous old earth, and flushing the hedge-rows and groves with the russet and



violet of kindling life. Johnny Wetherley is on his way to the Hellings, with the needle-book laid, together with a variety of little pictures, in a basket, and with a great anxiety and tremor lying in his heart.

He sees the smoke rising from the many-chimneyed roof of the Hellings, which lies low among its woods ; he hears the bark of deep-mouthed hounds, ascending to him from the old mansion ; he hears the crowing of cocks shrilly pealing through the quiet morning air ; he hears and sees the innumerable rooks who fitfully career and caw around the tall elms which skirt the widely-extending out-buildings ; he sees the sunlight gleam and glitter upon the tall vane of the weathercock like a brilliant star ; he sees it gleam and glitter upon the sullen water which fills a mossy moat which on one side crosses the closely shaven grass-plats of the small but stately garden ; he sees the great hatchment with its emblazonments which hangs above the gray gateway leading up by a flagged walk to the red brick, many-windowed, many-gabled mansion ; he sees the ivy-mantled griffins which guard the gateway ; he sees a figure ; a spot of brightest scarlet ; it appears at first upon the steps of the old mansion, then there are other figures — there is a bustle — a barking of dogs — the scarlet figure is seated upon a white pony ; away it dashes, followed by two splendid hounds ; pony, scarlet figure and hounds, rush on across the green turf of the park-like pasture field in which lies the old house.

Johnny's heart leaps up into his mouth, he feels that it is the beautiful Honoria; she approaches near enough for him to see between the leafless tree branches, though still far off, how beautiful she is in her black riding-dress,—above which she wears a wondrously dainty little scarlet jacket,—in her black velvet hat and feather, and with her splendid hounds and pony. Wild as the careering rooks above her head, she gallops round and round the great field, leaping ditches, making her pony curvet and rear, free and bold as the wind which rushes through her fair hair, that in a luxuriant mass is allowed to float beneath her velvet hat.

Johnny felt quite sick at heart, he felt somehow as though he had been bold enough to think of making a needle-book, and giving it to an angel whose abode was in heaven, where no pain or poverty ever had entered, he felt so humbled, that he sank his head down among the bright fresh primroses and wild hyacinths which were springing up through the dry brown oak leaves which carpeted the thicket where he sat, and a strange discomfort gnawed his soul.

A far stranger, far bitterer discomfort gnawed the soul of another being who was pacing that thickly-wooded hill-side. Whilst Johnny had watched Honoria so gaily riding in her scarlet jacket, joyous and strong as the brisk March morning, a mournfully brooding woman had drawn near to him, her eyes cast towards the earth, but seeing nothing there — no violets, no

fresh verdure, no lovely snail-shell freshly burnished with gold and purple for the new year, no happy bird pulling bents and leaves for its building nest — those eyes only saw the phantom of a beloved, lost son.

She was Leonard's mother.

All through the winter had she ever and anon put forth in the papers appeals 'to a tenderly beloved and anxiously mourned-over absent son;' she had besought 'L. M. to communicate with his heart-broken mother.' 'As L. M. valued the earthly and eternal welfare of a parent, he was besought to write, to forgive, and all should be forgiven.' But Leonard read no paper, communicated his history to no one in the great metropolis which had swallowed him up, and thus the heart-broken mother lived on in a sickening despondency. She had quitted her brother's house and lodged in a squalid part of the town, refusing all assistance from, and all intercourse with, him. Her days were spent in restless wanderings; she had tramped the country far and wide in search of him she had lost, ever returning with a sick hope to Nottingham, hoping, longing — that the young bird might have returned weary to the nest. She was this morning upon one of her rambles; she was always expecting to meet Leonard in some sylvan haunt, she believed that she had seen his phantom many a time standing in Clifton Grove, and other solitary spots, picking up mosses and stones and flowers; and when, with wide open arms,

she had sprung towards the figure with a shriek of joy, the form had melted into a tree or bush !

Johnny heard a wild cry at his ear, a form hovered above him, he was madly clasped to a woman's heart, his eyes, his hair, his clothes were kissed ; tears, hot as molten lead, burnt upon his hands, his brow, and a pair of large, bright, flashing eyes gazed at him — and then the woman flinging him with violent indignation from her, her face changed instantaneously from most passionate love to intensest anger. He saw in giddy amaze, as he cowered against a tree-stem, the woman press his little pictures, his little needle-book, and the flowers with which he had adorned his little basket, as madly to her lips, to her heart, as she had pressed him but a moment before.

‘ My boy ! my Leonard ! they have murdered thee ! ’ shrieked in wild accents the strange woman. ‘ Thy flowers ! thy pictures ! thy dear, dear pictures ! they have taken them from thee, thou art despoiled, thou art slain ! But vengeance ! ’ shrieked she, springing up a maniac. ‘ Vengeance is mine, quoth the Lord, ’ and she sprang towards the tree where a moment before Johnny had stood. But Johnny had slipped down in horror and haste by a steep pathless bank, and leaping from point to point, and clinging by roots and ivy trails, had escaped, with the agility of terror, from the mad-woman.

Honorina was still careering upon her white pony

over the pasture-field, but he heeded her no longer ; the dogs barked with deep-mouthed echoes from the Hellings, but it was only the cry of the strange woman that rang in his ears.

Bathed in perspiration, and white as a ghost, with his clothes torn by briars and stumps of trees, panting and breathless, he burst into the cottage of his grandmother, and fell fainting upon her bed.

## CHAPTER IV.

Qui voudrait vivre, mon fils, s'il connaissait l'avenir ?

BERNADIN DE SAINT PIERRE.

HONORIA was reining in her white pony, and commencing a quiet return towards the old mansion, when suddenly a strange woman emerged from a coppice, and with wildly waving arms paused like some ancient Pythoness before the young girl. The affrighted pony reared, and infallibly would have thrown his rider, had she not been possessed of unusual presence of mind and an excellent seat on horseback. The hounds sprang towards the woman; Honoria's decisive tone of command, uttered in her clear, bell-like voice, instantly caused them to fall back; or, it might be, they fell back shivering, cowed more by a strange undaunted something in the woman, than even by the command of their mistress.

'Stand off, woman!' ejaculated Honoria, the blood with violence suffusing her transparent skin; 'do you not see how you have startled my pony?'

'Vengeance! vengeance!' shrieked the woman, heedless of Honoria's danger and her own, 'my Leon-

ard! my Leonard! my son—he has been foully murdered, girl!—look here!’ and the poor maniac held forth towards Honoria the little pictures and needle-book. Honoria, startled by these awful words, cast her eyes upon the childish paintings, and her keen spirit appeared instantly to comprehend the condition of the unhappy being before her.

‘That is sad, indeed, poor woman!’ said she, soothingly, whilst she sought to curb in her fiery little steed, which still curvetted about in a manner perilous enough for Mrs. Mordant. ‘We will try and help you,’ pursued Honoria; ‘I will ride off for help;’ and saying this she loosened her pony’s rein, and fled like an arrow towards the house.

Soon Mr. Pierrpoint and Honoria’s tutor, followed by a servant, might have been observed crossing the meadow towards the unhappy woman, who was restlessly pacing up and down upon the spot where Honoria had left her. Mr. Pierrpoint proffered his assistance, and poor Mrs. Mordant, in her frantic vehemence, mingling truth and miserable fancies, poured forth to him her distress of mind.

Mr. Pierrpoint obtained sufficient information from her incoherent speeches for his purpose. He discovered that she was the sister of Michael Stamboyse, and to the house of this well-known merchant he forthwith conveyed her.

The morrow’s gray dawn saw her removed from

Stamboyse's house to an asylum lying on the outskirts of the town.

And here for the present, in this house of woe, must we leave the miserable mother. Nothing could induce her to part with the scraps of paper covered with Johnny Wetherley's childish paintings. She had folded them in a pink-gauze handkerchief and carried them in her bosom, guarding them fiercely and jealously, as if they were an untold treasure.

Her guardians, with a wise humanity, indulged her frenzied fancies by leaving her, undisturbed, this pitiful solace. Her madness had now sunk into a lethargic misery for the most part. For hours she might have been seen crouched in some corner of her sleeping cell, or of the common ward, with her head bowed in a wild abandonment upon her knees, like one of those extraordinary figures designed by that sublime madman, William Blake, or flung upon the floor with her face lying in the dust, in the attitude of oriental worship, oblivious to the blood-curdling cries that rose around her from afflicted souls torn by frantic misery, which now vented itself in awful ribald jest, in cries of bitterest anguish, or, more fearful still, in laughter such as never issued from sane bosom. But there were also times when poor Ursula Mordant woke up from lethargy, and flinging her treasure from her bosom, would blend her cry with other cries of agony, echoing through the white mournful corridors, and ascending up to God.



But this cry of anguish never reached Leonard. Where was he? Let us seek after him.

One morning the scholars of Signor Lambelli, assembled in the rotunda of his celebrated academy of painting in London, were addressed by their worthy master in the following little set speech:—

‘Gentlemen! to-day a pupil will enter this Temple of the Muses, for whom I must, gentlemen, request your especial courtesy. Art, my dear youthful friends, we all believe, sublimates the meanest atom. As Jove, we learn, descended from the skies, assuming groveling shapes of beasts and birds to bear away the prize of beauty, so now in common life—as in the case which I am about to lay before you, gentlemen—we perceive how the highly-born, if I mistake not, and the highly endowed with genius, may stoop to perform the drudgery of slaves in order to gain admittance to the Temple of the Muses. Gentlemen, I bewilder you! In simple terms, casting aside the flowers of rhetoric, I will explain. A young gentleman last night besought admittance to me, his name, as given, is Leonard Hale, and, with a noble frankness, declaring himself unpossessed of worldly wealth, but burning with an unextinguishable ardor for the service of the Muses, he besought permission, upon any terms, to enter this Temple. He would, he declared, with eyes of pride, become a menial even, so that he might in the end attain to the rank of a disciple. I was’—pur-

sued the kind-hearted, but pompous Labelli, his voice becoming somewhat husky, his speech somewhat less florid — ‘interested, gentlemen, in the youth; his manner bespoke an earnest, steadfast love and ardor; his sketches, which he showed me, power. He would not receive his admission among you upon any terms, but those of working out a return for my instruction. He will gentlemen, henceforth perform the functions of that lazy dog, Peter; and, *gentlemen*, my dear young friends, you will evince yourselves in the reception of this *gentleman*’ — concluded Lambelli, sonorously clearing his throat as if to drive away some lingering emotion.

The good signor’s little address was received in a variety of ways: there were titterings and coughings, and there were also a few instances of noble and generous response to poor Leonard’s action, which expressed themselves in murmurs of ‘By Jove, though, there must be stuff in the chap!’ ‘We must be up and doing, old fellow, or this phoenix of servitors will sweep us out of the rotunda with the other rubbish!’

The door opening, Leonard entered, and murmurings and titterings ceased suddenly, although many glances, both bold and furtive, were cast upon him.

It was with no cowed or menial air that he advanced, but with so proud a bearing that the good signor’s suspicions regarding the youth’s noble birth might readily have been acceded to by all present. A keen fire

flashed in his eyes as they rapidly glanced over the room prepared for study, with the light striking broadly upon the rows of large-limbed casts after the antique which in calm dignity stood around the walls. Then slightly bowing to Signor Lambelli, and the color suffusing his usually pale cheek as he felt so many wondering, strange eyes rivetted upon him, he said, in a clear but low voice, —

‘ Is there any duty, sir, which I shall perform before commencing my drawing? You will, perhaps, have the goodness clearly to explain to me here, before these gentlemen, what my duties are; I wish to arrange all my work methodically, so that the one shall not interfere with the other, in order that both you and I, sir, may have satisfaction in each other.’

Signor Lambelli, with a certain bustling excitement, and an undisguised deference, then explained the mysteries of straining paper upon the students’ drawing-boards, of arranging the room for models, and various other duties of the same kind which would devolve upon the youth, —

‘ The brooms,’ observed the kind-hearted signor, lowering his voice and drawing Leonard aside, ‘ for — hem — hem — my dear young sir, you will pardon my using such homely terms — for sweeping out the rotunda, and dust-pans, and such trifling matters, I will order up here, and they shall be kept in this closet; so that, you understand me, my dear young sir — that

with the menials of my household you shall have no occasion to come in contact. As you gracefully observed last evening, 'the hand is never defiled by an action, however lowly, which is performed in a noble spirit;' we know that—we know that. But now let us set to work upon the nobler work—of course—of course, in a *noble* spirit.' And the good man drew forth an easel, and arranging an anatomical cast in an advantageous light, with love and earnestness set his new pupil to work.

'And, gentlemen,' pursued he, turning round to the considerably-surprised groups of youths who were scattered through the room, 'you will not be unreasonable in your demands upon Mr. Hale's time. I rely upon your honorable feelings, gentlemen.'

It would be needless, step by step, to follow Leonard through this portion of his career. Let it suffice to say, that he battled onward through difficulties, and through what to many a less truly proud spirit would have been humiliations, inspired by a fervent love of art, inflamed with a vast ambition, nerved up to endure all things for the accomplishment of his then sole purpose in life, the development of his latent genius, and thereby the attainment of triumphant artistic success, which should be the sign of his love to his mother, of his revenge upon his uncle.

He had, in the first instance, to run the gauntlet with various mean spirits amongst Lambelli's pupils; but

the nobler ones speedily rose as his champions, and in Lambelli himself he had ever a true and steadfast friend, who not alone imparted freely and proudly all the practical knowledge of art of which he was possessed to his singular pupil, but, with a gentle thought inquiring into the poor youth's circumstances, put work into his hands which enabled Leonard, by unceasing toil at night and in the early mornings, to earn sufficient for his slender wants. But this evident pride of Lambelli in his pupil only in another way produced thorns for Leonard—jealousy and envy of him spread among the other students. Nevertheless, silently, earnestly, at times moodily, Leonard wrought on, performing his two spheres of labor, the lower for the love of the higher, and that, too, with the conscientiousness which would have been incredible to Michael Stamboyse, had he known of it. But where a strong love rules, how easy become all things! Speedily, however, did the time arrive for Leonard to pass on to a yet higher school than that of the Rotunda—to the school of the Royal Academy, where Lambelli longed to see him entered as a student; foreseeing that much credit to his teaching would accrue to him through Leonard, and also from an unselfish interest in the youth.

And neither were master nor scholar disappointed in their expectations: Leonard's success was signal; his zeal and skill a constant subject of discourse both

among teachers and fellow-students, and the highest expectations were excited regarding his career. This phase of Leonard's life was truly typified in a bold figure which he had once sketched in charcoal upon the wall of Lambelli's school, and which for long years was carefully preserved there by Lambelli, and by later generations of students, as a relic of 'that clever fellow, Hale.' It was of a strong youthful warrior hewing his way through the world with a huge two-edged sword, his breast heaving, his youthful brows knit with a strong determination.

And thus Leonard hewed his way boldly forward, and in the struggle and emulation of the combat he could not hear the wailing voice of his mother echoing through the desolate corridors of her abode of misery.

'I shall write to my mother on the day of my triumph!' said Leonard, in his heart. And for the sake of the great joy to his mother and himself of this triumph, he silenced with a strong will the agony of his love for her, which at times threatened to overwhelm him and his ambition.

## CHAPTER V.

The traveller who from ignorance of the country or from misdirection, takes a wrong path at the commencement of his day's journey, must use double diligence to retrace his steps, and yet reach the journey's end at the same time with those who have gone straight forward from the beginning. — TRUISMS.

LET us now return to our poor little artist, Johnny. Before a month had passed from the day on which he had encountered Mrs. Mordant in the wood above the Hellings, that long-yearned-for happiness had arrived, a visit from the Pierrponts; and then a yet more marvellous bliss, his translation from the cottage of his good old grandmother to the studio of Mr. Isaac Strudwicke, of Nottingham, a portrait-painter of much provincial fame.

On a clear-skied, joyous May morning, the carriage of the Honorable Jasper Pierrpoint stopped at the turn of the lane, near to Sally Wetherley's cottage, and the old dame herself, now pretty nearly recovered from her accident, might have been seen at the door of the cottage supported on a crutch, which nevertheless did not prevent her from attempting various curtsseys in reply to Mr. Pierrpoint's words, as he conducted away

Johnny, who, attired in bran new clothes, and with a very crimson countenance, was grasping his grandmother's hand. Then one might have seen how the good old woman hobbled down, as fast as she could, to her favorite point of observation in the little garden, where, standing among the young cabbage-plants, through a gap in the hedge, she watched, with tears of pride and affection gathering in her eyes, the carriage roll away, with Johnny seated in the rumble.

And now commences, truly, a fresh chapter in the life of John Wetherley.

Often in after life did that first entrance into the temple of art recur to him, and call forth smiles, but smiles mingled with a certain tenderness. John Wetherley's maturer judgment in later years declared the studio of worthy Isaac Strudwicke to have been but a dreary, barren temple. Great names, and much technicality and conventionality, certainly adorned the teaching and the life in the temple, and many a strictly correct and conventional picture of a gentleman standing before a crimson curtain, festooned between marble columns, the said gentleman holding in his hand an open letter, or leaning it gracefully upon a table scattered over with books and papers, did Johnny study; and as he progressed under the instruction of his worthy master, aid in the creation of.

Innumerable were the crimson Indian scarfs which he industriously dashed in for Isaac Strudwicke for the



adornment of elderly ladies, both amiable and severe, who, attired in brilliant black satin, were seated upon Grecian couches—innumerable the pale blue scarfs for the young ladies in white, who, with ringlets and pensive eyes, wandered through cinnamon-colored groves, often bearing in their hands baskets of roses. Much labor also did blue coats, striped buff waistcoats, crimson curtains with ditto cords and tassels, and green table-cloths, and vellum-bound books, and massive ink-stands, afford him. But it was some time ere such delicacies of art were intrusted to the pencil of the novice.

Above all, in John Wetherley's memory bloomed two pictures of his life with Isaac Strudwicke, his presentation to his master, and the last day of his discipleship.

The carriage of the Honorable Jasper Pierrpoint, upon the bright May morning already referred to, stopped abruptly at a house in the same street as that of Michael Stamboyse, and, like it, a house bearing the stamp of the reign of William and Mary. Johnny's heart beat faster and louder, and his breath came ever thicker and quicker, and his cheeks glowed ever hotter and redder, as he followed Mr. Pierrpoint, and the demure elderly woman-servant who ushered them up the well-carpeted staircase, and through a long gallery hung and carpeted with crimson baize, and adorned with copies after Rubens, Vandyke, and Rembrandt,

made by Mr. Strudwicke when upon his continental tour. Now the door at the end of the gallery was opened, Johnny feeling as though certainly his loudly-beating heart must burst his breast, and as though every one certainly must hear, as he did, a rush as of winds and waters, which was, after all, simply the circulation of his own excited blood.

The door opened, they entered, and he saw tall easels rising up around him, from which gleamed down the contented countenances of gentlemen and ladies; he saw light streaming in a blinding shower from the upper portion of a tall window at the end of the room, the lower portion of the window being mysteriously hung with a heavy green curtain. Everywhere he saw pictures, and books, and prints, and portfolios, and ghastly-looking casts of hands, arms, feet, and heads, standing about the floor or hanging upon the walls; he saw a hideous, huge doll bedizened up with a widow's cap and a crimson scarf; and he saw Isaac Strudwicke himself.

The good old gentleman had been inspired by one of the unusual flights of imagination which, upon two or three occasions of his long and indefatigable life, had visited him. He was painting a picture which, to employ his own words, he regarded as 'idealized poetical portraiture.' It was a picture of Niobe and her children; and in order to enjoy the full force of contrast, or maybe the picture originating in the fantastic con-

tradition inherent in human nature, he had chosen as the models for his poetical picture his newly-wedded wife, the matronly relict of Jeremiah Dale, formerly mayor of Sheffield, and her two little daughters, Phœbe and Emma. Possible, also, is it that Mrs. Strudwicke's poetical mind had influenced that of her 'cherished spouse,' for she was a lady with a vein of tender sentimentality running through her comfortable being; and now, rejoicing in a second and beloved husband, and in the possession of two remarkably healthy and pretty little daughters, she poetically chose to have herself immortalized, by the pencil of her husband, as the unhappy Niobe, and Phœbe and Emma, clinging to her, in horror of Diana's arrows, as the last of her ten daughters.

Could Johnny have read the expression upon Mr. Pierrpoint's countenance when that gentleman's eyes encountered 'the poetical portrait' in progress, and the group throned before Isaac Strudwicke, the lad would have read something there very dry and sarcastic. But Johnny was in no condition to read countenances or anything else; he was fairly bewildered—bewildered by the portly dame in classical drapery, and whose plump arm, protruding from a flame-colored tunic, was wound round the shaft of a broken column, against which her stout cheek reposed; he was bewildered by the two pretty little girls dressed in blue and pink gauze, who were amusing themselves, until com-

manded by their step-father to 'pose,' the one with eating Queen's-cakes, the other with dressing her doll; he was bewildered by the vision of the painter himself, who was seated before his picture, palette and brushes in his hand, and attired in a green damask painting-gown. With the pair of round spectacles upon his nose, and with the powder he wore in his hair, altogether Isaac Strudwicke bore a certain resemblance to the well-known portrait of Sir Joshua Reynolds, a resemblance, be it known, especially cherished by the worthy man himself.

Everything bewildered the country lad, and a strange sense of humility overwhelmed him, also a feeling akin to that which had made him in the wood above the Hellings bury his face, wet with bitter tears, among the bright spring blossoms. What a world of new knowledge was opening before him!—how should he ever learn to understand all the strange things about him! And as he heard Mr. Pierrpoint's clear aristocratic voice in easy converse with this strange gentleman talking about the picture, that wonderfully *beautiful* picture, as Johnny thought, of the fat lady in the queer yellow shawl, Johnny called it—he felt how rough his own voice was, how clumsy his tongue, as well as his feet and his hands—oh, were he only back in the turnip-field or with his dear old granny! But then the thought, the intoxicating thought flashed through him—'but I'm come to learn how to make beautiful

pictures such as these around me ! and I *can* make them too, I feel sure, some day !' And Johnny's head was very erect when Strudwicke observed, ' And so, my dear boy, you would like to be a painter ?' And his voice was not at all thick and husky, when he replied, ' Yes, indeed, that I should, sir !' for it was his soul which spoke, and gave clearness of utterance.

' Yes, yes, Mr. Strudwicke, as I before observed, I trust that you will find that I have discovered a "Giotto,"' remarked Mr. Pierrpoint, with a smile, looking at the blushing boy, whose face once more had sunk upon his breast suffused with blushes.

' A Sir Joshua, a Sir Joshua, let us rather say, my dear sir,' returned Mr. Strudwicke, again peering good-temperedly at poor Johnny through his round spectacle glasses.

' I need not repeat my wishes regarding my young *protégé*, Mr. Strudwicke,' said Mr. Pierrpoint, taking his leave. ' All affairs were satisfactorily arranged upon my last visit ; and now good-by, Wetherley, and let us hear satisfactory accounts of your progress !'

## CHAPTER VI.

Ausserordentlich schwärmerische Menschen, Genies und Narren sollten gar nicht heirathen, aber die erste Liebe äusserst heiss, just bis zum ersten Kusse treiben und dann auf und davon gehen — Warte mit dem Zorne, die Gründe Kommen.

ADALBERT STIFTER.

SOME five years have calmly flowed away since this first picture was impressed upon the memory of our friend. He is grown into the youth of eighteen, and the second picture, which in maturer years called forth both smiles and a certain tenderness in Johnny Wetherley's heart, shows him reclining in a pleasant shadowy garden upon grass and among flowers at the feet of a young girl.

To his enamored eyes all that ever poets sang of love and loveliness, of nymphs, of goddesses, of shepherdesses, of angels, is embodied in the form and face of this girl, around whose soft brown hair Johnny has placed a wreath of roses. How his fingers are thrilled with a delicious faintness as he places the happy flowers upon that little head, every beloved hair of which has wound itself around his heart; how he feels a sharp pang of half-sweet jealousy shiver through him

as he looks at her little dimpled fingers pressing the dainty little needle which sparkles in the warm afternoon sun; and if those sweet violet eyes would but raise themselves only for a half moment and gaze into his, and read there all the romantic devotion welling up into them from his throbbing, warm, intoxicated heart, would not that indeed and indeed be bliss! But they rest, those dove-like eyes, with the most provokingly bewitching demureness upon the delicate muslin which the little dimpled fingers are embroidering, and the sunlight flickers through the vine leaves upon the trellis-work covering the garden-house, at the foot of which this beloved goddess is embroidering, and sharply penciled shadows fall upon her peach-like cheek from those long eye-lashes, and roses of earth never wore such marvellous brilliancy as her red lips, or breathed such perfume, and her white dress, catching the sun's rays, gleams with celestial radiance, and as Johnny lies dreaming before her, half supported by cushions, upon which he has enthroned his goddess, his soul dissolves into an ecstasy, then deepens into sadness, as he feels how in a few short hours he will have been borne away from her, his beloved idol.

London! London! fresh paths of study opening out before him! his debt of gratitude to the Pierrpoints! In this moment what were they? He had of late been seized with discontent at this eternal painting of sleek ladies and gentlemen wearing an eternal simper, and

in his heart of hearts had scorned the skill of honest Isaac Strudwicke ; and when thrills of intensest joy vibrated through his being at visions of gorgeous sunset skies, of fresh dewy flowers unfurling their delicately-tinted chalices ; of solemn and thickly-wooded landscapes, stretching away towards a vast horizon with ocean-like immensity, had not a sense of artistic power been born within him, and had he not then burst the bonds which for years had bound him reverently to his good old master's teachings ? And had not Miss Pierrpoint, as if divining this secret new-born aspiration, but a few weeks before, witnessing his flushed face and gleaming eyes, as he leant over a design by an old Italian master, which she had shown him, exclaimed, ' Mr. Wetherley has stayed long enough, too long, father, in Strudwicke's studio — he must have higher teaching — the true love of art is in him ; we shall not after all be disappointed.'

Yes, once more earnest, oracular words had been spoken by this cold, haughty Miss Pierrpoint, she whose beauty, decision, and harsh frankness throughout five years of unceasing thoughtfulness for him, their low-born *protégé*, had weighed upon him rather with pain than joy ; — and once more in her he had recognized the angel who burst the dungeon gates for him drawing him forth into the refulgence of day. His heart had bowed before her in gratitude, and for a space he had rejoiced over his approaching deliverance



from the eternal delineation of vapid faces and forms.

But as his departure for London approached, John Wetherley had discovered how bands of a far more subtle bondage than those of Isaac Strudwicke's art had bound themselves stealthily around him. He believed that now, when it was too late to save himself from a great misery and mistake in life, the scales had fallen from his eyes, and he, in full consciousness of the calm and beautiful life he left behind smiling and beckoning to him from the shore, was plunging into an ocean of troubled waters, within whose depths lay fearful monsters awaiting his destruction. What at that moment to his soul were the pearls and the rare marvels he might discover within the ocean caverns, to the familiar joys of the meadow flowers upon the peaceful shores?

'After all,' he repeated again and again to himself, 'do not I believe Love to be nobler, more beautiful than Art? Why, therefore, do I quit this beloved being; I have offended this good Strudwicke, her second father, by quitting him and his instruction at the very time when he has declared me, with noble generosity, to be his *son* and favorite pupil; even half hinting, also, how, perhaps, in years to come, I might take up his palette and step into his vacant place as second emulator of "Sir Joshua;" and that good, motherly Mrs. Strudwicke, too, am not I also bitterly ungrateful to her? and Phœbe? and — Emma?' And

his restless thoughts touching upon this enchanting goddess, and his eyes resting with bewilderment upon her radiant face and dimpled hands, he was tossed from all anchorage of reason; and duty to the stern Honoria and her father, all, all might have been lost, but for dire necessity.

Yes, John Wetherley, and now, with these thoughts teeming within thy brain, with thy lips seeking to utter words which should bear them glowing to the silly little heart of thy goddess, much gratitude dost thou owe, although thou couldst not then acknowledge it, to thy Nemesis, who approaches through the bowery garden in the guise of Phœbe Dale, the sister of thy divinity, or *Penserosa*, as she is called familiarly. 'Tea awaits us within the honeysuckle bower,' with melancholy air says *Penserosa*, closing a large book which she has been perusing, and smiling faintly at the romantic pair; and the glowing words rush back to John's heart; and, blessed interference of Nemesis, oh, John Wetherley, thou art rescued from bondage for life to an empty, pretty face, with, either for thyself miserable mental deterioration, or for thy idol of clay bitter misery and injustice!

Slowly, very slowly, the three walked towards the bower, John silently and looking very pale, his eyes fixed upon the mossy turf, which yielded to the dainty footsteps of his divinity — he was jealous even of the happy moss which dared to kiss the tender soles of her

dear little shoes ! The large and handsomely-bound volume, in which Penserosa had been reading studiously all that cloudless June afternoon, was her commonplace book, and into it she copied, as she informed inquirers, ' All the most melancholy passages from the most melancholy poets.' Apparently she had this afternoon been perusing the most melancholy of all her extracts, for her countenance wore a pensiveness more striking than even that depicted in Strudwicke's celebrated ' Poetical Portrait ' of herself and Emma, from which the two sisters had derived their cognomens of La Penserosa, and L'Allegra. Penserosa clasped her volume to her breast with nun-like air, her small head sunk upon it, her eyes resting on the earth, and thus she walked to the left hand of our unhappy lover. Emma danced along upon his right, now she had flitted off like a butterfly to gather a rose, now she had stuck it into John's button-hole, looking up into his face with such arch smiles, that had not the melancholy figure been at his side, and Isaac Strudwicke and his worthy wife been seated beneath the bower in full view of the approaching trio, he must infallibly have seized upon that terribly beautiful little face, and pressed it to his heart instead of the rose. And then she chirped around him like a merry bird, and everywhere sunshine fell upon her, and he was bewildered, distracted. Alas ! poor Johnny, thou wast in a deplorable condition ! But kind, irrevocable fate was saving thee from the syren.

Yes, although the withered remains of the rose which she had given thee for long months were cherished by thee as the most sacred relic of a saint ; although in fantastic, heavenly dreams that divine face haunted thee nightly with a pertinacious madness for a long space ; although with burning, passionate, and earnest heart, thou hadst implored from heaven the possession of her love through the long night of thy journey up to London, sitting upon the top of the coach, and gazing up into the calm sky, and towards the stern, indifferent stars, thou wast only learning one of the very earliest lessons in life's school, poor Johnny ! that Heaven's wisdom turns a deaf ear to many a mortal's prayer.

But spite of our friend's heart being tossed to and fro by the billows of love's ocean, and by the billows also of jealousy—for Mrs. Strudwicke, during the meal within the honeysuckle bower, with cold cruelty lacerated John's heart, intruding within its sensitive core the thorn of jealousy by lavishing, as she did, unbounded praise upon ' that delightful Mr. Ellis Stamboyse, whose appreciation of her Strudwicke's genius was undisguised, and who having been so greatly struck by that lovely picture of her Strudwicke's, *Pen-serosa* and *L'Allegra*, was himself going to sit immediately, '—yes, spite of these tides of agitating love and jealousy, and of the self-condemnation also called forth by the cold and silent expression of good old Strudwicke's countenance, John Wetherley had much to

arrange and think of this evening before his departure with the coach at nine o'clock.

He had to bid adieu to the kind but awe-inspiring Pierrpoints, now staying for a few days at their stately mansion in the town, Pierrpoint House, one of those handsome and dignified old houses belonging to old county families, of which Nottingham is, or was, perhaps more correctly speaking, very rich.

John, his senses in a feverish delirium, passed through the familiar streets, along which, bathed in the quiet golden light of evening, people moved gaily or loiteringly. Happy people, John thought, who to-morrow and the next day, and the next after that, would wake up within the familiar town, and who would, lying down to rest or waking, breathe the same air as his beloved! That stately, gloomy mansion of the Pierrpoints, divided from the street by its court-yard, where grew the tall poplars which shivered in the breeze of this balmy June evening, as though Pierrpoint atmosphere even to them were chilling; and where the formal grass-plats, divided at right angles by hard, straight gravel-walks, were yielding as softest velvet to any insanely erratic footstep which should dare to cross them, and where the jessamine, festooning the rich iron balustrade running up either hand of the stone steps leading to the tall portal of the mansion, gleamed forth in cold white stars from darkest hued leaves, all smote this night on John's burning breast, like ice upon a volcano.

The tall portal swinging back, whilst still the voice of the deep-toned bell vibrated through the air, and a grave, sable-clad servant replying to John's somewhat abashed inquiries, he was speedily ushered across the gleaming black and white marble floor of the hall, grim portraits of departed Pierrpoints and antlered heads frowning down upon him from the dark wainscoted walls.

And now he stood in the large dining-room. More generations of stately Pierrpoints gazed around upon him from the walls, also of dark, gleaming wainscot; and that extraordinarily beautiful, but bold-looking, Lady de Callis, of whom John's grandmother related such strange histories, and whose face was Honoria's, and yet *not* Honoria's, looked forth from among the knots and festoons of carved flowers and fruits above the high mantel-piece. The slender aristocratic, large blue-eyed boy, whose arm encircled her proud neck, seemed jealously to frown away all gazers upon his mother's singular, yet beautiful face, and that face seemed heartily to invite John's approach, then to repel him with a marvellous, enigmatical expression on its lips.

No sunlight was in the spacious room; and, though June, a fire burned upon the low, broad hearth beneath that heavily carved mantel-piece. But no fire-rays could warm up either the cold gleamings from the pictured faces, from the polished walls, from the pol-

ished Indian cabinets standing here and there, or from the polished oaken floor, which revealed itself where it ceased to be covered by a thick and richly-tinted Turkey carpet.

Sunlight had also passed away from the square of stately garden which was seen through the broad plate-glass windows lying beyond a low terrace with stone balustrades crowned with balls. Sunlight streaked the cloudlets with rose and orange in the pearly sky which hung above the garden, but within it all was cold and duskily green; a chillness hung around the sun-dial that rose in the centre of the garden; it hung among the tall, dark cypresses, upon the thick tapestry of jessamine and ivy which clothed the high walls surrounding the garden, and crept over the soft velvety turf. A deep hush brooded over the whole place without, only rendered more perceptible by the chirp of noisy town sparrows, within by the loud ticking of an ancient time-piece all gold and enamel, and by the startling fall of cinders from the fire upon the polished steel hearth.

The remains of a rich dessert were standing upon a small table drawn up near to the fire-place. There were delicious hothouse fruits heaped up in rich silver and china baskets, and rendered yet more lovely from being wreathed with leaves and flowers; and through the crystal sides of antiquely-formed decanters shone golden and ruddy wine. In that chair, with its ebony

back and crimson-cushioned seat, must that cold, awful Mr. Pierrpoint have sate, and there at his feet, upon that crimson velvet ottoman, must Honoria have nestled up to her father's knee. Could even a daughter, John thought, cling to so cold, so awful a being as Mr. Pierrpoint? or could words so cold and keen as his ever soften into love, even to this daughter?

But John was not long allowed to ponder upon the frigid Honoria, or the glowing Emma, a much more dangerous theme, for in a moment more the grave servant was conducting him into a smaller adjoining room, lined with books up to the ceiling. Seated beside the fire was Mr. Pierrpoint, sipping coffee out of a tiny cup of daintiest china. Honoria, attired in gray silk, now silvery as a gleam of moonlight, now dusky as a rain-cloud, and with her marvellously beautiful hair gleaming in the light, as if her head were surrounded with a golden glory, stood before a little table with quaintly-carved legs, pouring out coffee from a massive silver coffee-pot for an elderly lady, dressed in black, who sate beside her.

But neither the most courteous reception from this group, nor warm coffee poured from this quaint coffee-pot, worthy to have been designed by Benvenuto Cellini, and presented in a Sèvres cup by the fair Honoria, nor yet Mr. Pierrpoint's wise advice upon this, the new chapter in his art-life commencing for him, could set the poor youth at ease, or thaw the ice



within him ; no, not even Mr. Pierrpoint's parting gift of 'Gilpin's Forest Scenery,' nor yet, much more, the parting words and action of Honoria.

With a sudden glow, as of a reflected sunset upon her white brow and among her crisp golden hair, — 'Father,' said she, slightly turning towards Mr. Pierrpoint, 'remember that our copy of Albinus, which Mr. Wetherley was so much interested in the other night, is to be lent to him, until he is rich enough to purchase one for himself. It is already packed ; shall I order it to be carried to the coach-office ?' and turning towards John with a certain swan-like action, as she drew up her noble figure — 'Mr. Wetherley,' she pursued, 'my father imagines that Mr. Strudwicke has given you no anatomical instruction ; now you must earnestly begin to study anatomy. Without such knowledge you can be no artist, and were I one, or wishing to become one, I would never rest until Science had yielded to me her strength, as Poetry should yield to me her beauty. Let "*thorough*" be your motto in art and in life. Old Albinus shall aid you. Neither books nor human beings have a right to waste their lives, both should ever be in useful activity ; Albinus will be doing his duty more by accompanying you to London than by stopping to moulder in a rich binding upon our shelves. *You do your* duty by him. But remember, he is only *lent*, not given. Take care of him, both because he is a loan

and because he is an excellent work, worthy of respect from you. And now, Mr. Wetherley, good-by; we must not detain you!’

About an hour and a half later, the London coach, rolling along with Johnny and Albinus upon its top, was stopped by a little cart standing at the corner of a lane in the gathering twilight. An old voice cried out from the little cart, ‘Good-by, my dear lad — again, good-by! Samiwel brought me for a last word. Bless thee, my lad! — and here’s a nice pasty for thee, poor chap!’ And then a warm packet, wrapt up in a spotlessly clean blue and white checked handkerchief, was handed up to Johnny by the laughing guard. Away rolled the coach towards London, but the little cart stood in the dust until the last sounds of hurrying horses and wheels died away. But neither Albinus, Honoria, nor the pasty, nor yet its giver, occupied the thoughts of John as he sped along towards London.

## CHAPTER VII.

After brief space  
From every form the beauty waned ;  
From every firmest limb and fairest face  
The strength and freshness fell like dust, and left  
The action and the shape, without the grace.

SHELLEY.

TOWARDS the end of December, 1835, Leonard completed his competition picture for the gold medal of the Royal Academy. He had withdrawn himself entirely from his fellow-students, and living absorbed in his work, had been almost lost sight of by them for the last several months.

The subject chosen for competition, was St. Michael and St. Margaret appearing to Joan of Arc, and announcing to her the astounding future, whilst still the simple shepherd-girl was yet tending her flock. Leonard's imagination had keenly entered into the devoted enthusiasm of the young girl, who having once heard heavenly voices announcing her sublime mission, steeled her soul and sense against every allurements of earthly love, home, and kindred, to obey the celestial behest; accomplishing through the might solely of obedience, faith, and enthusiastic love,

a work almost miraculous. Leonard in imagination had completed a series of pictures illustrative of her career, treating her almost fabulous history from his own peculiar point of view ; making her conquer alone through the power of spirit ; making her vanquished when she had fallen from her immaculate throne of spiritual beauty, by faithlessness in the spiritual voices, and by the desecration of her inspired hand through the shedding of blood.

But the sole picture of the series completed was the 'Announcement of her Mission,' another development of that thought which Leonard had sketched upon the wall of the little chamber in his uncle's house, the arousing of a dormant soul to action. He had lived, whilst painting, wrapt in a golden mist of poetry, filled with entire faith in his creations and filled with a restless eagerness. Now, when his picture stood completed, the mist parting, his picture, as if struck by the wand of some evil magician, faded and shrunk before him into meagreness and poverty. A bitter contempt of his picture induced him now to turn aside from it with disgust, to forget it utterly, and its destination, to leave in imagination that London room behind him, with the sickening roar of wheels rising ever up through its dingy window, to stand within a solitary wood, with pure snow and ice around his feet, with solemn, leafless trees above his head, with a sharp winter's breeze striking upon his burning brow, to

stand upon the gypsum cliff in Clifton-grove, as he had done five winters before, to silence, but for one hour, the cry after his mother, to silence, but for one hour, the unappeasable longing which devoured his heart's core! That bitter reaction of spirit had overwhelmed him, which, sooner or later, follows upon the accomplishment of any arduous mental labor. Leonard buried his face in his hands, and wept like a child. Still sitting with bowed head, the door of his little room opened, the Professor of Painting, together with Signor Lambelli, stood before him. He had not heard their preparatory knock, so absorbed had he been in his reflections. The professor's eyes rested upon the picture.

'Good, Lambelli,' said the professor; and an unmistakable smile of benevolent satisfaction played about his lips. Lambelli rubbed his hands, and commenced criticizing in a remarkably lively and energetic manner. Leonard meanwhile stood coldly aside, a strange contempt swelling within his breast. Could then this faded shadow of his dream call forth aught but censure from the lips of men possessed of knowledge? Could he not, even then, accept with gracious thanks the censure which Lambelli passed upon his picture, when it was *censure* rather than *praise* which he desired? No; for the censures passed upon it were censures for mere technicalities, and the censure cast by his own spirit was the failure of his ideal!

‘You have overworked yourself, Hale,’ remarked the professor, cordially taking leave of poor Leonard. ‘He may wear a brighter look, may he not, Lambelli, when next we see him?’ and the visitors were gone.

The professor’s few words, and his manner still more, had conveyed to Leonard the conviction that the gold medal would be awarded to him. But no longer did this medal appear an object worthy of such eager quest as it had done but a few hours before, for the crowning satisfaction, peace in his work, was wanting. ‘How easy to do better—ten-fold—than this miserable picture!’ muttered Leonard bitterly to himself.

‘My mother! and will this have been my first triumph for which I shall have wrung thy heart! I have looked upon this as an earnest of future success—what if it be but an earnest of future bitter disgust!’

Leonard paced up and down his dingy room with steps strangely akin to those of poor Ursula pacing her son’s deserted chamber five years before. Suddenly he paused, a deep flush passed across his face, and the muscles of his mouth worked with a nervous spasm. He seized his hat, and rushing down the stifling staircase, was soon rapidly pursuing his way along the crowded streets. He walked like one in a dream. The roar of omnibuses, cabs, and carriages; the murmurs of the thousand dissonant voices of the great city grated upon his over-wrought nerves, till he

was filled with a feverish anguish, the foreshadower of delirium. His eyes, when they unclosed to outward objects, fell only on the squalor of great London; mouldering, slatternly marine stores, gin-palaces, pawnbrokers' shops bursting with their rich produce of misery, doctors' shops and hospitals. Now he encountered a sick person borne along through the bright sunshine in a curtained litter, from which the passers-by by shrunk with loathing dread. Leonard's imagination piercing through the dusky canvas curtains, descried the woe-struck, disfigured countenance of the sick; and strange, too, to his imagination, it was like the face of his mother! Leonard's eyes fell upon a placard pasted on a pump: 'If this should meet the eyes of Sarah L——b,' read Leonard, 'who left her home on Sunday, 15th of December, she is earnestly besought to return to her afflicted mother; or to communicate at least by letter. As she values the life of her heart-broken mother, she is implored to communicate. Through the blessing of God, may these words speedily meet the eyes of S. L. Soon it may be too late!'

As a dagger these words had pierced to Leonard's soul—to him *his* mother it was who implored him to communicate with *her*; the old pleading tones of her sad voice, with which, as in years gone by, she had implored her unhappy husband, echoed in his brain; and the voice ever ringing through his ears, Leonard

sped on : and as he moved rapidly through the fresh wintry air, coming out into the Regent's Park, the straight formal alley of which he restlessly paced up and down, oblivious to the gaily attired children there, eternally trundling their hoops, and to the nursemaids who criticized his gestures and his shabby clothes, his thoughts formed themselves into a burning letter to his mother, which he immediately would despatch. In fancy he saw her vehement joy as the boy in the canary-colored jacket presented to her, whilst sitting at her little work-table, the long-expected letter in the beloved hand-writing of her son. He saw the quivering of her fingers as she tore open the seal, the tears of joy and love showering down upon the paper. The might of yearning was so strong within him, that all thought of triumph over his uncle was thrust aside — love, deep love alone, held dominion in his being.

Leonard, with a fevered cheek, paused at a small stationer's shop in Albany-street, and entering, bought paper, and there indited a few lines of warmest love, dwelling but slightly upon his own career, though proudly announcing that so far it had been crowned with as much success as even he could have anticipated ; but the essence of his words was the yearning love which flamed up within him, and which, smouldering these five long years, now threatened to overwhelm all other passions in its sudden outburst.

The expression of a deep emotion, whether by writ-



ten or by spoken words, has an almost magical power of relief to certain impulsive and passionate natures ; and Leonard was of such a nature. Having written his letter and posted it, a calmness settled over him ; and the joy which he believed his words would cause his mother, shed for a short time a celestial peace within his soul. He began, however, soon to anticipate the arrival of her reply, and to count the time which probably would elapse ere the receipt of it—perhaps even she herself might reply in person ! The possibility of resentment for his long silence and desertion never, for one moment, presenting itself.

Posting the letter, Leonard reminded himself that his very meagre funds were just exhausted — but one half-crown remained. This, however, was a usual state of affairs with our poor hero ; and as now for several years, by means of rigid economy and constant hack-work, in which he conscientiously employed a portion of his time, he had maintained himself, it was but a small matter of anxiety to him. In fact, so much had the writing of his letter restored Leonard to his natural state of mind, that he called, before returning home, at a publisher's, for whom he was in the habit of making ornamental designs, from the emblematic cover of an annual to the frontispiece of the last new cookery-book. To-day he obtained certain orders for designs of an equally elevated class ; and, retracing his steps homewards, he mentally arranged his little designs,

looking at the fruiterers' and florists' windows and stalls in Covent-garden market, to obtain hints, these designs being destined to adorn Macalpine's 'Growth of Hothouse Fruits.' Purchasing a spray of vine with sixpence of his last half-crown, and having lingered with an artistic enjoyment of the rich combinations of form and color displayed by the fruits and flowers, he hastened home immediately to commence his sketches; for until a certain number were received by his employer, no more money could Leonard obtain. The publisher for whom Leonard had now worked for several years, and whose system, wise and upright, had been a moral training especially healthful for our hero's desultory nature, most sternly refused all payment in advance, as strictly, however, and as justly, paying for Leonard's labor so soon as the work accomplished was received by him.

The necessity of labor gradually wrought its holy work within poor Leonard's breast; his morbid horror of his picture slowly decreased; he drew and drew, and a healthier pulsation was in his blood. The time arriving for him to send off his picture for the competition, this was done, but almost as a matter of indifference; and then, with coldness, resuming his pencil, he drew and drew, leaves, fruits, flowers — flowers, leaves, fruits, with marvellous patient industry. But his ear became hourly, daily, keener; and restlessly he would resume at times his agitated pacings of his room; and

the postman's sharp knock at the door of the house where he lodged, and all down the street, made him start and breathe quickly, and a sick giddiness to gather over his eyes. But no letter arrived as yet. 'Who knows?' said Leonard in his heart, 'perhaps she is from home; if she had received it, one thing I know — silent she would not remain. But who knows? — who knows?' asked he a hundred times an hour of his heart. Yet that this silence could proceed from death or any grievous evil he denied to himself sternly, angrily. 'No; he was only over-impatient; or, it might be, his uncle ——' A violent burst of unrestrained anger, uttered in loud words within his solitary room, startled himself, and broke the completion of his supposition.

The distribution of prizes had arrived, but no letter. At the important hour Leonard attended in the amphitheatre of the Royal Academy, and with him the scarcely-acknowledged anxiety gnawing his heart's core unceasingly. He seated himself far up among a group of students, in as unobtrusive a place as possible. He was greeted with questions innumerable, and merry jokes about his hermit's life; words seemed to buzz about him like a swarm of flies. The amphitheatre was crowded; the hum of anxious suspense died away; the ordinary preliminaries were gone through; the president addressed the students. During the address, Leonard recognized the kind-hearted

Lambelli peering anxiously about through his eye-glass. He knew that he was the object of the good man's anxiety. Leonard wondered how it was possible for him to feel so little excited, so wholly indifferent ; but his strongest feelings were for the time swallowed up in a vast discomfort. His head sank on his breast, and the old brooding recommenced. He was aroused by hearing his own name clearly enunciated by the president ; then it was repeated around him with a confusing hum. He was pushed forward ; there were acclamations on all hands ; he was the successful candidate. But the triumph was a cold, joyless one, with this worm of anguish gnawing at his heart's core.

Slipping away from his congratulators, Leonard hurried home. The slatternly girl opening the door, holding in one hand a flaring candle, with the other gave him a letter, which she took up from a begrimed slab in the passage. The handwriting of the address was bold and masculine, and not the peculiar, delicate one of his mother. Leonard paused various times whilst ascending the staircase to his room, turning the letter round and round. The post-mark was Nottingham. A weakness crept into poor Leonard's knees, and his lips grew parched. He unlocked his door with an unsteady hand, closed it, dropped upon a chair beside the table strewn with the Macalpine sketches, the candle swealing down the stick in long gutters of grease, and with the lamps from the street gleaming in

balefully through the uncurtained window. Leonard gazed upon the letter. 'God! God! be merciful!' he muttered in low, hoarse accents — and still his eyes rested upon the unopened letter held in his trembling hand. At length, slowly breaking the seal, he read—

'Nottingham, December.

'DEAR LEONARD, — Your letter to Mrs. Mordant of the 8th instant came duly to hand, and, in consequence of your mother's state of health — or rather, state of mind — I was compelled to break the seal and become master of its contents, which, under existing circumstances, you must pardon. Being absent from home when your letter arrived, a slight delay in my reply has, unavoidably, been occasioned.

'The perusal of your letter shows me that you are not aware of the unhappy state of your mother. She has been an inmate of the lunatic asylum of this place for the last four or five years — in fact, almost immediately from the time of your leaving Nottingham.

'Of your circumstances since that time, we have had no intelligence, but it is satisfactory to perceive by your letter that you are doing well. To the painful occurrences connected with your hasty departure, I do not refer further than that your mother's derangement dates from that time, and from the distress of mind occasioned by your unaccountable silence. You are not aware that your uncle has left Nottingham, and is now residing at Hamburg.

‘I shall take an opportunity of communicating to your poor mother that news has been received of you.

‘It may be satisfactory to you to know that all suitable and necessary attention is paid to your mother.

‘Dear Leonard, yours truly,

‘ELLIS STAMBOYSE.

‘P. S. — It is painful to me to find that you have changed your name, as no good can possibly accrue from such disguises.’

Like one transfixed with the spear of his enemy, Leonard writhed with agony, whilst his eyes perused these fearful words, the very straightforwardness of which tore every germ of hope from his breast.

Dropping his head upon the table, Leonard remained sunk in the depths of utterest bitterness. The candle flared and flamed — then the wick lengthened into a glowing and spectral fungus, and the light grew dim. And hour after hour was tolled mournfully from the near church-tower; and the footsteps of passers-by had long since died out of the streets, and the candle sunk in its socket, sending forth fitful glares across the melancholy room and athwart the melancholy bowed youthful head; and the stench of the expiring wick made the air thick and noisome. But Leonard stirred not. Like one dead, except for a keen throb of agony which ceaselessly stirred within his soul, he sat throughout that long December night with his head bowed upon the sketches, which became blistered with his tears.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Bewildered and incapable, and ever  
Fancying strange comments in her dizzy brain,  
Of usual objects. — SHELLEY.

ELLIS STAMBOYSE had just returned home from his wedding-tour to the old house in —— street, now all freshly painted, and refurnished with the most comfortable and most ponderous of costly furniture for the reception of its new mistress, when he had read poor Leonard's letter, and indited his reply. Within the newly-furnished dining-room, the scene of Mrs. Mor-dant's altercation with her brother, and of Leonard's with his uncle, were seated the newly-married pair upon this the first evening of their return. L'Allegra, more beaming than ever, had, with an arch grace, which truly would have driven John Wetherley utterly distracted could he but have seen it, poured forth un-numbered cups of tea for her loving husband. Luckily, however, John, more than a hundred miles away was sternly absorbed, forgetful of the lovely being, in drawing by gas-light with might and main from the model in Lambelli's rotunda. Then flinging herself back in a low and softly-cushioned chair near the

brightly-burning fire, the young bride first admired her dainty feet placed upon the fender, sunk deep in the white fur which lined the loveliest of scarlet embroidered slippers; then she had drawn a little scarlet mantle, trimmed also with white fur, over her round white shoulders, for the night was cold, even within that most comfortable and wealthy abode; and every now and then she glanced with a pretty pettishness at her husband, who would so pertinaciously read the heap of letters awaiting him upon the mantel-piece. 'It was very provoking of Ellis, to forget his dear pet that very first evening, she would scold him for it, that she would, the first instant he laid down those dreadful letters;' but a sternness sat upon his face, as he read letter after letter, and L'Allegra had secretly a little fear of Ellis's sharp clear voice, and of that determined, strong look upon his brow and lips. His very hair had determination in its crisp, dark-brown curls, and his short figure was stronger than that of many a giant. Ellis Stamboyse was no man to be interrupted by his lovely, beautiful little bride, thought L'Allegra. L'Allegra watched him, and then amused herself with thoughts of all the bridal gaiety awaiting her; and then again watched Ellis; but he seemed quite to have forgotten her; his face had become sterner than ever; he had risen, and, after standing in deep thought, with an open letter in his hand, before the fire, and bringing an inkstand and paper to the table, had, after another



pause of deep thought, begun slowly writing. L'Allegra's eyes closed, and she fell into a gentle sleep, with her pretty profile, as it lay upon the cushions, gilded by the flickering fire-light. Ellis having folded and sealed his letter, rose, and with hands crossed behind him, like a youthful image of old Stamboyse, paced slowly up and down the room, as the elder Stamboyse had done a thousand times before him. Then, suddenly pausing beside his sleeping wife, an unusual expression of tenderness suffused his whole countenance — a strange look, akin to that of Leonard — a look, as of a transfigured soul, shone through his clearly-chiselled features, and bending over the unconscious girl, his lips pressed her brow with profound tenderness, and a prayer ascended up from his soul, 'God, enable me worthily, unswervingly to fulfil towards this poor child the awful responsibilities which I have taken upon myself, and enable me to strengthen her. What unutterable miseries flow from an unworthy, an unconscientious marriage. Thou alone knowest, for Thou "visitest the sins of the parents upon the children to the third and fourth generation."' When L'Allegra woke up, she flung her arms around her husband's neck, and her red lips kissed his broad forehead a dozen times; because he was 'such a dear creature, and had put away his tiresome letters!' Ellis drew her towards him, and looked quietly at her, with such a grave smile, yet so full of love, and without

speaking a single word, that L'Allegra exclaimed, between laughing and crying, 'Oh, Ellis, you *are* so queer! I wish you talked more! You are not half as amusing as John Wetherley used to be. Poor John! I wonder, now, what he is doing?'

In the sumptuously-furnished dressing-room of L'Allegra, where tall mirrors reflected back the blazing fire which careered up the broad chimney, and where massive wardrobes stood with open doors and drawers to receive the rich dresses which a half-unpacked portmanteau displayed; and where the softest of curtains and carpets, and the easiest of chairs and couches, and innumerable toilet knick-knacks, prophesied a life of luxury for the young wife, sat another being, who wondered what John Wetherley was doing. But in her heart he was 'dear, beloved John;' 'the adored,' 'the tenderly-cherished John.' Need we say, that this was poor Penserosa! She looked very pale and meek, and seemed as though she had been suddenly struck by some idea whilst arranging her sister's dresses in the new wardrobes, and had sat down by the fire to complete her meditations;—

'God hath his own great plan:  
And joy and suffering  
Are his commissioned discipline of man!  
Each is the seraph-wing  
That lifteth from the clod;  
That to the angelic band,  
This to a higher sphere, the sphere of God.'

Murmured Penserosa to herself, 'those are lines by Mordant, the poet. I remember well copying them into my book — it was the day that dear John stole Emma's ringlet in the studio behind the Indian screen, and I saw him press it to his lips. I did not know at that time what comfort some day I might find in these lines. I suppose life may be a school, and that "God hath his own great plan."'

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'Tell them I can see NO ONE, that I am ill — NO ONE! Thank the gentlemen for their kindness — but see them I CANNOT!' spoke Leonard, the morning after his triumph and misery, through his locked door to the servant-girl outside.

'But it is not the gentlemen, sir, as comes generally; but somebody, sir, as wants very particular to speak with you — very particular, indeed, they says; and says, sir, I must give this here card. If you was well enough to read the card, they says, you'd maybe see 'em. I'll shove the card under the crack of the door, sir, they is so very pressin.' And the card duly appeared beneath the door.

With a mechanical listlessness belonging to a soul's misery, Leonard unconsciously bent down and picked up the card, and mechanically he read the well-known name —

'Mr. Andrew Gaywood.'

As a drowning man clings, it is said, to a straw, so

in a great misery does the sinking soul snatch madly at the faintest comfort held forth towards it. Andrew Gaywood was the sole loving heart of that hard Stamboyse time ; the name foretold only love and sympathy. Leonard opened the door. There, close upon the threshold, stood—not the poor deformed, mild clerk of Michael Stamboyse's office, but—a tall, mild woman !

‘ Who is it that dares to pry into my misery ? ’ exclaimed Leonard, with a harsh, grating voice, and with the blood rushing into his haggard face.

The servant-girl, lingering to listen near the door, glided away down the stairs to lean over the banisters, there, duster in hand, still unobserved. But the tall, mild woman, whose gentle eyes filled with sudden tears, stood yet more erect, and calmly holding forth her hands, seized those of Leonard.

‘ Leonard,’ spoke a deep voice and mild as the eyes ; ‘ Mr. Leonard, I know your bitter misery, therefore am I come to you. I am Andrew Gaywood's sister ; no human heart must be left in this great London friendless and desolate. Human sympathy and aid are God's angels upon earth ; long have we sought to obtain a clue to you—my brother in Nottingham, I here. Your letter to Mrs. Mordant gave the clue so long required. Mr. Ellis Stamboyse was little aware of the importance of his information when he communicated the intelligence which he had received from you to Andrew.’

As Lucretia Gaywood continued to speak, with an earnestness of love and sorrow indescribable permeating her every word, the anger died out of poor Leonard's heart. He had again entered his room and sunk his head upon the table.

Lucretia drew near him, and as she stood, calm and yet filled with a deep compassion, strength, refreshment, as from the presence of an angel, seemed to go forth from her, and raise up his fainting spirit. Sunshine fell in through the window, which Leonard, in his fevered panting for any external alleviation of his misery, had flung wide open. It brightened and brightened, filling with almost summer gleams and spring mildness the desolate room.

'We believed that you would wish, at all events, to see your poor mother,' said the compassionate tender voice; 'and we knew that the life of an art-student was hard and bare of means; therefore, if you will permit Andrew the favor of begging you to accept a few pounds of ready money from him: he has received so many and so great favors for these years from your house, and he has such earnest respect and affection for yourself, that you will not pain him by a refusal. It is here,' she pursued, laying a small purse upon the table; 'and if there were the slightest thing by which I could aid your immediate departure, believe me it would be a relief to my heart; for your affliction has long been a vast anxiety to us. Were

alone yours the sufferings of a stranger I should be earnest in my offers of sympathy ; but with *you* I am more than earnest, for you are no stranger to me ; and as the son of Augustus Mordant, you have a claim upon all reverers of beautiful poetry.'

Leonard accepted this gracefully-proffered aid with that warm acknowledgment of a generous sympathy which is its truest reward.

The following evening Leonard started by coach for Nottingham ; Lucretia having, in numerous ways, which alone can be divined by an affectionate woman's heart, rendered the preparations for his journey as painless as possible to him. She had also written, begging her brother to meet Leonard at the coach-office ; which he did. And, though but little more than a tight pressure of their hands passed between them, and but brief words were spoken, Lucretia's thought had produced its good fruit.

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Mrs. Ellis Stamboyse and her sister, and good, bustling Mrs. Strudwicke, were marvellously busy with the heaping up of rich bridecake in a silver basket, with gossip, and with preparation of the drawing-rooms for the reception of wedding visitors, during the hour that Leonard, with hurried footsteps but lagging heart, hastened out of the town in the direction of the asylum. The sunshine gleamed upon its many windows, as he neared the house of woe. A clear blue sky circled

over it, and a flight of pigeons, with wings gleaming as the wings of angels, soared up in whirling flights above its prison-roofs. Leonard's eyes noticed everything, every grass-blade tipped with rime, which nodded along his pathway ; every fleecy pile of cloud which rolled through the azure heaven. And now he waited in a small sitting-room, where the patients received their friends. With the same dull, mechanical perception, Leonard here noticed the cards stuck in the frame of a ground-plan of the establishment hung above the mantel-piece, and also he noticed that the fire-irons were chained to the stove, and that the window was very high and closed in with bars.

The door opened, and, mechanically turning round, he saw, whilst a great trembling seized his soul, that his mother entered. Except that she was so very thin, and a certain mist hung within her restless eyes, he saw no change in her as she approached him — for she looked but little older, and had always in years past, a certain wildness in her dress. But it was as a stranger that she addressed her son. This cut poor Leonard, as with a sharp knife, to the very bone. He, it was, whose features were convulsed with emotion.

‘ You have done me the honor, sir, of calling upon me — pray be seated ; ’ said the poor mother, waving her hand with a strange grace towards a chair. ‘ Visitors are unfrequent now in the world ; but I do not wonder that they should not come **HERE** to see me,

though I am the widow, sir, of Augustus Mordant — the poet's widow — for there are sad and terrible things done here. Had my son lived, sir; — but, we won't talk about THAT — he was murdered — MURDERED — MURDERED!' and hoarsely muttering to herself the terrible word, she sunk upon the floor, oblivious to all but her anguish, and her frame quivered, as if she were seized with ague.

'Mother dear, — he is here!' said the stifled voice of Leonard, and he pressed his white lips to her poor thin hands; 'I am your Leonard, only look at me, mother.' But springing up like a tigress, the heart-broken mother seized her son fiercely by the shoulders, and with flashing eyes uttered a wild yell — 'YOU — YOU MY SON! YOU are his murderer!'

The door flew open — a tall man seized upon Mrs. Mordant, and holding her poor hands tightly in his grasp, motioned with his head for Leonard to retire.

Leonard waited no longer; the last drop of misery was added to his cup, and in truth it flowed over. Pacing up and down the hilly fields around the asylum might Leonard have been seen during the whole of that day. He was unable to tear himself away from this place of woe — such a mighty pity for that suffering soul, swallowed up his own misery. Doubts of all that is holiest at times assailed him; bitterest scorn of his own importance stung him; all anchorage seemed lost for his soul. To have believed in utter annihilation



after death, and to have sunk into a dull oblivion, was all that he desired. The beauty, the perfection, the cheerfulness of nature seemed a cruel mockery of man. No oasis showed itself in the desert of his life ; yet, as in the house of death, the mourners rise up and lie down, partake of meat and drink, and take heed of the morrow, so did the body of Leonard mechanically pursue its course, whilst the soul lay dead. Back to London went the body, re-entered the dingy lodgings, and recommenced a dull, soulless existence. Ambition had vanished, hope and love ; he never asked himself whether they would any day return.

Leonard sternly refused all intercourse with his acquaintance, and changed his lodging, desiring to be lost in the great vortex of London. Much astonishment did his sudden disappearance after his triumph occasion to the academy students and the professors, and especially to good Lambelli. But in London the greatest wonder only remains a wonder its proverbial length of time — nine days.

‘ He was always a queer fellow, was Hale, he ’ll be turning up again some of these days, never fear,’ was the consoling refrain to the wonderments of his acquaintance.

Lucretia Gaywood, however, could not so easily be silenced. Leonard, on his return, was too unobservant of external things to notice an air of freshness and of order which reigned in his room ; that all his books

had been dusted and arranged ; that all his brushes had been beautifully washed, and his paint-box put into nicest order ; that sketches, tumbling about, had been cleaned and laid together ; that a fresh cloth was laid upon his table, of a beautiful dull crimson ; and that various rents and rags had disappeared from the hearth-rug. Neither did he notice that a new block-tin coffee-pot stood on the accustomed spot of a leaky old one, which for several years had been a comforting friend of his. Alas! grief, which so often renders the kindest of hearts unkind, had rendered him blind to the ministrations of two bright angels, who, during the days of his absence, had worked with busy fingers and sorrowing hearts for him — the angels Lucretia and her little sister Mary.

## CHAPTER IX.

'Throw away Thy rod,  
 Throw away Thy wrath,  
                                   O my God!  
 Take the gentle path,  
 O let wrath remove,  
 Love will do the deed;  
                                   For with love  
 Stony hearts will bleed.'

GEORGE HERBERT.

A GREAT crisis had arrived in the life of Leonard; he was suddenly become the grave and fully developed man. Treading the path of earthly sorrow which our Blessed Lord deigned to tread, our poor hero had become in due time 'a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.' Gradually through that dull time loomed forth the truth of many things, and, with truth, a certain hope. 'Knowing what pain is, having involuntarily caused a pain unutterable, if there be a God of love and mercy, may that God avert from me the bitter curse of further increase of pain — may my life become not a curse, but each day, each hour, exist innoxious, if not bless-

ed through the power of creating joy,' thought unceasingly the soul of Leonard. Unceasing ponderings upon these things absorbed his spirit; the seeds of the peculiar misery of his own and of his parents' miserable fate, he traced down to their source, seeking with prayers and with an agony as of 'bloody sweat,' to disentangle the mournful skein of their lives.'

The only remaining motive of his soul, during these long months, was this stern resolve to avoid causing a pain or injustice towards any human being, and this alone impelled Leonard to exertion. In order honestly to pay for the slender requirements of his life, he unceasingly made the description of designs for the publisher already mentioned. To begin any great work of imagination seemed to him a mockery—the glory of his earlier aspirations was gone, and he remembered his fervor of but a few months back with a sort of pity. How long this frame of mind might have continued, had Leonard been left undisturbed in this strange and brooding life, we know not. But the seeds of earnestness having been sown by the angel of Pain in his soul, now came the angel of Pity to call them into life by her warm smiles, and by her tears of sympathy.

Leonard was drawing, as usual, one April afternoon, with a dull monotony of hand, and with his thoughts far away, when suddenly once again the angelic vision stood in his room.

‘You must pardon our intrusion,’ said Lucretia’s mild voice, ‘but we have been very anxious about you, and Andrew has insisted upon our disturbing you. We have brought you a little bit of nature, Mr. Hale, to tempt you to come out with us and see what pleasant things are going on in the world, which we are all of us at times apt to forget. Where is it, dear Mary?’

And Mary, a girl of fifteen, with the most modest of deep hazel eyes, brought up from beneath the soft folds of her cloak a rustic basket brimful of clusters of the freshest primroses, and bright gleaming arum leaves, and dark-green dog’s mercury, and ivy trails, and bunches of violets here and there peeping out of moss.

‘How very beautiful, Miss Gaywood!’ exclaimed Leonard, with such an expression of pleasure in his voice and in his whole countenance as had not been there for many a long month; ‘and what a kind, gentle thought of yours — beautiful as the flowers themselves!’

‘Oh, it is not *our* thought,’ said Mary, speaking for the first time, and a bright color spreading over her face, till she looked almost beautiful; ‘it was Andrew’s thought, yesterday, when we were all together down in those beautiful Esher woods — how beautiful they are! — and the birds singing like mad, and Lucretia repeating her favorite lines of Mordant’s, about

the summer grass, we all at once exclaimed, how much we wished indeed that you could have been with us, — for Andrew always connects you with thoughts of flowers, and moss, and ivy ; and he said, “ Take him some flowers, and try to persuade him to come here — to these Esher woods I mean.” And so, this morning, after we had been with Andrew to the coach and bade him good-by, we came over here.’

As the bright young girl spoke, the dull mist over Leonard’s soul was withdrawn for a space, and rays of celestial light fell with a warmth upon him. But he remained quite silent, and there was almost an unresponsively cold look on his face.

‘ We were so sanguine,’ resumed Lucretia, ‘ as to believe that, together with these flowers, our words might influence you, and that you might be prevailed upon to take some change. I know myself the deadening effect of these London rooms, and especially the reluctance that grows upon one living alone, to break through the charmed circle of solitude, the influence of which grows upon one with the strength of an enchanter’s spell. I wonder whether you would ever so far break the spell, as to come out to us at Kentish-town ; we’ve no Esher woods there, nor any thing even to be properly called a garden — not what we country-folks, Mr. Hale, should call a garden — but we have quiet, and a few trees, and beautiful sunsets from our sitting-room window, and we are

near to really lovely strolls at Highgate; and, above all, we have a truly hearty welcome for you? Will you believe this, and will you come and test it?’

And such truth and purity lay in every accent of the sisters’ voices, and in their kind countenances, that Leonard, spite of himself, said, ‘Yes, I will!’

‘You will; that is right and kind! but when— let us fix now?’ said Lucretia. ‘You would not come back with us, would you? This is a very sudden thought, I grant— and startling perhaps to you; but never mind, the sooner, the more suddenly, the better for such a hermit as you are. If we left you time for consideration of the subject, we never should see you!’

Leonard smiled. ‘I will return with you now even, if you really invite me!’

‘We do! we do!’ repeated the sisters. Mary especially looking greatly pleased. ‘Meet us,’ said Lucretia, ‘in twenty minutes at the corner of Tottenham-court road. Mary and I have to call at a shop in Oxford-street; and so, until then, good-by.’ And the sisters were gone.

It was certainly a clever stratagem of the sisters to have thus suddenly taken poor Leonard at his word, and arranged this meeting. For no sooner had their bright presence vanished out of the dusky room, than our hero repented him of his promise. The remembrance of his worn clothes rose up with an impor-

tance which they never before had had in his eyes, and the pain, ever in his soul, seemed to return with a bitter violence, as if to reproach him that even for a few moments he had enjoyed respite from its gnawing tooth. But the fresh odor from the primroses and violets rose up towards him with the vernal gentleness of the sisters' voices, and the mild eyes of the flowers seemed full of reproaches.

'They are too pure to trouble themselves about my old coat and hat,' thought Leonard, with a smile creeping over his sad face. 'What a marvellous world this is, where the sternest grief at times gives way before such ridiculous trifles as old clothes.'

A respite to Leonard's dull grief came whilst he sat in the small sitting-room of the Gaywoods' cottage at their bright little tea-table. Lucretia pouring out the most fragrant tea; and Mary, bringing forth from a Japan cabinet, much too large for the room, all imaginable dainties from the East and the West — preserved ginger, Guaya jelly, and other delicious condiments and confectionaries.

'We have long been wanting a guest of especial honor to enjoy all our dainties,' laughed Mary, as she dived still deeper into the cabinet, bringing forth fresh jars and quaint baskets. 'Those good brothers of ours, Thomas and Robert, keep our old cabinet always so full, that we really often propose — don't we, Lucretia, dear? — to set up shop with our



stores. I fancy I could drive a prosperous trade, if Lucretia would only let me have a stall at the Kentish-town gate, near to the old apple-woman's. Every month, almost, Thomas sends us some beautiful things to look at, or some good things to eat; and Robert, who is in India — poor Robert — “with a sigh” — is quite as bad in cramming our poor little cottage with stuffed birds, wonderful shells, shell-baskets, ivory boxes, and Indian idols. This is the reason why Lucretia and I have to live like a couple of “Nellys” in an “Old Curiosity Shop!” But do try some of this beautiful jelly; its color is lovely, is it not? there always seems to be a tropical sunshine glowing within it;’ and Mary floated about like sunshine herself.

But not alone were the dainty foods and marvels of the ‘curiosity shop’ — which, by-the-by, extended throughout the whole house, from scullery to attic — the sole entertainments offered by Lucretia and Mary to their guest.

Mary glided in like a sunbeam out of the room shortly after the disappearance of the tea-tray — in fact, to ‘wash-up’ the tea-cups down in the most ideal of little kitchens — for the Gaywoods kept but one little maid, and such delicate china cups, the gift of ‘poor Robert,’ were never entrusted to any unskilful hands. Lucretia and Leonard fell into discourse, such as Leonard had rarely ever enjoy-

ed, and, contracted as was his acquaintance with women, certainly never before with a woman. Of poetry they talked; of Keats, and Shelley, and of the new poet Tennyson as the overture. Then Lucretia's little book-shelves having attracted Leonard's eye, the discovery of various periodicals containing fugitive pieces of his father's, all carefully marked by Lucretia's hand, surprised him with a mingled thrill of joy and pain.

'How much,' said Lucretia, without looking up from the delicate needle-work at which her fingers were industriously stitching—Lucretia was always seen employed at *idle times*, as she would term them, upon the most delicate of needlework—needlework which helped out the very slender income of the two sisters—'How much, and how often, I have desired that the poems of your father should some day be collected into a worthy form. Those gems of poetry, scattered as they are through the periodicals of the time, are lost entirely except to the earnest seeker after his rare genius. Were I rich, that is a labor of true love in which I would indulge; and I should consider that to unite in one great blessing the scattered fancies of such a mind, would be as benevolent an act as the digging of a well in the desert for the reviving of fainting travellers—and, indeed, the draughts of refreshment to my own spirit which I have quaffed from his poetry, would

render such an act but a simple one of earnest gratitude.'

'I have frequently desired such a thing myself,' said Leonard, with his old mournfulness stealing shadow-like over his face; 'and one of my thousand fancies has been to sketch a few designs, suggested by various of the poems. It would truly to me be a labor of love, Miss Gaywood; for, with all my unhappy father's weakness, to me he ever appears surrounded by a wondrous glory of even celestial beauty, and——'

'Is it then possible that *you*' — suddenly interrupted Lucretia, looking up at Leonard with an almost stern reproach in her tone — 'that *you* echo the cruel injustice of the world, and fling a stone against the memory of a man certainly more sinned against than sinning, and that man your *father*. Words such as *his* lips have uttered, it were faithless indeed to believe proceeded from any but the most generous, the most noble soul. Oh! Mr. Leonard, let us cultivate an unbounded charity and faith; they alone enable us to pass with joy through the earth. Trust me that, believing in perfection, perfection reveals itself to the believer.' Lucretia's usually calm manner was momentarily ruffled, her fingers trembled as she resumed her needlework, and a flush passed over her Madonna-like countenance. 'Pardon my warmth,' she resumed, with a heavenly sincerity looking forth from her soft eyes as they rested upon Leonard's mournful face;

‘I owe your father too deep a debt of gratitude lightly to hear a shadow of reproach cast upon him, and especially by a son. Whatever strength may be given me to perform the duties of existence, whatever sunshine is cast over Mary’s and Andrew’s life, and mine, we may in a great measure attribute to your father’s influence. Years ago—years before you were born—Mordant was an inmate for one whole summer of our father’s house. Our father was the schoolmaster of a village upon the borders of Sherwood Forest. I was quite a little child then, but each word, each look of the poet, remains engraven for ever upon my memory. What a marvellous power did he not possess as the interpreter of nature! With a child’s simplicity, with a woman’s love, and the knowledge of a philosopher, he unfolded the marvels of beauty and joy contained in every natural object around him. He stretched forth his hand and removed the seal; he opened his lips, and behold, the hieroglyphics of God glowed in living fire before even the eyes of an ignorant child! Each acre of the old forest became an acre of paradise, over which the feet of angels eternally paced, leaving the impress of glory, mystery, and joy behind them. I was, through his teachings, ever hearing the still, small voice of God in the trees, in the murmur of the waters, in the hum of the bees, in the rustle of the flowers—everywhere I beheld “the Burning Bush,” and removing my sandals, adored, prostrating myself upon

the holy ground. And when I tell you that your father's words, and gentleness to man and bird, and beast and worm, sinking into the child's heart, as seeds sown in a willing soil, came up in after years and put forth flowers of still deeper thought and purport, do you not acknowledge that *that* child owes a deep debt of love and gratitude towards the sower of the good seed ?'

Lucretia's eyes rested, with warm tears of emotion swimming in them, upon Leonard ; but he did not reply, as he sate with a bowed head. 'Incomprehensible, Protean nature of the Poet,' mused he ; 'what human being can compute the balance between the good and the evil which thou hast produced ?'

But it was balm to the wounded soul of the son to recognize the lovely fruit brought forth by his father in one human life at least. And this might be but a single sheaf from a vast harvest.

Mary had returned during Lucretia's unusually excited address ; and, sitting upon a low seat at her sister's knee, was gazing earnestly and silently up into her face. Twilight was stealing into the quaint little room, and no sound for a few seconds was heard but the quick and monotonous click of Lucretia's needle, as, sitting at the window, she still mechanically pursued her work.

Suddenly a cab, laden with luggage, stopped before the gate of the little garden ; there was a violent ringing of the bell. A gentleman's face looked inquiringly

out, and a child was seen convulsively to cling round his neck.

Lucretia and Mary, starting suddenly up, cried, as with one voice, 'That is not Robert — that cannot be little Cuthbert! No, it is *not* Robert,' cried Lucretia, a sudden paleness spreading over her face; and she flew out of the room, and was seen standing beside the cab door; and the gentleman was seen speaking hurriedly, and Lucretia stretched her arms towards the child, endeavoring to untwine his little hands, clasped tightly round the gentleman's arm. But the child clasped them ever tighter and tighter, and a sad wail of childlike misery pierced even into the little parlor. Mary, who breathlessly had watched this scene through the window, now also flew to the cab. But no endeavors of the sisters could induce the child to untwine his hands; he fell sobbing upon the breast of the gentleman, who appeared to become more and more impatient. At length he raised the little boy in his arms, and bore him, still violently sobbing, into the sitting-room; Lucretia and Mary, with distressed countenances, following hurriedly.

'I regret, ladies, that I cannot stay with this poor little fellow, but it is of vital importance that I start to-night for Scotland; we have already, in seeking you, lost only too much time. Strange, unaccountable, that neither Gaywood's letter nor mine sent from Marseilles, should have reached you! But Cuthbert! —

Cuthbert, my man, these are your aunts — this is your home — be a brave little Cuthbert ! These ladies love you very much.’ And as he spoke, the strong sun-burnt man, with a mother’s tenderness, kissed the boy’s beautiful curling locks, and even the slender little fingers so intricately clasped round his arm. Lucretia and Mary, their loving faces bathed in tears, sought by every possible means to soothe him and attract his attention ; but the boy, staring with large mournful eyes at them for one moment, uttered a sad cry, and once more buried his face upon the stranger’s broad chest.

‘It is very painful to resort to force with the poor child,’ said the gentleman, in a voice of emotion. ‘Nothing but this severe illness of my poor mother could induce me to leave my poor little companion in such distress, but we *must* release his hands ;’ and the strong man’s hands unclasped the tender fingers of the child ; and Lucretia and Mary holding him in their arms, the stranger hurried out of the room, jumped into the cab, and rapidly rolled away.

Little Cuthbert struggled violently, burst from the sisters, and, looking round in wild amaze, caught sight of Leonard, who was gazing at him tenderly ; he flew to him, clasped Leonard’s hands, and imploringly looked up into his face.

‘You, you’ll take me ! They frighten me — you are a good man ! They frighten me — Papa — Mr. Ruther-

ton—' and the poor little fellow once more burst out into violent sobbing, and clung to Leonard.

'How very extraordinary!' exclaimed the two sisters, greatly distressed. 'What an unaccountable thing, poor, poor little fellow! It must be that he is not used to women; his father wrote us word that almost from his birth he himself had been little Cuthbert's nurse, and that he feared he would grow up very strangely. He has no mother, poor little fellow!' And they looked at each other, and then at Leonard, with a strange uncertainty.

Leonard, sitting upon the sofa, had taken little Cuthbert on his knee; and the child, flinging his slender arms around his neck, sobbed as though his very heart would break. Leonard made no attempt to soothe him, beyond stroking his soft hair and winding his arms tenderly about him. But a sudden, deep, and marked sympathy had permeated the souls of the unhappy man and the unhappy child. All remained in deep silence.

'May I carry Cuthbert into your garden, Miss Gaywood?' at length spoke Leonard, 'I fancy, someway, that that might do him good.'

'Oh, certainly, certainly,' exclaimed the sisters. 'Poor, poor little fellow!'

Leonard bore the child, still weeping, out into the twilight garden. The stars were already peeping forth here and there in a silvery gray sky; and long streaks



of orange and violet lay upon the horizon, gleaming through the budding trees. All was hushed, except the distant murmur of the city. Leonard seated himself upon a rustic chair beneath a weeping ash, upon the little grass-plot, and pressing the weeping child yet closer to him, began in a low voice to speak of this kind Mr. Rutherton, and of the long voyage, and of his home in India. Gradually the little breast heaved less violently and the child, listening and becoming spell-bound by the tenderness of the voice, began, with convulsive sobs ever and anon breaking through his replies, to freely talk with his new friend. Leonard's keen sympathy had discovered the key with which to unlock the little heart. Cuthbert's highly excitable and nervous temperament responded to the imaginative nature of Leonard, and the boy's eyes opened with eagerness, and his lips poured forth a stream of hurried words whilst he filled up the pictures of his Indian life, the outlines to which had been suggested to him by Leonard.

Thus the two sat in long discourse till the large full moon rose shining through the trees, and Leonard felt the little figure shiver as it lay nestling up to his breast — his soul all eagerness about 'that beautiful, beautiful day when papa took him out to ride with him on Mr. Langton's beautiful white Zippi — that's the elephant, sir — such a beauty; and, you know, white ones are very rare, even in India; and —'

‘But you are cold, dear Cuthbert; let us now go in and tell your aunts about all these wonderful and beautiful things,’ urged his friend.

‘But—but—they make me feel quite—quite afraid, sir; they are strange—all is strange,’ whispered the poor child, half weeping, as he crept up to Leonard’s ear, and laid, with an indescribable trustingness, his little cheek upon Leonard’s shoulder.

‘Am *I* not strange, also?’ inquired Leonard.

‘No!’ said the child, quite boldly; ‘I’ve often seen you in my dreams—you are an old friend quite—they are not; and all you say is so nice, and you love India as I do. I’ll always obey *you*—I know instantly those people I’ll obey. I’m very bad and wicked at times: even papa says so; and then, if people don’t love me, I wish I was dead, like my beautiful mamma, whom I never knew, but who lies buried beneath the great Banian tree. I wonder, now, whether your mother is dead? I know, though, she is, or you would not be so unhappy.’

‘Let us go into the house,’ again urged Leonard; and with slow steps towards the house the two friends walked. But Cuthbert, when he approached the door, was not so easily persuaded to enter. ‘It’s so dark, and like a box,’ he said: ‘I think it is as bad as a ship; now don’t you, sir? I sha’n’t, I’m sure, like this England—I always dreamed I hated it, and that I was always wishing to go to sleep with my mamma under the great Banian tree.’

‘But you will like your aunts if you don’t like England,’ remarked Leonard.

‘Shall I? Do *you* like them, dear, kind man? Oh, then, perhaps *I* shall; only I never had any women about me; papa said always it was a great pity there were no women about me.’

While this conversation went on, the two anxious aunts had been most busy in preparing a bed for the traveller; in having his foreign-looking boxes unpacked, and then in spreading a little repast to tempt the poor child to forget his miseries. Mary had brought out all their Indian dainties, in their native jars and baskets, and arranged them prettily upon the table before the sofa; had lighted the candles, and brought up out of the kitchen, as an attraction to the child, a beautiful parroquet which Robert had sent them over a year or two previous, and whose harsh and jarring cry had caused him to be banished, spite of his gorgeous plumage, to the lower regions. Several times had the sisters glided to the garden-door; but seeing Leonard and the child quietly seated beneath the weeping ash, they wisely returned, leaving the pair undisturbed.

The child was now more courteous to his aunts, yet still very shy, and clung with a convulsive grasp to Leonard’s arm, sitting beside him upon the sofa, and only choosing to eat such things as he placed upon his plate. But the Indian baskets and jars, and the parroquet especially, reconciled Cuthbert to his new home;

and after various lively sallies, the little head sank upon Leonard's breast, and the heavy, swollen eyelids closed in sleep. It appeared, however, as if in slumber the child's anxiety returned shadowly into his soul ; for he clung yet closer to his new friend, and heavy, sob-like sighs heaved his little frame.

Dreading to re-awaken such a sad grief in the unhappy little one, Leonard besought the sisters to leave him reposing within his arms yet a little while. 'I fear,' said he, 'it is growing late, and that I may be intruding ; but for the sake of this dear child you will, perhaps, pardon such intrusion. In half an hour or so, perhaps his sleep will be deeper and calmer.'

'Oh, we are only too grateful to you !' cried both the sisters.

'But with your permission, Mr. Hale,' said Lucretia, 'we will now perform our little evening duty ; for the reading of the beautiful words of Scripture I need not apologize to you ; and we endeavor, for the sake of our little maid, to strictly adhere to times and seasons. Mary, dear, ring the bell for Margery.'

The holy hush of the room, through which Mary's deep, earnest, and soulful voice, fell like a quiet blessing as it read : —

'Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted ;

'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth ;

'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God ;'

the gentle aspect of the three women, and the warm

grasp of the little slumbering mourner, sent a gush of peaceful love through poor Leonard's heart, as though an angel from God had laid upon it his gentle, beneficent, healing hand. And when the three women, kneeling, repeated with a low, deep, fervent murmur, the sublime and tender words of the Lord's Prayer, Leonard sank his face upon the child's head, and bedewed the soft locks with a few trembling, warm tears, such as had not for years gushed up from his soul. It was the sanctification of a fresh chapter in Leonard's life.

## CHAPTER X.

To love, I found, was greater than to live ;

To die was greater than to live or love.

JOHAN LUDVIG RUNEBERG.

WE must now hasten over a considerable space of time in our narrative. Leonard became a constant visitor at the Gaywoods' home, and the affection of little Cuthbert grew the strongest bond between them. The child, spite of a peculiarly affectionate nature, was passionate, most difficult to govern, and of such a sensitive temperament — at times, with an occult sense, as it were, showing itself within him by strange dreams and instincts — that Lucretia trembled for his health, either physical or mental. With Leonard she took earnest and deep counsel. Her brother Robert wrote, urging that his little son should immediately be placed in some school, where, among boys of his own age, the morbid and unusual developments of the child's nature should be ground off by contact with the realities of life. A public school in the city where his friend Rutherton had been educated, he indicated as the one where, when old enough, Cuthbert should be

placed. But Lucretia recoiled from such a training for this peculiar child.

Communicating with Mr. Rutherton during his stay in England, and most earnestly (in an interview she had with him before his return to India) entreating him to influence her brother so far as to defer Cuthbert's entrance into a public school, until at least he had attained the age of twelve, Lucretia obtained a partial compliance with her prayers. Cuthbert was to remain under his aunt's roof till he was ten; now he was eight. These two years should be most religiously employed for good, she determined, and many were her earnest conferences on this subject with Leonard, who held such singular sway over the child's mind. And in her schemes, also, for Mary's education, Lucretia took counsel with her friend. But not alone was Leonard's influence felt over Cuthbert, nor yet in Mary's German lessons, for his whole graceful, poetical, and artistic nature flowed forth in warm and vivifying radiations; a fresh interest in life had awoke also within himself, and with it a more natural tone of mind. This period of his life was, perhaps, if not the most full of strong joy, the most painless. The purest and noblest friendship bound these friends together, each influencing the other for good. And Lucretia's influence, though of a different nature to that which he exercised upon Mary, herself, or the child, was even a more vital one. It was a keen *moral* influence. Unceasingly

also she sought to arouse a spirit of joyful, prayerful activity within poor Leonard, whose misery seemed to have so long bound him with fetters of listlessness and sloth as regarded all creative labor. She sought to work upon his soul through his moral being. Ambition or fame never entered into her view of Leonard's career. His affections were the lever by which she sought to raise up his dormant energy.

To her influence, especially, may be attributed Leonard's resolve to spend several years abroad. The loss of his society was a real sacrifice to Lucretia, but she speeded him forth without one selfish regret. And the cheerful tone of his letters, the eager joy in the great works of great men, who until then had been to him mere words and misty dreams, was a fourfold reward for any pain she herself had endured. It was evident to her, that Leonard's artist soul had ascended into a peculiarly elevated region of thought and feeling.

Two years or more had elapsed from the time of Leonard's departure, when a couple of pictures excited an unusual degree of attention in the exhibition of the Royal Academy. They were hung side by side, and being the works of men whose names were new to the public at large, and each possessing in its way a marked character, were always surrounded by a throng of critics, admirers, and cavillers. The larger of the two pictures contained many figures, and possessed a strangely weird spirit, which instantly arrested the at-



tention. Heavy dim tempest-clouds, with lurid reflections in them, were rolling up athwart a brilliant sunset sky — a sky so translucent, that the eye, penetrating through the jagged fissures of the storm-clouds, felt as though it might pierce to the very gates of heaven. A stretch of ocean, reflecting the dusky shadows of the storm and the dying radiance of the heavens, boiled up against a rocky shore. Upon a promontory, jutting forth into this panting ocean, amid sea-grasses and sea-blossoms, bent and torn by the sudden tempest falling upon the world, lay the dead body of a beautiful and young man. His peaceful white face was turned towards the sky, a livid shadow falling upon it from the tempestuous clouds. The face was as the face of Christ in its look of a deep love, unutterable ; no stamp of pain was upon his mouth or brow, although blood oozed from the breast, staining with clear crimson the broad folds of a white tunic, edged with a deep golden border. The hands had fallen crosswise over the body ; the sea-flowers and grasses bent over him, bedewing the poor, beautiful corpse with their tears. Ravens and doves whirled through the sky in mad grief. Trees upon a distant cliff bowed themselves before the coming sorrow, or stretched forth their huge arms, appealing to heaven with a mighty agony. Not nature alone mourned over the stricken white form, but men also, and women and children. Warriors and sages, of godlike mould, bowed their heads, mourning

and pondering over the great misery. One warrior of especially majestic mien, with a golden shield gleaming as a sun on his broad shoulders, leant upon a huge mallet of iron, and gazed inquiringly, with an enigmatical look in his stern and solemn eyes, upon the face of the slain; whilst another form of yet more godlike proportions, and wrapt in a violet mantle which fell over golden armor, raised his countenance with a sudden and awful joy as the astounding tidings of a far-off future were whispered to him by two ravens, messengers from the All-Father, and who, with heavy wings, poised themselves above the silver locks of the sage, which were confined within a circlet of gold.

It was the death of Balder, — the God of Love of the old Scandinavian mythology. Gone from the world was Love, and gods, and men, and nature, must mourn the death of Balder until his final restoration — when there will be a fresh heaven and a fresh earth, and the great harmony of gods and men shall be born.

The other picture was a striking contrast in composition, subject, and coloring. It simply represented Paul and Virginia within the depths of their tropical forest. It was the embodiment of the most pure, the most virginal love — yet a love of the senses as well as of the soul; it was a burning gleam of perfect joy, yet but a gleam, the intenser the more transient. The very vividness of the flame cast a shadow afar off. Lips pressed to lips, the children stood beneath the dim

shadows of the heavy fern-like palm-leaves, scarlet and azure passion-flowers springing up from the mossy earth, clustering and entwining with tight tendrils clasps ; whilst moonlight tinted blossoms of strange fantastic forms, but pure as the brows of angels, gleamed down, drooping from the verdant canopy. The children's arms encircled each other with a clasp tight as that of the passion-flowers. A flush tinted Paul's brow ; but Virginia, with her earnest deep eyes, was white as the moonlight blossoms. There seemed a might of love and purity, binding the two together, which must be omnipotent over fate itself ; but already the foreboding breath of a hurricane raised the heavy leaves of the palm — already through the tangle of the forest a glimpse of the heavy billows of a tempestuous ocean was caught, and a keen observer might read a spasm upon the lips of Paul.

Lucretia, and Mary, and little Cuthbert, as well as the rest of London, often stood before these pictures. Lambelli and Strudwicke, too, and very often Honoria and her friend, Agnes Singleton.

‘ Is it not really glorious, Agnes,’ said Honoria, with her peculiar swan-like motion, and with her noble eyes beaming with joy, upon one of their visits, ‘ to be the possessor of these two beautiful pictures ? How much more glorious, though, to have painted them ! I am delighted that John has painted so well, and that this, his first-exhibited picture has done him credit. It *is*

lovely, only a little too sweet and sentimental to be quite to my taste. John must not grow mawkish. There has been enough painting and writing in the world about that *one* phase of love. Love is universal — this is but its commonest phase. And he still wants boldness and strength too, I feel, in many ways: but there is the true stuff in him. Oh, it is a joy to think that the hand and mind which wrought out this picture have been cultivated and developed instead of being left to harden into dulness in a turnip-field. Thanks, dear father, for your faith in the poor little "*Giotto!*" Yes, it is a great and glorious gift is wealth; for now, besides helping on these two fine young fellows, can I cause you, dearest Agnes, great joy through this extraordinary picture of Balder, as you, through your interpretation of the old myth, have caused me great joy. You must always consider this picture to belong as much to you as it will do to me. I feel that it must and will influence you greatly in the writing of the Scandinavian portion of your work on the Universal Faith, of which you were speaking the other night. This is, indeed, conceived in the large and broad spirit after which we aspire. We must know this Leonard Hale, Agnes, whenever he returns to England. I feel that he is one of the "salt of the earth" — a spirit who will do us all good. And his influence upon John will be good. He possesses especially that largeness of conception which I desire to see John possess. But

come, Agnes, the rooms are beginning to fill ; and if I see any silly fools gazing with stupidity written upon their faces, whilst their ignorant tongues dare to cast blame upon this beautiful work of art, I may lose all patience, and utter some unpleasant truth, which would be as galling to the poor wretches as a slap in their silly faces. We will enjoy our pictures, Agnes, for a few quiet days together at the dear Hellings.' Saying which, the beautiful Honoria and her friend, the young authoress, Agnes Singleton, drove away from the exhibition towards one of the most squalid quarters of London, where Honoria had various beneficent missions to fulfil.

It seemed as though each external success of Leonard brought with it an internal woe. The great epochs of life often strangely repeat themselves ; and thus was it with Leonard. The letters from Lucretia, and the newspapers sent by her kind hand announcing her great joy in his picture, and the universal response to its excellence, were followed with a sharp pain, springing from the old root of his misery.

It was at Innspruch that a sad and important letter reached him. He was on his way from Italy towards Munich, where he proposed to sojourn a few months. His whole soul had sung a hallelujah for days, as he had journeyed across those marvellous Alps. And the tender flowers, and clear green Alpine waters, the dim pine forests and the sublime mountain crags and jagged

pinnacles crowned with eternal snows, glittering in rainbow glory, or veiled with cloud, had bound him with the deepest spell of joy which his soul had ever known ; and with the joy came the impulse of creation as of old. And now quaint Innspruch, as he entered it from the mountain gorges, with the mistiness of twilight gathering over its fantastic towers and roofs, had held forth promise of another rich feast of enjoyment. At Innspruch also he awaited letters, and of letters at the post-office he found a whole packet — the letters announcing the success — another letter, despatched later, announcing the pain. Glancing over the contents of the earlier letters as he walked back from the post-office to his inn, the last sad epistle remained unopened, till he was sitting, with a combined tea and supper spread before him, in a brightly-lighted *salle* of the great hotel. As he read, his cheek went white as ashes, and a faintness as of death crept over him. Thus ran the letter : —

‘ Kentish Town, June.

‘ Dear Friend, — We have been anxiously awaiting news of your receipt of the letters and papers announcing the signal success of your beautiful picture. Of our deep joy in this success I have already spoken. But now I write about something more important still. Your poor mother, dear Leonard, is very ill ; and as the powers of her mind seem singularly restored — as so frequently you know is the

case before the last sublime and awful change takes place — and as she speaks of you with the most yearning affection, we all desire your immediate return. She is in London. All particulars I will, dear friend, communicate when we meet. I need not *urge* your most immediate return. To my eyes this great change in the poor sufferer is a divine blessing; try, dear friend, so to view it. There are deaths, which we all know, are much less sad than many a life. I need not assure you that all our attention and earnest care can do for your poor mother is done. Would that we could send a consoling angel to conduct you hither. With the most earnest sympathy,

‘Yours ever,

‘LUCRETIA GAYWOOD.’

When Ursula Mordant’s son read these words, her sorely tried spirit had passed away from the poor corpse. The mist of madness had been cleared away many days, leaving the soul a seer, vigilant, and far-seeing even into futurity. Sitting by the pillow of the dying woman, Lucretia had glimpses of a spiritual life, so glorious, yet so sublime, both revealed in the flickering of intensest beauty over the dying countenance, and in the scattered words uttered in a voice of soul-thrilling gentleness — that never could she refer to these revelations, even to Leonard, except by hints, and then it was with a great shuddering of joy and awe seizing upon her frame.

‘Leonard! Augustus!’ said the dying woman, on one of those occasions, ‘we faint beneath our heavy cross. Beloved ones, we faint, we fall! But lo! the cross is changed into wings; we mount — we!’ and the head had sunk, irradiated with a celestial beauty, upon the shoulder of Lucretia.

Ursula Mordant died in one of the great hospitals of the metropolis, and was buried in the burial ground attached to it.

Leonard travelled as only those travel when life and death are in the scale. Mere death — a death of peace for this poor tortured spirit — he did not dread; but the foreboding angel within his breast whispered that more sad things than death waited to be revealed; and such foreboding voices are only too often the voices of truth.

Lucretia informed Leonard of the spirit’s release; and gradually, when the broken heart could endure the sadder truth, communicated the following details:

Late, one lovely June evening, she, Mary, and little Cuthbert, were returning from a stroll in the fields, when beneath the hedge of a lane, she perceived in the dusk, the figure of a woman lying upon the bank. Suddenly foreboding evil, Lucretia sent Mary forward with Cuthbert, fearful lest the child’s lively imagination should be excited or distressed. The woman had evidently fainted, and from her grasping a small knife in her hand, and from



blood oozing through her dress, Lucretia instantly divined that she had attempted to destroy herself. Of course, as always occurs in such cases, neither Mary encountered a policeman to send to Lucretia's aid, nor yet did a policeman's anxiously-desired figure saunter up the lane. To Lucretia it appeared ages before any assistance arrived, and to leave the woman she did not dare. At length, a young man, evidently returning from painting in the open air, with his sketching materials slung around him, came in sight. Lucretia hailed him as a friend in need. Leaving his picture and paint-box behind him, at full speed he set off up the lane for help, returning, in an almost incredibly short time, with a doctor and a couple of policemen. The woman appeared seriously, although not dangerously, to have injured herself; but from her strange and incoherent speech upon returning to consciousness, her unhappy condition was evident to all. She was conveyed to a hospital, attended by Lucretia and by our friend John Wetherley, again brought into contact with Ursula Mordant by one of those singular fatalities which occur much oftener in life than the novel-reader is willing to grant.

John Wetherley, when he called the next day upon Lucretia Gaywood, to offer his co-operation with her in any way for the alleviation of the poor unfortunate's misery, related the circumstance of his having, as a

child, encountered a mad woman in the woods above a beautiful old place in Nottinghamshire—the Helling. The discovery made by the two, John and Lucretia, that Nottinghamshire was the native county of both, became, together with mutual reminiscences of the neighborhood—Clifton Grove, and Wilford, and the River Trent—a bond of extraordinary sympathy between the new acquaintances. And a yet stronger sympathy arose when Lucretia discovered, by glancing again at his card, the name having been misread by her at the first moment, that *he* was the painter of the ‘Paul and Virginia,’ the beautiful picture hanging by the side of Leonard’s ‘Balder.’ John then related various circumstances regarding his early history, and spoke of the Pierrpoints’ noble conduct towards him, in a manner which altogether charmed Lucretia.

‘I fancy we shall like Mr. Wetherley very much; Mary,’ said Lucretia; ‘and that he would like poor Leonard greatly; for he has long been—for years he says—following in the footsteps of the painter of ‘Balder.’ ‘Everywhere have the memory and achievements of this clever artist risen up before me like a beacon from afar, urging me on to greater industry and success,’ were his words. I have promised that they shall meet at our house upon Leonard’s return. But how strange that insanity should bring about his acquaintance with Leonard! Poor Leonard must never know of this origin of our acquaintance; and in all

our intercourse with Mr. Wetherley, let us most scrupulously preserve poor Leonard's *incognito*. Let us never refer to Leonard as having a connection with Nottingham. And yet I cannot but regret concealment.'

Still greater surprise awaited Lucretia when, upon her visit that day to the hospital, she discovered, by the incoherent speech of the suffering woman, that she was the widow of Mordant and the mother of Leonard.

A great and solemn change suddenly showed itself in the dying woman: and Lucretia, communicating her knowledge of the truth to no one but Mary and Andrew, wrote to Leonard, as we have seen.

How Mrs. Mordant had escaped from the asylum, and how she had travelled up to London, always remained a mystery. The belief in her son's existence seemed gradually to have dawned upon her mind after poor Leonard's miserable interview with her, and to seek for him through the world had become her ruling idea. It was supposed that, in pursuance of this idea, she had wandered up to London. There were laid in her coffin various scraps of childish paintings of flowers and a little needle-book, which she appeared, in her insanity, to have treasured beneath her pillow, forgetting their existence in the clearness of vision before her death. John Wetherley, in after years, hearing of this singular circumstance, gave his expla-

nation. Little, as he assisted in raising the bleeding woman from the bank, did he imagine that his childish drawings and the needle-book intended for Honoria were concealed among her garments.

## CHAPTER XI.

Jeder hat sein eigen Glück unter den Händen, wie der Künstler eine rohe Materie, die er zu einer Gestalt umbilden will. Aber es ist mit dieser Kunst wie mit Allen ; nur die Fähigkeit wird uns angeboren, sie will gelernt und sorgfältig ausgeübt seyn. — GOETHE.

MORE than a twelvemonth has elapsed since the death of Mrs. Mordant, and Leonard is living once more in England.

This second shock had passed over him, leaving but slight, yet significant external sign. The fervor of creation which had fired him among the Alps had never returned ; a strange apathy devoured him. Sketches, it is true, were struck off, then days were spent in dreaming ; and great works were thrown aside with disgust, after a few weeks' labor. Leonard had received various commissions, among them one from Lord-de Calis, the uncle of Honoria ; but the very necessity of fulfilling an engagement, in the morbid state of Leonard's mind, deprived him of the power to work. This strange apathy extended not alone towards his own pictures, but towards the works of others. He rarely now felt joy at the sight of

picture, statue, or print; everywhere he seemed alone to recognize failure, or weariness of spirit, or conceit, or affectation. His sole impulse was towards nature; his innate, enthusiastic adoration of her became his consoler and joy-giver. Days, weeks, and months, were spent in this worship; and he commenced various studies, elaborated with patience and love unutterable of her prodigal beauty, even in her humblest walks. He painted masses of lush vegetation down by brook-sides, golden calthas, and, later in the year, the quaint arrow-head, with its broad leaves, mingling with the rose-tinted and graceful butomas, the snowy meadow-sweet waving above an undergrowth of azure forget-me-not, and crimson loose-strife, and majestic typha, and gleaming Aaron's-rod; tangles in woods and hedge-rows, and bits of moorland, he painted with waving cotton-rush, pale grass-of-Parnassus, and dusky crimson sun-dew; and dry heathery banks also, gleaming with their myriad of flowers. But exquisite as were these faithful loving transcripts, to himself they gave no joy. Rarely even were the studies completed; for his keen perception of nature's perfection sickened him with the imperfection of all human copies. For hours would he lie in the grass, glorying in the marvellous beauty around him, and wandering away by subtle degrees into obscure and mystical regions of thought, which were at this season of his life unfolding their portals to him.

Lucretia marked with the most lively anxiety this alarming apathy ; yet to her hand seemed to be denied the key with which to unlock his heart. Nay, the very anxiety she expressed seemed but to estrange him from her. We need not say how deep a pain this was to Lucretia ; but like all pain, she bore it silently in her heart.

To her infinite surprise, she learnt through John Wetherley, who had become a more frequent visitor at the Gaywoods than Leonard, that their old friend was engaged to be married to Agnes Singleton the authoress ! Lucretia believed now that the mystery was solved ; and painful in the extreme as Leonard's silence was to her, and as his withdrawal from their old intimacy had been, she with her whole soul now rejoiced in what she believed must work in his life a change for happiness ! Yet, she had read Agnes Singleton's books ; and clever, brilliant, often profound in thought as they were, there was yet a certain character of hardness, an absence of *love*, which excited an astonishment in Lucretia's mind as to the fascination which Leonard could have found in the writer, and as to the sympathy which possibly could exist between her and Leonard.

Lucretia knew, both from Leonard himself and from John, that Honoria Pierrpoint, having become the purchaser of the ' Balder,' had, shortly after Leonard's return, called at his studio, and with a cordiality irre-

sistible, invited him down to her little villa at Box Hill, where Leonard had become a frequent visitor, the whole tone of Honoria's circle, the nobility and beauty of the atmosphere around her, falling like balm upon his morbid soul. All this Lucretia knew, and wove her own romance upon these slight premises. But the reader must be made acquainted with a little more detail.

Lucretia was right in her judgment as to Agnes Singleton's works. A hardness, an intense pride, and a scorn of much that the world considers sacred, were harsh features in the writings of Agnes, and were harsh features in her nature also. Intellect, and not love, had been her divinity. Battling towards a free intellectual atmosphere through the ranks of prejudice belonging to a peculiarly narrow sect of religionists, she had encased herself in an armor of scorn and pride; she had gained immense power of will, self-confidence, and independence in the struggle; but had left behind her her kindred, and the gentle grace which peculiarly belongs to womanhood, and which may render strength the more glorious when united to it. She professed herself to despise all such graces, but within her soul lay the germs of love and of gentleness, spite of the rude encrustation of pride and scorn.

The picture of 'Balder' had spoken to her intellect and to her imagination; and expressing her earnest



admiration to Leonard upon their first meeting at Honoria's house, she had unconsciously waxed more than ordinarily eloquent, and discovering in her listener an unusual intellectual affinity, the whole powers of her mind had been drawn forth by the magic of sympathy, and Leonard had from the first hour of their intercourse become dazzled and fascinated by a being totally unlike anything he had previously encountered or imagined.

He had become fascinated, dazzled, filled with a deep interest, was bound by some potent spell; but was it the spell of love? He breathed freer in the presence of Agnes than now in the presence of Lucretia, and cast aside the dark memories of the past, and questioned not of the future — but had Agnes touched the core of his soul, which, overflowing with love for all things, even the humblest, should for a bride have flamed up with a fire, even as a fire of sacrifice?

In Agnes the germ of love, within the core of her being, had, as if struck by an enchanter's wand, sprung forth into sudden vigor, and waxed daily stronger, surrounding her with a halo of gracefulness and tenderness, at least in the eyes of Leonard; whilst, at the same time, her own strong and vigorous life developed itself yet more strikingly through this new impulse. Agnes never once attempted to conceal from herself the affection with which Leonard inspired her.

‘It matters little to me whether this affection be returned,’ said Agnes once to Honoria; ‘the fact of a new and powerful influence swaying my spirit, as a mighty wind rushing over the earth sways and changes the atmospheric currents, is the great thing. It will have a marvellous influence upon my work, Honoria; all strong passions, all experience — ay, bitterness, martyrdom, are necessary baptisms for the life of the teacher.’ And Agnes, for the ‘sake of her work and her career, would willingly have gone to the stake. Her affection for Leonard — *his* even for *her*, should that ever exist — was but a secondary object, the one which was of importance was serving the primal object.

Honoria, in spite of her own peculiarly bold opinions, and with all her regard for Leonard and her love for Agnes, was alarmed by the feelings of this singular girl, and often pondered into what course fate would bend her strong will. And thus months had passed on, and, to the surprise of themselves, no less than to the surprise of Honoria and Lucretia, Agnes and Leonard had plighted their troth! In Agnes their engagement had only increased the dominant impulse of her soul — pursuit of success in the career which she had set before herself; in Leonard — his apathy.

John, also, has undergone various revolutions of soul since he and Leonard have met. For years, as we have seen at Lambelli’s, then at the academy,

and even within the walls of the Exhibition itself, had the genius of Leonard ever been arousing him to action, speaking to him of an excellence yet unattained. At each contact with Leonard's spiritual influence, John had endured peculiar sensations, the most generous acknowledgment of Leonard's superiority, the highest delight in his excellence; yet, as regarded himself, mingled with dogged determination to attain an equal excellence, if not a superior one, the bitterest disgust, self-contempt, and hatred, of what he already had done. In the Exhibition, when he saw his picture, his beloved 'Paul and Virginia,' he could have torn it down from the wall; he could have trampled it indignantly beneath his feet, as he had done the comforter of his poor old grandmother; a thousand feelings filled his soul with sickness. Honoria's enthusiastic admiration of the 'Balder' he echoed with the most thorough truthfulness; yet each word of praise cut him to the soul and filled him with an agony of jealousy, although he himself would have been the very first to have yielded the palm to Leonard, and well knew that *his* picture stood far below anything that Leonard could ever paint. He respected Honoria's judgment, which did *not*, at least to him, praise the 'Paul and Virginia;' yet one word of praise from her would have been nectar and ambrosia.

If such had been the influence of Leonard through

his works upon John, how much more intense were the feelings which Leonard in person produced. Leonard's excessive refinement of taste, which rarely permitted praise to escape his lips, his coldness towards John's artistic powers, his criticism, so marvellously just, yet so cutting, his breadth and cultivation of mind, and marvellous play of fancy, the perfect ease with which he executed things that were in John's eyes exquisitely beautiful, yet which he himself criticized as keenly as he did the works of others, or flung aside with contempt; and, above all, the respect and admiration with which Honoria regarded him, the evident delight she took in his society, and her custom of holding him up to John as an example, aroused storms of the most contending emotions within John's breast. Many a time, leaving Leonard's presence, he has rushed home, pulled forth his pictures or his sketches, gazed at them grinding his teeth, then flung them indignantly from him. He has been known even utterly to destroy a picture or sketch, and, rushing up and down his room in a state of extraordinary excitement, has denounced himself as a blockhead, an idiot, a fool, and terminated his invectives with exclaiming, 'Yes, that Hale is right; he is a genius, a great, a noble and grand genius; the breath of the Divine Artist has breathed upon him! I—I?—I'm only a lad taken out of a turnip-field; let me never forget *that*. And what means

have I possessed for the expansion of my mind? Miss Pierrpoint? Of course Hale and she can have grounds of sympathy which she cannot have with me. I'm but the lad out of the turnip-field, and am indebted to her for all the little I have learnt, But oh, for one, no not *word*, but expression of admiration, of pride in my work, from her by look or emotion in her beautiful face. Well, Hale is greater than I ever shall be, but that is God's work, and not Miss Pierrpoint's; and if he skins me alive with speaking the truth, I ought to thank him for it, were I only *morally great*. Ay, flay me alive, Hale! I'll profit by every wound you inflict upon me; there is the mighty, the increasing love of nature, and of my art within me, and they may achieve for me excellence, though it be a different excellence to that of my noble tormentor!'

And John's pictures in the next Exhibition truly proved to himself, as well as to others, that he had profited by this 'flaying.'

Honoria even acknowledged the superiority of these pictures to the 'Paul and Virginia;' but the vanity of John suffered, as usual, from Honoria's words. John's soul, however, expanded immeasurably beneath the influence of Leonard, and with this expansion awoke a perception of Honoria's greatness of character and beauty of soul, which swallowed up every lesser emotion. What had been John's love for L'Allegra—a

mere romantic dream? He now stood upon the brink of a mighty passion — the more potent because reason, duty, honor, all admonished him of danger.

Such was the position of affairs when, upon a lovely autumnal evening, we find assembled, at Honoria's Italian villa at Box Hill, Leonard, John, Agnes and Honoria, together with Mr. Pierrpoint and Honoria's companion, the elderly lady dressed in black, with the silver hair and quiet smile.

The four had been spending a day, worthy to have been celebrated in the 'Decameron.' Leonard and John had been painting in the woods, Honoria and Agnes either sitting with them reading aloud poetry, or conversing; or Honoria and Agnes had wandered away by themselves through the woods, returning to find Mr. Pierrpoint and the old lady arrived, together with an abundant repast, spread out by Honoria's servants beneath the trees, and decorated by the hands of the young painters with garlands of richly-tinted leaves. Returning home as evening approached, with sketches and sheaves of leaves and flowers as glorious trophies, coffee was served up in Honoria's little library, the French windows of which opened upon a low terrace, and commanded a magnificent expanse of woodland scenery, now bathed in the warm rays of an autumnal sunset.

The gayest tone pervaded the little circle. John alone was silent. He never yet had been able entirely

to overcome the chill which Mr. Pierrpoint's manner struck to his heart; besides which, his love for Honoria throughout this poetical day had waxed ever deeper and stronger, and to speak in her presence made his words come thick and incoherent.

‘That turn of expression again reminds me marvelously of my old friend, Mordant, the poet. Poor Mordant!’ suddenly remarked Mr. Pierrpoint, turning towards his daughter, as Leonard ceased speaking with an animation somewhat unusual with him. ‘At various times have I been struck with a resemblance between Mr. Hale and that gifted, that unfortunate man. Had Mr. Hale been Mordant's son, the world would have exclaimed, what an extraordinary family resemblance! For my own part,’ pursued Mr. Pierrpoint, ‘being a believer in the transmission of the same type through many generations, I dare say, could we but obtain the clue, consanguinity might be discovered to account for this resemblance — which is not alone mental, but physical. Yes, the more I recall Mordant's features, the more does the resemblance haunt me. What a termination was his to the most promisingly brilliant of careers!’ continued Honoria's father, musingly. Then turning towards poor Leonard, who, with his coffee-cup in his trembling hand, had turned toward the open window, and appeared absorbed in contemplation of the glorious landscape, ‘I believe you once expressed yourself as acquainted with the

writings of the man to whom I refer. Brilliant, caustic, at times rising into sublimity, some of the finest and most eloquent writing in our language, in my opinion, has flowed from his pen; yet he has left behind him merely fragments: still they are gems of the purest water, and deserve a setting of the finest gold. It was a favorite idea of mine, years ago, to collect and edit an edition of poor Mordant's works, prefacing it with my own recollections of the man; for circumstances and congeniality of taste, at one time, brought us much in contact. But more pressing business always interfered. Besides, one special inducement to the undertaking was soon lost—the benefit which such an edition might have been to his family; for his poor widow became an incurable maniac, and his son, I understood, died. The child was a child of great promise, I remember, but sadly neglected; and you, Honoria, must still recollect having once seen Mrs. Mordant—that poor mad woman at the Hellings. Yes, she, indeed, had endured enough misery to destroy any reason. Now, Mr. Hale, if ever you should feel inclined, you and Mr. Wetherley there, to undertake the illustration of Mordant's poems, I should feel greatly inclined to carry out my scheme. It would be a labor of love which you, Mr. Hale, can comprehend.'

Mr. Pierrpoint paused, as if for a sign of assent from Leonard, and a silence having crept over the little company, he, by an almost superhuman effort, found



his lips replying. 'It is singular, but I have already made various sketches, illustrating, or suggested by, these poems. I shall be happy to place them at your disposal, sir.' Leonard's voice startled himself, there was such a hoarse sepulchral echo in its tones.

'That man possessed the most extraordinary power of fascination I ever encountered,' pursued Mr. Pierr-point, unobservant of anything peculiar in Leonard's voice. 'The actions he was guilty of, had they been performed by another, would have disgusted and alienated his friends a dozen times over, and have been pronounced downright dishonest; but even over his creditors his magic extended itself for years. It was only the old story over again; and I, for one, was always willing to help on the good within him, as it was a rarer good, after all, than the generality of good in honest men. I willingly closed my eyes to the evil, endeavoring to close also the eyes of others, for such a genius does not come among us every day.'

'Father,' said Honoria, suddenly rising, as if propelled by an unseen influence, and with her whole countenance flushed with emotion, 'pardon me, but from *your* lips never should I have expected to hear such words. The evil in a rarely-gifted being, such as men unite in pronouncing this Mordant to have been, called upon all true friends of his — all true worshippers of genius — all high-minded and high-souled men — to have opened their eyes especially to this evil, to

have probed it to the core, to have removed temptation if you will from the sorely tempted, but *never* to have sanctioned *two* codes of morality, one for the gifted and one for the ungifted. From him to whom much is given much will be required: and neither can the personal happiness of the genius himself be secured by deviation from the law of rectitude handed down to us by the Divine, nor yet can the stigma be removed from him in the eyes of the world. We, father, to whom is granted to appreciate the rare gift of genius — who cherish it as breath from God himself — who regard the poet, the painter, as a high-priest in the temple of nature — must *require* from the priest purity of an especially high order. What unction in his words, in his teachings, if the seal of conviction stamp not his life! The Cabbalah says that a lower and far more revolting degree of uncleanness attaches to the moral or physical impurity of a priest, of a holy man, or of a vessel devoted to a sacred use, than to the impurity of a man or vessel of lower sanctity. Especially is this true with regard to the world's estimate of the high vocation of its teachers. Far be hardness of heart and uncharitableness from us; but let a higher code of purity inscribe itself upon the tablet of our souls; — let us not aid in the erection of whited sepulchres, without all beauty, within desolation and rottenness; for the desolation within must come forth, and with its pestilential breath cast horror and contempt upon the

beauty! John, Mr. Hale, Agnes, you who are going forth as priests to serve in this temple, to offer up before the Divine, and to raise the Holy of Holies before the gaze of his people — preserve white and spotless your garments by preserving your *souls* undefiled!’

A strong emotion passed through her listeners, and Honoria, with glowing cheeks, her eyes brilliant with tears, and with the swan-like movement of her round white neck, stepped forth upon the terrace. ‘Let us breathe a cooler air,’ said she; ‘and John, I want to speak with you before you leave us this evening.’

Mr. Pierrpoint and the old lady, however, remained seated in the library, and exchanged a look of admiration of Honoria as she stepped forth, followed by her friends.

Honoria and John walked on silently side by side till they entered a pleached walk of roses, which stretched across one side of the lawn. Leonard and Agnes had betaken themselves meanwhile to the banks of a little stream, which flowed through the garden, and across whose glossy darkling mirror a pair of swans approached.

‘John,’ said Honoria, after they in silence had paced side by side the mossy turf of this shady, bowery walk, ‘I am a keen reader of the human soul, and yours I have long read as a book; and for some time upon its pages, especially throughout this day, I have read there of a great and mighty emotion, which unless

it bend itself into its *true* path, can only render your life a wreck and a mistake. Did a similar emotion live within my soul towards you, I should scorn to permit mere worldly considerations to deter my acknowledgment of its existence. True, earnest and unselfish love, I place among the very rarest and the most sacred gifts of God. This, you know me sufficiently well, instantly to believe. Because I have faith in your candor, your strength and uprightness, do I say all this. I should not say it to an ordinary man, for I have but a very mean opinion of man's moral nature in general. A true, firm and devoted friendship is the sentiment which I entertain for you; and your success in the world, your living out the artist's life, such as I believe this life may be lived out, is one of the most earnest desires of my heart. Do not let us be disappointed in this desire! But to achieve such a life, my friend, no worm of hopeless misery must gnaw at the roots of your life — strength, soul and body, must be yours! Sorrow, and the baptism of fire coming to steadfast souls, bring alone strength and a morrow of joy. I must have you put the curb of reason and truth upon your imagination; she must not as a demon drag you down into hell, and then, as an angel, lead you up into heaven, or, if she do this, she must alone mirror my image to you in the heaven, as your stern judge and guide! "Paint each countenance as though it were the countenance of your Beloved!" I once heard a

great master say to his scholars — “let each fold of drapery, each flower, each leaf, each gem, be as if it belonged to your Beloved.” So say I to you, Mr. Wetherley, your passion must wreak itself upon your art; if you have the true artist’s soul, the struggle will not be so difficult. Love of your art must be greater than love of me. Were I your wife, I would have it so, much more as your friend!’

John walked beside this singular Honoria, a most extraordinary tempest of feeling raging within him. ‘Ah, if she loved, if she *ever* had loved, how differently would she have reasoned,’ thought he to himself; ‘how cold, how unsympathetic her words; how far, far removed from her calm realm of reason is my soul. Whilst her rich voice fills my ear, whilst I am in her presence, I desire only to feel that one vast bliss. I would learn the universe from her wise lips. I would lay my soul in her hand, and she should guide it as a child — oh, to be of service to her, to remain near her — even as a menial!’

John recalled how much he owed to her in every way. And had he not always loved her, long, long years? Was it not love moving within his breast, when as the ignorant child he had bowed his face among the flowers of the Hellings wood? Alas! poor John, were you not almost falling again into the depths of folly as absurd as in days of yore; are you, then, grown no wiser with years — and with the remembrance of sweet L’Allegra?

In a bewilderment John walked, his hands convulsively clasped and cold, with a great trembling which shivered down him, his face very white, and no voice proceeding from his firmly-set lips. He heard Honoria's words clearly and distinctly pouring forth; and a warmth seemed to flow forth from, and a glory to encircle her whole being; but the words conveyed no conviction to his soul at the moment. At a later time they did; heard and buried within his memory, they then came forth and showed themselves to his understanding, and each word was as of steel.

At length Honoria, suddenly pausing, fixed her noble, frank countenance with her clear eyes upon him, and stretching forth her warm, jewelled hands, took his clasped, trembling ones, and spoke with a voice which quivered for one moment with emotion, then clear as a trumpet awoke his intellect: — 'Pardon, pardon, John, for pain caused you so unintentionally, so painfully to myself. Henceforth, we stand upon the rock of truth — our friendship must become purer and stronger; never more doubt my faith in you, or in your genius. I have always been *severe*, because I am ambitious for you. Show me that you can conquer this, your weakness, this your strongest temptation; show me by your work, that I have given you strength, even though I have given you pain. We will avoid meeting for some time; but our friendship shall not, must not, suffer!'

It was already dusk, and looking around her, Honoria said, with her usual abrupt decision : ‘ You had better return to town to-night ; my carriage shall take you. Master your feelings sufficiently to permit you to bid adieu to my father and Mr. Hale. I will explain in a satisfactory manner your departure. Remember, I shall most anxiously await the evidences of your conquest ! ’ And leaving poor John speechless and heart-broken within the dusk of the beautiful garden, she glided towards the house.

## CHAPTER XII.

These looks sometime upheld him; for I showed  
My youthful eyes, and led him by their light  
In upright walking.—CARY'S DANTE.

BUT let us return, and follow Agnes and Leonard to the banks of the stream, where they, too, held strange converse. The words of Mr. Pierrpoint had sunk with the sharpness of a dagger into Leonard's soul, the old wound had re-opened, the fearful moment had arrived, he felt, when, let it cost him even all the brightness of the future, Agnes must know the truth. To have so long concealed, in cowardice, the truth from her was baseness.

Silently Leonard and Agnes had paced the terrace, and silently descended towards the little stream. Leonard's eyes never raised themselves from the earth; in Agnes there was an extraordinary excitement, her large brown eyes flashed with a weird light, her slight form raised itself with an extraordinary vigor, her small white hands were grasped, as if she sought to repress some violent internal emotion. She seemed to shrink from all contact with



Leonard, and yet her eyes watched him with an eager restlessness, with a searching, extraordinary gaze.

They descended the sloping banks of the stream ; the swans approached, their plumage tinged with the glow of the departing evening, as the eternal snow of the Alps is tinted at sunrise and set ; but neither of the lovers observed this beauty upon the swans, nor even their approach. Suddenly Leonard cast himself down upon the turf, burying his face in his hands, which trembled like aspen leaves, and bowed his head upon his knees. A vast spasm seemed to shoot through nerve and brain. Agnes watched him, like one turned to stone, except that her eyes became even brighter and keener, and her face seemed to sharpen in the approaching twilight.

‘Leonard — *you* are Mordant’s son — that poor maniac was your mother!’ — slowly, clearly, and sharply ejaculated Agnes ; her voice seemed to come forth from her inmost being, and yet her lips scarcely moved ; but her hands grasped each other tighter and ever tighter, and her face became more rigid.

‘God, thou art merciful!’ murmured a faint, hoarse voice from between the clasped hands of Leonard ; but he neither raised his head, nor ceased to shiver with his strange spasm.

‘It was *base*’ — spoke Agnes, with a voice clear, low, and sharp — ‘*base* to have concealed aught of

such import from me ; you have sunk deep, deep in my esteem ; you should have mirrored yourself in my soul, as in a glass, as I have done and ever would do by you. What is your faith in me, Leonard, when you conceal matter of such vital import ? But this will require much consideration on my part, and reason with me is strong as love. But, Leonard, Leonard,' cried she, wildly flinging herself down beside him, and drawing his bowed head towards her and pressing it against her breast, and looking down upon the closed eyelids of her lover's white face, with an expression which must have wrung his soul for ever had he seen it, 'why, why have you done what was base — unworthy of you, of me, of your father's memory ? — speak, speak to me, clear yourself. I now know all — it is dreadful, sad ; but worst, worst of all, is that cowardice, that baseness ! But I love you, Leonard — Oh, God ! oh, God ! how much, how at times beyond reason, I knew not till this moment ;' and Agnes burst into a fit of weeping.

Why did not Leonard take her in his arms, and with words of eloquent truth confess his weakness, unfolding his soul's sickness before this deep strong love ? He neither heard nor saw it. Agnes was a portion of the present — of the future — her words descended not into the dark, troublous Bethesda of his soul as the Angel of Healing. The wings of the mournful Past were around him, the Past held him chained with the fetters

of fatalism. Leonard, God had placed a strong, an energetic, a fervently-loving soul beside yours, proffering to you a draught of Lethe, unveiling a new heaven and a new earth ; and you turn aside, dashing the cup from her hands, and binding yourself tighter and tighter in your chains. You have said to your soul, these are the chains springing from the graves and the departed lives of Augustus and Ursula Mordant ; my life was their life — my death will be theirs. But Love, Leonard, is life, is the fulness of life, the creative power, the consoler, the strengthener. Let Love lay a hand of magic upon your bruised heart ! But no electric thrill passes through you ; yours is a death, a darkness, an annihilation !

When Leonard, as if by a violent effort, aroused himself out of his miserable paroxysm he saw Agnes rapidly pacing up and down the side of the stream ; her arms were tightly pressed upon her breast, her profile looked stern and hard. As he approached her, she turned almost fiercely round, and said :

‘ Leonard, I shall set off to Sweden ; I shall now do that which I have long intended to do ; you must throw off also this sloth which has crept upon you, which, to a degree, has crept upon me. Now that I know the secret of your life — which I had certainly every right to have known much earlier — I shall look at your character from a totally different point of view. This sloth, this morbidness, is to a degree inherited. That

is a serious, very serious matter in my eyes, with my knowledge of physiological laws, an awful subject of importance. But you must arouse yourself. Leonard! Leonard!' cried she, with a momentary glow of that deep tenderness passing over and softening her features; 'my pride will be bitterly wounded if you do not achieve all that, as my husband, you must achieve. I will not,' and a fire flamed up through her whole being, and she stamped her foot violently upon the ground, 'marry a man whom I must despise — who is a slave either to circumstance, to fate, to weakness! I will be great, and so must he! My eyes are unsealed, Leonard; you have a stern judge;' and with an indescribable pride she approached Leonard, and laying her quivering hand — a hand quivering with passion, not with weakness, upon his arm, she slowly said, 'I never break my word — I have given my troth — I shall not withdraw it; but I shall be your judge — your task-mistress. You must be strong, free and noble. I will tear out my very heart and trample it beneath my feet sooner than it shall swerve from the dictates of my reason!'

Leonard felt that she would do this. He had not seen the undying love which had looked out of her sad, strange eyes; he always had considered her one of those women in whom the intellect far overbalances the heart. He had been fascinated, his intellect had delighted in intercourse with her; she had bound him

with an irresistible spell — but *love* her he did not ; at this moment this became clear to him, and he cast the fault of it upon her.

‘Where in her is the sympathy,’ cried the anguish in his soul, ‘before which I could unfold my misery ? — she has no love, no pity in her nature, — love, which is the sole pulse yet waking within me, stops, as she with her pride, her stern, merciless eyes approaches me !’ Yet, why did he not then unbind the chains which bound him to this being whom he believed so cold ?

‘Agnes,’ he said, in a tone indifferent as her own appeared to be, ‘I am glad you know this *one* secret of my life. I was about to have told it to you when your lips spoke the words. The misery connected with it — the whole blight which it has flung over my life, you with your strong and powerful nature never would, nor could perceive. You do not conceive the tortures which it and its concealment have occasioned me. If you could — even you, dear Agnes, might pardon. Now that you know this secret, and look into the one darkened chamber of my soul, have mercy — pardon if you can. You are right in your determination to pursue your career, and to put now into execution your journey to Sweden. I should bitterly regret in any way to have placed obstacles in your path ; your energy cannot fail to influence me. Ask anything now concerning my life, Agnes ; all lies before you. Pub-

lish my real name, if you will, to Miss Pierrpoint, to the world ; I no longer care. There was at first no other motive for assuming the name than to conceal myself from the pursuits of my poor, poor mother, and to shroud my success—miserable success! from the eyes of my uncle, until it should burst upon him with a perfectly blinding glory. Fool that I was! Then came habit and a hundred small entanglements that rendered it difficult for Leonard Hale to return into Leonard Mordant. But I detest falsehood as much as you do. It will be well to have this ended.'

'But this cannot so soon be ended, be set right,' said Agnes, 'though the way may open. But there must, there shall be no more untruth, no more shadow of an untruth!'

'There are old friends of mine, kind, loving, and *trusting* friends,' said Leonard, with a somewhat bitter emphasis on the word *trusting*, 'whom I have only too much neglected of late, Agnes, and whom I should like you to become acquainted with—Lucretia and Mary Gaywood, and their little nephew, Cuthbert. The Gaywoods have known me from a child; knew my unhappy parents, and yet they still respect, and even, I believe, feel affection for me. Talk with them, Agnes.'

'I shall wish to know them,' was her brief reply.

Alas, Leonard and Agnes! a cloud, a phantom, a misery almost without a name has risen up between

you! Pride was aroused in Leonard, spite of his self-condemnation, and there was no true love of the one who had wounded and aroused this pride, rather a terror of her; and disgust began to whisper within the secret and dim recesses of his soul.

In Agnes suspicion was aroused, which would never, never rest, and which, with its lynx eyes, would pierce through long years past and long years to come, and justice and firmness seized upon this suspicion, making it their servant, their bloodhound, who must hunt out the *truth*, and *then* must come the final struggle of Love and Reason.

The two walked up and down by the dark margin of the brook. Twilight sank duskily over all, and as they walked they conversed with a strange calmness, and as though no terrible shock had agitated their inmost souls, and changed the whole course of their future lives. Agnes had arranged the plan of her journey, she would start within a week.

A sudden gust of wind swept across the water, agitating its placid surface; the swans aroused by the approaching storm fluttered their wings, and uttering a wild cry dashed out into the stream from their lair beneath the reeds. The wind roared through the trees, and heavy rain-drops began to fall; the two returned towards the house, where Honoria was already calmly reading aloud an article in the 'Quarterly Review' to her father and the old lady by the brilliant light of the lamp. John was speeding away towards London.

Without one pressure of their hands or lips the lovers came out of the storm and the darkness into the warm and brilliant room; their faces had a ghastly and haggard look.

Agnes spent the last evening of her stay in England with Leonard at the Gaywoods. It was a wretched evening, like the whole of this wretched time. Lucretia, spite of her earnest desire to like Agnes and believe her worthy of Leonard, could not forget her conviction of the hardness of her nature, and thus was cold and constrained. Agnes immediately set the Gaywoods down as women of the mere ordinary run, of whom in the bottom of her heart she had a decided contempt, and a proud and cold expression sate upon her countenance quite sufficient to authorize Lucretia in her present somewhat hasty judgment. The secret distrust of each other in the minds of Leonard and Agnes rendered their mutual affection no cement with which to unite these elements of repulsion.

Leonard wished the Gaywoods had not seen Agnes; and even little Cuthbert added to the discomfort and ill-omen of the visit, by drawing Leonard aside in the garden, where pulling down his head, he whispered into his ear:—

‘Dear friend!’ the child was in the habit of so addressing Leonard, ‘you don’t then like *her*? She’s not your wife. I’m *sure* then you don’t like her!’ And the child, either from a certain jealousy, or from some



of his strange intuitions, would not allow Agnes to touch him, nor yet would he look at her.

How those words, 'But you don't like her!' rang like a demon's voice through Leonard's soul night and day, day and night, for many months to come!

Agnes' letters were long and full of detail, her career seemed to be one of unclouded success, although not without its difficulties and its fatigues; but these, to a nature such as hers, only gave zest to her undertaking. The fresh world of thought opening up to her in the life of the North, and in the rich material for her work on the 'Universal Faith,' which she discovered in the libraries of Upsala and Stockholm, and in the conversations which she frequently enjoyed with one of the greatest of Sweden's learned men, a professor of Upsala, who had assisted her in her researches with a benevolent and fatherly interest, of which Agnes could never speak in sufficiently warm terms, fired her soul with a tenfold vigor. All these interesting details she communicated to Leonard with a scrupulous care, believing that they would be of scarcely less interest to him than to herself, his sympathies being especially Scandinavian. 'I will not weary him,' spoke Agnes often to herself, whilst she penned her letters, 'with the deep yearnings which fill my heart towards him; my *actions* shall prove my deep, increasing love, which this long absence but reveals. His, perhaps, is a nature itself undemonstrative where the deepest feelings

are concerned, and, therefore, pained and annoyed by demonstration in others — still it is a strange anomaly, this unbounded expression of love towards the whole universe, with but one exception, and that towards his bride, his betrothed! — But whether it pain him or not, I must strive unceasingly to arm and warn him against his morbid sloth. Candor and truth must go hand in hand with my deep love!

Leonard reading these letters reasoned from his own point of view — ‘What a proof is here of her cold, unsympathetic nature! At this great distance she alone writes of her work, of her success, of speculative intellectual matters, detailing, word for word, conversations with an old book-worm! The dazzling dream gradually vanishes! Where is the love, the tenderness, the sympathy which my soul cries for and nowhere finds? This unmeaning goad, too, of her words, “How is your picture for Lord de Calis progressing? Send me word, Leonard, what you are doing. I shall be a very hard task-mistress, and you must have such and such things completed by my return!” How little can that nature of steel and iron sympathize with riven nerves and a sickening brain! No, Agnes, mine has been a great mistake! Lucretia — who is charity itself — I have always felt did not like Agnes; *she* recognized her as cold and hard. I cannot be mistaken. Agnes is one of those strange and miserable women in whom the life of the heart has withered up in nourishing the

brain!’ And Leonard brooded and brooded, falling only deeper and deeper into his musings, and believing himself thwarted by fate on all hands.

Lucretia spoke rarely to Leonard of Agnes, owing to many causes; and Leonard was only too thankful to cease speaking of his betrothed with his old friend, for the thought of Agnes gradually deepened into a sharp pain. The old intercourse between Leonard and the Gaywoods returned, both Leonard and Lucretia tacitly feeling as though Agnes had been the enemy who had stepped in between their beautiful friendship — another unspoken thought which strengthened their injustice towards the poor girl.

Agnes became a perfect scape-goat with Lucretia for all Leonard’s short-comings. ‘Ah!’ sighed Lucretia to herself, ‘if that Agnes Singleton had only loved Leonard as such a nature deserves — if she had only possessed heart enough to comprehend such a being, what a change should we have seen in him! But his life seems eating itself away with misery. She should never, never have left him; she *could* not, had she rightly loved! She it is who should have drawn him forth from his sad dreams, should have been the spur, the vigor of his existence! But she is devoured by her vanity, and by her heartless ambition! Such beings do not deserve the noble name of woman! — they are even a thousand times, in my eyes, more disgusting than the woman whose whole existence is absorbed in

warming her husband's slippers and in mending her children's socks!' And Lucretia, with all her charity, in her inmost heart of hearts, gave vent to a vast indignation — and bitter injustice!

And thus month after month rolled on. Of John Wetherley at this time the Gaywoods saw little, he was so very hard at work, he declared; and 'He overworks himself dreadfully, we are sure,' often observed they; 'he is grown almost as thin and pale as Leonard — what can we do for him?' But their hearts could do him no good; neither could any friendly attention from Leonard, who frequently looked in upon him, always finding John frantically at his work. Leonard's keen sense had long divined John's secret; and the wonderful power which suddenly developed itself in John's present picture called forth even words of praise from Leonard, and first awakened respect within him both for John and his genius.

## CHAPTER XIII.

I fall upon the thorns of life ! I bleed ! — SHELLEY.

SPRING came on, and with it the time for the completion of John's picture. John, in his solitude, as he touched the termination of his labor, was seized with a sudden faintness ; the world seemed to reel before him. Leonard one morning found him lying upon the floor, in what he at first supposed to be a fit. It was a swoon, the forerunner, however, of a fierce and all but fatal fever. With that womanly tenderness, such a peculiar attribute of Leonard's, he raised his friend and bore him to his bed, bathing his fevered brow ; and when a melancholy consciousness dawned in John's vague eyes, Leonard quitted him for a few moments, and, bringing a hackney-coach, conveyed him immediately to that benevolent institution, the Sanatorium. Leonard, prompt in action for another, though strangely careless of himself, had planned with rapid thought all that might be done for his friend. With his last guinea he paid the entrance-fee, and only left him when laid to moan in miserable, delirious sleep, within a shaded and calm chamber of the Sanatorium. He hastened

with his sad news to Lucretia, knowing her to be a ministering-angel in all times of pain and sadness as well as in times of joy.

Leonard's and Lucretia's tending of the sick man, their self-sacrificing exertions for his continuance in this peaceful home of the sick, were one of those poems not unfrequently inscribed by the recording angel — thanks to the divine germ implanted in humanity, some blessed day to bloom forth into a celestial blossom of unsurpassable beauty.

But ere long Lucretia's active exertions on poor John's behalf must cease, for little Cuthbert, their idol, was stricken with a great evil. In some mad frolic with the boys in the playground, the little fellow met with a fall, which, unregarded at first by him, through a generous desire to shield his companions from blame, showed at length stealthy signs of a fatal disease. The first terrible discovery of this great sorrow was one of those moments in life which the heart shrinks from describing. Lucretia's sympathies, however, were only the more keenly called forth for John, though little of her time could be given to him. Leonard was daily at the Sanatorium, and, listening to the ravings of John's delirium, more profoundly entered into the sanctuary of his friend's soul, the flame of love casting fitful illumination upon the ark and cherubim within.

Again were Leonard's nights spent in designs for

the publisher as of old, for the desire to maintain his friend in his haven of peace lent a long-forgotten spur to his sluggishness; and each day he painted upon the beautiful picture of his friend, whilst his own commission for Lord de Calis lay neglected in a corner of his room.

‘His work is noble,’ said Leonard to himself, ‘it is wrought in his bloody sweat; such work must accomplish its mission in the world. Honoria must see it as Wetherley’s emblem among the crowd of insipidities which will furnish the walls of our exhibition.’

It was a relief to Leonard to escape from his own thoughts, and for a time thus to absorb himself in the life of his friend.

Upon such an hour of labor Honoria herself intruded, having learned suddenly, through the benevolent physician of the Sanatorium, of John’s danger and of Leonard’s unwearying friendship. Honoria was setting out for a ride, when Dr. —, who had just left the Sanatorium, encountered her upon the steps of her house, and, his mind being still busied with the scene which he had just quitted, and recollecting that Honoria was acquainted with these two young painters, he spoke to her of John’s illness, of Leonard’s devotion, and of a picture by John, left uncompleted in his studio. Honoria was deeply moved, and bidding Dr. — a hasty adieu, rode immediately in the direction of John Wetherley’s deserted

rooms. It was with a flushed cheek that Honoria entered the studio. Leonard stood before the nearly-completed picture. He gazed at Honoria's excited countenance as she entered, without surprise, but with a strange mingling of sadness and almost sternness. Standing aside, he placed a chair before the picture, motioning her to be seated.

Beneath the picture, written as if in letters of blood, Honoria read the words —

*'Love is Endurance, Martyrdom and Victory.'*

The scene represented by the picture was a dim dungeon. At the foot of a dark row of heavy columns stood a rack; upon its bars reclined the youthful, wan figure of a man. His face shone with the glory of a victorious love. He raised one hand, as if in blessing. Instruments of torture lay around. An open and torn Bible was pierced by a bloody sword. Two hardened torturers fell aside, covering their faces, as if blinded and stricken by that countenance of love. The other arm of the martyr encircled a woman, who, firm and calm, supported him through the fierce pangs of his sufferings, bathing his parched brow and kissing his ashy cheek, she enduring martyrdom of spirit to soothe, by her love and strength, his pangs of physical anguish.

Honoria's eyes rested long upon the picture. Then clasping her hands, and bowing her face, tears, of a



bitterness such as rarely had fallen from her eyes, fell glittering to the ground. In them she acknowledged John's noble self-victory.

Her emotion was profound, and its flood of intense feeling carried along with it a certain indignation, which for months had smouldered in her breast against Leonard, Honoria having, equally with Agnes, divined Leonard's secret, and having despised him for what she imagined deceit and baseness; besides which his sloth and weakness irritated and bitterly disappointed her, and her anxiety for Agnes had augmented in proportion. A certain coldness even had arisen between her and Agnes upon this subject, Agnes warmly defending her Beloved at Honoria's first word of censure.

'Mr. Hale, I honor, I respect your devotion to your — to *our* friend; God bless you for it,' said she. 'I have been angry with you these months past; you know this, and the reason. I have been pained on Agnes' account — but *she* knows you better than I do — she must be right. I see how impossible it would be for such a noble soul as hers to love one that was less frank, not to say noble than her own; pardon me!' stretching forth her hand; permit me to aid you in your acts of love. But let our friend never know that my hand is in the work, at least not yet. This sad, wonderful picture is mine. I will send you a draft upon my banker; he must want for

nothing. Oh, Mr. Hale, should he even now die, it will be better to die *thus*,’ looking with streaming eyes and an exultant joy in her face, towards the picture — a joy strangely akin to that on the martyr’s face, ‘ than to have vegetated in a turnip-field — than to have remained a clod of the earth, though his portion had been content and peace. But he will *not* die; life shows itself strong through this very struggle; it is the new birth within him. The higher life is arising — is arisen within his soul — he has passed into a higher class of the great School of Life.’ And with beaming eyes Honoria gazed upon the picture, and, gathering her veil about her face, passed out.

The draft upon the banker was for a munificent sum, and a few words accompanying it to Leonard, desired him to induce his friend, upon his recovery, to go abroad to Italy and to Spain. ‘ This *must* be done,’ ran the note; ‘ this money will suffice. All that devoted friendship will accomplish must be accomplished by us.’

## CHAPTER XIV.

Guess now who holds thee? Death, he said. But then  
The silver answer rang, 'Not Death, but Love.'

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

HONORIA'S were words of prophecy when she said he will not die. Gradually having passed through the crisis of the fever, and through its attendant state of exhaustion, John returned to a consciousness of life and of the world.

He was leaning back upon his pillow, and was gazing around him with listless eyes, listening to the chirp of sparrows upon his window-sill, and counting the folds of the white drapery of his bed, when Dr. — entered. Having talked cheerfully to his patient, and listened with a quiet smile to his inquiry of who it was that sent him a lovely bouquet of wild midsummer flowers from some rich hay-field, and which stood now upon the window-sill, Dr. — remarked —

'Probably, my dear sir, some admirer of your picture in the Academy; you've created quite an excitement in certain circles—you, there, lying so feeble in your bed!'

‘My picture in the Academy!’ gasped out poor John, with a strange excitement. ‘Oh, no, no, it cannot be — surely not; it was so far from finished. You laugh at me, sir!’ And the sick man trembled, and grasped with nervous excitement at the quilt. ‘It ought not to be —’

‘My dear Mr. Wetherley, be calm. I regret I have mentioned this, if it agitate you so much; but will you believe the voice of the *Athenæum* — of the *Literary Gazette* — of all the papers in fact? Here, for example, is the notice of Mr. Wetherley’s picture in the *Athenæum* — “This picture, full of an earnestness rare in art of the present day,” “an inspiration,” “a marvellous finish and delicacy of touch;” will you believe now, sceptic that you are? and your picture has been purchased at a high price.’

‘Oh, sir, you bewilder me! you bewilder me!’ said John, in a low voice, and closed his eyes and sank his head back upon the pillow.

‘He speaks only the truth, and scarcely all the truth, about the success of your picture, Wetherley,’ said another voice; it was the voice of Leonard, who had quietly entered. ‘Your picture was noble and grand in intention. It required but a very little mechanical finish, which I felt it an honor to be able to give to it; it can do no man discredit. Let us congratulate you upon its success, and upon your restoration to Art and to us.’

The sick man stretched forth his arms, and in the weakness of a great illness, and of a great joy mingling with a great grief, pressed his throbbing temples upon Leonard's breast and shed quiet tears. Time had been when a keen jealousy would have gnawed and envenomed his heart at the bare thought of owing aught to Leonard's skill; but John had been in the presence of death, and life and the aims of life now lay before his soul, shone upon by a purer and more celestial light than had ever of old illumined them.

The reader may imagine how John recovered, surrounded as he was by such an atmosphere of love, and how, though at a distance, Honoria vivified him with her warm rays, the sun of his system.

He set forth upon his travels, and Leonard became once more the attendant of the sick. Little Cuthbert lay now extended upon the couch of the Gaywoods' sitting-room, a confirmed invalid; his body daily wasted away, whilst his intellect developed with marked rapidity. His was the mind of a philosopher and poet, bursting the husk of a child's frame. Leonard and the child clung with an indescribable tenderness to each other; and thus, accompanying the child in his excursions into the pleasant country about Highgate, where he was drawn in a little invalid's carriage, and planning beautiful surprises for the child, in reading and conversing with him, in sketching for him, in playing soft and lovely music upon the piano,

to soothe the gnawing pain which at times assailed the little tortured frame, Leonard passed the days and weeks and months of Agnes' absence. Where were his thoughts of love for her? the work to be accomplished during her absence? They did not exist. Strange are those problems of character where all duties, except the sternest and most immediate ones, are fulfilled with ineffable grace, where the life would be one perfect hymn of beauty and praise, were but primary instead of secondary duty served and sacrificed to.

Leonard was unconsciously following in the footsteps of his father; the curse was handed down through his devoted being. At the great Judgment Day will the pleading voice of imperfect organization, mental as well as physical, raise its lament, and turn aside the sword of the Angel of Judgment? Our Father in Heaven judgeth not as man judgeth; and let us take courage in the thought of His mighty compassion when the cry of this pleading voice shall reach His throne.

And thus time rolling on brought near the return of Agnes.

However cold in the eyes of Leonard the letters of Agnes might appear, the love within her soul only burnt the brighter the longer he remained away, — the longer she restrained the expression of her love. It impelled her in the eager search after materials for her

literary work, which should win her renown, not alone for her own sake and her work's sake, but as an assurance to Leonard, that she was an object worthy of love, and lived out that which she commanded him to live out also. Stern with him she was, yet sterner with herself. Her every thought and action were purified through the knowledge that she had to *live* as well as to write in an exalted manner; she *would* arouse him, her beloved, out of his lethargy; she would be proud of him before her own soul and before the whole world. Never had she failed in an object, and in him she would not fail; love her he must, and with a mighty love, and their lives should be worthy of the doctrines they would teach. And her woman's tenderness shot forth with rapid growth. She planned ways in which to surprise Leonard with tokens of her love, and a scheme, which gradually ripened within her, was to bring back with her to England the reconciliation of his uncle Stamboyse, — the acknowledgment from the stern old man that Leonard had done right in the independent choice of a career.

All that Agnes had heard of the old merchant had seized upon her imagination, and she felt herself in many points akin to him. 'I understand his character better than Leonard does,' she said to herself; 'he was right, right to a certain degree; truth is many-sided; his vision is narrow, — he saw but *one* side of the truth — but it *was* truth and not falsehood that he re-

cognized in the life of Leonard's father. He must acknowledge through Leonard — through *us* — that principle and ideality may be united.'

Agnes pondered and pondered upon her scheme of reconciliation with the old merchant, and without mentioning her intention to Leonard, determined to remain a day or two at Hamburg on her return from Sweden, and have an interview with him.

The commencement of May found Agnes arrived at Hamburg with her precious manuscripts, the result of her eager labor — her most precious treasures packed within her trunk. A miser could not have watched with more anxiety the conveyance of his money-bags than did Agnes watch the conveyance from steamer to hotel of these beloved papers. These papers once safely locked within her chamber of the — Hotel on the Alter Jungfernsteig, Agnes breathed freely, and began to consider how she should commence her quest.

The name of Stamboyse was one of much note even in that city of great merchants. The English landlord of the hotel was loud in sounding the praises of his wealth; but when Agnes expressed a desire to see him, inquiring where she should probably find him, a very peculiar expression crossed the landlord's face, and a dry smile. 'Oh, the young lady would be sure to find Mr. Stamboyse at his offices; he lived there, transacted business there, slept there, never went out to public



gardens, theatre or church. Yes, yes, there was no doubt he would be *found* there, but whether he would see *her*, that was another question. There were strange rumors abroad about him. It was supposed he had had some great family affliction; but, sure enough, he was an eccentric man — some people called him a bear, others a misanthrope — but such a thing as a lady, and a *young lady*, to call upon merchant Stamboyse! That was a novelty!’ And the stout landlord, laughed and rubbed his dimpled hands, and pushed towards Agnes the *carte* of the table d’hôte, and requested, still smiling, to know at what hour she would dine, and whether she would dine in her own room or at the public table.

Agnes, undaunted by this description, set forth in the direction of the old merchant’s abode. The tall warehouses, the cranes busily at work hauling up bales of goods, the busy traffic, the self-absorbed and prosaic character of countenance of the crowds in the narrow streets, all filled Agnes with an uneasy feeling; she, the woman, the scorner of all but moral and intellectual wealth, felt out of harmony with the world around her. She recognized how impossible it would be for Leonard and his uncle ever to be aught but antagonistic, and how she herself, by subtle degrees, felt her kinship of soul with Leonard to increase, with Stamboyse to decrease. ‘Yet truth is truth, in all circumstances; principle, principle; Stamboyse, Leonard, you

*both* are right, yet both are wrong. I am clairvoyante of both spheres. I must be the mediator ;' so reasoned she.

To various clerks, going in and out of the dusky offices, did Agnes address herself, both in English and German, but they either were too busy to listen to her inquiry after the merchant, or shook their heads dubiously. 'He never saw any one during business hours, except upon business. The lady could not possibly see Mr. Stamboyse till evening : it was impossible,' testily replied a little man with a large flabby face, a pen stuck behind his ear, and a huge ledger underneath his arm.

'It was upon business she desired to speak with Mr. Stamboyse,' urged Agnes ; 'and would he give the few lines written upon her card to Mr. Stamboyse, she would call again to learn his answer, and at what hour she might have an interview. Of course,' she pursued in a mollifying tone, 'she would on no account trespass upon Mr. Stamboyse's time unnecessarily.'

'I know he will see no lady — never does,' returned the man, rubbing his nose with the card ; 'and so you had better not give yourself the trouble of calling again.'

'I will thank you to give the card to Mr. Stamboyse,' very calmly observed Agnes, turning away, 'and I *shall* call again.'

And Agnes did call again in the course of a couple of hours, when she found the clerks yet more uncour-

teous, and the flabby faced man so highly indignant, that she felt firmly persuaded the card had never been delivered.

Agnes' determination only rose, however, with the opposition she encountered. Leaving the office, she walked slowly along a narrow street, or rather lane, the one side of which for many yards was made by the blank walls of the great Stamboyse warehouses; on she sauntered, pondering upon some stratagem by means of which to beard the lion Stamboyse in his den, and raising her eyes they fell upon a name, painted in white letters, upon the entrance to a passage — Stamboyse, *Zweiter Stock, Linke Hand.*'

'There is the nocturnal den!' ejaculated she; 'now will I of a certainty achieve my object.'

'At what hour does the *Herr Kaufman* Stamboyse sup?' asked Agnes carelessly of a woman who was just entering the passage with one of the quaintly-shaped Hamburg marketing baskets upon her arm.

'Sup? *Fraülein, Kaufman* Stamboyse?' returned the woman, suddenly stopping and eyeing Agnes from head to foot, 'seven o'clock certainly. *Köchin* — seven o'clock your master sups, does he not? — There's a lady inquiring. I suppose your master is going to have visitors.'

'Visitors — my master — a lady — a lady indeed — sup do you say? That's no business of yours, or of hers,' screamed and scolded a remarkably harsh

voice from a higher landing, and there was a sound as if a broom were most unceremoniously flung down stairs, and a loud sound of scouring intermingled with angry ejaculations followed.

Agnes, however, had obtained the information she required, and sauntered on: she wandered through the town, now noticing the busy traffic and the many vessels lying at anchor, and the barges bearing along the many canals the merchandise from these vessels to the warehouses of the great Hamburg merchants; now amusing herself with the gay costumes of the women of the humbler class; now pondering and pondering upon her scheme, and her own and Leonard's intermingling fates.

Half-past six found Agnes with her hand upon the bell-handle which hung beside the door of merchant Stamboyse. The sound of the bell resounded through the ghastly passages and up the ghastly public staircase, but no one answered to its summons. Again and yet again she rang. Growing impatient, she rang a fourth time, giving a peal fit to have awakened the seven sleepers. Slowly a little sliding shutter in the door slid back, and a sour faced servant-woman, wrinkled like one of Denner's portraits, showed herself.

'And who is then there?' growled, in German, an old voice, as ill-humored as the face. 'Oh, I see, the *Frauenzimmer* — the lady, I take it, who wanted to

know when the merchant Stamboyse ate his evening's bread. I'll have none of your impertinent inquiries!' And before Agnes could reply, the shutter was pushed violently back.

Agnes, smiling at this extraordinary reception, and wondering what kind of a monster must be the master of this house, guarded by such a Cerberus, heard heavy footsteps ascending the stairs with slow and solemn tread. 'Stamboyse,' said her heart, and involuntarily her lips felt parched and a great weakness rushed over her frame. A tall and powerful old man, whose grizzled locks hung in thick masses upon the collar of his coat — that blue coat of the peculiar cut so familiar to her in Leonard's description of his uncle — stood before her. Out of his waistcoat pocket he took a key, and whilst he placed it in the lock Agnes read his strong countenance with a rapid glance. He had not observed her, as she stood somewhat back from the door; he might have thought her merely passing towards some other dwelling in the house.

'Mr. Stamboyse,' suddenly spoke Agnes, stepping forward, and her words coming forth without reflection, for a great nervousness was upon her soul. He turned suddenly round — the light in his cold, gray eyes flashed upon her a stern lightning.

'Madam? — I have the honor ——?'

'Mr. Stamboyse, I am very anxious to have an

interview with you ; it is upon business. I have found it next to impossible to gain admittance to you — I am here in Hamburg on purpose to speak with you. When may I have a few moments' — half an hour's conversation with you?' And Agnes felt that the blood, spite of herself, rushed up to the very roots of her hair.

'Business?' slowly repeated Stamboyse, and his keen eyes perused her face — 'business? — you, a *young lady*, with business to the merchant Stamboyse?' Agnes imagined a shadow of satire upon his face and in his words: it stung her.

'Yes, business, sir. A woman, as *I* take it, may have business, sir, as well as a man; *important* business!' proudly, and with a certain anger in her manner, replied Agnes.

'You are, perhaps, too much of an English *young lady*,' pursued the old merchant, 'to call here at so early an hour as seven to-morrow morning. If not too early for a young lady, before I go to *my* very important business I can then attend to *your very* important business. Madam, good evening.'

The old merchant had entered his door, leaving Agnes standing alone upon the landing. Was she indignant, amused, wounded? She did not know; but this she knew, that all shadow of sympathy seemed impossible between her and Leonard's uncle. 'Yes, yes, how could Leonard have endured the slavery of

such a master? Her very mission seemed to lose its object; what had she come for? for what did she now desire an interview? She felt as though the whole attempt were an absurd piece of stupidity. She seemed to have lost her anchorage. Who has not known such a miserable, perplexing, mortifying mood of mind? A quiet night's rest, however, had wonderfully calmed her, and at half-past five o'clock the next morning, her interview with Leonard's uncle assumed a more hopeful aspect.

When ready dressed by six, she flung open her chamber-window, and with a joyous hope within her heart, leant out and watched the bright rays of the newly risen sun gilding the Lombard's Brück, the masts of the various craft lying in the basin, and the groups of early holiday people passing along the broad public walks of the Alter and Neuer Jungfernstieg, for this was Ascension Day. The bells of the churches were already pleasantly sounding in the clear air, and an unusual peacefulness seemed with the early morning to hang over the busy seaport town.

Agnes was ushered into the presence of the merchant by the cross old woman, who was cowed, however, it seemed to Agnes, by some command issued by her stern master, relative to this visit. She entered his presence precisely as the neighboring church-tower tolled seven. Stamboyse was reading the 'Allgemeine Zeitung,' as he sipped his coffee, wrapt in his morning-

gown. The face had become harder than when we last saw him, and more than ten years seemed to have laid their stamp upon his brow.

‘You are come, madam,’ said he, laying down the paper, rising, offering her a chair at the breakfast table, and perusing her countenance with a peculiar mixture of dry humor and contempt. ‘Bring in another coffee-cup, Martha,’ he pursued, addressing the old woman who lingered in the doorway, scowling and sticking out her under lip till she resembled rather some corbel in a church than a living being. ‘I did not expect so early a lady visitor — you see — madam, your important business — if you will favor me!’

Agnes sat for a few moments with a strange feeling of petrification creeping over her; those cold searching eyes of the old man, during her silence, reading her perplexed and distressed countenance. ‘Now I am here,’ she continued suddenly, and raised her eyes, fixing them boldly upon his, ‘my business becomes difficult.’

‘Humph,’ remarked Stamboyse.

‘Difficult, because I feel how completely you and I are guided by such opposite views in life.’

‘What does all this lead to, madam?’ growled the merchant, impatiently, taking up his paper.

‘It leads, Mr. Stamboyse, to the very heart of my business.’

‘*Heart!*’ growled the merchant, ‘of course a young



lady *can* only have *business of the heart.*' And he continued to glance over his paper.

'Mr. Stamboyse,' cried Agnes, starting with impatience from her chair, and stamping her foot with irrestrainable irritation upon the floor, 'for once listen to a woman as though she were a human being. Drop, for heaven's sake, the word *young lady.* I am a human being, who demand a fair and candid hearing from another human being.'

Stamboyse looked up with an expression of less contempt: his interest was aroused. Agnes' words now flowed unimpeded; she had lost all self-consciousness and embarrassment. 'I am Agnes Singleton, who have chosen as my future husband your nephew, Leonard Mordant, the son of that unhappy and misguided man, Augustus Mordant, and of your most unhappy, most to be compassionated sister. I am acquainted with the whole misery of the marriage; of your hatred of Leonard's father—a just hatred; of your anger with Leonard; of your utter abandonment of him; of the disappointment you have had in him. Restrain your angry words, Mr. Stamboyse, what I have to speak now I *must* speak. Pardon me that I touch upon subjects so painful, so forbidden; but at times words must be merciless as the knife of the surgeon. I desire only truth to exist between you and me, between Leonard and you.'

'You wish to make up matters. That sneaking

young coward has sent you, as his miserable father of old sent my befooled sister, to whine and wring her hands and play off a woman's fooleries before me!' burst in Stamboyse, with a force of anger and contempt which must have silenced any one less resolute than Agnes Singleton. But she, proudly approaching the irate man as he paced with angry steps the room, said with a voice of such convincing truth and noble pride, that it quelled even Stamboyse's anger.

'No, Leonard is utterly unconscious of my being here — he would be the very last person in this world to desire a mean or a base thing. All blame be upon my head. It is because I have perceived in Leonard's soul a secret yearning after a reconciling word from you, as balm to soothe the unhealed wound of that great misery, that bitter curse hanging upon him from the wretched marriage of his parents; it is for this that I am come. His is a gentle, noble, yet proud spirit, incapable of so base a meanness. It is because I recognize, on your side, Mr. Stamboyse, justice — to a certain point — because I regard moral principle as highly as you can do — because I regret, ay, a thousand times more deeply than you can do, the spectacle of glorious mental gifts being dragged down into the mire and trampled upon by coarse brutal feet, through lack of *honesty* — yes, because I consider moral principle of higher importance than intellect, yet worship intellect with the whole powers of my being — that I

am come as a mediator between you and your nephew. Let not the additional curse of your displeasure cling to him and darken his life—'

Whilst Agnes still spoke, the old woman burst in, wringing her hands and crying aloud, 'A fire! a fire in Deich-strasse! the flames are curling up through the roofs at the back of the houses across the canal. You can see them! The engines are coming—don't you hear them? Lord of heaven, preserve us! The warehouses, *Herr Kaufmann*, the warehouses!' And whilst they listened, the tolling of the alarm-bells was heard, the thundering along of fire-engines, the shrieks of people in the streets.

Stamboyse and Agnes flew simultaneously to the window and flung open the casement. Thick volumes of smoke were hurried along by a brisk wind, sparks were falling in showers upon the barges moored in the canal beneath the windows, people were seen hurrying along or flinging furniture into the street from the windows. A sudden panic had seized upon the city this bright holiday morning. The old woman had fallen upon her knees, praying.

'We are safe, Martha,' said Stamboyse, 'don't be such an old fool! I must see, however, that the people are on duty.' And he hurried off without apparently remembering the presence of Agnes, and leaving the old woman still sobbing and praying.

Agnes, unconscious of the flight of time, gazed out

of the window towards the burning houses ; the flames flared and leaped up through the roofs, windows and chimneys, white and livid in the glare of the bright early morning sun. Now was heard the sudden crash of a stack of falling chimneys, now the shouts of the distant crowd — the roar of fire-engines, the galloping of soldiers arriving to drive off the crowds of gathering spectators, the rumbling along of wagons and carts carrying away madly heaped together furniture. Barges suddenly were unmoored and glided down the canal loaded with furniture and people ; men, women, and children bearing the most heterogeneous articles — bedding, books, clothes — were seen hurrying along the quays ; the sick, the dying, were borne in litters or in the arms of their friends ; children were lost in the crowd uttering loud shrieks of despair.

Whilst Agnes yet gazed out upon the scene of anxiety, her eyes swimming with tears of excitement and sympathy, a barge just opposite the windows suddenly burst into flames ; the shrieks of the people upon it yelled fearfully above the more distant roar of terror — there were people seen leaping into the water, boats putting out to snatch up the sufferers, masses of burning merchandise and furniture falling hissing into the canal. In a moment Agnes had rushed down upon the quay. The next moment she was carrying in her arms a terrified child, whose mother lay fainting upon the stones.

Agnes suddenly felt an extraordinary strength and energy enter into her. Every interest of her being seemed absorbed by the great misery around her. Helping, suggesting, cheering, she was carried along through a dozen dangers, which at the time appeared no dangers to her.

At the foot of a flight of wide steps leading up from a wharf into great warehouses, she constructed an asylum for a group of children, terrified women, and sick persons. And here with water in front, and on either hand, seemed to be a place of entire safety ; besides which, the wind carried the flames towards another quarter of the city. Still, fire-engines came thundering along the wharf, and were stationed in readiness with their long leathern pipes curling like serpents up the walls and over the roofs, and everywhere men were vigilant—for these were the warehouses of the great house of Stamboyse.

The group of people who under Agnes' guidance had sought shelter upon the steps, felt, in resting overshadowed by the walls of this great house, an assurance of protection. It was such a rich, such an important house, that ill-luck could not befall it—at least, they knew that all that the power of man could do to avert the flames would be done. But together with the engines came men who ruthlessly sought to drive away the fugitives from the broad steps. Agnes pleaded with an unconscious eloquence for the little band. She

caught a glimpse of the tall figure of old Stamboyse himself; the brisk wind which so unluckily for the doomed city was abroad that morning, blowing through his gray locks, and fluttering his long green morning-gown.

‘Oh, sir!’ she cried, stretching forth her hands and seizing upon its folds, as he stood at the top of the steps commanding the men to drive off the fugitives; ‘I conjure you, have pity upon these miserable women and children — upon these sick — these aged! See! see! the wind carries the flames in the contrary direction — your great warehouses stand surrounded by this canal; oh, may not this be an asylum for this handful of the afflicted! May not heaven for their sakes guard and preserve your merchandise!’ And she clung to his skirts, looking up at him with such an eager, pleading, and extraordinary look in her excited young face, that Stamboyse was strangely affected.

‘Yes, yes; perhaps you are right — let them be brought in. Within the court there is space sufficient; only let these steps be cleared — let there be room for the engines to play, if need be!’ And Agnes had the great joy of seeing Stamboyse himself aid in the conveyance of the weak and fainting within the area of the great court-yard.

‘What are you here for?’ the old man said hurriedly to her, after they had made a temporary shelter for the sick. ‘You should not be here — go home. Are you

alone here in Hamburg—quite alone? This is no scene for you. Heaven alone knows what may be the termination of this fire. I will send you under safe escort to your hotel. You must return directly to England!

‘I cannot go yet,’ returned Agnes in a low, firm tone, grasping Stamboyse’s hand. ‘I must stop with you—I must. God will bless you for your action to these miserable people. I shall be no burden to you. I feel it within me to remain here.’

The old man returned no answer, except a momentary glance of surprise and inquiry at the delicate white profile which was turned away from him, and which was arrested as if intently listening to some distant sound.

‘Hark! hark!’ she exclaimed; ‘do you not hear that cry! It is from the brigade in the street; they command that water be made to play upon the roofs of the houses; the cry is that the flames are rushing in this direction.’

She and Stamboyse now were out upon the quay. A chain of busy hands was formed to pass along the buckets of water, in order to saturate the bales of goods lying within the court-yards whilst the engines played vigorously upon the roofs. Across the canal, in thick volleys, flew flakes of fire; the wooden bridge spanning the canal was a wreathed white flame. A turmoil of men surged around the nearer end of the bridge,

seeking to stop the fatal progress of the fire. The houses connecting the bridge with the street, in which the Stamboyse warehouses stood, were blown up with gunpowder. The horror, the tumult, increased with every hour ; but as yet the warehouses of the wealthy Stamboyse stood untouched.

Hour after hour passed by, and Stamboyse with Agnes at his side stood working in the chain. No words were uttered by either. All consciousness seemed lost, except for the one absorbing anxiety — the putting a check upon the devouring flames. Before the eyes of Agnes arose the vision of the helpless beings within the court-yard — the weeping children — the sick. What vision rose up before the inward eye of the stern old merchant ? Let us believe, for the sake of the divine spark implanted within each human breast, that it was some other object than the salvation of his bales of lace and stockings.

Time passed over uncounted by the surging multitude. The hoarse voice of the bell from the near church of St. Nicholas tolled the hours ; but its voice was drowned in the hubbub of cries and crashing roofs and walls, and in the roaring of panting flame which a quick light breeze fanned into yet wilder fury.

At length the sun sank calmly down in the gloomy western sky, and was mirrored together with the flames within the waters of the Alster basins, and of the many canals. And now flames wreathed around the St.



Nicholas church, and its tower fell with thundering crash, scattering death and still deeper horror around it. Fire had seized as evening approached, upon the corner of the outer warehouse of the house of Stamboyse ; but the redoubled energy of the workers had kept it under ; and now it was extinguished, and the flames, as if wafted away by the wing of some guardian angel, turned to devour elsewhere.

Agnes, in after years, referring to this moment, was heard to say that she suddenly became aware of her own identity when the flames sank and the immediate danger was passed, and that she, feeling a sudden weakness overwhelm her, was caught round the waist and sustained from falling under the feet of the multitude by a strong arm, and that this was the arm of Stamboyse. My whole soul,' pursued she, 'seemed to have poured itself forth in silent, yet frenzied prayer, for aid from heaven for those poor souls. All personal danger was unheeded, all physical exhaustion, during these long hours of strained anxiety.

Stamboyse at that moment also came out of his rapt trance, and his eyes became aware of the young girl standing at his side drenched with water ; her black hair fallen upon her shoulders, her face white as a corpse, and rigid as a statue. And as he saw her small white hands, upon one finger of which glittered in the fire-light a slender ring, hanging on the water-buckets, a sentiment of tenderness, unknown since his early love

of his sister seized upon him, and his heart opened and received her into its depths.

But we must hasten over this portion of our story. The fire had passed in its fury across this portion of the city, leaving wreck, ruin, and death behind it. Few were the buildings which escaped besides the warehouses of Stamboyse. Smouldering ruins were revealed in this quarter of the city when the sun arose next morning, whilst the flames still devoured like hungry demons all before them as they hastened forward. A cry went through Hamburg that the judgment-day had arrived, and that all would perish.

But we will not dilate upon the miseries of the great fire at Hamburg, further than as they concern our story. Stamboyse and Agnes, as if united by the vast calamity, throughout that night did noble deeds of love and piety to numbers of miserable homeless beings who took refuge within this asylum so marvellously preserved. And thus did Stamboyse break his vow, registered long years ago, 'utterly to root out all human love from his disappointed heart.'

'But Agnes, that is your name, is it not?' said the old merchant, 'you must now return to England; I insist upon it; I dare not permit you to remain longer in this doomed city. You have already done far more than your strength can sustain. All that can be done more for these miserable people shall be done — trust in me. Such great afflictions truly open the hearts of men; they do more to prove the fact of universal

brotherhood, as you remarked, than all the democratic orations in the world.'

Stamboyse insisted upon Agnes reposing herself for a short space in such accommodation as the awful time afforded. The tenderness which the old man lavished upon her remained deeply impressed upon her soul, and will continue to be remembered until the latest hour of her life. He learnt from her own lips her anxiety regarding the precious manuscripts left at the hotel; had it been possible, he would have hastened himself to ascertain their safety and bring them to her. But the flames were roaring on in their fatal career in the very direction of the hotel — nay, even flying rumors reached them that the *Jungferensteig* was already one mass of flames. All that Stamboyse could do was to assure her that he would seek for the papers, and if they existed send them after her. He insisted upon her starting by the steamer the next morning; accompanied her thither, pressing upon her a much larger sum of money than she was willing to accept; and, in short, did all that the tender affection of a kind father would dictate.

'And Leonard,' said Agnes, at parting, 'what message to him? Oh, Mr. Stamboyse, you can forgive! —'

'Any message you choose, Agnes, for the sake of his love of you — of yours for him.'

And thus Agnes Singleton returned to England by the first steamer which brought to London the disastrous news of the great Hamburg fire.

## CHAPTER XV.

Teach me thy love, thou meek Philosopher !  
Show me thy nightly visions, bright-eyed seer !  
Give me thy faith ! — why should I blindly err  
And shrink with anxious fear ?

MARY HOWITT.

ON the morning after Agnes' arrival, lay upon Leonard's mantel-piece a note directed in the hand of Agnes ; no longer a far-travelled letter, but a note left by a messenger. Leonard hesitated to break the seal, and he looked long and with a moody gaze upon that bold and rapidly-indited address. He paced up and down his room ; he felt as though his doom were about to burst thundering over him. Where was the winged impulse of Love which should have transformed him into a very Hermes of speed ? Instead of words from her of joyous, passionate welcome, his disturbed fancy hissed around him words of bitter reproach and reproof, and cold, stern eyes glittered balefully in his imagination, like the fiery swords of the angels of Rebuke and Judgment. The secret voice of self-contempt also raised its bitter cry — his very life seemed frozen within him.

Having so long yielded to morbid weakness, having

so long permitted weeds to spring up unchecked from the rich soil of his nature, they now had choked the fair lilies and the gorgeous roses, and all the tender herbs and blossoms were dragged down into a tangle of confusion and misery. 'Had only the gardener Love tended the fair herbs, then would they have flourished and waxed into mighty forest trees,' said the voice of self-excuse. 'The gardener Duty was ever ready at his post, even were Love absent,' whispered the voice of conscience; 'but thou turnedst away and wouldst not heed his advice. Behold the desolation of thy garden! were Love even to return, the garden would know him not.'

'Dearest Leonard,' ran the note, written in pencil and with a great haste visible in each word, 'I am come back to surprise you — I have much, very much, of vital importance to communicate. I cannot write more — but come! you *must* not delay. — Yours, A. S.'

Did Leonard speed to his betrothed on the wings of love? No. The words of the note jarred his every nerve. He paced up and down with a vacant misery. He pulled forth a sketch which he had begun — some way suggested to him by the sharpened features and form of little Cuthbert, as he saw him lying day after day upon his couch. The sketch represented an aged woman, a pilgrim, as it were, to some far off shrine, lying dead at the foot of an ancient cross. She had come up through the land of graves and of gloom. A

sea stretched out beyond the barren place of sepulture, and the uprising sun cast beams of light upon the waters and upon the sharpened, rigid face of the dead. 'The End of the Pilgrimage,' was written beneath the sketch.

As Leonard drew, the recollection of little Cuthbert's sad white face, in which the simplicity of the child mingled so awfully with the expression of a life's pain and anxiety, — that face, stamped with the mystic and unmistakable print of death upon the hollow eyes and skeleton-like profile, rose up before his soul, and blinded his eyes with tears, whilst a mighty longing seized him to soothe, even for one hour, that little pilgrim touching upon the threshold of the awful unknown.

'Oh! why in the sight of the All-seeing One do I dare with base untruth to simulate towards Agnes a love which I do *not* feel?' cried out the nobler nature of Leonard. 'It is love which binds my soul to this poor child; in this love there is no deception; it speaks in these burning tears, in the mighty pity, in the unappeasable longing to soothe him, to clasp that tiny transparent hand; in the thought which makes his departure such unutterable pain. In the presence of the purified soul of this little pilgrim sunk at the foot of his cross, for whom the morning of immortality is about to break, let me gird up the loins of my resolution; let me shake off the fetters of a mean slavery; let me not do a base

injustice to the woman whom I have once thought I loved. *She* does not love ; thus her suffering, if she should suffer, will be but the sufferings of wounded pride ; and justice and nobility of soul Agnes possesses, if not *love*. The very words, too, of her note may have reference to some communication of her own relative to this very subject. Let me save her the pain ; let me take the burden upon myself.'

A transient gleam of energy shot forth through Leonard, and hastily laying aside his sketch, he seized his hat and went forth towards the Gaywoods', intending to sit a little while beside Cuthbert's sofa, and then proceed to Agnes.

The formation of a resolve, even be it a painful one, has something in itself so healthful, that body as well as spirit are braced by it, as by a fresh breeze from the ocean. Leonard walked along with a step almost buoyant ; even the suburban trees and shrubs, and the blue May heaven arching over the roofs of the houses, sent a waft of hope to his spirit.

The carriage of Dr. — was standing before the Gaywoods' little gate, and that benevolent man himself was descending the steps as Leonard reached them. A peculiarly grave expression upon his countenance fell on Leonard's heart with a sad foreboding—a cloud suddenly overcast the transient gleam.

' Poor little Cuthbert,' said Dr. —, ' I fear, will not remain many days, if hours, with us. You will find

Miss Gaywood much distressed. It seems also that her sister has always believed that the child must ultimately recover. I grieve that at this trying moment, when Miss Gaywood herself has so much to endure, there should be the necessity for her to inflict this fresh pain upon her sister. But I am sure they will wish to see you, Mr. Hale,' pursued Dr. —, as Leonard, with a mingling of delicacy and cowardly shrinking from the sight of their hopeless misery, was about to turn from the door. 'Little Cuthbert was asking for you whilst I was there; he seems extraordinarily attached to you. What a dreadful shock will this be to the poor child's father!'

In the passage Lucretia encountered Leonard; her face was bathed with tears. 'Dear, dear Leonard,' she ejaculated, 'you will guess the sad news. How thankful I am to see you! Go in to the beloved child; he has had a wretched night, and in the delirious dreams which tortured him, was unceasingly conversing with you, as though he were a grown man. A man? — what do I say? — as though he were a seraph! Oh, he loves you so much, so much, you can comfort and cheer him as we cannot, for he always has loved you more than he has loved us. Oh, I thank God that He sent you to us. I cannot yet come in, Leonard; the dear child cannot bear to see me weeping, and cuts me to the soul by his words of comfort. I must tell poor Mary the dreadful truth; she never has listened, for



one moment, to a hint of the possibility of Cuthbert's dying. How can I prepare her and strengthen her to endure the blow? But go in, dear friend; stay with Cuthbert till I return.'

Leonard found the child lying, as usual, upon his sofa with his books, his little drawings, his flowers about him; but he was thinner, more spectral — the terrible fever of the night had been doing its fatal work rapidly.

'Dear, dear friend,' cried the child, opening his heavy eyelids as Leonard softly unclosed the door, and stretching forth his arms eagerly towards him, 'I felt you were coming. I've seen you all night, and we have been so happy; for we both were in heaven, and you were much happier than now; and we were gathering flowers, such as do not even grow in dear India. I know they are all unhappy because I am going to die. I know Dr. — told dear aunty Lucretia so, and I do wish I could comfort them — make them feel as happy as I do. I'm not unhappy now as I was when I came away from papa and dear India; or as I have been at school when I have quarrelled with the boys and felt angry and bad. Do comfort them — you always have comforted me — you talk so beautifully, and are so gentle and kind. Oh, I do love you dear,' and the child raised his thin arms and encircled Leonard's neck as upon that first night when they met; and his little parched lips kissed again and again Leonard's

bowed face. 'Don't you also be sad, dear,' said the child anxiously, as Leonard averted his face, seeking to repress his emotion. 'I'm sure we never shall be parted. Dear, dear man, don't be sad; I've a deal to say to you; sit down beside me, dear; take hold of my hand—there: that does me good. I've not much pain now. I've not had pain now for a long time, that is so nice, only I am so faint, and am not certain of all that I say; but I do not now trouble you, dear aunties, by being so fretful. Oh, it's you, dear. I feel—ah—I want to ask you something. I have known a long time—oh, long before aunt Lucretia did, that I was going away, and have thought a great deal of dear Christ's words about dying, though I did not like to talk with people of what I knew, for it made them cry; but as I have lain upon the cushion, dear, beneath the trees and the sky, and you have talked or read so beautifully to me—all those words came clear to me—and oh, many, many things which I can't tell *you* even! And often, when you have thought me asleep, I've been thinking upon these things; how happy, how lovely those days were! Oh, how I do love you, dear! But one thing I have often, often thought of, and it makes me very unhappy. I do pray God will forgive me! I saw one day, when I first went to the school, a poor old man who was quite lame, and he hopped along in a very funny fashion; and I laughed quite loud, and began to hop as he did, and all the boys

clapped their hands and laughed, and hopped also; the poor old man was very much hurt; was it not wrong? was it not wicked? I have so often thought of this since I was lame. I would give a great, great deal to ask that poor lame man to forgive me. I know now what a sad thing it is to be lame. I've always looked about for him when I was well enough to go out in my little carriage. But I feel better since I've told you, dear friend; but don't *you* ever be cruel — or unkind; it is a deal worse than death. I'm glad you are here, keep fast hold of my hand. I'm tired now, I'll sleep — only don't move from me — I do so love you.'

Leonard leaned his head upon one hand, whilst the other grasped the boy's small fingers.

What strange visions may now have flitted ghost-like before the spirit of the child as it journeyed along the dim Valley of the Shadow of Death? Sunlight fell upon the rigid features, and birds and butterflies flitted about without on joyous pinions, and the cries of merry, robust children at play came into the still room through the open window! But the senses of little Cuthbert seemed already closed to all sounds and sights of earth.

And what strange and doleful visions arose now before the spirit of poor Leonard? Let us not seek to enter the torture-chamber of that poor soul, where once more the rack, and the flame, the pincers, and the saw were at their fearful labor.

The child's placid but sharpened countenance lay statue-like upon the pillow, the face seeming to mature in its expression as hour after hour passed over. Lucretia and Mary, recalling the face in after years, always remembered it as the face of a youth, and not of a child.

At length, Lucretia, having performed her painful task of preparing Mary for the sad climax approaching for the dear child, looked into the room, and there still sat Leonard, with bowed head, grasping the little hand. She silently breathed a prayer, and gazing with swimming eyes, glided forth again to seek poor Mary, who, in an agony of grief, was pacing up and down the straight walk of the little garden.

Mary's joyous and hopeful nature, in which life was so strong and beautiful, must endure a great struggle before the thought of death was a reality. To her, until now, that great Schoolmaster in the School of Life — Death — had read no lesson. And she, hearing his stern, relentless accents, found the lesson one too hard to be believed. A fresh and unimagined consciousness of evil — sweet, joyous Mary — had entered into thy life, as pacing and weeping restlessly up and down that straight gravel walk, thou didst seek to understand these mournful accents. Henceforth, at times of greatest joy and security, their echo will resound through thy heart. Alas ! a horror has entered into thy soul which will for ever lurk behind the beautiful forms and features of thy beloved.

## CHAPTER XVI.

Again the voice spake unto me,  
Thou art so steeped in misery,  
Surely 'twere better not to be.

ALFRED TENNYSON.

It is the morning of Agnes' arrival, and whilst Leonard sits holding the hand of the dying child, steeped in bitterest despair, self-contempt, and distrust of Agnes' love, poor Agnes waits with longing, listening, breathless impatiencē for Leonard. What joy to convince him by the greeting of love, brought from his uncle, that *his* interest, *his* happiness, have been a quickening thought in her soul during a long absence. What matters the loss of her long-worked-for papers! The awful sights and sounds of that terrible day and night, the glow of human sympathy which had electrified her being, cast all personal loss into nothingness.

'Oh, if he would but come — quickly! quickly!' cried the excited girl; 'why did I not more urgently word my note? but words upon lifeless paper are so flat — so powerless! He must have been from

home — let me seek to calm myself; but every nerve still vibrates — my ears yet resound with the crash and the cries of that dreadful scene. My eyes, if they close, mirror back that whirling chaos of flame and vapor and swaying multitudes. Oh Leonard! Leonard! why do you not come? I long to hold your hand, and to assure myself that I am sane — that I possess a peaceful, a calm haven of rest. If there must be communion of soul, you must — you must listen to my cry!’ And Agnes, with wild action, pushed back the hair from her throbbing temples, and, with clasped hands, standing by the window, gazed with fixed searching eyes and listening ear. But hour after hour went by, and no Leonard arrived.

‘Do you say that Mr. Hale left home at eleven *after* he received my note?’ asked Agnes with a forced calmness from a servant whom she questioned in the course of the afternoon; no Leonard having arrived, and poor Agnes, after tortures of anxiety, impatience, and indignation, having once more despatched her messenger to Leonard’s lodging.

‘Yes, miss; Mrs. Buddle said she put the note upon Mr. Hale’s chimney-piece, and she saw Mr. Hale reading it a long time as she was a fetching the breakfast-tray out, and then Mr. Hale painted a bit, and took his hat and went out. She says she did wonder how he could stop painting just as usual, so quiet-

like, after he got a letter from you, miss, and you just come back ; but gentlemen, says she, is so ——'

'That will do,' coldly interrupted Agnes, and the gossiping woman withdrew to gossip to her heart's content below stairs.

Every word had been torture to Agnes. The door closed. Agnes clenching her hands together, for a moment stood white and rigid as a statue, then sunk her clenched hands upon the table, and falling to the floor upon her knees, buried her face in her hands — a heart-piercing low moan bursting from her lips ; and so for a space she knelt. No tears flowed from beneath the burning eyelids. The moment had arrived when spontaneously, irrevocably, her soul severed itself from Leonard.

'Henceforth he shall be as one dead to me,' spoke the inward voice within Agnes' heart : 'what miserable weakness to permit a phantom, a mere love of an ideal Leonard, to devour my life, my happiness, my career ! God be praised, life is rich in a thousand ways ! Yet — yet to have possessed in Leonard the unutterably dear friend whom I have dreamed — to have been all in all to him — to have been doubly strong in each other, I in him and he in me ! Oh, what joy, what deep, deep, blessed joy ! But, alas, alas ! that cruel voice which has ever whispered of his coldness — his carelessness ; that, *that* was the truth. No, *he* never burned with the ardor of *my*

love. No fire of devoted passion burned within his heart! But *that* fire smoulders within my heart ready to leap forth into a mighty conflagration: but it shall not kill — not destroy; it shall, O Father in heaven, through Thy aid, flame forth only to kindle noble love and devotion in other hearts. My work in the world shall be wrought out alone through this mighty love — *it* shall be my husband, my beloved. Father, I thank Thee that I am snatched away from the brink of a great misery — from this treachery; for the sake of this strongest impulse of the soul, I can crush all tender thoughts of a cruel phantom. Leonard does not and *never* loved me; this I see clear as the sun. Thus am I severed from him, and he from me. I pray Heaven I forget him — I shall — I do. I am happier, O God, than I have been for long.'

Agnes arose from her knees; a strange light burnt in her eyes, her usually pale cheeks glowed with crimson, her lips were streaks of vermilion, her frame trembled with a strange ague-fit; and yet her countenance was that of a victor, and not of the vanquished. Up and down the little chamber she paced; the air oppressed her, the sounds of the awful fire at Hamburg roared in her ears, mingling in delirious confusion with the thousand fancies of her overwrought brain.

'I stand upon the eve of a fresh chapter in my life,' said she: 'I shall never see Leonard more —



I *will* not! If his love did not dictate an instant meeting with me, it is a miserable love, unworthy of the name. He shall be free from his bondage. I will never more see the face of one who has been so unutterably dear. I will write to him, telling him of his uncle's words—*they* shall be my revenge. Let me to the last offer him only deeds of love and words of kindness. As the words of a guardian angel shall be the words of my letter;—but—no, never, never, never more will I see him! And my dear papers—my lost manuscripts—the labor of these long months! But what is that loss, the loss of Leonard, to the losses, the agonies, the burning frienzy of those poor sufferers in this mighty conflagration! Would that I knew what tidings were received!’

Agnes bathed her burning cheeks in water; she flung open her window to gain a breath of air; but her lips were parched, her very brain seemed scorched and seared.

As evening began to gather, and the golden rays of sunset glowed upon the windows of the house opposite, Agnes hurriedly walked along the dry, warm pavement of the narrow, quiet street in which she lived; she was seized with an impetuous longing after physical action; she could not repose, although weary and exhausted to the last degree. Calling a cab, and ordering the driver to drive as rapidly as he could to the outskirts

of the great city — she cared not whither, only that it must be where were green fields and fresh air — she was soon driving along one of the great crowded thoroughfares leading from the heart of the heat and fever of the metropolis into suburban verdure.

Youths and children were passed by the dusty careering cab, in which, sunk back in a corner, lay poor Agnes, devoured with strange feverish horrors, and yet planning great schemes for the future. These youths and children grasped in their hands bunches of blue hyacinths, and cowslips, and primroses, telling of happy strolls among the distant woods; their faces were full of joy, and they all talked merrily among themselves, but Agnes heeded them not. Neither did she heed a poor sun-burnt countryman who, standing at the corner of a squalid street, exhibited, with stolid mien, to a squalid crowd, a marvellous banner of his own construction — a banner fit to have been borne in a procession to the honor of Flora. Primroses, and blue-bells, and cowslips, and tulips, and narcissi, all in thick clusters massed together with bright contrasts, and upborne by a thick hazel-pole wreathed with ivy. The children, with their hot dirty hands and faces, eagerly stared up at the beautiful banner, attracted by its magic, as was also a certain white butterfly, which had bewildered itself among the smoky London roofs. Even the policemen's hearts were touched by the vision of spring

beauty, and they left the stolid countryman unmolested. He had stood there all that livelong day with the same unmoved features, except when a most unusual gleam had passed across his copper-colored face, as a tall gentleman, whom he had observed watching his banner for some moments, placed in his hand half-a-crown. Yes, Leonard had heeded the countryman whilst passing along this same great thoroughfare, although Agnes had not. And the tall gentleman, and the vast wealth of the half-crown, remained the one bright memory of London in the heart of the bearer of the floral banner for long, dull years to come.

On rattled the cab past crowded stalls of fish and vegetables, where miserable flowers had baked in the sun's rays the hot day through, their parched leaves covered with dust; and on rattled the cab out among suburban pleasantness, where lilacs were bursting forth into their fresh greenery, and where the little garden plots were gay with bright spring flowers; but Agnes heeded them not. Neither did she heed the darkened windows of a little house especially gay with spring beauty; and little did she divine that within its shadow Leonard's spirit had brooded these last many hours of misery — nay, was still mysteriously linked with its sorrow. Agnes, forgetful of the Gaywoods and of their connection with Leonard, was utterly unobservant of the road she was pursuing,

and remained oblivious to all but her partial delirium.

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Within the green duskiness of the Gaywoods' little sitting-room was an awful visitant. The Angel of Death already cast his shadow across the brow of little Cuthbert. Mary and Lucretia, with hushed breath, knelt beside the sofa where the child still lay, sleeping as Leonard had left him a few hours previously, but the features were sharper and the complexion more transparent. Suddenly his large eyes flashed open with a strange intelligence — a smile beamed over the whole transfigured countenance, and then the head sank with leaden weight upon the encircling arm of Lucretia. The supreme moment had arrived.

The sisters sank their faces upon the little corpse with a sickness of the soul too deep for tears ; and, marvellous to relate, through the brain of Lucretia passed a strange vision of seraphic awe. The spirit of the child shone down upon her with eyes of joy and purity unutterable — as if of effulgent glory was his whole being — and stretching forth his loving hand, suddenly another spirit was at his side, dimmer, sadder, yet scarcely less beautiful, and as if flaming up into brightness as it touched the hand of the child, and as the unheard accents of the child-spirit's quivering lips fell upon his ear. It was the spirit of Leonard !

And where was Leonard? Rousing himself at length from his torturing meditations, with a stern determination to meet Agnes, Leonard arose from beside the sofa of the dying child, and without indulging in a natural grief at what his soul told him would be his last glimpse in life of his beloved little friend, he quietly left the room and house, unseen by any one of the small household. But once more within the vortex of the metropolis, and approaching the presence of Agnes, disgust and world-weariness seized yet firmer hold upon him; he seemed impelled to fly from his stern judge, as if some irrevocable repulsion dwelt within her sphere. Her countenance, her fancied words, harrowed his morbid and vacillating nature, till, mingling with the old pain, a paroxysm, it may be, seized upon him, not unlike the misery of his poor mother, whose face was ever haunting him in strange juxtaposition with that of Agnes. Now Agnes' stern cold features melted into the unrecognizing gaze of his mother as last he had seen her; now as vacantly he stood staring into a toy-shop — the toys unconsciously bearing his memory back into the years of his childhood — the passionate words of his mother's love rang through his brain, but the words were spoken with Agnes' stern, unrelenting, cold lips. Impelled as if by a demon, Leonard posted out of London. On and on he walked for hours, with a strange delirium upon him, which, as in the case of Agnes, showed itself in a restless desire for motion.

When the rejoicing rays of the morrow's sun darted sparkling through the matted boughs of a solitary wood, some miles from London, they fell upon the pallid face of a man who lay prostrate at the foot of a twisted and gnarled old thorn just bursting into blossom. The sun's rays danced merrily among the leaves; the soft morning breeze arose shivering through the branches, and scattering down the rain-drops which hung upon them from a shower fallen in the night. The little birds suddenly burst forth into their morning anthem, and the whole wood was awake and filled with an active joy. But the man lay unmoved. The glittering rain-drops fell upon him, glancing upon his soft but matted hair, and quietly rolling over his white face like bright tears. The wind waved his hair and the skirt of his coat; and a little bird, fluttering down from the thorn tree, perched upon his uncovered head, and began pecking the long, dark hair which fell upon the mossy ground, and with several hairs in her bill flew up again to weave them into her nest. A lovely green and orange beetle crawled wonderingly out of a hole in the thorn-tree root, and passed slowly across the man's clenched hand, as it lay outstretched upon the moss. Trees, birds, insects, and flowers had all awoke to activity and joy, but the man lay motionless among them. The sun rose higher into the heavens, and his rays fell through an opening among the trees

with a searching violence upon that passive face; and then came a sudden shower, drenching the hair and clothes; but the form remained quiescent and as fading as a mass of crushed flowers which lay beside him. And sounds of gay laughter, from a picnic party in a distant part of the wood, floated upon the breeze to the old thorn tree; and the cheerful splash of oars from a little river which flowed through the wood; and the quiet bleating of sheep from sunny uplands; and the barking of watch-dogs and the crowing of cocks from lone homesteads and the yet more distant village. The sad face grew darker and more ghastly, and birds continued to sing over the poor corpse for three days; and grass, full of its young vernal vigor, and convolvulus, and vetches, had begun to nod over the face and hands and catch at the fearful fingers with their innocent, loving tendrils.

About sunset on the third day, a keeper, passing through the deep wood, discovers by his dog this strange trespasser. His face grows dark, almost as the one upon the moss at which his dog barks and whines, and the keeper rushes out of the wood, and up to the distant village. And the passive figure lying at the foot of the thorn-tree occasions a mighty convulsion within and around that rose and honeysuckle festooned and whitewashed public-house. And the doctor, and the beadle, and the landlord, and the keeper, and various other notables of the village, are

off with a cart to fetch out of the wood this sad, terrible figure ; and the coroner is sent for post-haste.

And when the moon slowly rises and shines between the clump of pines which grow upon the terrace of a beautiful Italian villa lying among the hills above the village, where the slender spire of the village church seems to melt away into the tender night heaven, and where the breath of May sweeps across meadows and into the open casements of cottages, cheering the hearts of the sick and wafting sweet dreams to the slumbering children, slowly comes the cart along with its fearful burden ; and there is a busy hum of voices around the cart from the men who accompany it, and women and children glance fearfully at the procession as they stand outside their gardens in the dusty road ; and some of the children begin to cry ; but the women's voices murmur as busily as the men's who attend the procession.

And the clergyman and others are awaiting the arrival in the dimly-lighted, mouldering church. And when the sad form is displayed by the glare of candles, the changed face is still not so changed but that the landlord gives a great gasp, and exclaims, all hot and excited — Lord ! Lord ! if it aint that painter gentleman as used to be down here last summer a painting — a mighty great friend of Miss Pierrpoint's — Lord ! Lord ! but my missus will take on a bit I reckon : he took a picture for her of our pretty little Rose as is



gone, and was a right, nice, pleasant gentleman — Lord! Lord!’

And among the people looking in at the church-door was the countryman of the floral banner; but the face glared upon by the dismal candles, and stolid in the midst of that excited assembly, was faded as the banner now was, and scarcely less an object of scorn. Though the countryman had only that very hour been showing his marvellous half-crown given by the tall gentleman, even he did not recognize the giver.

## CHAPTER XVII.

O friends — O kindred — O dear brotherhood  
Of all the world ! what are we, that we should  
For covenants of long affection sue ?  
Why press so near each other, when the touch  
Is barred by graves ?

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

WE left Agnes Singleton driving along in a cab towards the first glimpse of country freshness and repose which she should reach, with her whole being fevered with the memories of the awful Hamburg fire, and her soul sick with its renunciation of her love for Leonard.

We will not follow her, when she quitted the cab, along her wild walk across the lovely stretch of undulating country lying between Highgate and Hampstead, which so peacefully reposed that beautiful May evening, with its rich woods, and gleaming ponds, and soft green slopes, beneath the golden sunset sky. On, on she walked, like one in a trance, oblivious to all around her, and it was instinct only which led her back to London and her solitary home, when night had closed in. Neither will we describe her miserable awakening upon the morrow, nor how with this morrow still no Leonard came !

Alas ! Agnes little could divine that the earthly husk of Leonard's spirit lay fading and changing into an object of dread beneath the pleasant leaves and blossoms of the beautiful, peaceful woodlands. Could she, as she wandered frantically along, that soft May evening, have manifested the richness of her love to him, instead of hardening her soul against him, would it have availed aught ? Could she have withdrawn him from his miserable fate by the strength of her warm life — could she have bound him to the earth and to its beautiful realities ? Had Agnes' eyes looked into his with all the devotion which filled her heart, would they have laid the phantoms which tortured his brain ? Had the voice of Mary Gaywood reached Leonard's ear, clear as a bell and holy as a seraph's hymn, pouring itself forth in 'I know that my Redeemer liveth,' as upon many a twilight — would the demon have been laid, as within Saul's breast by the touch of David's harp ? Could aught have rescued Leonard from the last sad act ? Alas ! Leonard was one of those beings left, in the extreme moments of their existence, to struggle utterly alone ; abandoned, as it seems, by man — abandoned even by their better self ; and whose cup of misery flows over in completest bitterness through the loss of faith in the one True Friend, the Father without whose knowledge not a sparrow falleth to the ground.

Honorina is standing beside the bed of Agnes, with an extraordinary mournfulness and pallor upon her noble countenance. Agnes is lying dressed upon her bed, and appears sunk in a profound sleep. There she has lain for two days and a night. Honorina has learnt from Agnes' servant that she has awakened once and drunk a cup of coffee, and again fallen into her death-like sleep.

Agnes was not one of those people who would fall into a brain fever, or pine away and break their hearts, however bitter the pain; her physical being was utterly exhausted, but Nature, that marvellous restorer, sank her into the Lethe of sleep in order again to brace up her being for fresh endurance! Alas! poor Agnes, thou art proud and filled with a bitter indignation, which for the time would have silenced thy cry of love and anguish, had Leonard lived! How will thy soul array itself in sackcloth and ashes for each shadow of reproach and anger, now, when thou shalt hear that Leonard is dead — has died by his own hand!

Whilst Honorina gazed upon that calmly-sleeping pale face, the tears rolled quietly over her cheeks, and, stooping down to impress a kiss upon her friend's brow, the eyes of Agnes suddenly unclosed and gazed at her for a moment in bewilderment.

'Oh, Honorina!' cried she, hurriedly, and started up, 'Honorina! Where am I? — Oh! — I begin to recollect — but how kind of you, Honorina! How did you learn

of my return ! What a great, great joy to see you, beloved friend ! I have been so strangely exhausted by all that great fatigue of the fire — that awful fire at Hamburg, Honoria. You can tell what news has arrived since I left. I have been in a strange dream ever since, but am quite refreshed now.’ And she rose from her bed, and drawing back the window-curtains, looked out into the sunny street. ‘Honoriam, I have lost all count of time ; I have no conception what hour of the day it is ; scarcely what day it is of the week. I feel like one of the sleepers of Ephesus,’ said she, with a deep sigh, and her head sank upon her breast. ‘Honoriam,’ resumed she, ‘I shall have such sad things to describe to you about that fire, when I feel less weary than I do now ; and some noble and beautiful things too ; but oh, my God !’ and dropping her arms upon the toilette-table, she buried her face upon them, and deep sobs shook her frame.

Honoriam watched her friend in the most painful state of suspense. Had she seen Leonard since her return ? — did she know any circumstances which might throw light upon the termination of his life ? — what did this demonstration of a great grief denote ? — and in one ordinarily of so undemonstrative a character ? Honoriam knew not how to enter upon the miserable inquiry, how to break the sad intelligence to her.

Agnes soon restrained herself. ‘Honoriam,’ said she, with a sad, faint smile, ‘I am so utterly exhausted by

this great excitement, my nerves so thoroughly unstrung, that I must appear in your eyes little better than a weak child; but you must have read of some of the horrors of the fire in the papers. And, Honoria, only think, I have had a great loss myself: all my papers — all my labors of the past winter at Upsala and Stockholm — are probably lost. Is it not a sad thing for me? But you do not seem to appreciate my loss, dear Honoria — the loss of such valuable material?’

‘That seems to me at this moment but a small loss, Agnes,’ spoke Honoria, with trembling lips, and her eye rivetted with an unspeakable sadness upon her friend.

‘Of course, of course, Honoria, in comparison with the loss at Hamburg of life and property; but, just at this moment, to me this loss of mere written paper is very sad; it was so very, very dear to me!’ And again tears chased themselves down Agnes’ face, and her lips quivered convulsively.

‘Agnes! my dear, dear Agnes! But there is Leonard!’ and Honoria would have drawn Agnes’ bowed face upon her breast.

Agnes started violently up, and exclaimed — her face flushed crimson, and her eyes sparkling with a wild light — ‘Honoria, never, never speak that name to me: our love is at an end; with him it never existed! He is to me as one dead. For his sake — for mine — let us never, never speak of Leonard!’

‘Have you seen him since you returned, Agnes?’ eagerly inquired Honoria.

‘No, no, Honoria; he loved so little that he never came, although I summoned him — yes, in the very first hour of my arrival. Oh! Honoria, was *that* love?’ and the poor girl trembled with a bitter passion.

‘My Agnes, Agnes! Leonard is DEAD!’ cried Honoria, flinging her arms around her friend, and pressing Agnes convulsively in them.

‘Dead!’ spoke Agnes, in a low hoarse voice, tearing herself from Honoria; then, as if in whisper, — ‘Dead!’ and Agnes had sunk upon the floor in a swoon.

It was a most painful task to communicate to Agnes, upon her return to consciousness, the truth regarding the death of Leonard, and little was the light which the unhappy girl could throw upon the motives leading to such a deed as self-destruction. That he had been seized with a sudden fit of insanity was their sad verdict, as well as that which the coroner had passed upon the body the evening before.

News of Leonard’s death had been brought with the early dawn to Honoria upon the very day when we find her now with Agnes. Accompanied by her father, she had hastened down, post-haste, into the neighborhood of Dorking, where, having satisfied themselves that the body was indeed that of poor Leonard Hale — having learnt all the meagre information that could be given

by the villagers, and arranged with the clergyman what was necessary to be done for the respectful and mournful interment of the poor corpse within the precincts of the quiet churchyard — they returned as rapidly again to town, there to prosecute fresh inquiry. Honoria, upon their journey, communicated to her father the, to him, most astounding intelligence, that Leonard Hale and the son of Augustus Mordant were one and the same person. The old gentleman appeared unable to realize such a surprising fact. ‘And yet, and yet, Honoria, you remember how the likeness to Mordant always struck me in the young man: but it *is* surprising, surprising!’ he repeated a dozen times as they hurried back to London.

Honoria knew that Agnes was expected from Sweden about this time, and her anxiety regarding her waxed great. That she had really returned, Honoria, however, first learned at Leonard’s lodgings, whither she and her father had immediately hastened. There, upon a table beside Leonard’s easel, lay the little hasty note in Agnes’ hand, and to which, sobbing violently, the good old woman of the house pointed; for, like every one brought within his sphere, Leonard had inspired her, through his gentleness, with a strong affection for him.

‘Oh, *do* you think, Miss Pierrpoint, mum, that there was anything wrong between Mr. Hale and Miss Singleton? Oh, if we had but known that the poor gen-



tleman had had anything upon his mind — my old man and me — I'm sure and certain we'd have worked the very flesh off our bones to have given him a bit of ease. He was such a sweet-spoken gentleman! Yes, indeed, Miss Pierrpoint, mum, and Mr. Pierrpoint, sir, he was far more like a lady in his ways than any gentleman — never a cross word; but it was always — “If you please, Mrs. Buddle;” and, “I'll be obliged to you if you will have my breakfast ready at the hour I ring for it;” and, “You'll oblige me by not disturbing my pictures;” always “please” and “thank you” so natural like, and so punctual in his payment. Mum, it's true *this* month is owing for; but then, poor young gentleman, he could not have foreseen his death, you know.' And she sobbed violently into her checked apron. 'And all his traps, mum, — Mr. Pierrpoint, sir — what's to be done with them? Mr. B. and me, we've had a precious deal of talk about who'd look after them. If Miss Singleton — but I don't think she cared much for the poor departed gentleman — that I don't, indeed, mum! for Mr. Hale, he never seemed revived like by her letters; and the very last morning that I set eyes upon his blessed face, came that trumpery bit of a note there from her, and she just come, her servant said, from across the seas, and to send such a two or three lines as *that*. And he seemed to think so too, for he drawed and drawed a mortal long time before he went out — to see *her* we supposed. Now that does not

look much as though she cared for him—do it, mum?’

And so Mrs. Buddle sobbed and chattered, and passed judgment upon Agnes Singleton, whilst Honoria gazed round the room filled with its traces of poor Leonard's sad life and beautiful genius, till her heart swelled with a sad pain. Mr. Pierrpoint, meantime, condescended to communicate all the details of the discovery of Leonard's body and of the inquest to Mr. Buddle, who, with spectacles on nose and newspaper in hand, listened breathlessly to every word. The newspaper contained a paragraph descriptive of the discovery of a dead man within a wood near Box Hill, and that paragraph had already, earlier in the day, greatly agitated Mr. and Mrs. Buddle's nerves, already excited by the disappearance of their cherished lodger; and Mr. Buddle, in a very nervous trepidation, had just made up his mind to set off that very afternoon to look at the corpse, so soon as Mrs. Buddle should have fortified him for the journey by a hot luncheon, when the sad mystery was partially cleared up by the appearance of Mr. and Miss Pierrpoint. And now Honoria sought out poor Agnes, as we have already seen.

Within a week's time Mrs. Buddle had to retract her hard judgment upon Agnes.

‘Oh, Mr. Buddle, it is enough to make one's very heart break to see the face of that poor young thing, Miss Singleton! Not that she takes on like as I should

have done, a crying and a sobbing like ; but she looked so very white in her black dress when she stepped out of the carriage in which Miss Pierrpoint brought her, that I'd a mighty piece of work of it not to begin a crying myself in her face ; and they says not a word, but Miss Pierrpoint and she, they just goes into Mr. Hale's painting room as was, and I hears the key turned in the lock, and Miss Pierrpoint comes down directly — “and don't disturb her on no account,” says Miss Pierrpoint, in her noble, commanding way ; “leave her quite alone, Mrs. Buddle, I shall call again for Miss Singleton.” But I assure you, Mr. B., I got quite frightened — she stayed so long up in that there room. Thinks I to myself, if she should now make an end of herself, what a tragedy that would be ! If she should fall into a fainting fit, or take on dreadful, whatever could one do for her ? I listens, and listens, and listens, and I hears nothing at all, but the old clock ticking in the passage just as usual, and the distant cries in the road. I gets quite fidgety, and at last I remembers that I'd opened the window of Mr. Hale's painting-room this morning, and that if I stepped into the garden, without being inquisitive like, I could just quietly see what the poor thing was a doing of — it is but taking a motherly oversight, I says to myself — and then I steps across the flower-bed — I took care and did not trample upon your sweet-williams and sweet-peas, Mr. B., so don't be so frightened ! — and there I

gently looks in — and Lord a mercy! — I was ready to give a skreech ; for I sees the poor young lady lying upon the ground, and one grows quite narvus with such horrid histories ; but she was neither dead nor in a swoond, I see immediately, for her hands was clasped, and her head, as it lay upon a chair, shook with her violent crying ; but all so quiet ! and there was the picture Mr. Hale were a drawing of — the woman dead at the foot of the cross — the very last day he were alive ; she 'd put it, poor young lady, up upon the easel ; and there hung his cloak and garden hat behind the door, and all his colors and brushes and painting things and books lay about just as he 'd left 'em — I 'd not had the heart to touch them ; and the sun shone in so warm through the window, and the birds were a singing so cheery, and some way I never felt sorrier for anything nor anybody in all my life, Mr. B., I do assure you, and I did not know which to pity most, him or her ; and I stepped quite back from the window and prayed that the spirit of peace might enter into that poor young thing's heart, and that she might put her trust in what is more than man. And then, whilst I was crying a bit to myself in the garden, and tying up your balsams, Miss Pierrpoint comes again, and comes out to me in the garden, and asks me a deal about Mr. Hale, and she looks very sad ; and she says, says she, " Mrs. Buddle, Miss Singleton thinks she should like to come out into this quiet place and live with you — she

would like to live in Mr. Hale's rooms ; and you must disturb nothing till she comes — poor thing ! — she was to have been Mr. Hale's wife, you know, Mrs. Buddle, and everything is very dear to her. Now, if she comes to live here, you will be very attentive to her and kind, and will not disturb her in any way, for she is a great writer and very clever, and must be quite quiet, especially now she is so unhappy. Now, remember, she takes your rooms from this time, but she will not return here for some weeks, as she is going away with me into the country. But here is my address, and if you want anything, write to me ; and if there are any little bills of Mr. Hale's to be settled, let us know." Very handsome that of Miss Pierrpoint ; but I don't think there will be many bills ; he was such a very abstemious gentleman, was Mr. Hale. And, then, Mr. B., Miss Pierrpoint went up into the room, and directly after, without ringing for me, they lets themselves out and drives away.'

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Some ten days after Honoria and Agnes had thus abruptly left Mrs. Buddle's, and were located in a quiet village in one of the most beautiful districts of North Wales, whither Honoria had conveyed her friend, the following letter was received by Honoria from Ellis Stamboyse : —

‘ Nottingham, May 25th, 1842.

‘ Madam, — Learning from my confidential clerk, Andrew Gaywood, of your friendship with Miss Agnes Singleton, I am induced to address you in preference to her, considering the natural state of her feelings in consequence of the rash and fatal act of my relative, Leonard Mordant, more particularly as the circumstances which I have to communicate bear upon her connection with that unfortunate man.

‘ A succinct narrative will perhaps be the best mode of presenting my communication.

‘ On hearing of the fatal fire of Hamburg I hastened immediately to that city, but arrived only to learn, although the whole of the property and premises of our house remained in substance intact, that still we had sustained an irreparable loss in the death of our valued head, Michael Stamboyse. He appears to have perished, with several others, towards the close of the fire, in endeavoring to save a valuable amount of property lying in the city warehouses. My relative, who was a man of the strictest business habits, appears, on the day previous to this event, to have made a final will, which I found in his bureau properly attested, and which, to my astonishment, was made principally in favor of Miss Agnes Singleton, supposing her to become the wife of his unfortunate nephew, Leonard Mordant.

‘ I have said that I made this discovery with surprise, because at that time this young lady’s connection with

my relative was quite unknown. On inquiry, however, I soon learned of the singular circumstances of her arrival in Hamburg, and of the extraordinary manner in which these two strangers, of apparently such opposite characters, were thrown together, and became co-actors amid such appalling events. From Miss Singleton herself you will probably have heard the particulars, and more than I myself know of what passed between her and my deceased uncle, relative to Leonard Mordant.

‘From what I hear regarding this young lady’s character, I deeply deplore the rash, and I must say sinful, act of poor Leonard, which has thus deprived both himself and her of benefits which Providence evidently designed for them.

‘This is perhaps hardly the time to express my sincere and earnest admiration and esteem of such portions of Miss Singleton’s character as have come to my knowledge. At some future time, I trust that I may be enabled to evince to her the sincerity of these sentiments, and my earnest sympathy with her in this deep trial.

‘I remain, madam, yours truly,

‘Miss Pierrpoint.’

‘ELLIS STAMBOYSE.’

Of the tempest of affliction which had burst over the little home of the Gaywoods by this accumulation of death and sorrow, we will not speak; the sympathetic reader, who has accompanied us so far, will easily have conceived it.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

‘ My bride,

My wife, my life ! O we will walk this world  
Yoked in all exercise of noble ends ;  
And so through those dark gates across the wild  
That no man knows. Indeed I love thee : come,  
Yield thyself up : my hopes and thine are one :  
Accomplish thou my manhood and thyself.  
Lay thy sweet hands in mine and trust to me.’

ALFRED TENNYSON.

LET us, at all events, have a gleam of sunshine in which to bid farewell to these scholars in the School of Life. It is full three years after the mournful deaths of Leonard and of little Cuthbert, that we meet our friends, Lucretia, and Mary Gaywood, and John Wetherley, sauntering along an umbrageous lane leading from Clifton Grove towards the Hellings. Of poor Leonard's fate the three friends have been conversing ; and this may account for a certain mournfulness which overshadows their countenances ; but as they speak of the noble steadfastness with which Agnes has pursued her path, purified by her deep sorrow, an undying love



permeating her every word and deed — her whole life devoted to the service of suffering humanity — their faces beam with an enthusiastic joy.

‘Her true union with poor Leonard was more accomplished by his death,’ remarked Lucretia, ‘than ever it could have been by his life. Through her he still acts and lives in the world; his spirit of universal love has entered into her, and become active through her moral being. To her imaginative nature, the ideal of Leonard, mingling, as it does, with bitterest regret for her own harshness — though even I, John, am ready to confess now, that I formerly accused Agnes Singleton too severely of an absence of tenderness and love — has been, and ever will be, probably more effective in its influence for good and nobleness upon her life, than the marriage of the living Leonard ever could have been, even had he returned her love with the full force of his being. Love may do his work by separation at times rather than by accomplished union. But you, dear Mary and John, shake your heads; you are sceptics! And may *your* lives, beloved ones, in their accomplished union, read a yet stronger and yet more beautiful moral. But, dear ones, I am not going to preach you a marriage homily; I am going to consult you about a scheme which Andrew, and Mr. Ellis Stamboyse, and I have in hand. We were very busy in discussion, you may remember, the other evening when you two returned from your long day’s ramble,

bringing with you that grand sheaf of water-plants, and that beautiful sketch of the old willows upon the island; but as we had not quite settled affairs, we would not then tell you.'

'Oh, I'm afraid you did not tell us, dear Lucretia,' cried Mary, with her sweet, gay voice, 'because John and I were so full of our adventures, and so selfishly absorbed in our happy day; do, do forgive us! But what is the scheme? three such wise people can only have concerted a marvel of wisdom!'

'It is that I shall become book-keeper for the London branch of the great house of Stamboyse — book-keeper with a salary of £200 a-year; what think you of that?'

'You *book-keeper*, Lucretia!' her two listeners exclaimed with one voice of astonishment.

'Yes, the idea is novel, I confess; but the more you reflect upon it the better I fancy you will like it,' pursued Lucretia, smiling at the surprise written upon the countenances of her auditors. 'You know that Ellis Stamboyse has long been an advocate for the employment of women in various occupations usually closed to them — and how in every direction he would open up paths for their enlightenment, and for means of their usefulness, both to themselves and others — and how he and Agnes have worked together in this direction for some two years past you also know — and how since his return from America he has become still

more earnest upon the subject. The other day he offered Andrew this situation in London, which has a much higher salary than the one which Andrew fills at Nottingham; but Andrew hesitated, both because he dreaded, on account of his delicate health, the increased responsibility and the greater confinement; and because, delightful as would have been his near neighborhood to us, he still regretted leaving his old routine of business and his old haunts—you know Andrew's ways! And then, all at once, Mr. Ellis proposed that I should become their book-keeper with £200 a year! I was not so much surprised as you are; all became clear to me at once, and many things could thus be accomplished about which I was anxious. I had often wondered how I might, after dear Mary was gone, employ my time in such a manner as should, to some degree, banish my longing for her dear presence. Dearest Mary, now that I have found this employment, I can speak of this selfish regret of mine in losing you, who these long years past have been my sister, daughter almost, and most beloved of friends.'

Mary could only reply by pressing Lucretia's hand fervently to her lips.

'And then, too,' continued Lucretia, 'I shall be so rich; there will be no fear for sickness or old age in years to come; and, besides, I have secretly determined never to rest until Andrew gives up his situation and comes and lives with me in London; and we will

take a cottage within a short walk of you at Brompton, so there will be plenty of money provided for our own wants. I already have fixed upon the cottage even. And it will be most edifying, I assure you, dear ones, to see me setting off to my *office* each morning, punctual as clock-work, by the omnibus; and still more edifying to see me sitting within my glass-case, like some rare stuffed animal, with my big ledgers about me. I mean to become the very model of a book-keeper; it will never do for a *woman* to do such a thing imperfectly, you know. And thus you see it is all arranged, and Andrew comes over to-morrow evening to give me my first lesson in posting the ledger. Yes, dear Mary, you and John may laugh, but the thing is no joke!

And thus, gaily talking, the trio passed along towards the old-fashioned village of Wilford, where John had determined that he and Mary should be married, and where the three were now waiting until the marriage-day arrived.

The reader will perceive that various changes must have taken place in the heart of our friend John Wetherley since we parted with him, seeing that we find him now a third time in love.

John himself laughed with Mary about what he called his 'very susceptible heart,' and had confided to her the history of his youthful passion for L'Allegra; at which both Mary and John smiled, recalling L'Al-

legra, as they now knew her, the very elegant, but insipid fine lady, whose interests in life were bounded by the desire to see 'her dear husband and babes' enjoying every possible creature-comfort; the 'babes,' be it observed, adorned always in the most exquisite and costly of attire, fashioned by no meaner hand than that of the fair L'Allegra herself. They smiled not at L'Allegra's love — so far as it extended — but at its extending within such narrow bounds, and sighed also when they believed that they had divined what was the peculiar and secret trial of Ellis Stamboyse's life, disappointment in the compass of his pretty wife's soul, which he so willingly would have cultivated and enriched with precious seed, till it should have brought forth roses more beautiful than those which glowed upon her pretty cheeks, and till she had become truly a *help-meet* for him in this world of stern labor.

John also had confided to Mary his more serious passion for Honoria, and with words of a deep earnestness declared that if ever Mary found in him the devoted, faithful friend and life-long companion which he so earnestly desired to be to her, she must ascribe much, if not all, of their happiness to Honoria, and to the upright principles which she so sternly had inculcated, to the aspiration after, first moral, then intellectual perfection, which she had thought necessary to inspire him with.

'No, never, never, beloved Mary,' had John once

exclaimed, 'could I have recognized the beauty of your and Lucretia's lives, had it not been for Miss Pierrpoint's influence. Never, never could your beautiful love have been bestowed upon me, except for her teaching of *wisdom*; for even had she by her wealth and influence raised the poor boy from the turnip-field into the painter and well-to-do man, that would not have crowned me with the rarest of blessings, the love of a pure and noble-minded woman such as you! Yes, sweet little Mary, let our gratitude towards, and love of this dear and noble friend show itself to her through the accomplishment of our beautiful dreams of an ideally lovely marriage. Oh, Mary, how lovely, how pure and noble a future lies before us! God only grant us strength to accomplish some of these beautiful aspirations through His holy power and love!'

'Amen!' spoke Mary in a low, deep voice, and clasped her beloved with unutterable tenderness in her soft arms.

John Wetherley truly must have been born under a lucky star; for not only upon his return from his continental sojourn, enriched with study and purified by a profound mental struggle in which he had come forth nobly victorious, did he achieve an extraordinary success in his artistic life, but gradually had dawned in his breast a fresh love for sweet Mary Gaywood, who had been developed during his absence, by her sorrow over little Cuthbert's death, and by the gradual

course of time, from the gentle, sweet young girl, into the sweet, joyous-hearted, and intellectual woman. This love, virginal in its purity as his love of L'Allegra, elevated in its moral tone as his love of Honoria, yet differed from either through its blessedness in being returned, and that with a full-heartedness which at times fairly intoxicated John. Mary, if anything, grew graver and more thoughtful; but her gay, joyous nature lost nothing by the mellowed earnestness which this deep affection, with its beautiful but awe-inspiring responsibilities cast over her.

And now, as we have seen, the wedding-day was rapidly approaching, and we find our friends located at the quaint little village where first we made John's acquaintance. John is staying with his good old grandmother, who yet lives, although we have lost sight of her these ten years, of course looking older, but hale and merry as ever. She lived in the same little cottage in which we first met with her, but which had, thanks to John's never-ceasing thoughts of the dear old woman's comfort, been enriched with many useful presents. She had a girl, too, who did whatever house-work was beyond the old body's strength; and altogether old Sally Wetherley was regarded quite as a lady by her village acquaintance—not that she regarded herself as a lady. She would have been the first to ridicule the idea; and still hobbled about her work with a certain pride, although her dream of

former days was strangely realized, and she 'had a maid-of-all-work, and could live like a lady.' Her greatest pride was 'my grandson John.'

'He's a brave lad's my John, not a bit of pride, I assure you, Dolly,' she had said some weeks before to her old gossip—'not a bit of it, and that you'll see when he comes down here next week to look out for lodgings for the lady as he's going to be married to, and as is coming down here to stay, as she must do, you know, she and her sister. John says in's letter they's made up their minds long ago only to be married by Mester Brewster, as had laughed at him for painting with powder-blue and mustard, when he was a bit of a chap, thou remembers, Dolly; and that he and Mary—that's th' lass's name—none of your fine fly-away names, you see—had rather be married in th' old Wilford church, than in St. Peter's at Rome, or in any o' th' fine churches he'd seen in foreign parts. And it seems that the lass knows all about Wilford, and has a brother as lives in Nottingham; and she sends her affectionate love to me, thou sees, Dolly—nay, I forgot thou wast so blind, and could not see th' writing, though it is big:—my lad always writes big and black; for he knows my eyes is bad, though not so bad as thine yet, Dolly. And so thou sees it's no wonder I'm a bit in a flurry, and must help Bess to red up th' place. But I must say, Dolly, I'm a bit scared when I think a seeing my grand lady grand-



daughter as is to be ! Not but that she 'll be a good lass to my lad, I feel sure ; but she mayn't like, thou knows, to find as her husband was such a poor lad, thou sees, and has still such a poor old woman for a grandmother, as can't talk fine.'

And terribly '*scared*' indeed was good old Sally the evening of Mary and Lucretia's arrival.

'Now, grannie !' exclaimed John, bursting into his grandmother's cottage, his face radiant with joy, 'make haste and come across the green. Mary is come ! I've just brought them from Nottingham ; they are going to drink tea, and are a little weary after their journey or they would have come on directly with me ; but I said I'd fetch you to drink tea with them — come along, come along. Mary's so impatient to see you,' cried he, kissing the old woman ; 'I'll put your bonnet on, and there's your shawl !'

'But bless thee, lad, I can't, I tell thee ; thou quite upsets a body — thou's rumbled my cap, and flustered me ever so, lad !' cried the old grandmother, a little bit ruffled in temper as well as in dress. 'I can't go and see thy fine Lunnon acquaintance, I tell thee, Johnny — thy fine ladies, in this old rag ; thou should ha' a bit more respect for me ; and you're come ever so much sooner than Bess and I expected — we've been redding up th' hearthstone, thou sees, and have been making some pikelets. I was just a-going to clean myself and be ready. Thou shouldn't be in such a hurry, lad !'

‘ But you ’ll do beautifully, grandmother, — that nice russet gown Mary will admire if she looks at it ; but she ’ll only look at your dear old face that I ’ve told her about so often,’ said John, laughing.

‘ Make me believe that, lad ! ’ interrupted his grandmother with a touch of her old hastiness of temper, ‘ as if a young fellow like thee talked so much to his sweetheart about an old woman. I can’t go i’ this shabby rag, I tell thee ; and my puce silk’s laid out already up stairs to put on, and my best cap, and my beautiful reticule with thy pretty flower paintings upon it, as I use only on holidays : thou remembers it, John ; Miss Emma Dale as was, made it up for thee : I ’ve not forgotten it, if thou has ! ’

But John’s laughter and his grandmother’s oration were interrupted by a sun-beam gliding into the room and pausing beside them. It was dear Mary herself.

‘ Have you quarrelled again about the comforter, then ? ’ said a merry voice, and in a moment more the old grandmother and Mary were folded in a warm embrace.

‘ Well, Johnny, and this is thy wife then, that is to be,’ said the old woman at length, sinking down upon a chair, and wiping her eyes, which some way were full of tears, as were the eyes of John, and of Mary, and of Lucretia, who stood upon the threshold of the cottage. ‘ Well, but she’s a sweet lass, and looks as though she’d make thee a brave wife ; and do thou,

lad, make her a brave husband, which is a harder thing, John, than being even such a brave grandson as thou's been to me. "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness. Her children arise up and call her blessed; her husband also praiseth her!" added the old woman in the beautiful blessing of Scripture, and then fairly sobbed outright.

Surely a more beautiful prelude to a beautiful and holy married life could not well be imagined than were the quiet weeks spent by John and Mary at Wilford before their marriage. Mary and the old grandmother became very fond of each other, and could not outdo one another in singing his praises.

Lucretia and Andrew and Ellis Stamboyse had many discussions leading to results equally rational as the one we have already recorded, and Mary and John spent days of almost celestial joy among the woods and fields, looking down into the depths of each other's being with an unreservedness such as could alone exist between two such loving, pure, and enlightened hearts, and mirroring each other in their souls, mutually to gain truth and strength.

Not a spot hallowed to Mary by any incident of

John's childhood but was visited by them ; ' for,' said Mary, with her deep love welling up into her sweet eyes as she looked into her lover's face, ' I must not alone belong to your present and to your future, but must be able to live with you in the past. To me it is so beautiful, John, that I also have childish associations with these dear fields and groves ; for it would seem to me so sad and painful if ever there had been a time when no association bound us together. And that you knew and loved Cuthbert and poor Leonard, and love Lucretia only next to me, is indeed a great blessedness ; but it could not be otherwise, for my soul acknowledges you as an old friend. I cannot imagine how I felt or lived before this deep emotion formed a portion of my life.'

And a great deal more such love-making went on whilst John sate painting amidst the pleasant trees and blossoms, with Mary beside him, forgetful of the book which she had begun to read aloud to him ; or when John, flinging aside his sketch, would throw himself at her feet in the grass, and gaze into her dear face with a nobler but not less intoxicating passion than had flamed up within him for his first love.

' I do think my Johnny's nearly off's head with love for that lass,' had been Sally Wetherley's remark to old Dolly ; ' only think, I came the other evening upon the two whilst they were sitting down at the bottom of the garden — thou knows the turf-seat, where John's made

the strawberry-bed as is so full o' fruit this season — and there, only think, if th' silly chap had not made her a crown o' flowers, which he 'd put upon her head, and was lying down 'mong the grass at her feet ; and just when I and Miss Gaywood hobbled up — they 'd been too throng in their talk to heed us — there was the lass a-laughing like a madcap because my silly big booby of a grandson — who, they say, is a mighty great man, and has his bits a paintings written about i' th' Lunnon papers — had just seized hold of her little foot and covered it with kisses — her *foot*, Dolly — if it had been her pretty white hand I should not have wondered, but her foot, in its little light-colored, dandyfied boot, as these ladies wear ! “ Johnny, Johnny, thou big booby ! ” I cried, laughing a'most as much as she did, “ a dozen years hence, think you, wilt ta' be as fond and foolish as now ? ” “ Not quite so foolish, grandmother, I hope,” the dear lass replied, stopping her laughter, “ but quite as fond.” And if you had seen how proud and happy they both looked up toward me, thou'd a thought with me, Dolly — though we know what wedded life is — that mappen a dozen years hence he might be as fond of her, if not so foolish ! ’

But we must hasten on to the conclusion of our story, tempting as it is to linger among such pleasant scenes and such hearty people — tempting as it is to elaborate with loving pen, pictures of that rarest beauty in the world — a deep, pure, earnest, and devoted love between two equally noble beings.

We can but glance at the golden bridal morning, when Mary, awakening from a refreshing and deep sleep, found Lucretia already dressed watching her, as she so calmly slumbered on, with surprise and deep love ; for now that the eventful morning had arrived, Lucretia was by far the most agitated of the sisters. As for John, he had never slept a wink all that night, so agitated and intoxicated was he with joy and awe. He had been strolling through the woods and fields, living over his past life ; and, in the transient darkness of the balmy June night, offering up fervent prayers to the Creator of this beautiful universe for strength to perform the duties of the new life stretching out before him, and this, too, in such a manner that his own life, and the lives bound up in his, might be in harmony with the beauty and glory pervading all nature ; that he and Mary, as an Adam and Eve, standing amidst the garden of Eden of nature, though having eaten of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, should cleave to the good, listen unfeelingly to the voice of the Almighty, wandering through the garden and serve Him, though unseen, hourly with obedient and adoring hearts, until that blessed day when they should eat of the Tree of Life, and enter into the glory of their Lord.

When the sun rose redly up, and sent his slant beams quivering through the tangled underwood of a coppice where John had flung himself down upon the

mossy ground, and when the happy birds burst into their morning anthem, and the dew drops showered down from the thickly-blossoming may-trees, and the corn-crake was heard uttering his shrill note with his quiet voice through the deep mowing-grass, John came forth from his meditations, and gathering trails of lovely wild creepers and flowers, slowly sauntered towards the village. Two milk-maids, going out to their cows, passed him as he walked along, his agitated face half concealed by his sheaf of greenery, and, looking back after him, observed to each other, 'Why, that's Mr. Wetherley, isn't it? — old Sally's grandson; and to day's to be his wedding-day! — Bless the young man! But, depend upon it, he's so full of joy he's not been able to sleep all this blessed night!'

And when Mary was about to array herself in a lovely white silk dress — a present from Honoria which had arrived the previous day — Lucretia opened the door of their chamber, and led Mary, much surprised, to a table in a little ante-room, where, most tastefully festooned with wild creepers and flowers, stood a quaint little old looking-glass.

'See what John has been doing,' she said, 'whilst you have been fast asleep! He has been wandering about all night, I fancy from the look of his face, too happy to sleep, and came ever so early, begging me to let him adorn the old looking-glass with flowers; for

he says the image of you, darling, in your bridal dress must be encircled by a worthy and appropriate frame. See how lovely it is! And he would not take any of the exquisite flowers sent last night from the Hellings' hothouses, but brought these simple wild flowers. Oh, Mary, he loves you dearly, tenderly. But can he love you as I do, as I have done for these long years, ever since you were the little motherless child?'

And the sisters clung together in a tight embrace, and it was now Mary's turn to cheer her sister, and to call again bright smiles forth from amidst her loving tears.

We must not dwell upon the marriage blessing pronounced by Mr. Brewster over the lovers in the quaint little church, where Mary knelt before the altar in her pure white dress, with a ray of sunshine falling upon her, till, like Keats' lady, she looked, a splendid angel newly dressed, save wings, for heaven.' Nor yet may we dilate upon the grandeur of dear old Sally Wetherley, who stood during the ceremony, big reticule in hand, between Lucretia and Mrs. Brewster; nor how the three tender-hearted women shed tears, and inwardly besought blessings upon the united lovers — this we leave, also, to the imagination of the reader.

One little ray of sunshine we must, however, notice, as being present at the marriage ceremony, beside the ray which glanced over and kissed sweet Mary's bridal garment; and this was a tall figure robed in a white



muslin morning-dress, gleaming forth, like a fresh morning cloud, from a distant pew in the church. It was Honoria ; but before the little bridal party had recovered from the emotion of the solemn ceremony, the beautiful white figure had floated, cloud-like, out of the church, and was nowhere to be seen, either in the churchyard or upon the road. Upon the wedding breakfast-table lay, however, a little note, with the most fragrant of orange-blossom bouquets, which, opened by Mary's trembling fingers, and read by her and John's eyes half blinded by happy tears, ran thus:—

‘ Beloved friends, — All happiness, all peace to you ! I was at your wedding, you see, though you believed me still with Agnes at *Kaiserswerth* — but I could not lose a true moment of happiness in witnessing the solemnization of such a marriage as I believe yours will be. I am not going to disturb you now, dear John, dear Mary, do not fear ; such moments in life ought to be sacred even from the dearest of friends. But I shall await you with the warmest welcome and congratulations upon your return from the Peak. Drive immediately, when you return to Nottingham, to Pierrpoint House. I shall be there, and will command even our poplars to *shiver* you a *warm* welcome !

‘ Your affectionate friend,

‘ HONORIA PIERRPOINT.’

‘ P. S. — Mary must not trouble herself in bidding her sister adieu with the thought of how lonely she will be. I and the Hellings shall look after that.’

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And in Pierrpoint House, standing within that stately dining-room, which long years before had sent such a chill into John’s heart, did Honoria welcome her friends ; and beneath that portrait of the stately Lady de Callis, who no longer chilled him with her enigmatical eyes and proud smile, did Honoria pronounce their marriage homily with the same eyes and lips as were pictured in the portrait of her grandmother.

‘ Welcome, dear friends,’ cried she, stepping forth with her gracious, yet majestic air, and taking a hand of each wedded lover. ‘ Welcome ! It is seldom a marriage gives me any satisfaction, any hope ; but yours does. You must not fail in the fulfilment of your dreams of an ideally beautiful marriage ; such marriages becoming realities, are the great educators of the world, the sole regenerators of society — such married pairs as you may, perhaps, become, are the only reformers of our great social evils in whom I place much faith. John, through your beautiful Art, ennoble your own soul and your wife’s soul ; and Mary, through your life, ennoble your husband’s Art. And your children — oh ! I have much joy in the thoughts of your children, for they will be worthy denizens of this beautiful world — strong in mind and body — healthy

to the core. And we — for I shall love them as *my* children, John — *we* must rear them up so that they may become worthy denizens of a yet more beautiful, more perfect world. We must always treat them as little angels; and as they sit upon their little benches far down in the lowest forms of the Great School of Life, let us seek — we, the elder scholars — so to teach and train their innocent hearts, that in later years the Great Schoolmaster may not have to whip and buffet them as He has had to do with us, his disobedient scholars! Dear friends, dear brother and dear sister, do you associate me with you in this holy labor?’

Their answer was spoken rather by warm pressure of the hands, and by the united looks of love in the faces of the married pair, than by words.

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And now, in conclusion, we must just remark that the Wetherley's marriage has in no wise disappointed Honoria. The other night, driving with Agnes from John Wetherley's beautiful house at Brompton, Honoria suddenly broke the silence in which the two friends were sunk, by saying: —

‘Agnes, if I felt proud of John's first picture in the Exhibition, how much more proud do I feel of John's beautiful life! What so exquisitely beautiful, so sublime, as moral excellence! Does not such an evening as this refresh our souls? Will not the memory of those two pure and loving beings standing in perfected

union before John's noble pictures, within that lofty and quiet studio, and Mary's full voice mingling with and leading the shriller voices of her children, as they sang that lovely anthem, revisit us again and again as glimpses of living poetry? You, dear Agnes, the type of a class of woman each day becoming less rare — the woman of intellect, who, self-absorbed, offers up as a willing sacrifice her heart's blood as well as her brain to the life of the intellect; and I, the woman of wealth, who offer up all the vast power of this wealth to the furtherance of what appears to me justice and truth, — we two women, who have chosen our portion in the world, and consider it a good and wise portion; and who, struggling to benefit our sex, and indignant at the injustice it has suffered through long ages from ignorant men, at times inveigh against marriage as a yoke of all bitterness, — let us recall this marriage with joy, and acknowledge that among the women-workers for the enlightenment of the world, such a wife and mother as Mary is one of the most efficient; but she is efficient alone, Agnes, because she has followed in all simplicity the bent of her nature, and all her duties thus flow forth easily from her — they are her radiations. To her, to guide and to cherish those beautiful children, is as natural and easy as it is for you to pour out your soul in eloquent words, which arouse to deeds of noble action thousands of men, women, and children, — as it is for me to plan schemes for education and for

the alleviation of misery. Agnes, each of us, sister-workers, have we not, in listening to the secret voice of our hearts, disentangled the skein of our destinies? And may we not thank our beneficent Father for the clear and noble path of duty stretching forth before us boldly into the future? To learn how to discern our duty, is not that the first great lesson in the School of Life? and that lesson now surely, dear friend, we have conned thoroughly.'

THE END.





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