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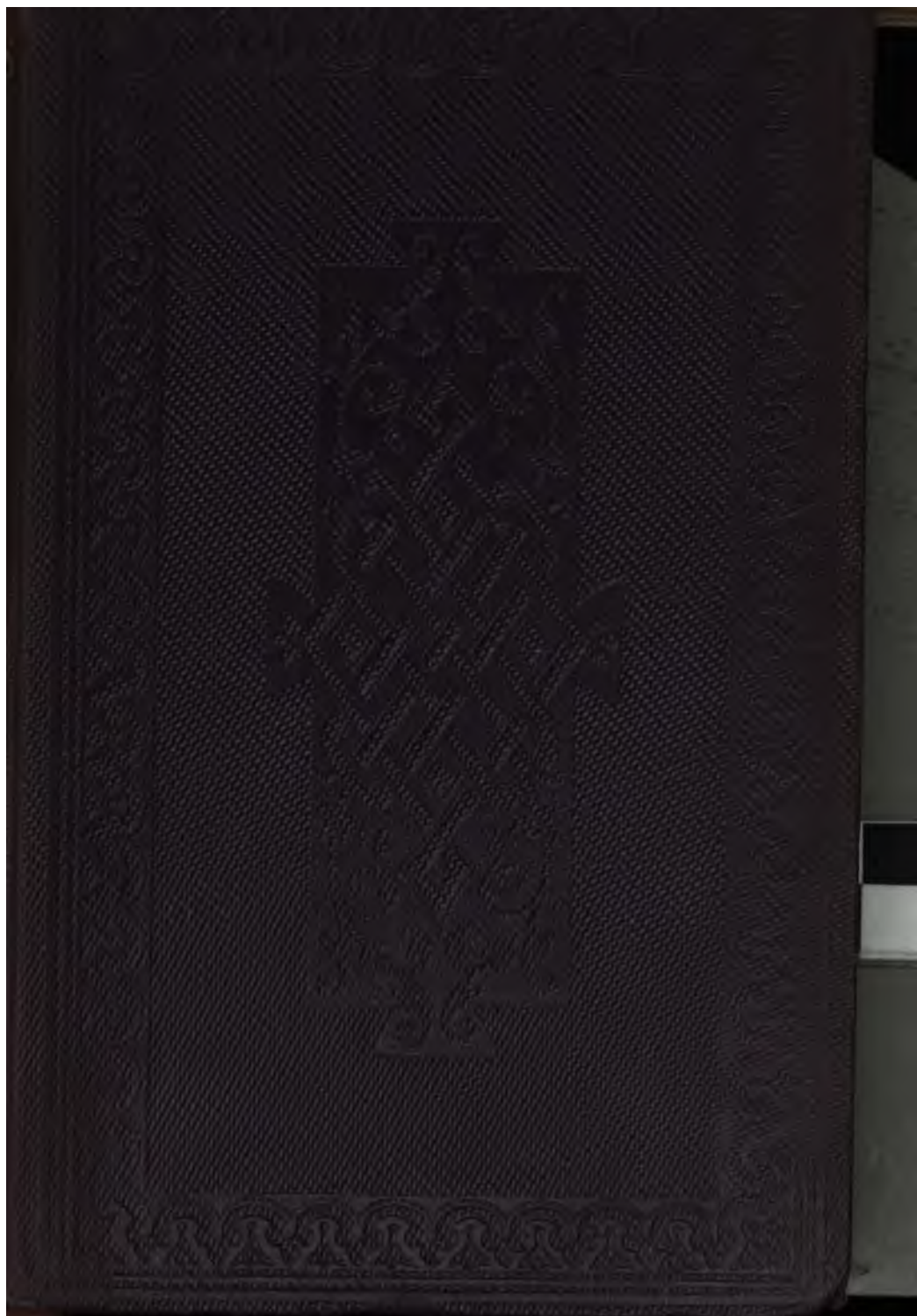
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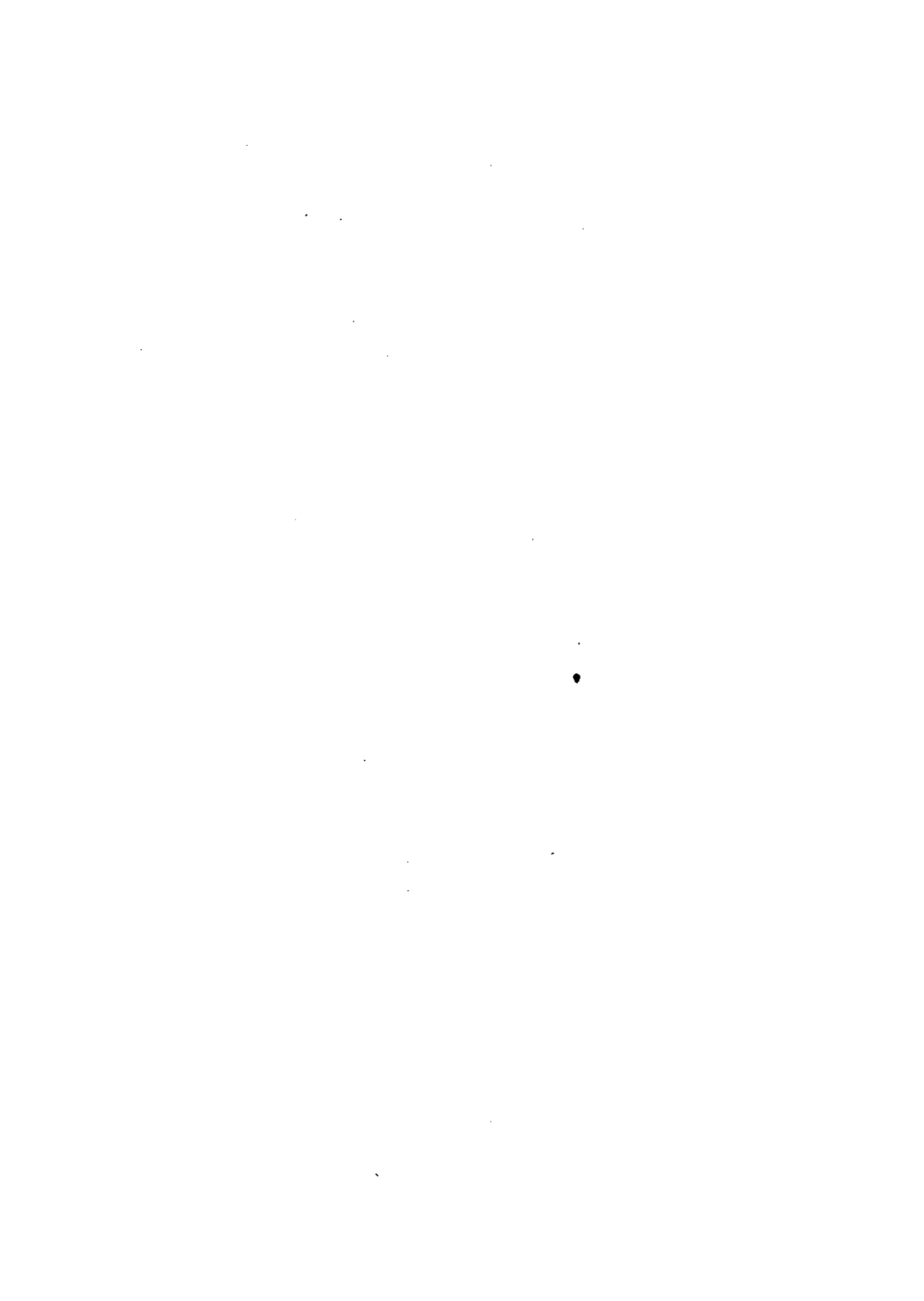


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GRANDMOTHER'S MONEY.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

"ONE AND TWENTY," "WILDFLOWER,"

"WOODLEIGH,"

&c., &c.

"See what Money can do."

BROME.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
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249. W. 508.

life! Grandmother Tresdaile did not give way to despair, or weep, wring her hands, and ask for a clergyman; she was a strong-minded old lady, one could see that in her inflexible face, in her cold grey eyes, hear it even in the sharp ring of a voice that was not getting faint yet a while at least.

Grandmother Tresdaile thought it over all the afternoon, and kept to her opinion, that it was very hard on a woman of seventy-seven. Seventy-seven was not a great age, her own mother had seen eighty—why could not she have seen eighty, and died happy, she should like to know! Why, three years more would have made a comfortable round number of it, and wound up matters very satisfactorily. Drat the doctors!

“Nurse!”

“Yes, mum.”

“I suppose they have been calling all day and asking after me, and hoping I was better—the hypocrites?”

“There’s been a good many inquiries, mum, as to how you was.”

"You said I didn't want to see them, to be bothered, and worried, and harassed, and tortured on my dying bed?"

"I said you was very bad, mum."

"That'll do. When is the doctor coming again?"

"In about an hour, mum."

"I don't want to see *him*, mind! Shut him out, bang the door in his face, tell him, if he can't do me any good, he'd better stay at home, and make out his bill for my executors,—Parkins?"

"Mum?"

"I should like to see that bill before I die, though—see it's correct, and not over-charged. Just mention that when you tell him to go away, will you?"

"Yes, mum."

Grandmother Tresdaile sat up in bed without much difficulty, and began groping under her pillow with two bony hands.

"Can I get you anything, Mrs. Tresdaile?" inquired the nurse, advancing to the bedside.

"No," snapped the old lady. "If I had



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The light having been placed on a little table near the bedside, the black seal was broken, and the old lady composed herself for the perusal of the will.

Silence unbroken in the room, save by a little time-piece ticking on the mantel-shelf, and the grating of the spoon at the bottom of the saucepan, as the nurse stirred mechanically at the gruel and looked over her shoulder at the strangely-occupied invalid. How many at the moment were thinking of that will!—speculating, dreaming, praying about it; wondering if they should be remembered after all, forgiven for past offences, recollected for past kindnesses and offers of assistance; thinking, if they should be left out of those closely-written sheets, what would become of them in the dim future—or, if they should drop in for the lion's share, what they should buy with it, and what manner of investment it should assume? Were there any thoughts in another land, under a burning sun, of Grandmother's money at that time and hour?—perhaps so!

“Ah, well, well,” muttered Grandmother

Tresdaile, refolding the paper and placing it under the pillow along with the keys; "it might have been better, and it might have been worse. It won't satisfy them, and it don't satisfy me. *Who's there?*"

Grandmother Tresdaile, who had sharper ears than her nurse, or was more alive at that moment to passing events, sat up briskly in bed, and repeated the question.

"Miss Tresdaile's come, ma'am," replied a subdued voice on the other side of the door.

"Oh! she's come at last, has she!—well, ask her up—and Mary?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Let me know who calls. I've altered my mind, and I'll see everybody—that is, everybody but *one*," she added, in a lower voice.

Presently a light tap at the door, responded to by Mrs. Parkins. Presently the slim figure of a child of twelve years old standing by the bedside, her little hand in the feverish palm of her whom the doctors had given up.

A child tall for her age—a fair-haired, pale-faced girl, with large blue eyes — a pretty girl, who stood there trembling and striving to keep down her sobs.

“Well, Alice,” said Grandmother Tresdaile, in a softened tone, “so they have allowed you to visit your grandmother at last, then? When did you reach London?”

“We came up by the train yesterday—but the doctor would not let me see you.”

“We came?”

“I and the madame. Madame Lausan, our French governess.”

“Do you stay here to-night, Alice?”

“Oh! no, grandma. We return by the last train at ten, and shall travel all night.”

“Late hours for one so young, child; but it is only once in a way that you get the school-girl's treat of sitting up late! Our grandmothers don't die every day — eh, Alice?”

There was some of Mrs. Tresdaile's previous acerbity in the question, and the bright grey eyes seemed to furtively watch

the effect of the speech on the grand-daughter.

“Do they say you are going to die, grandma?” asked Alice.

“Don't I look like it, child?”

“I don't know!” was the timid answer.

“Yes, they say I am going to die—think very likely I have lived long enough, and troubled my friends, relations and acquaintances too long. What feasting and reveling, Alice, when they carry the old woman out of the house, pack her away, set a stone over her with all her virtues in capital letters, and then — have done with her for ever! What woe-begone countenances, but what dancing hearts under the black dresses! What tears, sighs and groans, but how many a true regret—how many—how many!”

She became so excited, and grasped her grand-daughter's hand so tightly, that an expression of pain passed over the child's face.

“There, I am frightening you, Alice,” said the grandmother; “you are too young to understand the raving of a despondent,

demented old woman. Perhaps you'll miss me—do you think you will?" she asked anxiously.

"Yes," replied the child.

"You'll be alone in England, then—one to tell your sorrows and joys to—quite alone in a hard, selfish world. Well, well, well, this is not a fit place for a child—say good-bye, and go away again; next time you write to brother Ernest, tell him I did not forget him at the last—good-bye, my dear!"

Alice stooped, and kissed the old lady whose arms had enfolded her to her breast, murmured her good-bye, then hurried from the room, and stood weeping for a time outside the door.

Grandmother Tresdaile took her gruel after the departure of her grand-daughter, snapped away at her nurse, and found fault with her general management. The spoon was dusty, the basin was cracked, and the gruel tasted more of smoke than anything else! Would she take her medicine?—no, she wouldn't touch it! Try the composing

draught ?—she would be composed enough soon, without any nasty stuff to help *her*—put it behind the fire!

Presently another visitor. He came in when the night-light was burning dim, when the fire was hollow and of a sullen red, when Mrs. Parkins had gone to sleep with her head bent back over her chair in a frightfully dislocated manner. He came in very stealthily, looked round him from the wakeful old lady in the bed to the heap of distortion by the fire-place—perhaps had vague suspicions that Grandmother Tresdaile had got up, strangled Mrs. Parkins, and slipped into bed again—and stood in the shadow of the room, twisting his hat round in his hand.

“Why did you not knock, Barnaby?”

“Ah! grandmother,” said he, advancing on tiptoe to the bedside, “you *are* awake, then? I was afraid of disturbing you—was thinking of calling again in half an hour’s time. How are you, my dear madam? Better I hope.”

“Much better, Barnaby.”

“Ahem—thank God!”

“Not so much pain—breathe freer—doctor says I may live six hours more, Barnaby.”

“Six hours!—good heavens, you don't mean to say—”

“I mean to say, Barnaby Tresdaile, that you will be as sorry to hear of my dissolution as the rest of my relatives—not more cut up or afflicted, perhaps, but still about as deeply grieved. I haven't forgotten you in my will.”


“Thank you, thank you, Mrs. Tresdaile,” he answered, loftily; “I have every confidence in your wise judgment, but I was not thinking of the will. Whatever you may have been good enough to bequeath me is dust in comparison with the precious life of one to whom I have been for many years indebted. I would —”

“I have been reading my will this evening—it's under my pillow now—” interrupted his grandmother, “regretting part of it was dictated in a hasty moment, and that time is not spared me for further thought concerning it. The possession of

• money is a source of great care to us, Barnaby."

"Ah!" sighed her grandson.

That particular possession was not a source of concern to Mr. Tresdaile possibly, although there was nothing in his outward man to warrant the assertion. His hat was new and of a radiant blackness, his coat was not white in the seams or fringed at the cuffs, there were no patches on his knees or boots. Yet no one would have taken him for a rich man; had he been shown into your presence, reader, you would have thought he had called to put your name down in a subscription list, or to show you a sample bottle of new varnish, or to solicit orders for Messrs. Chicory and Company, St. Paul's Churchyard. There was that in his face, thin and sharp as his grandmother's, in his little twinkling brown eyes which took in everything and betrayed nothing, in the lips which shut so closely over a very indifferent set of teeth, that denoted a clever man, a shrewd man, but somehow a man at his wit's end!



Presently visitor No. 3—before No. 2 had risen from his seat by the bedside of his aged relative. No. 3—a tall, thin man with an awkward stoop, a man in sleeky black, a carrotty-haired and whiskered man.

“Ah! Bartholomew,” exclaimed No. 2, rising and extending his hand, “I hope I see you well.”

“Quite well, sir, thank you,” replied the new comer, as he reluctantly placed two fingers in the hand of Mr. Barnaby Tresdaile.

“My dear grandmother,” said Bartholomew, turning to the sick woman, “it is painfully distressing to find you in this condition; it is—”

“Yes, I know,” she snapped; “your cousin’s speech will do for the two of you.”

Mr. Bartholomew Tresdaile looked daggers at his cousin, who blinked at the ceiling, and gave a faint cough.

Grandmother Tresdaile exchanged a few civilities with the new comer; talked of the weather, of the closeness of the room, made another acrimonious remark on the last

basin of gruel, which was evidently preying on her mind—finally dropped into a disjointed kind of doze.

“She is not so bad as I expected to find her,” remarked Barnaby Tresdaile, leaning over his cousin’s shoulder, and whispering in his ear.

“She’s bad enough, sir,” replied the other, shortly.

“She has made her will, poor old soul,” added Barnaby; “it’s under her pillow, she says.”

“God bless me!” ejaculated Bartholomew; “has she been altering it? What does she want with the will there?—there is something else, too.”

“Keys,” gruffly explained Mrs. Parkins, from the distance.

“*Her* keys?—oh, thank you,” said Bartholomew; “and if anything should happen between this and morning, Mrs. ——”

“Parkins, sir.”

“Parkins,” added he, “perhaps you will have the goodness to let me have those keys directly.”

"No, Bart, I don't think that," said his cousin, quickly; "for though you are the eldest grandson, I——"

"Mr. Barnaby Tresdaile, I have every reason to believe that I am the sole executor to the will of our worthy relative."

"Oh!" said the gentleman addressed, with a visible lengthening of countenance, "you know what is in the will, then?"

"Pretty nearly."

Barnaby Tresdaile crossed one leg over the other, and looked thoughtfully at the fire.

"I don't see any reason for detaining you here, sir," said Bartholomew Tresdaile, addressing his cousin: "I will write and apprise you when the melancholy event is over."

"Do you mean to stop till the old lady dies, then?"

"I do."

"Now, look here, Bart," cried the other, more energetically; "it's all very fine, but——"

He stopped—the eyes of Grandmother

Tresdaile had opened again, and were fixed upon the speakers.

“What! not gone yet!—either of you!” said Mrs. Tresdaile; “what are you waiting here for?”

No response.

“What are *you* waiting for, Bartholomew?” asked the Grandmother; “to say good night, eh?—Well, good night—look in early to-morrow morning, will you?”

“You may rely upon me, grandmother,” replied Bartholomew, in his softest accents.

Adieux were interchanged, and the cousins Tresdaile went downstairs into a dimly-lighted drawing-room—an old-fashioned, rather poorly-furnished drawing-room, with one or two portraits on the walls.

Bartholomew Tresdaile stirred the fire, and sat down before it; his cousin Barnaby stood on the hearth-rug, and bit his fingernail perplexedly.

“It will not be right to leave the house till those keys are in my possession,” said the elder cousin; “how do I know what may be in those drawers and boxes?—how

can I answer for the honesty of the servants?"

"A few more hours will end it," said the other; "I'll stop too!"

Bartholomew Tresdaile's countenance expressed intense surprise as it was turned towards his cousin, who, taking no notice of the look, drew a second chair near the fire and composed himself therein.

Sitting thus side by side, one could see they were very much alike—had the same aquiline noses, the same little twinkling eyes, the same expression of eagerness, perhaps craftiness, upon the face. Yet both had not fared equally well with that world which serves so many of us better—and worse—than we deserve; both had not drawn prizes in the lottery of life. There were one or two good chances in the hands of Bartholomew Tresdaile, but in the pockets of his cousin there were nothing but blanks.

Barnaby was the best tempered man, however—was really of a conciliatory disposition. He did not like sitting there in silent meditation, and doubtless objected to his

cousin's studied reserve. He talked of the grandmother ill upstairs, of old times, of city business; finally asked affectionately after his cousin Bartholomew's baby, and was not dashed by the monosyllables which dropped from the thin lips of his companion.

Presently more relations, old and young ones, with whom this history has no future connection; presently the doctor, who, despite Mrs. Tresdaile's orders to the contrary, went upstairs to see his patient.

Doctor still upstairs, the grandsons Tresdaile and about fifteen first and second cousins in the drawing-room — a single heavy knock at the street door.

Presently feet coming rather noisily, despite their owner's efforts to the contrary, up the carpeted stairs—presently the proprietor of those feet standing at the drawing-room door, and looking in upon the ravens—we beg pardon, the relations!

Visible commotion in the room—Bartholomew Tresdaile on his feet, indignantly regarding the intruder—half-a-dozen of Mrs.

Tresdaile's cousins simmering on their chairs with suppressed excitement—Barnaby Tresdaile industriously but absently raking out the fire.

“This is an unlooked-for visit, sir,” cried Bartholomew Tresdaile—“an uncalled-for visit—a most indecent, mercenary visit. I am no orator, George Keldon, and you must excuse me if I speak my mind at once.”

“I like a man to say what he thinks,” was the deep response; “and I have no objection to your observations—they don't hurt me.”

It would have taken a great deal to hurt the speaker. He was more than six feet in height, had a chest like a bull's, and a pair of sledge-hammer hands that could have pulverized that little family party in less than two minutes. His head might have been called disproportionate to the rest of his body; it was a trifle too small. It was a fine, well-shaped head though—nay, and it was a good-tempered, swarthy-looking face at which Bartholomew Tresdaile was

glowering, a face, too, with something of the Tresdaile sharpness on it.

"May I inquire your motive for this visit, Mr. Keldon?"

"Yes, Bartholomew, you may."

Bartholomew Tresdaile winced a little at this familiar handling of his Christian name.

"I called to ask after the old lady's health," continued George Keldon, putting his hands into the pockets of a fustian jacket, and leaning against the door-post; "to hear if she's any better or any worse. If she's better, why, thank God for it, and good night to you. If she's worse, as I suppose she is by the doctor's cab at the door, the straw in the road, and all this genteel company—why, I should like to see her."

"She is too ill."

"I don't know that, cousin," was the quick reply; "and I'll see what the doctor says about it, by your leave. Grandmother Tresdaile and I have never been the best of friends—her own fault, mind you, nobody else's!—and I should be sorry for the

old lady to die without saying 'good-bye,' after all. I don't know but that she'd be sorry too," he added, after a short pause.

"She has never mentioned your name," said Bartholomew sharply.

"She must have thought of me."

"And as it is too late for any change in Mrs. Tresdaile's will, supposing she were even to think of you more favourably in her last moments—which I doubt—it will be sheer waste of time on your part to—"

"Stop there, Bart Tresdaile, if you please," cried the other roughly. "I was not thinking of her money—I don't want it! You mayn't believe it perhaps, but I'd rather the old girl said, 'Your mother was in the right after all, George, and God bless you,' than leave me every farthing she's got in the Bank of England; and that's truth!"

George Keldon turned his back on the company, and was preparing to march up the next flight of stairs, when Bartholomew darted after him and held him by the arm.

"Where are you going, sir?"

"Where I have as much business as you, at present," was the reply—"upstairs to grandmother."

"You can't go, sir—she's dying—the doctor's there—if you attempt to go and excite her, sir, you shall answer for the consequences, depend upon it."

"Well, I'll wait till the doctor comes down. I should not like to frighten her."

And George Keldon coolly took a seat on the stairs.

"I won't go up yet," said George to his cousin Bartholomew, who was sky-blue with passion. "You need not be afraid of my breaking my word—it's a thing that don't often occur, Bart."

Before the other could reply, the doctor came hastily down the stairs, and nearly fell over George Keldon at the bottom of them.

"How is she, sir?" asked George, rising, and jerking his thumb in the direction of the sick room.

"Very bad, very bad!" said the other

hurriedly ; “ pulse a little stronger, perhaps.”

“ Is there any hope, doctor ? ” asked George.

“ No, no—that is, whilst there's life there is hope, you know. I shall return in five minutes,” preparing to descend the second flight.

“ Do you think it would excite her too much to see one who has been—who *hasn't* been the best of friends lately, sir ? ” asked George Keldon, anxiously.

“ It might kill her at once,” replied the doctor,—“ she has seen too many people to-day already.”

“ Very well,” said the other, buttoning his jacket and putting on his cap ; “ so much the worse, that's all. I should have liked to—but no matter—here's off ! ”

And George Keldon was gone.

Presently, when a fresh brace of cousins (fourths) had swelled the family party in the drawing-room, the doctor, accompanied by a white-haired gentleman, returned. Doctor and white-haired gentleman, after

conferring together for some minutes on the hall mat, went softly up the stairs. Mr. Bartholomew Tresdaile was waiting for them outside the drawing-room door, but they were too deep in argument to pay much attention to his inquiries.

Was she worse? No, about the same. Would it be long before—before the solemn event? Doctor could not say—white-haired gentleman did not know. If anything should happen suddenly, would they please to call him? Yes, they would.

Doctor and friends ascended the next flight of stairs, and Bartholomew Tresdaile followed them with his eyes, and looked suspiciously at a flat mahogany case which the gentleman with the white hair carried under his arm.

Stillness in the dark deserted passages, into which stole no echoes of the whispering. Whispering in the servants room, downstairs, between the cook and housemaid, about the MONEY—whispering in the drawing-room about the MONEY—only whispering upstairs in the sick-room about the sufferer.



Presently—that presently for which so many were waiting—the door above was heard to open, and the nurse to come tumbling hastily down the stairs.

“Mr. Tresdaile, the gentleman who spoke to the doctor—he’s wanted.”

Bartholomew sprang with alacrity to his feet, ran up a few stairs, and met the doctor half-way down them.

“Never mind, thank you, Mr. Tresdaile,” said he; “not just yet, if you please. *Presently!*”

Bartholomew once more beat a retreat, swearing softly to himself.

Presently, the door above stairs open again, the doctor and white-haired gentleman descending.

The doctor came into the room.

“It’s all over!”

“Over!” exclaimed half-a-dozen relations at once—“poor thing—dead?”

“Dead, no! the *operation* is over, and, you will be glad to hear, has been perfectly successful. It was a dangerous experiment, but Mrs. Tresdaile consented to it at last—

she is a brave woman. Had she continued obstinate—remained firm,” he corrected, “she would have been dead before morning. Now—”

“Now?” repeated Bartholomew Tresdaile dismally.

“Now, despite her great age, there is a fair chance of her recovery. Time and care may restore her to her friends. I shall remain here to-night. You will be pleased to make no noise, ladies and gentlemen—Mrs. Tresdaile is asleep.”

“God bless my soul, how vex—very surprising!” ejaculated Mr. Bartholomew Tresdaile.

The next day Mrs. Sarah Jane Tresdaile of Stamford Street, Blackfriars, was
OUT OF DANGER!



BOOK I.

"'Tis Money that procures a Man's respect,
And want thereof is Slighted with Neglect."

MONEY MASTERS ALL THINGS, 1696.

"What thoughts he has without now, as he walks:
That this might be the last gift he should give;
That this would fetch you; if you died to day
And gave him all, what he should be to-morrow;
What large return would come of all his ventures;
How he should worship'd be and reverenced;
Ride with his furs and footcloths; waited on
By herds of fools and clients."

BEN JONSON.



CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCES MYSELF.

WHEN I stood in London streets for the first time in my life, the Great City fell several degrees in my estimation. I could not believe it was the grand place which I had thought so much about in my little island home, talked of all day, dreamed of all night; could not fancy I was standing at last in the City where so many fortunes are daily made and lost, in that world of wealth and temptation which the book-writers hold up to the view.

Certainly I was in Lower Thames Street, on a muddy pavement, in a drizzling rain,

with two boxes and a carpet-bag on my mind. There were a few porters in white aprons about, two or three men in fustian suits, several sharp-looking lads, with no suits on at all to speak of, who eyed my boxes in a lynx-like manner, and harassed me with perpetual offers of assistance. There was a gloomy-looking warehouse before me, and some men lowering bales of wool into a waggon beneath; there was a dog gnawing a bone in the gutter, and there was a wet policeman.

“And this is London,” thought I; “what a miserable place after dear old St. Brelade!”

I was disappointed at not finding brother Andrew waiting for me at the wharf, although I could make every allowance for him on account of his studies. But I had so built upon seeing his handsome face at the landing-place—that face I had not seen for five long years, God bless it!—that my heart sunk to find myself at the end of my journey, standing alone in the damp London streets.

However, wishing for Andrew would not bring him into my arms, and standing on the sloppy pavement in the rain and wind would only give me cold, and not speed me on my journey.

I should find plenty of time for Andrew's society now the sea did not roll between us ; it was only a few hours' delay, and then I should be telling him all the news from home, giving him his father's and mother's love, and listening to the story of his own struggles in the world begun so early. With the assistance of a porter and cabman, whose efforts were superintended by the wet policeman, my boxes were placed on the top of a cab, and myself, umbrella and carpet-bag carefully packed away in the interior. Cabman was anxious that my carpet-bag should join the boxes outside, but I was not going to have my "fine things" sat upon, or tumbled anyhow out of my sight — though I was from the country. I was not to be imposed upon at quite so early a stage of my London career—no, no!

"Where to, marm?" asked the cabman.



"No. 502, Stamford Street, Blackfriars
—Mrs. Tresdaile's."

"Werry good, marm."

Whilst I was being bumped and jolted on my way, my thoughts got before the rumbling old cab and settled themselves in Stamford Street. Those thoughts would forestall the first meeting with the elderly lady who had advertised for a companion, draw her picture, hear her voice, feel the pressure of the hand which welcomed the wanderer.

I was certain she would be a lady with white hair—the very picture of good temper and benevolence—a cheerful old lady, fond of young people, and whose advanced years had not given her a distaste for young people's ways. Something like my own dear mother, whom it was so hard to get away from three days ago—whose arms held so tightly round my neck till the very last minute—whose "God bless you, Barbara!" was still ringing in my ears. She stayed so long on the boat, with poor father frantic with excitement on the pier all the

while, that it was a mercy she did not come to London with me, after all.

Strange blending together of the past and the future in that afternoon's ride to Blackfriars. Strange faces painted by Fancy, looking over the shoulders of the well-known; shadows of the new home I was proceeding to, falling athwart the picture of the old home I had quitted; the rattle of a thousand vehicles near me, drowning the murmur of the far-away sea; the busy London streets, shutting out, perhaps for ever, the wild little village on the Jersey coast.

Still, I was leaving home to better myself, as the phrase goes—was one the less for my father to support—might be even considered fortunate in obtaining the post of companion in a city where those who “Want places” outnumber by thousands the places themselves.

When the cab stopped before No. 502, Stamford Street, I did not find the exterior aspect of Mrs. Tresdaile's establishment particularly enlivening. I peered anxiously from the window, which I had tried to

open and then tried to shut, and failed both ways, and thought that Mrs. Tresdaile must be a lady of eccentric tastes to select such a spot for a dwelling-place.

It was a large house, of an imposing exterior—rather too imposing for the neighbourhood—with a door that opened in the middle like a cupboard, and had two lion-headed, ferocious knockers thereon. There were several houses of the same size and pattern on either side and over the way; gaunt, dirt-begrimed houses of three stories high, which, in their time, might have contained great people, but were certainly short of the article at present.

The cabman was dismissed, and my boxes, carpet-bag and myself were at last in the hall of No. 502.

“Is your name Bloyce, Miss?” inquired the servant, a middle-aged woman as dirt-begrimed as the house.

I answered in the affirmative.

“Will you please to step this way?”

I followed the servant up the carpeted stairs to a neatly-furnished room on the

second floor—evidently Miss Bloyce's room from that time forth. After removing my bonnet and shawl, and brushing my hair—if the reader be of a curious turn of mind, perhaps it will satisfy him to know that I have black hair*—I drew up the window blind and looked forth. Mercy on me! what a prospect after the hills and vales of St. Brelade, the wave-washed old church and the green tossing sea!—what hills and vales of house-roofs, chimney-stacks, factory-shafts; what glimpses of dark upper windows from which the banners of poverty were flapping; what blackened church spires, ugly shot towers, roofs of manufactories and breweries, and what a canopy of smoke and smother over all!

“Shall I be able to exist in this place?” I thought, “shut out from the leafy trees, the pure breeze, almost from the sunny blue sky; or shall I droop my feathers, and grow rusty, like that little shivering sparrow I

* And black eyes, which my mother considers very bright and piercing.

can detect in the shadow of the opposite cowl?"

"Good afternoon, Miss Bloyce."

"Oh! dear me!" I ejaculated, taken aback by a sepulchral voice so close to my ears.

I turned round and faced Mrs. Tresdaile. I had no doubt it was Mrs. Tresdaile, though it was too dark in the doorway to distinguish anything but the outline of a tall figure leaning on a stick.

"I hope your nerves are strong, Miss Bloyce."

"I believe they are, ma'am," I answered.

"I can't believe anything of the sort, just yet, Miss Bloyce," she said, sharply. "May I ask if you are ready?"

"Quite ready, thank you."

'An eccentric old lady,' I thought, as I followed the tall figure down the dusky staircase—'a lady of uncertain temper, and not too courteous. Never mind, Barbara Bloyce, it will not do to encourage that sinking at the heart quite so early—get rid of it, my dear!'

Mrs. Tresdaile led the way to the front room on the first floor—a large room crowded with furniture very much out of date, and carpeted with a Brussels very much out of colour.

A tea equipage and a large lamp were on the table, a scanty fire was burning in the grate, a large leathern chair studded with brass nails was planted on the hearth-rug.

“I am an old woman, Miss Bloyce, accustomed to old ways,” she said, sinking into the easy chair; “I dine at one and tea at five after the manner of my ancestors. Will you take a chair?”

“Thank you.”

I took the chair indicated by a wave of her hand, and glanced askance at my mistress and—companion! She was a tall old lady, in a faded grey silk dress—a pale-faced, sharp-featured lady, the expression on whose countenance was not a cheering one. There was something in the clear grey eyes, the hooked nose, the thin pursed lips, which indicated a decision of character not often seen on the features of a woman

of fourscore and odd years. Looking at the face intently, one could fancy its owner had fought her way through much opposition, trouble, pain, for many weary years—fought on unflinchingly for her own way, and gained it. Whether winning her way and subduing the will of others had made her a happy woman I knew not, but it was not a happy-looking face!

“Will you do the honours of the tea-table, Miss Bloyce?” said Mrs. Tresdaile. “I fear I shall require a great deal of waiting upon—but you are not afraid of trouble, I hope?”

“I hope not, madam.”

I filled Mrs. Tresdaile's cup, conscious that observant eyes were upon me all the time. I was vexed with myself for not exhibiting that proper amount of composure evidently expected by Mrs. Tresdaile; mortified to find my hand shake and the cup clatter noisily in the saucer as I tendered it to my mistress; disappointed, too, in my heart with my new home, my new companion, my new prospects.

"When I advertised for a young person," said Mrs. Tresdaile, "I did not anticipate an answer from one quite so young as yourself—did not fancy from your letter you *were* so very young."

"I am two-and-twenty, ma'am," I replied, with conscious dignity.

"Well, two and twenty is better than two-and-forty, a cross fidgety spinster who would harass my life out with her old-fashioned ways. I am not sorry I made up my mind to accept your offer, Miss Bloyce."

This was intended for a compliment, perhaps, and I thanked her accordingly.

"Although my medical attendant has recommended me a companion," she continued, "it was not strictly for my own sake that I resolved upon having a fresh face in the house—incurring, too, at my age, all manner of fresh expenses."

For whose sake was it, I wondered?

"You will possibly be more of a companion to my grand-daughter, Alice, than to me," she continued—"When she gives up

her finishing school for No. 502, Stamford Street, Miss Tresdaile will be glad to find here some one nearer her own age than her fright of a grandmother. Another cup of tea, Miss Bloyce, and some sugar *this* time if you please."

"I beg your pardon," said I, blushing vividly.

"I'm sure you're nervous," said Mrs. Tresdaile.

I shook my head and laughed.

"You are good-tempered, though — all your testimonials said that. I like good-tempered people, though I haven't had much to do with them."

She looked at the fire, and apostrophizing that rather than me, added in a lower tone—

"They have been a sour, ill-tempered, cross-grained, greedy lot, every man Jack of them!"

When she was stirring her tea, which was "much too sweet, thank you, Miss Bloyce," this time, she fixed me with her eyes again.

"What did you leave home for?"

This was a question that brought the colour once more to my cheeks.

"Leave home for!" I repeated.

"Couldn't you agree with your father and mother?"

"I never quarrelled with them in my life, lady."

The old lady caught up her stick and gave an emphatic rap on the floor with it.

"I don't believe it!"

"As you please, ma'am," said I, quietly.

"I have been a mother myself, the mother of three unruly boys and an undutiful girl, and know what a family is—what strife and contention there is always within it. It is full of toil, trouble, scheming, and ill-will!"

"I never saw any ill-will in the little farm at St. Brelade, Mrs. Tresdaile; perhaps the Bloyce family is an exception to the rule."

"I hope you are not of a satirical turn, Miss Bloyce," said Mrs. Tresdaile, suspiciously.

"No, ma'am."

"You'd much better be nervous; I can't bear sharp people, or people that have two meanings for everything; but *what* did you leave home for?" again inquired the inquisitive dame.

I do not know why I hesitated in my reply—there was nothing to be ashamed of, and it was not false pride that restrained me. Possibly it was that natural dislike that most of us have to discuss family matters with strangers.

"A Jersey farmer, Mrs. Tresdaile, is seldom a rich man; he is a great person if he farm twenty acres in a place where land is very limited. My father's farm, madam, is one of the smallest—my father's income therefrom one of the smallest too."

"Ah, I see, I see," responded the old lady; "and you were too proud to be a burden to father and mother when you were old enough to earn your own living. Very praiseworthy of you, indeed. I hope the rest of your brothers and sisters mean to imitate your example."

"I have only one brother, madam."

"Oh! I thought there were a dozen or two of you, at least—poor people have such very large families. How old is your brother?"

"Twenty-four."

"Hulking about home, I'll lay sixpence. Draining his father, worrying his mother, gri—"

"My brother is in London, Mrs. Tresaile, earning his own living."

"Bother it!"

I looked with some surprise at my companion.

"So you *have* got acquaintances in London, too. I knew the two hundred and twenty-five had who answered my advertisement in the '*Times*,'—they were all London birds—but I did hope that a young lady from Jersey would have been better off. Miss Bloyce, I have a very great objection to people calling here; I may as well tell you at once, I can't bear it."

"My brother shall not trouble you, madam."

“I shan't mind once or twice a-year,” said the old lady; “that is, if he's respectable. It isn't as if you were a cook or housemaid here, with disreputable relations. I never allow a single friend of that sort of people to even look down the area, if I can help it. It's a bad practice, and leads to silver spoons being missed, and so on. What is your brother?”

“A teacher of the pianoforte, ma'am.”

“What an extraordinary profession for a farmer's son!”

“He was very fond of music when a boy, madam,” I said; “showed so much musical ability, that my father, by a great effort, managed to buy a piano and find a teacher for him. Oh! he's very clever indeed, Mrs. Tresdaile—everybody says so!”

“Ah! that must be true then,” she replied, dryly.

I proceeded no further with my encomiums—they did not appear to please the old lady. At her request I rang the bell, and the maid entered and carried away the tea-things.

The remainder of the evening was spent in conversation similar to that which has been already submitted to the reader.

I found Mrs. Tresdaile exceedingly anxious to know all my affairs—the age of my father and mother, the rent of their little farm, the amount of their savings in the course of the year, the extent of my own education (she was very particular about my abilities as an accountant), the life and adventures of my brother Andrew, and the contents of my two boxes in the hall.

She was not equally communicative though I learned during the evening that she had outlived three sons and a daughter, that she was eighty-three years old, had had a narrow escape of her life six years ago, and that Alice Tresdaile would soon be home for good.

It was late before we went to bed that evening; Mrs. Tresdaile did not appear to keep good hours. My journey had fatigued me, and it was a matter of some difficulty that night to play the part of “companion” till the clock in the hall struck twelve.

Mrs. Tresdale waited till the two servants had gone to their rooms before she jerked out suddenly—

“Good night, Miss Bloyce!”

I rose.

“Shall you not retire to *your* room now, Mrs. Tresdaile?” I asked in some surprise.

“In a minute or two. I am going round the house first to make sure all is safe—it’s a practice of mine that I invariably adopt. I am always the last up in the house here. Good night to you!”

I repeated her “good night,” and had reached the door, when she called me again.

“Perhaps you had better come round with me for this once, Miss Bloyce—for I may be ill again some day, and then you’ll have to look after the locks and bolts yourself.”

We went slowly downstairs together, Mrs. Tresdaile leaning on her stick with one hand and clutching at the banisters with the other. She disdained all offers of assistance from my arm, and relied entirely upon her own resources. It was a long and tedious

tour round the house—looking into every room, examining every door and window-shutter, to each of which was fixed a prodigious bell—looking into the pantry, the wine and coal cellars, even up the chimneys.

“Can’t be too careful in these times, Miss Bloyce,” said the old lady as we returned upstairs again.

“Is London such a dreadful place for thieves?”

“Dreadful!” was the answer; “don’t you find Jersey full of thieves too?”

“Oh! no—only one here and there, and not any at St. Brelade. They always go to bed at home with the door on the latch.”

“Humph!” remarked Mrs. Tresdaile, “if your father don’t wake up some fine night with his throat cut, it’s very odd to me!”

In my own room at last, thinking of the new life before me, and that I should not like it much—thinking of home, and almost wishing I were back again. In a little pocket-book of mine was the advertisement which I had cut from the newspaper, and

treasured—perhaps as legal evidence, along with the letters, in case of breach of contract. I could not help opening and reading it again, late as the hour was.

“WANTED, A COMPANION to an Elderly Lady. Must be young, of cheerful habits, a good scholar, a member of the Church of England, *and clever at accounts*. A knowledge of music desirable. Letters, *prepaid*, to be addressed to S.J.T., Post-office, Blackfriars, London.”

And I had been the fortunate one chosen—the fortunate one, oh, dear!

“It will be a dull, quiet life for me,” I soliloquized as I restored the advertisement to its place—“a weary round of monotonous occupation. Never mind, I’ll make the best of it.”

I did not dream then what that life was to be—how full of shoals, quicksands and rapids!—how little quietness there would be of which to complain! Could I have dreamed of all that night in my strange bed, heard the warning whisper at my ear, should I not have waked with the early morning

and flown back, with my two boxes and carpet-bag, to the rose-covered farm on the cliffs of St. Brelade ?

CHAPTER II.

INTRODUCES MY BROTHER.

MRS. TRESDALE was probably not an early riser. Excepting myself and the cat, no one was up in the house till eight o'clock the next morning. The cook and housemaid were indulging in pleasant dreams when I was at my window again, taking another look at the tile-covered acres. The prospect was not more cheering to the spirits than that of yesterday, although I had slept off the fatigue of my journey, and dreamed of home all night.

I was having my breakfast alone that morning at the late hour of nine, when the

servant-maid entered to say that when I was quite disengaged, Mrs. Tresdaile wished to see me in her room.

I went up-stairs a few minutes afterwards and found Mrs. Tresdaile propped up in bed, enjoying a substantial meal of chocolate, bacon and eggs. About a pint of chocolate, two thin rashers of bacon, and three eggs boiled hard! Evidently a very hearty old lady.

"Good morning, Miss Bloyce—take a seat. Hope you have slept well?"

"Very well, thank you, Mrs. Tresdaile. May I hope——"

"No, you mayn't," interrupted Mrs. Tresdaile; "I never sleep well—always have the night-mare dreadfully. Do you know a cure for the night-mare, Miss Bloyce?"

I had not heard of a cure, but it was certainly not three eggs boiled hard.

"There's the *Times* newspaper on the drawers," observed my mistress; "will you be good enough to let me know the principal news, whilst I finish my breakfast? What was the price of Consols yesterday?"

It was some time before I could ascertain the price of Consols—Consols and the Money-Market had never troubled the heads of the Bloyces—and Mrs. Tresdaile got vexed at my bewilderment, and if she did not mutter “stupid” over her cup, it was a word very much like it.

“ $95\frac{1}{4}-\frac{1}{2}$,” I said at last.

“Ah! a little improvement, isn't it?”

“I hope so, ma'am.”

“Any body hanged yesterday, Miss Bloyce?”

I looked over the paper again. “No, nobody hanged, madam.”

“Nor transported for life, I suppose? Look in the Central Criminal Court part and the police news, if you please, and see if anything serious has happened to a George Keldon.”

“George who?” I inquired.

“Keldon — a relation of mine, more's the pity. A man for whose name I have been waiting in those sheets, day after day, for twelve years — it'll be there yet, though!”

And with this consolatory assurance she began her second egg.

"Shall I read you anything, Mrs. Tresdaile?"

"No, thank you. Unless there is any news from India—I have a grandson frying there."

No news from India, nobody of the name of Keldon figuring at the police courts, nobody transported or hanged, and Three-percent Consols at $95\frac{1}{4}-\frac{1}{8}$. Mrs. Tresdaile was satisfied with the *Times* for that day. The Court, politics, literature, the Derby, which happened to be that very Wednesday, were not of so much consequence to her as egg No. 3, the shell of which she was chipping. When Mrs. Tresdaile had finished her breakfast, she lay down in bed again, closed her eyes, requested to be comfortably tucked up and called at twelve o'clock.

"Not till twelve o'clock!—would not Mrs. Tresdaile want me before twelve?"

"No. *Why?*" asked the old lady, suddenly opening her eyes again.

"Why—why, I think, madam, I should

find my brother Andrew at home before twelve, and I haven't seen him for five years."

"Then, perhaps, the sooner you see him the better, or he will be coming here and frightening people. Tell him I object to company, Miss Bloyce—and don't be later than twelve, if you please."

I left Mrs. Tresdaile to her morning slumbers, went to my room, put on my bonnet and shawl, took up my pocket map of London, which had been my father's present to me before leaving home, and then hastened into the streets in search of my brother.

Andrew Bloyce lived at Pimlico, in the first floor of a No. 9 of a Terrace. When I was in Pimlico at last, I found so many terraces and so many Nos. 9, so many houses exactly alike, that I experienced considerable difficulty in discovering the particular terrace in which brother Andrew resided.

When the difficulty had been got over, and the little brass knocker of the identical

No. 9 was in my hand, I felt my heart beating rapidly at the thought of meeting Andrew, and feeling his arms round me after five absent years.

It was a fine-looking house, and I was glad to find Andrew so comfortably located. I had been afraid that he was not getting on well in his profession, till I was re-assured by looking up at the first-floor windows—his apartments—which were very large and imposing. There were great people in the house, too—perhaps they had come for their music lessons, I thought!—for there were a postchaise, four white horses and two postilions at the door—the postilions' legs frightfully akimbo, and the objects of intense admiration from several dirty boys and a butcher.

“Is Mr. Bloyce within?” was my first inquiry of the slim youth in buttons who responded to my summons.

“Well, he is in, miss,” replied the page; “but he's uncommonly ill, and can't be disturbed. The doctor says he's to be kept very quiet, or he—”

The page stopped abruptly and his lower jaw fell, as I staggered into the passage, leaned against the wall, and panted for breath.

“Very ill, and none of us to hear of it! How long has he been ill?”

The slim youth looked up to the ceiling, and went through an elaborate mental calculation, which did not appear to come right, for he gave it up and asked me—

“If my business was very particular?”

“My name is Bloyce—I am his sister; but if he is to be kept very quiet, perhaps—oh, dear! what’s that?”

From upstairs, or on the first-floor landing—the first floor where poor Andrew was!—there rang through the house the braying, brazen notes of a cornet, which, being played with great ferociousness, and some little inaccuracy, sternly informed the inhabitants of No. 9 that “Charlie was over the water.”

I looked at the page, who had turned black in the face with suppressed hilarity, and a dim suspicion began to grow upon me that Andrew Bloyce was as well as I

was! The next observation of the slim youth confirmed that suspicion.

"You see, miss, I didn't know you was his sister, and as he left orders last night that he was to be very ill this morning if anybody asked arter him, why, I naterally obeyed the genelman's directions. But I'll tell him youv'e come."

And dashing up the stairs three steps at a time, he left me standing in the passage more bewildered than ever. Leave orders last night that he was to be very ill this morning! Brother Andrew do such a thing—he, the soul of honour, the hope of the family! I must have come to the wrong No. 9 after all!

Suddenly the cornet ceased playing, several voices were heard speaking at once, some noisy shouts of laughter and an opening and shutting of doors followed, and then the page swung himself round the stairs with alarming recklessness, and dropped on to the hall mat.

"Mr. Bloyce says, will you please to walk hup? This way, miss."

Upstairs again went the page, three steps at a time as before, showing a great deal of dirty stockings between the bottoms of his trousers and slippers. The handle of the front room door turned, and Miss Bloyce announced with considerable pomposity. Into the drawing-room, where brother Andrew was waiting — waiting alone to receive me, and press me to his heart.

“My dear Andrew!”

“What! Barbara, old girl! how are you?”

The first embrace over, I could rest my hands upon his shoulders, look up into his face, and see how time had served him since he had left home for the world. Left home as I had, full of hope in the future, with a father's and mother's blessing on his head!

Heigho! five years make a difference. Between nineteen and twenty-four, what changes may ensue—from what a different spot may Manhood look back to the green vale of Youth!

Andrew Bloyce had altered very much, although *I* should have known him, for there is no deceiving a loving sister's eyes. He was full of growing pains when he left Jersey, and no wonder—for he was six feet in height now! What whiskers he had got too, and such a moustache, rather too long and cat-like to my fancy, although he looked handsome enough with it—of course he did! I wondered, as I looked at him, though, what he had done with the pair of rosy cheeks he had taken away from St. Brelade.

I wondered more at his costume, although I did not like to hazard any remark on the same, lest I should betray my ignorance of the metropolitan fashions. He wore a grey silk coat with very large bishops' sleeves, white trousers and waistcoat—and there was a white hat, with a funny-looking green veil fastened to it, upon the table.

“And you are not ill, then, Andrew?”

“Ill, my girl—do I look like an invalid?”

“You are very pale, I think; but then

London is not the best place to keep the colour on your cheeks—especially when one studies so hard as you do.”

“Ah! when one studies hard—that’s just it, Barbara.”

“I expected to find you at Thames Street yesterday. You received my note, Andrew?”

“Yes, but too late to put off my engagements for that day, dear. But how glad I am to find you have arrived here safely! Where is it you are living, Barbara—Stamford Street?”

“Yes, No. 502.”

Andrew appeared to have exhausted the subjects of conversation; he stared stupidly at his gauze-covered hat, he fidgeted with a pair of buckskin gloves, he walked to the window, looked from it, coughed, walked back again.

“You have not asked if father and mother are well, Andrew?” I said, half reproachfully.

“I was just going to make the inqui—”

The cornet in the next room here burst

forth with the significant tune of "Off she goes!"

"Is that a hint that I am detaining you from your musical friend, Andrew?" I inquired, with a laugh.

"No, no, don't hurry, Barbara—there is plenty of time. We don't meet every day, you know. The fact is—damn the cornet!"

"Oh! Andrew!"

"Did you ever hear such an unearthly noise in your life?" he exclaimed—"it's enough to put a saint out of temper. The fact is, Barbara, three friends of mine and myself are going to the races."

"In that carriage outside?" I asked, in rather a severe manner.

"Yes," responded he; "it's a great treat for me to get into the country; just once a year, after all my hard work at the eternal piano."

"But is not travelling in a postchaise rather expensive, Andrew?"

"Not between four of us, when—*da*—there he goes again!"

Cornet began "Over the hills and far away" in an extraordinary number of sharps, whilst somebody in the next room kept time on the wall with a walking-stick.

"Oh! they are getting impatient to take you away," said I, "and I am very selfish to detain you. Your only holiday, too, in a long twelvemonth! You must forgive me, Andrew, but it is such a pleasure to see you after so long a parting. Well, good-bye, dear!"

"You must come soon, Barbara, and have a long chat with me about old Jersey and the Jersey folks," said he, as he stooped and kissed me—"what day shall we say now—this day week?"

I was going to say "to-morrow," but I checked myself, and repeated "this day week" in a tremulous voice.

Andrew saw me down stairs into the hall, wished me good-bye, even reminded me of my promise, and that cheered me up and made me smile again. He did want to see me then; he would have asked me sooner

had time allowed him — he would have to work and study very hard, perhaps, to make up for that one holiday.

I did not go away quite so heavy at the heart, although I was not perfectly satisfied with the result of my interview.

I lingered at the corner of the next street, and saw the bandy-legged postilions get astride the horses, one postilion very feeble—should have thought him intoxicated, only the early hour of the morning rendered that *impossible*!—watched the three friends and Andrew issue from the house, the three friends laughing at Andrew and poking him playfully in the side; saw that it was the fashion to wear light silk coats and white hats with green veils — they all wore them—and felt glad I had not shocked Andrew with my old-fashioned notions; saw the postchaise occupied—heard again, subdued by distance, the blast of the cornet · noted the neighbours' heads hanging out of windows and peeping over blinds; heard the dirty boys and the butcher cheer lustily —watched the former run beside the post-

chaise as it started on its journey—turn head-over-heels in the road, and try to get their legs entangled in the wheels.

As the chaise-and-four whirled by me on its way to Epsom, I shrank behind several people who were waiting, too, at the corner of the street. Andrew did not see me; he was holding a little note-book in his hand, and making some entries therein with a very grave expression of countenance—possibly looking at his engagements with pupils for the morrow, and letting the shadow of that morrow's business fall across the sunny track of to-day's pleasure.

CHAPTER III.

THREE TRESDAILES.

THE course of the following week gave me frequent opportunities of observing life at No. 502, Stamford Street, introduced me to a few of the Tresdaile family, and reconciled me to my new position in society. I have often wondered from what member of the Bloyce family I inherit the habit of looking at the best side, even of a bad bargain. Certainly not from father, or mother, or brother, but from some remote ancestor, whose name on the fly-leaf of our family Bible tells us such a person came into the world, and went out of it. I have never

found that habit of mine do me any harm—on the contrary, at times a great deal of good; and if I could talk a few of the readers of this history into the same complaint, I am sure it would be better for them. Not that Barbara Bloyce is a strong-minded female, a patient Grisel, an angel in petticoats; she has often given way in her life, and wrung her hands despairingly, tasted the cup which is of bitterness, and felt the shock of the avalanche of trouble; but still, here she is, not much the worse for it! I began to get used to Mrs. Tresdaile's ways; her irritability did not affect me, or her eccentricities bewilder me, after the first week: she was an infirm, peevish lady enough, but she was a great age, and our tempers do not always cool down as our years increase—mine don't.

It was uphill work with Mrs. Tresdaile, nevertheless; it took so much time and such extraordinary pains to get a smile or good word from her—to even refrain at times from giving her a “bit of one's mind” when she was more than usually fractious.

I did not find my occupation a monotonous one, the lady whom I served as companion being too full of fancies and too fond of change to render that likely. There was no fixing the old lady; had she been weak in the head, which she most decidedly was *not*, one could scarcely have been less prepared for her next movement. For instance, the second night of my stay under the roof of No. 502, Stamford Street, Mrs. Tresdaile went to bed immediately after tea, having previously ordered the servants to their rooms, and gone carefully round the lower part of the house. It was very "early to bed" that night, for I remember the postman rapping at the door and waking me out of my first sleep, and my teasing myself with the thought that perhaps it was a letter from home, the dear old home!—or from Andrew, informing me that he had reached Epsom in safety.

When the morning postman brought the letter again, I learned that it was from a house-agent of Mrs. Tresdaile's, asking for instructions concerning a slow-paying tenant,

and suggesting a seizure of goods by way of indemnity. My services as companion came in here opportunely, and, at my mistress's dictation, I issued orders to put a broker into the house forthwith. I wrote with a heavy heart; the cruel fiat was delivered in such a business-like manner, that I could not help saying, ere I folded the letter—

“Perhaps a little more time would save all this trouble, Mrs. Tresdaile.”

“But it wouldn't, Miss Bloyce!”

I sealed the letter, and five minutes afterwards away it went on its errand, leaving impressed on my silly, sensitive mind a picture of home in distress, of honest labour paralyzed, of a family cowering over the fire and looking gloomily into its depths; when, perhaps, Mrs. Tresdaile was right after all, and would hardly be in time to stop the retreat of a swindler with the key of the house, and all the fixtures that did not belong to him.

Mrs. Tresdaile had two methodical habits—I believe only two. The first I have already alluded to, that of being the last

person up at night in the house—whilst the second consisted in an examination of her books every day after dinner. In the latter occupation it was my duty to assist—“clever at accounts” had been one of the qualifications requisite for Mrs. Tresdaile’s companion. And what accounts they were!—what great books, with brass edges, were brought from the iron safe and lumped down on the table of the little back room which Mrs. Tresdaile called her “counting-house!” It was well I did know a little arithmetic, or my term of service under my lady would have been speedily ended. Over those books which Mrs. Tresdaile *would* lift by herself—I believe she would have knocked me down with her stick or her great bunch of keys if I had attempted to approach within two yards of the safe—I learned that Mrs. Tresdaile was still carrying on the business which her lord and husband had given up for ever fifty years ago. It was a great business, too, to judge by the long rows of figures, and the very large sum those figures amounted to—the business of a tobacco mer-

chant, down some dark street near the Docks. I learned, also, that her general manager was a Mr. Bartholomew Tresdaile; and as Mr. Bartholomew Tresdaile called to see his grandmother once or twice a-week, I had soon an opportunity of seeing that gentleman in person.

To be candid with the reader, I did not take kindly to him at first sight, and I don't believe he took very kindly to me. My presence at No. 502 certainly surprised him not a little, and he appeared hurt that his aged relative had not informed him of her intention to take as a companion a certain Miss Barbara Bloyce, of St. Bre-lade, Jersey. Not that he was discourteous, or did not bow politely to me, and express his pleasure at hearing that I was there to cheer the lonely hours of his grandmother—quite the contrary; but still there was about him one of those undefinable "somethings" which puzzle the best of us at times, and which did not set my heart beating very warmly in his favour. He was a tall but slightly-made man, with an incli-

nation to double up suddenly, as if certain invisible but weighty packages descended at uncertain times upon his shoulders and took him off his guard. He had a narrow chest—he carried his head so forward, had such a pair of round shoulders, that even in his most upright moments he was like the letter J turned upside down. Add to this, that he was carrotty—a colour I object to, being fond of neutral tints—and the reader will believe Mr. Bartholomew Tresdaile was not a handsome man for nine-and-thirty. He was a business man though, and that was more to the purpose. He was a quick man too, and was not long in rendering a weekly account of his stewardship; he skimmed over cheques and notes with incredible velocity, and quite put me out of conceit of my own arithmetical powers, by adding up a column of figures almost as long as himself in less than a minute and a quarter.

“You’ll find everything correct, Mrs. Tresdaile,” said he, at the conclusion of the

first interview to which I had been a witness in the "counting house."

"You are generally pretty correct, Bartholomew," responded the old lady—"but Miss Bloyce and I will check your figures in the course of the afternoon—Miss Bloyce will be my confidential clerk and assistant now the figures begin to worry me a little."

"I am sure you could not have found an assistant more worthy of your confidence," replied the general manager, suddenly doubling up in the middle of a bow.

He did not smile over his compliment—he was too stern a man to look pleasant; and although I thanked him for his flattering opinion, I did not think much more of it than he did. Imagining grandmother and grandson might have some private affairs to discuss in my absence, I hastened to retire from the room; but before Mr. Tresdaile could close the door politely behind me, I heard his grandmother say—

"What do you think of her, Bartholomew?"

I should not have heard the grandson's reply, had not Mrs. Tresdaile repeated the answer in her customary high tone—

“ ‘Too young you are afraid!’ Do you think I want a woman as old and ugly as myself about the house?’ ”

I hastened to shut myself in the drawing-room before I, unwilling listener, heard no good of myself.

I saw Mr. Bartholomew Tresdaile very often. When business did not bring him to No. 502, anxiety for his grandmother's health seemed to lead him thither. He was deeply attached to his grandmother, paid great deference to her wishes, brought her little presents of fish and game, had even at times to be told by the servants that Mrs. Tresdaile was not in.

There was one more privileged visitor to No. 502, who came less often and stayed less time—a second grandson, very much like the manager of the tobacco-stores about the nose and eyes. They were only cousins, Mrs. Tresdaile informed me, although I should have certainly taken them

for brothers, myself. Yet there was a great difference when one came to observe them closely—a difference in their natures as well as their features. It would be premature at this period to parade their good and bad qualities before the reader; if in the course of this history of my life, and of that family with which my life is blended, their characters do not develop themselves, it is the fault of her who has set herself this task.

I may add, however, that Mr. Barnaby Tresdaile was as affable and courteous as his cousin Bartholomew, although equally surprised to find me his grandmother's companion; that he was not quite so old as grandson No. One, and was certainly of a more cheerful disposition. He quite enlivened the old lady during his stay; talking briskly and jovially, listening to his grandmother's querulous complaints, and replying to them in a light and easy manner that more than once softened the hard expression of her face.

Immediately his back was turned, Mrs.

Tresdaile began, after her invariable custom, to comment upon the object of his visit.

"I wonder if Barnaby would be so fond of me, so anxious about my health and spirits, if I hadn't something to leave behind me in the world? I wonder how an old woman like me is to tell the real from the false!"

"The false will disclose itself, Mrs. Tresdaile, in good time."

"Not always," was the quick response; "if there's anything to be gained by it, the mask is kept on close enough, I can tell you. And there's a good deal to be gained by Barnaby Tresdaile, who, with all his cleverness and scheming, is as poor as a church mouse, Miss Bloyce."

"Indeed, ma'am!"

"So was his foolish father before him, who was twice set up in business, and twice made an awful mess of it. Ah! *he* was better out of the world!"

"He must have died young."

"Let me see," said the old lady, putting her finger to her lips and looking up at the

ceiling; "he's been dead twenty years; he died going out to America with his wife and child. I paid their passage out, and it cost a mint of money; all thrown away, too—oh, Lord!—for the wife sent Barnaby back again,—a lout of a boy, fourteen years of age too,—and got married again to a nigger-driver."

Mrs. Tresdaile drew her chair close to the fire, which was roaring up the chimney, though the middle of June, and helping to half-bake me.

"He wasn't the only one who died young," said Mrs. Tresdaile, holding her thin white hands before the blaze; "there was John—Bartholomew's father—who met with an accident at the warehouse and got killed. And my other son was shot at the head of his regiment, only a few years ago."

"But the daughter?"

"What daughter?" asked the old lady, looking at me curiously.

"On the first night of our meeting you spoke of a daughter, Mrs. Tresdaile."

The old lady's eyebrows lowered over the keen eyes.

"I had forgotten it. You have an excellent memory, Miss Bloyce," said she; "what made my old fool's tongue prate of *her*?"

"Have you not lost her?" I inquired.

"If I had lost her in her cradle, when my hopes were brightest, it would have been better for us both," Mrs. Tresdaile muttered; "she might have been a lady, and she chose to be a slave."

Could this daughter, of whom the old lady was speaking, be in her grave, I thought?—had not the grave even cancelled the injury done to this woman's pride?

"She married a poor man when she was eighteen years of age,—only the age of my grand-daughter, when she ran away from home, and got married on the sly! I never saw her after that. I never went to see her when she was very ill and had given birth to a son. I never saw her in her coffin!"

"Poor girl!"

"I don't see anything to pity," said Mrs. Tresdaile, scowling in my direction.

"Surely you must have felt regret, and——"

"Oh! yes, yes; I was younger then, and more easily imposed on. I did feel a twinge or two, till her greedy husband wanted to make a market out of his dead wife—to tell me of her last wishes for her boy, and all that nonsense; till he pestered me with a sight of the boy—just like his own ugly self, Miss Bloyce—and kept sending the boy begging to me till I hated him, and wished him anywhere. Bad, bad — father and son!"

Was the son or the father the George Keldon for whom she looked in the papers day after day?

"So, what with sons and grandsons, I have had a nice time of it all my life, and never been quit of leeches and blood-suckers, and other vermin."

"Then Alice is not your daughter's child, madam?"

"Do you think I would have had a child

of that wretched woman's in my house," exclaimed Mrs. Tresdaile; "educated it, sent it to a boarding-school, and lavished my money on it in every way? No, no—Alice is the daughter of a gentleman, the only son of mine who ever turned out a gentleman."

"The officer?"

"Yes," replied Mrs. Tresdaile; "he has left two children, Ernest and Alice. Ernest is in India, and Alice is at Bath learning to be a lady. Ah! she's a dear girl," said the old lady, brightening up—"a dutiful, affectionate child—one who will never make her grandmother's heart ache as it has ached in old time."

"When shall I have the pleasure of seeing her?"

"In a fortnight or so. She was eighteen last month, and anxious to leave school then, but I said finish the quarter, and my dear Alice is all obedience, tired of lessons as she is. She—whatever can that be!"

A ringing at the bell, followed by a loud

and prolonged knocking, which raised the echoes of the house, frightened the servants, and sent the domestic cat of the establishment, who had been sleeping on the hall-mat, scuttling upstairs like a mad thing.

Mrs. Tresdaile gasped for breath and pointed to the door.

“Thieves, my dear!” she panted, “a plan—to rob the house, not a doubt of it. Its twelve o'clock at night—no respectable person would come now. Run to my bed-room and get the rattle that h—h—hangs behind the door. George Keldon, perhaps—oh! we shall all be robbed and murdered!—where's my keys?”

I felt rather alarmed myself; the sudden and impatient summons from without, the agitation of my mistress, the noisy whispering of the cook and housemaid as they came together up the kitchen stairs—all tended to rob me of composure. However, I ran to Mrs. Tresdaile's room, found the rattle,—a huge unwieldy watchman's rattle, that had not seen active service since the days of the second George,—and descended

just in time to hear inquiries made through the keyhole of the front door.

The answers were satisfactory enough, for before Mrs. Tresdaile could call out "keep the door locked," the impatient and late visitor was admitted, came rustling up the stairs in hood and cloak, ran into the drawing-room towards the old lady,—who had managed to open the window, and was sitting there prepared for any emergency,—and flung herself into her arms.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Grandmother Tresdaile—"why, it's Alice!"

CHAPTER IV.

A L I C E .

STANDING in the doorway with a watchman's rattle of seven pounds in my hand, I had leisure to observe Mrs. Tresdaile's reception of her grand-daughter. I had leisure also to observe the young lady who had surprised us by her sudden visit, and to think I had not, in my pilgrimage through life, met a fairer face. Holding her grandmother's hands and looking into the deep-lined countenance, the light fell full upon her and made a picture worth the studying. Not tall for eighteen years of age, a graceful figure, a bright speaking face,

a shower of light dancing ringlets, a pair of large blue eyes, a straight little nose, and two red pouting lips—and there is Alice Tresdaile. Stay, hardly Alice Tresdaile yet; for, as eighteen summers gazed into the time-beaten face of four-score and three, the eyes looked too full of fire, and the colour on the cheeks was much too deep!

“Grandmother, I have to ask you to forgive me.”

“Forgive you, Alice! Well, well, what is there to forgive, child?”

“I have had a quarrel with my school-mistress,” said Alice, hurriedly; “she wished to set me tasks, treat me like a child, and order me about as if I were one of her poor trodden-down teachers; and as I could not bear it any longer, I put on my bonnet and cloak this afternoon, took the train to London, a cab to Stamford Street, and here I am, dear grandmother, for good!”

Mrs. Tresdaile sat rather bewildered, and looked a little discomfited, though she had not the heart to snap up her favourite grandchild in the first moments of meeting.

“And you have left all your boxes at Bath, of course?”

“Yes; I'll write for them in the morning, grandma.”

“And—and—” the old lady's eye wandered to the open door at which I was standing—“and—come in, Miss Bloyce, do! I wondered where all that draught was coming from, blowing my cap nearly off my head; and—oh! and the window, too—will you shut it, if you please?”

“What shall I do with the rattle, Mrs. Tresdaile?” I inquired, exhibiting that ancient relic at the same time; “it's making my wrist ache very much.”

Grandmother Tresdaile was not often hilarious, and the rusty cackling shriek which at that moment escaped from her throat was the first laugh I had heard since I had been her companion. From that moment I never cared to hear another.

“You see, Alice, we were quite prepared for murderers and housebreakers—windows were open, and rattles ready to be sprung,” said Grandmother Tresdaile, taking off her

spectacles to wipe her eyes; "but we did not anticipate a wilful, runaway school-girl. Miss Bloyce, *will* you put that thing down somewhere and shut the window?—I shall be half dead with rheumatics in the morning."

At Mrs. Tresdaile's request I laid the rattle on the table, and proceeded to close the window, the large eyes of Alice Tresdaile following me and critically observing.

When I had fulfilled the orders of my venerable companion, Mrs. Tresdaile said, with a wave of the hand towards me:—

"This lady, Alice, is my companion, Miss Bloyce. Miss Bloyce, will you allow me to introduce you to my grand-daughter, Alice?"

Alice, in rather a stately manner, bowed a return to my best curtsy.

"We had better ring for the supper-tray," again observed Mrs. Tresdaile; "I am sure you must feel fatigued after your long journey, Alice."

"I am fatigued, and shall be glad to get to sleep," replied Alice; "pray don't prepare any supper for me."

“But——”

“But it is a pity to give the servants unnecessary trouble, and I sha — cannot eat any supper,” corrected Miss Tresdaile.

“Then, as your room is not ready, Alice, perhaps you will not object to sleep with Miss Bloyce to-night?”

“Very well,” responded Alice, languidly.

“And to-morrow we'll talk of this flighty action of yours,” said the grandmother, “and I'll think over the scolding I intend to give you. Don't fancy, young lady, you are going to escape so easily.”

Adieux having been exchanged, the young lady and I ascended to the room on the second floor; and shortly afterwards Mrs. Tresdaile was heard descending the stairs, and trying the fastenings of the doors and shutters.

When we were in my own room, Miss Tresdaile sat down before the dressing-table, took her round little chin in her hand, and, after one glance at herself in the looking-glass, fell into a brown study.

"Would you like a fire, Miss Tresdaile?"

"No, thank you."

"I thought you might find it cold after the warm drawing-room."

"No."

I left Miss Tresdaile to her meditations, and busied myself about the room. Had she taken another chair, I could have arranged my hair for the night; but there she sat, very thoughtful and very much in the way. Still, late as it was, I was in no more hurry to get to bed than Miss Tresdaile, and was anxious to see a little farther into the character of that young lady. So, after drawing the window-curtains close, I took up a book, seated myself, and began to read the night away.

There was a small time-piece on the mantel-shelf, and it was ticking briskly on to one. Presently it struck, but neither of us took any notice of the new day being an hour old. Of rather an obstinate nature myself, and inwardly vexed at the taciturnity of the new comer, I resolved to "sit her out," if I even waited for the

milkman's ring in the morning. So I sat and read on patiently, turned leaf after leaf of my book, snuffed the candle when requisite, and took not the slightest notice of Miss Tresdaile, who, about half-past two, began to shiver a little, and look at me out of the corners of her eyes.

"Heigho!" sighed she, as a signal that she was perfectly conscious; but I had begun chapter the twenty-second of the "Devotional Exercises," and was not going to look up till I had finished it.

Alice Tresdaile glanced at herself in the glass again, took off her cloak and bonnet, smoothed her hair, braided it back over her ears, yawned several times, beat impatiently with her foot, made a noise with the hair brushes and coughed once or twice. But my first effort at conversation had been received with chilling indifference, and if Miss Tresdaile had anything to say to relieve the monotony of the morning, there I was to be spoken to at her ladyship's service.

"That is an entertaining book, Miss Bloyce," she remarked at last.

"Yes, Miss Tresdaile."

"It is very late."

"Yes."

Miss Tresdaile looked at me again, bit her lip, finally burst into a little musical laugh, that made my heart thrill again. I had not heard such a laugh for many a long day.

"Ah! Miss Bloyce, you are paying me in my own coin, and it serves me right for being out of temper with myself and the world. You would not think I was such a very bad-tempered, obstinate little thing now?"

"I might think so by an effort," I replied, smiling.

"An impetuous girl, who don't know her own mind, and don't care for other people's feelings. Did you ever run away from school?"

"Never, Miss Tresdaile."

"Do you know anyone who has?"

"Not any one."

"Because I should like to know what the world thinks of her, and—I—I shouldn't

like the world to talk about me, and say that I am very much in the wrong ! ”

“ But you are not very much in the right, Miss Tresdaile,” I remarked ; “ and I have no doubt your grandmother will tell you so in the morning.”

“ What, my dear grandma ? ” exclaimed she ; “ oh ! she will never scold her favourite Alice. I was sure I should be welcome at Stamford Street, or I should not have come flying from Bath in such haste. Grandmamma is such a kind, forgiving old lady ! ”

Miss Tresdaile had certainly a much higher opinion of her grandmother than I had.

“ And you do not know the cause, the provocations which led me to leave that hateful school,” exclaimed Miss Tresdaile, in an excited manner ; “ instead—instead of treating me like a young lady who is eighteen years of age, and who was going away for good at Midsummer, and whose father had been in the army, they, they—but—” with a stamp of her pretty foot on

the carpet, "I can't bear to think of it, and I won't!"

"If you sleep on your wrongs, Miss Tresdaile, you will find them lighter in the morning."

"I wish you would call me Alice!" said she peevishly; "Miss Tresdaile do this, and Miss Tresdaile do that, is so much like Mrs. Wilcox's seminary for young ladies. What is your Christian name?"

"Barbara."

"Oh, what an old-fashioned name, to be sure! And how did you get here? Are you any relation?"

"Oh! no, Miss Alice," I replied, "I am merely your grandmother's companion. I read to her, help her with her account-books, and so forth."

"You'll be my companion, too, will you not? I have often wondered what I should do when I was my own mistress in this lonely old house. Grandmother Tresdaile must have thought of me when she engaged you as companion. Do you know,"

regarding me attentively, "I think we shall agree very well together."

"I hope so, Miss Alice."

"You'll put up with my little fits of petulance better than Mrs. Wilcox, humour me in my cross fits, and not thwart me by harsh words and sour looks," she continued; "if I have my own way, I am sure I shall get on very well indeed."

"So would most people, Miss Alice," I replied; "but unfortunately the wills and the ways of others will cross us, and there is no turning them aside to make room for our own."

"That is out of those 'Devotional Exercises,' I know," she said, with a sharpness that reminded me of her grandmother.

"No, it is out of a little volume called the Common-sense book."

"I don't know that I *shall* like you much, after all," replied Miss Tresdaile, after a moment's reflection.

I could not help laughing at the frank avowal; there was nothing disingenuous in Alice Tresdaile. She told you her thoughts,

and that said a great deal for her heart. Yet what a spoiled child she was, and what time and trouble it would take to make her all that was amiable and good! More time and trouble than I could afford, supposing I were amiable and good myself, which I was not, and never expected to be.

When Alice Tresdaile lay sleeping by my side at last, and the moon was bright enough to show the calm face, the flowing golden hair, the peaceful rest of her who had so suddenly come home, I could not close my own eyes for thinking of her, for gently rising in my bed and looking at her in her sleep.

CHAPTER V.

GEORGE KELDON APPEARS IN THE PAPERS.

ALICE TRESDALE was right—her grandmother was a kind, forgiving old lady. She said no more of the boarding-school *escapade*, and when a four-page letter of complaint arrived in due course from Mrs. Wilcox, the old lady put it behind the fire without reading half of it.

“Alice, you had better write to your governess for your boxes.”

“Oh, I shouldn’t like to write after what has happened,” replied Alice; “I am sure Miss Bloyce will be kind enough to be my amanuensis.”

"Certainly, but——"

"But what?" asked Alice.

"But I think if I were you, Miss Alice, I should write to my old governess myself, especially as you are sorry for your late precipitancy."

"I never said I was sorry, Miss Bloyce."

"But I am sure you are, now you have had time to think over a step that might have ended more seriously."

"How can you be sure I am sorry, when I am not sure myself?" exclaimed Miss Tresdaile, flouncing from the room indignantly.

The old lady almost went to extremes and the verge of a laugh again, after the door had closed upon her grand-daughter.

"She'll write the letter, Miss Bloyce, for she's a dear girl, who bears no malice. You managed that very well indeed, but you mustn't try her too much, she's very young."

"Not too young."

"Time enough, time enough," said the old lady; "we must not be hard with the

poor girl in the first days of her liberty. Will you get the *Times*, Miss Bloyce, and read me carefully the *City* article?"

After I had read it, and had once more, at her request, seen if anybody of the name of Keldon were charged with felony, manslaughter, or pot-stealing, Alice Tresdaile returned with a sealed letter in her hand.

"I — I have just said a few words to Mrs. Wilcox — perhaps it will please her to hear that I am sorry; and I was a long while at the old school, wasn't I, grand-mamma?"

Two days had passed, and I had seen a great deal of Miss Tresdaile — seen much to like and dislike in her. She was certainly a girl full of caprice, a girl who did not seem to know her own mind for five minutes together. She must have been pretty well used to her own way at Mrs. Wilcox's, or the reaction from seven or eight years of restraint was something out of the common. Wild, impulsive, a little selfish, very inconsiderate, quick to take offence,

quick to get over it, entertaining a good opinion of her looks and accomplishments, and expecting others to do the same—she was a young lady the management of whom was far from desirable. I was glad I had not accepted the post of companion to Alice Tresdaile instead of her grandmother; and, although the latter had once hinted that my principal business would be to act as that young lady's friend, yet I thought, if she did not give herself "less airs," it would not be Barbara Bloyce who would long dance attendance.

-But I did not take one thing into consideration—did not think of my heart becoming engaged to the grand-daughter, and of her virtues, even her weaknesses, weaving round me a spell that day after day would grow stronger. It was impossible to refrain from loving her, though I tried hard, for I knew she would give me a great deal of trouble! In that old house, with a cross old woman of eighty-three for company, I naturally turned for relief to the light-hearted beauty, and found a charm by

her side which became irresistible. Possibly it was for the same reason that Alice Tresdaile sought me out, made me her confidante, asked my advice, and even acted upon it; and though the second day after her appearance at No. 502 she would not speak to me for six hours (owing to my advice concerning the letter to Mrs. Wilcox), yet she threw her arms round my neck when I was going up to bed, knocked the chamber candlestick out of my hand, and—forgave me!

Mrs. Tresdaile's affection for her granddaughter was something remarkable—Alice could do no wrong, or say anything to offend her. Her will was law, and the servants had orders to fulfil it; and even I, who was not compelled to obey the young lady's caprices, received my secret instructions with the rest, and was "not to hurt Miss Alice's feelings on any account!" Alice was certainly fond of her grandmother, was the only relation, perhaps, who loved her for herself, and had never even thought of her money; and Mrs. Tresdaile turned

to her as to the one true friend she had in the world, and in whose love she might have faith.

Poor old lady, there was something to pity in her, and nothing to envy, despite that money for which so many paid her homage. Had I been asked by one of those potent magicians in whose existence I had believed once upon a time, if to possess all her money I would act through her life, follow it step by step, I should not have hesitated in my answer. All her money, and the reverence and lip-service it might have brought me, would not have compensated for her unhappy life, for her want of comfort in those nearest and dearest. She had never been happy—she was not happy now, even with riches at command, and with the grand-daughter whom she loved at her side. Alice's love even troubled her—she was fearful she should lose it, or that some one else would come in for a share of it; was even jealous of *me* at times, and half inclined to give me warning to leave Stamford Street. So, Grandmother Tresdaile could

love warmly, as well as hate heartily, and both love and hate preyed upon her. She was an anomaly; for the same woman whose love for one grandchild was a dotage, could think of another all that was ill, and forgive not a daughter with a gravestone over her!

So Alice Tresdaile had her own way in the world, and rejoiced in it; and Mr. Bartholomew Tresdaile and his cousin Barnaby bestowed upon her the greatest attention.

Alice had been home a fortnight, and I had not yet been fortunate enough to see my brother Andrew again. Twice had I called at his lodgings in Pimlico, the first time at the hour and day appointed by himself; but business had suddenly summoned him from home, and "it would not do," he said, in a little note which he had left for me, "to neglect new pupils and new opportunities in life, even for the pleasure of meeting his pretty-faced sister." No less successful a second time, I had written to him to appoint his own day again; he had replied "next Tuesday," and for that Tuesday I was anxiously waiting.

Before the Tuesday came, I found a great many things that were foreign to Andrew and his fortunes settled on my mind.

The *Times* newspaper began them—that *Times* is always getting somebody into mischief! It was early in the morning; Mrs. Tresdaile had taken it into her head to rise before daylight, and, what was more annoying, to make everybody in the house rise too. The servants had been hustled and bustled, the breakfast was finished, Alice was playing the piano in the drawing-room, Mrs. Tresdaile and I were in the front parlour, and it was not yet nine o'clock.

“You may depend upon it, Miss Bloyce,” said the old lady decisively, “there’s nothing like early rising for the constitution. I feel quite another thing this morning.”

(The following day, Mrs. Tresdaile was getting out of bed at two in the afternoon.)

“It’s a beautiful morning,” I remarked, absently.

“I wasn’t saying anything about a beautiful morning—I wish you would pay more attention, Miss Bloyce. It’s very hard to

talk to stones, and pieces of furniture—where's the paper?"

Newspaper was not forthcoming, and Mrs. Tresdaile's amiability fell fifteen more degrees.

"That's that boy again. He ought to be here by eight o'clock, and he's staring into every shop-window with the paper under his arm, instead of bringing it straight here. I wish I was behind him with a pitchfork!"

Without any necessity for that playful instrument, the boy's ring at the bell announced the arrival of the *Times*.

The old lady cooled down, and, after the money article had been read, appeared to have recovered all her usual equanimity—such as it was.

"Any news, Miss Bloyce?" inquired Mrs. Tresdaile.

I knew what she meant, although I feigned an intense interest in the advertisements. Her anxiety to hear something wrong of George Keldon always excessively irritated me.

“What a number of advertisements to tourists and families leaving town,” I said; “the fine weather this summer appears to have its attractions.”

“Do you want to leave London, Miss Bloyce?”

“No,” I replied, feeling my cheeks redden.

“Then what is the good of reading those advertisements, I should like to know? I never go out of town myself, it wouldn't do me a mite of good, and only give me a cold in the head. I wonder though,” added Mrs. Tresdaile, “if Alice would like a change this year—don't you think she is looking pale, Miss Bloyce?”

“I have not remarked it.”

“Ah! there are no eyes like a grandmother's. Perhaps Stamford Street does not agree with the dear girl. Yes, we must take her out of town, I think. What are you jumping at now?”

I might well jump, for George Keldon was in the paper at last! I could scarcely hold the newspaper between my trembling

hands; I had heard so much of George Keldon, the old lady had inquired for him with such persistency day after day, that to find him in print after all was like the fulfilment of some prophecy.

“Here’s George Keldon, ma’am.”

“EH, WHAT!” exclaimed Mrs. Tresdaile; “come to harm at last then! I knew he would—I said he would! The sins of the fathers are visited upon the sons unto the third and fourth generation—so are the sins of the mothers—capital, capital, capital!”

And fourscore-and-three rubbed her hands together, rapped her stick on the floor, crowed with delight, and finally burst into one of those extraordinary laughs which she kept in stock somewhere inside her for particular occasions.

“Let us have the whole of it!” cried Mrs. Tresdaile, when she had recovered sufficient breath to speak—“no skipping a line, Miss Bloyce, if you please—oh! how Bartholomew would enjoy this!”

I began the reading of that paragraph with which the name of George Keldon

was connected. I fear I read it rather spitefully, and nearly ruined my eyes by trying to keep them on the print and on Mrs. Tresdaile's countenance at the same time.

“‘FALL OF A HOUSE IN HACKNEY.—At an early hour—’”

“Fall of a house!” interrupted Mrs. Tresdaile, “what do you mean by that?”

“It is an accident that has happened to him, madam.”

“Only an accident,” said Mrs. Tresdaile, in a disappointed tone—“all that fuss, and only an accident. Never mind, read away—perhaps he's smashed!”

“At an early hour yesterday evening, the inhabitants of Blackman's Gardens, Hackney, were witness to one of the most alarming scenes that has lately occurred in the metropolis. A house known as No. 10, Blackman's Gardens, suddenly fell with a terrific noise to the ground, burying within its ruins five of the unfortunate inmates. Assistance was promptly on the spot, and every endeavour was made by the police

and the inhabitants of the neighbourhood to rescue the sufferers from their perilous position. After intense exertion the five persons were recovered from the ruins, although hopes are not entertained of the recovery of three of them. We regret to add that a Mr. George Keldon, of No. 12, Blackman's Gardens, was seriously injured in his efforts to preserve the lives of his neighbours. This is another of those lamentable accidents which, to the disgrace of surveyors, landlords, and the parish, an exercise of common caution might have prevented.'"

"What a fuss about nothing!" remarked Mrs. Tresdaile—"and so he's seriously injured, is he? Serve him right for meddling with things that didn't concern him!"

Mrs. Tresdaile thus attempted to dismiss the subject; but it would not be shaken off so easily—it sat on her mind, troubled her through the morning, interfered with her book-keeping in the afternoon, cast its shadow on her all that evening. Did she

make too much profession of her hatred to George Keldon, I thought, and was she trying to persuade herself into that enmity which she affected towards him? Was she glad he was hurt, or was he her daughter's child, blood of her blood, after all?

She alluded no more to her grandson, but she put on her tortoise-shell spectacles, read the paragraph to herself, and carried the newspaper to bed with her. If she felt any regret at George Keldon's misfortune, she was too strong-minded to own it, after all her professions. It was singular that I should feel regret though—that I could not get this George Keldon out of my head, try as hard as I might to think of something else. I was as interested in him for the time as if he had been my brother Andrew, and felt as glad that his name in the paper was connected with a worthy action, as perhaps my ancient companion was disappointed.

I have already observed that two o'clock in the afternoon was Mrs. Tresdaile's time for rising the next day, but it was at an earlier hour that I was called to the bedside,

and the newspaper placed in my hands. I was uneasy about George Keldon, and looked anxiously over the paper for further particulars concerning the fall of a house at Blackman's Gardens, Hackney, and got snapped up fiercely by Mrs. Tresdaile for neglecting the money article. However, there was nothing about the grandson that day—the reporter had evidently forgotten him. There was half a column concerning the house in Blackman's Gardens, and the condition of the other sufferers, some more censure of the surveyor, the parish officials, and the owners of the property, but the case of George Keldon was passed over in silence.

I ventured to remark the omission.

“Do you think the papers care for such common people,” was the reply, “or have not something better to do than trouble themselves about a rogue and a vagabond?”

“Perhaps it was a mistake.”

“Not very likely, when the name and address were so pat. I should not be surprised to hear he was dead.”

"I hope not, Mrs. Tresdaile."

"Why, isn't a poor wretch like him better dead than alive? Suppose he has to lose an arm or a leg, and drudge on at the workhouse the rest of his days."

"Not the workhouse, surely."

"Do you think I'd help to keep him from it. Not to see a hundred years, Miss Bloyce!" she said decisively.

I shuddered.

"I would have helped him once, and he turned away like an ungrateful dog as he was, and did not even thank me for my offer. I only hope—some—day," said the old woman, breathing hard, "he—may—want—help—again—*that's all!*"

I was folding up the *Times*, and wondering how one whose years had nearly run their course could talk so bitterly, when the object of my thoughts said—

"Where's Alice?"

"In her room, madam."

"Do you mind going alone to Blackman's Gardens, Miss Bloyce?"

Had Mrs. Tresdaile relented suddenly?

I felt quite light-hearted again. Mind going to Blackman's Gardens!—why, I had been thinking the last twenty hours how I could get to Hackney, and hear further news of George Keldon, without Mrs. Tresdaile's knowledge! I hastily expressed my willingness to proceed thither.

“See if you can't find out whether he be dead or alive without bringing my name into question. It would be a great relief,” she added, “to hear he was dead!”

Before I left the room, she repeated her injunction not to mention her name, under any consideration. When I was dressed, and ready to depart, I returned to Mrs. Tresdaile for final orders, hoping against the truth which shone out so relentlessly on the sallow visage of the octogenarian. No, there was nothing more to say; only when I came back I need not mention his name to her, unless there was an end to him for ever.

Before I left the house, Alice made her appearance in her grandmother's room, and asked whither I was going. Mrs. Tresdaile

had no scruples about disguising the truth.

“On a message to the manufactory,” said the old lady, bluntly; “don’t be longer than you can help, Miss Bloyce.”

CHAPTER VI.

BLACKMAN'S GARDENS.

SINCE a tourist, in search of the picturesque, sketched, in the year 1800, "*A View near London*," no one of a fancy turn of mind has heard of Blackman's Gardens. The daily labourer, the beggar, and the thief, are aware of its locality, and the policeman calls frequently with kind inquiries. The tourist who sketched Blackman's Gardens sixty years ago will never set brush to canvas again, and his sketch has gone the way of many other sketches, and not left him famous. But if that tourist could be recalled from Hades, and set down on the spot

where once the green hedgerows, the leafy elms, the farm, and the rippling brook were, together with the stile on which he had sat, painting the present and building up his own future, he would never believe the voracious City had made such a clean "bolt" of the landscape. The hedgerows are uprooted; the tall elms have become blocks, keels of ships, and have even helped to bury the tourist; the little farm has vanished, and the brook has turned black, and ripples no more.

Blackman's Gardens of the present day consists of a series of tall houses, which were "made to sell" by a speculating builder, and, consequently, constructed of the very worst materials that could be obtained for the money; houses which have had to be supported by beams crossing the street—a mutual accommodation system, that prevents them knocking their heads together—and are let into "stores," and low lodging-houses, and places worse than either; houses where honest labour, patient suffering, low fever, famine and theft crowd together,

struggle for life, and die of disease and want unknown to good people further west.

I had some difficulty in finding Blackman's Gardens ; the omnibus conductor who set me down in the Hackney Road knew nothing of it, and thought I meant the place where they let off fireworks and air balloons ; shopkeepers shook their heads at first, till I was in narrow thoroughfares and "back slums," and then they became perfectly aware of the locality, and evidently wondered what I wanted there as they bewildered me with directions. I reached my destination at last ; and as I did not know much of Blackman's Gardens at that time, I thought he must have been a very eccentric gentleman who christened the place so euphoniously. If anyone had told me that it had really been the site of fair gardens sixty years ago—flower-gardens, too, wherein Blackman, gardener to the Lord Mayor, had reared roses that took the conceit and scent out of any from Ghaizeepore—I should not have believed him ; the houses looked so old, and the ditch that

stagnated before them so anciently nasty!

Blackman's Gardens having been discovered, there was no trouble in finding No. 12, with the ruins of No. 10 as a landmark, and the labourers working in their midst. I stood before Mr. Keldon's house, and hesitated how to proceed with my delicate mission, speculating as to what was the best method of ascertaining the health of my mistress's grandson, without letting the poor man know from whom I had come. It would be sufficient to knock at the door, ask of the person who responded to my summons if Mr. Keldon were out of danger, and then away back to Stamford Street. I was certain he was not dead, by the raised blinds, by the sound of a melancholy and extremely ill-played flute, that was being operated upon in the front parlour, the window-sill of which would have looked very gay with the geraniums and fuschias thereon, if those articles of floriculture had condescended to bloom—which they had not.

A modest tat-tat-tat at the door, answered

before I had relinquished my hold of the knocker, by a tall man in a fustian suit. Such a tall man, that my brother Andrew would have looked quite a baby beside him; a long-armed, long-legged man, with a brawny pair of shoulders, and a boy's head on the top of them. Almost a boy's head at first glance—on a second inspection, a man's head, more suitable for some one of smaller stature, who would not have carried it so much out of sight. His right arm was in a sling, and there was a slip of black sticking-plaster across a high, well-shaped forehead. He seemed about three-and-thirty years of age—certainly not older.

“Well, miss, what is it?” he said.

He made way as if for my entrance; but I stood on the little stone step, and declined to move. The flute-player inside continued playing morbidly.

“I have taken the liberty of calling to inquire after the health of Mr. Keldon, sir.”

“Which Mr. Keldon, miss?”

This was a puzzler.

"Mr. George Keldon."

"There are a couple of George Keldons in this house—which one do you want, young lady?" said the man, with a grin that showed two rows of white teeth.

I felt myself in an awkward position, and was conscious of colouring beneath the gaze of my interlocutor.

"I—I mean the Mr Keldon who met with the accident, of course."

The man seemed to enjoy my embarrassment, for he grinned again as he said:—

"Both Mr. Keldons have met with accidents, lady—one was blown out of a house, the other had a house fall on him. Which of the two is the happy individual required?"

He gave a backward scrape with his foot, and made me an awkward bow. His brown eyes twinkled so, that I was sure he was making fun of me.

"The happy individual who had the house fall on *him*, I was inquiring about, sir," I replied, satirically.

“He’s much better, thank you—how is Mrs. Tresdaile?”

I thought I should have fallen off the step at this home-thrust. I was discovered! Drawing down my veil hastily, to hide my burning cheeks, I turned with the intention of beating a retreat before questions perhaps more hard to answer were poured upon me by this singular individual. He laid his disengaged hand upon my arm.

“Stay one moment, miss,” he said more earnestly; “I am quite serious now, quite anxious. You will do me a favour by stepping into my little room—I am the George you have been inquiring for.”

It would not do to struggle on the doorstep, or take to my heels down Blackman’s Gardens with that long-legged young man tearing frantically after me—there was no help for it, but submission; and with Mr. Keldon’s hand still upon my arm, as though he were a policeman, and I had stolen something, he led me a captive into the parlour.

It was a small uncarpeted room, in what housewives call “a terrible muddle.”

Never was a place which required more putting to rights than the front parlour of Mr. George Keldon. Pieces of brass, iron, and other metals; slips of wood, rules, tools of extraordinary shape and make; a lathe in one corner; bottles of varnish and other mixtures, side by side with medicine bottles, on the mantel-piece; glue-pots and sauce-pans, a pint mug, with something smoking in it on the hob, and a tea-kettle in the fire-place; another tall man, about sixty years of age, propped up on an old sofa opposite the lathe, and too-tooting miserably on the flute.

"That'll do, father," said the junior Keldon, in a raised voice, "beautifully played — beautifully! We'll have some more of that when this young lady has gone — there's nothing like music, it's so precious soothing!"

"I'm sure I tire you," murmured the white lips of the invalid in the corner.

"Not a bit," answered the other, cheerfully.

"To have a little of it when you come

home from work may be a change, but to be always pestered—pestered!”

“I don't care how much I have of a thing when it's good!”

The father, pleased with the compliment, smiled, turned on his side, and in an instant was fast asleep.

“He don't take long to compose himself, does he, miss?” asked George, as he marked my wandering glance; “sleep and music—*he* calls it music, poor old fellow—are his only comforts now-a-days.”

“Has he been ill long?”

“Fifteen years or thereabouts. You can't believe, looking at him there, miss, that he was a fine handsome fellow once—what people called a clever fellow, too. And now!—now he's as helpless as a baby, and can only lie and think what he might do if he had his strength—not a very cheerful subject to think about, I take it!”

“No, perhaps not,” I answered, absently regarding the sleeper, and thinking of Mrs. Tresdaile's daughter, and the runaway match of old time.

“Save being forgetful now and then, and rather hard of hearing, his faculties are all right, miss—and he bears up like a Briton. I’ve known him say he feels first-rate, just to cheer me up a bit, when his only feelings have been a couple of fine saws going it like mad at his legs. But won’t you take a seat, miss?”

And, with one sweep of his great hand, he cleared the wooden seat next me of a hammer, two files, a pair of pincers, and about a pound of loose nails and screws, which spread themselves over the floor, and, as Keldon said, “would be picked up by-and-bye, when he had time to tidy a bit.”

“And now, miss,” observed he, when I was seated, and he had taken a chair opposite me, and was leaning his damaged arm on the little table by the window, “I dare say you were rather surprised at my last question concerning the old lady?”

“Very much surprised, Mr. Keldon.”

“You see, I make a point of looking at the house in Stamford Street about once a

month or so, when I am sent that way on business errands, for instance, or when I have mustered up courage to face the old lady's hard looks—hard words on things that nothing can recall—” he added, his face shadowing; “and it's very singular, miss, that my nerves always fail me at the last moment, and bring me back to Hackney Road. I was in Stamford Street when I saw you yesterday.”

“Yesterday!”

“I thought my grandmother might run against my name in the papers—one of them said I was as dead as a door-nail—and being old and nervous, might take alarm at the news, and reproach herself a little for, for—never mind that just now! So I started off to Stamford Street, just to show that I was alive and kicking, and met you and another young lady coming from the house, and saw my grandmother at the first floor window, looking after you. She didn't appear very much alarmed or distressed in mind—so my nerves gave way again, and I thought I would not trouble her. You could not

believe, miss, how I take to that old lady ; I don't know why myself, unless it's on the principle of counter-irritation, or because she's my poor mother's mother ! Bless your heart, when I saw you at my door to-day, I felt as happy as a king, for I knew Grandmother Tresdaile had sent you to ask after me ! If you will only tell her how kind I think it, after so many years' difference between us, I'll be obliged, young lady."

I did not answer — I merely inclined my head, an action that he might take for an assent to his request if he liked.

He appeared so elated at having aroused the sympathies of his grandmother, that I have no doubt he considered his premature burial under the ruins of No. 10, Blackman's Gardens, one of the luckiest things that had happened to him for a twelvemonth. I fancied no harm could arise from my reserve ; Mrs. Tresdaile would not ask me a question concerning him, and her grandson would go in due time to his work with a load off his mind. Could I have known

what would have followed my duplicity, George Keldon might have entertained a very different opinion of his grandmother before I had left Blackman's Gardens.

"Your accident keeps you from your work, Mr. Keldon?" I observed, anxious to quit a dangerous topic of conversation.

"Yes. Unfortunately it was the right arm got damaged fishing the young ones out of the kitchen, and the doctor says it will be a week or two before I can use it. But I can amuse myself a little with my left, and trouble my head—that's cracked, too, a bit—with experiments that seldom turn out of any good."

"Why prosecute them then?"

"It won't do to let them go before I have made something out of them, lady, if it's only a shilling or two to add to my wages. No, no, I take after my father, and never give up anything; *he* says he will never give up the flute till he can play like an Orpheus; and though it's my private opinion he will always play horribly, yet it amuses him to keep on—and if he thinks he is

improving, why, it don't hurt anybody."

"But can you earn enough by these experiments to maintain yourself and father, now you are out of work?"

"Not exactly—but you see there's the club to help a fellow in his troubles. All we hard workers, miss, belong to clubs, those that are foolish and think they will always be strong excepted. Not that I should have got on badly without a club this time, thanks to the newspapers printing my name and making a fuss about me. Look here!"

He plunged his left hand to the bottom of his jacket-pocket, and drew forth a handful of letters.

"These don't say much against human nature, miss. There must be a jolly lot of good fellows somewhere, though if you went out in search of them you would not find half a one. Here's a charitable soul sent 10*l.* to my father for my funeral—that's what I call doing the thing handsome!—and another wants to learn if I have left any children behind me, which I haven't that I

know of; and here's a five-pound note for my use from somebody who has read the other papers, and don't know I am dead!—besides ever so much more, all sent by X.Y.Z.'s and other letters of the alphabet, with no address where to return the money, if it turns out all humbug. Beg pardon, miss, but when I get excited my language is forcible."

"I am glad to find the public so generous."

"Well, it thinks me dead, or more hurt than I am, consequently all this game is obtaining cash under false pretences. I live in hope that the gentleman who contributed so liberally to my funeral expenses will write for his ten-pounder back, when he hears I am not defunct; but if everybody insists upon my keeping the money, perhaps, as I am a greedy fellow, I shan't much object to it."

"You deserve all for your—"

"Oh! nonsense," said he, visibly blushing; "I deserve worse luck than I have had in the world yet, miss. I don't deserve to be

made a rich man of—why, its nearly five-and-twenty pounds!”

“A nice little account to open at a savings-bank, Mr. Keldon.”

He laughed.

“No, no—it’s all laid out. I shall spend every penny of it!”

“But—”

“Every penny of it, miss,” he repeated, with sparkling eyes; “I have got my idea how to get rid of it, and off it goes! It’ll be the rarest time, the greatest surprise, the—hollo! who’s that knocking now? Perhaps it’s the undertaker come to measure me!”

“I fear I have been hindering you from those experiments you spoke of,” I said, rising.

“Lord bless your pretty face,”—(I could not help blushing at that familiar expression—his language *was* forcible at times, certainly)—“it does me good, and keeps my heart from sinking, to see friends. Upon my word, we have been talking like friends—and you came as one, didn’t you?”

“Certainly.”

“And you'll make my respects to the old lady,” he said, as he ushered me into the narrow passage and towards the door, on which a second summons was being delivered, “and tell her how very kind it was to think of me. Good-bye, miss—it was kind of *you*, too, to come all this way; I shan't forget you!”

He bowed, and scraped, and coloured again as he opened the street-door; and the new-comer, who had been standing on the door-step, suddenly dropped his walking-stick and his lower jaw, and backed on to the narrow pavement.

“God bless my soul!” exclaimed Mr. Barnaby Tresdaile; “who'd have thought of seeing you here, Miss Bloyce! This is very surprising! I'll be with you in one moment, Keldon. Miss Bloyce,” said he, after he had picked up his stick, “will you allow me the honour?”

It had all happened so quickly, that I was arm-in-arm with Mr. Barnaby Tresdaile, and walking with him down Blackman's

Gardens, before I had sufficiently recovered from my surprise to know where I was. Mr. Barnaby Tresdaile was evidently embarrassed; he coughed, panted, rubbed the side of his ear nervously, blew violently at nothing.

“Pooh! it is very warm this afternoon. The summer has set in at last in earnest, Miss Bloyce.”

I answered in the affirmative.

Barnaby Tresdaile coughed and blew at nothing again, finally broke the ice precipitately.

“I—I beg your pardon, Miss Bloyce, but—but did Mrs. Tresdaile ask you to call here this afternoon?”

“I can hardly consider myself at liberty to answer that question,” I replied, remembering my mistress’s injunctions.

“Very well, very well, Miss Bloyce,” he said, rapidly; “of course it’s no business of mine; but it’s very surprising though, and I can’t understand it! Miss Bloyce,” he added, looking at me earnestly, “may I ask a favour of you—it’s not a great one?”

"I think I may venture to give you permission to *ask* a favour," I replied.

"The truth is, then," said he, in a nervous manner, "I should not like to upset my respected grandmother's feelings, should not—ahem, *ahem*, confound this cough!—like her to know you have met me in Blackman's Gardens. It might do me an immense deal of harm—that is, it might do the old lady a great deal of harm, Miss Bloyce. I hope you understand me?"

"I think I understand you perfectly, sir."

"Don't you think it would excite Mrs. Tresdaile?"

"Not a doubt of it," I answered quietly.

"**AHEM!**" he said, with a prodigious cough, that made me jump again; "I thought you would see the force of my argument, Miss Bloyce. Then I may rely upon you?" he added, in an insinuating manner.

"I will not mention your name to Mrs. Tresdaile, sir."

"Thank you. Though it's not of the

slightest consequence, so far as I am concerned—still I thank you, for the old lady's sake."

"Do you see Mr. Keldon very often, sir?" I asked.

"Oh! no, no—I am here quite by accident this morning," replied Mr. Tresdaile; "being in the neighbourhood, and interested in the poor fellow as a relation by blood, Miss Bloyce, upon my word I could not pass the end of the street without calling to see if he were hurt. Upon my word, between you and me, in the strictest confidence, I should have considered myself a brute!"

"He is much better than I expected to find him."

"Oh, much better! I was quite surprised yesterday when I—*heard* he was so little injured. He's a surprising man, Miss Bloyce."

"He does not seem a common man."

"It is not a common man who could put up with that old father of his and that awful flute. I consider the flute at all times

an instrument of torture, but when it's a bad flute, and played in a soul-harrowing manner, how is a person to survive the affliction? Did you hear him play, Miss Bloyce?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Would you believe that George Keldon could nurse such a man, wait upon him, shave for him, shave the old fellow every morning?" said Barnaby, energetically; "why, it's atrociously filial—there's nothing like it out of the Roman History. I don't mean anything disrespectful to the departed, but, if it had been my father, I should have put him into the work-house long ago. By George, Miss Bloyce, he would have driven me melancholy mad!"

"What trade is Mr. Keldon's?"

"Ah! that's another strange part of it. There is a man, six feet three in height, working in a pin-factory. Hercules in corduroys, making the 'Very Best Mixed, Solid Heads'! I tell you what, Miss Bloyce, if I had ten thousand pounds, and that man at my right hand, I'd make a fortune for

both of us. The schemes that he has revolving in his little cranium are enough to burst it."

"He tells me his schemes or experiments never come to anything."

"No," said Barnaby Tresdaile, "that's the awkward part of it. That's been the fault, too, of *my* non-success with the world, miss, — the sudden evaporation of what has seemed solid and tangible. I have been the promoter of fifty-seven public companies in my short life, and if any one out of the number had only lasted two years, I should have been riding in my coach-and-six. But they have all faded away, 'and left not a *rap* behind'!"

Mr. Tresdaile, whose features had gradually assumed a woe-begone expression, caught my eye at this juncture, and as it did not sufficiently disguise its appreciation of the ridiculous part of his discourse, he burst into a hearty laugh.

"And I can afford to be laughed at, and get no sympathy for my failures," said Barnaby; "for we can't all be great people,

Miss Bloyce. I'm the happy medium between two cousins—tobacco and pins—getting not quite so many halfpence as the one, but a less number of kicks than the other. When I feel misanthropical, and inclined to hate my fellow-creatures, I come to Blackman's Gardens, and the sight of that cheerful, flute-afflicted Keldon enlivens me for a week."

"I hope I am not taking you out of your way, Mr. Tresdaile?"

"I'll see you to the Hackney Road, Miss Bloyce, with your very kind permission," said Barnaby Tresdaile, politely; "the turnings are intricate, and the neighbourhood is not the most select."

Mr. Tresdaile saw me to the Hackney Road—would, I think, forgetful of George Keldon waiting for him at the street-door, have seen me to Stamford Street, had I not declined his further escort. He gave an odd sigh as I withdrew my hand from his arm, and looked at me so curiously, that I felt quite perplexed beneath his gaze.

"I wish you a very good day, my dear

Miss Bloyce," he said, raising his hat and giving it an easy flourish in the air; "and thank you for the unexpected pleasure of so agreeable a companion. Good day."

He did not attempt to go.

"Good day, sir."

"A pleasant journey to Stamford Street. May you find my dear grandmother, on your return, in the most amiable mood. Good day again—and you will not mention my name at head-quarters, Miss Bloyce? Thank you, thank you—pity to disturb the old lady at her time of life. Adieu!"

A second elevation of the hat, another flourish, and then Mr. Barnaby Tresdaile turned to retrace his steps to Blackman's Gardens, Hackney.

CHAPTER VII.

MONEY AND MUSIC.

MRS. SARAH JANE TRESDAILE kept to her word, and asked no questions concerning the result of my visit to Blackman's Gardens; by my silence she was aware that the fall of the house at No. 10 had not comfortably settled her poor relation, and was out of temper in consequence the remainder of the evening.

George Keldon's name was mentioned no more—it was under ban and interdict. Grandmother Tresdaile made no further inquiries about its appearance in the papers; and when there was the report of an inquest on

one poor boy who had sunk beneath the injuries he had received in the ruins, Mrs. Tresdaile snapped me up for mentioning so awful a subject.

I should not have heard of George Keldon again had it not been for Mr. Barnaby Tresdaile, whose calls at No. 12, Blackman's Gardens were evidently more frequent than he cared to acknowledge. It was to that gentleman I was indebted at last for the information that George Keldon's arm was nearly well.

"I've no doubt he'll be making pins again next Monday," said Barnaby Tresdaile, as he stood in the drawing-room with me, before his grandmother's appearance; "slaving away like a nigger to keep soul and body together—the souls and bodies, I should have said, of himself and his miserable old parent. I—I hope our secret is still safe, Miss Bloyce?"

"*Our* secret, Mr. Tresdaile!" I exclaimed.

"I beg pardon—*my* secret, such as it is!" stammered Barnaby; "and though, so far as

I am concerned, it does not matter a brass button, yet for the old lady's—"

"I have heard the argument before, Mr. Tresdaile," I said a little sharply, for his assumed indifference nettled me.

"Ten thousand pardons!" cried Mr. Barnaby, with a low bow; "of course you have. I have not forgotten that happy walk to the Hackney Road, when a little hand was resting with a sister's confidence on my arm—I hope I may say with a sister's confidence, Miss Bloyce?"

I could not help smiling at Mr. Tresdaile's question. I had seen him about three times in my life, and he was talking of a sister's confidence!

Mr. Barnaby Tresdaile, who always made himself agreeable to present company, drifted at once into a hearty laugh, as though he had uttered one of the finest jokes in the world. I believe, had I burst into tears, he would have drawn forth his voluminous silk handkerchief and cried and wrung his hands in the most tragic manner. As a gentleman who had been a hanger-on

to public companies all his life, he had had naturally to assume a great many characters to please the different directors, secretaries, and managers with whom he had come in contact. It was one of Mr. Barnaby Tresdaile's boasts, that he had never offended a person in his life; and as it was certainly one of his habits to agree with everybody's opinions, *when that "everybody" was present*, it would have been a wonder if he had.

Mrs. Tresdaile entered the drawing-room at this moment, and inquired what we were laughing at, glancing quickly from one to the other, as though she suspected her own whims and ailments had been the cause of our hilarity; and her grandson, in the easiest manner possible, invented on the instant a reason for our smiles, that even deceived the old lady. And this deception vexed me more than I can well describe; and after Mr. Barnaby Tresdaile had glanced meaningly in my direction, I felt cross with myself for the remainder of the day, and was more than half resolved to inform Mrs. Tresdaile of my adventures in

Blackman's Gardens. And yet,—though it was hardly a secret, and perhaps no more Mrs. Tresdaile's business than mine,—it might seriously affect the future fortunes of Mr. Barnaby Tresdaile. That gentleman evidently thought so, and he was a judge of human nature.

In the course of the interview Mrs. Tresdaile mentioned "going out of town," much to her grandson's surprise, as well it might be—Mrs. Tresdaile having clung to London stones for the last twenty years, in defiance of all her friends and medical advisers.

"A fine thing for you, grandmother," he remarked, however; "sea breeze do you a world of good, don't you think so?"

"No, I don't."

"Well, perhaps not, perhaps not. You are very comfortable here—have always had good health—"

"Given over six years ago, that's all; and had to be half cut up, like a bit of butcher's meat, before I could be put on my legs again."

"Yes, yes, true; and though that severe

illness to which you allude was the result of—”

“There, Barnaby, never mind the result. Upon my word,” said the old lady, “you grow prosier and prosier every day. I suppose it’s writing so many prospectuses!”

Mr. Tresdaile coughed behind his hand, and looked as if his feelings were hurt:

“It is not for myself, but for Alice, that I think of going,” said Grandmother Tresdaile; “for I don’t believe Stamford Street agrees with her. There’s too much difference between Bath and Blackfriars.”

Her grandson Bartholomew had more objections to Mrs. Tresdaile’s departure than his cousin Barnaby; and although he did not dispute the necessity of change of air for Alice, or desire to thwart his dear grandmother’s lightest wish, yet she was a great age, unaccustomed to travelling, and, if he might take the liberty, he thought Miss Bloyce would be a sufficient guardian and companion for Miss Tresdaile.

Mrs. Tresdaile was of a different opinion, and expressed that opinion rather firmly.

Well, Mr. Bartholomew wouldn't recommend a long distance, in case of accident.

What accident?

Well, no particular accident occurred to him at present—but life was full of chances, and there was no telling what might happen, &c., &c., &c.

Mrs. Tresdaile thought she should go to Hastings.

Her grandson considered Hastings much too far for her—was badly situated, and too warm—had Mrs. Tresdaile thought of Greenwich?"

No, she hadn't.

It was an easy journey from London; he could run down by the train in a quarter of an hour—he—

Mrs. Tresdaile informed Mr. Bartholomew that she had not thought of the favourite watering-place last mentioned, and was not going to think of it if he talked till "a blue moon,"—which lunar phenomenon not being likely to occur, decided the actions of Mr. Tresdaile, who took

his departure, with a low bow, and ground his teeth all the way down Stamford Street at his grandmother's obstinacy.

"Poor Bartholomew!" said the old lady, when he had been gone some minutes, "he don't wish me out of his sight. He likes to know what I am doing, and what company I am keeping; perhaps he is afraid I shall alter my Will when I get out of town—shouldn't be surprised myself."

"Surely leaving town will not make any alteration necessary?" I remarked.

"Change of scene always induces change of thought, Miss Bloyce," replied Mrs. Tresdaile; "and, like the fair sex in general, I'm not of one mind long. It's nothing new for me to alter my Will—Bartholomew knows that as well as I do. I have made in my life fifty-two Wills, just as many as there are weeks in a year, and I think the last one is a worse muddle than all the rest put together. If I were to die to-morrow, my heirs and successors would be at sixes-and-sevens till doomsday."

The idea of leaving all her relations in

confusion till that indefinite period arrived appeared so to please Mrs. Tresdaile, that she burst into one of her hideous laughs, which nearly finished the old lady with suffocation there and then.

“Some of these days, Miss Bloyce,” said Grandmother Tresdaile, when she had recovered her breath sufficiently to speak, “you shall read a few Wills of mine. We’ll take them down with us—there’s a good deal of fun in them.”

The idea of taking a bundle of Wills into the country by way of literary amusement was a notion that could only have occurred to this whimsical woman.

She was full of fancies, and her leaving town was not one of the least of them. For a score of years she had hardly seen a green tree or a blade of grass; her walks had been confined to the sunny side of Stamford Street, or to a shopping excursion in the Blackfriars Road. Now, much to Alice’s surprise and even annoyance, she insisted on her niece being out of health and requiring change of air; and Alice’s own

assertions to the contrary could not shake her opinion. Alice was a girl, and she was an old woman, who ought to know best—“Don't be obstinate, my dear child, it makes everybody wretched.”

So before the Tuesday came on which I was to meet brother Andrew, Mrs. Tresdaile had decided on Hastings, and had begun to superintend the packing up of her boxes. And if we had been going to India for a lifetime, more boxes, carpet-bags, and portmanteaus could not have been in requisition. Everything of value that might have been stolen during her absence was packed for transportation to the Sussex coast; and there was even one large trunk specially reserved for the brass-bound account-books.


I went to see Andrew on the Tuesday mentioned in his letter, and found him at home at last, and waiting for me. He was studying hard now; there was no carriage-and-four at the door to take him to Epsom, and no gentlemen-friends in silk coats and hats with green veils. There were nearly

eleven months to his next holiday, poor fellow!

As the slim youth in buttons ushered me up the stairs, I could hear the piano in Andrew's drawing-room. Outside the door I stayed to listen.

"That will do, thank you," I said to the page; "there is no occasion to announce me to my brother."

The page ducked his head respectfully, and left me on the drawing-room mat listening to the music. Such music, and so masterly a touch, that I wondered every lodger in the house did not listen, like myself—that the landlady, the page, and the maid-of-all-work did not forget their household duties, and sit on the stairs all day, rapt in harmony! I knew it was my own dear brother's hands upon the keys; there was something familiar in the style, too, that told me of home, of the happy evenings spent there before the Bloyce family broke up—of the time when we used to circle round the fire and talk of Andrew's genius, till Andrew would run and hide his blushes in the passage.



I opened the door softly, and peeped in. Andrew was so absorbed in his practice that he did not observe the prying eyes of his sister. Ah! there he was, certainly more like *my* Andrew than when I had seen him last—with music littering the top of the piano, piled upon the table, and strewn about the carpet at his feet; the loose sleeves of his dressing-gown turned above his wrists, his hair all wild and uncombed, and his waistcoat buttoned in the wrong place—looking quite the genius now!

“Good morning, Mr. Andrew Bloyce.”

He jumped from the music-stool, and advanced to meet me.

“Ah! Barbara, so you have come, then,” said he, embracing me. “Why, how long have you been watching there?”

“Two or three minutes. Oh! my dear Andrew, how delightfully you play!”

“Have I not had five years' practice since I gave up the tin-kettle at St. Bre-lade?”

“You did not think that first piano a tin-kettle once, Andrew. Do you remember

the surprise it was when you came home one day from school and found it in the front parlour — how you shook father's hands, and almost cried, and proudly promised to pay him some day for it—when you were a man!

“Yes, yes,” said Andrew cheerfully; “and the lessons on it, with father and mother hanging over me, and all the day-dreams of distinction as a player, Barbara—but,” he said, in a hasty tone, “‘those happy days are gone!’”

“But the dreams have come to something, Andrew dear.”

“Have they?” said he, dryly.

“Why, have they not?” I asked, rather surprised at his tone; “has not genius stepped out of the shade into the sunlight?”

“Twilight, Barbara.”

“Twilight, with these apartments, with that grand piano, and that fine ring on your finger, brother?”

“Yes, I am more lucky than I deserve,” said he, colouring; “for you, my dear

Barbara, cannot conceive how many men more clever than myself are grinding their lives away in back streets and sky-parlours, praying for the good luck that never comes, and the engagement that never falls to their share."

"You have a great many pupils, I suppose, Andrew?"

I had taken off my bonnet and shawl at his request, and was seated near him.

"Oh! more than I can manage—I am obliged to neglect some of them at times."

"How fortunate you are!"

"Sometimes, Barbara, when I have a composing fit on me, I fling pupils, friends and acquaintances to the winds, and lock myself in this studio of mine."

"And have any of your compositions been published?"

"Ay, and paid for, which is a boast not every being who has rushed into type can declare; but it is only when tailors and other vermin get pressing that I take refuge in new ballads and waltzes—it's slow work."

“But it will make you a name, if you persevere.”

“Let me persevere till the crack of doom, it will never make me a fortune,” said Andrew, impetuously; “why should I slave on when I can make money more easily?”

“By pupils, you mean.”

“Yes, of course!”

“Play me your last composition, dear, and I will tell you if there is a fortune awaiting you.”

“*You* will?” he asked, with a laugh.

“Do you think no one is a judge of good music but yourself, or that your amiable sister does not know a little of the piano by this time? Come, sir.”

Andrew turned to the piano again and played a brilliant little piece, that proved at once his power over the instrument, and that greater power to evoke new harmonies, which is not the gift of everyone who calls himself composer.

“There,” said he, with a short laugh; “which is it, a Mozart or a Mendelssohn in the bud?”

"Neither, if you give up because the prizes hang high on the boughs."

"So high, that to hang yourself by the lower branches would be wiser than attempting to reach them, my Barbara."

"Genius despairs not so early in the race. It plods on, takes 'the spurns of the unworthy' patiently, bides its time, and is at last——"

"Treated to a parish funeral?"

"No, no, is at last honoured, and wins the laurel crown! You used to think so once, Andrew. What has happened?"

"Nothing," said he gloomily.

"Yes, yes," said I, stealing my arm round his neck, and looking into his handsome face; "you are disappointed, or dissatisfied—which is it, Andrew?"

"Oh! disappointed to be sure," feigning a lightness of tone that jarred more on my heart than even his former despondency; "mortified to find the world not talking of me as my transcendent merit deserves. 'What a hard-hearted, priggish world it is!' cry I, with the rest of the fledglings."

“What were you playing when I entered?”

“Ah! that is my last hope of distinction,” replied Andrew; “something which I *do* take patiently, and work at in sober moments—my Opera.”

“Opera?”

“Yes—I have nearly finished the first act.”

“When did you begin it, dear?”

“Oh! three years ago. I don't work very hard at it. Sometimes I even forget it for months together.”

“I'm inclined to fancy all works that are intended for immortality must bear marks of honest labour on them, Andrew.”

“Oh! I'll work hard enough some day; when I have made my fortune some other way, perhaps.”

“Have you tried another way?”

“I may soon,” he replied, evasively.

“Better keep to your pupils and the Opera. It is the rolling stone that gathers no moss, you know.”

“That is a very foolish proverb,” re-

marked my brother ; "my friends and acquaintances are all rolling stones, and are all——"

"All?" I repeated.

"—— Better off than ever Andrew Bloyce will be!" he added, with the frown deepening on his face.

"My dear Andrew, how London has altered you!" I said. "Where is the old energy, the old hopes, the faith to believe in the future, and the moral courage to patiently wait for it? You were not like this at St. Brelade!—it was not the envy of our friends, or the growl of discontent at their prosperity, that made home happy *there*."

"Barbara, I was a boy then ; I went into the world with all a boy's thoughts."

"And has the world treated you so harshly? You spoke a moment since of men more clever than yourself, whose prospects were not half so bright?"

"Perhaps I was jesting then."

"No, you were not. Oh! Andrew," I exclaimed, "I wish I were living with you

—sharing in your success, encouraging you under disappointment. I am sure the day will come when the disappointments will all vanish.”

“And the clever Andrew Bloyce bask in the sunshine for ever!” he added, with a laugh. “Well, if I can find time to finish the Opera, perhaps it will.”

“Don't be too sanguine about the Opera, dear,” I said, as Andrew's face wore a brighter look. “I would not cast you back to the shadows, but there is such a weakness as being too confident. ‘Hope for the best, but be prepared for the worst,’ is a good motto, Andrew.”

“My hopes aim very high or sink very low, Barbara,” he answered; “there is no medium with me, and, high or low, I am never content!”

“Yours has grown a restless spirit, Andrew.”

“Two friends of mine made their fortunes last week—the first wasn't half so clever, the second not half so good-looking.”

“How conceited we are!” I said, laugh-

ing; "but how did the gentlemen manage it—and what had good looks to do with the success of the latter?"

"The first backed the field against the favourite at Ascot, made lucky bets, took extraordinary odds against a horse that nobody thought would win, and cleared at one sweep twenty thousand pounds."

"By gambling?"

"By speculating; and if I only had five thousand pounds to work with, Barbara, I could make the same in a year or two—perhaps in less time."

"Don't think of anything half so dreadful, my dear Andrew," I exclaimed in alarm; "I haven't much knowledge of the world, it is true, but I have sense enough to know that the race-course is one of the easiest roads to ruin."

"And one of the smoothest roads to wealth," replied Andrew, "if he who follows it keeps his eyes open and watches well his opportunity."

"May you never be tempted to seek your opportunity where so many shrewder men

have perished. Oh! Andrew, don't think of fortune-making in so wild a way, or you will find its fallacy when the hour is too late."

"Well, well, I am merely telling you how my friend succeeded."

"I—I hope you do not know that friend now?"

"He talks of going abroad."

"I am so glad!"

"That's rather a cruel observation, Barbara," replied he, smiling; "but are you not curious concerning friend No. 2?"

"The friend not half so good-looking as yourself?—oh! yes."

"He ran away with an heiress—a pretty girl of seventeen, full of romance and sentimentality."

"Poor girl!"

"Lucky fellow," said Andrew; "I wish I had had only his chance."

"But you would not marry any one you did not love, Andrew?"

"Ah! I see, you are not free from your old fancies yet, Barbara," said he; "cannot

imagine people speculating in the affections, and making money out of them. That's a thing done every day."

"With worldly men—with men who have never known what love is."

"Or have felt that love too much," he said, sternly, "and been deceived in it."

"But that is ——," I began.

"Not the case of Andrew Bloyce, true enough," he said, lightly. "All I know of love is, that it sits peeping out of the leaves of my Opera, where Clarina is wooed by a real lord, whose happy rival is the young peasant Damon. How unlike real life!—all the Clarinas of my acquaintance would faint at the sight of a Damon earning ten shillings a-week at the plough's tail, and would leap into the arms of the oldest and ugliest noble that ever tottered to her feet with his offers."

"Spoken bitterly, for one who knows so little of love, brother."

"But who knows so much of the world!"

"A horse-racing, heiress-catching world, Andrew."

"London has improved the native wit of

my sister," said Andrew, dryly; "or she must be living in a very sharp family."

"There's truth in the family being sharp, at all events," I replied.

"Is there an heiress in it, Barbara?"

"Yes."

"Give me her name and address, then, and I can call to—see my sister occasionally!"

"But she will only be an heiress if she behave herself," was my answer. "There's a stern grandmother in the case—and I am forgetting that old lady, too. I must not stay much longer, Andrew; and oh! dear, I haven't told you half the news. I'm going with the family to Hastings, and don't know when I shall be back."

"Hastings, eh?" said Andrew; "well, now tell me about your projects and your prospects in life—you have heard something of mine. What castle are you building in the air, and who is the hero of your love story?"

"Neither Damon nor a real lord at present?" I replied.

“Ah!—at present!”

I stayed a few more minutes with him, talking of my life in Stamford Street; sketching faintly—as are faintly sketched within these pages—the figures round me there. He did not appear to pay very great attention; it is only a lover who listens to the prattle of a lady—when was a brother *ever* attentive! He sat by the piano, struck the keys idly at times, looked at the manuscript leaves of that Opera which some day—ah! some day!—was to win its way in the world, and make him famous.

I left him playing and composing, and little scraps of that Opera were floating in my brain, along with my thoughts, my hopes and fears of him, when I went away to Hastings!

END OF THE FIRST BOOK.



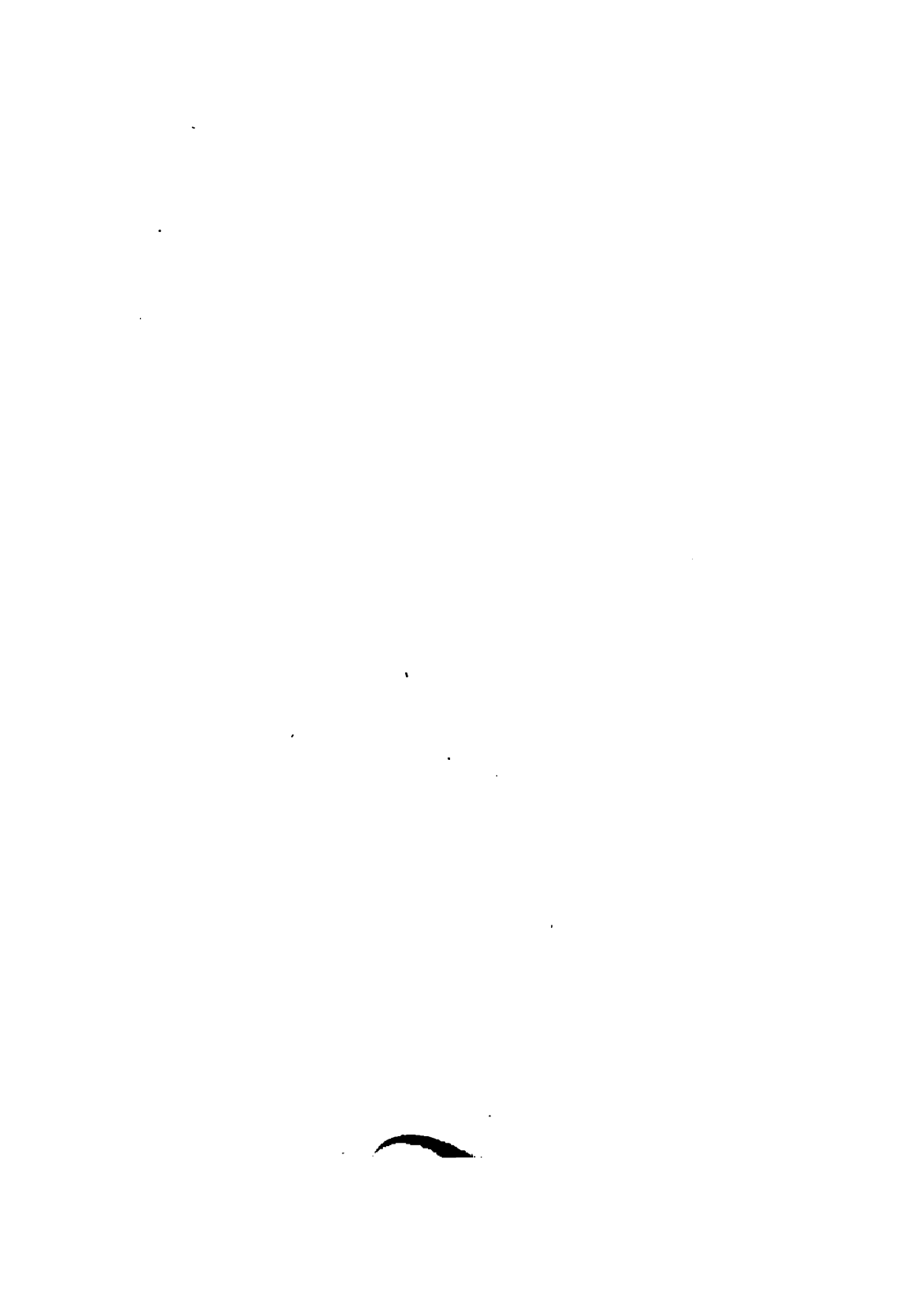
BOOK II.

“This lofty dame, with unrelenting soul,
Had a fair girl to govern and control.”

CRABBE.

“What can he shew you more
To take you with, than a wild head of hayre;
A very Limebush to catch Lady-birds?
A tissue Doublet; and a Riband shop
Hung in his Hatbands, might set up a Pedler?
Can this maintaine a Lady?”

RICHARD BROME.



CHAPTER I.

OUT OF TOWN.

Is there anything more pleasant to a thorough-bred Cockney than leaving town to take care of itself in the hot summer months, and plunging from the close lanes and streets into Arcadia? I think not. To him who has worked hard at his desk, or behind his counter for the last eleven months, even to the easy trotting clerk in the suburbs, who can manage to catch a glimpse of a flower or a daisy sod when he "comes home from business,"—what a luxurious relief to be facing the sea-breeze at last, taking it by wholesale into the lungs,

standing on the beach and watching the wild play of the sea-waves! I do not wonder at the house smelling of paint, of the children looking pale, and of mamma feeling her old sick headaches so regularly in July and August—of the shop, or the apartments, or the little private house becoming so unbearable when the sun shines all the day long, and neighbours are provokingly packing up and starting off by early trains—do not wonder even at pater-familias giving way, shutting up his account-books, and hurrying off with his happy flock under his wing.

Oh! the bright summer weather, when the days have not drawn in, and rank and fashion are still in Rotten Row; when the leaves have not begun to teach their moral of “all that’s beautiful must fade,” and the sea can be leaped into in the early morning without fear of the ague—oh! the bright summer weather!

I write too much like an enthusiast in these keep-down-your-feelings times, but then I was born and bred in the country,

and London I don't love in my heart. Although I had not left Jersey a great while when we started for the Sussex coast, yet the idea of the sea and the country again sent my spirits up several degrees, despite the vagaries of Mrs. Tresdaile of Stamford Street.

The reader has paid very little attention to this history if he has not set down Mrs. Tresdaile for a fidgety, cross-tempered, eccentric old lady; and I can assure him that never were her unamiable traits of character more strongly developed than when we three unprotected females and our maid-servant found ourselves in the pretty town of Hastings.

Mrs. Tresdaile, preferring to see and judge for herself before all the agents and recommendations in the world, had secured no apartments in advance—therefore our trunks having been left in the booking-office, and a Bath-chair having been found for Mrs. Tresdaile, the world was before us where to choose.

A lively remembrance of that first morn-

ing in Hastings clings to me still; of the long, weary search for apartments; of Mrs. Tresdaile's objections to each suite, or each landlady, or each price demanded; of the houses "commanding a fine sea-view" being too dear for my mistress, who "hadn't come there to be ruined, or preyed upon by mercenaries, she could tell 'em!"—of the houses without a sea-view being still very dear and very nasty, and "only fit for pigs"; and of those upon the hills being enough to kill her to get at them! If we passed through the town of Hastings once we passed through it half-a-dozen times, making some hundreds of inquiries and inspecting at least fifty specimens of furnished apartments, till we finally settled down in a shabby-genteel residence, for accommodation in which a Mrs. Elwes charged us four guineas a-week.

In these apartments Mrs. Tresdaile, tired and fretful, exercised her aggravating powers, and exhausted the patience of her friends and landlady—so much so, that the latter lady informed her servant, who told

our maid in confidence, who immediately told me and Mrs. Tresdaile, "that if she had knowned it, she wouldn't have taken her for double the money!" And quite right too, for Mrs. Elwes had not lighted on a bargain, and Mrs. Tresdaile was not going to pay four guineas a-week for nothing. My mistress did not "look about her" much till evening, till she had recruited her strength by a comfortable nap on a sofa, which she took the first opportunity of informing Mrs. Elwes was "as hard as a paving stone."

Mrs. Tresdaile first became fidgety about the sheets, and had the beds stripped and the sheets aforesaid hung round the drawing-room fire, which was burning rather formidably for July, owing to her frequent stirs at it; and when Mrs. Elwes and maid were thinking of retiring to rest themselves, she fancied the bedstead itself was too near the window, and had it removed to the other side of the room, much to the horror of a nervous lodger in the floor underneath. Finally, she terrified the entire strength of

the establishment by going round the house at eleven o'clock at night, after her usual fashion, as though she were at home in Stamford Street.

"It's what I would not neglect for the world, Miss Bloyce," said she, in reply to my whispered objections; "I've done it at home for fifty years, and I am not going to leave it off now, because I am in a house where there is greater reason for caution."

"Perhaps, if I accompany you—" I began.

"Perhaps, if you go to bed, Miss Bloyce, it will be more comfortable for all parties. It's not the slightest use sitting up to aggravate people, that I can see!"

So I retired to bed, and the firm old lady went round the house as if it belonged to her; trying the handles of doors, peeping into deserted rooms, endeavouring to enter those which were secured against intruders and frightening their inmates, apologizing now and then to an alarmed "Who's there?" by saying, "It's only me," in a voice so like Mrs. Elwes, that it would have done credit to a ventriloquist—wandering

about the lower regions, and winding up by nearly being the death of the landlady herself, who had gone to bed in the front kitchen, and whose first sleep was broken in upon by a tall apparition in a frilled nightcap.

I believe there was a slight dispute between the two old ladies before Mrs. Tresdaile's return; Mrs. Elwes not considering her new lodger's explanation satisfactory—a dispute which might have ended less amicably, had not Mrs. Elwes' doubts of Mrs. Tresdaile's sanity been stronger than her indignation.

The next morning, before my fellow-travellers had risen, I had found my way to the East Hill, and from that breezy height was enjoying the fresh air and sunshine. It was a bright July morning, and the view inland or seaward well repaid me for my climb up the hill. Such a walk in the early morning, before the town was awake, and only the fishermen were busy on the beach, reminded me of my long rambles at St. Brelade—reminded me of

home, and of that dear father and mother so many miles away. Thinking of home and old times before the name of Tresdaile was known to me, before home was a memory and perhaps a regret, I strolled on toward that pretty valley of Ecclesbourne, with which most of my readers are acquainted, and was not aware I had wandered so far from the town, till I was looking down at the little coast-guard station in the vale.

Turning hastily, with the intention of a brisk walk homewards, I became aware of another early riser, standing close to the edge of the cliff, and shading his eyes with his hand, as he looked out to sea. As I passed him he turned and looked hard at me, and I, who have always had the maiden's objection to be stared at, hurried by, with my eyes bent on the close green turf at my feet.

The blood of the Bloyces flowed a little quicker in my veins, as the stranger came with very long strides after me—strides which soon brought him even with me,

despite my own increased rate of progression.

“Ask pardon, Miss, but surely—surely it is you, isn't it!”

The voice was familiar, and I glanced up at the inquirer. There was no mistaking that large-limbed, little-headed man, although I had only seen him once before—it was the George Keldon whom I had called upon in Blackman's Gardens. And yet hardly the same George Keldon, for there was a rosy colour on his cheeks that made quite a handsome fellow of him, and the wind had blown his hair all manner of ways about his head, and caught the ends of his neckerchief and made streamers of them. He was in nautical costume, too, and might have passed for one of the coast-guard, he wore such a large pea-jacket, such loose trousers, and such a very shiny hat; his huge turn-down collar, too, might set him off a little, but would certainly give him a sore throat.

“Mr. Keldon,” I exclaimed, extending my hand; “is it possible I see you in Hastings?”

After taking my hand timidly, as though he were afraid of hurting it, he gave a short deep-toned laugh.

"Ha, ha!" replied he, "that's what all who know me would say if they caught me enjoying myself in this profligate manner. Upon my word, Miss, I can hardly believe that I'm not going to wake up in a minute at No. 12, Blackman's Gardens."

"Has business brought you hither?" I inquired, as he strolled by my side.

"Business! bless your soul, no," he cried, "pure enjoyment! This is the treat I was speaking of when I saw you last, young lady; when you recommended me to open an account at a Savings' Bank, if you remember?"

"And you preferred a holiday to that investment, Mr. Keldon?"

"*Not a bit of it,*" he cried energetically, "I didn't want a holiday, I wouldn't spend a farthing on my own enjoyments. I'm strong enough, and as for my appetite, it's much too big for me already! No, I am not here to live like a gentleman, but to take

care of the old man—it's *his* treat; and as he may never have the chance of another, poor chap, I thought I'd give him this one."

"He should be proud of so considerate a son."

"I don't see that," answered Keldon, quickly; "he has nothing to be proud of—quite the other way, I take it, for I'm such a precious story-teller!"

"That is bad news, Mr. Keldon."

"I have been obliged to tell him all manner of lies—saving your presence, Miss—about how ill I feel, and how my accident has shaken me to pieces, to get him here at all. He thinks I'm here for *my* health—ho, ho!"

The idea of such an improbability so tickled Mr. George Keldon's fancy, that he could not proceed for laughing. Suddenly he became grave.

"But I am forgetting Grandmother Tredaile. It's too much to be hoped that she is here."

"She *is* here, then," I replied.

"I'm very glad of that. I'll take the first.

opportunity of getting my nerves in order and coming to see her. Where does she live?"

I gave him the address very reluctantly.

"And what did she say when you got back?" he asked, eagerly; "didn't she seem pleased to hear I wasn't smashed to pieces? Didn't she ask you to come again? I don't suppose she did, though, or I should have seen you. Would you believe it, miss, I kept expecting you every day; clearing up the room for you, and putting things in what I call a little bit of order."

"We heard you were recovering the use of your arm from Mr. Tresdaile."

"Barney Tresdaile—ha! isn't he a rum one? Not a bad sort, 'take him for all in all,' as the poet says."

"Have you studied the poets, Mr. Kelton?"

"No—I haven't the time. Some days, when my father's memory brightens up, he puts away the flute, and talks about poets, and authors and the books they have written, and I learn a little that way

over my work. And so the old lady has come down to the sea-side—it will do her a world of good!”

“I hope it will.”

“And,” he said, rather inquisitively, “have you come down for *your* health, too, Miss?—you’ll excuse me, but you don’t look very poorly.”

“I enjoy very good health, thank you,” was my reply, feeling rather confused beneath his gaze.

“Then you have come down with your friend—just to keep her company?”

“With the lady whom I serve as companion.”

“But—but you are a lady, aren’t you?” he inquired.

“I hope so.”

“Ah! but you know what I mean,” he exclaimed; “you are a real lady born.”

“Oh! no; I am a farmer’s daughter—Mrs. Tresdaile is my mistress; I am her companion.”

“Well, this is a surprise,” ejaculated Keldon; “I thought you were a friend of my

grandmother's; lived next door, perhaps, and were one of those charitable parties who are always looking you up with half-penny tracts—dropping in generally when you are having dinner, or are rather too busy to listen to them. Bless their hearts! those ladies do a deal of good, though—and if they don't always understand us, why, it's not their faults, that I can see. And so you are Mrs. Tresdaile's companion? I hope," said he, very gravely, "you like your situation?"

"Ye—es, pretty well."

"I don't think *I* should like that berth for a continuance," said Keldon, after a moment's reflection; "though I respect the old lady, for more reasons than one."

Seeing me smile, he added—

"Ah! but you are a patient young woman, and that makes all the difference. I don't say nobody could live with my grandmother, mind you."

"How do you know I am a patient young woman?" I asked.

"I am a pretty fair physiognomist," he

answered; "I have seen a good many faces in my life, and have learned, in my little way, to study them. Now, yours is just such a face as suits me—I should like a little sister with a face like yours, or a—hold hard, George," he cried, "you're going it too fast, my man! Ask pardon, Miss Bloyce, but I've a dreadful habit of speaking out sometimes."

"You know my name is Bloyce, then?" I said, anxious to change the subject.

"Mr. Barnaby called you 'Miss Bloyce,' the day he took that *very* long walk with you," said he, with a shrewd look in his eye that I did not approve.

What did he mean by his emphasis on the adverb? Did he think Mr. Barnaby Tresdaile had a right to take long walks with me?—well, I never!

"I'm afraid you are coming out of your way, Mr. Keldon," I said, stopping suddenly.

"Quite the reverse, miss," he replied; "my father and I are lodging at a fisherman's in the back part of the town, and my

way lies over this hill, too—but,” he said quickly, “perhaps I’m troubling you.”

“Oh, no—”

“Oh, yes, I am,” he responded; “what a big blunderer I am, not to see it before. That’s just like me, shoving my ugly self where I am not wanted, and bothering people who have something better to think of than my nonsense. Good morning, Miss. If I have been too blunt, you must excuse me for this once. I’m a rough fellow, with all the graces and accomplishments of a polar bear. Here’s off!—good morning.”

He raised his glazed hat *à la cavalière*, and then started off at a pace that quickly took him out of sight and hearing. I returned home thoughtfully to Mrs. Tresdaile’s apartments, puzzling my head as to the best method of breaking the news of Mr. George Keldon’s arrival in Hastings.

CHAPTER II.

CONTAINS A DISCUSSION NOT THE MOST
FRIENDLY.

MRS. TRESDALE rose that morning to a late breakfast, in so unamiable a mood that I resolved to defer my revelation to a more auspicious occasion. There was no necessity to still further disturb the ruffled temper of my companion. She had not slept well; in fact, despite the removal of her bedstead, she was sure she had been in a draught all night, for she was full of pains all over! Then there was no *Times*, and the breakfast put her out, for her chocolate was not made properly, and the sugar in the basin

— the lump sugar brought expressly from town by Mrs. Tresdaile—had sensibly diminished since yesterday's tea.

“Robbers and thieves, my dear,” observed Mrs. Tresdaile in a stage whisper, before the maid-servant had retired, “and the sooner we are out of their den the better. I very much doubt,” with a fierce look at the sugar-basin, “if my means will allow me to be plundered in this wholesale manner. If there's any more of it, I shall put it in the hands of the police.”

And as Mrs. Tresdaile hammered away at the top of her egg, she looked as if she meant it.

Alice Tresdaile said very little on the subject, Mrs. Elwes's felonious abstractions not troubling her mind much. She was anxious to get breakfast over, and see what Hastings was like—whether it were better to persuade Mrs. Tresdaile to stay there, than second her grandmother's desire, which was beginning to develop itself already, to return to Stamford Street, Blackfriars.

Alice decided in favour of Hastings,

when she, and I, and Grandmother Tresdaile, and her Bath chair were in Eversfield Place; when the Fashionables or the Un-fashionables were riding by in their broughams, or cantering gaily past on horseback, or going out for a sail, or making for the beach and the bathing machines. It was a bright sunny morning; Hastings seemed full of life and activity, and Alice thought she should like to live there, "oh! for ever and ever!"

Even Mrs. Tresdaile's countenance brightened a little; she sat up in her Bath chair, put her spectacles on, and looked round her. In an earlier portion of this narrative, I expressed an idea that Mrs. Tresdaile was of an inquisitive turn of mind—that idea was soon confirmed that morning. She quite made me uncomfortable by her critical survey of the visitors, and by her critical remarks on the same, delivered in by no means a subdued tone of voice. As for Alice, she was in one flutter of embarrassment from Hastings to St. Leonard's, for everybody seemed to look at

her, as she walked by the side of her strange-looking relative in the Bath chair.

Certainly Alice was very pretty in that hat and feathers, and presented a strange contrast to the dry withered face peering from a heap of unseasonable furs and velvets—but that was no reason gentlemen should stare so, and I thought it very rude and improper, till I discovered it was the fashion at watering-places to stare everybody out of countenance.

Mrs. Tresdaile's interest in the visitors, however, was quite as great as their interest in her and her grand-daughter; she surveyed all who passed her attentively, even hung out of her Bath chair and looked after those who had more particularly attracted her notice.

"There's two fine madams for you!" said she, after one of those dangerous feats last alluded to, which taking by surprise the man who drew her, had nearly tilted her into the roadway—"I wonder who *they* are now in their hats—the old frights! Why, they are nearly as old as I am, and should

be thinking of something better than decking themselves out in that *fal-lal* manner, at their time of life."

"My dear grandmamma, I am afraid they have heard you."

"Do them good to hear an honest, homely woman's opinion, Alice," replied Mrs. Tresdaile. "Now, boy, can't you get out of the way when you see people coming!"

The boy — who was six feet in height, wore an incipient moustache, and was got up altogether on a most extensive scale—dropped his eye-glass, through which he had been surveying Alice, and, taken aback by the remark, turned rather red, and sneaked off.

"Miss Bloyce, will you remind me, when I get home, to buy a good green cotton umbrella," was Mrs. Tresdaile's next observation; "this flimsy parasol is not a mite of good here, I shall be burnt as black as a coal! And, Alice, my dear, I think you had better have one too."

"Oh! no, thank you, grandmamma,"

cried the alarmed Alice; "I don't find the sun inconvenient, and I—"

"My dear grandchild, you'll ruin your complexion, and—there goes a fly-away lot!" to a party of ladies and gentlemen on horseback, who galloped by at that moment, "spending their money, or other people's, on horse-flesh, instead of making use of their own lazy legs. Ah! here is some one after my own style—doubled up by time and affliction, bad legs or spinal complaint—he looks bad enough, the Lord knows!"

We were retracing our way to Hastings—were on the Parade enjoying the sea breeze. Some twenty yards before us, and advancing in our direction, was a tall young man of three and thirty, drawing, in a chair similar to Mrs. Tresdaile's, an invalid father. The father was reading—the son, not at all abashed by the fine people near him, tugged him along, and whistled cheerfully. The son was looking intently at the sea, evidently admiring every curve and toss of the waves, which came rolling and splashing

on the beach—and I hoped sincerely that he would continue to admire for a little while longer. But George Keldon turned his head when we were not more than ten yards apart, looked hard at us for a moment, glanced nervously over his shoulder at his father, who was reading on unconsciously, became very red in the face, suddenly wheeled round himself and his chair, and ran for his life off the parade, across the road, and down the first turning, the Bath chair bumping at his heels.

“Why — why, it can't be *him!*” ejaculated Mrs. Tresdaile; “and yet it was the family face—I'd know it anywhere. Miss Bloyce,” turning round to me, “did you see that man?”

“Yes, madam.”

“Was it he you called upon that day when, when——?”

“It was Mr. Keldon, ma'am.”

The old lady sank back in her chair and breathed hard.

“What does it all mean—what brought him here? It's fatality—I can't escape him!”

"Who is he, grandmamma?" asked Alice.

"Only a bad man, Alice, with the bad father who robbed me!"

"Robbed you?"

"Ay, of what can never be restored again, the selfish villain. But it's a long story, and teaches no moral—there's an end of it! Let us get home."

"One moment, *grandmother!*"

Walking by the side of the chair, keeping step with its progress, and bending his earnest brown eyes on the burden it bore, was George Keldon again. Mrs. Tresdaile shook with indignation, but did not look towards him.

"I haven't come to bother you, if my presence is unwelcome, grandmother," said Keldon; "only to thank you for a past kindness, and to hope that you are well."

"What past kindness of mine has George Keldon to be grateful for?" asked Mrs. Tresdaile, with a furtive glance from under her black velvet bonnet.

Keldon was about to answer, when his grandmother interrupted him.

"Never mind, I don't want to know," she cried; "I don't want to hear you, and shall be glad when your back is turned."

"Why, that's not friendly!" said Keldon, with an honest laugh.

"Who wants it to be?—neither you nor I."

"I want to answer for myself, grandmother, I—"

"Don't grandmother me, sir," ejaculated Mrs. Tresdaile; "you are too familiar by half. I, I—I won't say another word!"

"But—"

"But if you *will* speak, keep your say till we are out of the streets, man. Follow me, if you like—come home with me, if you please. All I tell you is, that you will live to repent it!"

"To repent my thanks. Bless your soul, grandmother, I'm not so ungrateful as that."

"We shall see."

Mrs. Tresdaile looked so pale, there was so peculiar an expression in her eyes, that I felt sure no benefit could arise from the interview. George Keldon could not win on

his grandmother's heart by opposition, and that that lady did not desire his presence was plain to every observer. That there was some of the family stubbornness in Mr. Keldon's disposition was equally plain; he trudged on steadily by the side of the Bath chair, resolved now his nerves were above proof, to 'have it out' with the old lady for once and for all.

I hastened to attempt the part of peace-maker, and, like many a peace-maker before me, got snubbed for my pains.

"I think, Mr. Keldon, if you were to call to-morrow on Mrs. Tresdaile, or—"

"Let him come, it will do him good, perhaps!" interrupted my mistress.

"I'm sure it will," said Keldon.

"And it won't do me more harm than I can get over in the next fortnight; therefore don't trouble *your* head about me, Miss Bloyce."

Meanwhile Alice Tresdaile, bewildered by these acrimonious remarks, walked by my side, looked from George Keldon to her grandmother, glanced at me inquiringly.

“What is it all about, Barbara?” she whispered at last.

“I don't know exactly.”

“Is that great rough man a cousin of mine—how is it I have never heard of him before?”

“Your grandmother is better able to answer those questions than I, dear.”

“Don't answer without you like, Miss Bloyce,” said Alice, pettishly; “I can obtain my information somewhere else, I dare say.”

And Miss Tresdaile was silent the rest of the way home, and marched thither, too, in a very dignified manner.

In the drawing-room at last—George Keldon, hat in hand, standing by the door; Mrs. Tresdaile in her arm-chair, and still in her bonnet and furs, as she had issued from the street; Alice looking from the bow-window; my humble self endeavouring to catch Mrs. Tresdaile's eye for orders.

“You need not go, Miss Bloyce,” remarked the old lady at last; “and Alice, I would rather you stay also. If this man

who has thrust himself upon our privacy attempt any violence, I may require you both as witnesses."

Nothing seemed to ruffle Mr. Keldon's temper. He flung his head back and laughed heartily at the last remark.

"I shan't hurt her very much, young ladies, or hit her very hard!"

"You have come hither for some reason," said Grandmother Tresdaile, fidgeting with the end of her favourite stick, as if anxious to launch it at the little head of her grandson; "explain that reason, and—go!"

"Well, I'm sorry to find you so sharp upon me, grandmother."

"If you call me 'grandmother' again," she interrupted, "I won't hear another word."

"Isn't it correct?"

"You have no right to use it," cried Mrs. Tresdaile; "you say it only for the purposes of insult. I have never received you as my grandson, or treated you like one. Your father is my bitterest enemy—has helped to make my life the wretched one it is."

"Stay," said Keldon, more energetically; "don't heap all the blame upon a man really destitute and wretched, deprived of the strength to do, often of the power to think, and—nobody's enemy, I'm sure!"

"He robbed me of my daughter."

"There, there," said Keldon, soothingly, as though he were talking to a child—"we have argued this before—you and I—and as we never can agree that it is proper for people who love each other to get married and be happy, why rake the subject up at this time? It is all past now, you know."

"It lives—it lives!" muttered the stern woman.

"Sorry for it, if it lives to rankle, grand—Mrs. Tresdaile," he corrected—"sorry for it, if the early death of my mother has not cured the sting left by her disobedience. It seems so odd to me—so precious odd!—that you should look upon the mother's child as all that's bad, and that that child should see in you his mother's mother!"

"That mother—"

“That mother—asking pardon for the interruption—always spoke well of you, taught my father to do the same, even under provocation, which some men *might* have kicked at—don't let us say anything against *her*! Although I never saw her, there's something in the name, I shouldn't like to hear hard words against—though they don't come from the heart.”

“But they *do* come from the heart.”

“Oh! stuff and nonsense,” said Keldon, bluntly; “I'm a judge of human nature, though I come from Blackman's Gardens. I've seen lots of life, and know what a hot temper is—how seldom the heart speaks when the temper puts the steam on! Let us change the subject, and come to the real point.”

“You have been long enough coming to it,” observed the grandmother.

“Now, it really is laughable to hear you talking of your wrongs and of your enmity to us poor Keldons; telling everybody how you hate us, and leaving orders never to admit us into your house,” said the plain-

spoken grandson; "talking of your firmness and hardness, with the woman's heart peeping all the time through the cloak."

"I did not know *you* could talk so well, George Keldon—quite sarcastically, too."

"Well, thanks to the old man, and to my natural liking for books, when I can get a chance to look at them of an evening, I do begin to know a little of the English language, and—but what do you mean by talking sarcastically? I say what I mean, that's all."

"You believe in the goodness of my heart then?"

"Yes, I do!" replied Keldon; "there, don't look so angry, grand—Mrs. Tresdaile; it's not a statement that should hurt your feelings."

"You are a knave, or a fool—I should like to know which," was the complimentary reply.

"Well, don't think me the first, because that would be my fault; and if it's the last, why, make some allowance for Nature's intention!"

"Will you tell me what you want?"

"To be sure I will," answered Keldon.

"I have been waiting these ten minutes to inform you, but I did not like to interrupt you. It's not very often I have the pleasure—well, well, if you won't believe it's a pleasure, I can't help it!"

"What do you want?" again repeated Mrs. Tresdaile.

"To thank you for letting me see a corner of the woman's heart, some weeks ago," said Keldon; "for sending Miss Bloyce to inquire if I were really hurt on the day I came out so strong in print."

"Miss Bloyce," shrieked Grandmother Tresdaile, "do I find you betraying my confidence, turning against me, too, like all the world? Did I not ask and beg you to keep this secret—trivial as it was—and you abuse my trust!"

I was about to explain, when George Keldon, with more energy than he had even yet exhibited, took up the cudgels in my defence.

"No, no, that's wrong, Mrs. Tresdaile,"

cried he; "that's where you women make so many muddles and mistakes, jumping at conclusions before you know half the causes that lead to the result. If I were to go to work like that at some of my experiments, my eye! It's not Miss Bloyce's fault. Upon my soul, you musn't be angry with that young lady for an act she never committed; I don't believe she'd turn against you, or tell your secrets, for the world! She had nothing to do with it—it's all my doings! When she came to Blackman's Gardens, I knew her at once, for I had seen her at your house in Stamford Street. I surprised her not a little, too, by my inquiries after you," he added, with a loud chuckle at the reminiscence.

"And you thought my interest in you very kind and flattering?"

"It was kind," answered Keldon; "it took me by surprise, although I had never believed half your hard words against me. It was so kind, that I resolved to thank you for it at the first opportunity—to let you know how much more comfortable it has made me feel."

"Miss Bloyce, will you stir the fire, if you please?"

Somewhat taken aback by this discursive remark, I left Alice's side and complied with the request of Mrs. Tresdaile.

"And so it made you comfortable?" asked the grandmother.

"Yes, and even the old man—though things don't prey upon him as they used—was much more easy in his mind."

"If he or you had only known the true reason for my inquiries!—perhaps you would like to know them now?"

"Haven't I guessed them, Mrs. Tresdaile?"

"No," cried the excited old lady—"nor seen that love and charity for which you would give me credit. Do you think I have forgotten or forgiven, or that long years have done anything but harden me! Your father I have always hated—I hate him more than ever now. Can you believe that I should entertain for you—his son—feelings more gentle?"

"*Her* son, too, remember!"

"George Keldon, I made you an offer

once, and you refused it. You wouldn't leave your father and become my child; *he* wouldn't part with you, although he had taken *my* child from me—that ended a l between us. Nothing on earth can make me regard you with any affection now."

"I don't believe it," said Keldon, shaking his head; "it is not human nature!"

"It is so easy to be affectionate and anxious, and to talk of my being your mother's mother, you hypocrite!" she cried; "do you think I have not studied human nature, too, or that, at the end of three-and-eighty years, I have grown blind and foolish? Miss Bloyce, stir the fire again."

"Well, I have seen you, thanked you, and done my duty, whatever you may think," said Keldon; "now I'll go back to the old man. I know it distracts you to see me often, so, whilst I'm in Hastings, I'll take care and keep out of your way. You wouldn't like to see the old man, I suppose?"

"Only in his coffin."

"Ah! that's not human nature," again observed Keldon; "it's very bitter and trying to the nerves, but, Lord bless you, you don't mean it!—yet, as it hurts my feelings a little, I'll go."

"One moment," cried the grandmother; "Miss Bloyce, you'll find my box in the other room, will you take this key and open it? There's a paper inside, sealed with black wax; bring it to me, if you please."

"Yes, ma'am; but—"

"There are no buts in the case—I said 'bring it to me,'" remarked Mrs. Tresdaile, most emphatically.

I crossed the landing to Mrs. Tresdaile's sleeping chamber, unlocked the box, found the paper, refastened the box, returned to the drawing-room, placed the key and the document required in my mistress's hands.

"You see *this*, George Keldon," said Mrs. Tresdaile, raising the paper in her right hand, which shook with the passion of its owner.

"It's certainly big enough to see," responded her grandson.

"This is my will—the last one—the *only* one in which your name is mentioned," she said; "shall I read it?" opening the paper.

"I don't see the good it will do you, Mrs. Tresdaile," replied her grandson, "it only seems to put you out and excite you."

"And you are so very anxious to see me calm and collected," sneered his amiable relative, opening the document; "but I'll disappoint you. Hark you, sir!—'*I give and bequeath to my grandson, George Keldon, the sum of five thousand pounds*'—I gave it then, in a weak hour, when I was an old fool—I cancel it for ever!"

She flung the document into the fire, and in another moment it was consumed.

"For ever?" repeated Keldon.

"Yes, never to be renewed again."

"You are sure of that?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, I can say shake hands more heartily," said Keldon, making two gigantic strides towards Mrs. Tresdaile; "can say be friends, for the sake of her whose memory should be dear to both of us. Let's drop

the money question for ever, as you say, and begin afresh on a different principle—come now, grandmother!”

He extended his hand frankly, was so earnest in his manner, even appeared so to enjoy the loss of five thousand pounds, that I could but admire his self-possession and good temper, and feel annoyed with Mrs. Tresdaile for not admiring them too.

“Get out!” exclaimed Mrs. Tresdaile, screwing herself round in the chair and turning away her face.

“What, not now!” cried Keldon; “well, then, I won’t bother you any more. Once every year I shall look in at Stamford Street, *volens volens*—that’s a nice expression for a journeyman pin-maker, isn’t it?—and see if I can talk you over to the Keldon side. Once every year, grandmother, like the Christmas waits.”

“*Get out!*” repeated Mrs. Tresdaile, giving a spasmodic kick with her left foot.

“Good-bye, then.”

George Keldon walked from the room.

As the door closed, Mrs. Tresdaile looked up.

“Go after him, Miss Bloyce,” she said; “see the door shut behind him, or he’ll hide in the house till nightfall, and murder me out of spite!”

“He does not look very spiteful, grand-mamma,” observed Alice.

“Alice, don’t *you* say a word for him—don’t let me hear you mention his name again.”

I went out of the room, down the stairs, and found Mr. Keldon in the passage, evidently thinking of closing the street-door. He caught sight of me descending, and awaited my approach.

“Isn’t she a queer old soul, Miss Bloyce?” he said, with a broad grin; “just like gun-powder when her back’s up—but, bless your heart, she don’t mean anything—it’s every bit talk!”

“Is it?” was my answer.

“There’s proof enough, even in the Will she so unceremoniously popped into the fire,” said he. “You see, with all her hard-

ness, she had not forgotten me in the Will ; and as that was a thing I did not expect, why, I don't feel disappointed. Perhaps I shall, though, when I reflect upon it more ; no, I shan't, for I *won't* reflect !”

“Can you help it ?”

“To be sure I can, with hard work, Miss.”

“It's a pity, Mr. Keldon, you insisted upon seeing your grandmother to-day ; I am afraid it has cost you dear.”

“You don't mean that ?”

“Mean what ?” I asked.

“That you are '*afraid* it has cost me dear'—and you really think it's a pity,” he cried, with sparkling eyes. “Well, it's very kind of you ; I shall think of *that*, mind you—thankee. Here's off !”

And with an easy nod of the head, and a pleasant smile that well became the good-tempered face on which it shone, he left me standing at the door, and conscious of a pair of cheeks blushing in spite of me.

CHAPTER III.

GRAND ACQUAINTANCES.

ON the evening of the day in which the interview, related in my last chapter, took place, Grandmother Tresdaile was very busy. There were a solicitor and his clerk closeted in the drawing-room; there were many sheets of paper spoiled, a great deal of whispering and no little irritation on the part of Mrs. Tresdaile, whom Alice and I could hear snapping up the lawyers even in the room across the landing.

Mrs. Tresdaile had made up her mind to have another Will before midnight. "Why, if she were to die that night, what would

become of the property?—fetch a lawyer somebody, and, Miss Bloyce, take Alice for a walk ; she's looking pale again."

So, when the solicitor had been procured, and the drawing-room door was closed against us, Alice and I went for the walk proposed by Mrs. Tresdaile, and talked part of the way about her grandson.

"Although he is evidently an honest, good-tempered man," said Alice, "still there is something very aggravating in his manner. Had I been grandmamma, I should have been just as much put out."

"Ah ! but you are one of the *irritable genus* also, my dear."

"Well, Barbara, is there anything more aggravating, when you are out of temper, than to see somebody else, who ought to be out of temper too, quite cool and collected ? Which way are you going, dear ?"

"Whichever way you please. I thought the inland scenery would be a change, Alice."

"Oh ! it's so dusty, and I don't care for a long walk on a country road, and—"

“And your new silk dress and flounces would better become the Parade and the company—ah! Miss Alice, is that it?”

“I never said anything about the Parade,” answered Alice, tossing her pretty head indignantly; “let us go inland, up those tiresome hills, or through those stupid hop-gardens—anything you please, Miss Bloyce.”

“Anything I please?”

“Yes.”

“Then we'll go amongst the fashionables, unprotected females that we are, and see if we can discover George Keldon again.”

I did not care for fashionable society myself—would have preferred hill, dale and corn-field that warm summer evening, to the Parade, the music and the gaily dressed visitors; but Alice Tresdaile, I could see, was of a different opinion, and had no particular fancy for still life. I had also my old objection to the Parade that evening, but I did not disclose it to Alice, lest she should think I was anxious to thwart her inclination—and that objection was, a distaste for the dandies and their cross fire of stares.

And while I am about it, let me tell those dandies, be they bread-and-butter boys fresh from school, or men about town all whisker and moustaches, that it is neither flattering, kind, nor courteous to bring the blush to our cheeks—that it annoys the modest of our sex, and that it don't make them—"fine puss gentlemen" as they are—one whit the more killing. Stay, that is only Barbara Bloyce's opinion after all; there are some ladies who can put up with a great deal of staring!

That evening, in particular, I felt quite out of temper for venturing on Parade, and wished there had been a gentleman with us to frown down a few of the puppies—even the George Keldon, to whom I had jestingly alluded, would have been a relief to me.

Alice, though younger than I, had infinitely more self-possession, and swept proudly and unconcernedly past the gazers; talking of the sea and the sunset, and the ladies' fine dresses. One fine dress, containing within it a fine young lady, rustled past

us twice, and drew our attention in its direction. There was no mistaking the beauty of the dress, or its costliness, although prudent females like myself might have questioned the providence, even the taste, of its wearer. To glance at the displayer of a twenty-guinea *moiré-antique*, with heaven knows the value of the lace shawl that covered it, was very natural in young ladies born and bred with critical tastes. And all the fair sex have eyes for fine dresses—nothing escapes them; a good, bad, or indifferent costume is keenly surveyed and commented upon—and Mrs. Spinks, the charwoman, is just as severe on her neighbours' apparel as the Duchess of Pomp and Inanity is on the friends and acquaintances she meets in Her Majesty's Drawing-room. Satirical men in the papers assert that we dress for the gentlemen; quite the contrary, my dear sirs—we dress for each other! It is not for your blundering eyes, which would see a dress half a dozen times without knowing it again, that we run up, in these hard times, such extravagant bills at our milliners'; it

is for eyes brighter and sharper than the silks and satins, the purple and fine linen, are flaunted—eyes which tell at a glance what is real and what counterfeit. It is for ourselves that the Idol of Dress is so worshipped. Is it in human nature to allow our friends to wear the grandest dresses at balls, assemblies, and—church? Is Mrs. Butcher, the wife of the great meat-salesman, in Leadenhall Market, to have a greater change of flounced robes than Mrs. Taxes, whose husband is in Somerset House? NEVER!—though the milliner's bill be the last feather on the back of the camel plodding across the desert—the dry, sandy desert—of Vanity; never, till those good old times come back, when freeholders' daughters were kept to felt waistcoats and cross handkerchiefs, and the proudest of the middle-classes “durst not have offered to wear hood or scarf!”

Moralizing to myself somewhat in the above fashion, when the *moiré-antique* came to a standstill, and two primrose kid gloves were extended towards my companion.

"Surely it is Miss Tresdaile—Alice Tresdaile?"

Alice looked full at the speaker, and then laid her little gloved hands within the primrose kids.

"My dear Emily, can it indeed be you? Barbara," turning to me, "this is a dear schoolfellow of mine. Miss Hollingston—Miss Bloyce."

Miss Hollingston gave me a fine lady's bow—a half haughty, half patronizing bow, which I imitated to a nicety,—and then turned to Alice Tresdaile again.

Miss Hollingston was a tall, graceful girl, some two years the senior of Alice—a dark-haired, dark-eyed girl, with a patrician little nose and mouth. Take her for all in all, she was certainly a beautiful girl, despite a general expression of countenance that did not please Barbara Bloyce. The eyes were too piercing to my taste, and if the red upper lip were not accustomed to curl disdainfully at sublunary things, I was very much mistaken.

But perhaps that evening I was inclined

to be misanthropical; perhaps the dress at which everybody glanced made my own drab silk—which *entre nous*, my dear readers, had been sponged and turned before I left Jersey—look exceedingly shabby. I did not feel comfortable in it, for I caught Miss Hollingston once or twice looking at it out of the corners of her eyes as she walked by the side of her school-friend, and separated me from Alice.

“I am not keeping you from your friends, Emily?” asked Alice.

“No, dear!” was the reply, “my father sees quite enough of his tiresome daughter, and can afford her a few minutes leave of absence—besides, I have so much to tell you, and so many questions to ask! You must come and see me to-morrow, Alice.”

“Oh! I shall be so delighted, if my grand-mamma will let me spend the day with you. You must tell me all your adventures since you left Mrs. Wilcox's two years ago—left me, a pouting girl of sixteen, regretting my education was not as finished as your own,

and that I was not going home for good with you."

"The time came round at last, however, Alice."

"Yes, not quick enough for me, though, for—but I will tell you my story to-morrow, in return for the history of your conquests, Emily."

"Conquests, silly puss," said Emily, laughing, "do you think I have begun to trouble myself about conquests yet awhile? I hope my Alice of eighteen summers is not thinking of conquests?"

"Oh! no," returned Alice, blushing; "but then you—"

The dark eyes of Miss Hollingston glanced from me to Alice meaningly, and Alice stopped. Both young ladies laughed merrily again—there was a capital joke somewhere, though I could not see it myself.

Miss Hollingston and Miss Tresdaile talked a little of Hastings. Miss Hollingston's father was down for the benefit of his health, I learned, "which has become im-

paired at a very unfortunate time," added Miss Hollingston to Alice, "for the opera is not half over, and one's friends are all in London."

"And yet Hastings seems very full," said Alice.

"Common people, my dear, with very few exceptions," whispered her friend; "rank and fashion are still in town, I assure you. Lord Stars is here certainly, and Sir Walter Waters, and the De Mowbrays, and—" with a laugh that was rather affected this time—"Colonel Hollingston and daughter! The rest on the visiting list are tradesmen, or those odious wholesale people who *will* consider themselves gentlefolks, try as we may to convince them to the contrary. But here is papa waiting for me—and, now I am certain you *are* the very same Alice Tresdaile I left at Minerva House Academy, let me have the pleasure of introducing you."

Colonel Hollingston, an upright old gentleman, inclined to be corpulent, with a pair of milk-white moustaches that hung

on to his chest, and reminded me of my father's favourite goat Billy, whom I had left cropping grass on the hills of St. Brelade, raised his hat solemnly as we approached.

"Papa, it is Miss Tresdaile! Miss Tresdaile, will you allow me to introduce you to Colonel Hollingston? Colonel Hollingston—Miss Tresdaile."

Colonel Hollingston's hat lifted very solemnly again, Colonel Hollingston himself stiff as buckram.

"Delighted to have the honour of making Miss Tresdaile's acquaintance," said the Colonel, in a loud and rather important voice, "we have had a delightful, but exceedingly hot day, Miss Tresdaile."

Miss Tresdaile murmured something in assent.

"We hope to have the pleasure of seeing you in Eversfield Place, Miss Tresdaile," continued he, in the same lofty tone; "my daughter and I cannot entertain you, perhaps, as we might desire—but Miss Tresdaile, I am sure, will make every al-

lowance for furnished apartments. *Ahem!*"

Colonel Hollingston was looking in my direction, but the cough was intended for his daughter, who had been somewhat slow in introducing me.

"Oh! this young lady is a companion to Miss Tresdaile, I believe—Alice, dear, what name did you say?"

"Pray, do not trouble Miss Hollingston, Alice," I answered, in an under tone, for Miss Hollingston's supreme air of indifference had brought the flush to my cheeks. But Alice, naturally susceptible herself, hastened to make amends for her own thoughtlessness.

"Miss Bloyce, Emily—a dear and valued friend."

I could have kissed her on the Parade, in the sight of all the people, for her loving words and her sisterly glance, both a tacit rebuke to Miss Hollingston, who possibly considered "companions" quite an inferior order of beings, and treated them accordingly. Miss Hollingston, in a languid manner, condescended to make me

known to her military parent, whose hat shot up in the air again like a rocket, and was then deposited carefully on the exact centre of a very round, shiny, bald head.

“A dear and valued friend of Miss Tresdaile's is a valued friend of Colonel Hollingston and daughter.”

“Thank you,” I replied, quietly.

“The name of Bloyce is, you will be surprised to hear, Miss B., very familiar to me. Have you a father or brother in the —th Regiment?”

“No, sir.”

“I have certainly met—Emily, my dear, we have certainly met somewhere, only my memory is so wretchedly bad, a gentleman of the name of Doyce—Bloyce, and—”

“It's of no consequence, papa.”

“But, my dear, it is of consequence—my memory is of the greatest consequence to me, and if I neglect its cultivation by not exercising it on these trivial matters, I shall degenerate by degrees into a confirmed idiot. Wherever,” he exclaimed, with a

petulant stamp of the foot, "have I heard the name of Boyce? Why, I can see the man—a tall, gentlemanly fellow, with a moustache and a white hat—wears a diamond stud in his shirt as big as a hazel nut—a fine fellow!"

"There are so many Bloyces in the world," observed Miss Hollingston, carelessly twirling the handle of her rose-coloured parasol.

"Now, my dear Emily, how aggravating you are," said the irritable colonel; "what on earth is the good of telling me there are so many Bloyces in the world? That fact don't assist my memory in the least. The Bloyce I mean was introduced to me by—by—shot if I haven't forgotten him too! I'll have a blister on the back of my neck to-morrow!"

And emphatically striking the gravel with his stick, he looked fiercely over our heads as if in search of some one to oppose his intentions.

"I fear we are detaining you," said Alice.

The soft tones of her voice appeared to recall Colonel Hollingston to himself. He coughed, squared his shoulders, and looked pompous again.

“Not at all, Miss Tresdaile,” he said; “people in Hastings are here to kill time, and a passable place it is to destroy the enemy in—take it altogether, a very passable place, indeed. But are we not detaining you?”


“Perhaps grandmamma will think we are late; Barbara?” suggested Alice to me.

“It is growing dark, dear, certainly,” was my reply.

“Will Miss Tresdaile allow me the honour of escorting her home?” said the polite Colonel, offering his arm. “Miss Hollingston, will you see to Miss Joyce?—Joyce, Bloyce,” he repeated to himself—“let me see, now—Bloyce!”

I am sure Alice would have gladly dispensed with Colonel Hollingston's attentions to the door of her grandmother's second-rate apartments; and had I had my choice,

I would have preferred a more agreeable companion than Miss Hollingston, not to mention my turned-silk's juxtaposition to a silver grey moiré-antique that cost two guineas a yard, if it cost a farthing. However, Miss Hollingston, whether impressed by Alice's remark or no tis a matter of inquiry, became several degrees more friendly, although that friendliness was offered so condescendingly that I was very much inclined to be pert and satirical. But my better feelings got the upper hand—perhaps it was only her way, I reasoned; she was the only child of a wealthy parent, and had been brought up to be a fine lady, and give herself grand airs; and I *was* beneath her—only a poor farmer's daughter, who had no right to be proud, or feel hurt because she saw I was a "companion" before Alice had opened her lips on the subject. She was not proud or reserved with Alice, but seemed glad to meet her again; would perhaps be a suitable friend and real companion to her—and yet I didn't like her at first sight! But first appearances are deceptive, and to judge by them is not wise.



Miss Hollingston had plenty to say all the way home, about Hastings, London, the fashions, the weather, the sights to be seen in the metropolis, Alice and her school-days, &c., &c., &c., glancing from one topic to another with an ease and volubility that testified to considerable practice, and made me think her an admirable specimen of Mrs. Wilcox's "finishing powers."

Miss Hollingston looked round in some surprise as we entered our street.

"Do you lodge here?"

"Yes."

"No sea view!—is Mrs. Tresdaile ill?"

"Oh, no; quite well, I thank you."

"A very eccentric lady, I have heard, Miss Bloyce."

"At times."

"For a lady so wealthy as my dear Alice's grandmamma is reputed to be, she appears to have made a most eccentric choice of apartments," said Miss Hollingston, glancing up at the first-floor window of our lodging-house.

There were lights within the room, and

the profile of Grandmother Tresdaile on the blind—a stern hooked-nose profile of gigantic proportions, which rather startled Colonel Hollingston.

“Ahem! I don't think we'll intrude upon Mrs. Tresdaile to-night,” said he; “being strangers, as it were, we might unnerve her.”

“Especially as Mrs. Tresdaile is transacting some very important business,” I ventured to add, as a check upon Alice, who, having forgotten all about the solicitors, was rather too pressing for Colonel Hollingston and daughter to step in.

“Oh! dear, I forgot the lawyers,” said Alice.

“Then you have not had much to do with them, or you would never forget them,” said the Colonel, with a twitch at the corners of his mouth that nearly broke into a smile; “pray, present my regards to Mrs. Tresdaile—a fellow-officer of her son's before he went to India and got shot down by the Sikhs, poor fellow; and say my daughter and I will do ourselves the

honour of calling on her to-morrow, with the intention of robbing her of her granddaughter. And," turning to me, "if this lady will also favour us—Miss—Miss—"?

"Bloyce," said Alice.

"*Damn*—beg pardon—but how very annoying it is, I can't think of anything," cried the Colonel, very much put out—"shot if I can think of Bloyce for ten minutes together—knew a man named Bloyce so well, too! But, Miss B., as I before observed, if you will favour us—"

"Thank you, but I fear I cannot avail myself of your kind invitation, Colonel Hollingston, and leave Mrs. Tresdaile quite alone," I answered.

"Some other day, when Mrs. Tresdaile will, perhaps, join us," said he, looking up at the window-blind again, which, with the head of the lawyer coming between it and the candle, combined with some expressive pantomimic acting of Mrs. T.'s, came out quite in the fantoccini line that evening.

"Some other day, perhaps," I said, repeating my thanks, and inwardly resolving

that that 'some other day' should be a long one. Colonel Hollingston took his hat off again, in dish-cover style, replaced it, and after his daughter had kissed Alice affectionately and favoured me with the extreme tips of two fingers, marched away to more aristocratic quarters.

When I was in my own room, after bidding good night to Mrs. Tresdaile, whom I left still up with the lawyers, and quite brisk and lively, Alice came stealing upstairs to know what I thought of Emily Hollingston. I had not formed any settled opinion on so difficult a character, and therefore evaded it by saying how pretty she was, and how handsomely dressed.

"Her papa is very rich," said Alice, "and the heir to a title—Lord something or other—and he is so fond of his only daughter."

"Is he a widower?"

"Yes, Barbara; there's a chance for you, dear!"

"Ah! I am afraid his daughter Emily would never consent to the match—so I shall not set my cap at him. You are Emily's

friend, and stand the better chance of winning the prize."

"Emily is too shrewd a girl, thoughtless madcap though she be at times, to second so ambitious a scheme as you propose, and I—object to."

"Object to, dear; if you cannot see any accomplishments in the Colonel, why recommend him to me?"

"Oh! you are four years my senior, and should be looking out for a husband," said she, with that music-rippling laugh which so won upon my heart the first night of our meeting; "and I don't intend to be in love, or think of the holy state of matrimony, for many a day yet. My time is not come!"

Not yet and—yet so near, unconscious Alice! Talking so lightly of love, ere the heart-strings are touched by the subtle god's fingers, or the chords struck within that vibrate for a life-time—now joyfully, mournfully, row upwards with hope to the heavens, then swiftly descending to earth and things earthly!

CHAPTER IV.

FURTHER ARRIVALS.

THE next morning Mrs. Tresdaile woke up in the best of tempers, was quite amiable at the breakfast-table, and only pleasantly satirical at discovering the sugar-basin empty —“three-quarters full last night, my dear—that old ogress down stairs must live on sugar!” The making of a new will, in which George Keldon was cut off with something less than a fourpenny-piece, appeared to have cheered up his grandmother amazingly; and certainly, in my experience, I had never seen her in so pleasant a mood.

Mrs. Tresdaile was rather taken aback by

Alice's information concerning the coming visitors, and the invitation which Alice, with the gracious permission of her grandmother, felt inclined to accept; but she recovered even that.

"An old schoolfellow is Miss Hollingston?" remarked Mrs. Tresdaile; "well, I suppose you cannot turn your back upon her, and, perhaps, its as well you should see a little society—a young lady with your expectations. Do you say the father is in the army?"

"He was formerly Colonel of the —th Regiment, grandmamma, and knew poor father before he went to India."

"The deuce he did!" ejaculated the old lady; "then a rare scapegrace *he* was—for Captain Tresdaile kept the worst of company before he married and sowed his wild oats."

In the course of the morning, Colonel Hollingston and his daughter arrived in their Brougham to fetch Alice away. Mrs. Tresdaile was prepared to receive them, gave Alice permission to accompany

them to Eversfield Place, exchanged a few formalities, and politely saw them to the top of the stairs, which being very narrow and rather dark, Colonel Hollingston descended backwards.

After that day, poor Barbara Bloyce played second fiddle—it was no longer she who was the bosom friend and *confidante* of pretty, wilful Alice Tresdaile; but the dashing Emily Hollingston, who usurped her place, went with Alice in her walks, and cut the “companion” out entirely.

And the companion—“poor me”? Why, I was foolish enough to cry about it at first, for I was a sensitive little silly, whose feelings had only warmed to one stranger since I had left home for the world, and that stranger had found another to love better than myself—one nearer her own sphere, and more after her own heart. Not that Alice Tresdaile treated me coldly after the renewal of her friendship with Emily Hollingston, but that I saw so little of her, and was left so much with Mrs. Tresdaile, who was not a person to live long with and grow

cheerful under. After my old fashion—that old fashion which is the wisest in the world—I made the best of it, tried to shake off my small troubles and let Emily Hollingston, a young lady whose visits did not win upon me in the least, bear away Alice Tresdaile and spoil her. I could not help her doing that; it was beyond my power, and it was not my place to interfere. Once or twice, when Alice and I were alone, I essayed to make her less impetuous, think at times less lightly, and then the Colonel's daughter stepped in again, and marred my efforts in an instant.

'It will not be Hastings all our lives,' was my consolation—'when we sober down in Stamford Street, I shall have more influence over Alice.'

Stamford Street, Blackfriars, seemed quite a haven of rest to look forward to, after I had been in Hastings a week, and grown heartily tired of it. Pretty as were the views, and pleasant as the walks were, it took a great deal from the sense of enjoyment to have them all to myself, or with old Mrs.

Tresdaile in her Bath chair, for company. Mrs. Tresdaile remonstrated now and then at Alice's frequent absence from home, and objected to her riding out with the Colonel and his daughter every day. "You forget your old grandmother at home, Alice. Oh! youth, youth!"

Alice was all affection. Should she stay at home?—should she write to Emily and put off her visit till to-morrow?

"No, no," said her grandmother, thus appealed to, "what does it matter? You are here for your health; I'm glad to see you enjoying yourself—there, begone, before I alter my mind, and say stop!"

And directly Alice had departed, Mrs. Tresdaile's ill-humours set in, and nothing could please her. The old jealousy of her grand-daughter's love—a jealousy but once in life exhibited to Alice herself, but once in the time to come!—tortured her incessantly.

"She will soon learn to forget me," she murmured; "the spring and the winter of life never agree together — never will!"

Youth seeks its pleasure with youth, and turns to age with regret—the way of the world, Miss Bloyce ! ”

“ Alice Tresdaile is of too loving a nature ever to forget,” said I, taking up the defence of the absent.

“ Do you really think so ? ” said Mrs. Tresdaile, more briskly. “ Well, if she only loves me a little, I don't care. All the rest of them may fight over my money like dogs over a bone, if they like. Miss Bloyce,” she added, “ don't tell her anything of this—it will only worry her for nothing.”

And the next day the old jealousy would return, and I had to use fresh arguments to console her.

Late in the second week arrived a letter from Mr. Bartholomew Tresdaile, wishing all health and happiness to his beloved grandmother, and stating his intention of coming down the following Saturday, by express, and staying till Monday or Tuesday.

“ Very kind of him, but nobody wants him bothering here,” remarked Mrs. Tres-

daile, when I had finished reading the letter to her; "I thought he would not let me alone long—it isn't his nature. All the business could have been managed by a letter and a banker's cheque. I should very much like to know what he's got in his head now."

The next day Mrs. Tresdaile, full of a new whim, resolved to await Bartholomew's arrival at the railway station.

"He'll be running half over the town if I don't," said Mrs. Tresdaile, in explanation; "besides, I want to take him by surprise with my affection for him."

Alice was at home that particular Saturday. Colonel Hollingston and daughter had gone to Brighton for the day on a visiting mission. It had been their wish that Alice should accompany them, but Mrs. Tresdaile had asserted her authority by so very firm a negative to Colonel Hollingston's request, that that gentleman had gone away half-offended.

"I wonder whether that bald-headed old man is thinking of a second wife," said Mrs.

Tresdaile to me; "he'd better be thinking of a second world."

This was a very sensible remark, although Mrs. Tresdaile, nearly double his age, had not thought much of a second world herself.

"Do you think Alice would say 'yes' to his offer, Mrs. Tresdaile?"

"I'd make another Will the same day if she did," replied Mrs. Tresdaile, fiercely; "for if that old rascal thinks to fatten on my money, he's very much mistaken—I'll tell him so, too, the next time I see him!"

And the old lady rapped with her stick on the floor.

"But, my dear Mrs. Tresdaile, is it at all probable?" I said; "surely so shrewd a young lady as Miss Hollingston would be the first to detect and put an end to the attentions of the Colonel."

"Yes, yes, and my grand-daughter is at too romantic an age to see an Adonis in that tub of a man," added the old lady, anxious to be convinced. "Alice, my dear," she said as that young lady made her

appearance, "we have just found a husband for you!"

"Indeed, grandmamma, who is the fortunate man?"

"Colonel Hollingston," replied Mrs. Tresdaile, with one of the sharpest glances that her eyes could bestow.

The merry laugh which responded to the name of the gentleman seemed to satisfy the old lady, who alluded no more to the subject.

Four o'clock that afternoon we were on the platform of the Hastings Railway Station, awaiting the arrival of the train which was to bring the anxious Bartholomew to his grandmother's bosom. There were a great many persons waiting like ourselves, and Mrs. Tresdaile got rather in the way with her Bath chair, which one or two surly guards ventured to anathematize.

The train came shrieking and panting to the terminus at last—doors were unfastened—the waiting and the waited for were mingling in one stream—Mrs. Tresdaile's chair was more in the way than

ever, and people were running against it and getting their feet under the wheels, and being continually told by Mrs. Tresdaile "to look where they were going, the great stupids!"

"My dear grandmother," cried Bartholomew, wriggling at last from the midst of the crowd, "this is an unexpected pleasure, to find you waiting here—how glad I am to see you! Ah! Miss Alice—Miss Bloyce, both charming as the flowery May!"

"CAN it be?—yes, no—yes, it is grandmother!" ejaculated a voice on the other side; "and Bartholomew, too, and the young ladies! What an extraordinary coincidence!"

Bartholomew whirled round and looked fiercely at the speaker.

"Why, what do you want here?" he said to his cousin Barnaby, who was smirking and bowing on the other side of the Bath chair; "wasn't London big enough for your abilities?"

"Too big, cousin, much too big," an-

swered Barnaby, not at all put out by his cousin's abruptness; "therefore, I seek a smaller sphere, drawn thither, I confess, by the dutiful affection of a grandson."

"Well, Barnaby, I am glad to see you," said Mrs. Tresdaile; "and so is your cousin, Bartholomew—look at his happy face."

"Oh! I'm not sorry to see him," said Bartholomew, trying to get the frown out of his features; "but I should have thought, with his numerous engagements, it would have been prudent to stay away."

"More prudent to come to Hastings," said Barnaby, shaking his head in a wag-gish manner, "when there is business to settle with grandmother."

"If you have come to borrow money, Barnaby, you'd better go back by the next train," remarked Grandmother Tresdaile, emphatically.

"Grandmother," replied Barnaby, in a pathetic manner, "do you think I would seek you in this marine retreat for mercenary purposes? No, no—far from it. I arrived here, Mrs. T., on the wings of gra-

titude, to thank you for past favours, and to pay you the hundred pounds I owe you."

"What!" exclaimed Mrs. Tresdaile, "to pay *me* back! I'll never believe it till I see the money."

"Money, or money's value—which you please—shall be placed in your hands this very evening."

"None of your money's value for me—some trumpery shares or other in a swindling company."

"The money, then," said Barnaby, carelessly; "you shall have the money, with all the heartfelt thanks of him who has, through your kind assistance, attained to independence—affluence!"

"Well, there is no occasion to remain here chattering," said Mrs. Tresdaile, giving the signal for the man to proceed with her Bath chair, "you had better come home to tea, both of you, as you have business to settle. I ought to be highly delighted with so many grandsons round me, all inquiring about my health—three out of four—it's very flattering."

"Three!" repeated Bartholomew and Barnaby in one breath.

"Oh! you did not know George Keldon was down here, enjoying himself? I expect he has attained independence and affluence, as well as Barnaby Tresdaile."

"In Hastings!" exclaimed the bewildered Bartholomew—"everybody seems to be coming to Hastings to harass you, my dear grandmother. That villain Keldon has not seen you, surely?"

"Seen me, and frightened me out of my wits!"

"Oh! a magistrate will have to settle this," said Bartholomew, as he walked by the side of the Bath chair.

"Let him be," replied Mrs. Tresdaile—"he'll live to repent his fool-hardiness. Had he kept himself away, and not revived ugly associations with his presence, he would have been five thousand pounds a better man."

"Eh?" said Bartholomew, with his head very much on one side, like a magpie, "how's that?"

"Never mind—so it is."

"But—"

"But, Bartholomew, don't worry me," said Mrs. Tresdaile; "if anyone has any respect for me or himself, he'd better not worry me!"

Bartholomew was silent the rest of the way home, and did not intrude upon Mrs. Tresdaile's reverie with further questions concerning George Keldon. He was very thoughtful too, and drew a rusty kid glove from his right hand for the purpose of biting his finger nails.

"And so George Keldon is in Hastings, Miss Bloyce," said Barnaby Tresdaile, after he had politely offered me his arm; "that man is blind to his own interest, a reckless being—an addlepate. If he is so precious fond of the old lady, why can't he keep it to himself; it would pay him better in the long run. It's extremely awkward Keldon being in Hastings. Good heavens! if he called to see me at Mrs. Tresdaile's, he'd be the ruin of me! Have you any idea where he is lodging, Miss Bloyce?"

I remembered Keldon's remark the day I met him on the East Hill.

"He was lodging at a fisherman's at the back part of the town," I said; "but I'm not certain he is in Hastings now. I haven't seen him for some days."

"I'd give twenty pounds to hear he was in Blackman's Gardens."

"I thought you were rather partial to Mr. Keldon's society, sir."

"So I am, Miss Bloyce, in its proper place, but I can't let ruin swoop down upon me for Mr. Keldon's sake. The truth is, my dear lady," in a whisper, "such is my grandmother's objection to the party whose name I have just mentioned, that—that were he to claim me as his friend and benefactor in *her* presence, annihilation would be the result; and he would never have the prudence to keep my secret."

"Are you particularly prudent, Mr. Tresdaile, in entrusting me, your grandmother's friend and companion, with that secret of yours?"

"Miss Bloyce, I would trust you with

everything and anything! Miss Bloyce, worldly and cunning as I am, I would for your—”

“Is Mr. Bartholomew aware of your secret?” I inquired, breaking in, rather alarmed.

“*He?*” cried Barnaby, in a husky whisper; “he’d be the first to turn the old lady against me, if he had a chance. There’s not a spark of Christian charity in the man, for even his blood relations; he’s one enormous lump of concentrated selfishness. Eager as I was to reach Hastings, I would have ventured to-morrow in the three-and-sixpenny excursion train rather than have come down with him.”

There were very few men in the world more anxious to pay their debts than Mr. Barnaby Tresdaile, I thought.

“Miss Bloyce, you heard me speak of independence and affluence, just now,” said he; “will you not as—as—ahem—a friend, offer me your congratulations?”

“With all my heart, Mr. Tresdaile.”

“I have been all my life an unfortunate

man, have—what's the matter, Miss Bloyce? —pray be calm, I'm not going to say anything, *now*, that can excite you."

But I was not excited by Mr. Tresdaile's remarks—had not been paying very great attention to them—there being something much more strange to surprise me in the distance. Twenty yards in advance, marching along at a pace that would soon make the distance greater between us, was my brother Andrew, or something so closely resembling him, that it might have been his Fetch. My brother Andrew in appearance, with such a light coat, such spotless gloves, and tiny varnished boots, altogether so extensively attired, that even Hastings was taken by surprise at the tall traveller's appearance. Yet not my brother Andrew surely, for there was a servant in livery trotting at his heels, and bearing in his arms a case—possibly a jewel case, too valuable to be left at the booking-office with the rest of his luggage.

"What a surprising likeness to my brother!" I replied.

"Which—who—where?" inquired Mr. Tresdaile; "that young gentleman in the zephyr coat—Ah! he came down by our train—and as I was saying, Miss Bloyce, I have been all my life—"

"Have I known Andrew for so many years, to be deceived like this?" I murmured; "and yet the little note he sent me yesterday said nothing about his coming down to Hastings. Oh! this is very perplexing—I should like to run after him!"

The wish had hardly left my lips before the impulsive Mr. Tresdaile dropped my arm, and set off after the stranger.

"What's the matter—what's the matter?" exclaimed Mrs. Tresdaile, startled at the precipitate retreat of her grandson Barnaby; "has he gone mad, or has anybody picked his pocket?"

"I think he wishes to overtake that gentleman at the corner of the street," I answered, vexed with myself for uttering a wish that he had hastened to fulfil his own way—vexed at his officiousness, and my

own necessity for explanation—"I thought I recognized my brother Andrew."

"Your brother?" ejaculated Mrs. Tresdaile; "good Lord, is everybody coming to Hastings? Does Barnaby know him? What does he mean tearing along the streets in that wild-goose fashion, disgracing himself and his connections?"

My brother, or my brother's Fetch, followed by the servant, had turned the corner of the street. Barnaby was close upon his heels, when the wind whisked off his hat in a contrary direction. A scramble after the hat, recovery, disappearance of Barnaby round the corner, sudden re-appearance, brushing his hat and looking vacant. He came slowly towards us with a heightened colour.

"He has gone!—vanished!—can't see him anywhere!"

"See whom?" inquired Mrs. Tresdaile.

"Miss Bloyce's brother," said Barnaby, becoming redder than ever; "Miss Bloyce thought it was her brother—like to see him and make sure—couldn't run after him herself, you know?"

"Miss Bloyce ought to be very much obliged to you for the trouble you have taken," said Bartholomew, grimly.

"It was very kind of Mr. Tresdaile, although totally unnecessary," said I, passing my arm through Alice's, and leaving Mr. Barnaby to the company of his cousin Bartholomew, or the back of the Bath chair. He preferred the Bath chair, at the back of which he marched with stately steps the remainder of the way to our apartments.

CHAPTER V.

MY FIRST CHANCE.

IT was a long while since Mrs. Tresdaile had had a tea-party—even consisting of numbers so small as were that Saturday evening assembled on the first-floor of Mrs. Elwes. Neither Bartholomew Tresdaile nor his cousin Barnaby had any recollection of sitting down to tea with his grandmother since he was a little boy; each had come about his business once or twice a-week for many years—Bartholomew, mostly to present money; Barnaby, full of some new speculation to borrow it—but neither had been asked to break bread, much less drink

tea, with his relative; such a proceeding would have totally deranged Mrs. Tresdaile's weekly housekeeping accounts, which were always calculated to a nicety.

I took the head of the table and made tea for the family party; both Mrs. Tresdaile and Alice objecting to trouble. I found it an embarrassing position that evening; Mr. Barnaby Tresdaile being particularly interested in my manœuvres, and following them with very great attention. Mr. Bartholomew Tresdaile conversed with his grandmother and Alice in the most amiable manner—complimented them both on their looks, congratulated them on not taking his advice and spending the summer months at Greenwich—hoped they were enjoying themselves as heartily as he could wish—talked a great deal of the beauties of Nature and the blessings of Providence—and was altogether as cheerful and conversational as such a foxy individual could possibly be.

After tea, Mrs. Tresdaile, with an eye to business and a distrust of Mr. Barnaby

Tresdaile's memory, called her younger grandson to the side of her chair and brought up the subject of the loan. Whilst they conversed in a subdued tone, it was painful to watch Mr. Bartholomew Tresdaile's efforts to be agreeable to Alice and me, and to hear something of the dialogue in the corner; to listen to his observations on passing events, with his little eyes screwed to the left, and his ears very much pricked up.

Barnaby Tresdaile's presence there, and the confidential position he had assumed, evidently made his cousin Bartholomew uneasy. It was half-an-hour before the business was settled, before Barnaby opened his pocket-book and drew forth several notes, which he tendered to his grandmother, who, proceeding immediately to the window, held the notes to the light, moistened the edges with her lips, and went through several experiments to make sure they were genuine.

"I'll give you your bill back in a minute, Barnaby, dear," said Mrs. Tresdaile, affectionately; "I brought it to Hastings along

with a few more little things—not that I ever expected to make use of it, or thought it worth twopence.”

“There’s no occasion to trouble—” began Barnaby.

“Ah! you are too easy, Barnaby,” interrupted the old lady; “I’m afraid you’ll never get on in the world, sharp as you think yourself. Always look after your receipts, my man, and don’t trust even your grandmother further than you can see her.”

Mrs. Tresdaile hobbled out of the room with the notes in her hand, and shortly afterwards returned with Mr. Barnaby Tresdaile’s bill, which had been left with her as—security!

“There, it’s off your mind, Barnaby, and you’ll be glad to get back to London and business again—do you return to-night?”

“To-night!—bless my soul, no,” said Barnaby, thrusting the bill which his grandmother had returned to him into his waistcoat pocket.

“You should never travel on Sunday, if you can help it, Barnaby.”

"I don't mean," returned Barnaby, decisively, "to travel on Sunday or Monday either. Grandmother, I *must* speak to you in private for a few minutes."

"Why, what's the matter?"

"Grandmother," said Barnaby, in a high state of excitement, "it is very important that I should have a few minutes private conversation with you; I have come seventy-four miles to open my mind to one or two persons, and you are one of them."

"Considering our grandmother's weakness," said Bartholomew—"taking into consideration her susceptibilities, her objections—"

"When she talks about her objections and susceptibilities and so on, cousin Bartholomew," cried Barnaby, opening his mind in another direction rather suddenly, "it will be time enough for you to interfere. It isn't your business at present."

Barnaby, generally so meek, so willing to give in to everybody, so docile and deferential on all occasions to his more wealthy cousin, firing up thus with a retort

uncourteous, left Mr. Bartholomew Tresdaile without breath for further argument.

"I have no objection to hear you, Barnaby," said Mrs. Tresdaile, who was trembling with impatience to satisfy her curiosity; "but understand me, I don't intend to give you back that hundred pounds, *however you came by it!*"

"It's nothing about the hundred pounds, Mrs. Tresdaile, I assure you."

"Then you had better follow me into the next room."

Mrs. Tresdaile and Barnaby retired, leaving Bartholomew with a very grave expression of countenance. He rallied after a few moments.

"Mr. Barnaby Tresdaile's good fortune, I fear has turned his head," he said, with a rusty little laugh. "I don't know, young ladies, whether you have noticed this singular behaviour before, but it is certainly quite new to me."

Neither of us had observed any excitement before in his cousin Barnaby.

"It will hardly be safe to leave Mrs.

Tresdaile with him any length of time, Miss Alice," said he; "if such an unfortunate event as the temporary derangement of our cousin should occur, it will be necessary to be watchful of his actions."

No one replying to this, Mr. Bartholomew Tresdaile doubled himself up, and relapsed into silence, and Alice gave me a comical smile across the table. Alice had formed a very true estimate of her cousin Bartholomew's character—was shrewd enough to detect its weak point, and mischievous enough that evening to work upon it.

She expressed her fears also for Mrs. Tresdaile in a very serious manner—trusted cousin Barnaby would not take advantage of his grandmother's good nature, and get her to sign some document which would make her answerable for a hundred shares in a bubble company, like he did—like he did—when was it, Miss Bloyce?

I sat rather surprised at this exhibition of Alice Tresdaile's abilities, and wondered if Emily Hollingston had taught her the art of aggravation. I glanced at Bartho-

lomew Tresdaile sitting there, very pale and quiet, but listening attentively; looked at Alice, and tried, without effect, to frown her into silence. She chattered on, feigning alarm at the length of the interview, and fancying she could hear Mr. Barnaby's persuasive voice talking about money, till, looking in Bartholomew's direction, she detected his keen eyes glinting at her from beneath his thick grey eyebrows.

There was a peculiar expression on his face too; an expression that startled one, and made the blood run cold. Sitting with his head bent very much forward, his lank hands clasped round his knees, his thin lips compressed, and with that strange look in his eyes, he reminded me of some dreadful ogre in a story-book.

"Miss Alice has excellent spirits, Miss Bloyce," said he, turning to me—"excellent spirits—may they never fail her!"

"I hope not," said Alice, somewhat pertly.

"Miss Alice would have aroused my fears by feigning an alarm herself," he added;

“ha! ha! a pleasant jest, which I should have seen through sooner had I been more used to young ladies' society. But I am a plain man, matter-of-fact even in the bosom of my family, and totally unused to banter! A very pleasant jest,” he said, with another rusty laugh; “I think I shall remember it.”

Was it ever forgotten?—was it not the nature of that cautious, money-loving man to treasure up his wrongs, to nurse them silently, and bide his time? With the old show of deference to Alice, as Mrs. Tresdaile's favourite grandchild, with his efforts to be pleasant, frank, and cousinly, was he not still brooding on the memory of that night, long after Alice had dismissed it from her mind?

Shortly afterwards Mrs. Tresdaile entered the room alone.

“Has Barnaby gone?” asked Bartholomew, looking up.

“Yes,” was the reply; “he begged me to offer his excuses for his abrupt departure; but his feelings—I think he said his feelings

—would not allow him to return again to-night.”

“It’s very singular,” said Bartholomew; “my charming cousin Alice was beginning to suspect his designs upon your purse.”

Alice coloured.

“Not more afraid than Mr. Bartholomew Tresdaile, I think,” was her reply.

“Perhaps not, perhaps not, we are all anxious to protect our grandmother from imposition.”

“She can protect herself, thank you,” curtly rejoined the old lady; “and now, Bartholomew, suppose we settle the week’s accounts at the manufactory — how has business been?”

“Pretty brisk,” replied the grandson.

“Miss Bloyce, will you see to that little black hole which Mrs. Elwes calls the back drawing-room, and let me know when you are ready to check the accounts.”

“Are the books out, ma’am?”

“Some of them.”

I crossed the landing towards the small back room which was to do duty as count-

ing-house during Mrs. Tresdaile's stay in Hastings, and wherein the interview between grandmother and grandson had recently taken place. Opening the door, I was rather surprised, and very much inclined to run away, to find Mr. Barnaby Tresdaile standing there, with his back to the mantel-piece, and his eyes fixed thoughtfully upon the table-lamp.

"Don't go, Miss Bloyce," said he, looking up, "I—I—wish a few minutes' talk with you, if you will please to favour me."

"Is—is Mrs. Tresdaile—"

"Mrs. Tresdaile is aware that I am here."

I advanced, rather nervously it must be confessed, and with a suspicion, very faint and far off though, of the coming subject of discourse. It might just be *that*, but how very absurd, preposterous, and unlikely!

"Will you take a seat, Miss Bloyce?" said he, tendering me a chair.

"No, thank you, sir; I must return immediately. Mrs. Tresdaile will require the use of this room in a few minutes."

"Mrs. Tresdaile was kind enough to say

so for my sake," said he; "but I can assure you there is no occasion for hurry."

"Surely there is no occasion for all this secrecy and formality."

"Ahem!—well, perhaps not, but will you be seated for one moment?"

After I had rather reluctantly complied with his request, he ran his fingers through his hair, buttoned his coat carefully to the chin, put his hands behind him, and began.

"Miss Bloyce, in these times of public—no, I will not begin like that; there rises before my eyes a ghostly prospectus to daunt me at the outset! Miss Bloyce," he commenced, for the second time, "I have been an unfortunate man for thirty-four long years—thirty-four is my age, Miss."

"Indeed," I replied, as Mr. Tresdaile appeared to expect a reply.

"An unfortunate man during my earthly pilgrimage; mixed up eternally with companies, and living in a little office down a dark lane in the City, like a spider, Miss—a lean and hungry spider catching few flies, though!"

He uttered this so solemnly, that I had to bite my lips several times to keep my smiles down.

“When I say I am a promoter of public companies, Miss Bloyce, I don't mean that I am in the habit of concocting those extraordinary schemes which we hear of every day for trapping shareholders. I am not an inventive genius; I only carry out the plans of men more clever than myself. I put gentlemen ambitious of becoming directors, general managers, &c. in proper training, write or revise their prospectuses, prepare their memorandums of association, see them duly registered and started—attend as a mourner at the winding-up.”

“Is all this preface absolutely necessary?” I asked.

“I think so, Miss Bloyce, with all due deference,” said he; “it explains my position in society. Will you allow me to continue?”

I bowed in assent.

“Miss Bloyce, you would scarcely imagine the hundreds in my profession, great and

small ; the great, as is the way of the world, swallowing up the prizes ; the small leading a very hand-to-mouth existence. Being, Miss Bloyce, one of the small, it is the hard-up companies, and the companies with very little capital, that fall to my share ; sometimes I get a few pounds, in most cases for my services a large number of paid-up shares, which I have to sell at any price before the smash comes. Fortune, however, has at the last moment condescended to smile upon me ; I have not only obtained the working of the machinery of a sound company—not only received six hundred pounds' worth of shares, which are at a premium, and have—ahem!—been disposed of, but have been guaranteed the secretaryship, at a salary of five hundred pounds per annum."

"If you desire to hear my congratulations, I—"

"Miss Bloyce, I am coming to the point rapidly," said Barnaby, pushing his hair back and unbuttoning his coat again for the convenience of breathing ; "of domesticated

habits, cheerful and companionable, still, Miss B., I have had no chance of settling in life, and enjoying the comforts of a home. Fate has been against me till now—and *now*, Miss Bloyce, when I feel the tide about to turn, I come to one I have admired and respected from the first moment of my happy acquaintance with her, and I—I offer her my hand and heart!”

I think he would have dropped on his knees had I not sprung up hurriedly.

“Don't kneel to me, pray don't kneel, Mr. Tresdaile,” I cried; “it is very flattering—you honour me—I thank you, but—”

“But!” echoed Mr. Tresdaile, dismally.

“But I am very sorry you have thought of me, for I can never be your wife,” I replied, as resolutely as possible considering the circumstances.

His countenance fell, and he looked hard at me with his little earnest eyes.

“I should make a good husband,” said he; “rather old for you, perhaps, but none the less affectionate for that. I wish you would say that I had taken you by sur-

prise—that you will think of this, and give me an answer in a day or two?”

“No, Mr. Tresdaile, I would prefer, must insist upon, your accepting the answer I have made you—it is final.”

“Fortune don't smile so very much after all, does it?” said he, with a spasmodic gulp; “I hope I haven't pained your feelings or frightened you too much? I had a faint hope that you were aware of the fancy I had taken for you—such a good, quiet, amiable, clever girl as you are, how could I help taking a fancy? Grandmother Tresdaile said it was all moonshine—said I was an old fool too—so I am! Good evening.”

Mr. Tresdaile took up his hat and walked out of the room, humming “The Dead March in Saul.” A moment afterwards his head came round the door.

“Miss Bloyce, you need not be alarmed when we meet again. You shall never hear a word more about it, or—”

He jerked his head back and disappeared without finishing the sentence. When I re-entered the drawing-room that evening,

I found Alice reading, and Bartholomew in earnest debate with his grandmother. I had some difficulty in keeping my blushes down, Mrs. Tresdaile looked at me so steadfastly.

"What a time you have been, Miss Bloyce!" she remarked; "here is Bartholomew anxious to give in his accounts and go home."

"No hurry—no hurry," said the senior grandson.

"Now, Miss Bloyce, if you please," said Mrs. Tresdaile; "Alice, my dear, can you amuse yourself with that book till we return?"

"Yes, grandmamma."

"Come into the counting-house if you feel dull, my child."

As we entered the little room, Mrs. Tresdaile said in a low voice to me:—

"Yes, or No, was it?"

"No."

"Sensible woman!"

I could not help thinking of Mr. Barnaby Tresdaile over the account-books, feeling a little sorry too for his disappointment,

although a little disturbed at a proposal made on so early an acquaintance. Yet there was something so ridiculous in it all—it had been so matter-a-fact a proposal, that with all my pity and confusion I could have found matter for merriment in it had I had the room to myself.

The report of the week's business having been delivered, the banker's book examined, and the account-books shut, Bartholomew withdrew in search of an apartment for the night, leaving Mrs. Tresdaile and I still at the table.

When the street door had closed, and Mrs. Tresdaile, after her customary manner, had removed the unwieldy account-books and secured them in her box, my mistress laid her thin cold hand upon my own.

“So it was No.?”

“You surely did not expect it would be ‘Yes,’ madam?”

“Girls are in a great hurry to be married, now-a-days—it is the first suitor who stands the best chance, and is greedily snapped at,” she replied; “still, somehow, I

didn't think you would say 'Yes;' and its just as well you didn't, Miss Bloyce, for its the toss up of a button whether Barnaby Tresdaile will be on his head or his heels this day six months, for all his 'independence and affluence'; besides—"

Mrs. Tresdaile paused for some moments, but I waited patiently.

"Besides," she concluded at last, "I'm glad you weren't in a hurry, for I don't know what I should have done without you."

"Oh! madam," cried I, very nearly bursting into tears, for some incomprehensible reason or other, "it is very kind of you to say so—I was afraid you didn't like me much!"

"You have been upset this evening, Miss Bloyce—you'd better go to bed."

"Thank you, I think I will."

"You need not mention anything of this to Alice—be putting marriage and giving in marriage in *her* head," said Mrs. Tresdaile; "time enough when she is thirty. Dear me, I shall be getting old when Alice Tresdaile is thirty years of age!"

CHAPTER VI.

“PUMPING.”

IF there were one morning more than another on which the actions of Mrs. Tresdaile could be depended upon, it was Sunday. With the exception of now and then getting up before daylight, and immediately insisting upon having her breakfast, Mrs. Tresdaile took Sunday as a day of rest in a very literal sense, and stayed in bed till dinner-time. The morning following the Saturday on which I had received my first offer—every girl has *one* offer in her life!—was no exception to the rule. Mrs. Tresdaile was sound asleep, or did not condescend to an-

swer when the bells of Hastings were ringing us to church.

Alice and I went to church together that Sunday morning—met coming out of church no less a personage than Andrew Bloyce! My suspicions of the preceding day were confirmed—the fashionably attired stranger, with the servant at his heels, was really Andrew after all. In my impulse I forgot everything but my joy at meeting him.

“My dear brother, this is indeed an unexpected pleasure.”

“My dear little sister, how glad I am to see you!”

I could not avoid introducing him to Alice, feeling proud of him too, as he stood there with raised hat, the picture of a handsome fellow. I don't know what Alice thought of him, for she was very shy and silent as he walked by my side towards home.

“We were nearly meeting yesterday at the Railway Station, Andrew,” I said.

Andrew coloured.

“Were you at the terminus, then, Bar-

bara?" he asked, with some surprise—with rather too much surprise, I thought, for the occasion.

"Yes, waiting with Mrs. Tresdaile for a friend," I replied; "and little expecting to see Mr. Andrew Bloyce and his servant there."

"And *his* servant!" said Andrew, with a laugh; "not yet so ambitious, Barbara. Say the servant of a very valued friend of mine."

"May I ask what brings you hither, Andrew?"

"Certainly, inquisitive sister, you may ask, and certainly your affectionate brother will reply," said Andrew, lightly—"although it's a humiliating confession—Idleness! Stand I excused, Barbara?"

"I don't know yet," I observed, gravely.

"Summer weather lures one to idleness," observed Andrew; "to take up the newspapers and read about the country—to live in London when the pavement is red hot, and the sun blisters everything in its way—is too great an infliction; and if one

flies from town to the sea-side, and exchanges the sirocco for the sea-breeze, is it so heinous a crime? If you refuse me absolution I must appeal to a higher court—the judgment of Miss Tresdaile.”

He bowed again, and Miss Tresdaile blushed and said—

“I am afraid I should say, ‘Not Guilty.’”

“Now, Miss Barbara, will you confirm the verdict?”

“Oh, yes,” said I, anxious to end the subject of dispute, and not particularly pleased with his light and airy manner. He walked by our side the rest of the way home, paying some little attention to Miss Tresdaile—talking of the weather, Hastings, and the sermon we had recently heard in the church of All Saints. His presence there troubled me, though I was glad enough to see him, and though I did not believe in my heart that he had given sufficient reason for his appearance. Yet I was anxious to trust in him, for his sake as well as my own. Had he satisfactorily accounted for the ser-

vant at his heels? Where was the friend he had hunted up?—how had he found money enough, he, a poor music composer, for the jewellery he wore, for that something glittering in his shirt-front, that might even be the “diamond as big as a hazel nut” of which Colonel Hollingston had spoken.

When we were at the door of Mrs. Elwes' establishment, Miss Tresdaile bade my brother a hasty good morning, and left me to discuss private affairs with him.

“A charming girl Miss Tresdaile!” was his first remark.

“Yes, so she is thought,” I said; “and now, Andrew, may I ask if any other reason save idleness has brought you to Hastings?”

“None other, on my word.”

“Can you—can you afford——”

“My prudent, careful sister,” said he, laughing and seizing my hand, “I ought to be very grateful to the powers that be for rewarding me with such a fidgety little fairy! Do you think a week's holiday at Hastings will bring me to ruin, or lodge me.

comfortably in that refuge for the destitute, situated not a hundred miles from Whitecross Street?"

"I hope not."

"Do you remember the last gloomy dialogue we had at Pimlico?" said he—"all distrust and morbid argument. You were rather fearful of my future?"

"Yes."

"Don't fear any more, my girl—I see my way before me, and it's a bright one."

"Your opera—"

"My opera!" he cried, "oh! no, something more substantial than trios and grand chori. But I'll tell you all some day, when I have more time, my girl."

"Shall we go for a little walk this afternoon, Andrew?" I suggested; "one of those quiet country walks which you and I used to take together in Jersey before you left home for good. You used to talk of your future, then, dear."

"Yes—hum—and a precious queer future we made of it, wherein piano-forte playing and prayer-meetings were the only chances

of success in this world," said he; "no, Barbara, I regret this afternoon and evening must be devoted to a little dinner-party at a friend's."

"A gay Sunday, Andrew!" said I; somewhat reproachfully.

"One must dine, methodistical sister," said he; "and even attending church of a morning, and answering all the responses, will not destroy the appetite of the genus homo."

"When shall I see you—to-morrow?"

"Yes, I'll call to-morrow, and you must introduce me to Mrs. Tresdaile; I shall soon have a favour to ask her."

"A favour?"

"The favour of taking away my sister Barbara to my own home," said he, pressing my hands in his; "of rescuing her from dependence and toadyism. Will it not be delightful, girl, to have a home of my own, and you for its housekeeper—a dainty little home, where I can play the piano all day, and hear your words of encouragement, when I grow despairing in the battle of life."

“How delightful to live together, Andrew!” I cried; “but will the day ever come?”

He looked into my tear-swimming eyes, then suddenly turned away his head.

“Yes—I think so!”

But he did not speak so confidently, I thought, and he left me doubtful if the picture he had drawn would ever be anything but surface-painting.

Over our early dinner that Sunday afternoon I informed Mrs. Tresdaile of my brother's arrival in Hastings; but my mistress made no comment upon the news till the dinner-table was cleared, and a few hard green apples were introduced by way of dessert.

“What does your brother want in Hastings, Miss Bloyce?” she inquired.

I had to inform Mrs. Tresdaile that Mr. Andrew Bloyce had come to Hastings solely for pleasure.

“Pity he's got so much time to spare, and money to waste,” she commented; “I hope he won't come bothering here, Miss Bloyce.”

“He has expressed a wish to see you,

ma'am," I said, with some little hesitation.

"What does he want to see me for?" she inquired.

"I—I really don't know, Mrs. Tresdaile," I replied; "he may be naturally curious to see the mistress of his sister. Some early day, he tells me, he shall have to ask a favour of you, madam."

"Like his impudence," muttered Mrs. Tresdaile; "what favour is it, Miss Bloyce?"

"Your consent to my quitting your home for his own."

"What! am I to lose you, then?" she exclaimed, sitting bolt upright with astonishment.

"He says so—I am not quite certain myself."

"Oh! he'll alter his mind, or get married, or something," was the cheering rejoinder; "brothers don't like their grown-up sisters too near them, watching and prying into everything. It's all talk, depend upon it!"

I sighed. I was inclined to think so myself.

"Perhaps your brother is one of the

coaxing sort, and want's to flatter you off your guard," added the old lady, shrewdly.

I gave a little jump at this. Ungenerous thought as it was, it had already darted to my own mind, and been, as I imagined, thrust hastily away. What object could Andrew Bloyce have in flattering one whose wishes were all for his good?—one, too, who would not require flattering to help him, if the power ever lay in her hands? I was glad when Mrs. Tresdaile changed the subject to her grandsons, and expressed a hope that they would keep out of sight till Monday—she had given them both a hint to do so, and they were pretty quick, she added, at taking hints in general.

Barnaby Tresdaile took the hint, but Bartholomew did not. At five o'clock in the afternoon the latter gentleman looked in to say that he had altered his mind about staying in Hastings till Tuesday, and intended to leave by to-morrow's early train—his wife would be uneasy at his delay, and perhaps the business would go wrong in his absence.

Mrs. Tresdaile was so pleased to hear of his intention not to stop till Tuesday, that she immediately asked him to tea, an invitation that was gratefully accepted. After tea, the church bells began to ring again, and Mr. Bartholomew to put on a very solemn expression of countenance.

“Are any of you ladies going to church this evening?” he inquired.

“You know I never go to church,” said Mrs. Tresdaile; “the heat is too much for me.”

Bartholomew looked at Mrs. Tresdaile, who was drawn up close to the fire that bright July day, and murmured—“Ah! he had forgotten how the heat affected his grandmother.”

“I can study my Bible with more comfort at home,” Mrs. Tresdaile further observed; “it is not he who goes most often to church that has the best chance of heaven, grandson.”

Mrs. Tresdaile regarded the ceiling reverently, and was evidently inclined to fall into a pious train of thought that afternoon.

Isat and tried to remember the day—even the Sunday—when Mrs. Tresdaile had studied her Bible with comfort at home. There was a large old Family Bible in No. 502, Stamford Street, Blackfriars, but it had only been opened once by my mistress, to my knowledge, and that was to refer to the date of Alice's birth, which was duly recorded on the fly-leaf. Mrs. Tresdaile had not thought to bring it to Hastings with her other Bibles—those brass-bound, statistical Books of Worship, which were opened daily, studied hard, perhaps prayed over!

Bartholomew Tresdaile did not know if the young ladies were going to church or not; that was why he inquired—he thought of going himself, and would have preferred the pleasure of his cousin's or Miss Bloyce's society.

“Alice has been once to-day,” said the old lady, “and will take a walk with me this evening. I believe Miss Bloyce is thinking of church again—she's always at it!”

“Oh! I will not deprive you of Miss

Bloyce—will not trouble Miss Bloyce with my company. Now I think of it, I am sure you cannot spare her.”

“I am sure I can!” said his grandmother, quickly.

“But Miss Bloyce would perhaps prefer to go alone?” said he, in an insinuating manner.

There was nothing left me but to accept the offer of Mr. Tresdaile's escort, and to answer that I should have great pleasure in accompanying him; and a few minutes afterwards there we were trotting to church, quite a Darby and Joan couple—Joan somewhat embarrassed by the attention which Darby's frequent doublings up on the road received from the Hastings visitors.

Darby had a great deal to say during that little walk to church, all on the one topic of the dear grandmother at home. He was so glad to find her well—he could assure me he had been in great fear lest the journey to Hastings should tax her strength too much, disturb her mind a little even—had I remarked any slight eccentricity in her

behaviour since that journey? — he asked the question in confidence, of course!

“Nothing particular,” was my brief reply.

Nothing more than her usual odd manner—in confidence again, did I not think at times she was extremely odd?

“I may have thought so at times. What a beautiful evening, Mr. Tresdaile.”

Yes, a lovely evening, the sea like a mirror; and perhaps Miss Bloyce thought his questions curious, but he was naturally attached to his grandmother, and was a great favourite of hers! He alluded to that beloved lady on a Sabbath evening, because she had herself remarked that a George Keldon—a man who, he could assure me, was a most violent and disreputable character—had nearly frightened her out of her wits. He presumed I was present at that interview?

“Yes.”

Of course it was not his wish to know what transpired on that occasion, although he had no doubt Mrs. Tresdaile would inform him on the first opportunity; he was

more anxious as a relative to know, and he could only know through a third person,—one to whom Mrs. Tresdaile, nay, every member of the family, had become attached,—whether his grandmother exhibited *more* than her usual eccentricity after the meeting—went out, for instance, or *sent for anybody?*

Mr. Bartholomew's intentions, with all his cleverness, peeped too plainly from the curtain—there was no masking them with his coolness and easy off-hand manners. The questions irritated me; the man's worldly nature, which he could not even lay aside as he walked churchwards, my suspicions of his former manœuvres in the drawing-room to make me his companion—for I could see they were manœuvres then—all pained me, but put me on my guard.

I did not know whether any deeper motive than the mere satisfying his curiosity lurked in the background, but I mistrusted him.

“Mrs. Tresdaile's eccentricity was not more strongly developed afterwards than

before," I replied. "To your other questions, sir, you must excuse me making a reply. I cannot think it my place, or consistent with my duty, to discuss the private affairs of her I serve."

"My dear Miss Bloyce, it's not the slightest consequence," he hastily replied; "my interest in her suggested the questions, as it might a hundred others. Her mental bereavement thirty-four years since, dwells still upon my mind, and makes me anxious."

"Mental bereavement," I repeated.

"Thirty-four years ago, Mrs. Tresdaile's only daughter ran away from home, made a low marriage, and brought disgrace upon her family. Mrs. Tresdaile's loss of her favourite child turned her brain, and kept her a lunatic for eight long months. In *my* opinion, she has never been the same woman since—never the same firm, methodical being that I, though a boy then, can recollect. All allusion to that time of insanity, to George Keldon, excites her violently, and leads her to think you still mistrust her strength of mind. You see now,

Miss Bloyce, why I, in confidence, have been perhaps too minute in my inquiries?"

It certainly accounted for his anxiety—accounted to me, too, for much that had been in Mrs. Tresdaile's manner unaccountable. The strange hatred beyond the grave, the craving for ill news of her dead daughter's child, savoured more of the past insanity than I cared to express to him with whom I walked. I could not shut it from my thoughts at church; it mingled with the prayers monotonously delivered by a sleepy curate to a flock not the most extensive; it interfered with my proper attention to the sermon.

Bartholomew, apparently more able to withdraw his thoughts from worldly contemplation when he really set his mind to it, was one of the best behaved of the congregation; he answered all the responses, and sang so loudly, that the curate woke up a little, and peeped over the pulpit into the pew beneath, wherein Mr. Tresdaile sat singing and doubling himself up alternately in a most remarkable manner.

CHAPTER VII.

UNDER-GROUND WORK.

COMING out of church that Sunday evening—Mr. Bartholomew and I—we found Mrs. Tresdaile and Alice waiting for us; Mrs. Tresdaile's Bath chair drawn right across the entrance, and materially interfering with the exit of the congregation.

“Oh! here you are!” exclaimed Mrs. Tresdaile, as she caught sight of the lank form of her grandson; “I was beginning to doubt if you had gone to church at all.”

“Is—is anything the matter?” Bartholomew Tresdaile ventured to inquire.

“Nothing very particular,” replied his

grandmother; "only I was afraid Miss Bloyce would bring you back again out of your way."

"Not at all out of my way, I assure you," was the prompt response.

"Well, then, it would be out of *my* way to see you," explained Mrs. Tresdaile, "and that's quite enough for me. You'll start early to-morrow morning, grandson?"

"Ye—es," replied Bartholomew.

"Then we'll bid you good-bye now, Bart.," said the old lady, "and a pleasant journey back again."

"And next week, shall I have the pleasure of calling on you at Hastings, or will a cheque and a little statement of the week's accounts suffice?"

Mrs. Tresdaile gave the signal for her man to proceed, and the barrier to Christian progress having been removed, the congregation were allowed to disperse more easily. Mrs. Tresdaile had not responded to her grandson's question, she was evidently considering it over. Mr. Bartholomew had suggested two methods of conducting the

tobacco business; had not appeared anxious for either, and had consequently puzzled the old lady, whose actions were ruled a great deal by contraries.

"You'd better come down next Saturday, I think," said Mrs. Tresdaile at last.

Mr. Bartholomew bowed his head and said—"Very well."

"Then good-night to you."

Mr. Bartholomew shook hands all round, doubled himself up for a moment, raised his hat, smiled, doubled up again, and then went off to his lodgings, whispering to himself numberless blessings on the head of his grandmother.

Mrs. Tresdaile watched her grandson out of sight, and then, much to the surprise of Alice and myself, ordered her man to turn the Bath chair towards the Parade.

"It's a beautiful night," observed Mrs. Tresdaile; "I think I should like a sea-breeze."

"But the night-air, Mrs. Tresdaile!"

"If the night air don't hurt you, Miss Bloyce, there's no reason to complain," said

Mrs. Tresdaile ; " it is better to have the night air, than to sit in that horrid room full of draughts ; besides I'm romantic, and want to see the moonshine on the waters. Nothing like moonshine for old women, *some people* think ! "

Mrs. Tresdaile expressed herself with a great deal of emphasis, and a few of her remarks were a trifle acidulated. Something had occurred to ruffle her since Bartholomew Tresdaile had escorted me to church ; but as she was very often " ruffled," without any ostensible cause, there was nothing remarkable in *that*.

We went in search of the sea-breeze and the moonshine, and found them both in perfection that warm summer evening. Neither Alice nor I had any objection to the walk, preferred it a hundred times to that close drawing-room, where the fire was always kept up to baking point ; but I think Mrs. Tresdaile had got it across her mind that I wanted her in-doors, and was, as a matter of course, inclined to stay out all night.

The moon was not in its full brightness

when we entered the Parade, the daylight had not quite died out of the sky, and the sea was faintly golden in the west. The Parade was thickly dotted with people; all the visitors in Hastings appeared to have turned out of their apartments to enjoy the beauty of the night.

As we strolled on towards St. Leonard's, I expected to meet every instant Colonel Hollingston and daughter, Barnaby Tresdaile, or George Keldon. My brother Andrew I was not prepared for; he was possibly at his hotel with that unknown friend whom I had not seen, and whose servant he had borrowed to carry his shaving case. It could not be his jewel case, now!

Barnaby Tresdaile and George Keldon did not cross our path; Barnaby had already gone back to London, I learned afterwards, and George Keldon—I learned afterwards too—had caught sight of us, and fled for his life, his nerves that evening having been many degrees below proof. Turning back, however, we came face to face with Colonel Hollingston and daughter—the Colonel look-

ing very important, the daughter very much dressed. They were not unaccompanied, for to my surprise there walked by the side of Colonel Hollingston, my brother Andrew!

"My dear ladies," cried the Colonel, with his hat very high in the air, "charmed to see you this fine evening—delighted to find you looking so well, Mrs. Tresdaile."

"Ah, Barbara," said my brother, after raising his hat to Mrs. Tresdaile, "I hope this is a little plan of yours to surprise me. You must allow me," in a lower tone, "to introduce you to Colonel Hollingston?"

"I have already had the pleasure of an introduction to that gentleman," I replied.

"Through the Tresdailes?—that is a most remarkable coincidence," said Andrew; "but your worthy mistress is looking very hard at me — what an amiable expression of countenance!—I long to make her acquaintance."

The reader may suppose Andrew spoke in a satirical sense; on the contrary, his longing was genuine, despite his highly-

coloured remarks on the good lady's looks. I introduced Mr. Andrew Bloyce to Mrs. Tresdaile, and Mr. Andrew Bloyce expressed himself flattered and honoured in a little eloquent speech, to which Mrs. Tresdaile responded by a jerk with her head, and did not appear at all overpowered.

"I have heard of you once or twice, sir," observed Mrs. Tresdaile; "how do you get on with your music?"

Andrew coloured.

"Music? Oh! has my sister been telling you of my little piano-forte amusements, Mrs. Tresdaile?" he said, with an easy laugh; "well, I must confess, business is interfering with that hobby of mine."

"I thought it *was* your business," was Mrs. Tresdaile's second remark.

Andrew was not prepared for these straightforward queries—had not expected to encounter so sharp and matter-a-fact an old lady.

"No, no," he said; "that would be a poor business, I am afraid, Mrs. Tresdaile. What a very fine evening, is it not?"

"Your sister certainly told me," said Mrs. Tresdaile, decisively, "that you had something to do with a piano-forte—to make it, or play it, or tune it, I forget which."

"My sister must have been thinking of the time when I was vain enough to fancy myself a musical genius," replied Andrew; "but my opinions have altered since then, although I have not had an opportunity to enter into a full explanation with Miss Bloyce. Fortune has indicated another road more successful."

"So I should think," muttered Mrs. Tresdaile.

"Barbara," said he, turning to me, "the independent spirit of the Bloyces, which leads us to work our own way in life, must be shaken in your case, now that fickle jade Fortune has condescended—but family matters will not interest these ladies, or Colonel Hollingston."

"Joyce, my dear fellow, don't mind me—Miss Joyce," said the Colonel, turning in my direction, "I was quite right you see, and my memory was not so bad after all.

This is the very gentleman I was trying to remember—the very gentleman I was introduced to last Derby-day by—by—”

“Sir Watkin,” added my brother.

“Sir Watkin, Miss Boyce.”

“Bloyce, papa,” whispered his daughter.

“I said Bloyce, my dear,” he replied; “and as I was about to observe, Miss Bloyce, when Miss Hollingston took the liberty of interrupting me, the acquaintance of this gentleman is an honour and a pleasure to me. I shall always be proud to see him at Eversfield Place, whilst he remains in Hastings.”

“Thank you, thank you,” said Andrew, rapidly.

Miss Hollingston was standing near me, passive and unconcerned. I touched her gently on the arm.

“How singular it is that your father and my brother should be friends.”

“My father makes a great many *acquaintances*,” observed Miss Hollingston; “mixing so much in society, it is natural that he should see a great many faces, hear a great

many names, and forget them. Mrs. Tresdaile, I fear we are detaining you?"

"I don't see the necessity of waiting and shivering here, myself," replied Mrs. Tresdaile; "we may as well move on and talk, if there is *so* much to say! Alice, you are looking dull."

"Oh! no, grandmamma."

"You and Miss Hollingston haven't seen each other for the last twenty-four hours," said the grandmother; "I hope I am not keeping you both from confidential communications."

"We will reserve those communications till the morning, Mrs. Tresdaile," said Miss Hollingston, smiling; "that is, if you will let me rob you of Alice to-morrow?"

"Just as Miss Tresdaile pleases."

"Can you really spare me, grandmamma?" asked Alice; "I have been away from you so much."

"Don't mind me, my child, study your own wishes. What pleases you," with a little sigh that no one heard but myself, "pleases me!"

"Then I think I will come to-morrow, Emily, for an hour's chat."

"I wish we could induce you to join us, Mrs. Tresdaile," said the Colonel; "we would not trouble you much with our ways, and we should consider ourselves honoured, highly honoured indeed. May we—in the name of Miss Hollingston and myself I ask—may we have the pleasure?"

"Yes," was the short unexpected answer.

The Colonel, whose nerves resembled George Keldon's, in not being always at his command, jumped a little.

"Ahem," said he, "a thousand thanks, my dear madam, a thousand thanks!—this frank acceptance of our invitation overpowers me. It will be a proud day to-morrow—"

"I never said I was coming to-morrow, Colonel Hollingston," said Mrs. Tresdaile; "I only said 'Yes.' If it will be a pleasure to see me at Eversfield Place, you shall *have it!*"

"But why not to-morrow?" argued the Colonel.

"No, not to-morrow," replied Mrs. Tresdaile, "some day when you don't expect me, I will look in for a minute or two, and take you by surprise—he, he, he!"

Colonel Hollingston regarded Mrs. Tresdaile with some alarm; he had never heard that lady laugh before, and it curdled every drop of blood in his body. It affected his memory, too, for he called Andrew, and even Mrs. Tresdaile—whose name he had fixed pretty well—by the most extraordinary titles, during the rest of the evening.

We moved in the direction of our lodgings, Colonel Hollingston gallantly escorting Alice and me, and walking a few steps in the rear of the Bath chair, on one side of which was Miss Hollingston, on the other Andrew Bloyce. My brother Andrew was very attentive to Mrs. Tresdaile. I could hear him discoursing on the weather, Hastings and me, in a very voluble manner—hear the short, dry responses from Mrs. Tresdaile, on whom the polite address of my brother made but little impression.

When we were before the door of our temporary home Mrs. Tresdaile said—

“I won't ask any of you to come in, for I'm poor company at the best of times. Miss Hollingston, Colonel, you will excuse me, I am sure?”

Both expressed their regret that Mrs. Tresdaile should have considered it worth her while to mention such a thing.

“And Mr. Bloyce,” continued she, regarding him intently, “I must ask your excuses for to-night, to-morrow—the whole time you are in Hastings! Your sister will call upon you when you desire her company, to interchange those affectionate sentiments and to talk of those family matters together, which will amuse you both and only trouble me. I can always spare Miss Bloyce in the afternoon—sometimes in the evening. To-night, now, as it is not late, if you particularly desire it?”

“Thank you, Mrs. Tresdaile. Barbara, dear,” said he affectionately, “can you spare me half-an-hour?”

“An hour, if you wish.”

Adieux were interchanged ; Colonel Hollingston and daughter went one way, Mrs. Tresdaile and her quiet grandchild another, Andrew Bloyce and his sister a third.

We strolled towards the country, almost as light as day beneath that clear, bright moon ; turned before we reached the hedge-rows, retraced our steps to the domicile of Mrs. Tresdaile, then back again, engaged in busy dialogue.

“That’s a queer old party, Barbara,” said he ; “one of the queerest I have run against in my experience, which is not great in old women of any description, certainly. Is she always so abrupt and personal ? ”

“Not always—but very often.”

“You must have a lively time of it—the grandchild must have a lively time of it with Mrs. T.’s odd ways and ill tempers. Surely the old girl crushes the lightness of youth out of you both.”

“Not quite, Andrew.”

“Miss Tresdaile seemed glad to get away to-morrow to the Hollingstons.”

“Miss Hollingston is an old friend of

Miss Tresdaile's—they were very intimate at school."

"Indeed. Miss Hollingston appears a self-possessed, accomplished young lady—do you know much of *her*?"

"Very little."

"A beautiful girl," said he, thoughtfully.

"Why, Andrew, you are not going to fall in love with Miss Hollingston?" said I, half seriously; "were you even her equal in position, I should be sorry to be witness to a match between you."

"Why?" he asked.

"You don't want a fine lady for your wife, Andrew—rather a gentle, trusting woman."

"Could you recommend me [Miss Tresdaile?" said he, lightly.

"No," I answered; "Miss Tresdaile has a will of her own, likes her own way, and is too firm at times."

"The general characteristic of the sex, my Barbara."

"You must find out an exception to

the rule, then, unless I judge you incorrectly."

"Do you judge from the past or present?"

"A little of both."

"Come then, the summary?"

"But I want to talk to you of something else; I am not easy in my mind about you; I wish you to throw a light upon a mystery."

"Time enough half an hour hence—tomorrow—next week. Come, Barbara, your brother's character?"

"Well, don't be offended."

He laughed, and said, "Go on!"

"Of a procrastinating disposition, without doubt—inclined to put off the evil day till 'half an hour hence, to-morrow, or next week';—sanguine at times; at times despondent—extravagant, I fear; neglectful of his interest; frequently ignorant of what is best for him—full of wild empty schemes that set aside plans more tangible and safe; hasty and obstinate—yet a warm-hearted, honest English gentleman."

"Gad, I was afraid there were no good words coming, as balm to the wounds which your chopping estimate has left on my self-love," said he; "but you relent at last, *Barbara mio!* Now, Mrs. Tresdaile's character?"

"Had I followed it through all its depths, should I be justified in telling you?—you, whose experience in 'queer old parties' is not great? No, no—I change the subject to the mystery."

"Well, did I not drop a hint this morning concerning the turn of the tide?" said Andrew, thus pressed for a reply; "talk of a house and a little housekeeper?—of Bloyce Il Bianco to the rescue of a certain fair virgin yclept Barbara! The mystery is, that I am rising in the world."

"Oh! I am so glad," cried I; "but—"

"But the secret of that rising must still remain under the veil, Barbara," he continued hastily. "I hope you will not ask me to reveal it. I will tell you all when I have doubled my capital in hand, and made ten or twelve thousand pounds."

"Oh! Andrew, why conceal anything from me? What object for concealment, if the means be just?"

"You don't know the mysteries of money-making," said he; "or what names get strangely linked together in pursuit of Mammon. Are you not content to hear I am worth five thousand pounds, am considered a gentleman—consider myself one?"

"Are father and mother aware of your good fortune?"

"I wrote to father yesterday, telling him I was getting on in the world, but entering into no particulars at present."

"And Colonel Hollingston and this Sir Watkin — how long have you known them?"

"About a year. You see I move in most respectable society, Barbara," said he, "you need not be ashamed of my connections."

"Do they not lead you into unnecessary expense?"

"*You* would think so, my prudent girl," he answered; "but one must keep up ap-

pearances, and act the gentleman to the life. As for the Colonel, that proud, stupid old fellow, I don't study him much. It's his turn to study me!"

"What do you mean?"

"Nothing, only don't be surprised if the Colonel makes me a present of Miss Hollingston, and gives me his blessing," said he.

"I know better than that!"

"I am getting ambitious, and am of a marriageable age, Barbara," said he, "if I could only pick up an heiress, you know!"

"Ah, if!"

"Here is a sister acquainted with two heiresses—may I not rely on her assistance?"

"If you were to exercise all your graces and abilities on Miss Hollingston, I think you would fail."

"And if on Miss Tresdaile?"

"There would be less chance for you still—for, aware of your tactics, I should warn her of adventurers."

"What, turn against *me*, then!" with another laugh.

“Yes, if you take the wrong path—which I trust you never will, dear.”

“Amen to that, Barbara—and amen to this idle, unprofitable talk,” said he.

There was a silence of some minutes duration; the subject had been suddenly dismissed, and it was too late at that hour of the night to begin another. As we stood before the door of Mrs. Elwes' house, a tall person, with his hands in his pockets, strode by us, and looked hard into my face as he passed. There was little difficulty in recognizing George Keldon, although that gentleman made no sign, but marched past whistling “Rule Britannia” his loudest. I did not mention his name to my brother; there was no occasion to enter into the family affairs of the Tresdailes, even if Andrew Bloyce cared to listen to them, which I very much doubted.

After my brother had repaired to his hôtel, and when I was in my own room that night, I thought a great deal of brother Andrew's fortunes, and wondered why they had not made my heart light; why even

at the very bottom of that heart—struggle with it and stifle it as I might—there lurked a feeling of distrust.

CHAPTER VIII.

“ F O R E V E R . ” (?)

THE last thought at night, be it a sad or a joyful one, is generally the first thought in the morning. It is the bright hope in the future, or that old crushing fact which stupefied us into forgetfulness yesternight, which comes to bid us good morrow when the curtains are drawn. I had dropped to sleep, thinking of Andrew; I had dreamed of him all night—dreamed of him as in old times on the Jersey coast—and I had awakened to think of him again.

The hour was early; Mrs. Elwes and her lodgers were still asleep; the sun was bright,

the birds were singing outside my window. A walk before breakfast over the breezy-hill would chase away the shadows and relieve my mind from a pressure which was almost unnatural. A' quarter of an hour afterwards the street-door closed behind me, and I was hurrying through the streets of the town towards the hill where I had once met George Keldon.

On that hill, in the same place, standing in the same position, looking out at sea, as I had seen him first at Hastings, was the identical George Keldon I had begun to think about. He had very quick eyes or ears, for he turned and came towards me before I had made up my mind to address him.

"Ah! Miss Bloyce," he said, touching that nautical hat of his with his forefinger; "this is a coincidence, I must say. I hope I see you well, Miss?"

"Very well thank you, Mr. Keldon."

"Looking pale, I think," said he; "just a trifle less colour than you generally have."

"Do you think so?" I answered, for the want of a better reply at the moment.

"This is my walk every morning before I shake up the old man—that's the governor, Miss Bloyce—for the day," he remarked; "one can always get a good blow on the hill. I haven't seen you up here lately—better occupied, mayhap?"

"I vary my morning walks, occasionally."

"Well, variety *is* charming, isn't it?" said he; "I find it so in business. Lord bless you, if I was always making pins, I should go into a melancholy way, like poor Ophelia. Ever read 'Hamlet,' Miss?"

"Once or twice."

"Rum cock-and-bull story as ever I heard in my life," remarked Keldon; "my father told it me last night, and its been preying on my mind. My father has brightened up amazingly since he's been in Hastings—wish he'd stop another week and see the five and twenty pounds out."

"When do you return to London?"

“Twenty minutes past six this precious morning, Miss Bloyce, by Parliamentary; *he* won't stop any longer, and when he makes his mind up he's horribly obstinate. I came up here for a last look at the sea and the hills, before I drop into the old life at Blackman's Gardens, and work away again in blessed nigger style. I was going from here to—to—its no matter, now I have met somebody to say good-bye to! Will you tell the old lady that I'm off, Miss?”

“If you wish it.”

“Well, it will cheer her up a little, perhaps. I say, Miss Bloyce,” said he, rather huskily, “I should have bidden you good-bye last night, if I had not met you with your sweetheart.”

“It was you, then.”

“To be sure it was. He's a fine young fellow, mind you!” said Keldon.

After shuffling at the grass with his feet a moment, he said abruptly—

“May I take the liberty of asking if you have known that gentleman long? It's

a strange, perhaps a rude question—but then I haven't cultivated politeness to any great extent, and I *am* curious to know!"

"I have known him a great many years, Mr. Keldon."

"Have you, now?" he answered; "well, I hope he will make you a good husband when the time comes—there's little doubt, I take it, what sort of a wife you will make *him*."

"I don't think it is lawful to marry one's brother, Mr. Keldon."

"Eh?" said he, eagerly.

I repeated my observation.

"Well, I'm da—blessed if that isn't a settler!" he exclaimed; "your brother—get along, you're joking!"

Seeing me still serious, he said—

"And it really is your brother, then. Well," with a tremendous sigh, "I'm glad of that, somehow—that's all right and proper, as it should be! I'm uncommonly glad of that, for you *are* too young to think of marrying anybody yet, arn't you?"

"That's not an easy question to answer, Mr. Keldon," I replied.

"But you are, upon my honour," said Keldon seriously; "it would be a pity to begin the battle of housekeeping and husband-minding quite so early. I can't abide those early marriages, Miss Bloyce!"

"They lead to trouble, sometimes," I observed.

"Always," was the reply; "young people get spliced before they know their own minds, and come to the conclusion that they are quite unsuited to each other just—as we say in Blackman's Gardens—just in time to be too late! Now, I consider between thirty and forty a good marriageable age for a man; he's got over his nonsense, sowed his wild oats, had the poetry knocked out of him, and don't see fairies, and angels, and goddesses in all the young women he meets. Depend upon it, Miss, when a man over thirty years of age pops the question, he's thought a good deal about it, and is likely—always supposing there's no money in the case—to make the best of husbands."

"You appear to have studied the subject, Mr. Keldon," I said, with a laugh.

“ Oh! I have studied a great deal, for a pin-maker,” he replied; “ pottering away all day at a bunch of wires gives plenty of time for thinking; and when there’s no experiment to bother my head, I take to moral reflections over my work; and marriage is a moral reflection—and an experiment too, sometimes, ho, ho!”

This was an extraordinary topic to discourse upon with a single young man at half-past five in the morning on the East Hill, Hastings, and I made an effort to break away from it by alluding to the weather. But George Keldon was too full of his subject.

“ Now, when I think of marriage, Miss—yes, it will be a fine day—when I think of marriage, it’s with a sort of sink inside me,” said he;—“ not, understand me,” he added quickly, “ that I am afraid of that blessed state, or that I should make a bad selection of a wife, but because it’s a cut above me! That’s where I feel it hard, that’s where I have felt it thundering hard—ask pardon again, I’m getting too forcible, as

usual—for the last few months. I can't afford a wife, can't offer her a comfortable home, can't share anything with her but poverty, a few models, and some bottles of varnish, so I keep myself to myself, and only hope for better luck. Sometimes, Miss," he said, laying his large hand on my arm, "I come so near to a great fact, a great improvement, a new wheel, a new screw, a new means to the end, that it quite takes my breath away—so near, that I go mad over it, and make the biggest fool of myself you ever saw in your life! I have been ten years, Miss Bloyce, so very near to a—but I don't see why I should bother you about my plans, which can never be worked out for want of capital. Just look at me, young lady."

I did so.

"Ain't I the picture of a big, lubberly, greedy, grasping lout," he exclaimed; "don't I look a lazy, covetous scoundrel?"

"I shouldn't take you for a lazy, covetous scoundrel, myself," I said.

"Thankee," said he, with an easy nod

of his head ; “ you are very kind, but you shouldn't judge people by their looks. I am greedy, selfish, everything that's bad. Would you believe it, I have been thinking of that five thousand pounds legacy which the old lady burnt up in a single jiffy—thinking of it at home, spelling it over in bed, till I have almost persuaded myself into the belief that I have been a fool not to play the hypocrite with my grandmother, for her money's sake. You don't know, Miss Bloyce, for you are all that's gentle, good and unworldly, how the devil—I'm sure it's the devil!—has been squatting on my shoulder and whispering, ‘ Five thousand pounds ! ’ into my ear lately, telling me what it would have done, how it would have helped me in the world, cut away all the brambles, made the old man happy in his last days, given me time to work at many things that are next my heart, and paved the road to independence. It's been such a struggle to feel contented, and *not* to feel I have been hardly dealt by ; such an up-and-down fight, and the devil—asking pardon for again mention-

ing that gentleman—more often that not uppermost, and pounding away like one o'clock!"

"He has not won the battle, Mr. Keldon, or you would not confess it to a stranger."

"You don't call yourself a stranger, I hope," said he, looking in a very peculiar, almost wistful manner, at me; "that's not a word I like at any time, and somehow you are not a stranger to me. I feel as if I have known you—Lord, I do not know how long! Why, I'd confess anything to you, as I would to my own sister, if I had one," he added, with a sigh.

"But—"

"But I have a bad habit of speaking out," said Keldon, "so you must not judge me by what I confess. An awful habit which, when I've got time, I'll try and break myself of; it offends a great many friends of my acquaintance, I can tell you. Well, *he* isn't uppermost always," he said, laughing; "sometimes I get him down, and sit upon him, and call him all the shabby, insinuating rascals, and serve the devil right, too! Oh, he's a bad one, Miss, isn't he?"

"I have never heard him spoken well of, certainly."

"Mind you," said Keldon, with great gravity, "he comes in for more than a fair share of abuse sometimes. There are lots of people in this world who go to work at their sins in the coolest and quietest manner—quite of their own free will, I fancy—and then swear the devil tempted them, and think they ought to be let off in consequence. Those sorts of people are the most dangerous to deal with!"

The subjects of discussion were becoming still more strange and unfeminine. First, an argument on marriage; secondly, on money, with which marriage is so often linked; then on a certain old gentleman, who has more to do with both than most of us fancy. But time was hastening on, and Keldon had to return to his lodgings and pack up his goods and his father for London.

"You'll excuse me keeping you so long, Miss," said he, after looking at one of the largest metal watches that was ever seen out of a pantomime; "your time is precious,

and here have I been robbing you of your country walk in the most unfeeling manner. Ah! it won't occur again, Miss, so I hope you will forgive me?"

"I have nothing to forgive, sir."

"You are very kind to say so. Well, I'll be off in cousin Barnaby's direction."

"Has he left Hastings?" I inquired.

"Yes," replied Keldon; "I saw him for a moment yesterday; he was in a great hurry, he said, and had important business in London."

"I don't think Mrs. Tresdaile is aware of his departure."

"You can tell her of two departures at once, Miss Bloyce," said he, with a twinkling eye; "one shock will do for the two of us. But here am I, still talking nonsense and detaining you, putting off the evil day, as the saying is."

"The evil day which takes your father back with better health to London!" I remarked.

"Ay, ay," said Keldon, in reply, "I had forgotten that; thank you for reminding

me. No, not an evil day, and yet a day to be remembered with some regret for all that, because—”

He looked me in the face, changed from red to white very unaccountably, then burst out with—

“If there's one fool in the world bigger than another, it's George Keldon! Perhaps you'll remember that, Miss, if anybody should be doubtful of the point? No bigger anywhere, upon my soul!”

“Fie, Mr. Keldon, I'm sure—”

“I'm sure there's no contradicting it,” said he, interrupting me; “it's a plain unvarnished fact—everybody will tell you so. Ask my old father, my grandmother, anybody who knows me. I wish I were as certain of some other things as I am of that. Good-bye, Miss.”

“Good-bye, Mr. Keldon—a pleasant and safe journey back.”

“Thankee,” he replied; “but I don't want it pleasant, and don't much care about it being safe. Shouldn't like the old man more damaged than he is though, now I

come to think of it! Well, good-bye—did I say good-bye before?”

“I think you did, sir.”

“I didn’t say God bless you, though,” he cried, “and I do that with all my heart. God bless you, with a long and happy life—you’re a good lady, and deserve it!”

“Hush, hush!—it is not for man to say what I deserve from God—I am as weak, sinful, and undeserving as the rest of us.”

“*Gammon!*” shouted Keldon, striding away in seven-league boots, and swinging his long arms about rather extravagantly. Before I had recovered from his eccentric response, he came striding back again.

“Hope I haven’t alarmed you,” said he; “but it always unsettles me to say ‘good-bye’ to any one; and when its good-bye for ever—*whew!*”

“For ever!” I repeated.

“I gave Grandmother Tresdaile my word that I’d see her once a year—only once a year, like the Christmas waits, I believe was my expression—and I never break my word. At the end of that time where will

you be, young lady? Not with Mrs. Tresdaile—that's not possible, for a whole year; I don't believe my constitution would stand *that*, much less yours. So, then, good-bye, for ever!" suddenly shaking both my hands. "I know I shall never see you again—there's no reason why I should—better not, perhaps! I shan't forget you, though—it'll be pleasant over my work to fancy you as I have once seen you—as I see you now—as I shall never see you again—damn it! its hard, for—ever—here's off!"

And Mr. George Keldon *was* really off, at a pace that would have put the half-past six o'clock Parliamentary to the blush.

CHAPTER IX.

ON THE LOOK-OUT.

I DON'T know why I should have felt so dull the remainder of that day—why Mr. Keldon's "forcible language" should have helped to unsettle me.

He was a strange man, an honest plain-speaking handicraftsman, but nothing to me in any way—why should he bother my head as he did, and monopolize three-fourths of my thoughts? "A poor working man," as my pride would have said contemptuously, if common sense had not stepped in and checked me. Common sense said I had nothing to be proud of, (not even my

grand brother, who was "such a gentleman!")—that I was but a poor girl myself, and the child of a poor Jersey farmer. "Poor working man, indeed, Lady Pride," added my best friend, and, shall I say, comforter? "Is he not working upwards with energy, the genius which is in him, directing his mind, training his thoughts, and biding its time. Who shall say what genius, backed by perseverance may not accomplish in the years to come?—it has done much in the Past, it will do more in the Future!"

But yet what was George Keldon to me?—what right had I to institute a comparison between him and myself, even between Blackman's Gardens and St. Brelade? It was no business of mine, and *he* was nothing to me! Why, I had not seen him half-a-dozen times in my life, and—I would NOT think of him any more, *there!* But how handsome he looked that morning to be sure, what a big giant he was!—why, he could eat me!—and he hadn't got such a very little head after all!

I had plenty of time to worry myself, for

Mrs. Tresdaile was taken taciturn or sulky, and sat before the fire all day twiddling her thumbs, and answering in monosyllables. Alice did not come home till late in the evening, and I saw nothing of brother Andrew. In the course of that day I mentioned my accidental meeting with George Keldon, and stated his wish that Mrs. Tresdaile should hear of his departure. The news did not "cheer her up a little," as Mr. Keldon had prophesied; on the contrary, she twiddled her thumbs harder than ever, and scowled at me like an ogress. The return of her favourite grandchild even did not entirely dispel the clouds, although she softened sufficiently to inquire if Alice had spent a pleasant day.

Alice had had a pleasant day; she had been for a ride with Emily Hollingston and the Colonel in the morning—had spent such a delightful afternoon and evening!

"Any company there?" asked the grandmother.

"No—that is," turning to me, "only your brother, Barbara, whom we met during our

ride, and whom the Colonel would take back to dinner."

"That brother of yours, Miss Bloyce," said Mrs. Tresdaile, "must have come into a fortune, somehow, or I don't think those stuck-up Hollingstons — never mind me, Alice, there's no harm in saying they are stuck-up—would condescend to notice him. How long is he going to stay in Hastings, Alice?"

"I really don't know, grandmamma," said Alice, pouting; "he did not tell me, and I was not sufficiently interested in him to inquire."

"Do you know how long, Miss Bloyce? He's a very loving brother — building a dove-cot somewhere for you and him, isn't he?—and would not have any secrets from you."

"He has not told me how long he intends to stay in Hastings, Mrs. Tresdaile."

"Ah! well—it does not matter," she replied; "it's no business of mine, and I'm not a curious woman. I wonder if that old fright means to let us have any supper

to-night—I have rung twice, and if I have occasion to ring again, I'll pull the bell down, blest if I don't!"

Mrs. Tresdaile's tempers were less variable than usual during that week—there was an uniform snappishness and sulkiness, which lasted till Bartholomew Tresdaile's second appearance in Hastings. Nothing pleased her, no one satisfied her, and she threw out so many hints about packing up and starting for London, that I expected every day to receive her orders for departure. Had Mrs. Tresdaile's actions that week been as uniform as her temper, I might have borne with her better, but she was certainly several degrees more eccentric, and reminded me of my conversation with Bart. Tresdaile more than once. During that week, on an evening when Alice was at Hollingston's, she made another will, summoned the solicitor and clerk to her side, and kept them occupied some hours; finally dismissed them, called me in, and, after a slight perusal of the document, placed it on the fire.

“Better there, after all, for there's not a

bit of sense in it. Miss Bloyce," said she, "I'll have such a bonfire to-morrow!"

She kept her word, too, and burned an extensive collection of wills which she had brought with her from Stamford Street, reserving one only from the flames, the date of which she read twice, and made me read twice for security's sake—the date of the interview with George Keldon, three weeks since. This conflagration in the drawing-room grate caused a deal of smoke, which did not all ascend the chimney, but hung about the room, and 'got into the passages, and even into the kitchens of Mrs. Elwes, who came trundling upstairs to know what the matter was, and who received a hint from Mrs. Tresdaile to mind her own business in the most emphatic language.

That she was troubled about Alice I was sure; that there was a struggle going on between her love and jealousy was equally certain. And yet she, so hard and harsh with her grandsons, so quick to express an opinion, or hold out a threat,—that one

fearful threat of her MONEY!—made no sign to the young girl, expressed no wish, sought out no confidence. It was as if she feared to speak, as if she thought that an explanation would sunder old ties and bring to light new ones; and, fearing that, she put off the evil day.

And yet it was the same Alice; a little thoughtful now and then, I fancied, but that was an improvement! True, she went very often to the Hollingston's; was more with them than her grandmother; thought there was no one in the world so good, clever, and affectionate as her Emily!

For Mrs. Tresdaile's sake—and, with all her oddities, her fits of temper, and uncharitable thoughts, I could have done a great deal for it—I ventured from my sphere to remonstrate with Alice, and throw a little light upon her grandmother's state of mind.

Alice listened patiently, very patiently for her, then answered:

“My grandmamma never objects to my visits; she would be the first to tell me if she disliked the Colonel or his daughter.”

"I am not so sure of that," I answered, doubtfully.

"Besides, Barbara, dear, I do not leave her alone; you are always with her, can amuse her so much better than I."

"No, no. Those she loves best have the greatest power to amuse her."

"Oh! I am such a giddy little thing," was Alice's reply; "I make her cross with my disregard for the funds, the tobacco business, and the housekeeping expenses; I go to sleep, or yawn, or do something or other to offend her. She is very old, you know, Barbara!"

"And you are so very young, Alice," I said; "and there is no affection more deep, more touching to witness, than that between Life's winter and its spring. I remember once seeing a picture, of a girl like you, resting at the feet of an old grey-haired woman; the girl looking up into the dotting eyes of age, the warm white fingers clasping one time-shrivelled hand, and it looked so life-like, told so true a story, that the tears came in my eyes."

"I love my grandmamma very dearly," said Alice, thoughtfully; "she has been very kind to me. When it would have been death to take me to India with papa, she gave me a home, brought me up, and educated me. I should be a most ungrateful girl not to love or study her. What would you have me do?"

"Ask her, Alice, not me."

"I would rather you tell me, now the subject is before us," said Alice.

"I have already told you," I replied; "it is only to repeat the wish to see you more often at your grandmother's side, consequently less often with Miss Hollingston. Nay, that need not be even; for Mrs. Tresaile would sooner see Miss Hollingston in this house than you away from it."

"Well, next week my engagements will be ended, and I'll turn over a new leaf," said Alice; "I will remember, too, every word of your lecture—for it is almost a lecture, Barbara, and I am not quite certain whether I like it or not, whether you—"

She stopped irresolutely.

“Whether I have a right to interfere,” I added; “perhaps I have not, though my heart does not blame me much yet.”

I waited anxiously for that next week, and whilst I waited the Colonel or Miss Hollingston came for Alice and took her away on horseback, or else Alice went to Eversfield Place to spend the day with Emily. That week I saw my brother Andrew twice; and each time he spoke of the little house we were to live in together some day—“the dove-cot,” as Mrs. Tresdaile had satirically called it. The last time, on the Saturday, he said:—

“And when I am married—I suppose I shall get married some day—there will be no occasion to leave us. Better be a companion to my wife, Barbara, than to a cross-grained old woman.”

“I might not agree with that wife so well as with the lady of the cross grain, Andrew.”

“Oh! you would agree with any one, Barbara.”

“What are you flattering me for—what can I do to serve you, Andrew Bloyce?”

His cheeks reddened, I thought, but the flush—if it were a flush—came and went so quickly, that I might have been mistaken.

“What, do you remember my old coaxing ways?” said he, with a laugh; “how, when we were boy and girl together, I used to be artfully amiable. Well, some of these days I may have a great favour to ask—who knows?”

He turned to a strange subject after that, and startled me considerably; he talked of Miss Tresdaile, what a pretty girl she was, how he had seen her once—no, twice—at Colonel Hollingston's; how it was his firm opinion that the sly old boy had her in his eye for his young wife, and what a sin it would be if my old lady companion and the Colonel were to lay their heads together to sacrifice that young creature on the altar of Mammon. I could not help smiling, however, there was something so very ridiculous in the picture of Mrs. Tresdaile conspiring

with Colonel Hollingston against her granddaughter. I assured Andrew that he had not roused my fears in the least, though I would, if he desired it, put Miss Tresdaile on her guard.

"No, don't do that!" said he quickly; "it may be all speculation on my part, and, right or wrong, Miss Tresdaile would think me impertinent to interfere. Still, in confidence, Barbara," (I jumped at this, for I had got very suspicious of that "in confidence" since Mr. Bart. Tresdaile's communications), "it wouldn't be a bad scheme of the Colonel's to patch up his bankrupt estate."

"Why, Colonel Hollingston is a rich man, Andrew!" I exclaimed.

"Poor as Job, though proud as Lucifer," was the reply; "and all his plans and schemes will not set him straight, unless Miss Tresdaile turns up a trump-card, which," with a laugh, "is not very likely."

"Will not Colonel Hollingston be a lord, some day?"

"Probably," said Andrew, coolly; "and

his title will be the only thing to step into. He has lost his own property, and sold the reversion of that which is somebody else's at present, and unless fortune smiles on him or his betting-book, there's a bad time in perspective."

"Is he a gambler, then?"

"He lost fifteen thousand pounds on the last Derby, and has forgotten to pay some of it, too—but then his memory is so bad, you know!"

"Where did you learn this news, or rather this scandal, Andrew?"

"It's not a secret at Tattersall's, or—who's this scarecrow with the carpet-bag, Barbara—he seems to know one of us?"

I looked round at the question, and encountered Mr. Bartholomew Tresdaile, who, after expressing himself charmed to see me once more, was introduced to my brother Andrew. Andrew was delighted to make his acquaintance, at least he said so, though his delight was not visibly apparent.

So, after my interview with my brother, there was something new to perplex me and

add to the weight on my mind. How much of all that I had heard concerning Colonel Hollingston was true, and how much was the result of that evil-lying and slandering to which we are all martyrs in turn? Supposing all true, what was Colonel Hollingston's plans?—and was his daughter acquainted with them? Granting all false, what interest had Andrew Bloyce in circulating the report?

I was destined to be still further perplexed the next week, that week in which Alice Tresdaile had promised to turn over a new leaf. Mr. Bartholomew Tresdaile stayed in Hastings till Wednesday, and paid court to his grandmother, sauntered about town, went on Parade, even ventured on horseback and nearly got shaken to pieces for so rash an experiment. On Parade and on horseback he met once or twice Andrew Bloyce, fraternized with him, sang his praises to me, and said, "what a fine young fellow he was!"

What were Mr. Bartholomew Tresdaile's motives for seeking out my brother? Why did my brother, after the first interview,

meet him half-way, even promenade with him arm-in-arm on Parade?—an affectionate contiguity in which Alice and I caught them once or twice. Why did Mr. Bartholomew Tresdaile lodge at a fashionable hotel—Andrew's hotel—dine with Andrew the last day of his stay in Hastings, and come to tell us so late in the evening? What did it all mean, why seemed everybody groping in the shadows?

Alice kept her word to me, and remained more with her grandmother that week, accepted less invitations to Eversfield Place, and pleaded former engagements when the Colonel or Miss Hollingston came to fetch her away. Mrs. Tresdaile woke up to brighter thoughts, and though she pressed her grand-daughter to go to her friends and not waste her time on a foolish old woman, yet she was relieved in mind when Alice took her not at her word. If Alice went less frequently to Eversfield Place, she did not see less of Miss Hollingston, who looked in of an evening, despite Mrs. Tresdaile's objection to company.

'Miss H. had learned to regard Alice as a sister—it was so dull at home without her—she had taken advantage of Mr. Bloyce calling in to a quiet game at backgammon or cards with her papa, to intrude upon us for an hour or so. She trusted Mrs. Tresdaile would pardon the liberty she had taken?'

Mrs. Tresdaile did not speak the exact truth when she smiled at Alice and said, "She was glad to see Miss Hollingston;" but her looks were far more to the purpose when Miss Hollingston's back was turned, and she was 'making a face' at it!

So time went on; Andrew and the Hollingstons still in Hastings, and Bartholomew Tresdaile flitting to and fro like a bird of evil omen; the nights drawing in, and the sun going down earlier every night in the great deep sea; fashionable people arriving and departing; weeks lengthening into months; September stealing on us—that thoughtfulness of Alice which I had fancied born many weeks ago, increasing to my nervous fancy daily.

'To my nervous fancy,' I say; for Mrs. Tresdaile and Miss Hollingston appeared to disregard it, or else Alice was less meditative in their presence. But when Alice and I were alone together—not very often that, however!—when I sat at my needlework and she at her book, I could fancy that the eyes were on the page before her, but the mind was playing its own part in the past or future—*which?* For the page was never turned, and the hand that held the volume sometimes trembled. "God forgive me if I am wrong in watching her, in suspecting more than the truth, misjudging others besides her," I whispered to myself sometimes; "but there is some mystery behind, and it is my duty to beware of it!"

God forgive me if I acted wrongly in the time which followed—if I set hearts against each other, and helped, part knowingly, part innocently to much estrangement! What was done, was for the best in my own judgment, not acted without thought. If it led to trouble and made me miserable, still, believing I was right, dare I regret it even now?

CHAPTER X.

“SITTING UP.”

“ALICE is very late to-night, Miss Bloyce.”

“Has it struck ten yet?”

“Half an hour ago. What have *you* been thinking about?”

We had had supper and were sitting up for Alice, who was expected every moment from Eversfield Place. Alice having done penance at her grandmother's side for two evenings in succession, had gone to Colonel Hollingston's to spend the day, and Mrs. Tresdaile and I were awaiting her return. Perhaps the most uncomfortable part of my life was spent in Hastings, sitting up for

Alice ; perhaps Mrs. Tresdaile, in those dreary periods, was more uncomfortable also, and was certainly more fidgety. That evening in particular, Mrs. Tresdaile was cowering before the fire—to escape from the heat of which, I was sitting in the extreme corner of the room, with the door surreptitiously ajar—her thin hands spread out to receive the warmth, her sharp grey eyes fixed upon the burning coal, save when she leaned forward, and peered round her chair at me in a disagreeable ghost-like manner.

Mrs. Tresdaile was less thoughtful that particular evening than curious. She was full of inquiries.

“ Arn't you tired of Hastings, Miss Bloyce ? ” she asked ; “ don't you think we have had quite enough of sea, and shingle, and Mrs. Elwes, by this time ? ”

“ The change of air has been so beneficial to you, Mrs. Tresdaile, ” I replied, “ that if the business can dispense with your presence in town, it would be a pity to return to Stamford Street this very fine weather. ”

"That depends upon taste," said Mrs. Tresdaile; "I think Stamford Street, in fine weather, quite as good as this place. I never liked the sea-side, and I don't like it now, though it has been so beneficial, according to Miss Bloyce. So beneficial, that I think I shall live to curse the day I ever came here!"

As she looked again round the chair at me, I could see the grey eyes flashing at me like a wild cat's.

"For what reason?" I asked, with a slight feeling of alarm.

"For many reasons," she replied; "not worth considering at present. I wonder now, Miss Bloyce, what those Hollingstons think of me—what your brother sets me down for—an old fool?"

Before I could calm her, or assure her to the contrary, she went on.

"A cross old fool, easily duped and made a scapegoat of—to be talked over, cajoled, tricked into saying 'Yes,' when my heart means 'No!' Too old and feeble to have a will of my own, and crush by a word a host

of shallow schemers—they're very much mistaken!"

"Colonel Hollingston and daughter have surely never thought of tricking or cajoling you," I said; "you cannot think so, madam? As for my brother Andrew—"

"Well."

"I answer for him as for myself."

"Were there an object to be gained from me, say some prize well worth the winning, could you answer for him then?"

"I hope so."

"I don't say there is a prize, or that he has a thought of one; but still—but still—Miss Bloyce," she cried, passionately, "if Alice is not back in five minutes from this time, I'll fetch her myself!"

"My dear Mrs. Tresdaile, it is not late—she has been from home much later than this, if you remember."

"When?" she asked, eagerly.

"Last week—two or three evenings in the week preceding that."

"Always alone—no one to watch her, to hear what is said, or see who is at her side.

And she so young, impressionable and—vain! Yes, vain; I see it in her—the woman's fault and curse!"

"Not vainer than other girls as young and pretty as herself," I said; "susceptible to praise and admiration, perhaps, but with a real good heart to judge the false from true—I'm sure of it!"

"Are *you* vain, Miss Bloyce?"

"Had I the face and form of Alice Tredaile, I might be."

"That's an evasion," said she, quickly; "and I like a straightforward answer to a question. I have heard people call you pretty,—do you think so?"

"I don't think much about my looks," I answered; "have never been struck particularly with my charms."

"Perhaps you are vain of your abilities, your powers of discernment," she said; "for you talk a great deal of Alice and your brother's character, as though you had read every line upon their hearts. You're sure of this and that, and always so very positive—it aggravates me!"

Mrs. Tresdaile was forgetting her anxiety concerning Alice, and I endeavoured to assist in the good work. But before a dozen words had been exchanged, back she flew to the old subject.

“Twenty to eleven,” said she, looking at her watch, “and you taking it so coolly!”

“Can I do anything?” said I, starting up; “shall I go to Colonel Hollingston’s and tell Alice you are waiting for her.”

“Make a laughing-stock of me to the Colonel and his dashing daughter,” cried Mrs. Tresdaile; “you’re very kind, Miss Bloyce, I’m sure. I will tell you what you can do though.”

I waited quietly for instructions.

“You can accompany Alice next time,” she said; “you have received plenty of invitations to Eversfield Place. There, don’t begin about my being alone—I like to be alone—I always did! I should be much happier knowing you were with her.”

“But—”

“But you don’t like the Hollingstons—all the kinder action to go, my dear, and all the

greater obligation for me. I intend to accept that invitation they gave me—not to-morrow, or Friday, but some day when I can take them very much by surprise—he, he! A quarter to eleven!”—glancing at her watch again—“as I am a living sinner.”

She seized the poker, and stirred nervously and furiously at the fire, till the red coals flew right and left, and one or two fell on the hearth rug and had to be picked off with the tongs, an operation which Mrs. Tresdaile performed at her leisure, and not till Mrs. Elwes's property was seriously damaged.

“I said if Alice didn't come back in five minutes I'd go after her myself,” said Mrs. Tresdaile; “I'm a woman of my word!”

Mrs. Tresdaile compressed her lips so firmly, there was such an air of set determination on her face, that I began to fear she would be rash enough to keep her promise. She was very strange that night, there was no guessing what shape her eccentricity might next assume. She had let me see more of the workings of her heart than I had been before a witness to, had con-

firmed, by her words that evening, much that I had guessed and feared. That there was little to excite her, little at present to guard against, I felt assured in my own mind—in that weak and foolish mind of mine, of which I was so vain!

“She cannot be many minutes, now,” I said, rising and drawing aside the window-blind; “if we were to go in search of her, we might miss her on the way, and how alarmed she would be to find us absent.”

“You’re the most artful young woman of my acquaintance,” remarked Mrs. Tresdaile; “but you don’t come over me! I give you my word I shall be off in a minute.”

“The Bath chair has been taken home, and——”

“And my legs, which are as strong as your own, Miss Bloyce, haven’t been taken home with it!” added the old lady; “another five minutes grace, and if you don’t give me warning you can see her and the Colonel coming up the street, or don’t hear the brougham in the roadway, I shall walk to Eversfield Place.”

She lay back in her chair and curled herself round as if with the intention of sleeping away the grace-minutes, whilst I stood at the window, and looked down the dark street. There was no moon that night, and the stars were far away and misty; the scanty row of gas-lamps bordering the pavement even appeared shimmering with an extra faintness, as though the Gas Company, taking advantage of few watchers, had reduced the supply at the main. All was still without; no straggler's footsteps echoed homewards; no guardian of the night was on the watch, and the low murmur which I had hoped once or twice was Colonel Hollingston's brougham in the distance, was but the dull break of the waves upon the beach.

I glanced over my shoulder at my mistress: she had dropped asleep at last, and was snorting defiantly in her dreams, perhaps at that something indefinable which puzzled her when waking, and which she feared would rob her of the only thing her heart had learned to cling to. The two

mould candles on the table had burned low—five minutes more, and they would copy Mrs. Tresdaile's resolution, and *go out!* Eleven o'clock *was* late for Alice—I had not remembered her later, though I had told a big story to keep down the nervous excitement of her grandmother.

“Supposing she were to run away,” I thought; “supposing she *had* run away, what would be the end of the story?—what new thoughts, hard, cruel, and bitter as those of old, when the daughter left her desolate, would the woman sleeping in the chair awake to! But run away with whom?—not the Colonel with the ugly white moustache that had reminded me of ‘Billy?’ not—thank God! here they are! Coming up the street were Alice and her escort. I could see two figures on the pavement, two figures walking very, very slowly as the light of the lamp fell on them as they passed. Too short for Alice, unless her head were bent down very much, and she were looking on the ground; too tall for Colonel Hollingston, the height, the


figure reminding me of Andrew—yes, of Andrew! I dropped the window-blind, and crossed the room on tiptoe. If Alice could surprise her grandmother by her presence before the sleeper was awakened, what an agreeable surprise to the old lady! If I could open the door before Mrs. Elwes's servant were waked from her own dreams over the kitchen table, before the noisy summons at the knocker roused the inmates of the house! If I could warn Alice to steal cautiously upstairs!

I was in the passage listening for the feet upon the steps without—how long they were advancing!

At last—voices, too. Alice's voice agitated and entreating.

“Oh! it is very late—do go, now, and give me time to think of all that you have said. It is so sudden, I was so unprepared!”

I dared not stay there; my blood was tingling in my veins, and every limb of me was shaking. I had learned suddenly a secret—a strange, deep secret, boding no



good to any one I feared, and I cared not to learn more by eaves-dropping. I made a noise with the lock, then drew it back and opened silently the door. Andrew Bloyce and Alice were on the steps before me!

“Don't make a noise, Alice,” I said, in a low voice; “your grandmother is asleep.”

“Ah! Barbara,” said Andrew, “you did not expect to find me Miss Tresdaile's escort?”

“I saw you coming down the street,” I replied, coldly.

“The Colonel is not well to-night,” he said, half in explanation, “and I have had the honour of taking his place, and seeing Miss Tresdaile safe across the threshold of her home. I hope Mrs. Tresdaile is well?”

“Quite well, thank you.”

“Pray present my best regards to her,” said he, as Alice passed me, and went rustling upstairs, “is it too late, Barbara, to pay my respects?”

“Too late—I fear so!”

"Fear what?" inquired Andrew.

"Nothing—my thoughts, I think, were wandering. Can I see you to-morrow, Andrew?"

"Yes, of course you can," he answered; "what is it?—won't to-night do, dear?"

"To-morrow, then," said I, without replying to his question; "shall I call at your hotel?"

"It will look curious."

"What, in a sister?"

"Very well, very well—in the afternoon, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"Good-night, then."

I closed the door after him, and went upstairs with a heavy heart.

I found the candles flickering their last, Mrs. Tresdaile still asleep, and Alice at the table near her, standing and looking at her—oh, so earnestly!

Was there any self-reproach in Alice Tresdaile's thoughts as she stood there?—any pang of remorse for past actions, past weakness?—any fear in the future of what

she on whom she gazed might say and do? Was there another story, akin to hers, in which that sleeping woman played the part of a Nemesis, and nursed her wrongs beyond the grave?

The eyes opened suddenly, as if by mechanism, and made the watcher start.

A vacant stare, replaced by a soft, gentle smile only kept in store for Alice, which only lighted up that face and altered its expression when Alice took her place beside her.

“Home again,” said the grandmother, “you are a sad runaway, my dear!”

“It is not so very late.”

“I was thinking of coming after you, was I not, Miss Bloyce?” said the grandmother, taking the little hand in hers.

“Yes,” I answered.

“You look very pale, my Alice—these late hours will rob all the red from your cheeks,” said she; “we must turn over a new leaf when we get to London. What are you thinking about, Miss Bloyce?”

“Thinking!” echoed I, as I jumped out of my reverie; “was I thinking?”

"Thinking, or going to sleep, one of the two," replied Mrs. Tresdaile; "and how did you get here, Alice?—in the Colonel's brougham?"

"The Colonel was taken with a sick headache a few moments before I left," said Alice, in reply, "and Mr.—Mr. Bloyce was kind enough to see me home."

"Did you walk home?"

"Yes."

"Is that man often at Colonel Hollingston's, Alice?" asked Mrs. Tresdaile, suddenly.

I could see the colour burning on Alice's cheeks; it was well for her that Mrs. Tresdaile had taken up the poker again and was stirring at the coals, now charred and fireless.

"Not very often—once or twice a-week! He is a great friend of Emily's father, grandmamma."

"And a nice man, eh?"

"The Colonel thinks so," said Alice, evasively.

"Everybody thinks so," remarked her

grandmother ; " Miss Bloyce has been singing his praises all this evening—she can answer for him as for herself, she says ! "

" No, no—I—"

" Eh—what ! " exclaimed Mrs. Tresdaile ;
" what is the matter, Miss Bloyce ? "

" Nothing, nothing, my head aches, I don't know what I'm saying," I replied, " I shall be glad to get to my room."

" See how your late hours have upset all of us, Alice," said Mrs. Tresdaile ; " you must early to bed early to rise, my dear, or the sea air will not benefit you much. Now be off, young people," said she, rising ; " and see if my chamber candlestick's outside, Miss Bloyce—I'm going round the house."

Alice kissed her grandmother, and then came to me, standing outside on the landing, and preparing the light for Mrs. Tresdaile's nocturnal expedition.

She laid her hand lightly on my shoulder.

" Good-night, Barbara."

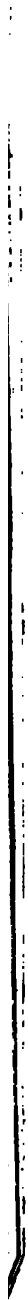
I repeated her good-night.

She crossed the landing and then stopped.

Standing with one tiny foot upon the carpeted stair, she looked at me irresolutely. Had she anything to say—to confess and relieve my heart from doubt?

No—nothing to confess! A pause, a short, quick sigh, and then she went slowly up the stairs. Strange picture of the Past, stranger contrast to the Present—for ever vivid in my memory. That landing full of shadows, the graceful figure, and the bright young face are before me as I write. She stands beside me full of hope and dreamy happiness—I hear her voice, her light touch falls upon my arm again. It is but yesterday!

END OF VOL. I.



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