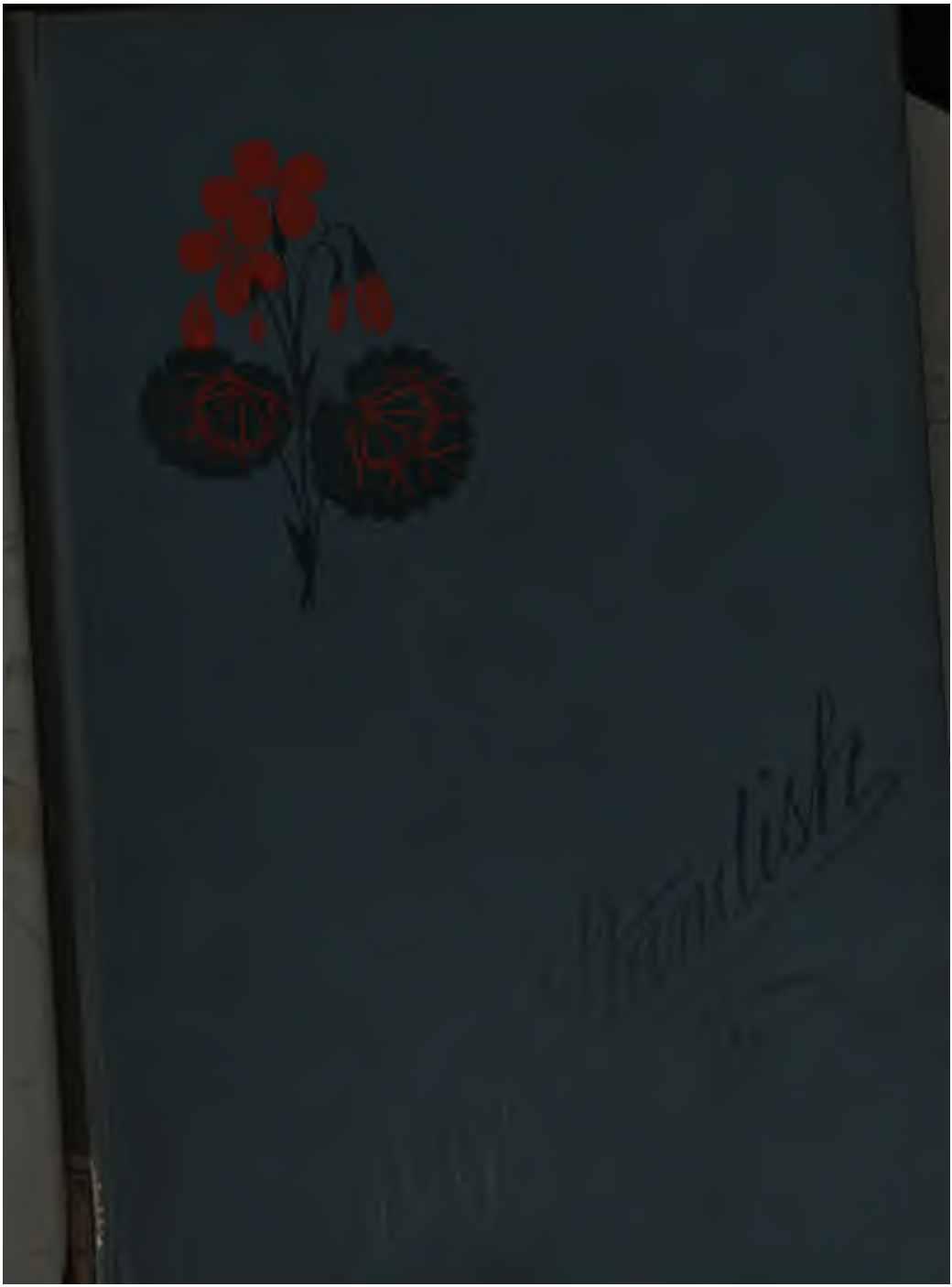

MISS STANDISH;

AND

BY THE BAY OF NAPLES.

By A. E. N. BEWICKE,

AUTHOR OF 'MARGERY TRAVERS;' 'ONWARDS! BUT WHITHER?' ETC., ETC.

'Beseech your majesty.
Forbear sharp speeches to her: She's a lady,
So tender of rebukes, that words are strokes,
And strokes death to her.'—SHAKESPEARE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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MISS STANDISH.

(Continued.)

BY THE BAY OF NAPLES.

MISS STANDISH.

CHAPTER I.

AN OFFER OF MARRIAGE.

'Day in melting purple dying,
Blossoms all around me sighing;
Fragrance from the lilies straying,
Zephyr with my ringlets playing,
Ye but waken my distress;
I am sick of loneliness.'

Maria del Occidente.

 MO had been all the morning at a committee meeting. She had got through her fourth business note since then, and was just

retying her bonnet strings preparatory to starting off for a Charity Organisation committee in the south of London.

'Emilia, you'll kill yourself,' said Mrs Mowbray, from the sofa, looking up from her novel; 'you really ought not to do so much. By the way, I wish you'd call round at the library, as you are going that way, and get me something else. I've got nothing for this evening now; for I've all but finished this, and I know exactly how it will be. They are sure to marry each other in the end. I knew it from the first.'

'Why don't you go to the library yourself, Marian? I should like to come home at once after the Charity Organisation.'

'Well, really, it is barely two steps out of your way. And when you are

racing about all day after poor people and bad characters, I think you might do a little for me. You know I've promised to go shopping with Mrs Sedgewick. We settled last week to go to the Stores together to-day. But I am sure I don't care. Only it is really in your way. Oh, and you might manage to hear of a servant for the Sedgewicks too. They want a sewing maid at very low wages. I can't think how it is none of your people seem ever to be able to do anything useful.'

'That is the reason they come to the Charity Organisation, I fancy,' said Emo, without looking up. 'Useful people don't want charity. What book is it you want, if I do go to the library?'

'Oh, now, my dear Emilia—the idea of your asking me! I never can choose

a book for myself. And you know what they are like by the outsides. You know my style. Don't get me something I've read before. And now, do tell me, what do you think, had I better buy a new evening dress at once, or have the one I wore last night retrimmed?'

'Let us talk that over at dinner,' and Emo was leaving the room in that decided way, that Mrs Mowbray sometimes complained of as so dreadfully like a man, and not quite feminine, when the door opened, and the servant announced, 'Professor Dakin!'

'Oh dear! what a bother. He never knows when to go away, and I must go with Mrs Sedgewick. Emilia, I shall leave him to you, as the only way of saving your life. I am sure you look dead tired,

and quite unfit for any more charities,' and so doing Mrs Mowbray fled through folding-doors, and half-drawn curtains, and not very noiselessly ran upstairs.

'I hope I have not come at an inconvenient hour?' said Professor Dakin, looking at Emo's bonnet.

'Not at all,' said she, quietly laying it aside. 'I have just come in.'

This was true, but only half the truth. Emo sat down on the sofa, looking indeed unfit for more charities, and miserably tired. If she had thought of it, she simply never in her life had looked older and plainer. Professor Dakin's keen eye noted all the various signs of over strain, and he then sat down, and looked at the carpet. How was he to begin? He had come intending to offer, and he thought the

moment looked propitious, if only he knew how to set about it. Now, the fact he wanted to communicate to her was that he wished her to become his wife. That was it with mathematical accuracy. But Professor Dakin felt nervously apprehensive that it would not do just to state it bluntly in that way, and that a poetess might have somewhat fanciful ideas as to wooing. He wished now he had read some of her poems, treating of such subjects. There must be some, and as it was, he had only read that one of which he had before spoken with such enthusiasm. He felt now as if this alone stamped him as a very remiss lover. But her poems were for the public, and that at once made him not care to read them. He wanted something for himself alone,

and dreaded to find how much she might have laid bare.

'Marian had an engagement this afternoon to go shopping. She will be sorry to have missed you,' said Emo. Only when she had spoken did she feel the falsity of her own words. She wondered how long she should go on telling stories to him that afternoon.

'I came to see you,' said Professor Dakin, sticking to the truth, and finding the truth very ill adapted for conversation.

'That is very kind of you,' said Emo, a soft expression stealing over her face. 'I know you have so little time for paying calls,' and there was a melancholy cadence in her voice, as if the want of time were the one great difficulty.

'I am afraid it is not only want of time; it is want of inclination as well,' said the exact Professor. 'As a general rule, one finds people out in the afternoon, and if one finds them at home,' here he was rather at a loss; then finished up with saying, 'one has nothing to say.'

'Haven't you?' said Emo, trying to laugh, but not succeeding very well. 'I am afraid I am rather fond of paying calls. It is a dreadful thing to confess, I believe. As a rule, everyone is expected to dislike them. But I must own I like seeing my friends, and I am never sure that that is not the very best way there is, a great deal more satisfactory than an evening party, where one is distracted by the number of people.'

'Yes!' said Professor Dakin. That

was not at all the kind of thing he wanted to talk about. He had not come out that afternoon to make conversation, and he knew if he only let Emo run on she might be capable of entangling him in some scheme for the regulation of society, by insisting on everyone paying calls, and everyone receiving them, after a course of lessons from the best professors in the art; a scheme, the discussion of which might certainly be expected to last till some one interrupted them. They were alone now. He must somehow contrive to seize the present opportunity.

'What were you thinking of when I came in just now, Miss Standish?' he asked. 'You looked very melancholy.'

'I felt so,' said Emo, after a pause, and

speaking quite absently, looking at the fire.

Now that was getting more like it. Professor Dakin felt as if he were adjusting his microscope, and would soon be on the high road to a discovery.

'I can't help it,' said Emo, looking up at him suddenly with frightened, appealing eyes. 'I have tried everything. I don't know what I can do more. And I cannot bear the misery of the world.'

'Why should you bear it?' asked Professor Dakin; the words were equally simple, plain enough in themselves, but thus said they evidently meant a good deal.

'I don't—I don't quite understand you, I am afraid,' said Emo. 'It is there

I must bear it, or go mad, I suppose,' she added more lightly.

'I don't see that,' said Professor Dakin, very simply but earnestly. 'It is there, that is true enough. But you have only got your portion of it. And be sure that is quite enough for you. Miss Standish, do you know what you have often led me to think? That you are making a great mistake. That you are exhausting yourself in vain efforts to make others happy, and never thinking that they have no more call to be happy than you have, and that people cannot be made happy by others. The only way is to accept the happiness offered to each one. You were created to be happy; I was created to be happy. At one time I thought, as I fancy you often think, that happiness

was not for me; that I should show my good sense, or superior virtue, by putting out no claim for it, and that I would be content with very little, only the absence of pain and so on. Depend upon it, it is a mistake. The Creator created us to be perfectly happy. I say so unfalteringly; although I say it, knowing that, humanly speaking, it lies with you whether I can ever in this life enjoy that happiness without which—which—you know what I mean. You know—you must know how long I have wished that you might one day consent to share my life with me as my wife. Will you?'

He put out his hand almost like a child asking his mother for something. Emo turned away from him as if in pain.

'Oh, I am not a nice woman for a

wife,' she said; 'not at all the right kind.'

'I do not know about kind,' said Professor Dakin, humbly. 'I know you are the only woman who ever could be my wife. I have never thought much about marrying, or about being happy myself,' he went on, speaking almost as if to himself. 'It is only of late I have begun to see my mistake, and realise what life should be.'

'You ought to marry some woman who would understand keeping your house in order, and saving you all worry,' pleaded Emo, still turning away from him, and repeating as by rote snatches of the conversation of the other evening, but saying them with great earnestness, 'a good manager who—'

'Would see I had my dinner always

nicely served,' interrupted he with considerable acrimony. 'Thank you. There are hotels and c— and cookshops. Do you think it is of no account to a man whether he finds a companion in his wife?'

'I should have thought it was everything!' exclaimed Emo, moved to compunction by his embittered tone, and not now giving utterance to others' thoughts, but to her own.

He looked up at her, the tears almost blinding him, as he said,—

'And it is everything. To me at least. Do not think I will hurry you, or make great demands upon you all at once. Only let me love you, and—and—'

'If you are quite sure,' said Emo, moving still further away now, and leaning back in the corner of the sofa, looking

rather as if she had sought it out of very weariness. 'I would—you know I would *do everything* I could for you. And I do not believe I manage our house so badly. I manage everything here, and Marian—she often makes it more difficult for me, and we spend very little; and it is not all so very horrid, is it?'

'My dear!' he said, smiling, and going nearer to her, laid his hand upon her shoulder. 'Why do you think of me so much? Think of yourself a little. Will it make you happy?'

'Me!' Emo opened her eyes quite wide. She stared at him for a moment. The next she had hidden her face in the cushions, half sobbing, half fainting.

Professor Dakin fetched her a glass of water, and could not have set more

systematically to work to calm her, if he had been perfectly uninterested himself. But Emo could see the constraint the little plain man, as most people would have called him, was putting upon himself. And she held out her hand to him, and clasped his of her own accord.

'I hope I shall never be so troublesome to you again,' she said, with a faint smile playing round her white lips. 'But I have been so lonely, so very lonely, and I am so tired of all the questions, whether women should stand alone, or have votes, or speak in public. It has always seemed to me so plain that—'

James Dakin was looking at her with eyes full of intelligence. He knew all she meant to say without her saying it. 'If men were really men, it would not be

necessary for women to exert themselves so much,' he said gently. 'And whether they exert themselves or not, women need love. Was that what you meant?'

'Something of that,' said Emo. Then looking up at him very earnestly, 'I wish now though you would tell me whether you really do think I am right about all those women's questions, as they are called—human questions I should call them? They don't concern only women.'

He did not laugh at the comprehensiveness of the appeal, but said slowly and very thoughtfully, as if for the moment his one care was to answer her question as fully and accurately as he could,—

'As far as I ever heard of your

opinions, either from yourself or from others, I have always thought them correct. And from the line you have taken with regard to one or two questions, I have felt so sure of your general principles being right, that had I been tempted to think you wrong, on any other in particular, I rather think I should have been inclined to hold my own opinion in abeyance against a season of more leisure, giving your judgment the preference over my own. For after all you have made these questions a special study, and I have not. I am not sure that I have not too much neglected them. With regard to broad principles, I am *sure* that you are right, and that you will never lack the courage and tenderness of heart, that a woman must have before

she will be impelled to give expression to her opinions as you have done.'

Then all on a sudden Emo Standish stood up, and approached the fire before which he was standing.

'I have always felt you were the best man in the world,' she said. 'Now I know it,' and gently she laid her hands upon his arm, while her eyes shone with tears of joy and gratitude.

Then there was a rustle in the stairs. Marian was evidently coming down dressed for her shopping.

'May I tell her?' asked Professor Dakin.

'Yes, tell her, tell her; and good-bye. No, I must go. I must be alone now,' and Emo fled as Mrs Mowbray entered.

'My dear James — why, what is the

matter?' looking in consternation after Emo flying through the door she had just opened. Then looking at her cousin: 'Why, James, what is the meaning of all this?'

'The meaning is a very deep one,' said he, smiling, and rather enjoying her bewilderment. 'I intend to rob you of your companion. She has promised to be my wife.'

Mrs Mowbray stood still, speechless.

'Promised to be your wife!' she said at last, as soon as she had recovered breath sufficient to speak. 'Emilia Standish! Why, good gracious! was there ever anything so unpractical? A philosopher and a poetess! Why, every one with a grain of common sense will say you are both mad.'

'Well, then, it is a good thing we have neither of us a grain of common sense, but are just a philosopher and a poetess,' said he, mimicking her accent, and not a whit disconcerted by her reception of his intelligence.

'We were all talking only the other night, and settling how you ought to marry the sort of girl who'd manage your house well, and sit by your fireside knitting, Emilia, and all of us. And as to Emilia, why, I thought she'd marry Mr Du Cane, now he has got no wife.'

'Got no wife! When had he a wife?'

'Why, always, till she ran away from him. And now she has only just done it, and I thought Emilia and he would certainly be making it up together at last. And now there she goes and accepts you,

who never read a line of poetry in your life, I should think. Why, Mr Du Cane writes poems himself.'

'Perhaps Miss Standish prefers to be the only poet,' said Professor Dakin drily, so drily that Mrs Mowbray sprang forward with,—

'My dear James, I hope you are not offended. I hope you don't think I don't wish you joy. I do, with all my heart, both you and Emilia too. Of course I am very glad, and quite delighted. Only I never thought of such a thing for a moment. And, I am sure, no one else did. Why, only last night I thought it was Mr Rae Cobbold.'

'Rae Cobbold!' Professor Dakin's brow looked darker than Marian had ever seen it before.

'He has really got a horrid temper,' thought she. 'Poor Emilia!' Then she said, 'Well, after all, you are in an excellent position. I am sure it is very nice for Emilia.'

'I don't think it is at all nice for Emilia,' said he, savagely.

'Why, James, how cross you are! Whatever have I done to annoy you? You looked quite radiant when I came in; and now you are as black as a thunder cloud. What is the matter?'

'Oh, nothing. Only there is a great difference in women. Thank God, there is an Emilia in the world!' With which polite remark, the meaning of which, Mrs Mowbray said afterwards she really could not quite appreciate, let us leave Professor Dakin.

CHAPTER II.

WHAT HE FELT ABOUT IT AFTERWARDS, AND WHAT SHE FELT.

'I have wandered in the mountains, mist bewildered,
And now a breeze comes, and the veil is lifted,
And priceless flowers, o'er which I trod unheeding,
Gleam ready for my grasp.'—*H. Kingsley.*

JAMES DAKIN'S weak point was his self-depreciation, for why should a man for ever be thinking about himself, and analysing himself? And, short of doing so, how should his want of good looks, and suave man-

ners, and general lack of fascination be a constant grief to him? Yet to Professor Dakin they were. And Mrs Mowbray's lightly uttered words had quite dashed his joy. Why should she think Mr Du Cane, or even Rae Cobbold, more suitable to marry Emilia Standish than himself?

At first he told himself he knew they were not, but gradually he forced himself to see, as with the world's eyes, how well Oscar Du Cane and Emilia would look walking down the aisle of a church together, the beautiful grave-faced man bending over the tender-faced last new poetess. Had he not thought himself, the first time he had seen those two together, that they were just made for one another? Emilia and Rae Cobbold! Well, that would be contrast enough, certainly. The

man who jested about everything, and the woman who saw pathos in everything; the man who never lost an opportunity of paining others, and the woman who never lost an opportunity of being pained by others. Both in their different lines were perhaps equally successful. Then James Dakin thought of himself by Emilia's side, a little plain, dark-browed man, not at all unmistakably a gentleman at the first glance. He felt that to every surface onlooker there must be conveyed a feeling of unfitness. And he knew how busy he generally was, how often over-tired with his work, and with barely a moment to spare, even in the evening. And he fancied to himself that Emilia was just the woman to be more pained by any appearance of neglect, than even by a rough word, and

under that, he knew well enough how much she suffered. She was just the sort of woman who could not complain, and around whose pale lips a long-suffering smile would wreath a shadow of contentment till the moment that her heart finally broke. 'Then it would be all over!' thought James Dakin, 'and I should even lack the impulse to shoot myself, the only thing a man should do after he had broken the heart of the woman he loves. I should reason about it, and reflect. And even then not do the only thing there would yet be left to be done. Oh, what a fool I have been!'

It was just about this time he chanced to hear a sad story about a friend of his —a foreign friend—whom he had never met, but with whom he had corresponded

for years on scientfic matters. His wife, of whom someone said that she was a charming and delightful and high-minded woman, had left him and her children and disappeared with a married man, whom she had never even seen eight months before.

James Dakin heard that his scientific friend still refused to believe the worst, and continued daily to expect his wife's return, but the world, always so well informed, knew that she would return no more. James Dakin had one passing pang of sorrow for the friend with whom he had for so long corresponded, and then his thoughts reverted to himself, to Emilia, to Oscar Du Cane, a married man, whom she had not only known for eight months, but for years before she ever saw himself.

For jealousy there should be no place in hell, for those who give themselves a prey to it suffer too much in this life. In vain did he try to turn to his studies. No microscope, no books, no correspondence could engage his thoughts for a second. He was on the rack.

And meanwhile Emilia Standish was happy, as children are happy, as butterflies, who have but a day to live, and no mouth even to shut and open, and bother with, spiritual creatures, to whom only to live is joy, and who, incapable of providing for themselves, are thus altogether without cares. She came down in the evening in her old muslin dress, with a bit of gold cord tying back her hair, and her eyes shining, and she sat down and wrote. She was so happy, she wanted to make all

others happy. And at once her thoughts turned to the sick and suffering. A ward in an hospital, of which she had heard much good, was about to be closed for want of funds, and some friends of hers had asked her to help in getting up a dramatic entertainment for its benefit. Emilia sat down and wrote a dialogue, rather two dialogues. Not about love in the ordinary acceptation of the word; not about the passion of love, falling in love, but about a man who has offered to a girl and been rejected. He meets her years afterwards, and refers to this, and briefly alludes to the celebrity he has gained in the meantime. And she looks up at him, and says, 'It was for this I refused you. I knew you could do something for the world, and it needed you; but that, what with

satisfied love, and the daily cares a married man with a precarious income must be exposed to, nothing of all that has been could have come to pass, so I gave you up—to humanity.'

And then he replies,—

'Then, now nothing hinders but that my request of old should be granted?'

'Nay; now everything hinders,' says she, smiling. 'For the love you once offered me is dead. One cannot give up and yet have,' says she. 'I made my sacrifice. And my sister, bright-faced Tekla, is more like what then I was than now I am.'

And he sees the younger sister fair with the beauty of his own young love, yet looking even simpler and more youthful, as his eyes through ageing have grown

more ready to appreciate youth and innocence. But he pleads still.

'You talk of giving up; then you once loved—'

'What you were,' she says; 'and knowing what you were, I could with all confidence urge my sister to make the sacrifice of her young life to you a wiser, but a disillusioned man.'

'Must it be a sacrifice?' he asks, and looks at the young girl, the image of his lost love, with longing eyes. Then again, 'But you—but you?' he asks. 'I have won fame, and now you offer me a bride young, fair, and loving, and noble-minded, for she is like you—what have you gained?'

'I have sacrificed myself for what was worth the sacrifice,' she answers; 'and it

is all a woman ever asks of life. After years of it, could I all on a sudden change my whole nature and enjoy? Nay, it will be happiness for me to see you and Tekla happy, and to hear the people bless you, and to know both your lives are nobler and fuller, and God's world more beautiful; because, as a girl, I stifled my love dream, which, after all,' and here she smiled again, 'is but a very little part of life to those who love God, and for His sake all things and people. Their lives are always full.'

She wrote her poem, wrote to the end, wrote how he yielded, his heart prompting him, and how in loving Tekla, and in daily living with her, the last earthliness fell away from his nature, till at last he died 'The Coming Man,' as the people

called him. After his death people wrote high tributes of praise to his memory, and lauded his fair young widow to the skies. Only he knew and Tekla, and God—God knew it too—how much had been the work of the woman who still went about her daily task with a face that was like a psalm, in its calm peacefulness. And never had one whisper of jealousy, one thought of repining come between the sisters, and separated their pure souls.

Thus Emilia wrote, and the words seemed winged, and the pages flew beneath her fingers. The last line finished, she paused. Could she thus give up James Dakin to some younger, fairer girl?

'Yes, if it were for his happiness,' she said, whilst the colour mantled to

her cheeks. 'For his highest happiness,' she added softly, and there seemed a safety in the reservation of that adjective. But her heart ached at the thought of it, and she knew she could not go about her daily work with her face like a psalm.

That indeed had never been Emilia's way. Hers was a passionate nature only by the stern training of an unprotected, independent youth, forced into outward calm, and ever and anon threatening to break all bounds. Emilia had never been able to say those pretty, kindly things to men, that make them sometimes think a girl is half in love with them. She was stiff and repelling to the men she most liked, even to her friend Oscar at times, even to James Dakin, till she owned her love. Then she loved him

utterly. It was not only that she loved him. On him alone she rested all her hopes of peace and happiness. She trusted him, as mortals should trust no one but God.

Mrs Mowbray came in from her shopping, and found Emilia standing by the fire, looking down at it, playing with a ring upon her finger.

'Why, Emilia, you have grown positively good-looking!' she exclaimed. 'What a difference a little happiness makes to be sure! Anyone might think you were beautiful to look at you now. How that dress and that gold cord suits you! You should always be dressed like that.'

And Emilia looked in the glass, and thought she would wear a dress and gold

cord like that on the night her poem should be declaimed for the benefit of the Hospital; and James Dakin should be there, and see her beautiful with the happiness he had given her. 'How Oscar would like to see me like this,' thought Emo. 'He would disapprove of the poem though—say I knew nothing about love, and that it savoured of asceticism.'

Meanwhile, James Dakin was tortured by jealousy.

CHAPTER III.

IT WAS A GREAT SUCCESS!

'D'abord je suis femme, avec les devoirs, les affections, les sentiments d'une femme ; et, puis je suis artiste.'
Mme. Viardot Garcia.

'HAVE you heard the news?' asked Mrs Mowbray of Emo, a few nights before the great night of the performance for the Hospital.

'No ; what news?' asked Emo, looking up rather anxiously.

James Dakin had written twice since

she had accepted him. He had also called once for a few minutes. But there had been other visitors there. He had said much of pressing work, and the difficulty of getting away even for half-an-hour; told her he was going down to Edinburgh to give a lecture, and would travel all night, if necessary, so as to be back in town for the reciting of her new poem.

But Emo had not felt satisfied. She had begun to feel that perhaps it was true, as Rae Cobbold was fond of hinting, that she was sentimental, and fancied things. Anyhow, she did not feel as if there were such perfect oneness between her and her affianced lover as there ought to have been. Surely he should know that it was not necessary to say so much

about being busy to her, and that she took for granted, he only did not come to see her oftener, because it was impossible, that nothing less than that would have stopped him. Now James Dakin had made many words about it, and they had evidently been composed into set sentences before he came to see her.

So Emo looked up rather anxiously.

'What news?' she asked.

Once before Mrs Mowbray had told her news, and then, even before she had heard it, she had known it would be about Oscar Du Cane. But Oscar Du Cane, and every one else, had faded out of the foreground of her life since James Dakin had asked her to be his wife. If Emilia had but lost her heart a little to two or three men in her path through life, as is

the way with so many women, she would not have had such a wealth of affection to lavish, whole and undivided, upon James Dakin. As it was, whole and undivided she gave it, and she seemed to be recalled, as to an old forgotten world, when she found Mrs Mowbray's news was not of him.

'Why, that Mrs Du Cane may be expected in England any day! And it seems she never ran away at all, only went to nurse Captain Wildair, because he was thought to be dying, and then was very glad to come home as his nurse, when he was evidently unequal to the voyage alone, and asked her to let him pay the passage money for her and her children, which, it seems, Mr Du Cane has never been in a position to send out. I wonder

on whose money he is living over here. He never seems in any want.'

'Then you mean to say it has been all right the whole time!' exclaimed Emo, growing first pale, and then pink. 'Only one of those wicked, false rumours. Oh, how Oscar must feel to think he believed it for a moment! He said he didn't; but *he did*,' said Emo, with determination.

'He would not have been so unhappy if he had not,' said Mrs Mowbray, who had of late been a good deal touched by Oscar's melancholy expression. 'Well, it wasn't his fault at all. So many people have heard it, and *believed* it. And, of course, there has been nothing in it the whole time. Poor Captain Wildair was thought to be dying, and is very ill still. And he always was her husband's friend, and, of

course, she was glad to seize this opportunity of coming home to her husband. I daresay she thought he had been quite long enough flirting about away from her. I always did think it the most extraordinary thing Mr Du Cane's wife should run away from him, when he is such a fascinating man, just what one could fancy any woman falling in love with. And now I hear that Captain Wildair is a little, plain, common-place-looking man,—something like James Dakin, as good as gold, as I have no doubt James is. Of course, the women are very wise who choose such husbands, and I quite understand it in you at your age. But one can't fancy a romantic elopement with a man of that kind. Why, he'd think it wrong himself.'

'I should think he would,' said Emo, very gravely.

She always showed her disapproval when Mrs Mowbray talked thus lightly over such subjects. Then she sat and thought, pictured to herself the meeting between husband and wife, and prayed with all her heart they might now at last enter upon a happy married life together. Emo supposed now she should see his wife, and felt some shame of the instinctive feeling that she did not think she should like her, and that there would probably be an antipathy between them.

But what did that matter? She trusted Oscar would be happy, and she, with James Dakin by her side, need not trouble herself, even if Oscar's wife held a little aloof from her. Perhaps she would with-

draw Oscar also, and possibly that also might be as well. In her heart of hearts Emo knew it would be a relief to herself, and yet she had no friend in the world to whom she felt so tenderly. But she was going to be married now, and she did not need a friend. Oh, the heartlessness of the happy ones! It makes one thank Heaven there are some mourners in the world, else it would be too cold a place, each revolving on his own axis as it were, wrapt up in his own dearest ones, and without care for others. We need sorrow to make us kind.

The days passed, and Oscar called, but Emo was out. The evening of the performance for the Hospital came, and there in the seat behind hers she saw Oscar Du Cane. The seat beside her

was vacant waiting for James Dakin, who had promised to travel all through the previous night, if necessary, in order to occupy it that evening. Mrs Mowbray was on her other side.

Oscar's presence was soon explained. One of his aunts was one of the most energetic patronesses of the Hospital, and when she had offered him a ticket he had gladly accepted it, seeing Emo Standish's new poem announced. He had called a few days previously to ask her about it.

'You have heard about my wife?' he said, almost the first thing. Emo's pressure of his hand on meeting had already said she had. 'It was a foul slander, which no woman has less merited than she has. True as steel that she has always been. I said from the first I knew

her better, and I do not know who should answer for a woman's honour, if her husband may not. But I feel now as if I ought to have crammed the audacious lie down the throat of every person who uttered it.'

He said it with such hot indignation, it was difficult not to be carried away, and to remember he had never attempted anything of the sort.

'It was much better, and will always be much better, to disdain it too much to notice it,' said Emo, shyly but earnestly.

He was a married man once more, with the barrier of a wife interposed between him and her, and both at once felt more at their ease, and even nearer together than they had done of late. Only Oscar felt it the more intensely,

because he had felt so fearfully isolated when he had fancied himself free to marry Emo, and realised it was the last thing he wished. But Emo had realised this last also, and knew with grateful rapture that she was James Dakin's now,—his, and his only. So she only felt that it was pleasant that Oscar had regained his old loving manner, and was looking into her eyes, as he had been always used to do, till the last few times, and meanwhile herself sat blushing in the happiness James Dakin's love had brought her. But why did he not arrive? He had said he would travel through the night, so as to be in time. That empty place began to sit heavy on Emo's heart, as the time drew near for her poem to be declaimed. It was declaimed. Not well according to

Emo's ideas. When did poet ever hear the loved syllables, that had come glowing from his heart, accentuated as he would have them? But people shed tears, and handkerchiefs were waved, and Oscar Du Cane leant forward, a face all glowing, and said, 'Oh, Emo, Emo, where did you find all that?' and pressed her hand. Then the applause deafened her, and before it was half over a distinguished critic and editor had come up and complimented her, and offered her her own terms for the poem. And friends were congratulating her, and altogether certainly it was a great success —a great success! Emo smiled, and bowed, and thanked, and made her terms. And who cared enough about her to notice how pale she had grown? Who cared enough about her to have specul-

ated on the hastily folded note that had been pushed across to her ?

'You are right. Your poem has taught me wisdom, even if I needed teaching, after my eyes had seen your young and handsome lover by your side. You had hardly realised the other day that he was free. But I see it all now. And so does he. I will not accept the sacrifice of your young and happy life. No! the elder sister for me. Or rather her portion of self-sacrifice. It has been all a mistake. Forgive me that I have troubled you by crossing your path. I remove myself at the first possible opportunity. I was not made for love like other men. Henceforward it shall be science to whom I shall give undivided worship.'

Emilia read the note for the second

time. She had looked round and failed to discover James Dakin in the crowd. She looked round again now. Rae Cobbold came forward, and asked if he could do anything for her. He took the chair that should have been James Dakin's.

'I am very tired,' Emo said; 'tired and cross, I think. I wish people would say no more about my poem. It is great nonsense, you think, don't you?'

She looked appealingly at him.

'Why should people sacrifice themselves?' asked Rae Cobbold, looking down. 'Depend upon it, it is a mistake—in real life. It is very pretty in a poem, of course.'

He said this last so shyly, she felt it was almost the highest compliment she had had paid her. Indeed, for Rae to

be moved into paying a compliment, was indeed a wonder. Then in a lower voice, he asked,—

'Why do you sacrifice yourself, Miss Standish? Is not happiness better than fame for women, at all events?'

'Do you call this fame?' said poor Emo, smiling one of those smiles sadder than tears. 'Oh, Mr Cobbold, I never felt more wretched in my life!'

'That's just it,' said Rae Cobbold afterwards; 'just the way women are. They talk of wanting votes and so on. Let them just make what a man will call a lucky hit, and they are all unstrung at once, and wanting some one to comfort them.'

Emo certainly had needed some one to comfort her. But Rae Cobbold had

done nothing in that direction. He had felt too much for her. With that keen insight of his he had at once perceived that she was suffering past the power of words to comfort. Only why she was suffering he did not know. Vaguely he felt it was love that she needed, and his mind was busy with many thoughts. Was it really true that he had expended all his stock of love on that one unhappy issue? He had always said so to himself, but he felt now that it would be wondrous easy to love this poetess, who was all he thought a woman should not be, except that she needed love. That was her one redeeming point in Rae Cobbold's eyes. And he did not love her at once, but he longed to do so. With all the tenderness that was su

an inherent characteristic of his, in spite of his sharp tongue, he longed to comfort Emo Standish, and he knew he could only comfort her by loving her.

She had made a great success. Every one was talking of her next morning. The Society papers were full of her praises, and some of them actually went so far as to say something of the very handsome man who had leant over the Poetess, and shared her emotion. But, of course, James Dakin would be too busy to read society journals, and Mrs Du Cane had not yet arrived, so it did not seem as if it much mattered.

James Dakin, however, happened just about that time to receive a book wrapped in newspaper. As he undid it, his eye was caught by Miss Standish's name, and

he read the paragraph. It was written by the youngest member of the staff, a silly girl, greatly elated by being put upon a newspaper, and who wrote it against time driving on to a ball.

But it was in print now, published, and this Philosopher was not above being moved by it. He had just received a long letter from Emo Standish; but he believed that lightly-written paragraph rather than her earnest words.

CHAPTER IV.

FOR MY SAKE!

'It is indeed one of the manly, and I heartily wish it to be enrolled among the female virtues—*he never complained of people.*'

MANY other people besides Rae Cobbold came to the conclusion that success did not agree with women, when they saw how pale and jaded Miss Standish now appeared, and various philanthropic workers began to look depressed, when they found some more work was going to be thrown upon

their already heavily charged shoulders, for Miss Standish was projecting a trip upon the Continent. But just as she was planning this, thinking to find rest in southern sunshine by the blue seas she knew so well, it occurred to her that Oscar's wife was on the point of arriving, and that, considering all the circumstances, she would herself do well to stay in England, at least so as to see her. How hard Miss Standish looked as she acknowledged to herself that it would be more expedient for her to consider appearances in this matter, it would be impossible to put into words.

She had tried to set matters right with James Dakin, but in vain. It had been all a mistake was the only reply he gave. Just before receiving her letter he had

read that paragraph, written by the youngest, lightest-hearted member of the staff of a Society journal, and tortured by jealousy, had not himself sufficient ease from pain to perceive another's pain, and realise her words were true. Very coldly and guardedly he wrote, in stiff pedantic language, that it had been all a mistake, writing his note very carefully, folding it mathematically, and sending it off by return of post. Only when he had done so James Dakin buried his head in his arms, and groaned.

But Emilia knew nothing of this. She only saw the stiff writing, read the guarded phrases, and concluded that he had deceived himself in thinking he loved her, and that she had been deluded in believing him. And very quietly she told Mrs

Mowbray all was over between them, and begged there might be no further allusion made to what had been thought of only for a moment, and that no one else should be allowed even to know there ever had been anything. So naturally everyone supposed that it was Miss Standish's success that had so affected her health and spirits. Everyone, that is to say, but Oscar; and he was very tender to her, tenderer than he had ever been. He quite understood, he thought, why Emilia was at times cold and spiritless, and passive under his loving speeches, and still more loving glances, and at other times tetchy and even bitter.

She met Rae Cobbold often now—she herself hardly noticed how often; and he came to see her once or twice, and even

went so far as once to say to Mrs Mowbray that the life of a poetess was quite unnatural for a woman, in which Marian fully agreed with him, adding in a melancholy tone,—

'And Emo would make such a devoted wife.'

That did not quite suit Rae Cobbold. He did not want a devoted wife, but rather a wife he could be devoted to; one who would trample upon him, drive him half wild with her caprices, but yet suffer him to adore her, as his slave. Nevertheless he had gone too far to draw back now. He was certainly thinking of Emo Standish as his wife.

One day he and Emo found themselves alone together. It was the first time it had happened. This, in itself, made it

the more remarkable, for they had met so often, and never alone before. There are some men who always feel slightly embarrassed on finding themselves alone with a lady, and Rae Cobbold was one of these. This feeling of disquietude was not slow now in communicating itself to Emo, for she was singularly quick to feel her companion's tone of thought.

Rae Cobbold looked at the china on the mantelpiece. 'That is a pretty cup,' he said. With his usual luck he had picked out the most valueless piece of china in the room. Emilia did not notice this at first, but she regarded the cup as absolutely uninteresting, and could not find anything to say about it.

'I do not care much about china,' she said.

'What do you care for?' asked Rae.

Emilia looked at him, and the empty fireplace, and the uninteresting new books, uncut upon the table, and then at the china cup. She seemed absolutely spiritless, and her eyes filled with tears, as she said,—

'What do people generally care for? We may do the best we can to help others, and fill our own lives, but—but—'

'A woman's life is not fame, nor the pursuit after it,' said Rae somewhat sententiously; but his eyes also full of tears.

'Why will you talk of fame in that way?' said she waspishly. 'When have I thought of it, or wished for it? I never wrote with less care and thought than that poem, that has been more talked of than anything of mine. I wrote it to

give pleasure,' with a half sob. Then, quickly recovering herself, and beginning to adjust the flowers in a bowl before her—it was the time of roses—she said, steadily, 'Now, I have nothing else to care for, or to think of but fame! Only I shall never care for it,' and she broke down again, and turned away half shading her face with one hand. It exhaled something of the rose perfume.

'Emilia—Miss Standish,' began Rae Cobbold. Then she uncovered her face, and looked at him evidently startled. And he felt baffled, and, looking doggedly at his own boots, not at her, said, 'Give it up. Be a woman—what you really are. Will you not, for my sake?'

'For *your* sake!' asked Emilia sadly, and full of wonder. 'What do you care?

You, who despise me utterly, and every idea I hold dearest.'

'I don't,' said he angrily. She had spoken with passion, and he was speaking with indignation now, 'You know I don't despise a single one of your ideas, if only because it is yours. They may not be the same as mine; but—but what I want to ask of you is to give up living for ideas, and to live for yourself, for your own happiness.'

'My own happiness!' cried Emo, with a sudden cry; and then she thought of what she knew—knew in her inmost heart must be the truth, though she had tried to disguise it from herself. And she saw James Dakin, having abandoned the struggle to interest himself in his books and studies, alone, sad, crushed, devoured

by loneliness and jealousy. She had told herself, half in pride, half in humility, that he had never cared for her, had deceived himself, had deceived her. But she knew now, with this other man standing beside her, making love to her by asking her to abandon all the higher part of herself; she knew now James Dakin loved her, and she loved him, and that they never, never could forget one another. Yet, with all her imagination she knew no way consistent with womanliness, by which she could convince him of this truth, of which he doubted.

Rae Cobbold had understood something in that anguished cry, 'My own happiness!'

'There is someone you care for?' he said, and his face grew quite white, and the pain at his heart so intense, it forced

out the hissing words, 'Oh, Miss Standish, least of all did I think it of you, that you would marry a *divorcé*, who has driven his wife to it.'

The words were awful as he said them. They recovered Emo as much as if he had dashed a glass of cold water in her face

'Not Oscar Du Cane,' she said, seizing hold of both his hands in her excitement. 'Do not you, too, suspect me of that? And his wife has done nothing, she is as innocent as the day—whatever he may be. He had just got the news of her expected arrival, and it was of that we talked that—that night I got *his* letter.'

Whose letter, Rae Cobbold thought and thought. But he did not ask.

'Well, good morning, Miss Standish, I will not detain you longer. Perhaps I

ought to beg your pardon,' he said, laughing, and looking back. He was waiting for her to say something.

She followed him. She held out both her hands. 'Oh, Mr Cobbold, do not go like that! Be my friend, at least. Be my friend, since you can be no more. I know you very little. I have thought too little of you, I am afraid. For I have been very miserable, and—and *greatly* troubled. But sometimes, do you know, I have felt so sad about you. I have felt,' she added, speaking lower, and looking down, then again glancing pleadingly at his face, 'I have felt as if there were so much more good in you, than you ever let appear.'

'I know there is,' said Rae, the mocker, looking down too now, and with the expression of a child in pinafores, such a good

child too, humble and contrite and very meek.

'Do let it come to the surface then. Do *try*.'

'I do try sometimes,' said he, still looking down very humbly; 'more—more perhaps than you think.'

'I daresay,' said Emo gravely. 'Everyone is better than one thinks. We all wrong each other in our thoughts. I believe. But you—' She looked wistfully into the dark corners of the room. 'Sometimes it seems as if there were nothing heroic to be done. But you would do it if it came your way, I know; and it must some day. If only you have not frittered your soul away before then!'

'I will try not to fritter it,' said Rae, equally gravely.

'And you will be my friend? Let us be friends,' she said it very pleadingly.

'Is it not possible that we should ever be anything more?' asked he, looking up now.

'Do not—do not ask it,' cried Emo, retreating. 'I—I—my one wish is—to make *him* happy.'

'When you are married then we may be friends. But till then let me hope,' said Rae.

'No one else could make him happy as I could,' said Emo. 'Now you—you—'

'No—not just any woman would suit even me,' said Rae, a smile flashing out suddenly and showing how pale his face was, then vanishing equally suddenly. 'But why should I be made happy? His happiness is of more consequence.'

'I think so,' said Emo slowly. 'But you—why do you—'

'Why? Because you do,' said Rae Cobbold. He had not the least idea who it was. But he would not ask. He did not wish to be told, though he had been racking his brains to discover. 'I am glad it is not that fellow Du Cane. He is a bad lot for all his good looks, and his wife is to be pitied.'

'Very—very much so,' said Emo, with such earnestness that even Rae looked at her surprised.

Then he went. Only as he reached his own rooms it flashed across him, had he not heard some one talking of Professor Dakin the other evening, saying he was changed or something, had actually forgotten an appointment, and did not seem

to think it of much consequence when reminded. He remembered now how the Professor had talked with Miss Standish about a poem of hers. It was strange certainly, but there was no accounting for women's tastes. It must be James Dakin.

'Depend upon it, my dear Emilia, you will end by marrying Mr Cobbold. Oh, I see how it will be,' said Mrs Mowbray that evening, 'and I must say I think it will do very nicely after all. He is so quick and practical, and his sharp tongue will defend you against all reviewers. And how he will adore you! My dear Emilia, he will carry you in his hands, as those horrid Germans say.'

'I don't want to be carried in any

man's hands,' said Emilia wearily. 'I would rather toil to make him happy.'

'You toil!' said Mrs Mowbray. 'Now that is not the least my idea of you. I do not look upon you as at all a housewifely creature. You would never have done for poor James; I never did think so. But I really think you'd make Rae Cobbold perfectly happy. And, my dear Emilia, how you would improve him! Why, you'd make quite a man of him. Now mind you don't refuse him, when he offers, as of course he is sure to do sooner or later. For he is certainly making up to you. That kind of man is greatly taken by success. He has paid you ten times more attention since your poem.'

'That is true,' said Emilia absently. She had not thought of it before.

'Recollect I shall quarrel with you, if you refuse him,' said Mrs Mowbray. 'Why should you not make the poor man happy when you could so easily?'

Emilia only looked the sadder for the question. She felt as if Rae Cobbold would have been satisfied, if she had but consented to marry him without caring particularly about him. He would not have expected that she should, or that he should make her happy. He had a lowly opinion of himself, and would have been content to be suffered to drudge for her, well pleased, if he could at times win a smile. But of course it was impossible he could be thus suffered to live for her, Emilia thought. She was not the woman to accept the sacrifice of a man's life and

be pleased withal. Besides, there was James Dakin yet uncomforted. She knew he was uncomforted. Oh! if she could but convince him that she loved him.

CHAPTER V.

OUT OF TOWN.

'Not so darkly, gloomy spirit,
Here are things of sprightlier hue,
Here are suns, and stars, and rainbows,
And a glorious arch of blue,
Earth is not all tears and woe;
There are bright things here below.'

IT was over, the meeting between Emilia Standish and Oscar Du Cane's wife. She had a quiet, pretty face, and a quiet, decided manner, and when she shook hands Emo felt at once that, for all her hand being so small,

and thin, this other had ten times her own force of will. Oscar Du Cane's wife would not have given up without finding some way of letting James Dakin know that she loved him, and that all the mistake was in his not thinking so. Oscar himself seemed the most puzzled how to behave on the occasion of this meeting. Emilia felt as if he had almost an apologetic manner, as if he wanted her to understand that he thought himself unfortunate in having a wife, but that he was not to blame, and that as she was his wife, well! she was very well, was she not? He had been very devoted to Emo since the night of her great success, most considerate as to her pale looks, most anxious for her to leave London for change of air. He talked to

her now of the flowers, and the sunshine on the Riviera, and the old days they had spent there together almost paternally, yet somewhat over tenderly for a father. Emilia felt annoyed, but once when Mrs Mowbray distracted his attention for a little, his wife looked right into her eyes with a grave, earnest expression, that made her at once trust and respect her.

'Oscar has told me what a very good friend you have always been to him,' she said, 'and how you have stood by him through everything.'

'Thank you for saying that,' said Emo, simply.

'I thought you might like me to say I knew it,' said the other. 'Indeed, I have often blessed you for it, though

sometimes perhaps I have been tempted to think— But now I see you, and I hope—I hope you will be my friend a little as well as Oscar's — for his sake.'

She said it very prettily, and Emo got up, and drew her towards her, and kissed her, and Oscar's wife laid her head upon her shoulder, and said low but distinctly,—

'You do not know what I have suffered!'

'I am afraid I can guess it,' said Emo, with her eyes full of tears.

Then Oscar and Mrs Mowbray returned, and Oscar looked at Emo with imploring, supplicating eyes.

'I knew you would like my wife,' he said in words. 'I knew you two would

be friends.' But his eyes said, 'Oh, Emo, forgive me!'

Though for what his eyes did not specify, but Emo understood him, only too well. She felt annoyed with him, and her cheeks burnt, and her manner became nervous. After that she did not wish often to see his wife. Indeed, neither wished to see much of the other. They both trusted and understood each other. But Oscar's wife could not dissemble before Emo, and yet she wished that she, who had alw ys been Oscar's friend, should continue to respect him, as she, his wife, could not. And Emo felt she could best serve Oscar's wife, as well as himself, by remaining always his friend. She redoubled her exhortations to him to take to any work, whatever

drudgery it might be, rather than continue to idle, he with a wife and children to support. And Oscar took her exhortations very meekly and then looked at her.

'My dear Emo,' he said, 'have you ever known me refuse any work yet?' And am I not, as it is, working far harder at getting some employment than other men do, who are called busy? My only pleasure all these months past has been to come and see you. And you know yourself sometimes weeks have passed, and I have not come.'

Then Emo was silent, but not satisfied.

'In your place I should get work,' she thought, and then blamed herself for that presumptuous confidence in her own powers, that so often marks women, who,

with possibly small but settled means, have never tried their strength in the merciless battle of money making. It leads to their being very hard on men sometimes.

A few days after this Emilia left town.

What a great deal there is in those simple words! The season is over for the one who has gone away. Other people may be going to Ascot, and later on to Goodwood; what is that to those who have left town? How insignificant and trivial seem the rumours of garden parties, or of marriages broken off and announced! On the top of the Rigi, who cares for things like these? The question *there* is, has Pilatus got a cap on his head, and, was the sunrise fine? Emo loved the Rigi. She had known it as a child, and though every year is making it more

cockneyfied, old associations clung about it for her. Besides, for other people the season was not at an end, nor London yet let loose. The Rigi was at first something like its old self. Marian had grieved at leaving town so early, but Emo's pale cheeks had prevailed upon her when persuasions would have had no weight. She was glad now she had been so amiable, as she saw Emo reviving in her amusement at having once more to discuss international politics in polyglot tongues.

How well Emo knew it all,—Poland and Schleswig-Holstein, Roumania, and now Italia Iredenta! There was a pleasure in finding foreign languages once more flow easily from her tongue, and recognising quotations from Heine, with which German officers, as of old, interlarded

their conversation at the sunset hour. When one drew from his pocket a well-thumbed copy of 'Mirza Schaffy,' she almost laughed aloud with delight. It made her feel as if she were seventeen once more. But sometimes, when the Post came in, her face grew sad and weary. And Marian, even inobservant Marian, soon noticed this was when she received accounts of meetings in England, or debates in Parliament, and learnt how her other fellow-workers were working on with unflagging energy. Then Emo looked sad. She felt as if she had deserted her post. What had she to do with this idle tourist life, *dilettante* singings and sketchings and expeditions? She, a worker, had she any place there? Then a glance at her own trembling fingers told

her she had better be there, if ever she meant to return to the strenuous old life again. And all the while never a sign from James Dakin.

Emo sat and thought of him sometimes, hour after hour; thought of what might have been, and how it never could be now, for it must be that he did not love her, since there was nothing else to come between them, or hinder their being united. She grieved to think she was so unlovable, a woman made only to be respected—a little. Then, with a sense of gratitude, she thought of Rae Cobbold.

'He has been very kind to me,' she would say. 'He is very kind.'

Rae Cobbold and Mrs Mowbray corresponded. The correspondence had began about some trifle, a mistake of Mrs Mow-

bray's, a book Rae had lent Emilia, and that Mrs Mowbray had carried abroad not knowing it was his. But both liked each other's letters, and so it continued. In his letters Rae related everything that he thought could possibly have any interest for Emilia, though not always in a manner to give her pleasure. Yet Emilia noticed how he tried to tell her little scraps of news, and felt grateful to him. She thought him very kind; but Mrs Mowbray thought him a great deal more, taking infinite pains with the letters she wrote back to him, and trying hard to inveigle Emilia into sending messages.

As for James Dakin, Mrs Mowbray had no patience with him. What business had he to become engaged to Emilia, and then break it off all in such

a hurry? Mrs Mowbray remembered his rude speech to herself—a speech with no sense in it too, as she always said, and she recalled Emilia's indignation before that, when she had laughingly asked to be the first to congratulate the future Mrs Rae Cobbold.

'It will all come right in the end,' said Mrs Mowbray sagely. 'As for him, he certainly means it, and he is a man one can depend upon, not just an eccentric Philosopher like James Dakin. So unsuitable that! I always said so.'

And all this time Oscar Du Cane never wrote, till Emo was beginning to wonder at his silence; he who would at times think nothing of writing to her every other day. She felt sure he must be getting into some mischief, doing some-

thing that made him feel incapable of writing to her. And then in one of Rae Cobbold's letters came the little bit of gossip.

'Lady Hallaton is getting herself very much talked of with that good-for-nothing fellow Du Cane. I am doing my best to keep it out of the newspapers. Where is his wife? As for her husband, it is of no use to ask. He is probably too dead drunk to notice. Her ladyship is at Brighton, and her name is in every one's mouth. The question of the day is — What is Lady Hallaton wearing? Why do beautiful women make such fools of themselves?'

'I think it is other people are the fools to notice,' said Emilia, with some acerbity. 'After all, Lady Hallaton must wear something.' Then after a few minutes, 'How

would it be if we were to go to Brighton for a little while, Marian?'

'Oh, I should like it immensely,' said Mrs Mowbray. 'Anything is better than these mountains. I really don't know what I am to do for boots if we stay on any longer here. And after all, Emilia, I daresay it won't bore you. There'll be the Social Science Congress — that's quite in your line.'

'Is the Social Science Congress at Brighton this year?' asked Emilia, as if waking from a dream. 'I—I have never noticed. Oh! Marian, I don't think I can go back to England.'

'Nonsense!' said Mrs Mowbray; 'you needn't go to the meetings. Oh! now, Emilia, I really do call that too bad of you. I have never complained a bit

staying all this time in Switzerland, and rushing away from London so early, and everything. And now I should enjoy a few weeks at Brighton before the winter so very much. And Frank would not like my going by myself.'

So they went to Brighton, and before they started, Mrs Mowbray wrote another little note to Rae Cobbold, telling him of their destination, and saying incidentally she was quite sure Social Science wouldn't prosper unless he sent notes of its Congress to the newspapers, for which purpose it would be necessary for him to come to Brighton.

Mrs Mowbray flattered herself she was growing quite clever. 'That comes of associating with clever people,' she thought. 'How surprised Frank will be when he

comes home! A year ago I didn't know there was such a thing as Social Science, and even now I haven't the least idea what it is.'

But Mrs Mowbray knew there was a rink at Brighton, and she knew what that meant. She was sick of foreigners, she said, and as to all those tangled political questions that seemed to interest Emilia so much, Mrs Mowbray only hoped she might never hear of them again. A good many Cabinet Ministers would probably sympathise with her in this. But from these international questions, and the Babel of foreign tongues, all alike difficult to Mrs Mowbray, she and Emilia passed away now to Brighton, with its London faces, poky lodgings, spacious pier, and crowded King's Road.

CHAPTER VI.

GOOD-BYE, WORLD!

'Thy path is not as mine; where thou art blest,
My spirit would but wither.'

THERE was the announcement stuck up—'Lady Hallaton at the Rink this afternoon.' And Emilia felt a deep compassion for her as she saw it. How should a woman thus watched, and followed, and commented upon, know how to conduct herself?

Mrs Mowbray and Miss Standish had been at Brighton some little time now,

and Rae Cobbold had turned up in the most natural manner on the King's Road on an early day after their arrival, and been their constant companion almost ever since. Curiously enough, Oscar Du Cane had each time happened to miss them when he called, and Emo had not yet spoken with Lady Hallaton. She did not know if she wished to do so or not; for what could she say? But she felt, when the occasion of speaking with her should arise, she must make the most of it, for her name was in every one's mouth, and it was very freely coupled with Oscar Du Cane's.

'What can be done?' Emo had once asked.

'Nothing!' Rae Cobbold had replied. 'When a man and woman are bent on

making fools of themselves, no power on earth will stop them.'

'Yes,—on earth,' said Emo, half to herself. Then aloud, 'But suppose they are not bent on making fools of themselves, only just drifting into it?'

'It is much the same,' opined Rae. 'And I should say no one was more likely to know what he was about than your friend, Mr Du Cane. And as to Lady Hallaton; what can be the end of a woman like that?'

'She is good,' said Emo softly.

'Is she? I am glad to hear it,' was all Rae's answer.

But generally he put more constraint upon himself to please Emo; yet he had very slight idea of ever succeeding in doing so. Mrs Mowbray differed from

him on this point. She told him it would all come right, and she was so glad.

'You are much more fitted to take care of her than ever James was,' she said, 'That was so unsuitable.'

'But she cared for him,' said Rae, looking down.

'Oh yes, I suppose she cared for him, or she wouldn't have accepted him. But it was all a mistake. I suppose a great intellect like his has a very dazzling effect upon a woman like Emilia. For my part, he always seemed to me so tiresome and very stupid.'

But Rae Cobbold did not in the least care what James Dakin seemed to Mrs Mowbray.

'Do you think she cares for him still?' he asked.

Mrs Mowbray felt annoyed, for directly she was asked, she knew she thought Emilia did. But she answered quickly,—

'Why, how should she? He has never taken a bit of notice of her all these months. No woman could like to be slighted like that. Especially not a poetess. Of course she has exaggerated notions of love, and would like to be made a great deal of. Constant devotion is what would touch her. Don't you know that poem of hers? I never can remember things. But I know she read it to me one day, just when I had got a new bonnet, and I was so cross with her. I was trying it on. I believe she was vexed with my inattention, for she has never read me another since. You know I am quite sure she is getting to care for you,' added Mrs Mowbray, impressively. 'If she were

not she would not consent to your being about with us all day. Emilia has a very high sense of honour, and would always consider she was bound, where another woman would only think she was a little compromised. She has never said one word to me of surprise at your being in Brighton, and I am sure she always looks pleased when you join us. It is the only time she brightens up. Why don't you ask her herself, though?'

'When the Congress is over,' said Rae Cobbold.

'The Congress! What has that to do with it?' said Mrs Mowbray. 'We are neither of us going. Emilia does not care to hear anything about it. Oh, do you mean you are too busy with your accounts of it for the newspapers to make an offer?

Oh, you men! you men! what dreadful, hard, methodical, business creatures you are, when we women pour out our whole hearts! I am so glad to think Frank offered to me just at the time when every man in the service said he had no business to think of marrying for the next year or two. We married all the same,' said Mrs Mowbray.

'Every one has not Captain Mowbray's resolution to be able to tear himself away afterwards,' said Rae Cobbold, trying hard after a compliment and failing egregiously. He did not care to clear himself from the imputation cast upon him. What he meant by waiting till the Congress should be over he knew well enough.

He was with Mrs Mowbray and Miss Standish as they turned into the Rink that

afternoon, and Emo felt grateful to him for not commenting upon the offensive announcement of Lady Hallaton's presence. There she was, as they entered, the centre of a group of men, prominent amongst whom Emo at once noticed Oscar Du Cane. What was he doing at Brighton amusing himself? He who had a wife and children to support! But he recognised Emo now, and at once left Lady Hallaton and came to her.

'I thought we never were to meet,' he said gravely.

'It seemed so,' said she, smiling somewhat. He looked so over serious.

'Are you staying here long?'

He waved his hand.

'*Chi lo sa!*' he said. 'I have given up making plans. Any day I might get a

summons to Liverpool. But the man I came here to talk over business with has gone to Spain, and till he returns my hands are tied. There is nothing to be done but wait and enjoy one's-self.

'Can you enjoy yourself waiting?' asked Emo, looking gravely at him.

'You know I have long thought life a very poor thing,' said he. 'Everything is at cross purposes, and arranged wrongly. And just when one hopes the most one comes upon the inexorable. If it would all come to an end I should be glad, I think. I have never feared death, and I have faced it many times. But till death comes, I have learnt to take things as the birds and flowers do, to be glad when the sun shines.'

'That is all we can any of us do,' said Emo, wistfully.

'Only one of us can't do it,' said he, looking compassionately on her pale face. 'My poor Emo, must you always bear the weight of the world upon those weak shoulders?'

Emilia smiled.

'I feel anxious for you, Oscar.'

'For me!' He laughed. 'There is no use in being anxious for me. I can but be myself, not another. That is the mistake people make to think we can all live by rule, as if we were so many pairs of boots all made on the same last. I have my part to play in life, or I should not be, any more than that mote you see in the sunshine. It has its cause; it has its utility. When that has ceased it will cease to exist, and so shall I. In

the meanwhile, let us eat and drink and take our pleasure. Depend upon it, that is the only true philosophy.'

'Oh, Oscar!' said Emo, looking up shocked.

'I can't help it. I know I am paining you. But I cannot talk humbug to you. Somehow if I ever would tell a lie to you, I know I couldn't with those eyes looking at me. Emo, why have you so much power over me? Do you not see I am only trying to shake it off to assert myself, and that I cannot? Why have you so much power over me? Or having it, why is it our lot to be so separated?'

Emilia was saved from the necessity of answering by Mrs Mowbray and Mr Cobbold's here rejoining her. She was glad of it. For the blood was mounting

to her face. Oscar Du Cane must indeed be convinced that she cared for him, or was it only that his nature had suffered change by yielding to the temptation of being entangled in a flirtation with the most talked-of woman in England? She knew well enough how her notoriety would make her preference of himself delightful to his vanity. But that he should talk to her in such a style, Emilia could not, would not, suffer. She answered so coldly, when he next spoke to her, and so decidedly walked a few steps away with Rae Cobbold, that it was no wonder Oscar Du Cane was soon back again in Lady Hallaton's circle. But not before he had turned quickly to Marian, and glancing at the other two a hasty glance of investigation, had asked, 'Is that a case?'

'I hope so,' said Mrs Mowbray. 'Indeed, I consider them as good as engaged. And I do hope dear Emilia will be happy.'

'My poor Emo!' said Oscar, then quickly skated away. He thought he saw it all. She was trying to console herself. As for being in love with Rae Cobbold, that he was sure she was not, could not be. But he had seen she had been displeased by his previous speech. No wonder if she were trying to persuade herself into marrying Rae. 'I had better let her do it,' thought Oscar; 'better leave her alone. If we were much together, she would feel it impossible. The only kindness I can show her is to keep away from her.' As usual Oscar thought himself self-denying, as he determined to devote himself wholly to Lady Hallaton.

When pleasure and self-denial go hand in hand, there is great sweetness in martyrdom.

Lady Hallaton and Oscar Du Cane sweeping round the rink were a picture such as arrested the attention of all on-lookers. 'Rushing to destruction,' some one said, and it looked like it. Both so grave, both so beautiful, skating so fast together with their hands linked, and their faces drooped, as if they cared not to see the goal to which they were hastening. Rae Cobbold looked at them, and looked at Emo. There was a quiver in her sensitive face, as she watched them, but that quiver did not disturb him. No, she certainly did not care for Oscar. But, indeed, he had never thought so again, after she had once told him that she did not.

'People might just as well go mad about Mr Du Cane's beauty as about hers,' said Rae; 'but as he is only a man, I suppose it does not count. When women have got the suffrage, I wonder if we shall have men going in for being beauties!'

'Is not that past?' said Emo, smiling, as she would not have done once at such a speech. 'But we must soon have the Suffrage, so then we shall see,' she added gaily.

Certainly it was true, that only in talking to Rae Cobbold did she rally and look bright. Rae was so kind to her. He made rough speeches sometimes, and often tried to tease her about Suffrage or the like, but she never for a moment lost the consciousness of how kindly he watched over her, noted every sign of

fatigue, or weariness even before she was herself conscious of it, and intuitively knew when she liked to be left alone, and when talked to.

But Lady Hallaton was now at least as anxious to speak to Emo as Emo could be to speak to her. For Oscar had told her whom he had been talking to, and that he believed she was now to marry Rae Cobbold, 'a man she cannot possibly love,' added Oscar, who was naturally prejudiced, and inclined to see Mr Cobbold in his most unattractive aspect. '*Ma ché vuole!*' he said, shrugging his shoulders. 'Is it not always so?' Then he and Lady Hallaton had skated round the Rink together, she thinking of what he had told her, he wearing the air of thinking of it also. Possibly he was really

thinking of it. But the air he wore was always such an important matter with Oscar, that it was often difficult to say what he was really doing. Of course he was thinking a little, or he could not have worn the air so successfully.

'I have not followed your advice,' said Lady Hallaton, coming up to Emilia.

'So I see,' said Emo gravely.

'How do you see it?' asked the other.

'By your expression. It is changed.'

'How?'

'You are floating with the stream, drifting you know not whither. When I saw you last you were struggling.'

'Is it not better to offer no opposition to the irresistible forces of nature? Do the flowers strive, or the birds?'

Emilia knew so well from whom she

had caught those phrases. She looked sadly at her.

Lady Hallaton could not meet her glance.

'Marriage is a mockery where there is no love,' she said, looking down. 'And to pretend it is real is to join in an hypocrisy. I think those, and those only, are truly married whose hearts beat in sympathy. I wished to say this to you, for I hear you are about to be married. Why should you—you, who are free and wise, put yourself in a position where nothing ever again can be right? Nature reveals to a woman who is her husband, in defiance of ordinances, and to attempt to go against nature must be an impiety. Surely you will not be guilty of trying to force yourself?'

'There is no talk of my marrying,' said Emilia quickly, as if that were a matter of no moment, and looking with extreme pity on the poor child whose mind was all unfit to deal with questions which it was yet but too probable her heart had already decided. 'But by the mere fact of having once exchanged friendly words with you, I am bound to you. Women are bound to their friends, to their brothers and sisters, to their fathers and mothers, to their children. How they should all, on a sudden, profess not to be bound to the men to whom they have solemnly promised themselves as wives I cannot understand. When they have become wives they are bound indeed. And that nature of which you speak has, I think, suffici-

ently revealed this by making a wife's very character at once more dependent and less energetic than an unmarried woman's, except where her children are concerned. There the mother's instincts come into play.'

'How much you have thought!' said Lady Hallaton, with wondering eyes. She was at once overpowered by Emilia's apparently greater wisdom, as Emilia had intended she should be. She began to distrust reasonings that had before seemed conclusive to her, and, indeed, her own judgment. 'I am tired of all this,' she said impatiently, looking round at the gay and animated scene around them. 'It does not feed my heart. I think in all the world there is no one more lonely and to be pitied than I am. You are laughing at me, I see.'

'Not laughing, really,' said Emo. 'I was thinking you know very little of life. But after all, I am not sure that you are not right.'

'Do you see her?' asked Lady Hallaton quickly. 'No, not that one. The one in black with the hat all lace and feathers, and that weary look in her face. That is Alma. She was my dearest friend. She ran away with Lord Henry ——, and she has been divorced, and all! And she is *here!*' in a tone of disgust.

'She must be somewhere,' said Emilia, looking at her sorrowfully, noting the extreme dissatisfaction of the face, the straining after a romantic effect in the costume.

'Yes, but *here*,' said Lady Hallaton impatiently. 'I can understand giving

up all for love, and going away—away with the man one cares for; but to come here and flirt with any of the men of her old set who will notice her, and be cut by all the women! I call that degradation; and I thought better things of Alma.'

'She took a downward step when she left her husband,' said Emilia, gravely. 'The first step commonly leads to more. And yet I wish I knew her, for there must be much good in her still. Though I have never known her, I feel as if I loved her only looking at her. Perhaps Lord Henry did not like going away with her, and prefers to come here.'

'He is *not* here,' said Lady Hallaton, wearily.

'*Not here!*'

'Do you think men ever love as women do?' asked the beauty, after a long, sad pause, raising her great eyes with the old imploring, pathetic look.

'I don't know,' said Emilia sadly. There was silence between them. Then something of her old energy and decision returning to her, Emilia said, 'I do not believe a man ever can continue to love the woman who brings daily disgrace upon him.'

'As Alma did,' said Lady Hallaton, calmly. 'They were in the same set, and everyone knew everything about her.' She seemed to think for a moment or two. 'Was not your advice a mistake?' Then she added abruptly, 'Is not my life such as is in itself bad, a life in which it is impossible truly to pray?'

Emilia only said,—

'If it is impossible to pray in it, that says enough.' Then, 'Have you courage to break with it?'

'Break with it!' and suddenly Lady Hallaton's face lighted up with a smile like a child's. 'What courage is needed for a thing that is done once and for all? Is it the brave or the cowardly who go into convents? Is a child a hero for sitting down and having a tooth drawn? I am only a child. I can sit down and have a tooth drawn. But day after day, and all day long—to-morrow all Brighton might be settling that grey homespun and a poke bonnet are the most becoming wear, and the day after it will decide I have gone mad. Let me go into a sisterhood, dear Miss Standish, do let me.'

'I am afraid they will not receive a married woman,' said Emo, laughing in spite of herself at the other's gleeful seizing out of the frivolous accessories of a life of charity.

'Never mind,' cried the other. 'I will be an associate, and the pet of the whole sisterhood. Oh, what a time I shall have! Listen!' said Lady Hallaton; 'do not think me vain. But I have but one gift—my beauty. Who would be most gladdened by that? Hopeless invalids! Who nurses incurables? Tell me, that I may go and take them flowers, and sit by their bedsides, and at least give them some joy.'

Her face had saddened as she spoke. It was as if a cloud had passed over the sun.

'I do not know, but I will find out and tell you,' said Emo.

'This evening?' asked Lady Hallaton quickly. 'You think this is a caprice, and it will pass.'

'I hope not,' said Emo earnestly.

'It will not pass,' said the other, suddenly throwing back her head, and turning those glorious eyes, for love of which one man had killed himself, full upon her. 'I have made my choice. And my life is decided. Good-bye, Rink! Good-bye, world! You have broken my heart for me, and in return I will heap coals of fire upon your head by being so good—oh! so good to the other maimed sufferers, crushed in the contest.'

She put up her face to be kissed,

whispering so low, Emo was hardly sure she had said it.

'It is not your doing. It is God's. Twice He has sent you to me. Soon would have been too late.'

Then she went away, murmuring to herself,—

'Crushed in the contest—crushed in the contest.'

As she moved, people made a file to let her pass, those at a distance pressing forward to have a good look at her, those nearer at hand retreating in respect before her beauty. She moved along with her head thrown back, her face glowing, and the last bright rays of a dying sun giving an almost unearthly brilliancy to her features. There was no smile upon her lips, but only a noble

expression of being so removed above the surrounding throng, as to be unconscious of its existence, yet with nothing of pride, rather of absorption in a higher, than thought of self. A murmur of admiration growing louder, as she moved away, followed her. An excitable Southern crowd could not have refrained from clapping her. As it was, English men and women spoke her praises.

Emilia listened, and from the general buzz distinguished again and again, 'And that handsome man is not her husband!'

'Mr Du Cane! Mr Du Cane!' She heard Oscar's name again and again; she saw him standing at a little distance watching Lady Hallaton, waiting for her,

evidently expecting her to return to him, and claim the shawl she had left in his keeping. But Lady Hallaton looked neither to the right nor to the left, as she went straight to the entrance to the rink. Then she paused to take off her skates, left a message that someone was to bring her her shawl, and went.

That evening, Emo sent her the most careful information she could collect with regard to Sisterhoods. Next day Lady Hallaton had left Brighton.

CHAPTER VI.

QUICK RESOLVES.

'Marche d'un pas plus ferme an vrai but de ta vie;
Travaille, souffre, attends, ton heure doit venir;
. . . . . .
Que ton ciel soit serein ou chargé de nuages,
Marche à ton but, marche toujours.'—*Ampère.*

'I HAVE been talking to Lady Hallaton,' said Emo to Rae Cobbold, as they walked away from the Skating Rink. 'And why do you always take such a low view of human nature? She is good, and I do

not believe that speaking to her this afternoon has been of *no* use.'

'You can say things no one else could,' said Rae very low, and hanging his head. It was not the first time he had hinted, that he regarded Miss Standish as different from all others, and did not consider her succeeding in a line of action of necessity a precedent for others.

This usually provoked Emo. But she could not afford to be provoked just now. She was entirely absorbed for the moment in thought of Lady Hallaton, for whom her heart bled. Generally, Emo was not much disposed to admire Sisterhoods, but she felt now that she should be glad to know this dangerously beautiful creature was safe inside one. Only it could not be. Then Emo

thought over the other's words, analysed them, constructed theories upon them, applied them to herself, to her friends, did everything that it is possible to do with human words, except forgetting them. That was not Emo Standish's way, till she had sucked the sweetness out of them, and extracted all her lively brain and fertile imagination could extract of useful from them. She was essentially a good listener. Words were not wasted upon her.

Rae Cobbold must be the man Lady Hallaton thought she was going to marry without loving. Did he think it also? Emo wondered, began to feel she was in an unsafe position; that Rae, if it was with that idea in his mind he joined her and Mrs Mowbray so often, might justly

reproach her with having let him do so, if she meant no more by it than pleasant acquaintanceship. And then Emo had to fight against the temptation which, of all temptations, was calculated to be the most powerful to her. Why should she not make Rae Cobbold happy, if it were in her power? That life of perfect trust and sympathy and fellowship in work, which she had dreamed of with James Dakin, had faded from her as a mirage. Just when she thought it safe within her grasp it had disappeared. It was not for her. And that being so, she knew she could be happier herself, trying to make Rae Cobbold happy, if there were any prospect of success, than ever she could be alone in life, unloved and unloving. Her face wore a very dreamy

expression as she sat on the King's Road the following afternoon with Mrs Mowbray. The latter glancing at it, augured well for Rae, as he joined them. If he would but press his point now, she felt sure he might go in and win.

Oscar Du Cane came up, and asked Emo if Lady Hallaton had announced her sudden departure to her the day before.

'Has she left Brighton? No! she said nothing of going to-day. I do not know where she is gone,' said Emo somewhat stiffly, and most markedly continued her conversation with Rae, to the exclusion of Mr Du Cane.

He dropped into an empty seat by Mrs Mowbray's side, but did not exert himself much to be agreeable to her.

He was very pensive and *distrait*, moreover.

People all turned round as they passed, to see who was the pretty woman Mr Du Cane was devoting himself to now, and Marian was delighted. Mrs Smithson, rolling past in her carriage, had her attention caught by the sight of the now well known Mr Du Cane, and so doing, saw Emilia also, and stopped to speak with her.

'My dear Miss Standish, I am so glad to see you back. England cannot get on without you; and you look so much better, too. I want to get up a Franchise meeting here. It is dreadfully difficult—Brighton is so frivolous. But that is the very reason. We must keep always pegging away, especially at the

most frivolous, reducing their number, if it be but by one or two. Besides, it is our duty to educate the class we wish to enfranchise. So promise me you will speak?'

The colour burnt on Emilia's cheek. She recollected what an effort it had been last time, and felt as if her nerves would at once regain their old unstrung feeling if she tested them so severely now. Besides, Rae Cobbold was listening, and she knew he hated the whole thing. Why should she vex him? 'If I were his wife it would be my duty not to do so,' thought Emilia. Quick as lightning came the conviction that, to marry a man, marriage with whom would cut her off from doing things she now considered her duty, must be wrong.

'That settles it,' said Emilia to herself, waiving all thought of ever trying to make Rae happy, and meanwhile said quickly,—

'I will think it over, and let you have a decided answer when I have done so,' then sat down, having settled for herself something far more important than the question whether she should speak at Mrs Smithson's meeting or not.

'Oh, don't speak!' said Mrs Mowbray quickly. 'Horrid creature! she never looked at me. And I did want to see the front of her bonnet! Perfect! was it not? I am sure she must spend a fortune on dress. Why does not she give it all to the franchise? Oh, I know you are going to tell me it is her husband's money, and husbands like

money spent in a way that tends to their own glorification. Mr Cobbold, do persuade Miss Standish not to go to this meeting. That's where she gets all her horrid ideas from. She has been quite different since I have got her away from the whole strong-minded set. She hasn't naturally all those notions, only she accepts them. Persuade her not to go.'

'I don't think Mr Cobbold cares whether I go or not,' said Emo uneasily.

'I don't see what women have to do with such things,' said Rae doggedly. 'They're quite bad enough for men. I don't see why women shouldn't have the franchise; but it is all this perpetual talking of it sets men against it.'

Emilia sat and thought for a little. She

thought very quickly, and so none of them had any clue to what was guiding her, when she said, 'I shall not go to that meeting.'

Mrs Mowbray bent forward, and looked congratulatingly at Rae. And Rae himself coloured with satisfaction. It was the first time he had really thought Emilia was beginning to care for him. But Rae was far too noble-minded to care for marrying a woman who only consented to do so to make him happy, and who possibly still cared for another. The Congress was not over yet. He knew Emo had specially avoided hearing anything about it, not wishing to tax her newly-recovered strength with hot rooms and long speeches. Possibly he did not know who was going to speak this even-

ing. At all events he would see. He pulled a paper out of his pocket, and began rather nervously,—

'The meeting this evening promises to be rather interesting.'

'Oh, Social Science! Don't talk to me about it, since I am not going to the Women's Franchise meeting,' she added, with a smile.

'This is an off meeting,' persisted Rae Cobbold. 'It has nothing to do with the original Congress; something about mammoths and teeth — why civilised people haven't room for them, and what's to be done.'

Without intending it, he was making the whole subject appear ridiculous; therefore his conclusion sounded the more *mal apropos.*

'I wonder you don't go; it is sure to be very interesting.'

'Teeth, indeed!' said Mrs Mowbray, turning away again from Mr Du Cane to display two pearly rows. 'I do not require any advice about them. What an absurd subject for a lot of scientific men to discuss! Who is going to be the chief dentist?'

Rae Cobbold hesitated a few moments, then he said slowly,—

'I see Professor Dakin is announced to read the paper that opens the discussion.'

For the moment the world turned round with Emilia Standish. She said nothing. Mrs Mowbray, on the other hand, exclaimed with such mingled astonishment and consternation,—

'Professor Dakin!'

That it was natural enough Rae Cobbold should ask,—

'Why! do you take a great interest in him?'

'He is my cousin,' said Mrs Mowbray.

'Oh! then you had better come to the meeting.'

'Will you, Emilia?' asked Mrs Mowbray, looking at her.

'No! Oh no!' said Emilia, and actually got up and walked away, and pretended to be intent upon looking at the sea and a passing boat, the sort of thing no one ever notices at Brighton.

Rae Cobbold looked at her, noted her sudden movement, her drooping attitude; noted also the studied expressionlessness of her face when she rejoined them.

'So you will not go and hear your cousin?' he said to Mrs Mowbray. 'Well, I shall.'

'You are going?' said Mrs Mowbray, astonished, whilst even Emilia looked at him in surprise now.

'Yes; it is sure to be interesting. I remember talking to Professor Dakin with you, Miss Standish, one evening. He seemed a great friend of yours then.'

'Yes,—then,' said Emilia, falteringly, and with somewhat more emphasis than she intended.

Rae Cobbold looked at her; she felt he was looking at her. She only became aware how tightly she had clasped her hands when she saw he was noticing it. Rae Cobbold sighed.

'Good-bye,' he said.

'Good-night,' said Marian gaily. 'You will come and tell us all about the lecture?'

'No; I shall not come and tell you about it,' said Rae. 'You will hear of it from others—if you hear at all,' he added.

'Good-bye,' said Emilia.

He held her hand for a minute in his, then pressed it, and let it go.

Mentally she had determined to refuse him if he offered. Mentally he had determined not to offer. She realised this as he pressed her hand and let it go. She had caught the meaning of his previously uttered good-bye, and answered in the same spirit.

Mrs Mowbray meanwhile almost thought he might have been accepted during the few minutes that she had been talking to

Mr Du Cane. 'If not to-day, it would certainly be to-morrow,' she thought.

Mr Du Cane had not stayed long talking to her; he had not attempted again to speak with Emilia, but had looked grave and sad and preoccupied, and gone away with an air of being pained. That and other things came back to Emilia when she went upstairs to her room that night. And she sat and thought about them instead of undressing, sitting by the window watching the strip of sea, of which they got a glimpse cornerwise.

It was very unusual for her thus to sit and think. The hours passed without her being aware; neither did it ever occur to her to consider that the light in her room, shining through the window of which she had thrown open the shutter,

showed to the outer world that the whole house had not gone to bed, until a gentle but persistent knocking at the house door at last roused her to the consciousness of this. The knocking persisting, she went downstairs herself to see what it was, knowing well it would be impossible, as well as cruel, to try and waken the overworked servant. A note was thrust into her hand directed to herself. She opened it in some confusion, for on one side she found hurried pencil notes about the deluge, and mammoths, and teeth, then at the foot these words,—

'I must know; have I made a mistake all this while? And do you still love me? JAMES DAKIN.'

As she grasped the meaning of the words, she saw that a pencil had been tied on to the paper, so that she might answer at once. She tore off a bit of the paper, directed it to James Dakin, wrote,—

'Yes, yes.—Yours, EMO STANDISH.'

And slightly opening the door again, returned it to the messenger. There seemed to be two, and she knew afterwards it was into Rae Cobbold's hands she had given her answer.

He handed it to James Dakin, and together, by the light of a street lamp, the two men digested the meaning of that note. Rae understood it first.

'Well, good-bye,' he said; 'I may as well leave Brighton.'

'How can I ever thank you enough?' said James Dakin, trembling with emotion.

'Keep your thanks for yourself,' said Rae, roughly, and only paused as he went away to turn and see the other leaning against the wall in his agitation, his head buried in his arms.

'He will get over it,' said Rae, with one of his old hard smiles, and did not stay to see after him.

CHAPTER VII.

CONCLUSION.

'Some sweet saint's hand must quicken in our palm,
Or all the life in heaven and earth is cold.'

THEY are old married people now, and the Dakins' house is one of the pleasantest I know to visit at. I often drop in there, and only know one drawback to it. They are so entirely convinced that a husband and wife are one and the same, that they never seem to realise that, to a scientific man bent on research, it may not be quite

the same thing to be shown into Mrs Dakin as to the Professor, and that those who call to talk about philanthropy or literature, may prefer to see his wife.

As this, however, only results in my very often seeing James Dakin when I call to see Emilia, I do not grumble with it, for really he is more like what Emilia used to be than she is now. Not that she is not as full of all good Causes as she ever used to be, and a much more prominent person than of old at women's franchise meetings, and such like. It is no definite change like that. But Emilia as a wife is a wife indeed, and far more absorbed into her husband's identity, pursuits, and ways of thinking, than ever seems to be the case with those professedly docile women, who have

not graduated in the school of woman's rights.

At the same time she has coloured her husband's tone of thought, and modified him so that it is really rather in him I find the old Emilia than in her, with her whole soul imbued with the awful importance of the early education of the two children one always finds clinging to her knees.

For the rest the house is essentially comfortable, though how much of its comfort may be owing to Rae Cobbold, who is a regular habitué, and sometimes makes severe comments, and is always fertile in suggestions, I do not know. Emilia is not now quite so ready as of old with schemes for making the world in general happier; so Rae can take up his position in his usual arm-chair without suspicion of any

deep-laid plot for making him happy for life. For though Emilia and he are the best of friends, and nothing more, yet she knows well enough that any scheme for making Rae in love with any other woman would never prosper. Rae Cobbold is hopelessly and incurably a bachelor. Yet no one is more changed than Rae is. Something heroic to do came in his way, and he did it, and far less close observers than Emilia see something of the hero in Rae now. Besides, he is softened by a sincere and close friendship with a woman upon whom he can thoroughly rely, and to whom he can show himself as affectionate as he feels without fear of being suspected of love-making. Rae has grown softer and gentler towards the world in general. A

circle of men friends are still as deeply attached to him as ever, an ever-varying circle of young boys just merging into men, are still as much his devoted admirers as of old, but no brilliantly sarcastic remarks are heard from Rae now, nor would the most anxious mother do otherwise than rejoice to see her half-fledged son drawn under his influence. There is only one matter about which Rae is obdurate—he will never go to hear another lecture. 'I heard one lecture,' he says, 'and that was enough for me.' Nevertheless, Emilia has sundry schemes for inducing him to hear another. Although Rae eschews lectures, and is profoundly ignorant of science, he is one of Professor Dakin's most intimate friends. 'I would trust that man with all I hold

most dear,' says the Professor occasionally. It is a great deal for him to say. But then he knows what no one else knows, not even Emo, how Rae Cobbold, almost by physical force, dragged him to Miss Standish's door that night, and how Rae Cobbold stood over him, while he wrote those hurried pencil words. Emo has heard how Rae came up to the Professor after his lecture with his sarcastic 'You think yourself very clever, guessing what people were like before there were any. I think you scientific men would do better to look under your own noses, and see what is passing round you.'

'What do you mean?' the Professor had asked.

He had delivered his lecture, and with a worn weary look was leaving the lecture

hall, having already shaken off all friends, who had tried to lay detaining arms upon his. Rae had noted it all before he spoke, noted the look of complete prostration, noted the utter hopelessness, the trembling yearning to pass away out of sight, and then he had spoken roughly and rudely.

'You forget we met before,' he replied, half in answer to James Dakin's startled look of non-recognition, half in answer to his question. 'Miss Standish was there then. She is in Brighton now. I should not tell you so, if I did not think you loved her.'

James Dakin's eyes seemed nearly to sink into his head in his extremity of pain.

'What is the use of talking of loving?' he asked, in a voice hoarse with suffering.

'Women do not love those who love them, and—'

'Much you know about women,' muttered Rae, interrupting him impatiently. 'Miss Standish loves you, and that's the long and the short of it. And if you go on breaking her heart you're a villain, as well as a fool. After I have told you!'

'After you have told me!' repeated the Professor, looking at his companion, as if he feared he had taken leave of his senses.

'Yes, after I have told you,' said Rae; 'for if she didn't love you, she'd marry me, and I believe now—' the rest of his speech was too low to be heard.

'This is a long story,' began the Professor.

'The longest story I ever told,' interrupted Rae, 'the story of my life.'

'I do not understand your object in coming to speak to me,' said the Professor, standing quite still, looking him in the face, and speaking in measured tones professorially.

'My object in coming to tell you, what you seem unable to discover for yourself, is I wish to secure the happiness of a woman I *respect*.'

Something of all this Emo knew, but no one but Professor Dakin and Rae Cobbold knew how long it had taken before the Professor was convinced. James Dakin was rooted in his self-depreciation, convinced Emo loved another, and had suffered so cruelly from the conviction, that but for Rae Cobbold forcibly dragging

him that very evening to the door of Emilia's lodgings, and but for the fact of her light streaming out into the night, and thus giving support to Rae's assertion, that it was not even then too late to write a note, and ask for an answer, the Professor might even yet have remained unconvinced. No one knew what James Dakin had suffered during these months, since the *great success* of Emilia's poem. If he had even sickened, it would have been better for him, but he seemed to have retained his full strength, so as to suffer in all their entirety the pangs of jealousy and disappointed love. He was a man who had never loved before, never thought of any woman before. From the first day he had seen Emo, he had felt that she was the wife made for him, the

only one. He had schemed and striven, hoping against hope, to win her love ; he had loved her with his whole heart ; and then he had made a profound analysis of Oscar Du Cane's character, an analysis prompted from the first by jealousy, and he believed the woman he loved, loved this man rather than himself. The torments he had suffered were not to be quickly recovered from.

Emilia had seen this when he had called next morning, and she had spoken with him. She saw that no assurances of her love, no affectionate words or looks, could reassure him, and give him peace at once. Only as his wife could she hope thoroughly to convince him that she loved him. There was nothing to prevent their marriage taking place at once, and much

in James Dakin's frame of mind to render it expedient. Oscar Du Cane said, 'This is a very sudden affair,' when he heard of the approaching marriage, and looked compassionately at Emo with fond blue eyes.

'Not so very,' said Emo. 'I could not tell you when—when we were first engaged, because you were in such trouble then about — about your wife. Then afterwards there came a little division between us.'

'You mean you had consented to become Professor Dakin's wife, when I thought my wife had left me!'

'Yes,' said Emo, demurely; 'it was just a little while after that you came to talk to me about it, and it seemed heartless to say anything about my own happiness to you just then.'

Oscar Du Cane bit his moustache. If he had only known, he thought, that then, when he had felt so cut off from Emo, fancying she might be expecting him to make outspoken declaration of the love he had so often implied and hinted at,—that then, just then, she had accepted another man! Well, he might have spared himself a good deal, he thought. But now he felt that Emilia had an advantage over him. However, James Dakin very soon made his promised wife feel that she could not keep up any acquaintance with Oscar Du Cane. This was even before she married him. Perhaps it was a pity; perhaps it led to Emo sometimes, in a sentimental mood, sitting and thinking more tenderly of that old friendship, than she otherwise would have. And at times,

perchance in after years, when James Dakin drank his tea in the morning in a brown study, and went away to his work afterwards with the air of not having yet become awake, the recollection of two blue eyes, that had ever looked sympathetically, appealingly, deep into hers, and would have known, even without looking, how she was feeling, may ever and again have come back to her in a way in which they could not have haunted her, were they things of her daily life.

Yet, after all, perhaps James Dakin was wise, and knew himself, and his own proneness to jealousy, even if he a little misread Emo. As it is, Oscar has long ago forgotten his impression that Emo had the advantage of him. He is convinced that Emo loved him truly, passion-

ately, desperately, and only married James Dakin in utter hopelessness. And, alas! for the frailty and credulity of women, his wife also shares that belief. Though no one knows Oscar's faults better than she does, she still fondly believes they are hidden from all other women. Oscar fancies also that it was for love of him that Lady Hallaton first forsook the world, in which she had reigned so long, and then afterwards died. She was found one day with an empty bottle of chloral by her side. There had been several reigning beauties since, and the newspaper articles, commenting upon 'A Beauty's Caprice,' and predicting self-abnegation would soon become the fashion, — thus showing a slight want of comprehension of that word self-abnegation, a virtue

which never can be the *fashion* as long as the world lasts — these newspaper articles were already forgotten, when again a great stir was made over her sudden death. People heard, with a sinking of the heart, that she had been dead for hours before it had even occurred to any one to ask what had become of her, or look for her. Then she was found in her own little room, with the empty bottle by her side. Some hours sooner her life might have been saved, but now she was already quite cold.

'She took it by mistake,' said Emo, directly she heard of it.

Professor Dakin had been carefully considering all the details, going over the pros and cons, and slowly and laboriously arriving at the same conclusion. He

did not know how his wife had arrived at it as by intuition.

'I promised *always* to believe the best of her,' said Emo. 'She knew I would keep my promise, and she would not deceive me.'

Professor Dakin sat and thought. To the scientific mind such reasoning seemed illogical, yet he reflected women's conclusions were often just, and that he had arrived at the same, only after the man's method—reasonably.

There was a grand funeral, to which all the Sisterhood went. They had not thought it right in life to receive the woman, who was a wife, into their friendly circle, but in death nothing hindered them from treating her as if she had been one of themselves. So they all stood around, mourning very truly; and orphan children

scattered flowers on the grave of their benefactress, and old men and women tottered up, and pronounced the grave and flowers lovely, just as she had been in life.

And, amongst the crowd, stood a grave, sad-looking priest, with white face and hollow cheeks. He had come from a crowded manufacturing town in the north, where he was said to be giving his life away for the people among whom he worked as curate. With head bowed, and clasped hands, he knelt by Lady Hallaton's grave and prayed, and all the sisters noted him as one of the saintliest of the band of Ritualists. A little apart from the crowd stood another man. He wore his arm in a sling, and, if the sisters had known it they would have been greatly interested to hear how he had lost his

arm and won his V. C. No one there knew anything about him, though, in military circles, his name was very well known. Neither his head nor his knee was bowed; but when all the old men and women had tottered up to the grave, and tottered away again, he, too, came and looked at the flowers they had laid there. The pale, sad priest then saw him, and held out his hand.

'We both loved her,' he said, 'but God loved her best. He has taken her from us. God grant we may both make such an ending!'

The soldier did not return the pressure of his hand. He looked at him from under his eyebrows, and said shortly,—

'It was not God took her from me.'

Then he turned on his heel, and walked

away. He was the penniless cousin, who had played with her as a child, and of whom her father had said he was just like her brother. He was on his way to become one of England's heroes now; but when he had urged his suit, he had been just nobody—only a subaltern—her penniless cousin. And Lady Hallaton had never heard of it; for her father had forbidden him ever to see her again. Then, when she found her brother had deserted her, and her father had peremptorily ordered her to marry the man whose position made looking into settlements agreeable, Lady Hallaton had obeyed, as she always had. Poor, young thing! she had never known a mother. And how should a father ever consider that his daughter might love one man, and not another?

Women ought to acquiesce in the arrangements men made for them, and be thankful there were men who troubled themselves to make arrangements for them. That was his creed.

That manufacturing northern town soon had to mourn its curate; for within a week of Lady Hallaton's funeral, that pale, sad priest had gone to convert the heathen in savage lands, finding England no longer savage enough for him. When a year later the soldier, sitting in his club, read the short notice in the paper telling how the other had sickened at his post, and died of fever, he felt a momentary pang, that he had not returned that hand pressure by the grave of the woman they had both loved. He tried to shake it off, by saying to himself,—

'He always was a sickly fellow. And

he never had a chance.' But somehow from that day the young priest's words came back to him, and 'God grant we may both make such an ending,' became a living thought for him. When he died, too, all England knew how that prayer had been answered. But that is in the far future, with which we have no concern.

The Dakins' life is a very full and a very happy one.

'The least happy year of our married life was the first year,' says Emilia, in the wintry firelight.

'Nay, that was very happy too,' says the Professor, looking at her somewhat reproachfully.

'Happier than anything I had known before; but less happy than all the years that have followed after,' says she softly.

'That is quite true,' says James Dakin in that simple, thorough tone of his, that makes one quite sure he is speaking exactly what he thinks, not one word more nor less, whether he is expounding the last new scientific theory, or as now simply expressing an opinion about his own domestic happiness.

When I come away from visiting the Dakins, I always do so refreshed and strengthened. The air of their house is like that of the mountain tops, and any frivolous or petty thought would feel as much out of place there as the healthy hardy Rose des Alpes looks planted out in a trim, tenderly-nursed English parterre.

THE END.

BY THE BAY OF NAPLES.

'The time will come, when you shall plead,
And supplicate, and try to woo them back to you,
With piteous prayers, and tears, and folded hands;
But the bolt shall be rusted
In the socket of the door
Of your soul,
So that the angels you have refused
Can neither gain admission,
Nor the devils you have entertained get out.'

J. Aden.

BY THE BAY OF NAPLES.

CHAPTER I.

'A TRIFLE, A TRICK OF COLOUR.'

'How strange are the freaks of memory,
The lessons of life we forget,
While a trifle, a trick of colour,
In the wonderful web is set.'—*Lowell.*

IT was at Naples in the Carnival. The sun was streaming, dazzling down, forcing everyone to hold up parasols, umbrellas, handkerchiefs, in one way or other to shelter

their eyes from the fierce radiance. They had left London shrouded in fog blacker than the blackest night, and so heavy even the strongest people breathed asthmatically, whilst tears now and again coursed down their cheeks with the smarting of the smoke. Here it was the sun brought tears into unaccustomed English eyes, blinking rather puzzledly at it all. It was a strange sight. In London they had left people so depressed, each one speaking as if he had heard of his dearest friend's death that morning, and been disappointed of a legacy; people looking so pale and yellow, all more or less suffering from liver, and only the very broadest jokes taking at the theatres. Here all was rollicking, wild, frantic merriment.

There is no order in the Carnival at Naples, no pretty studied gracefulness, such as somewhat mitigates the outrageousness of its folly at Nice, or Rome. People pelt each other with fury. To walk across the street without the protection of an iron mask would be madness. Those who run the gauntlet are cased in brown holland; as to their persons, wear masks over their faces, and yet must try to dodge the various missiles hurled at them. Not sugar-plums, but stones tied up in pocket-handkerchiefs, old carrots, and never ceasing a perfect cloud of make-believe confetti. The London rough would not be more dangerous than the Neapolitan at carnival time, and would probably show somewhat more gallantry. And through all the pelting, and shouting, and laugh-

ing, and singing, drive the cars, in each, some one man or other, or possibly more, dancing, as if out of very abandonment of joy down the whole length of the Toledo, kissing his hand to the lookers-on, waving, gesticulating — in short, a Neapolitan quite natural and unrestrained. The good old English Rector took off his glasses and wiped them. He could not make it out at all. In Lincolnshire they would have thought it was a lunatic asylum escaped, but here everyone seemed to think it quite natural. Besides, he remembered Naples in the days of his youth. Was it not at Capri he had met Mrs St Germains, and fallen in love then and there? Well, evidently Naples was unaltered, just the same mad, beautiful, wicked, sunshiny, amusing place it had

always been. He and Mrs St Germains had come to see the Carnival mainly on Dulcie's account. Dulcie was their adopted daughter, but they called her their niece, and bade her say they were her uncle and aunt.

'Adopted daughter is so formal. It is like mother-in-law,' said Mrs St Germains, 'and daughter we have no right to call her yet.' So she passed as their niece.

Dulcie's history was a strange one, —very strange, and very sad. But this is not the place for telling it. And no one would have thought there could be any strange, sad history connected with the sweet-looking English girl who stood beside them. Dulcie was so distinctively English in the midst of that excited, flashing-eyed, dark-haired Italian crowd,

that it was no wonder she should excite notice. She was so conspicuously inconspicuous, even in the simple way her hair was braided, the quietness of the colours she wore, the very simple fashion in which her dress was made without trimmings of any sort. All were conspicuous among the Neapolitan ladies, with their mountains of dark coarse hair piled above faces, almost masked by the quantity of *poudre de riz*, and set off by elaborate French costumes of the most brilliant and un-French colours. The Rector was not surprised a stranger should notice her; but as, after wiping his glasses, he put them on again, he was surprised at the fixity of the stare with which a stranger was regarding her. A tall, somewhat haggard-looking man, dark, but with

glittering blue eyes, was leaning back against a wall near by, and with folded arms, gazing at Dulcie, as if fascinated by her to the forgetfulness of everything, the Carnival, the crowd, nay, even of Heaven and Hell. It was strong words such as these rose to the good Rector's mind as he caught sight of the stranger, and he looked uneasily at his so-called niece to see if she were doing anything to warrant such a gaze.

No! Dulcie was apparently even unaware of it, as she looked down at the crowd beneath, with that quiet air of contentment that was the nearest approach to being amused he had yet seen upon her features. Never yet had Mr and Mrs St Germains heard their adopted daughter laugh, nor even seen her smile. But her

face looked as if she might be smiling inwardly now, as she watched a passing car, in which all the company were dressed so as to personate various vegetables, one an onion, one a potato, and most conspicuous of all, a very lively scarlet tomato. The tomato blew kisses to her, and waved his arms frantically as if to intimate that his heart were lost—quite lost; but Dulcie neither looked offended nor smiled. The sweet-looking English girl was somewhat inanimate, the Italian thought. Mr St Germains glanced back at the stranger with folded arms. Still that steady, concentrated gaze, as if he were devouring the contour of her face, the bend of her neck, nay, even the curve of her wrists. It had roused Dulcie at last. She looked up, raised two very

innocent, brown, somewhat beseeching-looking eyes to those wild blue eyes that were so passionately devouring her. The stranger met her glance, shivered, and strode away.

'One would not have thought Dulcie could stare a man of that kind out of countenance,' thought the Rector, and his opinion of her rose. He said something to Mrs St Germains that night about Dulcie's quiet dignity. 'It shows she really is a lady,' he said; 'inherited qualities always must come out sooner or later in spite of deficiency of early training. I begin to feel confident we shall never be put to shame by any vulgarity on Dulcie's part. She is as much a lady as anyone at heart, although it may take her a little time to

acquire the manners and pronunciation of one.'

'She is improving very much,' said Mrs St Germains. I noticed Lady Cecil accepted her quite as a matter of course, and seemed to detect no peculiarity in her. She only said she was shy. And I hastened to explain Dulcie had not been introduced, and was going to her first party on Thursday. By the way, my dear, Lady Cecil is very anxious for us to know Sir Ivor Montague. She thinks you might do him good, she says. He is immensely rich, and she says strikes her as the most utterly miserable man she ever came across.'

'Ah, how often do we see that!' said the good Rector, piously. 'Everyone covets riches, and people toil, and do

many dishonourable actions to attain them; but how seldom do they convey happiness!'

'How, Peregrine, how can you?' said Mrs St Germains. 'If we had only the three hundred a-year we thought of marrying on, we could not have made this journey south, and I should have been laid up all the winter, and very likely died. And as to Sir Ivor, no one suggests he has come by his money dishonourably. He inherited it from his uncle.'

When Lady Cecil at Dulcie's first party brought up Sir Ivor Montague to introduce to her very dear old friend Mr St Germains, the Rector started on recognising the stranger who had stared so fixedly at Dulcie, and then gone away at the

first upward glance of her mild young eyes. Curiously enough he did the same now. He was greeting Mr St Germains somewhat haughtily, and, as if it were only to oblige Lady Cecil, he had consented to make his acquaintance. Dulcie turned round. Sir Ivor grew livid, and without a word left the room and the party.

'Did you ever see Sir Ivor before, my dear Dulcie?' asked the Rector.

'Is that gentleman Sir Ivor?' asked Dulcie.

'Yes. I saw him the other day at the carnival.'

'But before that—before that?' asked the rector impatiently.

Dulcie looked surprised and distressed.

'No, of course I never saw him before

that,' she said confusedly. She was afraid the Rector was displeased with her, that she was doing something unladylike, and she was so very anxious to behave like a lady—poor Dulcie!

Her confusion made the Rector doubt her. 'I wonder if she has seen him before, and how?' he thought, almost savagely to himself.

The Rector was a clergyman, but he came of a proud family, and Dulcie had become really like a St Germains to him. Her honour was his, and he almost ground his teeth as he thought of the many situations in which possibly they might have met before. But Sir Ivor Montague had left the party.

'A most strange man he is,' said Lady Cecil. 'I wish you could help him. He

always gives me the idea of being pursued by demons. It seems as if the demons had carried him away now. Well, you are sure to meet again if he remains in Naples.'

CHAPTER II.

MAY A LADY TAKE PRESENTS FROM A GENTLEMAN?

'DULCIE, you ask him.' It was Lady Cecil's youngest daughter, Eva, who spoke. Eva was full of educating the Neapolitans. She had been to see a wonderful school upon model principles. It was in need of funds, and Eva was begging of all her friends. Her cheeks glowed with the delight of picturing the lazzaroni all in whole garments, reading improving

little books. She pictured to herself a day when Neapolitan girls would do their own hair, and have something better to do than peep pensive from behind green blinds, and have love made to them by the passer-by. She heard that some of these girls had so little else to occupy their minds, that they actually sickened and died when their love affairs went wrong. And Eva, who had never felt the least twinge of love in the whole course of her eighteen summers and springs, and winters and autumns, and considered love-making and love affairs 'quite too foolish,' panted to find some sensible occupation for the Neapolitan girls. How could they do anything till they were better taught? So Eva begged and talked, and actually sketched, and sold her sketches, and had

already raised fifty pounds all herself for the great school at Naples. But she had never yet had the courage to beg of Sir Ivor Montague, the richest man of her acquaintance.

'Dulcie, you ask him,' she whispered, and nudged her with her little round elbow.

Dulcie, thus appealed to, never hesitated. It was her peculiarity, a dangerous peculiarity, that she always did what she was bid.

'Sir Ivor, will you give Eva something for the school for the Neapolitan girls?' she asked, in her low, clear tones. It was the first time she had ever spoken to him.

Sir Ivor turned and looked at her, and under that expression it was no wonder

Dulcie looked down, nor that impetuous little Eva whispered,—

'Oh, Dulcie, I am so sorry I asked you!'

But after Sir Ivor had looked at her with the expression of a man in torment so severe, he found no words; he put his hand as if mechanically into his pocket, and pulled out what he found there. He had just come from the bank, and it was five hundred francs he put into Dulcie's hands.

Dulcie said thank you very timidly, and not more effusively than if he had given her five francs, and at once handed the money on to Eva.

Eva grew crimson with delight; her little heart felt like bursting.

'Oh, thank you, Sir Ivor!' she exclaimed.

Any other man must have been pleased to see her intense delight. Sir Ivor scowled.

'I gave it to her,' he said, pointing to Dulcie. 'I would give her anything she asked for.'

Then he looked at Dulcie again, as if it were all he could do to tear his eyes away from her, and then pressing his hand to his forehead, as if the pain were too great, he strode away.

'Why, he is in love with you, Dulcie,' cried Eva, with wide-open blue eyes. 'Of course I knew he was in love with you, when I asked you to ask him. I knew he'd give you something. But did you hear him say he'd give you anything you asked for?'

'Yes,' said Dulcie.

She looked very sweet and pretty in her

simple cotton dress and little shady hat, only half protecting her from the sunshine. But it certainly was an unsatisfactory answer.

Little Eva, with her head full of all her grand schemes and projects, stamped her foot with impatience as she said,—

'Why don't you say whether you like it or not? You never say anything, Dulcie. Don't you know, if you don't like Sir Ivor being in love with you, you should make him understand it at once? Nothing is so wicked as for a girl to encourage a man whom she does not mean to marry. Now, if you are not going to accept him, I don't know if I oughtn't to give back all this money,' she added, staring at her heaped-up treasure somewhat blankly. 'And of

course you won't accept him, will you, Dulcie—a man like that? — you couldn't.'

'If he asks me—' began Dulcie, after a pause, as if for consideration, but broke off, for there was Sir Ivor again.

'What is your name?' he asked.

'Dulcie!'

'Dulcie!'

His brows contracted again, as if with pain.

'Say it again,' he said.

'Dulcie, sir.'

'Sir! You are an American then?'

'No, sir; no. No; I mean,' stammered Dulcie, red with confusion at having said anything so unladylike as 'sir,' and trying hard to express herself properly. 'I am English, and this is the

first time I have left England, and come on the Continent.'

'And you have never been out of England before? Never? Never?' he asked.

'No; never,' said Dulcie, looking up at him rather puzzled.

'I like to hear you speak,' he said; 'you have a sort of accent, as if you had lived all your life in some quiet provincial town, and when you speak I feel at rest. Do you know, child, you remind me of some one I used to know long ago? But when you speak, the likeness passes away, and I feel at rest. She had such a pure, crisp, high-bred pronunciation. Now, you—why, for all the world, you speak like a little servant girl.'

Dulcie's head drooped. She looked pained.

'Are you vexed with me? Are you vexed with what I said, child?' And he put out his dark bony fingers, and touched the girl's hands. She was twining her fingers uneasily together, deprecatingly as it were. 'Do not be vexed with me, child. There is nothing in this whole wide world I would not do to give you pleasure. Dulcie, ask me anything.'

And Eva, who disbelieved in love affairs, and had grand ideas of high-mindedness and uprightness, and doing to others as you would be done by, had to stand by, hearing it all. How could she reconcile it to her conscience to leave Dulcie alone with this strange man? Dulcie had not said what she would do, if he asked her to be his wife; and Eva was sure she could not possibly love him

And nothing can be more wrong than for a girl to marry a man she does not love, thought Eva. But now when she heard the trembling softness in his voice, as he said 'Dulcie,' and saw how tenderly he took Dulcie's hands in his, Eva began to feel as if one moment more, and she must run away, or cry. 'Now, of course, Dulcie must tell him she could not love him, and how could she have the heart to? I don't know if I even could,' thought Eva, 'if he spoke to me like that. And Dulcie has not half my spirit.'

'I do not want anything for myself, thank you,' said Dulcie, quite calmly, but adroitly disengaging her hands. 'I daresay Eva would always be glad of more for the school, if you could afford to give her more.'

'Oh, Dulcie! how can you ask for more?' cried Eva, her cheeks scarlet.

But Dulcie went on quite evenly,—

'She does not want it for herself. We neither of us want anything for ourselves; we have everything. But the Neapolitans are so poor. And I believe it is a very large sum is wanted for the school.'

Sir Ivor hardly looked like the same man as she spoke, speaking very slowly and deliberately, and evidently with some satisfaction in the words, 'a very large sum,' a phrase that, apparently, she had some pride in.

The gaunt, unhappy-looking man looked at her the while with a wealth of passionate love welling from his eyes, and almost transfiguring him.

'And you want nothing for yourself, Dulcie?'

Evidently he took no interest whatever in the Neapolitans and their poverty. Dulcie looked puzzled.

'I have everything,' she said, pleadingly; 'clothes and food, and everything my uncle and aunt give me. I want for nothing now.'

'Are clothes and food enough to satisfy you?' he asked. 'Would not you like some of these pretty things, for instance?'

And he took up, somewhat disdainfully, one of the rough coral necklaces offered for sale in the Villa Reale. It was there the little trio had met.

'Is it right, Eva, for a lady to take presents from a gentleman?' asked

Dulcie, turning to Eva with more of interest than she had yet shown.

'Oh yes! Yes, if—'

Eva was greatly embarrassed. She wanted to say, 'if he is in love with her,' for she had always understood that lovers made presents to their lady-loves. But she did not see how she could say this. She supposed it was right. It could make no difference to Sir Ivor, who was so rich, the price of one of those trumpery necklaces.

But Dulcie was now at rest; and when Sir Ivor said to her, 'No, these are too great rubbish. Come with me, and choose something decent,' she followed at once quite obediently.

Eva followed also, out of consideration for Dulcie, who, she was sure, now was

doing something quite improper in going into the first jeweller's at Naples for Sir Ivor to choose her a present.

'It made it rather better my going too, I thought,' explained Eva afterwards, when Lady Cecil lectured her upon her conduct.

It resulted in Eva's getting a very pretty set of corals. For whilst it was nearly impossible to choose any ornament, that did not somewhat mar the sweet simplicity of Dulcie, everything in turn looked well on the brilliant little Eva, who could not resist the pleasure of trying them on when the jeweller and Dulcie both pressed her. Sir Ivor did not. But he gave her the corals at once, when Dulcie, somewhat forgetting herself in interest for her friend, touched his arm, whispering,—

'Oh, do give these to Eva! They look so very nice on her!'

As to Dulcie herself, she seemed rather frightened of the ornaments, which, she said, were not fit for her, cared at first for nothing but tortoiseshell, and finally, as a sort of compromise, just as she was leaving the shop, allowed the jeweller to substitute a pearl necklace for the tortoiseshell locket she had originally chosen.

Sir Ivor said he would return and pay, and left the shop well satisfied. Pearls certainly would suit Dulcie, and he was grateful to the jeweller for having thought of them.

After that, of course it became noised abroad that Sir Ivor was desperately in love with Mr and Mrs St Germains' niece. Eva was not a gossip by nature, but what

could she do? There was the money for the school to account for; and there were the corals.

'And, mamma, do you think she will marry him?' she asked of her mother. 'It seems hardly right to take the things if she won't!'

'It was not right to take the corals,' said Lady Cecil; 'however, you can't return them now. It would be making too great a piece of work about it. But don't do it again, my dear Eva.'

'I wonder what we ought to do?' said the Rector, musingly, when the report reached him.

'Let things take their course,' said the Rector's wife.

It certainly was the easiest way. Sir Ivor was not the sort of man any guardian

would particularly like to cross-question as to his intentions, or in anyway to interfere with. That he meant to marry Dulcie seemed now quite evident. After all, he was a baronet of old family and great wealth, and it did not appear that he either gambled, or drank, or in any way publicly misconducted himself, only looked more miserable than ever man looked before, except when talking to Dulcie.

So the Rector let things take their course, although with many misgivings.

CHAPTER III.

WICKED BAIÆ.

PEOPLE who go to Naples mostly go to Baiæ, and when they go to Baiæ, they mostly walk round Cape Misenum. In all the world there are probably few spots that can compare with this for loveliness, possibly none that can outvie it. And all around this headland, with its often described view of exquisite, entrancing loveliness, hangs like a cloud the tradition of its great wickedness. Even prosaic Bœdeker

steps aside from its detailed description of villa, island, temple, etc., to comment upon the destruction and the sinfulness of the town, whose ruins strangers come to visit. The good Rector was detailing as much of his classical knowledge as seemed apropos, and also for the benefit of his youthful hearers, and Eva was listening, rosy cheeked, and radiant, also with many a bright interruption, when she corroborated the Rector's information with passages she herself had read, when Dulcie, who had been sitting by silent, with hands lightly folded in her lap, said very earnestly,—

'I think Nero's wife must have been a very good woman. It is nice to think there were such very good women even then.'

Everyone looked startled, and the Rector, who recovered himself first, said with some amusement—some traits of Poppæa Sabina, Rome's most beautiful woman, mixing themselves confusedly with other memories of murdered Octavia,—

'Well, my dear child, on what do you base this very original supposition? What makes you for one moment imagine such a very bad man could have had a good wife? Like generally loves like.'

'I did not think of that,' said poor Dulcie, troubled. 'I only thought how very difficult it must have been to put up with him. He must have been so miserable sometimes, when his own wicked deeds came and looked at him, and then she must have had to comfort him and soothe him. I always think that must

be very difficult. And do you not think, sir,' she went on very deferentially, turning to the Rector, 'that it is only men, who are rather bad, who would like rather bad wives, and that a man given up to wickedness would feel as if he must have a good woman to shield him against himself? I don't know, of course,' said Dulcie calmly; 'but it is what I have often thought.'

'I daresay you are right, my dear child,' said the Rector gravely, and passed a protecting arm round her, drawing her nearer to him.

Somehow they all thought of Sir Ivor Montague.

He was lying at full length on the dry, stubbly grass, looking at her as she spoke.

'Dulcie is quite right,' he said now.

'A man devoured by the bitterest memories needs an angel to comfort him. Nothing less will serve his turn,' and he got up and moved away.

Later in the day, as they drove homewards, some of the party went into the dark underground passage that leads back to the Elysian fields. Laughing Eva of course insisted on being carried across the Styx. Dulcie had been frightened at the darkness, and stayed by the shores of Lake Avernus gathering flowers. Sir Ivor had promised to take care of her against possible brigands or other dangers, and so Lady Cecil and Mrs St Germains remained contentedly in the carriage, sitting together under the shade of white-covered umbrellas, and watched them strolling away, Sir Ivor

once holding out his hand, possibly to help her over a rock. Anyhow, she did not take it, as they passed out of sight.

'Did you hear what your niece said about Tiberius' wife?' asked Lady Cecil, with a little shudder. 'There must be far more in her than she lets appear. Are you in her confidence, my dear Mrs St Germains?'

'No one is in Dulcie's confidence,' said the Rector's wife sadly. 'We have done our very best to win it, but in vain.'

'I'm sure you have, you dear, good people,' said Lady Cecil caressingly. 'But is it not rather awful her marrying him with that idea?'

It would be for some girls,' said the Rector's wife, musingly. 'But I don't know that Dulcie would not be as happy

married to him as to anyone else. I'm sure the kindness my husband has shown her, and we both meant to love her as our own, not that I mean to blame her the least, poor child! She has not got a fault, unless it is in having no will of her own. I didn't like the idea. I can't say I do. And none can say it is our fault. We certainly have not encouraged it in the least. But the thing I can't make out, dear Lady Cecil, is, what is there wrong with Sir Ivor. He does nothing wrong that I can see; except that he never goes to church. I don't believe he goes to church. But then I am afraid many men don't. And one never hears him say a slighting word about religion. And really my husband has inquired about him as much as he possibly can; and he can't hear a word against

him. Now, you know there are men who drink; there are men who do all sorts of dreadful things. It is, at least, better for Dulcie than marrying a man like that. Besides, there are circumstances in her case which make one feel that it probably would be a very good thing for her to be married and in an assured position. And I don't believe Sir Ivor would mind a bit about her story. One day the Rector tried to tell him a little. He thought it right, my husband did. But Sir Ivor cut him short.

'"What does the past of an innocent girl like that signify?" he said.

'My husband was quite shocked. Of course poor, dear Dulcie is quite innocent. It has not been her fault, poor child! She has only been sinned against.'

'Sinned against!' said Lady Cecil, with at once all the regular fine lady's love for scandal. 'Do tell me her story, dear Mrs St Germains. You know you promised to once, and then we were interrupted. I daresay we shall just have time now. Dear me! what a long way they are walking. I do believe Sir Ivor is taking her right round the lake. What can he be thinking of? Depend upon it, he means to get her into a solitary place, and then, if she won't promise to be his wife, he will threaten to drown her, or himself, or both. Dear me! I wish Eva would come back. She must be tiring your dear, good-natured husband to death. And she would know what to do at once. She has such a chivalrous regard for Dulcie, whom she considers quite as her *protégée*. Do

tell me her story, dear Mrs St Germains, I really am so nervous.'

Thus adjured, Mrs St Germains began Dulcie's story, telling it after her own fashion, sitting in the carriage by the shores of Lake Avernus, the sun lighting up with a shifting radiance the gloomy scenery around them.

CHAPTER IV.

A WIFE'S DUTY.

'In this world of sorrow and sin,
This world of pain and of passion.'
Tannhaüser.

'IT was one of those dreadful autumn evenings,' said Mrs St Germains, 'when the rain goes drip, drip, drip, till one feels as if a hole were being bored right through one's brain, and I was feeling very ill again, and the Rector not over well, when there came one of those dreadful rings, that are the bane of a clergyman's life.

'"Please, sir, there is someone dying at Farmer Jenkins', and they've sent to ask you to come at once."

'"Now, don't go," I said. "It is that dreadful woman, be sure. And what can be the use of a clergyman going to a creature like that, who has kept carefully enough out of his sight whilst in health?" You know, dear Lady Cecil, it is not that I wish to cast any doubt upon deathbed repentance, and all that. No, of course not,—not that I am a great believer in it. But, you see, anyone can repent without a clergyman. He is not absolutely necessary. And when they have had the whole of life to send for him in, and never done so, why should he have to go that very minute, however ill he may be, and whatever the weather is like, just

because they are dying? I call it so unreasonable.'

Lady Cecil was of rather a freethinking turn, and so, in talking to her, Mrs St Germains was always glad to show that she herself was not straitlaced, and that although a Rector's wife, there yet were points on which she doubted. Lady Cecil smiled assent now. 'But my dear, good friend, the Rector, he would not listen to you!'

'No, of course not,' said his wife. 'He never does if I attempt to dissuade him from doing anything he considers his duty. That leaves me so free to say what I like, you see. I know he'll do it, whatever it is, if he thinks it right. He went at once, and it was that dreadful looking woman—a regular bad woman, my dear

Lady Cecil. And there had to be the burial service, and everything read over her! I must say I don't call that right. And when Mr St Germains came back he looked so white and grave, I thought he would have a serious illness. She had given him papers; she said she couldn't die till she had given them to him. They were about a child, a little girl, whose nurse she had been; and she had been paid to steal the child and hide her from her father and mother. Why, I can't imagine. And she had done it. She said it was years ago, and she said where she had put the child, and that she was now a milliner's apprentice in the workroom of one of those great London shops, as it turned out, but that her parents were very wealthy people in

Australia; and she gave the Rector their address and the girl's address, and papers relating to her, and she told the Rector that the child's father and mother had doted upon her—simply doted upon her; and then she cursed some one, and died cursing — died cursing. And the Rector said he must go to London and see the girl, and when he came back he said, "My dear, I think we must adopt her. We cannot answer it to our consciences to let her remain there." And of course I objected; but when he told me her name, I took a fancy to it. I thought I should have liked to have a daughter called Dulcie; and then he led her into the room, because he had counted on my yielding. And there she was, just as simple and pretty as she is now. So we

took her for our own till we could get an answer from Australia as to what her parents wished. Perhaps they are dead, and she will be quite ours. Only if she marries Sir Ivor—'

'There! he is going to drown himself! I told you so!' cried Lady Cecil, standing upright in the carriage, and screaming and brandishing her parasol.

Mrs St Germains stood up too, and screamed; but it made no difference. The Rector and Eva were recrossing the Styx, and Dulcie and Sir Ivor were almost on the opposite shore of the gloomy lake, which after all is not quite so gloomy as one would expect from its name. The ladies' screams did not reach so far. And after all it seemed Sir Ivor had not meant to drown himself, for there were

he and Dulcie now calmly retracing their steps.

That evening Dulcie laid her hand upon the Rector's arm and drew him out on to the marble balcony in the moonlight,—

'Please, uncle, I wish to ask you a question,' she said; 'ought a woman to marry a man if it will make him happy?'

The Rector hesitated.

'It is a strong reason,—a very strong reason,' at last he said.

'Yes,' said Dulcie gravely.

'There is no other man you love better, my dear?' Mr St Germains asked after a little time for consideration.

'I have never thought about loving anyone,' said Dulcie simply.

'Then, my dear, I feel sure you would

do your duty as a wife to the man who should become your husband.'

This was the true St Germains' code—that a good woman would always do her duty by her husband, whatever he might be.

'What is a wife's duty?' asked Dulcie. 'I mean what would she be expected to do for him?'

She asked it just as she might have asked what would be expected of her in a new situation she was undertaking as housemaid. It had been a great trouble to her at first to find that nothing seemed expected of her by Mr and Mrs St Germains, and she had accepted quite thankfully little jobs of mending, and the task of looking through the linen when it came from the wash.

Mr St Germains was puzzled.

'Different husbands expect such very different things,' he said. 'A wife should always be obedient and do what her husband wishes, whatever that may be.'

Dulcie said 'Yes.'

But for all her quietness, all her acquired good manners and ideas of reticence, before those whom she still was disposed to consider her superiors in birth, the girl noticed things, and she was thinking that she had never yet heard Mrs St Germains not object to anything the Rector proposed doing, nor Mr St Germains ever refuse to do anything his wife wished.

Dulcie thought the husband she should like would be something like the Rector, only younger, courteous, and kindly, and easy-going, and good looking. Some-

thing like Mr Jephson, for instance. Mr Jephson had just left college, and was a nephew of Lady Cecil's. He had often joined their party of late. To do what Mr Jephson wished would be very easy, Dulcie thought. To do what Sir Ivor wished! The girl shuddered. Hers was a gentle, dutiful nature, incapable of great emotions. His hot passion terrified her. There was only one thing drew her towards him,—she felt sorry for him.

CHAPTER V.

LITTLE EVA SO SORRY!

'Ho! ye who suffer! know
Ye suffer from yourselves.'
Edwin Arnold.

AND little Eva, did she not feel sorry for Sir Ivor? Every fibre of her little warm heart was drawn with pity for the tall, gaunt man, who loved Dulcie so passionately, and whom it was impossible Dulcie should ever love. Eva cried herself to sleep at nights thinking of it.

As to Howard Jephson, he was her cousin—young, commonplace, never likely to be the hero of a tragedy—Eva had no thought for him. But she pitied Sir Ivor, who was so rich and so miserable. Once, as he was walking by her side, he had moaned, and Eva had asked him in her bright, lively way, 'Tired?' and he had answered, 'Tired; yes, always tired, except with her.' And Eva had known he meant except with Dulcie. 'Then the years roll away, and I feel as if I were a boy again. I loved a girl then, like her—so like. Can things ever be undone, I wonder, and it be as if *she* had loved me—not him? If I could forget—forget!' and he went on muttering to himself, while Eva walked beside him sad and silent.

Eva never could forget that day. Lady Cecil was somewhat freethinking, and thus the romance in Eva had been suppressed, and she had taken to Philanthropy, making it always as pretty and poetical as she could, with Kyrle societies and the like, but yet not finding that outlet and refreshment that religion affords to those who are brought up implicitly to believe in it. Eva had not even been brought up to disbelieve. She might have been a passionate little sceptic. But everything had been presented to her as an open question, about which she might form her own conclusions as soon as she had sufficient data to go upon. Having reached which point, her mother would not be at all surprised if she differed from herself, and adopted

either other forms of reasoning, or at least ultimately arrived at quite opposite conclusions.

Thus now, when Eva was for the first time brought near to a romance, she threw herself into it heart and soul. Loyal she wished to be to Dulcie. But, as Eva had complained from the first, Dulcie never said anything, and that was stupid. And now, to add to this, it really seemed as if Dulcie were ready to marry Sir Ivor without caring for him one bit, whereas a man like that evidently required all the love of which a woman was capable.

'Now if it were me!' thought poor little Eva, and dreamt of David playing his harp to charm away the evil spirits with which Saul was tormented. Meanwhile, some one else was taking

another view of the situation, and that was Howard Jephson. He had taken honours, and found it hard work, and came to Italy to rest. But it is one thing to intend to rest, and another thing to do it. Habits of application and industry once acquired, are not easily laid aside. He studied the bronzes in the museum; he studied the ruins of Pompeii; and in between the intervals of noting the curve of poor maimed Psyche's neck, he studied the droop of Dulcie's head while Sir Ivor talked to her.

Sir Ivor was a baronet, and rich beyond the common, every one knew that. Howard Jephson had his scholarship, seven hundred pounds a-year, and university acquired tastes and habits. How to free Dulcie from her tyrant

lover was a problem that puzzled him. He tried to work it by algebra, and then geometrically. In the end he thought practically, or rule of thumb would suit him best. He began to talk to Dulcie; she listened. He was not very much in love with her—only a little. Dulcie breathed as a plant removed from hot-house air to the healthier atmosphere of the garden.

She began to develop an interest in bronzes, and to ask questions about the Pompeians. Howard Jephson proposed an expedition to Pœstum, and every one welcomed the idea. They were to sleep at Salerno, and drive on. Dulcie expressed great interest in the three temples; Eva could not sleep for thinking of them. Mr St Germains brought out some big

volumes, and imparted much useful information. Mrs St Germains whispered to Lady Cecil that it was while gathering violets under the shadow of the temples that the Rector, then an undergraduate, had offered to her.

Lady Cecil always loved to see memorials of religions of the past. So all were pleased at the thought of the expedition. Sir Ivor Montague must have been, for no one had asked him to come too, and yet when they started, there was he at the station, taking it as a matter of course that he was of the party.

The train was on the very point of [illegible]. A courteous guard waved to the party to hasten, whilst the station-master, yet more courteously, detained

the train. A woman, with a baby in her arms, begged importunately, leaning on the railing where tickets were to be obtained. Howard Jephson ordered her off, and expostulated with a carabiniere standing by for permitting travellers thus to be disturbed. The man, magnificent with spotless shoulder strap and dignified cocked hat, looked greatly shocked that anyone, happy in the possession of youth, health, and fortune, should begrudge another the small comfort of begging in a lamentable voice.

Sir Ivor looked at the woman, and signed to her to take the handful of change pushed to him through the guichet. The woman pursued the whole party with benedictions to their carriage. The carabiniere actually paid them the compliment

of taking a few steps after them, looking at Sir Ivor with a countenance of supreme satisfaction. As to little Eva, in spite of all her Charity Organisation training, her heart swelled with joy, she recalled 'Monte Christo,' and envied Dulcie such a lover.

Dulcie said stilly,—

'That woman will not know what to do with such good fortune. She is used to bad;' then inquiringly to Howard, 'You wanted her sent away?'

'Yes,' said Howard Jephson, colouring up to his temples with dissatisfaction, and wishing the whole Charity Organisation, Poor Law Reform, etc., etc., at the bottom of the sea; and that he could still give pennies to beggars, as once he had done, with the simple childlike belief they might avail much.

'They have no Poor Law here,' said Eva, sorry for Howard, and as usual anxious to relieve pain wherever and in whomsoever; anxious also to appease her own doubts as to Sir Ivor's magnificent generosity. 'There is no State aid for the poor. Any Neapolitan may die in the street of hunger—nothing hindering. That great Asilo is nothing but a charity, to which the Municipality contributes something, and each benefactor has to pay before getting his poor client in, unless, that is to say, he has interest, and when they have got in they are very miserable.'

'Eva, you know everything,' said Dulcie admiringly.

'Eva and I went over it—that is, over about a tenth part of it—the other day,'

said Lady Cecil. Then she and Mr St Germains started off into a great discussion as to mendicity in all countries, pauperism, etc. Mr St Germains was greatly in favour of charitable doles. Lady Cecil maintained it was convent doles had reduced the poor of Italy to that state in which we now find them; that charity, so called, benefited no one but the giver, and not even him in reality, fostering his self-love, teaching him to be arrogant, and encouraging the true Sybarite dislike to *seeing* suffering. The conversation lasted pretty well all day. It was brought to a stop by Dulcie saying, in her even tones,—

'Look! that woman is eating grass like a rabbit.'

They had strayed up to the hills above

Salerno, that home of merchant princes of long ago. The magnificence of the scenery—well remembered by all who have once seen it—cannot be translated into words. Even in winter, the Italian sun gilds with a glory—unimagined even, not only unwitnessed, in these colder climes—every meanest stone and tree. At Salerno the whole scene is rugged, but magnificent, in outline. To the right, round the massive projecting cliffs, lies Amalfi; over against Salerno, dimly seen by the sunset light, is the headland on which stand the temples of Pœstum. Nowhere probably are the people much more ignorant than at Salerno; nominal Christians, the fundamental, primary doctrines of Christianity are unknown to them. But they have a new promenade

by the sea, and the band plays there. Lemon-coloured gloves are also not uncommon. The woman that Dulcie pointed out was not unlike many others they had seen that day,—no thinner, no yellower, no darker; but she was, as Dulcie said, eating grass like a rabbit. It suggested a dreadful idea as to what might be the prevalence of poverty. Lady Cecil took up a blade of the grass, and examined it scrutinisingly, to see if it had any special properties. Leonard Jephson made a collection of the various biscuits and cakes brought out by the party to serve as a substitute for afternoon tea, and handing them to the woman, thus made peace with his own conscience. Unseen by the others, there were a few francs also slipped into the woman's hand.

Mr St Germains began to discourse on the healing properties of various herbs. The others listened, bringing occasionally various desultory scraps of information to bear. Pauperism was no more discussed for that day,—the subject had become too practically painful. Even the most unselfish people do not like *seeing* suffering, although occasionally guilty of going out of their way to seek it, in order to relieve it.

CHAPTER VI.

A DRIVE THROUGH PARADISE.

'Speak not of lakes and streams to him who once
has seen the sea.
The clouds that circle Wu's peak are the only
clouds for me.'

THE next day they drove to Pœstum, past herds of buffaloes shaggy and matted with the dreary mud swamps in which they ruminate: curious uncouth monsters, harmonising with preconceived ideas of Italy just as much as, and no more than the gnarled and knotted boughs of the olive

trees which 'writhe in voiceless agony.' Past fields full of village maidens, who seemed as if they might have stepped out of Covent Garden Opera House, only their attitudes were more graceful than those generally to be seen there. Each leaned on her spade and turned dark eyes, lighted up by a passing interest and curiosity on the strangers driving by. The men did likewise, and the only surprising thing seemed to be that they did not all burst out into some well known opera chorus, or suddenly dance away, and give place for the tenor to come on, or the prima donna, instead of quietly going on with their digging as the carriage drove by; the slanting rays of the sun lighting up snowy whiteness of head cloths and bosom coverings, and

accentuating their brilliant scarlet. But here, at a turn of the road is surely Pan himself, with the well-known goatskin breeches and easy attitude, tenderly fluting to himself—

> 'Was there ever a way since the world began
> For making a poet out of a man,
> Down by the reeds of the river!'

Eva was in ecstasies, of which Lady Cecil approved, and in which she even took some part. Mr St Germains smiled serenely. Howard Jephson was glad he had seen that; it made some classical readings more real to him. Only Dulcie and Sir Ivor seemed to take no notice. He was sitting leaning back with his arms folded, his eyes fixed on Dulcie's face. It was doubtful whether he even saw Pan. Dulcie certainly did not. She

was always anxious to do her duty, and the only duty, so to say, to hand that day was to be looked at by Sir Ivor, to whom it gave pleasure. She had long ago felt, rather than noticed, that it troubled him if she moved whilst he looked at her. So she sat, her hands lightly folded, her little white hat giving a soft shadow to the calmly maidenly brow. Her face was very still and girlish. One could not imagine any great sorrow or sin or trouble coming near her.

From her one looked at Sir Ivor. In his face it was very difficult to notice anything but the eyes. Their absorbing gaze unconsciously absorbed the gaze of the beholder. He seemed seeing so much more than others could see; not Dulcie with the sunshine and shadow coursing

each other over her small white face, but Dulcie and things unutterable. The very action with which his arms were folded told that he was seeing things the others saw not.

In reality his mind was going back over the long ago past, years ago, when he had looked on a fair young face, and dreamt such dreams as the sight of Dulcie's face aroused in Howard Jephson's mind. Can the past ever come back again? Can life ever be as if things that have been had not?

Sir Ivor's was not a speculative mind. He asked himself no such question. He wished; that was all. Wished now, as he had wished years ago with the same intensity, the same determination, same blindness to all intervening obstacles.

Up till this moment he had never even looked at Leonard Jephson sufficiently to be aware of the young man's existence.

There are men who go through life in this way, not from any deficiency of observation, but because their whole powers of observation are absorbed with a concentration of which the rest of the world are incapable. Once the face of a girl like Dulcie had seemed to offer to Ivor Montague those two blessings of which his nature was in itself incapable—rest and peace.

Years had passed away since then—years in which he had drunk deep of that draught hell holds out to its votaries. Not that he had plunged into dissipation or vice; he had given up his soul to one devouring passion, and that passion had

devoured, leaving him but the bare wreck of a man, tall and gaunt, with a worn, yellow face and hopeless eyes. He had come into a property and a baronetcy, but he had had enough of this world's wealth before—enough, that is to say, for a man who neither gambled on the Stock Exchange, nor with horses or cards simply objected to being restrained by money cares, or in any ways guided by the thought of cheapness.

Sir Ivor could not brook being guided. But it was years since any one had attempted doing so. He was alone in the world, a man without a near relation or a friend. Added wealth made no difference to him. People courted him a little more than before, but he did not even notice it. Wholly absorbed in himself,

his eyes lighted upon Dulcie, and at once the weight of years—the weight, the sorrow, and the sin seemed to roll away. He was a boy once more, an under-graduate fresh from college honours, standing in a Gloucestershire lane. How well he remembered it all, the scent of the dog-roses, the sweet thyme, the creamy yellow stone of a regular Gloucestershire house showing through the elm trees, and in the lane meeting him Phyllis Lyndsay, coming from the village school. He remembered how he had dismounted and walked beside her, till they reached that side gate leading into the garden of the Hall. There he had tied his horse, and then still followed her. By the old sun-dial they had paused. Phyllis leaning over it had said,—

'It is too old: it marks time badly. See, the sun-dial says it is two hours I have been away, and the time has seemed to me but a few minutes: I love those children so.'

'The whole of life seems to me but a few minutes, I love you so, Phyllis,' he had answered.

And since then, what long, long years! what misery! and, worse still, what a blank! Could it all be rolled away? Was it all a dream, a delusion of the enemy? Had he never done the accursed deed, sold himself body and soul to Satan, and killed her—his Phyllis—not his, never his, therefore dead! Thus he had thought at the Carnival, when first his eyes lighted upon Dulcie, thinking it all with that rapidity with which thoughts course through

an almost distracted brain. Then she had looked up; her eyes had met his—no reproach in them, only a gentler, quieter expression than even in those he remembered long ago. And with an agony of remorse he had moved away. Since then he had gone through the same process again and again.

When Dulcie sat still and silent, the years rolled away, and Sir Ivor forgot them and everything but his own overpowering wish to make her his—his own—take her away from all of them, and have her for himself alone, no one else soothed by her sweet presence, and himself thereby soothed as much through it as it was possible for him to be. Then Dulcie would move and look up, and the gentle unconsciousness of her eyes would

make him feel himself the villain that he was, but whose villainy he had never realised till he met those innocent, girlish eyes, ignorant of evil as they were incapable of it. Or, again, Dulcie would speak, and the uncultured tone in which she spoke recalled to him it was not Phyllis Lyndsay, dead and buried—dead and buried years ago—but Dulcie, the niece of Mr and Mrs St Germains, whose acquaintance he had only made a few short weeks before—Dulcie, whom he had asked to be his wife by the shores of the lake Avernus. She had only said then, 'Do you wish it?'

'Wish it!' he had replied, and his tone and gesture had told the girl her fate. So at least Dulcie had thought. It was that gesture Lady Cecil had seen.

'Will you wait a little?' she had asked, looking round at the lake and the sky, wishing she could soar away into the blue ether, wondering a little whether she would not rather herself be buried beneath that cold water than the wife of this man, whose love suffocated her. Yet she did not ask it as making it a condition.

'How long?' said Sir Ivor, looking down on her half-averted cheek with eyes that might have melted it, had it been wax. But as it was, it was only a girl's cheek. Dulcie endured that gaze; her cheek did not even burn; but her hands trembled, and her heart seemed to contract.

'Will you wait three weeks?' she asked timidly.

'And then?' asked Sir Ivor.

'And then,' said Dulcie stilly, 'I shall know better what you want of me as your wife, and whether—whether it is possible for me.'

Her voice died away somewhat sadly in the stillness of the strange, lonely region, and Sir Ivor said nothing. He began to have some dim appreciation of what he was asking of Dulcie. Was it possibly a thing more terrible than even that which he had done to Phyllis?

Possibly it has occurred to one man here and there to think how it would be to marry himself, knowing what he is. To no man probably to project himself into a girl's soul, and then think how it would be to marry himself. Sir Ivor had not

got so far as this; he was not speculative. He wished for Dulcie for his wife. But somehow out of the dreary, desolate scene there seemed to come a voice like that of Dulcie's last sad words, only sadder, telling him it was a dreadful thing this that he had asked of Dulcie.

Not a word was spoken between them as they walked back to the others.

Dulcie had gained three weeks' respite; she was mentally counting the days,—three more Sundays, three more Mondays, and so on. Then she would have to become Sir Ivor's wife. For Dulcie never for a moment imagined to herself that she would be able at the end of that time to tell Sir Ivor she found it impossible to marry him. Only some-

how, whenever she thought of it, she thought how very different it would be if it were Leonard Jephson she had to marry. Not that she wished to marry him, only she had an undefined consciousness that he was the only man of all the men she knew capable of saving her from anything so dreadful as becoming the wife of Sir Ivor Montague. Yet it never occurred to her to ask his assistance, nor that of anyone; never occurred to her that she was in duty bound to acquaint Mr and Mrs St Germains with the fact of Sir Ivor's offer; nor that, at the end of the three weeks at the outside, she might be engaged to Sir Ivor, could not consistently, with the usages of society and the intricacies of inter-

national law, there and then become his wife.

Since then one week had gone by, and now Dulcie sat very still, leaning back in the carriage, while, as she knew, Sir Ivor sat and feasted his gaze upon her. To him that drive to Pœstum was a drive through Paradise. Mrs St Germains leant back in her corner half asleep. Dulcie neither spoke nor moved. It was Phyllis come back, and the past was rolled away, and a future seemed possible. Oh! what that is to a man to whom no future in the world has seemed possible, and only hell in the life to come—hell, because Phyllis would be there, the girl he had loved, and seen die by inches, knowing each moment he could save her, he, and he only. Phyllis in this life

had not known it, till she died. Then the knowledge had killed her, and she had passed away with a curse in her eyes, those gentle eyes that no one had ever seen even angry till that day she died, slain, and doomed by his sin. For she died cursing him. There was no mistaking the expression in her eyes. It had all passed in a minute, and the soul was gone, gone to that other world, where he fancied her wandering forlorn, ever seeking, seeking what was lost through him, and with that curse in her eyes. In the other world it would be eternal torment for him such as it had been during those few moments when she died. But in this life now he hoped for a future, for there was Dulcie, who in two weeks would be his bride. He, too, counted

upon no resistance from her. It was a respite she had asked; he had granted it. He would not shorten it by one day, for he counted upon his future. And indeed, meanwhile, that drive to Pœstum was a drive through Paradise.

END OF VOL. II.

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