



HE KNEW HE WAS
RIGHT

BY

ANTHONY TROLLOPE.

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LEIPZIG

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CHAPTER I.

Of a Quarter of Lamb.

MISS STANBURY, looking out of her parlour window, saw Mr. Gibson hurrying towards the cathedral, down the passage which leads from Southernhay into the Close. "He's just come from Heavitree, I'll be bound," said Miss Stanbury to Martha, who was behind her.

"Like enough, ma'am."

"Though they do say that the poor fool of a man has become quite sick of his bargain already."

"He'll have to be sicker yet, ma'am," said Martha.

"They were to have been married last week, and nobody ever knew why it was put off. It's my belief he'll never marry her. And she'll be served right;—quite right."

"He must marry her now, ma'am. She's been buying things all over Exeter, as though there was no end of their money."

"They haven't more than enough to keep body and soul together," said Miss Stanbury. "I don't see why I mightn't have gone to service this morning, Martha. It's quite warm now out in the Close."

"You'd better wait, ma'am, till the east winds is

over. She was at Puddock's only the day before yesterday, buying bed-linen,—the finest they had, and that wasn't good enough."

"Psha!" said Miss Stanbury.

"As though Mr. Gibson hadn't things of that kind good enough for her," said Martha.

Then there was silence in the room for awhile. Miss Stanbury was standing at one window, and Martha at the other, watching the people as they passed backwards and forwards, in and out of the Close. Dorothy had now been away at Nuncombe Putney for some weeks, and her aunt felt her loneliness with a heavy sense of weakness. Never had she entertained a companion in the house who had suited her as well as her niece, Dorothy. Dorothy would always listen to her, would always talk to her, would always hear with her. Since Dorothy had gone, various letters had been interchanged between them. Though there had been anger about Brooke Burgess, there had been no absolute rupture; but Miss Stanbury had felt that she could not write and beg her niece to come back to her. She had not sent Dorothy away. Dorothy had chosen to go, because her aunt had had an opinion of her own as to what was fitting for her heir; and as Miss Stanbury would not give up her opinion, she could not ask her niece to return to her. Such had been her resolution, sternly expressed to herself a dozen times during these solitary weeks; but time and solitude had acted upon her, and she longed for the girl's presence in the house. "Martha," she said at last, "I think I shall get you to go over to Nuncombe Putney."

"Again, ma'am?"

"Why not again? It's not so far, I suppose, that the journey will hurt you."

"I don't think it'd hurt me, ma'am;—only what good will I do?"

"If you'll go rightly to work, you may do good. Miss Dorothy was a fool to go the way she did;—a great fool."

"She stayed longer than I thought she would, ma'am."

"I'm not asking you what you thought. I'll tell you what. Do you send Giles to Winslow's and tell them to send in early to-morrow a nice fore-quarter of lamb. Or it wouldn't hurt you if you went and chose it yourself."

"It wouldn't hurt me at all, ma'am."

"You get it nice;—not too small, because meat is meat at the price things are now; and how they ever see butcher's meat at all is more than I can understand."

"People as has to be careful, ma'am, makes a little go a long way."

"You get it a good size, and take it over in a basket. It won't hurt you, done up clean in a napkin."

"It won't hurt me at all, ma'am."

"And you give it to Miss Dorothy with my love. Don't you let 'em think I sent it to my sister-in-law."

"And is that to be all, ma'am?"

"How do you mean all?"

"Because, ma'am, the railway and the carrier would take it quite ready, and there would be a matter of ten or twelve shillings saved in the journey."

"Whose affair is that?"

"Not mine, ma'am, of course."

"I believe you're afraid of the trouble, Martha. Or else you don't like going because they're poor."

"It ain't fair, ma'am, of you to say so;—that it ain't. All I ask is,—is that to be all? When I've giv'em the lamb, am I just to come away straight, or am I to say anything? It will look so odd if I'm just to put down the basket and come away without e'er a word."

"Martha!"

"Yes, ma'am."

"You're a fool."

"That's true, too, ma'am."

"It would be like you to go about in that dummy way,—wouldn't it;—and you that was so fond of Miss Dorothy."

"I was fond of her, ma'am."

"Of course you'll be talking to her;—and why not? And if she should say anything about returning——"

"Yes, ma'am."

"You can say that you know her old aunt wouldn't, —wouldn't refuse to have her back again. You can put it your own way, you know. You needn't make me find words for you."

"But she won't, ma'am."

"Won't what?"

"Won't say anything about returning."

"Yes, she will, Martha, if you talk to her rightly."

The servant didn't reply for a while, but stood looking out of the window. "You might as well go about the lamb at once, Martha."

"So I will, ma'am, when I've got it out, all clear."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Why,—just this, ma'am. May I tell Miss Dolly straight out that you want her to come back, and that I've been sent to say so?"

"No, Martha."

"Then how am I to do it, ma'am?"

"Do it out of your own head, just as it comes up at the moment."

"Out of my own head, ma'am?"

"Yes;—just as you feel, you know."

"Just as I feel, ma'am?"

"You understand what I mean, Martha."

"I'll do my best, ma'am, and I can't say no more. And if you scolds me afterwards, ma'am,—why, of course, I must put up with it."

"But I won't scold you, Martha."

"Then I'll go out to Winslow's about the lamb at once, ma'am."

"Very nice, and not too small, Martha."

Martha went out and ordered the lamb, and packed it as desired quite clean in a napkin, and fitted it into the basket, and arranged with Giles Hickbody to carry it down for her early in the morning to the station, so that she might take the first train to Lessborough. It was understood that she was to hire a fly at Lessborough to take her to Nuncombe Putney. Now that she understood the importance of her mission and was aware that the present she took with her was only the customary accompaniment of an ambassadress entrusted with a great mission, Martha said nothing even about the expense. The train started for Lessborough at seven, and as she was descending from her room at six, Miss Stanbury in her flannel dressing-gown stepped out of

the door of her own room. "Just put this in the basket," said she, handing a note to her servant. "I thought last night I'd write a word. Just put it in the basket and say nothing about it." The note which she sent was as follows:—

"The Close, 8th April, 186—.

"MY DEAR DOROTHY,—

"As Martha talks of going over to pay you a visit, I've thought that I'd just get her to take you a quarter of lamb, which is coming in now very nice. I do envy her going to see you, my dear, for I had gotten somehow to love to see your pretty face. I'm getting almost strong again; but Sir Peter, who was here this afternoon, just calling as a friend, was uncivil enough to say that I'm too much of an old woman to go out in the east wind. I told him it didn't much matter;—for the sooner old women made way for young ones, the better.

"I am very desolate and solitary here. But I rather think that women who don't get married are intended to be desolate; and perhaps it is better for them, if they bestow their time and thoughts properly,—as I hope you do, my dear. A woman with a family of children has almost too many of the cares of this world, to give her mind as she ought to the other. What shall we say then of those who have no such cares, and yet do not walk uprightly? Dear Dorothy, be not such a one. For myself, I acknowledge bitterly the extent of my shortcomings. Much has been given to me; but if much be expected, how shall I answer the demand?

"I hope I need not tell you that whenever it may suit you to pay a visit to Exeter, your room will be

ready for you, and there will be a warm welcome. Mrs. MacHugh always asks after you; and so has Mrs. Clifford. I won't tell you what Mrs. Clifford said about your colour, because it would make you vain. The Heavitree affair has all been put off;—of course you have heard that. Dear, dear, dear! You know what I think, so I need not repeat it.

"Give my respects to your mamma and Priscilla,—and for yourself, accept the affectionate love of

"Your loving old aunt,

"JEMIMA STANBURY.

"P. S.—If Martha should say anything to you, you may feel sure that she knows my mind."

Poor old soul. She felt an almost uncontrollable longing to have her niece back again, and yet she told herself that she was bound not to send a regular invitation, or to suggest an unconditional return. Dorothy had herself decided to take her departure, and if she chose to remain away,—so it must be. She, Miss Stanbury, could not demean herself by renewing her invitation. She read her letter before she added to it the postscript, and felt that it was too solemn in its tone to suggest to Dorothy that which she wished to suggest. She had been thinking much of her own past life when she wrote those words about the state of an unmarried woman, and was vacillating between two minds,—whether it were better for a young woman to look forward to the cares and affections, and perhaps hard usage, of a marriage life; or to devote herself to the easier and safer course of an old maid's career. But an old maid is nothing if she be not kind and good. She acknowledged that, and, acknowledging it, added the

postscript to her letter. What though there was a certain blow to her pride in the writing of it! She did tell herself that in thus referring her niece to Martha for an expression of her own mind,—after that conversation which she and Martha had had in the parlour,—she was in truth eating her own words. But the postscript was written, and though she took the letter up with her to her own room in order that she might alter the words if she repented of them in the night, the letter was sent as it was written,—postscript and all.

She spent the next day with very sober thoughts. When Mrs. MacHugh called upon her and told her that there were rumours afloat in Exeter that the marriage between Camilla French and Mr. Gibson would certainly be broken off, in spite of all purchases that had been made, she merely remarked that they were two poor, feckless things, who didn't know their own minds. "Camilla knows hers plain enough," said Mrs. MacHugh sharply; but even this did not give Miss Stanbury any spirit. She waited, and waited patiently, till Martha should return, thinking of the sweet pink colour which used to come and go in Dorothy's cheeks,—which she had been wont to observe so frequently, not knowing that she had observed it and loved it.

CHAPTER II.

River's Cottage.

THREE days after Hugh Stanbury's visit to Manchester Street, he wrote a note to Lady Rowley, telling her of the address at which might be found both Trevelyan and his son. As Bozzle had acknowledged, facts are things which may be found out. Hugh had

gone to work somewhat after the Bozzlian fashion, and had found out this fact. "He lives at a place called River's Cottage, at Willesden," wrote Stanbury. "If you turn off the Harrow Road to the right, about a mile beyond the cemetery, you will find the cottage on the left hand side of the lane, about a quarter of a mile from the Harrow Road. I believe you can go to Willesden by railway, but you had better take a cab from London." There was much consultation respecting this letter between Lady Rowley and Mrs. Trevelyan, and it was decided that it should not be shown to Sir Marmaduke. To see her child was at the present moment the most urgent necessity of the poor mother, and both the ladies felt that Sir Marmaduke in his wrath might probably impede rather than assist her in this desire. If told where he might find Trevelyan, he would probably insist on starting in quest of his son-in-law himself, and the distance between the mother and her child might become greater in consequence, instead of less. There were many consultations; and the upshot of these was, that Lady Rowley and her daughter determined to start for Willesden without saying anything to Sir Marmaduke of the purpose they had in hand. When Emily expressed her conviction that if Trevelyan should be away from home they would probably be able to make their way into the house,—so as to see the child, Lady Rowley with some hesitation acknowledged that such might be the case. But the child's mother said nothing to her own mother of a scheme which she had half formed of so clinging to her boy that no human power should separate them.

They started in a cab, as advised by Stanbury, and were driven to a point on the road from which a

lane led down to Willesden, passing by River's Cottage. They asked as they came along, and met no difficulty in finding their way. At the point on the road indicated, there was a country inn for hay-waggoners, and here Lady Rowley proposed that they should leave their cab, urging that it might be best to call at the cottage in the quietest manner possible; but Mrs. Trevelyan, with her scheme in her head for the recapture of their child, begged that the cab might go on;—and thus they were driven up to the door.

River's Cottage was not a prepossessing abode. It was a new building, of light-coloured bricks, with a door in the middle and one window on each side. Over the door was a stone tablet, bearing the name,—River's Cottage. There was a little garden between the road and the house, across which there was a straight path to the door. In front of one window was a small shrub, generally called a puzzle-monkey, and in front of the other was a variegated laurel. There were two small morsels of green turf, and a distant view round the corner of the house of a row of cabbage stumps. If Trevelyan were living there, he had certainly come down in the world since the days in which he had occupied the house in Curzon Street. The two ladies got out of the cab, and slowly walked across the little garden. Mrs. Trevelyan was dressed in black, and she wore a thick veil. She had altogether been unable to make up her mind as to what should be her conduct to her husband should she see him. That must be governed by circumstances as they might occur. Her visit was made not to him, but to her boy.

The door was opened before they knocked, and Trevelyan himself was standing in the narrow passage.

Lady Rowley was the first to speak. "Louis," she said, "I have brought your wife to see you."

"Who told you that I was here?" he asked, still standing in the passage.

"Of course a mother would find out where was her child," said Lady Rowley.

"You should not have come here without notice," he said. "I was careful to let you know the conditions on which you should come."

"You do not mean that I shall not see my child," said the mother. "Oh, Louis, you will let me see him."

Trevelyan hesitated a moment, still keeping his position firmly in the doorway. By this time an old woman, decently dressed and of comfortable appearance, had taken her place behind him, and behind her was a slip of a girl about fifteen years of age. This was the owner of River's Cottage and her daughter, and all the inhabitants of the cottage were now there, standing in the passage. "I ought not to let you see him," said Trevelyan; "you have intruded upon me in coming here! I had not wished to see you here,—till you had complied with the order I had given you." What a meeting between a husband and a wife who had not seen each other now for many months,—between a husband and a wife who were still young enough not to have outlived the first impulses of their early love! He still stood there guarding the way, and had not even put out his hand to greet her. He was guarding the way lest she should, without his permission, obtain access to her own child! She had not removed her veil, and now she hardly dared to step over the threshold of her husband's house. At this moment, she perceived that the woman behind was pointing to the

room on the left, as the cottage was entered, and Emily at once understood that her boy was there. Then at that moment she heard her son's voice, as, in his solitude, the child began to cry. "I must go in," she said; "I will go in;" and rushing on she tried to push aside her husband. Her mother aided her, nor did Trevelyan attempt to stop her with violence, and in a moment she was kneeling at the foot of a small sofa, with her child in her arms. "I had not intended to hinder you," said Trevelyan, "but I require from you a promise that you will not attempt to remove him."

"Why should she not take him home with her?" said Lady Rowley.

"Because I will not have it so," replied Trevelyan. "Because I choose that it should be understood that I am to be the master of my own affairs."

Mrs. Trevelyan had now thrown aside her bonnet and her veil, and was covering her child with caresses. The poor little fellow, whose mind had been utterly dismayed by the events which had occurred to him since his capture, though he returned her kisses, did so in fear and trembling. And he was still sobbing, rubbing his eyes with his knuckles, and by no means yielding himself with his whole heart to his mother's tenderness,—as she would have had him do. "Louey," she said, whispering to him, "you know mamma; you haven't forgotten mamma?" He half murmured some little infantine word through his sobs, and then put his cheek up to be pressed against his mother's face. "Louey will never, never forget his own mamma;—will he, Louey?" The poor boy had no assurances to give, and could only rouse his cheek again to be kissed. In the meantime Lady Rowley and Trevelyan were

standing by, not speaking to each other, regarding the scene in silence.

She,—Lady Rowley,—could see that he was frightfully altered in appearance, even since the day on which she had so lately met him in the City. His cheeks were thin and haggard, and his eyes were deep and very bright,—and he moved them quickly from side to side, as though ever suspecting something. He seemed to be smaller in stature,—withered, as it were, as though he had melted away. And, though he stood looking upon his wife and child, he was not for a moment still. He would change the posture of his hands and arms, moving them quickly with little surreptitious jerks; and would shuffle his feet upon the floor, almost without altering his position. His clothes hung about him, and his linen was soiled and worn. Lady Rowley noticed this especially, as he had been a man peculiarly given to neatness of apparel. He was the first to speak. “You have come down here in a cab?” said he.

“Yes,—in a cab, from London,” said Lady Rowley.

“Of course you will go back in it? You cannot stay here. There is no accommodation. It is a wretched place, but it suits the boy. As for me, all places are now alike.”

“Louis,” said his wife, springing up from her knees, coming to him, and taking his right hand between both her own, “you will let me take him with me. I know you will let me take him with me.”

“I cannot do that, Emily; it would be wrong.”

“Wrong to restore a child to his mother? Oh,

Louis, think of it. What must my life be without him,—or you?"

"Don't talk of me. It is too late for that."

"Not if you will be reasonable, Louis, and listen to me. Oh, heavens, how ill you are!" As she said this she drew nearer to him, so that her face was almost close to his. "Louis, come back; come back, and let it all be forgotten. It shall be a dream, a horrid dream, and nobody shall speak of it." He left his hand within hers and stood looking into her face. He was well aware that his life since he had left her had been one long hour of misery. There had been to him no alleviation, no comfort, no consolation. He had not a friend left to him. Even his satellite, the policeman, was becoming weary of him and manifestly suspicious. The woman with whom he was now lodging, and whose resources were infinitely benefited by his payments to her, had already thrown out hints that she was afraid of him. And as he looked at his wife, he knew that he loved her. Everything for him now was hot and dry and poor and bitter. How sweet would it be again to sit with her soft hand in his, to feel her cool brow against his own, to have the comfort of her care, and to hear the music of loving words! The companionship of his wife had once been to him everything in the world; but now, for many months past, he had known no companion. She bade him come to her, and look upon all this trouble as a dream not to be mentioned. Could it be possible that it should be so, and that they might yet be happy together,—perhaps in some distant country, where the story of all their misery might not be known? He felt all this truly and with a keen accuracy. If he were

mad, he was not all mad. "I will tell you of nothing that is past," said she, hanging to him, and coming still nearer to him, and embracing his arm.

Could she have condescended to ask him not to tell her of the past;—had it occurred to her so to word her request,—she might perhaps have prevailed. But who can say how long the tenderness of his heart would have saved him from further outbreak; and whether such prevailing on her part would have been of permanent service? As it was, her words wounded him in that spot of his inner self which was most sensitive,—on that spot from whence had come all his fury. A black cloud came upon his brow, and he made an effort to withdraw himself from her grasp. It was necessary to him that she should in some fashion own that he had been right, and now she was promising him that she would not tell him of his fault! He could not thus swallow down all the convictions by which he had fortified himself to bear the misfortunes which he had endured. Had he not quarrelled with every friend he possessed on this score; and should he now stultify himself in all those quarrels by admitting that he had been cruel, unjust, and needlessly jealous? And did not truth demand of him that he should cling to his old assurances? Had she not been disobedient, ill-conditioned, and rebellious? Had she not received the man, both him personally and his letters, after he had explained to her that his honour demanded that it should not be so? How could he come into such terms as those now proposed to him, simply because he longed to enjoy the rich sweetness of her soft hand, to feel the fragrance of her breath, and to quench the heat of his forehead in the cool atmosphere of her

beauty? "Why have you driven me to this by your intercourse with that man?" he said. "Why, why, why did you do it?"

She was still clinging to him. "Louis," she said, "I am your wife."

"Yes; you are my wife."

"And will you still believe such evil of me without any cause?"

"There has been cause,—horrible cause. You must repent,—repent,—repent."

"Heaven help me," said the woman, falling back from him, and returning to the boy who was now seated in Lady Rowley's lap. "Mamma, do you speak to him. What can I say. Would he think better of me were I to own myself to have been guilty, when there has been no guilt,—no slightest fault? Does he wish me to purchase my child by saying that I am not fit to be his mother?"

"Louis," said Lady Rowley, "if any man was ever wrong, mad, madly mistaken, you are so now."

"Have you come out here to accuse me again, as you did before in London?" he asked. "Is that the way in which you and she intend to let the past be, as she says, like a dream? She tells me that I am ill. It is true. I am ill,—and she is killing me, killing me, by her obstinacy."

"What would you have me do?" said the wife, again rising from her child.

"Acknowledge your transgressions, and say that you will amend your conduct for the future."

"Mamma, mamma,—what shall I say to him?"

"Who can speak to a man that is beside himself?" replied Lady Rowley.

"I am not so beside myself as yet, Lady Rowley, but that I know how to guard my own honour and to protect my own child. I have told you, Emily, the terms on which you can come back to me. You had better now return to your mother's house; and if you wish again to have a house of your own, and your husband, and your boy, you know by what means you may acquire them. For another week I shall remain here; after that I shall remove far from hence."

"And where will you go, Louis?"

"As yet I know not. To Italy I think,—or perhaps to America. It matters little where for me."

"And will Louey be taken with you?"

"Certainly he will go with me. To strive to bring him up so that he may be a happier man than his father is all that there is now left for me in life." Mrs. Trevelyan had now got the boy in her arms, and her mother was seated by her on the sofa. Trevelyan was standing away from them, but so near the door that no sudden motion on their part would enable them to escape with the boy without his interposition. It now again occurred to the mother to carry off her prize in opposition to her husband;—but she had no scheme to that effect laid with her mother, and she could not reconcile herself to the idea of a contest with him, in which personal violence would be necessary. The woman of the house had, indeed, seemed to sympathise with her, but she could not dare in such a matter to trust to assistance from a stranger. "I do not wish to be uncourteous," said Trevelyan, "but if you have no assurance to give me, you had better—leave me."

Then there came to be a bargaining about time,

and the poor woman begged almost on her knees that she might be allowed to take her child up-stairs and be with him alone for a few minutes. It seemed to her that she had not seen her boy till she had had him to herself, in absolute privacy, till she had kissed his limbs, and had her hand upon his smooth back, and seen that he was white and clean and bright as he had ever been. And the bargain was made. She was asked to pledge her word that she would not take him out of the house,—and she pledged her word, feeling that there was no strength in her for that action which she had meditated. He, knowing that he might still guard the passage at the bottom of the stairs, allowed her to go with the boy to his bedroom, while he remained below with Lady Rowley. A quarter of an hour was allowed to her, and she humbly promised that she would return when that time was expired.

Trevelyan held the door open for her as she went, and kept it open during her absence. There was hardly a word said between him and Lady Rowley, but he paced from the passage into the room and from the room into the passage with his hands behind his back. "It is cruel," he said once. "It is very cruel."

"It is you that are cruel," said Lady Rowley.

"Of course;—of course. That is natural from you. I expect that from you." To this she made no answer, and he did not open his lips again.

After a while Mrs. Trevelyan called to her mother, and Lady Rowley was allowed to go up-stairs. The quarter of an hour was of course greatly stretched, and all the time Trevelyan continued to pace in and out of the room. He was patient, for he did not summon

them; but went on pacing backwards and forwards, looking now and again to see that the cab was at its place,—that no deceit was being attempted, no second act of kidnapping being perpetrated. At last the two ladies came down the stairs, and the boy was with them,—and the woman of the house.

"Louis," said the wife, going quickly up to her husband, "I will do anything, if you will give me my child."

"What will you do?"

"Anything;—say what you want. He is all the world to me, and I cannot live if he be taken from me."

"Acknowledge that you have been wrong."

"But how;—in what words;—how am I to speak it?"

"Say that you have sinned;—and that you will sin no more."

"Sinned, Louis;—as the woman did,—in the Scripture? Would you have me say that?"

"He cannot think that it is so," said Lady Rowley.

But Trevelyan had not understood her. "Lady Rowley, I should have fancied that my thoughts at any rate were my own. But this is useless now. The child cannot go with you to-day, nor can you remain here. Go home and think of what I have said. If then you will do as I would have you, you shall return."

With many embraces, with promises of motherly love, and with prayers for love in return, the poor woman did at last leave the house, and return to the cab. As she went there was a doubt on her own mind

whether she should ask to kiss her husband; but he made no sign, and she at last passed out without any mark of tenderness. He stood by the cab as they entered it, and closed the door upon them, and then went slowly back to his room. "My poor bairn," he said to the boy; "my poor bairn."

"Why for mamma go?" sobbed the child.

"Mamma goes——; oh, heaven and earth, why should she go? She goes because her spirit is obstinate, and she will not bend. She is stiff-necked, and will not submit herself. But Loney must love mamma always; and mamma some day will come back to him, and be good to him."

"Mamma is good,—always," said the child. Trevelyan had intended on this very afternoon to have gone up to town,—to transact business with Bozzle; for he still believed, though the aspect of the man was bitter to him as wormwood, that Bozzle was necessary to him in all his business. And he still made appointments with the man, sometimes at Stony Walk, in the Borough, and sometimes at the tavern in Poulter's Court, even though Bozzle not unfrequently neglected to attend the summons of his employer. And he would go to his banker's and draw out money, and then walk about the crowded lanes of the City, and afterwards return to his desolate lodgings at Willesden, thinking that he had been transacting business,—and that this business was exacted from him by the unfortunate position of his affairs. But now he gave up his journey. His retreat had been discovered; and there came upon him at once a fear that if he left the house his child would be taken. His landlady told him on this very day that the boy ought to be sent to his mother, and

had made him understand that it would not suit her to find a home any longer for one who was so singular in his proceedings. He believed that his child would be given up at once, if he were not there to guard it. He stayed at home, therefore, turning in his mind many schemes. He had told his wife that he should go either to Italy or to America at once; but in doing so he had had no formed plan in his head. He had simply imagined at the moment that such a threat would bring her to submission. But now it became a question whether he would do better than go to America. He suggested to himself that he should go to Canada, and fix himself with his boy on some remote farm,—far away from any city; and would then invite his wife to join him if she would. She was too obstinate, as he told himself, ever to yield, unless she should be absolutely softened and brought down to the ground by the loss of her child. What would do this so effectually as the interposition of the broad ocean between him and her? He sat thinking of this for the rest of the day, and Louey was left to the charge of the mistress of River's Cottage.

"Do you think he believes it, mamma?" Mrs. Trevelyan said to her mother when they had already made nearly half their journey home in the cab. There had been nothing spoken hitherto between them, except some half-formed words of affection intended for consolation to the young mother in her great affliction.

"He does not know what he believes, dearest."

"You heard what he said. I was to own that I had—sinned."

"Sinned;—yes; because you will not obey him like a slave. That is sin—to him."

"But I asked him, mamma. Did you not hear me? I could not say the word plainer,—but I asked him whether he meant that sin. He must have known, and he would not answer me. And he spoke of my—transgression. Mamma, if he believed that, he would not let me come back at all."

"He did not believe it, Emily."

"Could he possibly then so accuse me,—the mother of his child! If his heart be utterly hard and false towards me, if it is possible that he should be cruel to me with such cruelty as that,—still he must love his boy. Why did he not answer me, and say that he did not think it?"

"Simply because his reason has left him."

"But if he be mad, mamma, ought we to leave him like that? And, then, did you see his eyes, and his face, and his hands? Did you observe how thin he is,—and his back, how bent? And his clothes,—how they were torn and soiled. It cannot be right that he should be left like that."

"We will tell papa when we get home," said Lady Rowley, who was herself beginning to be somewhat frightened by what she had seen. It is all very well to declare that a friend is mad when one simply desires to justify one's self in opposition to that friend;—but the matter becomes much more serious when evidence of the friend's insanity becomes true and circumstantial. "I certainly think that a physician should see him," continued Lady Rowley. On their return home Sir Marmaduke was told of what had occurred, and there was a long family discussion in which it was decided that Lady Milborough should be consulted, as being the oldest friend of Louis Trevelyan himself

with whom they were acquainted. Trevelyan had relatives of his own name living in Cornwall; but Mrs. Trevelyan herself had never even met one of that branch of the family.

Sir Marmaduke, however, resolved that he himself would go out and see his son-in-law. He too had called Trevelyan mad, but he did not believe that the madness was of such a nature as to interfere with his own duties in punishing the man who had ill used his daughter. He would at any rate see Trevelyan himself;—but of this he said nothing either to his wife or to his child.

CHAPTER III.

Major Magruder's Committee.

SIR MARMADUKE could not go out to Willesden on the morning after Lady Rowley's return from River's Cottage, because on that day he was summoned to attend at twelve o'clock before a Committee of the House of Commons, to give his evidence and the fruit of his experience as to the government of British colonies generally; and as he went down to the House in a cab from Manchester Street he thoroughly wished that his friend Colonel Osborne had not been so efficacious in bringing him home. The task before him was one which he thoroughly disliked, and of which he was afraid. He dreaded the inquisitors before whom he was to appear, and felt that though he was called there to speak as a master of his art of governing, he would in truth be examined as a servant,—and probably as a servant who did not know his business. Had his sojourn at home been in other respects happy, he might

have been able to balance the advantage against the inquiry;—but there was no such balancing for him now. And, moreover, the expense of his own house in Manchester Street was so large that this journey, in a pecuniary point of view, would be of but little service to him. So he went down to the House in an unhappy mood; and when he shook hands in one of the passages with his friend Osborne who was on the Committee, there was very little cordiality in his manner. "This is the most ungrateful thing I ever knew," said the Colonel to himself; "I have almost disgraced myself by having this fellow brought home; and now he quarrels with me because that idiot, his son-in-law, has quarrelled with his wife." And Colonel Osborne really did feel that he was a martyr to the ingratitude of his friend.

The Committee had been convoked by the House in compliance with the eager desires of a certain ancient pundit of the constitution, who had been for many years a member, and who had been known as a stern critic of our colonial modes of government. To him it certainly seemed that everything that was, was bad,—as regarded our national dependencies. But this is so usually the state of mind of all parliamentary critics, it is so much a matter of course that the members who take up the army or the navy, guns, India, our relations with Spain, or workhouse management, should find everything to be bad, rotten, and dishonest, that the wrath of the member for Killierankie against colonial speculation and idleness, was not thought much of in the open House. He had been at the work for years, and the Colonial Office were so used to it that they rather liked him. He had made himself free of

the office, and the clerks were always glad to see him. It was understood that he said bitter things in the House,—that was Major Magruder's line of business; but he could be quite pleasant when he was asking questions of a private secretary, or telling the news of the day to a senior clerk. As he was now between seventy and eighty, and had been at the work for at least twenty years, most of those concerned had allowed themselves to think that he would ride his hobby harmlessly to the day of his parliamentary death. But the drop from a house corner will hollow a stone by its constancy, and Major Magruder at last persuaded the House to grant him a Committee of Inquiry. Then there came to be serious faces at the Colonial Office, and all the little pleasantries of a friendly opposition were at an end. It was felt that the battle must now become a real fight, and Secretary and Under-Secretary girded up their loins.

Major Magruder was chairman of his own committee, and being a man of a laborious turn of mind, much given to blue-books, very patient, thoroughly conversant with the House, and imbued with a strong belief in the efficacy of parliamentary questionings to carry a point, if not to elicit a fact, had a happy time of it during this session. He was a man who always attended the House from 4 p.m. to the time of its breaking up, and who never missed a division. The slight additional task of sitting four hours in a committee-room three days a week, was only a delight the more,—especially as during those four hours he could occupy the post of chairman. Those who knew Major Magruder well did not doubt but that the Committee would sit for many weeks, and that the whole theory

of colonial government, or rather of imperial control supervising such government, would be tested to the very utmost. Men who had heard the old Major maunder on for years past on his pet subject, hardly knew how much vitality would be found in him when his maundering had succeeded in giving him a committee.

A Governor from one of the greater colonies had already been under question for nearly a week, and was generally thought to have come out of the fire unscathed by the flames of the Major's criticism. This Governor had been a picked man, and he had made it appear that the control of Downing Street was never more harsh and seldom less refreshing and beautifying than a spring shower in April. No other lands under the sun were so blest, in the way of government, as were the colonies with which he had been acquainted; and, as a natural consequence, their devotion and loyalty to the mother country were quite a passion with them. Now the Major had been long of a mind that one or two colonies had better simply be given up to other nations, which were more fully able to look after them than was England, and that three or four more should be allowed to go clear,—costing England nothing, and owing England nothing. But the well-chosen Governor who had now been before the Committee, had rather staggered the Major,—and things altogether were supposed to be looking up for the Colonial Office.

And now had come the day of Sir Marmaduke's martyrdom. He was first requested, with most urbane politeness, to explain the exact nature of the government which he exercised in the Mandarins. Now it

certainly was the case that the manner in which the legislative and executive authorities were intermingled in the affairs of these islands, did create a complication which it was difficult for any man to understand, and very difficult indeed for any man to explain to others. There was a Court of Chancery, so called, which Sir Marmaduke described as a little parliament. When he was asked whether the court exercised legislative or executive functions, he said at first that it exercised both, and then that it exercised neither. He knew that it consisted of nine men, of whom five were appointed by the colony and four by the Crown. Yet he declared that the Crown had the control of the court;—which, in fact, was true enough no doubt, as the five open members were not perhaps, all of them, immaculate patriots; but on this matter poor Sir Marmaduke was very obscure. When asked who exercised the patronage of the Crown in nominating the four members, he declared that the four members exercised it themselves. Did he appoint them? No;—he never appointed anybody himself. He consulted the Court of Chancery for everything. At last it came out that the chief justice of the islands, and three other officers, always sat in the court;—but whether it was required by the constitution of the islands that this should be so, Sir Marmaduke did not know. It had worked well;—that was to say, everybody had complained of it, but he, Sir Marmaduke, would not recommend any change. What he thought best was that the Colonial Secretary should send out his orders, and that the people in the colonies should mind their business and grow coffee. When asked what would be the effect upon the islands, under his scheme of government, if an incoming Colo-

nial Secretary should change the policy of his predecessor, he said that he didn't think it would much matter if the people did not know anything about it.

In this way the Major had a field day, and poor Sir Marmaduke was much discomfited. There was present on the Committee a young Parliamentary Under-Secretary, who with much attention had studied the subject of the Court of Chancery in the Mandarins, and who had acknowledged to his superiors in the office that it certainly was of all legislative assemblies the most awkward and complicated. He did what he could, by questions judiciously put, to pull Sir Marmaduke through his difficulties; but the unfortunate Governor had more than once lost his temper in answering the chairman; and in his heavy confusion was past the power of any Under-Secretary, let him be ever so clever, to pull him through. Colonel Osborne sat by the while and asked no questions. He had been put on the Committee as a respectable dummy; but there was not a member sitting there who did not know that Sir Marmaduke had been brought home as his friend;—and some of them, no doubt, had whispered that this bringing home of Sir Marmaduke was part of the payment made by the Colonel for the smiles of the Governor's daughter. But no one alluded openly to the inefficiency of the evidence given. No one asked why a Governor so incompetent had been sent to them. No one suggested that a job had been done. There are certain things of which opposition members of Parliament complain loudly;—and there are certain other things as to which they are silent. The line between these things is well known; and should an ill-conditioned, a pig-headed, an underbred, or an ignorant

member not understand this line and transgress it, by asking questions which should not be asked, he is soon put down from the Treasury bench, to the great delight of the whole House.

Sir Marmaduke, after having been questioned for an entire afternoon, left the House with extreme disgust. He was so convinced of his own failure, that he felt that his career as a Colonial Governor must be over. Surely they would never let him go back to his islands after such an exposition as he had made of his own ignorance. He hurried off into a cab, and was ashamed to be seen of men. But the members of the Committee thought little or nothing about it. The Major, and those who sided with him, had been anxious to entrap their witness into contradictions and absurdities, for the furtherance of their own object; and for the furtherance of theirs, the Under-Secretary from the Office and the supporters of Government had endeavoured to defend their man. But, when the affair was over, if no special admiration had been elicited for Sir Marmaduke, neither was there expressed any special reprobation. The Major carried on his Committee over six weeks, and succeeded in having his blue-book printed; but, as a matter of course, nothing further came of it; and the Court of Chancery in the Mandarin Islands still continues to hold its own, and to do its work, in spite of the absurdities displayed in its construction. Major Magruder has had his day of success, and now feels that Othello's occupation is gone. He goes no more to the Colonial Office, lives among his friends on the memories of his Committee,—not always to their gratification,—and is beginning to think that as his work is done he may as well resign Killicrankie

to some younger politician. Poor Sir Marmaduke remembered his defeat with soreness long after it had been forgotten by all others who had been present, and was astonished when he found that the journals of the day, though they did in some curt fashion report the proceedings of the Committee, never uttered a word of censure against him, as they had not before uttered a word of praise for that pearl of a Governor who had been examined before him.

On the following morning he went to the Colonial Office by appointment, and then he saw the young Irish Under-Secretary whom he had so much dreaded. Nothing could be more civil than was the young Irish Under-Secretary, who told him that he had better of course stay in town till the Committee was over, though it was not probable that he would be wanted again. When the Committee had done its work he would be allowed to remain six weeks on service to prepare for his journey back. If he wanted more time after that he could ask for leave of absence. So Sir Marmaduke left the Colonial Office with a great weight off his mind, and blessed that young Irish Secretary as he went.

CHAPTER IV.

Sir Marmaduke at Willesden.

On the next day Sir Marmaduke purposed going to Willesden. He was in great doubt whether or no he would first consult that very eminent man Dr. Trite Turbury, as to the possibility, and,—if possible,—as to the expediency, of placing Mr. Trevelyan under some control. But Sir Marmaduke, though he would repeatedly declare that his son-in-law was mad, did not

really believe in this madness. He did not, that is, believe that Trevelyan was so mad as to be fairly exempt from the penalties of responsibility; and he was therefore desirous of speaking his own mind out fully to the man, and, as it were, of having his own personal revenge, before he might be deterred by the interposition of medical advice. He resolved therefore that he would not see Sir Trite Turbury, at any rate till he had come back from Willesden. He also went down in a cab, but he left the cab at the public-house at the corner of the road, and walked to the cottage.

When he asked whether Mr. Trevelyan was at home, the woman of the house hesitated and then said that her lodger was out. "I particularly wish to see him," said Sir Marmaduke, feeling that the woman was lying to him. "But he ain't to be seen, sir," said the woman. "I know he is at home," said Sir Marmaduke. But the argument was soon cut short by the appearance of Trevelyan behind the woman's shoulder.

"I am here, Sir Marmaduke Rowley," said Trevelyan. "If you wish to see me you may come in. I will not say that you are welcome, but you can come in." Then the woman retired, and Sir Marmaduke followed Trevelyan into the room in which Lady Rowley and Emily had been received;—but the child was not now in the chamber.

"What are these charges that I hear against my daughter?" said Sir Marmaduke, rushing at once into the midst of his indignation.

"I do not know what charges you have heard."

"You have put her away."

"In strict accuracy that is not correct, Sir Marmaduke."

"But she is put away. She is in my house now because you have no house of your own for her. Is not that so? And when I came home she was staying with her uncle, because you had put her away. And what was the meaning of her being sent down into Devonshire. What has she done? I am her father, and I expect to have an answer?"

"You shall have an answer, certainly."

"And a true one. I will have no hocus-pocus, no humbug, no Jesuitry."

"Have you come here to insult me, Sir Marmaduke? Because, if so, there shall be an end to this interview at once."

"There shall not be an end;—by G—, no, not till I have heard what is the meaning of all this. Do you know what people are saying of you;—that you are mad, and that you must be locked up, and your child taken away from you, and your property?"

"Who are the people that say so? Yourself;—and, perhaps, Lady Rowley? Does my wife say so? Does she think that I am mad. She did not think so on Thursday, when she prayed that she might be allowed to come back and live with me."

"And you would not let her come?"

"Pardon me," said Trevelyan. "I would wish that she should come,—but it must be on certain conditions."

"What I want to know is why she was turned out of your house?"

"She was not turned out."

"What has she done that she should be punished?" urged Sir Marmaduke, who was unable to arrange his questions with the happiness which had distinguished Major Magruder. "I insist upon knowing what it is

that you lay to her charge. I am her father, and I have a right to know. She has been barbarously, shamefully ill-used, and by G— I will know."

"You have come here to bully me, Sir Marmaduke Rowley."

"I have come here, sir, to do the duty of a parent to his child; to protect my poor girl against the cruelty of a husband who in an unfortunate hour was allowed to take her from her home. I will know the reason why my daughter has been treated as though,—as though,—as though——"

"Listen to me for a minute," said Trevelyan.

"I am listening."

"I will tell you nothing; I will answer you not a word."

"You will not answer me?"

"Not when you come to me in this fashion. My wife is my wife, and my claim to her is nearer and closer than is yours, who are her father. She is the mother of my child, and the only being in the world,—except that child,—whom I love. Do you think that with such motives on my part for tenderness towards her, for loving care, for the most anxious solicitude, that I can be made more anxious, more tender, more loving by coarse epithets from you? I am the most miserable being under the sun because our happiness has been interrupted, and is it likely that such misery should be cured by violent words and gestures? If your heart is wrong for her, so is mine. If she be much to you, she is more to me. She came here the other day, almost as a stranger, and I thought that my heart would have burst beneath its weight of woe. What can you do that can add an ounce to the burden

that I bear? You may as well leave me,—or at least be quiet.”

Sir Marmaduke had stood and listened to him, and he, too, was so struck by the altered appearance of the man that the violence of his indignation was lessened by the pity which he could not suppress. When Trevelyan spoke of his wretchedness, it was impossible not to believe him. He was as wretched a being to look at as it might have been possible to find. His contracted cheeks, and lips always open, and eyes glowing in their sunken caverns, told a tale which even Sir Marmaduke, who was not of nature quick in deciphering such stories, could not fail to read. And then the twitching motion of the man's hands, and the restless shuffling of his feet, produced a nervous feeling that if some remedy were not applied quickly, some alleviation given to the misery of the suffering wretch, human power would be strained too far, and the man would break to pieces,—or else the mind of the man. Sir Marmaduke, during his journey in the cab, had resolved that, old as he was, he would take this sinner by the throat, this brute who had striven to stain his daughter's name,—and would make him there and then acknowledge his own brutality. But it was now very manifest to Sir Marmaduke that there could be no taking by the throat in this case. He could not have brought himself to touch the poor, weak, passionate creature before him. Indeed, even the fury of his words was stayed, and after that last appeal he stormed no more. “But what is to be the end of it?” he said.

“Who can tell? Who can say? She can tell. She can put an end to it all. She has but to say a word, and I will devote my life to her. But that word must

be spoken." As he said this, he dashed his hand upon the table, and looked up with an air that would have been comic with its assumed magnificence had it not been for the true tragedy of the occasion.

"You had better, at any rate, let her have her child for the present."

"No;—my boy shall go with me. She may go, too, if she pleases, but my boy shall certainly go with me. If I had put her from me, as you said just now, it might have been otherwise. But she shall be as welcome to me as flowers in May,—as flowers in May! She shall be as welcome to me as the music of heaven."

Sir Marmaduke felt that he had nothing more to urge. He had altogether abandoned that idea of having his revenge at the cost of the man's throat, and was quite convinced that reason could have no power with him. He was already thinking that he would go away, straight to his lawyer, so that some step might be taken at once to stop, if possible, the taking away of the boy to America, when the lock of the door was gently turned, and the landlady entered the room.

"You will excuse me, sir," said the woman, "but if you be anything to this gentleman——"

"Mrs. Fuller, leave the room," said Trevelyan. "I and the gentleman are engaged."

"I see you be engaged, and I do beg pardon. I ain't one as would intrude wilful, and, as for listening, or the likes of that, I scorn it. But if this gentleman be anything to you, Mr. Trevelyan——"

"I am his wife's father," said Sir Marmaduke.

"Like enough. I was thinking perhaps so. His

lady was down here on Thursday,—as sweet a lady as any gentleman need wish to stretch by his side."

"Mrs. Fuller," said Trevelyan, marching up towards her, "I will not have this, and I desire that you will retire from my room."

But Mrs. Fuller escaped round the table, and would not be banished. She got round the table, and came closely opposite to Sir Marmaduke. "I don't want to say nothing out of my place, sir," said she, "but something ought to be done. He ain't fit to be left to hisself,—not alone,—not as he is at present. He ain't, indeed, and I wouldn't be doing my duty if I didn't say so. He has them sweats at night as'd be enough to kill any man; and he eats nothing, and he don't do nothing; and as for that poor little boy as is now in my own bed upstairs, if it wasn't that I and my Bessy is fond of children, I don't know what would become of that boy."

Trevelyan, finding it impossible to get rid of her, had stood quietly, while he listened to her. "She has been good to my child," he said. "I acknowledge it. As for myself, I have not been well. It is true. But I am told that travel will set me on my feet again. Change of air will do it." Not long since he had been urging the wretchedness of his own bodily health as a reason why his wife should yield to him; but now, when his sickness was brought as a charge against him,—was adduced as a reason why his friends should interfere, and look after him, and concern themselves in his affairs, he saw at once that it was necessary that he should make little of his ailments.

"Would it not be best, Trevelyan, that you should come with me to a doctor," said Sir Marmaduke.

"No;—no. I have my own doctor. That is, I know the course which I should follow. This place, though it is good for the boy, has disagreed with me, and my life has not been altogether pleasant;—I may say, by no means pleasant. Troubles have told upon me, but change of air will mend it all."

"I wish you would come with me, at once, to London. You shall come back, you know. I will not detain you."

"Thank you,—no. I will not trouble you. That will do, Mrs. Fuller. You have intended to do your duty, no doubt, and now you can go." Whereupon Mrs. Fuller did go. "I am obliged for your care, Sir Marmaduke, but I can really do very well without troubling you."

"You cannot suppose, Trevelyan, that we can allow things to go on like this."

"And what do you mean to do?"

"Well;—I shall take advice. I shall go to a lawyer—and to a doctor, and perhaps to the Lord Chancellor, and all that kind of thing. We can't let things go on like this."

"You can do as you please," said Trevelyan, "but as you have threatened me, I must ask you to leave me."

Sir Marmaduke could do no more, and could say no more, and he took his leave, shaking hands with the man, and speaking to him with a courtesy which astonished himself. It was impossible to maintain the strength of his indignation against a poor creature who was so manifestly unable to guide himself. But when he was in London he drove at once to the house of Dr. Trite Turbury and remained there till the doctor

returned from his round of visits. According to the great authority, there was much still to be done before even the child could be rescued out of the father's hands. "I can't act without the lawyers," said Dr. Turbury. But he explained to Sir Marmaduke what steps should be taken in such a matter.

Trevelyan, in the mean time, clearly understanding that hostile measures would now be taken against him, set his mind to work to think how best he might escape at once to America with his boy.

CHAPTER V.

Shewing what Nora Rowley thought about Carriages.

SIR MARMADUKE, on his return home from Dr. Turbury's house, found that he had other domestic troubles on hand over and above those arising from his elder daughter's position. Mr. Hugh Stanbury had been in Manchester Street during his absence, and had asked for him, and, finding that he was away from home, had told his story to Lady Rowley. When he had been shown upstairs all the four daughters had been with their mother; but he had said a word or two signifying his desire to speak to Lady Rowley, and the three girls had left the room. In this way it came to pass that he had to plead his cause before Nora's mother and her elder sister. He had pleaded it well, and Lady Rowley's heart had been well disposed towards him; but when she asked of his house and his home, his answer had been hardly more satisfactory than that of Alan-a-Dale. There was little that he could call his own beyond "The blue vault of heaven." Had he saved any money? No,—not a shilling;—that

was to say,—as he himself expressed it,—nothing that could be called money. He had a few pounds by him, just to go on with. What was his income? Well,—last year he had made four hundred pounds, and this year he hoped to make something more. He thought he could see his way plainly to five hundred a year. Was it permanent; and if not, on what did it depend? He believed it to be as permanent as most other professional incomes, but was obliged to confess that, as regarded the source from whence it was drawn at the present moment, it might be brought to an abrupt end any day by a disagreement between himself and the editor of the D. R. Did he think that this was a fixed income? He did think that if he and the editor of the D. R. were to fall out, he could come across other editors who would gladly employ him. Would he himself feel safe in giving his own sister to a man with such an income? In answer to this question, he started some rather bold doctrines on the subject of matrimony in general, asserting that safety was not desirable, that energy, patience, and mutual confidence would be increased by the excitement of risk, and that in his opinion it behoved young men and young women to come together and get themselves married, even though there might be some not remote danger of distress before them. He admitted that starvation would be disagreeable,—especially for children, in the eyes of their parents,—but alleged that children as a rule were not starved, and quoted the Scripture to prove that honest laborious men were not to be seen begging their bread in the streets. He was very eloquent, but his eloquence itself was against him. Both Lady Rowley and Mrs. Trevelyan were afraid of such advanced opinions; and,

although everything was of course to be left, nominally, to the decision of Sir Marmaduke, they both declared that they could not recommend Sir Marmaduke to consent. Lady Rowley said a word as to the expediency of taking Nora back with her to the Mandarins, pointing out what appeared to her then to be the necessity of taking Mrs. Trevelyan with them also; and in saying this she hinted that if Nora were disposed to stand by her engagement, and Mr. Stanbury equally so disposed, there might be some possibility of a marriage at a future period. Only, in such case, there must be no correspondence. In answer to this Hugh declared that he regarded such a scheme as being altogether bad. The Mandarins were so very far distant that he might as well be engaged to an angel in heaven. Nora, if she were to go away now, would perhaps never come back again; and if she did come back, would be an old woman, with hollow cheeks. In replying to this proposition, he let fall an opinion that Nora was old enough to judge for herself. He said nothing about her actual age, and did not venture to plead that the young lady had a legal right to do as she liked with herself; but he made it manifest that such an idea was in his mind. In answer to this, Lady Rowley asserted that Nora was a good girl, and would do as her father told her; but she did not venture to assert that Nora would give up her engagement. Lady Rowley at last undertook to speak to Sir Rowley, and to speak also to her daughter. Hugh was asked for his address, and gave that of the office of the D. R. He was always to be found there between three and five; and after that, four times a week, in the reporters' gallery of the House of Commons. Then he was at

some pains to explain to Lady Rowley that though he attended the reporters' gallery, he did not report himself. It was his duty to write leading political articles, and, to enable him to do so, he attended the debates.

Before he went Mrs. Trevelyan thanked him most cordially for the trouble he had taken in procuring for her the address at Willesden, and gave him some account of the journey which she and her mother had made to River's Cottage. He argued with both of them that the unfortunate man must now be regarded as being altogether out of his mind, and something was said as to the great wisdom and experience of Dr. Trite Turbury. Then Hugh Stanbury took his leave; and even Lady Rowley bade him adieu with kind cordiality. "I don't wonder, mamma, that Nora should like him," said Mrs. Trevelyan.

"That is all very well, my dear, and no doubt he is pleasant, and manly, and all that;—but really it would be almost like marrying a beggar."

"For myself," said Mrs. Trevelyan, "if I could begin life again, I do not think that any temptation would induce me to place myself in a man's power."

Sir Marmaduke was told of all this on his return home, and he asked many questions as to the nature of Stanbury's work. When it was explained to him,—Lady Rowley repeating as nearly as she could all that Hugh had himself said about it, he expressed his opinion that writing for a penny newspaper was hardly more safe as a source of income than betting on horse races. "I don't see that it is wrong," said Mrs. Trevelyan.

"I say nothing about wrong. I simply assert that it is uncertain. The very existence of such a periodical

must in itself be most insecure." Sir Marmaduke, amidst the cares of his government at the Mandarins, had, perhaps, had no better opportunity of watching what was going on in the world of letters than had fallen to the lot of Miss Stanbury at Exeter.

"I think your papa is right," said Lady Rowley.

"Of course I am right. It is out of the question; and so Nora must be told." He had as yet heard nothing about Mr. Glascock. Had that misfortune been communicated to him his cup would indeed have been filled with sorrow to overflowing.

In the evening Nora was closeted with her father. "Nora, my dear, you must understand, once and for all, that this cannot be," said Sir Marmaduke. The Governor, when he was not disturbed by outward circumstances, could assume a good deal of personal dignity, and could speak, especially to his children, with an air of indisputable authority.

"What can't be, papa?" said Nora.

Sir Marmaduke perceived at once that there was no indication of obedience in his daughter's voice, and he prepared himself for battle. He conceived himself to be very strong, and thought that his objections were so well founded that no one would deny their truth and that his daughter had not a leg to stand on. "This, that your mamma tells me of about Mr. Stanbury. Do you know, my dear, that he has not a shilling in the world?"

"I know that he has no fortune, papa,—if you mean that."

"And no profession either;—nothing that can be called a profession. I do not wish to argue it, my dear, because there is no room for argument. The

whole thing is preposterous. I cannot but think ill of him for having proposed it to you; for he must have known,—must have known, that a young man without an income cannot be accepted as a fitting suitor for a gentleman's daughter. As for yourself, I can only hope that you will get the little idea out of your head very quickly;—but mamma will speak to you about that. What I want you to understand from me is this,—that there must be an end to it."

Nora listened to this speech in perfect silence, standing before her father, and waiting patiently till the last word of it should be pronounced. Even when he had finished she still paused before she answered him. "Papa," she said at last,—and hesitated again before she went on.

"Well, my dear."

"I can not give it up."

"But you must give it up."

"No, papa. I would do anything I could for you and mamma, but that is impossible."

"Why is it impossible?"

"Because I love him so dearly."

"That is nonsense. That is what all girls say when they choose to run against their parents. I tell you that it shall be given up. I will not have him here. I forbid you to see him. It is quite out of the question that you should marry such a man. I do hope, Nora, that you are not going to add to mamma's difficulties and mine by being obstinate and disobedient." He paused a moment, and then added, "I do not think that there is anything more to be said."

"Papa."

"My dear, I think you had better say nothing

further about it. If you cannot bring yourself at the present moment to promise that there shall be an end of it, you had better hold your tongue. You have heard what I say, and you have heard what mamma says. I do not for a moment suppose that you dream of carrying on a communication with this gentleman in opposition to our wishes."

"But I do."

"Do what?"

"Papa, you had better listen to me." Sir Marmaduke, when he heard this, assumed an air of increased authority, in which he intended that paternal anger should be visible; but he seated himself, and prepared to receive, at any rate, some of the arguments with which Nora intended to bolster up her bad cause. "I have promised Mr. Stanbury that I will be his wife."

"That is all nonsense."

"Do listen to me, papa. I have listened to you and you ought to listen to me. I have promised him, and I must keep my promise. I shall keep my promise if he wishes it. There is a time when a girl must be supposed to know what is best for herself,—just as there is for a man."

"I never heard such stuff in all my life. Do you mean that you'll go out and marry him like a beggar, with nothing but what you stand up in, with no friend to be with you, an outcast, thrown off by your mother,—with your father's—curse?"

"Oh, papa, do not say that. You would not curse me. You could not."

"If you do it at all, that will be the way."

"That will not be the way, papa. You could not treat me like that."

"And how are you proposing to treat me?"

"But, papa, in whatever way I do it, I must do it. I do not say to-day or to-morrow; but it must be the intention and purpose of my life, and I must declare that it is, everywhere. I have made up my mind about it. I am engaged to him, and I shall always say so, —unless he breaks it. I don't care a bit about fortune. I thought I did once, but I have changed all that."

"Because this scoundrel has talked sedition to you."

"He is not a scoundrel, papa, and he has not talked sedition. I don't know what sedition is. I thought it meant treason, and I'm sure he is not a traitor. He has made me love him, and I shall be true to him."

Hereupon Sir Marmaduke began almost to weep. There came first a half-smothered oath and then a sob, and he walked about the room, and struck the table with his fist, and rubbed his bald head impatiently with his hand. "Nora," he said, "I thought you were so different from this! If I had believed this of you, you never should have come to England with Emily."

"It is too late for that now, papa."

"Your mamma always told me that you had such excellent ideas about marriage."

"So I have,—I think," said she, smiling.

"She always believed that you would make a match that would be a credit to the family."

"I tried it, papa;—the sort of match that you mean. Indeed I was mercenary enough in what I believed to be my views of life. I meant to marry a rich man,—if I could, and did not think much whether I should love him or not. But when the rich man came——"

"What rich man?"

"I suppose mamma has told you about Mr. Glascock."

"Who is Mr. Glascock? I have not heard a word about Mr. Glascock." Then Nora was forced to tell her story,—was called upon to tell it with all its aggravating details. By degrees Sir Marmaduke learned that this Mr. Glascock, who had desired to be his son-in-law, was in very truth the heir to the Peterborough title and estates,—would have been such a son-in-law as almost to compensate, by the brilliance of the connection, for that other unfortunate alliance. He could hardly control his agony when he was made to understand that this embryo peer had in truth been in earnest. "Do you mean that he went down after you into Devonshire?"

"Yes, papa."

"And you refused him then,—a second time?"

"Yes, papa."

"Why;—why;—why? You say yourself that you liked him;—that you thought that you would accept him."

"When it came to speaking the word, papa, I found that I could not pretend to love him when I did not love him. I did not care for him,—and I liked somebody else so much better! I just told him the plain truth,—and so he went away."

The thought of all that he had lost, of all that might so easily have been his, for a time overwhelmed Sir Marmaduke, and drove the very memory of Hugh Stanbury almost out of his head. He could understand that a girl should not marry a man whom she did not like; but he could not understand how any girl should

not love such a suitor as was Mr. Glascock. And had she accepted this pearl of men, with her position, with her manners and beauty and appearance, such a connection would have been as good as an assured marriage for every one of Sir Marmaduke's numerous daughters. Nora was just the woman to look like a great lady, a lady of high rank,—such a lady as could almost command men to come and throw themselves at her unmarried sisters' feet. Sir Marmaduke had believed in his daughter Nora, had looked forward to see her do much for the family; and, when the crash had come upon the Trevelyan household, had thought almost as much of her injured prospects as he had of the misfortune of her sister. But now it seemed that more than all the good things of what he had dreamed had been proposed to this unruly girl, in spite of that great crash,—and had been rejected! And he saw more than this,—as he thought. These good things would have been accepted had it not been for this rascal of a penny-a-liner, this friend of that other rascal Trevelyan, who had come in the way of their family to destroy the happiness of them all! Sir Marmaduke, in speaking of Stanbury after this, would constantly call him a penny-a-liner, thinking that the contamination of the penny communicated itself to all transactions of the Daily Record.

"You have made your bed for yourself, Nora, and you must lie upon it."

"Just so, papa."

"I mean that, as you have refused Mr. Glascock's offer, you can never again hope for such an opening in life."

"Of course I cannot. I am not such a child as to

suppose that there are many Mr. Glascocks to come and run after me. And if there were ever so many, papa, it would be no good. As you say, I have chosen for myself, and I must put up with it. When I see the carriages going about in the streets, and remember how often I shall have to go home in an omnibus, I do think about it a good deal."

"I'm afraid you will think when it is too late."

"It isn't that I don't like carriages, papa. I do like them; and pretty dresses, and brooches, and men and women who have nothing to do, and balls, and the opera; but—I love this man, and that is more to me than all the rest. I cannot help myself, if it were ever so. Papa, you musn't be angry with me. Pray, pray, pray do not say that horrid word again."

This was the end of the interview. Sir Marmaduke found that he had nothing further to say. Nora, when she reached her last prayer to her father, referring to that curse with which he had threatened her, was herself in tears, and was leaning on him with her head against his shoulder. Of course he did not say a word which could be understood as sanctioning her engagement with Stanbury. He was as strongly determined as ever that it was his duty to save her from the perils of such a marriage as that. But, nevertheless, he was so far overcome by her as to be softened in his manners towards her. He kissed her as he left her, and told her to go to her mother. Then he went out and thought of it all, and felt as though Paradise had been opened to his child and she had refused to enter the gate.

CHAPTER VI.

Shewing what Hugh Stanbury thought about the Duty of Man.

In the conference which took place between Sir Marmaduke and his wife after the interview between him and Nora, it was his idea that nothing further should be done at all. "I don't suppose the man will come here if he be told not," said Sir Marmaduke, "and if he does, Nora of course will not see him." He then suggested that Nora would of course go back with them to the Mandarins, and that when once there she would not be able to see Stanbury any more. "There must be no correspondence or anything of that sort, and so the thing will die away." But Lady Rowley declared that this would not quite suffice. Mr. Stanbury had made his offer in due form, and must be held to be entitled to an answer. Sir Marmaduke, therefore, wrote the following letter to the "peuny-a-liner," mitigating the asperity of his language in compliance with his wife's counsels.

"Manchester Street, April 20th, 186—.

"MY DEAR SIR,—

"Lady Rowley has told me of your proposal to my daughter Nora; and she has told me also what she learned from you as to your circumstances in life. I need hardly point out to you that no father would be justified in giving his daughter to a gentleman upon so small an income, and upon an income so very insecure.

"I am obliged to refuse my consent, and I must

therefore ask you to abstain from visiting and from communicating with my daughter.

"Yours faithfully,

"MARMADUKE ROWLEY.

"Hugh Stanbury, Esq."

This letter was directed to Stanbury at the office of the D. R., and Sir Marmaduke, as he wrote the pernicious address, felt himself injured in that he was compelled to write about his daughter to a man so circumstanced. Stanbury, when he got the letter, read it hastily and then threw it aside. He knew what it would contain before he opened it. He had heard enough from Lady Rowley to be aware that Sir Marmaduke would not welcome him as a son-in-law. Indeed, he had never expected such welcome. He was half-ashamed of his own suit because of the lowliness of his position,—half-regretful that he should have induced such a girl as Nora Rowley to give up for his sake her hopes of magnificence and splendour. But Sir Marmaduke's letter did not add anything to this feeling. He read it again, and smiled as he told himself that the father would certainly be very weak in the hands of his daughter. Then he went to work again at his article with a persistent resolve that so small a trifle as such a note should have no effect upon his daily work. Of course Sir Marmaduke would refuse his consent. Of course it would be for him, Stanbury, to marry the girl he loved in opposition to her father. Her father indeed! If Nora chose to take him,—and as to that he was very doubtful as to Nora's wisdom,—but if Nora would take him, what was any father's opposition to him. He wanted nothing from

Nora's father. He was not looking for money with his wife;—nor for fashion, nor countenance. Such a Bohemian was he that he would be quite satisfied if his girl would walk out to him, and become his wife, with any morning-gown on and with any old hat that might come readiest to hand. He wanted neither cards, nor breakfast, nor carriages, nor fine clothes. If his Nora should choose to come to him as she was, he having had all previous necessary arrangements duly made,—such as calling of banns or procuring of licence if possible,—he thought that a father's opposition would almost add something to the pleasure of the occasion. So he pitched the letter on one side, and went on with his article. And he finished his article; but it may be doubted whether it was completed with the full strength and pith needed for moving the pulses of the national mind,—as they should be moved by leading articles in the D. R. As he was writing he was thinking of Nora,—and thinking of the letter which Nora's father had sent to him. Trivial as was the letter, he could not keep himself from repeating the words of it to himself. "‘Need hardly point out,’—oh; needn't he. Then why does he? Refusing his consent! I wonder what the old buffers think is the meaning of their consent, when they are speaking of daughters old enough to manage for themselves? Abstain from visiting or communicating with her! But if she visits and communicates with me;—what then? I can't force my way into the house, but she can force her way out. Does he imagine that she can be locked up in the nursery or put into the corner." So he argued with himself, and by such arguments he brought himself to the conviction that it would be well for him

to answer Sir Marmaduke's letter. This he did at once,—before leaving the office of the D. R.

“250, Fleet Street, 20th April.

“MY DEAR SIR MARMADUKE ROWLEY,—

“I have just received your letter, and am indeed sorry that its contents should be so little favourable to my hopes. I understand that your objection to me is simply in regard to the smallness and insecurity of my income. On the first point I may say that I have fair hopes that it may be at once increased. As to the second, I believe I may assert that it is as sure at least as the income of other professional men, such as barristers, merchants, and doctors. I cannot promise to say that I will not see your daughter. If she desires me to do so, of course I shall be guided by her views. I wish that I might be allowed an opportunity of seeing you, as I think I could reverse or at least mitigate some of the objections which you feel to our marriage.

“Yours most faithfully,

“HUGH STANBURY.”

On the next day but one Sir Marmaduke came to him. He was sitting at the office of the D. R., in a very small and dirty room at the back of the house, and Sir Marmaduke found his way thither through a confused crowd of compositors, pressmen, and printers' boys. He thought that he had never before been in a place so foul, so dark, so crowded, and so comfortless. He himself was accustomed to do his work, out in the Islands, with many of the appanages of vice-royalty around him. He had his secretary, and his private

secretary, and his inner-room, and his waiting-room; and not unfrequently he had the honour of a dusky sentinel walking before the door through which he was to be approached. He had an idea that all gentlemen at their work had comfortable appurtenances around them,—such as carpets, dispatch-boxes, unlimited stationery, easy chairs for temporary leisure, big table-space, and a small world of books around them to give at least a look of erudition to their pursuits. There was nothing of the kind in the miserably dark room occupied by Stanbury. He was sitting at a wretched little table on which there was nothing but a morsel of blotting paper, a small ink-bottle, and the paper on which he was scribbling. There was no carpet there, and no dispatch-box, and the only book in the room was a little dog's-eared dictionary. "Sir Marmaduke, I am so much obliged to you for coming," said Hugh. "I fear you will find this place a little rough, but we shall be all alone."

"The place, Mr. Stanbury, will not signify, I think."

"Not in the least,—if you don't mind it. I got your letter, you know, Sir Marmaduke."

"And I have had your reply. I have come to you because you have expressed a wish for an interview;—but I do not see that it will do any good."

"You are very kind for coming, indeed, Sir Marmaduke;—very kind. I thought I might explain something to you about my income."

"Can you tell me that you have any permanent income?"

"It goes on regularly from month to month;"—Sir Marmaduke did not feel the slightest respect for an

income that was paid monthly. According to his ideas, a gentleman's income should be paid quarterly, or perhaps half-yearly. According to his view, a monthly salary was only one degree better than weekly wages;—"and I suppose that is permanence," said Hugh Stanbury.

"I cannot say that I so regard it."

"A barrister gets his, you know, very irregularly. There is no saying when he may have it."

"But a barrister's profession is recognised as a profession among gentlemen, Mr. Stanbury."

"And is not ours recognised? Which of us, barristers or men of literature, have the most effect on the world at large. Who is most thought of in London, Sir Marmaduke,—the Lord Chancellor or the Editor of the 'Jupiter?'"

"The Lord Chancellor a great deal," said Sir Marmaduke, quite dismayed by the audacity of the question.

"By no means, Sir Marmaduke," said Stanbury, throwing out his hand before him so as to give the energy of action to his words. "He has the higher rank. I will admit that."

"I should think so," said Sir Marmaduke.

"And the larger income."

"Very much larger, I should say," said Sir Marmaduke, with a smile.

"And he wears a wig."

"Yes;—he wears a wig," said Sir Marmaduke, hardly knowing in what spirit to accept this assertion.

"And nobody cares one brass button for him or his opinions," said Stanbury, bringing down his hand heavily on the little table for the sake of emphasis.

"What, sir?"

"If you'll think of it, it is so."

"Nobody cares for the Lord Chancellor!" It certainly is the fact that gentlemen living in the Mandarin Islands do think more of the Lord Chancellor, and the Lord Mayor, and the Lord-Lieutenant, and the Lord Chamberlain, than they whose spheres of life bring them into closer contact with those august functionaries. "I presume, Mr. Stanbury, that a connection with a penny newspaper makes such opinions as these almost a necessity."

"Quite a necessity, Sir Marmaduke. No man can hold his own in print, now-a-days, unless he can see the difference between tinsel and gold."

"And the Lord Chancellor, of course, is tinsel."

"I do not say so. He may be a great lawyer,—and very useful. But his lordship, and his wig, and his woosack, are tinsel in comparison with the real power possessed by the editor of a leading newspaper. If the Lord Chancellor were to go to bed for a month, would he be much missed?"

"I don't know, sir. I'm not in the secrets of the Cabinet. I should think he would."

"About as much as my grandmother;—but if the Editor of the 'Jupiter' were to be taken ill, it would work quite a commotion. For myself I should be glad, —on public grounds,—because I don't like his mode of business. But it would have an effect,—because he is a leading man."

"I don't see what all this leads to, Mr. Stanbury."

"Only to this,—that we who write for the press think that our calling is recognised, and must be recognised as a profession. Talk of permanence, Sir

Marmaduke, are not the newspapers permanent? Do not they come out regularly every day,—and more of them, and still more of them, are always coming out? You do not expect a collapse among them."

"There will be plenty of newspapers, I do not doubt;—more than plenty, perhaps."

"Somebody must write them,—and the writers will be paid."

"Anybody could write the most of them, I should say."

"I wish you would try, Sir Marmaduke. Just try your hand at a leading article to-night, and read it yourself to-morrow morning."

"I've a great deal too much to do, Mr. Stanbury."

"Just so. You have, no doubt, the affairs of your Government to look to. We are all so apt to ignore the work of our neighbours! It seems to me that I could go over and govern the Mandarins without the slightest trouble in the world. But, no doubt, I am mistaken;—just as you are about writing for the newspapers."

"I do not know," said Sir Marmaduke, rising from his chair with dignity, "that I called here to discuss such matters as these. As it happens, you, Mr. Stanbury, are not the Governor of the Mandarins, and I have not the honour to write for the columns of the penny newspaper with which you are associated. It is therefore useless to discuss what either of us might do in the position held by the other."

"Altogether useless, Sir Marmaduke,—except just for the fun of the thing."

"I do not see the fun, Mr. Stanbury. I came here, at your request, to hear what you might have to urge

against the decision which I expressed to you in reference to my daughter. As it seems that you have nothing to urge, I will not take up your time further."

"But I have a great deal to urge, and have urged a great deal."

"Have you, indeed?"

"You have complained that my work is not permanent. I have shewn that it is so permanent that there is no possibility of its coming to an end. There must be newspapers, and the people trained to write them must be employed. I have been at it now about two years. You know what I earn. Could I have got so far in so short a time as a lawyer, a doctor, a clergyman, a soldier, a sailor, a Government clerk, or in any of those employments which you choose to call professions? I think that is urging a great deal. I think it is urging everything."

"Very well, Mr. Stanbury. I have listened to you, and in a certain degree I admire your,—your,—your zeal and ingenuity, shall I say."

"I didn't mean to call for admiration, Sir Marmaduke; but suppose you say,—good sense and discrimination."

"Let that pass. You must permit me to remark that your position is not such as to justify me in trusting my daughter to your care. As my mind on that matter is quite made up, as is that also of Lady Rowley, I must ask you to give me your promise that your suit to my daughter shall be discontinued."

"What does she say about it, Sir Marmaduke?"

"What she has said to me has been for my ears, and not for yours."

"What I say is for her ears and for yours, and for

her mother's ears, and for the ears of any who may choose to hear it. I will never give up my suit to your daughter till I am forced to do so by a full conviction that she has given me up. It is best to be plain, Sir Marmaduke, of course."

"I do not understand this, Mr. Stanbury."

"I mean to be quite clear."

"I have always thought that when a gentleman was told by the head of a family that he could not be made welcome in that family, it was considered to be the duty of that gentleman,—as a gentleman,—to abandon his vain pursuit. I have been brought up with that idea."

"And I, Sir Marmaduke, have been brought up in the idea that when a man has won the affections of a woman, it is the duty of that man,—as a man,—to stick to her through thick and thin; and I mean to do my duty, according to my idea."

"Then, sir, I have nothing further to say, but to take my leave. I must only caution you not to enter my doors." As the passages were dark and intricate, it was necessary that Stanbury should shew Sir Marmaduke out, and this he did in silence. When they parted each of them lifted his hat, and not a word more was said.

That same night there was a note put into Nora's hands as she was following her mother out of one of the theatres. In the confusion she did not even see the messenger who had handed it to her. Her sister Lucy saw that she had taken the note, and questioned her about it afterwards,—with discretion, however, and in privacy. This was the note:—

"DEAREST LOVE,

"I have seen your father, who is stern,—after the manner of fathers. What granite equals a parent's flinty bosom! For myself, I do not prefer clandestine arrangements and rope-ladders; and you, dear, have nothing of the Lydia about you. But I do like my own way, and like it especially when you are at the end of the path. It is quite out of the question that you should go back to those islands. I think I am justified in already assuming enough of the husband to declare that such going back must not be held for a moment in question. My proposition is that you should authorise me to make such arrangements as may be needed, in regard to licence, banns, or whatever else, and that you should then simply walk from the house to the church and marry me. You are of age, and can do as you please. Neither your father nor mother can have any right to stop you. I do not doubt but that your mother would accompany you, if she were fully satisfied of your purpose. Write to me to the D. R.

"Your own, ever and ever, and always,

H. S.

"I shall try and get this given to you as you leave the theatre. If it should fall into other hands, I don't much care. I'm not in the least ashamed of what I am doing; and I hope that you are not."

CHAPTER VII.

The Delivery of the Lamb.

It is hoped that a certain quarter of lamb will not have been forgotten,—a quarter of lamb that was sent

as a peace-offering from Exeter to Nuncombe Putney by the hands of Miss Stanbury's Martha, not with purposes of corruption, not intended to buy back the allegiance of Dorothy,—folded delicately and temptingly in one of the best table napkins, with no idea of bribery, but sent as presents used to be sent of old in the trains of great ambassadors as signs of friendship and marks of true respect. Miss Stanbury was, no doubt, most anxious that her niece should return to her, but was not, herself, low spirited enough to conceive that a quarter of lamb could be efficacious in procuring such return. If it might be that Dorothy's heart could be touched by mention of the weariness of her aunt's solitary life; and if, therefore, she would return, it would be very well; but it could not be well so, unless the offer should come from Dorothy herself. All of which Martha had been made to understand by her mistress, considerable ingenuity having been exercised in the matter on each side.

On her arrival at Lessboro', Martha had hired a fly, and been driven out to Nuncombe Putney; but she felt, she knew not why, a dislike to be taken in her carriage to the door of the cottage; and was put down in the middle of the village, from whence she walked out to Mrs. Stanbury's abode, with the basket upon her arm. It was a good half mile, and the lamb was heavy, for Miss Stanbury had suggested that a bottle of sherry should be put in under the napkin,—and Martha was becoming tired of her burden, when,—whom should she see on the road before her but Brooke Burgess! As she said herself afterwards, it immediately occurred to her, "that all the fat was in the fire." Here had this young man come down, passing through

Exeter without even a visit to Miss Stanbury, and had clandestinely sought out the young woman whom he wasn't to marry; and here was the young woman herself flying in her aunt's face, when one scratch of a pen might ruin them both! Martha entertained a sacred, awful, overcoming feeling about her mistress's will. That she was to have something herself she supposed, and her anxiety was not on that score; but she had heard so much about it, had realised so fully the great power which Miss Stanbury possessed, and had had her own feelings so rudely invaded by alterations in Miss Stanbury's plans, that she had come to entertain an idea that all persons around her should continually bear that will in their memory. Hugh had undoubtedly been her favourite, and, could Martha have dictated the will herself, she would still have made Hugh the heir; but she had realised the resolution of her mistress so far as to confess that the bulk of the property was to go back to a Burgess. But there were very many Burgesses; and here was the one who had been selected flying in the very face of the testatrix! What was to be done? Were she to go back and not tell her mistress that she had seen Brooke Burgess at Nuncombe then,—should the fact be found out,—would the devoted anger of Miss Stanbury fall upon her own head? It would be absolutely necessary that she should tell the story, let the consequences be what they might;—but the consequences, probably, would be very dreadful. "Mr. Brooke, that is not you?" she said, as she came up to him, putting her basket down in the middle of the dusty road.

"Then who can it be?" said Brooke, giving her his hand to shake.

"But what do bring you here, Mr. Brooke? Goodness me, what will missus say?"

"I shall make that all straight. I'm going back to Exeter to morrow." Then there were many questions and many answers. He was sojourning at Mrs. Crocket's, and had been there for the last two days. "Dear, dear, dear," she said over and over again. "Deary me, deary me!" and then she asked him whether it was "all along of Miss Dorothy" that he had come. Of course, it was all along of Miss Dorothy. Brooke made no secret about it. He had come down to see Dorothy's mother and sister, and to say a bit of his own mind about future affairs;—and to see the beauties of the country. When he talked about the beauties of the country, Martha looked at him as the people of Lessboro' and Nuncombe Putney should have looked at Colonel Osborne, when he talked of the church porch at Cockehaffington. "Beauties of the countries, Mr. Brooke;—you ought to be ashamed of yourself!" said Martha.

"But I ain't,—the least in the world," said Brooke.

Then Martha took up her basket, and went on to the cottage, which had been close in sight during their conversation in the road. She felt angry with Dorothy. In such matters a woman is always angry with the woman,—who has probably been quite passive, and rarely with the man, who is ever the real transgressor. Having a man down after her at Nuncombe Putney! It had never struck Martha as very horrible that Brooke Burgess should fall in love with Dorothy in the city;—but this meeting, in the remoteness of the country, out of sight even of the village, was almost indecent; and all, too, with Miss Stanbury's will just, as one

might say, on the balance! Dorothy ought to have buried herself rather than have allowed Brooke to see her at Nuncombe Putney; and Dorothy's mother and Priscilla must be worse. She trudged on, however, with her lamb, and soon found herself in the presence of the three ladies.

"What,—Martha!" said Dorothy.

"Yes, miss,"—here I am. I'd have been here half-an-hour ago amost, if I hadn't been stopped on the road."

"And who stopped you?" asked Priscilla.

"Why,—Mr. Brooke, of course."

"And what did Mr. Brooke say to you?" asked Dorothy.

Martha perceived at once that Dorothy was quite radiant. She told her mistress that she had never seen Miss Dorothy look half so comely before. "Laws, ma'am, she brightened up and speckled about, till it did your heart good to see her in spite of all." But this was some time afterwards.

"He didn't say very much," replied Martha, gravely.

"But I've got very much to tell you," continued Dorothy. "I'm engaged to be married to Mr. Brooke, and you must congratulate me. It is settled now, and mamma and my sister know all about it."

Martha, when she was thus asked directly for congratulation, hardly knew at once how to express herself. Being fully aware of Miss Stanbury's objection to the marriage, she could not venture to express her approbation of it. It was very improper, in Martha's mind, that any young woman should have a follower, when the "missus" didn't approve of it. She under-

stood well enough that, in that matter of followers, privileges are allowed to young ladies which are not accorded to maid servants. A young lady may do things,—have young men to walk and talk with them, to dance with them and embrace them, and perhaps even more than this,—when for half so much a young woman would be turned into the streets without a character. Martha knew all this, and knew also that Miss Dorothy, though her mother lived in a very little cottage, was not altogether debarred, in the matter of followers, from the privileges of a lady. But yet Miss Dorothy's position was so very peculiar! Look at that will,—or, rather, at that embryo will, which might be made any day, which now probably would be made, and which might affect them both so terribly! People who have not got money should not fly in the face of those who have. Such at least was Martha's opinion very strongly. How could she congratulate Miss Dorothy under the existing circumstances. "I do hope you will be happy, miss;—that you knows," said Martha, in her difficulty. "And now, ma'am;—miss, I mean," she added, correcting herself, in obedience to Miss Stanbury's direct orders about the present,— "missus has just sent me over with a bit of lamb, and a letter as is here in the basket, and to ask how you is,—and the other ladies."

"We are very much obliged," said Mrs. Stanbury, who had not understood the point of Martha's speech.

"My sister is, I'm sure," said Priscilla, who had understood it.

Dorothy had taken the letter, and had gone aside with it, and was reading it very carefully. It touched

her nearly, and there had come tears into both her eyes, as she dwelt upon it. There was something in her aunt's allusion to the condition of unmarried women which came home to her especially. She knew her aunt's past history, and now she knew, or hoped that she knew, something of her own future destiny. Her aunt was desolate, whereas upon her the world smiled most benignly. Brooke had just informed her that he intended to make her his wife as speedily as possible, —with her aunt's consent if possible, but if not, then without it. He had ridiculed the idea of his being stopped by Miss Stanbury's threats, and had said all this in such fashion that even Priscilla herself had only listened and obeyed. He had spoken not a word of his own income, and none of them had dreamed even of asking him a question. He had been as a god in the little cottage, and all of them had been ready to fall down and worship him. Mrs. Stanbury had not known how to treat him with sufficient deference, and, at the same time, with sufficient affection. He had kissed them all round, and Priscilla had felt an elation which was hardly intelligible to herself. Dorothy, who was so much honoured, had come to enjoy a status in her mother's estimation very different from that which she had previously possessed, and had grown to be quite beautiful in her mother's eyes.

There was once a family of three ancient maiden ladies, much respected and loved in the town in which they lived. Their manners of life were well known among their friends, and excited no surprise; but a stranger to the locality once asked of the elder why Miss Matilda, the younger, always went first out of the room? "Matilda once had an offer of marriage," said

the dear simple old lady, who had never been so graced, and who felt that such an episode in life was quite sufficient to bestow brevet rank. It was believed by Mrs. Stanbury that Dorothy's honours would be carried further than those of Miss Matilda, but there was much of the same feeling in the bosom of the mother towards the fortunate daughter, who, in the eyes of a man, had seemed goodly enough to be his wife.

With this swelling happiness round her heart, Dorothy read her aunt's letter, and was infinitely softened. "I had gotten somehow to love to see your pretty face." Dorothy had thought little enough of her own beauty, but she liked being told by her aunt that her face had been found to be pretty. "I am very desolate and solitary here," her aunt said; and then had come those words about the state of maiden women;—and then those other words, about women's duties, and her aunt's prayer on her behalf. "Dear Dorothy, be not such an one." She held the letter to her lips and to her bosom, and could hardly continue its perusal because of her tears. Such prayers from the aged addressed to the young are generally held in light esteem, but this adjuration was valued by the girl to whom it was addressed. She put together the invitation,—or rather the permission accorded to her, to make a visit to Exeter,—and the intimation in the postscript that Martha knew her mistress's mind; and then she returned to the sitting-room, in which Martha was still seated with her mother, and took the old servant apart. "Martha," she said, "is my aunt happy now?"

"Well,—miss."

"She is strong again; is she not?"

"Sir Peter says she is getting well; and Mr. Martin——; but Mr. Martin isn't much account."

"She eats and drinks again?"

"Pretty well;—not as it used to be, you know, miss. I tell her she ought to go somewheres,—but she don't like moving nohow. She never did. I tell her if she'd go to Dawlish,—just for a week. But she don't think there's a bed fit to sleep on, nowhere, except just her own."

"She would go if Sir Peter told her."

"She says that these movings are newfangled fashions, and that the air didn't use to want changing for folk when she was young. I heard her tell Sir Peter herself, that if she couldn't live at Exeter, she would die there. She won't go nowheres, Miss Dorothy. She ain't careful to live."

"Tell me something, Martha; will you?"

"What is it, Miss Dorothy?"

"Be a dear good woman now, and tell me true. Would she be better if I were with her?"

"She don't like being alone, miss. I don't know nobody as does."

"But now, about Mr. Brooke, you know."

"Yes; Mr. Brooke! That's it."

"Of course, Martha, I love him better than anything in all the world. I can't tell you how it was, but I think I loved him the very first moment I saw him."

"Dear, dear, dear!"

"I couldn't help it, Martha;—but it's no good talking about it, for of course I shan't try to help it now. Only this,—that I would do anything in the world for my aunt,—except that."

"But she don't like it, Miss Dorothy. That is the truth, you know."

"It can't be helped now, Martha; and of course she'll be told at once. Shall I go and tell her? I'd go to-day if you think she would like it."

"And Mr. Brooke?"

"He is to go to-morrow."

"And will you leave him here?"

"Why not? Nobody will hurt him. I don't mind a bit about having him with me now. But I can tell you this. When he went away from us once it made me very unhappy. Would Aunt Stanbury be glad to see me, Martha?"

Martha's reserve was at last broken down, and she expressed herself in strong language. There was nothing on earth her mistress wanted so much as to have her favourite niece back again. Martha acknowledged that there were great difficulties about Brooke Burgess, and she did not see her way clearly through them. Dorothy declared her purpose of telling her aunt boldly,—at once. Martha shook her head, admiring the honesty and courage, but doubting the result. She understood better than did any one else the peculiarity of mind which made her mistress specially anxious that none of the Stanbury family should enjoy any portion of the Burgess money, beyond that which she herself had saved out of the income. There had been moments in which Martha had hoped that this prejudice might be overcome in favour of Hugh; but it had become stronger as the old woman grew to be older and more feeble,—and it was believed now to be settled as Fate. "She'd sooner give it all to old Barty over the way," Martha had once said, "than let it go to her

own kith and kin. And if she do hate any human creature, she do hate Barty Burgess." She assented, however, to Dorothy's proposal; and, though Mrs. Stanbury and Priscilla were astounded by the precipitancy of the measure they did not attempt to oppose it.

"And what am I to do?" said Brooke, when he was told.

"You'll come to-morrow, of course," said Dorothy.

"But it may be that the two of us together will be too many for the dear old lunatic."

"You shan't call her a lunatic, Brooke. She isn't so much a lunatic as you are, to run counter to her, and disobey her, and all that kind of thing."

"And how about yourself?"

"How can I help it, Brooke? It is you that say it must be so."

"Of course it must. Who is to be stayed from doing what is reasonable because an old woman has a bee on her bonnet. I don't believe in people's wills."

"She can do what she likes about it, Brooke."

"Of course she can, and of course she will. What I mean is that it never pays to do this or that because somebody may alter his will, or may make a will, or may not make a will. You become a slave for life, and then your dead tyrant leaves you a mourning-ring, and grins at you out of his grave. All the same she'll kick up a row, I fancy, and you'll have to bear the worst of it."

"I'll tell her the truth; and if she be very angry, I'll just come home again. But I think I'll come home to-morrow any way, so that I'll pass you on the road. That will be best. She won't want us both together. Only then, Brooke, I shan't see you again."

"Not till June."

"And is it to be really in June?"

"You say you don't like May."

"You are such a goose, Brooke. It will be May almost to-morrow. I shall be such a poor wife for you, Brooke. As for getting my things ready, I shall not bring hardly any things at all. Have you thought what it is to take a body so very poor?"

"I own I haven't thought as much about it, Dolly, —as I ought to have done, perhaps."

"It is too late now, Brooke."

"I suppose it is."

"Quite too late. A week ago I could have borne it. I had almost got myself to think that it would be better that I should bear it. But you have come, and banished all the virtue out of my head. I am ashamed of myself, because I am so unworthy; but I would put up with that shame rather than lose you now. Brooke, Brooke, I will so try to be good to you!"

In the afternoon Martha and Dorothy started together for Exeter, Brooke and Priscilla accompanying them as far as Mrs. Crocket's, where the Lessboro' fly was awaiting them. Dorothy said little or nothing during the walk, nor, indeed, was she very communicative during the journey into Exeter. She was going to her aunt, instigated simply by the affection of her full heart; but she was going with a tale in her mouth which she knew would be very unwelcome. She could not save herself from feeling that, in having accepted Brooke, and in having not only accepted him but even fixed the day for her marriage, she had been ungrateful to her aunt. Had it not been for her aunt's kindness and hospitality, she would never have seen Brooke

Burgess. And as she had been under her aunt's care at Exeter, she doubted whether she had not been guilty of some great fault in falling in love with this man, in opposition as it were to express orders. Should her aunt still declare that she would in no way countenance the marriage, that she would still oppose it and use her influence with Brooke to break it off, then would Dorothy return on the morrow to her mother's cottage at Nuncombe Putney, so that her lover might be free to act with her aunt as he might think fit. And should he yield, she would endeavour,—she would struggle hard, to think that he was still acting for the best. "I must tell her myself, Martha," said Dorothy, as they came near to Exeter.

"Certainly, miss;—only you'll do it to-night."

"Yes;—at once. As soon after I get there as possible."

CHAPTER VIII.

Dorothy returns to Exeter.

MISS STANBURY perfectly understood that Martha was to come back by the train reaching Exeter 7 p.m., and that she might be expected in the Close about a quarter-of-an-hour after that time. She had been nervous and anxious all day,—so much so that Mr. Martin had told her that she must be very careful. "That's all very well," the old woman had said, "but you haven't got any medicine for my complaint, Mr. Martin." The apothecary had assured her that the worst of her complaint was in the east wind, and had gone away begging her to be very careful. "It is not God's breezes that are hard to any one," the old lady

had said to herself,—“but our own hearts.” After her lonely dinner she had fidgeted about the room, and had rung twice for the girl, not knowing what order to give when the servant came to her. She was very anxious about her tea, but would not have it brought to her till after Martha should have arrived. She was half-minded to order that a second cup and saucer should be placed there, but she had not the courage to face the disappointment which would fall upon her, should the cup and saucer stand there for no purpose. And yet, should she come, how nice it would be to shew her girl that her old aunt had been ready for her. Thrice she went to the window after the cathedral clock had struck seven, to see whether her ambassador was returning. From her window there was only one very short space of pathway on which she could have seen her,—and, as it happened, there came the ring at the door, and no ambassador had as yet been viewed. Miss Stanbury was immediately off her seat, and out upon the landing. “Here we are again, Miss Dorothy,” said Martha. Then Miss Stanbury could not restrain herself,—but descended the stairs, moving as she had never moved since she had first been ill. “My bairn,” she said; “my dearest bairn! I thought that perhaps it might be so. Jane, another tea-cup and saucer up-stairs.” What a pity that she had not ordered it before! “And get a hot cake, Jane. You will be ever so hungry, my darling, after your journey.”

“Are you glad to see me, Aunt Stanbury?” said Dorothy.

“Glad, my pretty one!” Then she put up her hands, and smoothed down the girl’s cheeks, and kissed her, and patted Martha on the back, and scolded her

at the same time for not bringing Miss Dorothy from the station in a cab. "And what is the meaning of that little bag?" she said. "You shall go back for the rest yourself, Martha, because it is your own fault." Martha knew that all this was pleasant enough;—but then her mistress's moods would sometimes be changed so suddenly! How would it be when Miss Stanbury knew that Brooke Burgess had been left behind at Nuncombe Putney?

"You see I didn't stay to eat any of the lamb," said Dorothy, smiling.

"You shall have a calf instead, my dear," said Miss Stanbury, "because you are a returned prodigal."

All this was very pleasant, and Miss Stanbury was so happy dispensing her tea, and the hot cake, and the clotted cream, and was so intent upon her little methods of caressing and petting her niece, that Dorothy had no heart to tell her story while the plates and cups were still upon the table. She had not, perhaps, cared much for the hot cake, having such a weight upon her mind, but she had seemed to care, understanding well that she might so best conduce to her aunt's comfort. Miss Stanbury was a woman who could not bear that the good things which she had provided for a guest should not be enjoyed. She could taste with a friend's palate, and drink with a friend's throat. But when debarred these vicarious pleasures by what seemed to her to be the caprice of her guests, she would be offended. It had been one of the original sins of Camilla and Arabella French that they would declare at her teatable that they had dined late and could not eat teacake. Dorothy knew all this,—and did her duty;—but with a heavy heart. There was the story to be

told, and she had promised Martha that it should be told to-night. She was quite aware, too, independently of her promise, that it was necessary that it should be told to-night. It was very sad,—very grievous that the dear old lady's happiness should be disturbed so soon; but it must be done. When the tea-things were being taken away her aunt was still purring round her, and saying gentle, loving words. Dorothy bore it as well as she could,—bore it well, smiling and kissing her aunt's hand, and uttering now and then some word of affection. But the thing had to be done; and as soon as the room was quiet for a moment, she jumped up from her chair and began. "Aunt Stanbury, I must tell you something at once. Who, do you think, is at Nuncombe Putney?"

"Not Brooke Burgess?"

"Yes, he is. He is there now, and is to be here with you to-morrow."

The whole colour and character of Miss Stanbury's face was changed in a moment. She had been still purring up to the moment in which this communication had been made to her. Her gratification had come to her from the idea that her pet had come back to her from love of her,—as in very truth had been the case; but now it seemed that Dorothy had returned to ask for a great favour for herself. And she reflected at once that Brooke had passed through Exeter without seeing her. If he was determined to marry without reference to her, he might at any rate have had the grace to come to her and say so. She, in the fulness of her heart, had written words of affection to Dorothy;—and both Dorothy and Brooke had at once taken advantage of her expressions for their own purposes.

Such was her reading of the story of the day. "He need not trouble himself to come here now," she said.

"Dear aunt, do not say that."

"I do say it. He need not trouble himself to come now. When I said that I should be glad to see you, I did not intend that you should meet Mr. Burgess under my roof. I did not wish to have you both together."

"How could I help coming, when you wrote to me like that?"

"It is very well,—but he need not come. He knows the way from Nuncombe to London without stopping at Exeter."

"Aunt Stanbury, you must let me tell it you all."

"There is no more to tell, I should think."

"But there is more. You knew what he thought about me, and what he wished."

"He is his own master, my dear;—and you are your own mistress."

"If you speak to me like that you will kill me, Aunt Stanbury. I did not think of coming;—only when Martha brought your dear letter I could not help it. But he was coming. He meant to come to-morrow, and he will. Of course he must defend himself, if you are angry with him."

"He need not defend himself at all."

"I told them, and I told him, that I would only stay one night,—if you did not wish that we should be here together. You must see him, Aunt Stanbury. You would not refuse to see him."

"If you please, my dear, you must allow me to judge whom I will see."

After that the discussion ceased between them for

awhile, and Miss Stanbury left the room that she might hold a consultation with Martha. Dorothy went up to her chamber, and saw that everything had been prepared for her with most scrupulous care. Nothing could be whiter, neater, cleaner, nicer than was everything that surrounded her. She had perceived while living under her aunt's roof, how, gradually, small delicate feminine comforts had been increased for her. Martha had been told that Miss Dorothy ought to have this, and that Miss Dorothy ought to have that; till at last she, who had hitherto known nothing of the small luxuries that come from an easy income, had felt ashamed of the prettinesses that had been added to her. Now she could see at once that infinite care had been used to make her room bright and smiling,—only in the hope that she would return. As soon as she saw it all, she sat down on her bed and burst out into tears. Was it not hard upon her that she should be forced into such ingratitude! Every comfort prepared for her was a coal of hot fire upon her head. And yet what had she done that she ought not to have done? Was it unreasonable that she should have loved this man, when they two were brought together? And had she even dared to think of him otherwise than as an acquaintance till he had compelled her to confess her love? And after that had she not tried to separate herself from him, so that they two,—her aunt and her lover,—might be divided by no quarrel? Had not Priscilla told her that she was right in all that she was doing? Nevertheless, in spite of all this, she could not refrain from accusing herself of ingratitude towards her aunt. And she began to think it would have been better for her now to have remained at home, and have allowed

Brooke to come alone to Exeter than to have obeyed the impulse which had arisen from the receipt of her aunt's letter. When she went down again she found herself alone in the room, and she was beginning to think that it was intended that she should go to bed without again seeing her aunt; but at last Miss Stanbury came to her, with a sad countenance, but without that look of wrath which Dorothy knew so well. "My dear," she said, "it will be better that Mr. Burgess should go up to London to-morrow. I will see him, of course, if he chooses to come, and Martha shall meet him at the station and explain it. If you do not mind, I would prefer that you should not meet him here."

"I meant only to stay one night, aunt."

"That is nonsense. If I am to part with either of you, I will part with him. You are dearer to me than he is. Dorothy, you do not know how dear to me you are."

Dorothy immediately fell on her knees at her aunt's feet, and hid her face in her aunt's lap. Miss Stanbury twined round her fingers the soft hair which she loved so well,—because it was a grace given by God and not bought out of a shop,—and caressed the girl's head, and muttered something that was intended for a prayer. "If he will let me, aunt, I will give him up," said Dorothy, looking up into her aunt's face. "If he will say that I may, though I shall love him always, he may go."

"He is his own master," said Miss Stanbury. "Of course he is his own master."

"Will you let me return to-morrow,—just for a few days,—and then you can talk to him as you please. I

did not mean to come to stay. I wished him good-bye because I knew that I should not meet him here."

"You always talk of going away, Dorothy, as soon as ever you are in the house. You are always threatening me."

"I will come again, the moment you tell me. If he goes in the morning, I will be here the same evening. And I will write to him, Aunt Stanbury, and tell him, —that he is—quite free,—quite free,—quite free."

Miss Stanbury made no reply to this, but sat, still playing with her niece's hair. "I think I will go to bed," she said at last. "It is past ten. You need not go to Nuncombe, Dorothy. Martha shall meet him, and he can see me here. But I do not wish him to stay in the house. You can go over and call on Mrs. MacHugh. Mrs. MacHugh will take it well of you that you should call on her." Dorothy made no further opposition to this arrangement, but kissed her aunt, and went to her chamber.

How was it all to be for her? For the last two days she had been radiant with new happiness. Everything had seemed to be settled. Her lover, in his high-handed way, had declared that in no important crisis of life would he allow himself to be driven out of his way by the fear of what an old woman might do in her will. When Dorothy assured him that not for worlds would she, though she loved him dearly, injure his material prospects, he had thrown it all aside, after a grand fashion, that had really made the girl think that all Miss Stanbury's money was as nothing to his love for her. She and Priscilla and her mother had been carried away so entirely by Brooke's oratory as to feel for the time that the difficulties were entirely

conquered. But now the aspect of things was so different! Whatever Brooke might owe to Miss Stanbury, she, Dorothy, owed her aunt everything. She would immolate herself,—if Brooke would only let her. She did not quite understand her aunt's stubborn opposition; but she knew that there was some great cause for her aunt's feeling on the matter. There had been a promise made, or an oath sworn, that the property of the Burgess family should not go into the hands of any Stanbury. Dorothy told herself that, were she married, she would be a Stanbury no longer;—that her aunt would still comply with the obligation she had fixed for herself; but, nevertheless, she was ready to believe that her aunt might be right. Her aunt had always declared that it should be so; and Dorothy, knowing this, confessed to herself that she should have kept her heart under better control. Thinking of these things, she went to the table where, paper and ink and pens had all been prepared for her so prettily, and began her letter to Brooke. "Dearest, dearest Brooke." But then she thought that this was not a fair keeping of her promise, and she began again. "My dear Brooke." The letter, however, did not get itself written that night. It was almost impossible for her to write it. "I think it will be better for you," she had tried to say, "to be guided by my aunt." But how could she say this when she did not believe it? It was her wish to make him understand that she would never think ill of him, for a moment, if he would make up his mind to abandon her;—but she could not find the words to express herself,—and she went, at last, to bed, leaving the half-covered paper upon the table.

She went to bed, and cried herself to sleep. It

had been so sweet to have a lover,—a man of her own, to whom she could say what she pleased, from whom she had a right to ask for counsel and protection, a man who delighted to be near her, and to make much of her. In comparison with her old mode of living, her old ideas of life, her life with such a lover was passed in an elysium. She had entered from barren lands into so rich a paradise! But there is no paradise, as she now found, without apples which must be eaten, and which lead to sorrow. She regretted in this hour that she had ever seen Brooke Burgess. After all, with her aunt's love and care for her, with her mother and sister near her, with the respect of those who knew her, why should the lands have been barren, even had there been no entrance for her into that elysium? And did it not all result in this,—that the elysium to be desired should not be here; that the paradise, without the apples, must be waited for till beyond the grave? It is when things go badly with us here, and for most of us only then, that we think that we can see through the dark clouds into the joys of heaven. But at last she slept, and in her dreams Brooke was sitting with her in Niddon Park with his arm tight clasped round her waist.

She slept so soundly, that when a step crept silently into her room, and when a light was held for awhile over her face, neither the step nor the light awakened her. She was lying with her head back upon the pillow, and her arm hung by the bedside, and her lips were open, and her loose hair was spread upon the pillow. The person who stood there with the light thought that there never had been a fairer sight. Everything there was so pure, so sweet, so good! She was

one whose only selfish happiness could come to her from the belief that others loved her. The step had been very soft, and even the breath of the intruder was not allowed to pass heavily into the air, but the light of the candle shone upon the eyelids of the sleeper, and she moved her head restlessly on the pillow. "Dorothy, are you awake? Can you speak to me?"

Then the disturbed girl gradually opened her eyes and gazed upwards, and raised herself in her bed, and sat wondering. "Is anything the matter, aunt?" she said.

"Only the vagaries of an old woman, my pet,—of an old woman who cannot sleep in her bed."

"But what is it, aunt?"

"Kiss me, dearest." Then, with something of slumber still about her, Dorothy raised herself in her bed, and placed her arm on her aunt's shoulder and embraced her. "And now for my news," said Miss Stanbury.

"What news, aunt. It isn't morning yet; is it?"

"No;—it is not morning. You shall sleep again presently. I have thought of it, and you shall be Brooke's wife, and I will have it here, and we will all be friends."

"What!"

"You will like that;—will you not?"

"And you will not quarrel with him? What am I to say? What am I to do?" She was, in truth, awake now, and, not knowing what she did, she jumped out of bed, and stood holding her aunt by the arm.

"It is not a dream," said Miss Stanbury.

"Are you sure that it is not a dream? And may he come here to-morrow?"

"Of course he will come to-morrow,"

"And may I see him, Aunt Stanbury?"

"Not if you go home, my dear."

"But I won't go home. And will you tell him?"

Oh dear, oh dear! Aunt Stanbury, I do not think that I believe it yet."

"You will catch cold, my dear, if you stay there trying to believe it. You have nothing on. Get into bed and believe it there. You will have time to think of it before the morning." Then Miss Stanbury went back to her own chamber, and Dorothy was left alone to realise her bliss.

She thought of all her life for the last twelvemonths. —of the first invitation to Exeter, and the doubts of the family as to its acceptance, of her arrival and of her own doubts as to the possibility of her remaining, of Mr. Gibson's courtship and her aunt's disappointment, of Brooke's coming, of her love and of his, — and then of her departure back to Nuncombe. After that had come the triumph of Brooke's visit, and then the terrible sadness of her aunt's displeasure. But now everything was good and glorious. She did not care for money herself. She thought that she never could care much for being rich. But had she made Brooke poor by marrying him, that must always have been to her matter of regret, if not of remorse. But now it was all to be smooth and sweet. Now a paradise was to be opened to her, with no apples which she might not eat; —no apples which might not, but still must, be eaten. She thought that it would be impossible that she should sleep again that night; but she did sleep, and dreamed that Brooke was holding her in Niddon Park, tighter than ever.

When the morning came she trembled as she walked down into the parlour. Might it not still be possible that it was all a dream? or what if her aunt should again have changed her purpose? But the first moment of her aunt's presence told her that there was nothing to fear. "How did you sleep, Dorothy?" said the old lady.

"Dear aunt, I do not know. Was it all sleep?"

"What shall we say to Brooke when he comes?"

"You shall tell him."

"No, dearest, you must tell him. And you must say to him that if he is not good to my girl, and does not love her always, and cling to her, and keep her from harm, and be in truth her loving husband, I will hold him to be the most ungrateful of human beings." And before Brooke came, she spoke again. "I wonder whether he thinks you as pretty as I do, Dolly?"

"He never said that he thought me pretty at all."

"Did he not? Then he shall say so, or he shall not have you. It was your looks won me first, Dolly,—like an old fool as I am. It is so pleasant to have a little nature after such a deal of artifice." In which latter remarks it was quite understood that Miss Stanbury was alluding to her enemies at Heavitree.

CHAPTER IX.

The Lioness aroused.

BROOKE BURGESS had been to Exeter and had gone,—for he only remained there one night,—and everything was apparently settled. It was not exactly told through Exeter that Miss Stanbury's heir was to be allowed to marry Miss Stanbury's niece; but Martha

knew it, and Giles Hickbody guessed it, and Dorothy was allowed to tell her mother and sister, and Brooke himself, in his own careless way, had mentioned the matter to his uncle Barty. As Miss Stanbury had also told the secret in confidence to Mrs. MacHugh, it cannot be said that it was altogether well kept. Four days after Brooke's departure the news reached the Frenches at Heavitree. It was whispered to Camilla by one of the shopmen with whom she was still arranging her marriage trousseau, and was repeated by her to her mother and sister with some additions which were not intended to be good-natured. "He gets her and the money together as a bargain—of course," said Camilla. "I only hope the money won't be found too dear."

"Perhaps he won't get it after all," said Arabella.

"That would be cruel," replied Camilla. "I don't think that even Miss Stanbury is so false as that."

Things were going very badly at Heavitree. There was war there, almost everlastingly, though such little playful conversations as the above shewed that there might be an occasional lull in the battle. Mr. Gibson was not doing his duty. That was clear enough. Even Mrs. French, when she was appealed to with almost frantic energy by her younger daughter, could not but acknowledge that he was very remiss as a lover. And Camilla, in her fury, was very imprudent. That very frantic energy which induced her to appeal to her mother was, in itself, proof of her imprudence. She knew that she was foolish, but she could not control her passion. Twice had she detected Arabella in receiving notes from Mr. Gibson, which she did not see, and of which it had been intended that she should

know nothing. And once, when she spent a night away at Ottery St. Mary with a friend,—a visit which was specially prefatory to marriage, and made in reference to bridesmaids' dresses,—Arabella had had,—so at least Camilla was made to believe,—a secret meeting with Mr. Gibson in some of the lanes which lead down from Heavitree to the Topsham road.

"I happened to meet him, and spoke two words to him," said Arabella. "Would you have me cut him?"

"I'll tell you what it is, Bella;—if there is any underhand game going on that I don't understand, all Exeter shall be on fire before you shall carry it out."

Bella made no answer to this, but shrugged her shoulders. Camilla was almost at a loss to guess what might be the truth. Would not any sister, so accused on such an occasion, rebut the accusation with awful wrath? But Arabella simply shrugged her shoulders, and went her way. It was now the 15th of April, and there wanted but one short fortnight to their marriage. The man had not the courage to jilt her. She felt sure that he had not heart enough to do a deed of such audacity. And her sister, too, was weak and a coward, and would lack the power to stand on her legs and declare herself to be the perpetrator of such villany. Her mother, as she knew well, would always have preferred that her elder daughter should be the bride; but her mother was not the woman to have the hardihood, now, in the eleventh hour, to favour such an intrigue. Let her wish be what it might, she would not be strong enough to carry through the accomplishment of it. They would all know that that threat of hers of setting Exeter on fire would be carried out

after some fashion that would not be inadequate to the occasion. A sister, a mother, a promised lover, all false,—all so damnably, cruelly false! It was impossible. No history, no novel of most sensational interest, no wonderful villany that had ever been wrought into prose or poetry, would have been equal to this. It was impossible. She told herself so a score of times a day. And yet the circumstances were so terribly suspicious! Mr. Gibson's conduct as a lover was simply disgraceful to him as a man and a clergyman. He was full of excuses, which she knew to be false. He would never come near her if he could help it. When he was with her, he was as cold as an archbishop both in word and in action. Nothing would tempt him to any outward manifestation of affection. He would talk of nothing but the poor women of St. Peter-cum-Pumpkin in the city, and the fraudulent idleness of a certain colleague in the cathedral services, who was always shirking his work. He made her no presents. He never walked with her. He was always gloomy,—and he had indeed so behaved himself in public that people were beginning to talk of "poor Mr. Gibson." And yet he could meet Arabella on the sly in the lanes, and send notes to her by the green-grocer's boy! Poor Mr. Gibson indeed! Let her once get him well over the 29th of April, and the people of Exeter might talk about poor Mr. Gibson if they pleased. And Bella's conduct was more wonderful almost than that of Mr. Gibson. With all her cowardice, she still held up her head,—held it perhaps a little higher than was usual with her. And when that grievous accusation was made against her,—made and repeated,—an accusation the very thought and sound

of which would almost have annihilated her had there been a decent feeling in her bosom, she would simply shrug her shoulders and walk away. "Camilla," she had once said, "you will drive that man mad before you have done." "What is it to you how I drive him?" Camilla had answered in her fury. Then Arabella had again shrugged her shoulders and walked away. Between Camilla and her mother, too, there had come to be an almost internecine quarrel on a collateral point. Camilla was still carrying on a vast arrangement which she called the preparation of her trousseau, but which both Mrs. French and Bella regarded as a spoliation of the domestic nest, for the proud purposes of one of the younger birds. And this had grown so fearfully that in two different places Mrs. French had found herself compelled to request that no further articles might be supplied to Miss Camilla. The bride elect had rebelled, alleging that as no fortune was to be provided for her, she had a right to take with her such things as she could carry away in her trunks and boxes. Money could be had at the bank, she said; and, after all, what were fifty pounds more or less on such an occasion as this? And then she went into a calculation to prove that her mother and sister would be made so much richer by her absence, and that she was doing so much for them by her marriage, that nothing could be more mean in them than that they should hesitate to supply her with such things as she desired to make her entrance into Mr. Gibson's house respectable. But Mrs. French was obdurate, and Mr. Gibson was desired to speak to her. Mr. Gibson, in fear and trembling, told her that she ought to repress her spirit of extravagance, and Camilla at once foresaw that he

would avail himself of this plea against her should he find it possible at any time to avail himself of any plea. She became ferocious, and, turning upon him, told him to mind his own business. Was it not all for him that she was doing it? "She was not," she said, "disposed to submit to any control in such matters from him till he had assumed his legal right to it by standing with her before the altar." It came, however, to be known all over Exeter that Miss Camilla's expenditure had been checked, and that, in spite of the joys naturally incidental to a wedding, things were not going well with the ladies at Heavtree.

At last the blow came. Camilla was aware that on a certain morning her mother had been to Mr. Gibson's house, and had held a long conference with him. She could learn nothing of what took place there, for at that moment she had taken upon herself to place herself on non-speaking terms with her mother in consequence of those disgraceful orders which had been given to the tradesmen. But Bella had not been at Mr. Gibson's house at the time, and Camilla, though she presumed that her own conduct had been discussed in a manner very injurious to herself, did not believe that any step was being then arranged which would be positively antagonistic to her own views. The day fixed was now so very near, that there could, she felt, be no escape for the victim. But she was wrong.

Mr. Gibson had been found by Mrs. French in a very excited state on that occasion. He had wept, and pulled his hair, and torn open his waistcoat, had spoken of himself as a wretch,—pleading, however, at the same time, that he was more sinned against than

sinning, had paced about the room with his hands dashing against his brows, and at last had flung himself prostrate on the ground. The meaning of it all was, that he had tried very hard, and had found at last that "he couldn't do it." "I am ready to submit," said he, "to any verdict that you may pronounce against me, but I should deceive you and deceive her if I didn't say at once that I can't do it." He went on to explain that since he had unfortunately entered into his present engagement with Camilla,—of whose position he spoke in quite a touching manner,—and since he had found what was the condition of his own heart and feelings he had consulted a friend,—who, if any merely human being was capable of advising, might be implicitly trusted for advice in such a matter,—and that this friend had told him that he was bound to give up the marriage let the consequences to himself or to others be what they might. "Although the skies should fall on me, I cannot stand at the hymeneal altar with a lie in my mouth," said Mr. Gibson immediately upon his rising from his prostrate condition on the floor. In such a position as this a mother's fury would surely be very great! But Mrs. French was hardly furious. She cried, and begged him to think better of it, and assured him that Camilla, when she should be calmed down by matrimony, would not be so bad as she seemed;—but she was not furious. "The truth is, Mr. Gibson," she said through her tears, "that, after all, you like Bella best." Mr. Gibson owned that he did like Bella best, and although no bargain was made between them then and there,—and such making of a bargain then and there would hardly have been practicable,—it was understood that Mrs.

French would not proceed to extremities if Mr. Gibson would still make himself forthcoming as a husband for the advantage of one of the daughters of the family.

So far Mr. Gibson had progressed towards a partial liberation from his thralldom with a considerable amount of courage; but he was well aware that the great act of daring still remained to be done. He had suggested to Mrs. French that she should settle the matter with Camilla,—but this Mrs. French had altogether declined to do. It must, she said, come from himself. If she were to do it, she must sympathise with her child; and such sympathy would be obstructive of the future arrangements which were still to be made. "She always knew that I liked Bella best," said Mr. Gibson,—still sobbing, still tearing his hair, still pacing the room with his waistcoat torn open. "I would not advise you to tell her that," said Mrs. French. Then Mrs. French went home, and early on the following morning it was thought good by Arabella that she also should pay a visit at Ottery St. Mary's. "Good-bye, Cammy," said Arabella as she went. "Bella," said Camilla, "I wonder whether you are a serpent. I do not think you can be so base a serpent as that." "I declare, Cammy, you do say such odd things that no one can understand what you mean." And so she went.

On that morning Mr. Gibson was walking at an early hour along the road from Exeter to Cowley, contemplating his position and striving to arrange his plans. What was he to do, and how was he to do it? He was prepared to throw up his living, to abandon the cathedral, to leave the diocese,—to make any sacrifice rather than take Camilla to his bosom. Within the

last six weeks he had learned to regard her with almost a holy horror. He could not understand by what miracle of self-neglect he had fallen into so perilous an abyss. He had long known Camilla's temper. But in those days in which he had been beaten like a shuttlecock between the Stanburys and the Frenches, he had lost his head and had done,—he knew not what. "Those whom the God chooses to destroy, he first maddens," said Mr. Gibson to himself of himself, throwing himself back upon early erudition and pagan philosophy. Then he looked across to the river Exe, and thought that there was hardly water enough there to cover the multiplicity of his sorrows.

But something must be done. He had proceeded so far in forming a resolution, as he reached St. David's Church on his return homewards. His sagacious friend had told him that as soon as he had altered his mind, he was bound to let the lady know of it without delay. "You must remember," said the sagacious friend, "that you will owe her much,—very much." Mr. Gibson was perplexed in his mind when he reflected how much he might possibly be made to owe her if she should decide on appealing to a jury of her countrymen for justice. But anything would be better than his home at St. Peter's-cum-Pumpkin with Camilla sitting opposite to him as his wife. Were there not distant lands in which a clergyman, unfortunate but still energetic, might find work to do? Was there not all America?—and were there not Australia, New Zealand, Natal, all open to him? Would not a missionary career among the Chinese be better for him than St. Peter's-cum-Pumpkin with Camilla French for his wife? By the time he had reached home his mind was made

up. He would write a letter to Camilla at once; and he would marry Arabella at once,—on any day that might be fixed,—on condition that Camilla would submit to her defeat without legal redress. If legal redress should be demanded, he would put in evidence the fact that her own mother had been compelled to caution the tradesmen of the city in regard to her extravagance.

He did write his letter,—in an agony of spirit. "I sit down, Camilla, with a sad heart and a reluctant hand," he said, "to communicate to you a fatal truth. But truth should be made to prevail, and there is nothing in man so cowardly, so detrimental, and so unmanly as its concealment. I have looked into myself, and have enquired of myself, and have assured myself, that were I to become your husband, I should not make you happy. It would be of no use for me now to dilate on the reasons which have convinced me;—but I am convinced, and I consider it my duty to inform you so at once. I have been closeted with your mother, and have made her understand that it is so.

"I have not a word to say in my own justification but this,—that I am sure I am acting honestly in telling you the truth. I would not wish to say a word animadverting on yourself. If there must be blame in this matter, I am willing to take it all on my own shoulders. But things have been done of late, and words have been spoken, and habits have displayed themselves, which would not, I am sure, conduce to our mutual comfort in this world, or to our assistance to each other in our struggles to reach the happiness of the world to come.

"I think that you will agree with me, Camilla, that when a man or a woman has fallen into such a mistake as that which I have now made, it is best that it should be acknowledged. I know well that such a change of arrangements as that which I now propose will be regarded most unfavourably. But will not anything be better than the binding of a matrimonial knot which cannot be again unloosed, and which we should both regret?"

"I do not know that I need add anything further. What can I add further? Only this;—that I am inflexible. Having resolved to take this step,—and to bear the evil things that may be said of me,—for your happiness and for my own tranquillity,—I shall not now relinquish my resolution. I do not ask you to forgive me. I doubt much whether I shall ever be quite able to forgive myself. The mistake which I have made is one which should not have been committed. I do not ask you to forgive me; but I do ask you to pray that I may be forgiven.

"Yours, with feelings of the truest friendship,
"THOMAS GIBSON."

The letter had been very difficult, but he was rather proud of it than otherwise when it was completed. He had felt that he was writing a letter which not improbably might become public property. It was necessary that he should be firm, that he should accuse himself a little in order that he might excuse himself much, and that he should hint at causes which might justify the rupture, though he should so veil them as not to appear to defend his own delinquency by ungenerous counter accusation. When he had completed

the letter, he thought that he had done all this rather well, and he sent the despatch off to Heavitree by the clerk of St. Peter's Church, with something of that feeling of expressible relief which attends the final conquest over some fatal and all but insuperable misfortune. He thought that he was sure now that he would not have to marry Camilla on the 29th of the month,—and there would probably be a period of some hours before he would be called upon to hear or read Camilla's reply.

Camilla was alone when she received the letter, but she rushed at once to her mother. "There," said she; "there—I knew that it was coming!" Mrs. French took the paper into her hands, and gasped, and gazed at her daughter without speaking. "You knew of it, mother."

"Yesterday,—when he told me, I knew of it."

"And Bella knows it."

"Not a word of it."

"She does. I am sure she does. But it is all nothing. I will not accept it. He cannot treat me so. I will drag him there;—but he shall come."

"You can't make him, my dear."

"I will make him. And you would help me, mamma, if you had any spirit. What,—a fortnight before the time, when the things are all bought! Look at the presents that have been sent! Mamma, he doesn't know me. And he never would have done it, if it had not been for Bella,—never. She had better take care, or there shall be such a tragedy that nobody ever heard the like. If she thinks that she is going to be that man's wife,—she is—mistaken." Then there was a pause for a moment. "Mamma," she said,

"I shall go to him at once. I do not care in the least what anybody may say. I shall—go to him,—at once." Mrs. French felt that at this moment it was best that she should be silent.

CHAPTER X.

The Rowleys go over the Alps.

By the thirteenth of May the Rowley family had established itself in Florence, purposing to remain either there or at the baths of Lucca till the end of June, at which time it was thought that Sir Marmaduke should begin to make preparations for his journey back to the Islands. Their future prospects were not altogether settled. It was not decided whether Lady Rowley should at once return with him, whether Mrs. Trevelyan should return with him,—nor was it settled among them what should be the fate of Nora Rowley. Nora Rowley was quite resolved herself that she would not go back to the Islands, and had said as much to her mother. Lady Rowley had not repeated this to Sir Marmaduke, and was herself in doubt as to what might best be done. Girls are understood by their mothers better than they are by their fathers. Lady Rowley was beginning to be aware that Nora's obstinacy was too strong to be overcome by mere words, and that other steps must be taken if she were to be weaned from her pernicious passion for Hugh Stanbury. Mr. Glascock was still in Florence. Might she not be cured by further overtures from Mr. Glascock? The chance of securing such a son-in-law was so important, so valuable, that no trouble was too great to be incurred, even though the probability of success might not be great.

It must not, however, be supposed that Lady Rowley carried off all the family to Italy, including Sir Marmaduke, simply in chase of Mr. Glascock. Anxious as she was on the subject, she was too proud, and also too well-conditioned, to have suggested to herself such a journey with such an object. Trevelyan had escaped from Willesden with the child, and they had heard,—again through Stanbury,—that he had returned to Italy. They had all agreed that it would be well that they should leave London for awhile, and see something of the continent; and when it was told to them that little Louis was probably in Florence, that alone was reason enough for them to go thither. They would go to the city till the heat was too great and the mosquitoes too powerful, and then they would visit the baths of Lucca for a month. This was their plan of action, and the cause for their plan; but Lady Rowley found herself able to weave into it another little plan of her own of which she said nothing to anybody. She was not running after Mr. Glascock; but if Mr. Glascock should choose to run after them,—or her, who could say that any harm had been done?

Nora had answered that proposition of her lover's to walk out of the house in Manchester Street, and get married at the next church, in a most discreet manner. She had declared that she would be true and firm, but that she did not wish to draw upon herself the displeasure of her father and mother. She did not, she said, look upon a clandestine marriage as a happy resource. But,—this she added at the end of a long and very sensible letter,—she intended to abide by her engagement, and she did not intend to go back to the Mandarins. She did not say what alternative she would

choose in the event of her being unable to obtain her father's consent before his return. She did not suggest what was to become of her when Sir Marmaduke's leave of absence should be expired. But her statement that she would not go back to the islands was certainly made with more substantial vigour, though, perhaps, with less of reasoning, than any other of the propositions made in her letter. Then, in her postscript, she told him that they were all going to Italy. "Papa and mamma think that we ought to follow poor Mr. Trevelyan. The lawyer says that nothing can be done while he is away with the boy. We are therefore all going to start to Florence. The journey is delightful. I will not say whose presence will be wanting to make it perfect."

Before they started there came a letter to Nora from Dorothy, which shall be given entire, because it will tell the reader more of Dorothy's happiness than would be learned from any other mode of narrative.

"The Close, Thursday.

"DEAREST NORA,

"I have just had a letter from Hugh, and that makes me feel that I should like to write to you. Dear Hugh has told me all about it, and I do so hope that things may come right and that we may be sisters. He is so good that I do not wonder that you should love him. He has been the best son and the best brother in the world, and everybody speaks well of him,—except my dear aunt, who is prejudiced because she does not like newspapers. I need not praise him to you, for I dare say you think quite as well of him as I do. I cannot tell you all the beautiful things he

says about you, but I dare say he has told them to you himself.

"I seem to know you so well because Priscilla has talked about you so often. She says that she knew that you and my brother were fond of each other because you growled at each other when you were together at the Clock House, and never had any civil words to say before people. I don't know whether growling is a sign of love, but Hugh does growl sometimes when he is most affectionate. He growls at me, and I understand him, and I like to be growled at. I wonder whether you like him to growl at you.

"And now I must tell you something about myself,—because if you are to be my sister you ought to know it all. I also am going to be married to a man whom I love,—oh, so dearly! His name is Mr. Brooke Burgess, and he is a great friend of my aunt's. At first she did not like our being engaged, because of some family reason;—but she has got over that, and nothing can be kinder and nicer than she is. We are to be married here, some day in June,—the 11th I think it will be. How I do wish you could have been here to be my bridesmaid. It would have been so nice to have had Hugh's sweetheart with me. He is a friend of Hugh's, and no doubt you will hear all about him. The worst of it is that we must live in London, because my husband as will be,—you see I call him mine already,—is in an office there. And so poor Aunt Stanbury will be left all alone. It will be very sad, and she is so wedded to Exeter that I fear we shall not get her up to London.

"I would describe Mr. Burgess to you, only I do not suppose you would care to hear about him. He is

not so tall as Hugh, but he is a great deal better looking. With you two the good looks are to be with the wife; but, with us, with the husband. Perhaps you think Hugh is handsome. We used to declare that he was the ugliest boy in the country. I don't suppose it makes very much difference. Brooke is handsome, but I don't think I should like him the less if he were ever so ugly.

"Do you remember hearing about the Miss Frenches when you were in Devonshire? There has come up such a terrible affair about them. A Mr. Gibson, a clergyman, was going to marry the younger; but has changed his mind and wants to take the elder. I think he was in love with her first." Dorothy did not say a word about the little intermediate stage of attachment to herself. "All this is making a great noise in the city, and some people think he should be punished severely. It seems to me that a gentleman ought not to make such a mistake; but if he does, he ought to own it. I hope they will let him marry the elder one. Aunt Stanbury says it all comes from their wearing chignons. I wish you knew Aunt Stanbury, because she is so good. Perhaps you wear a chignon. I think Priscilla said that you did. It must not be large, if you come to see Aunt Stanbury.

"Pray write to me,—and believe that I hope to be your most affectionate sister,

"DOROTHY STANBURY.

"P.S.—I am so happy, and I do so hope that you will be the same."

This was received only a day before the departure

of the Rowleys for Italy, and was answered by a short note promising that Nora would write to her correspondent from Florence.

There could be no doubt that Trevelyan had started with his boy, fearing the result of the medical or legal interference with his affairs which was about to be made at Sir Marmaduke's instance. He had written a few words to his wife, neither commencing nor ending his note after any usual fashion, telling her that he thought it expedient to travel, that he had secured the services of a nurse for the little boy, and that during his absence a certain income would, as heretofore, be paid to her. He said nothing as to his probable return, or as to her future life; nor was there anything to indicate whither he was going. Stanbury, however, had learned from the faithless and frightened Bozzle that Trevelyan's letters were to be sent after him to Florence. Mr. Bozzle, in giving this information, had acknowledged that his employer was "becoming no longer quite himself under his troubles," and had expressed his opinion that he ought to be "looked after." Bozzle had made his money; and now, with a grain of humanity mixed with many grains of faithlessness, reconciled it to himself to tell his master's secrets to his master's enemies. What would a counsel be able to say about his conduct in a court of law? That was the question which Bozzle was always asking himself as to his own business. That he should be abused by a barrister to a jury, and exposed as a spy and a fiend, was, he thought, a matter of course. To be so abused was a part of his profession. But it was expedient for him in all cases to secure some loop-hole of apparent duty by which he might in part escape from such cen-

sures. He was untrue to his employer now, because he thought that his employer ought to be "looked after." He did, no doubt, take a five-pound note from Hugh Stanbury; but then it was necessary that he should live. He must be paid for his time. In this way Trevelyan started for Florence, and within a week afterwards the Rowleys were upon his track.

Nothing had been said by Sir Marmaduke to Nora as to her lover since that stormy interview in which both father and daughter had expressed their opinions very strongly, and very little had been said by Lady Rowley. Lady Rowley had spoken more than once of Nora's return to the Mandarins, and had once alluded to it as a certainty. "But I do not know that I shall go back," Nora had said. "My dear," the mother had replied, "unless you are married, I suppose your home must be with your parents." Nora, having made her protest, did not think it necessary to persevere, and so the matter was dropped. It was known, however, that they must all come back to London before they started for their seat of government, and therefore the subject did not at present assume its difficult aspect. There was a tacit understanding among them that everything should be done to make the journey pleasant to the young mother who was in search of her son; and, in addition to this, Lady Rowley had her own little understanding, which was very tacit indeed, that in Mr. Glascock might be found an escape from one of their great family difficulties.

"You had better take this, papa," Mrs. Trevelyan had said, when she received from the office of Mr. Bideawhile a cheque payable to her order for the money sent to her by her husband's direction.

"I do not want the man's money," said Sir Marmaduke.

"But you are going to this place for my sake, papa;—and it is right that he should bear the expense for his own wife. And, papa, you must remember always that though his mind is distracted on this horrible business, he is not a bad man. No one is more liberal or more just about money." Sir Marmaduke's feelings on the matter were very much the same as those which had troubled Mr. Outhouse, and he, personally, refused to touch the money; but his daughter paid her own share of the expenses of the journey.

They travelled at their ease, stopping at Paris, and at Geneva, and at Milan. Lady Rowley thought that she was taken very fast, because she was allowed to sleep only two nights at each of these places, and Sir Rowley himself thought that he had achieved something of a Hannibalian enterprise in taking five ladies and two maids over the Simplon and down into the plains of Lombardy, with nobody to protect him but a single courier. He had been a little nervous about it, being unaccustomed to European travelling, and had not at first realised the fact that the journey is to be made with less trouble than one from the Marble Arch to Mile End. "My dears," he said to his younger daughters, as they were rattling round the steep downward twists and turns of the great road, "you must sit quite still on these descents, or you do not know where you may go. The least thing would upset us." But Lucy and Sophy soon knew better, and became so intimate with the mountain, under the friendly guidance of their courier, that before the plains were reached, they were in and out, and here and there, and up and

down, as though they had been bred among the valleys of the pass. There would come a ringing laugh from some rock above their head, and Lady Rowley looking up would see their dresses fluttering on a pinnacle which appeared to her to be fit only for a bird; and there would be the courier behind them, with two parasols, and a shawl, and a cloak, and an eye-glass, and a fine pair of grizzled whiskers. They made an Alpine club of their own, refusing to admit their father because he would not climb up a rock, and Nora thought of the letters about it which she would write to her lover,—only that she had determined that she would not write to him at all without telling her mother,—and Mrs. Trevelyan would for moments almost forget that she had been robbed of her child.

From Milan they went on to Florence, and though they were by that time quite at home in Italy, and had become critical judges of Italian inns and Italian railways, they did not find that journey to be quite so pleasant. There is a romance to us still in the name of Italy which a near view of many details in the country fails to realise. Shall we say that a journey through Lombardy is about as interesting as one through the flats of Cambridgeshire and the fens of Norfolk? And the station of Bologna is not an interesting spot in which to spend an hour or two, although it may be conceded that provisions may be had there much better than any that can be procured at our own railway stations. From thence they went, still by rail, over the Apennines, and unfortunately slept during the whole time. The courier had assured them that if they would only look out they would see the castles of which they had read in novels; but the

day had been very hot, and Sir Marmaduke had been cross, and Lady Rowley had been weary, and so not a castle was seen. "Pistoia, me lady, this," said the courier opening the door;—"to stop half an hour." "Oh, why was it not Florence?" Another hour and a half! So they all went to sleep again, and were very tired when they reached the beautiful city.

During the next day they rested at their inn, and sauntered through the Duomo, and broke their necks looking up at the inimitable glories of the campanile. Such a one as Sir Marmaduke had of course not come to Florence without introductions. The Foreign Office is always very civil to its next-door neighbour of the colonies,—civil and cordial, though perhaps a little patronising. A minister is a bigger man than a governor; and the smallest of the diplomatic fry are greater swells than even secretaries in quite important dependencies. The attaché, though he be unpaid, dwells in a capital, and flirts with a countess. The governor's right-hand man is confined to an island, and dances with a planter's daughter. The distinction is quite understood, but is not incompatible with much excellent good feeling on the part of the superior department. Sir Marmaduke had come to Florence fairly provided with passports to Florentine society, and had been mentioned in more than one letter as the distinguished Governor of the Mandarins, who had been called home from his seat of government on a special mission of great importance. On the second day he went out to call at the embassy and to leave his cards. "Have you been able to learn whether he is here?" asked Lady Rowley of her husband in a whisper, as soon as they were alone.

"Who;—Trevelyan?"

"I did not suppose you could learn about him, because he would be hiding himself. But is Mr. Glascock here?"

"I forgot to ask," said Sir Marmaduke.

Lady Rowley did not reproach him. It is impossible that any father should altogether share a mother's anxiety in regard to the marriage of their daughters. But what a thing it would be! Lady Rowley thought that she could compound for all misfortunes in other respects, if she could have a daughter married to the future Lord Peterborough. She had been told in England that he was faultless,—not very clever, not very active, not likely to be very famous; but, as a husband, simply faultless. He was very rich, very good-natured, easily managed, more likely to be proud of his wife than of himself, addicted to no jealousies, afflicted by no vices, so respectable in every way that he was sure to become great as an English nobleman by the very weight of his virtues. And it had been represented also to Lady Rowley that this paragon among men had been passionately attached to her daughter! Perhaps she magnified a little the romance of the story; but it seemed to her that this greatly endowed lover had rushed away from his country in despair, because her daughter Nora would not smile upon him. Now they were, as she hoped, in the same city with him. But it was indispensable to her success that she should not seem to be running after him. To Nora, not a word had been said of the prospect of meeting Mr. Glascock at Florence. Hardly more than a word had been said to her sister Emily, and that under injunction of strictest secrecy. It must be made to ap-

pear to all the world that other motives had brought them to Florence,—as, indeed, other motives had brought them. Not for worlds would Lady Rowley have run after a man for her daughter; but still, still,—still, seeing that the man was himself so unutterably in love with her girl, seeing that he was so fully justified by his position to be in love with any girl, seeing that such a maximum of happiness would be the result of such a marriage, she did feel that, even for his sake, she must be doing a good thing to bring them together! Something, though not much of all this, she had been obliged to explain to Sir Marmaduke;—and yet he had not taken the trouble to inquire whether Mr. Glascock was in Florence!

On the third day after their arrival, the wife of the British minister came to call upon Lady Rowley, and the wife of the British minister was good-natured, easy-mannered, and very much given to conversation. She preferred talking to listening, and in the course of a quarter of an hour had told Lady Rowley a good deal about Florence; but she had not mentioned Mr. Glascock's name. It would have been so pleasant if the requisite information could have been obtained without the asking of any direct question on the subject! But Lady Rowley, who from many years' practice of similar, though perhaps less distinguished, courtesies on her part, knew well the first symptom of the coming end of her guest's visit, found that the minister's wife was about to take her departure without an allusion to Mr. Glascock. And yet the names had been mentioned of so many English residents in Florence, who neither in wealth, rank, or virtue, were competent to hold a candle to that phoenix! She was forced, therefore, to

pluck up courage, and to ask the question. "Have you had a Mr. Glascock here this spring?" said Lady Rowley.

"What;—Lord Peterborough's son? Oh, dear, yes. Such a singular being!"

Lady Rowley thought that she could perceive that her phoenix had not made himself agreeable at the embassy. It might perhaps be that he had buried himself away from society because of his love. "And is here now?" asked Lady Rowley.

"I cannot say at all. He is sometimes here and sometimes with his father at Naples. But when here, he lives chiefly with the Americans. They say he is going to marry an American girl,—their minister's niece. There are three of them, I think, and he is to take the eldest." Lady Rowley asked no more questions, and let her august visitor go, almost without another word.

CHAPTER XI.

"We shall be so poor."

MR. GLASCOCK at that moment was not only in Florence, but was occupying rooms in the very hotel in which the Rowleys were staying. Lady Rowley, when she heard that he was engaged to marry an American lady, became suddenly very sick at heart,—sick with a sickness that almost went beyond her heart. She felt ill, and was glad to be alone. The rumour might be untrue. Such rumours generally are untrue. But then, as Lady Rowley knew very well, they generally have some foundation in truth. Mr. Glascock, if he were not actually engaged to the American

He knew he was Right. III.

girl, had probably been flirting with her;—and, if so, where was that picture which Lady Rowley had been painting for herself of a love-lorn swain to be brought back to the pleasures and occupations of the world only by the girl of whom he was enamoured? But still she would not quite give up the project. Mr. Glascock, if he was in Italy, would no doubt see by the newspapers that Sir Marmaduke and his family were in Florence,—and would probably come to them. Then, if Nora would only behave herself, the American girl might still be conquered.

During two or three days after this nothing was seen or heard of Mr. Glascock. Had Lady Rowley thought of mentioning the name to the waiter at the hotel, she would have learned that he was living in the next passage; but it did not occur to her to seek information in that fashion. Nor did she ask direct questions in other quarters about Mr. Glascock himself. She did, however, make inquiry about Americans living in Florence,—especially about the American Minister,—and, before a week had passed overhead, had been introduced to the Spaldings. Mrs. Spalding was very civil, and invited Lady Rowley and all the girls and Sir Marmaduke to come to her on her "Fridays." She received her friends every Friday, and would continue to do so till the middle of June. She had nieces who would, she said, be so happy to make the acquaintance of the Miss Rowleys.

By this time the picture galleries, the churches, and the palaces in Florence had nearly all been visited. Poor Lady Rowley had dragged herself wearily from sight to sight, hoping always to meet with Mr. Glascock, ignorant of the fact that residents in a town do

not pass their mornings habitually in looking after pictures. During this time inquiries were being made, through the police, respecting Trevelyan; and Sir Marmaduke had obtained information that an English gentleman, with a little boy, had gone on to Siena, and had located himself there. There seemed to be but little doubt that this was Trevelyan,—though nothing had been learned with certainty as to the gentleman's name. It had been decided that Sir Marmaduke, with his courier and Mrs. Trevelyan, should go on to Siena, and endeavour to come upon the fugitive, and they had taken their departure on a certain morning. On that same day Lady Rowley was walking with Nora and one of the other girls through the hall of the hotel, when they were met in full face—by Mr. Glascock! Lady Rowley and Lucy were in front, and they, of course, did not know the man. Nora had seen him at once, and in her confusion hardly knew how to bear herself. Mr. Glascock was passing by her without recognising her,—had passed her mother and sister, and had so far gone on, that Nora had determined to make no sign, when he chanced to look up and see who it was that was so close to him. "Miss Rowley," he said, "who thought of meeting you in Florence!" Lady Rowley, of course, turned round, and there was an introduction. Poor Nora, though she knew nothing of her mother's schemes, was confused and ill at ease. Mr. Glascock was very civil, but at the same time rather cold. Lady Rowley was all smiles and courtesy. She had, she said, heard his name from her daughters, and was very happy to make his acquaintance. Lucy looked on somewhat astonished to find that the lover whom her sister had been blamed

for rejecting, and who was spoken of with so many encomiums, was so old a man. Mr. Glascock asked after Mrs. Trevelyan; and Lady Rowley, in a low, melancholy whisper, told him that they were now all in Florence, in the hope of meeting Mr. Trevelyan. "You have heard the sad story, I know, Mr. Glascock,—and therefore I do not mind telling you." Mr. Glascock acknowledged that he did know the story, and informed her that he had seen Mr. Trevelyan in Florence within the last ten days. This was so interesting, that, at Lady Rowley's request, he went with them up to their rooms, and in this way the acquaintance was made. It turned out that Mr. Glascock had spoken to Mr. Trevelyan, and that Trevelyan had told him that he meant for the present to take up his residence in some small Italian town. "And how was he looking, Mr. Glascock?"

"Very ill, Lady Rowley;—very ill, indeed."

"Do not tell her so, Mr. Glascock. She has gone now with her father to Siena. We think that he is there, with the boy,—or, at least, that he may be heard of there. And you;—you are living here?" Mr. Glascock said that he was living between Naples and Florence,—going occasionally to Naples, a place that he hated, to see his father, and coming back at intervals to the capital. Nora sat by, and hardly spoke a word. She was nicely dressed, with an exquisite little bonnet, which had been bought as they came through Paris; and Lady Rowley, with natural pride, felt that if he was ever in love with her child, that love must come back upon him now. American girls, she had been told, were hard, and dry, and sharp, and angular. She had seen some at the Mandarins, with whom she

thought it must be impossible that any Englishman should be in love. There never, surely, had been an American girl like her Nora. "Are you fond of pictures, Mr. Glascock?" she asked. Mr. Glascock was not very fond of pictures, and thought that he was rather tired of them. What was he fond of? Of sitting at home and doing nothing. That was his reply, at least; and a very unsatisfactory reply it was, as Lady Rowley could hardly propose that they should come and sit and do nothing with him. Could he have been lured into churches or galleries, Nora might have been once more thrown into his company. Then Lady Rowley took courage, and asked him whether he knew the Spaldings. They were going to Mrs. Spalding's that very evening,—she and her daughters. Mr. Glascock replied that he did know the Spaldings, and that he also should be at their house. Lady Rowley thought that she discovered something like a blush about his cheekbones and brow, as he made his answer. Then he left them, giving his hand to Nora as he went;—but there was nothing in his manner to justify the slightest hope.

"I don't think he is nice at all," said Lucy.

"Don't be so foolish, Lucy," said Lady Rowley angrily.

"I think he is very nice," said Nora. "He was only talking nonsense when he said that he liked to sit still and do nothing. He is not at all an idle man;—at least I am told so."

"But he is as old as Methuselah," said Lucy.

"He is between thirty and forty," said Lady Rowley. "Of course we know that from the peerage." Lady Rowley, however, was wrong. Had she con-

sulted the peerage, she would have seen that Mr. Glascock was over forty.

Nora, as soon as she was alone and could think about it all, felt quite sure that Mr. Glascock would never make her another offer. This ought not to have caused her any sorrow, as she was very well aware that she would not accept him, should he do so. Yet, perhaps, there was a moment of some feeling akin to disappointment. Of course she would not have accepted him. How could she? Her faith was so plighted to Hugh Stanbury that she would be a by-word among women for ever, were she to be so false. And, as she told herself, she had not the slightest feeling of affection for Mr. Glascock. It was quite out of the question, and a matter simply for speculation. Nevertheless it would have been a very grand thing to be Lady Peterborough, and she almost regretted that she had a heart in her bosom.

She had become fully aware during that interview that her mother still entertained hopes, and almost suspected that Lady Rowley had known something of Mr. Glascock's residence in Florence. She had seen that her mother had met Mr. Glascock almost as though some such meeting had been expected, and had spoken to him almost as though she had expected to have to speak to him. Would it not be better that she should at once make her mother understand that all this could be of no avail? If she were to declare plainly that nothing could bring about such a marriage, would not her mother desist? She almost made up her mind to do so; but as her mother said nothing to her before they started for Mr. Spalding's house, neither did she say anything to her mother. She did not wish to

have angry words if they could be avoided, and she felt that there might be anger and unpleasant words were she to insist upon her devotion to Hugh Stanbury while this rich prize was in sight. If her mother should speak to her, then, indeed, she would declare her own settled purpose; but she would do nothing to accelerate the evil hour.

There were but few people in Mrs. Spalding's drawing-room when they were announced, and Mr. Glascock was not among them. Miss Wallachia Petrie was there, and in the confusion of the introduction was presumed by Lady Rowley to be one of the nieces introduced. She had been distinctly told that Mr. Glascock was to marry the eldest, and this lady was certainly older than the other two. In this way Lady Rowley decided that Miss Wallachia Petrie was her daughter's hated rival, and she certainly was much surprised at the gentleman's taste. But there is nothing,—nothing in the way of an absurd matrimonial engagement,—into which a man will not allow himself to be entrapped by pique. Nora would have a great deal to answer for, Lady Rowley thought, if the unfortunate man should be driven by her cruelty to marry such a woman as this one now before her.

It happened that Lady Rowley soon found herself seated by Miss Petrie, and she at once commenced her questionings. She intended to be very discreet, but the subject was too near her heart to allow her to be altogether silent. "I believe you know Mr. Glascock?" she said.

"Yes," said Wallachia, "I do know him." Now the peculiar nasal twang which our cousins over the water have learned to use, and which has grown out of a

certain national instinct which coerces them to express themselves with self-assertion;—let the reader go into his closet and talk through his nose for awhile with steady attention to the effect which his own voice will have, and he will find that this theory is correct;—this intonation, which is so peculiar among intelligent Americans, had been adopted *con amore*, and, as it were, taken to her bosom by Miss Petrie. Her ears had taught themselves to feel that there could be no vitality in speech without it, and that all utterance unsustained by such tone was effeminate, vapid, useless, unpersuasive, unmusical,—and English. It was a complaint frequently made by her against her friends Caroline and Olivia that they debased their voices, and taught themselves the puling British mode of speech. “I do know the gentleman,” said Wallachia;—and Lady Rowley shuddered. Could it be that such a woman as this was to reign over Monkham, and become the future Lady Peterborough?

“He told me that he is acquainted with the family,” said Lady Rowley. “He is staying at our hotel, and my daughter knew him very well when he was living in London.”

“I dare say. I believe that in London the titled aristocrats do hang pretty much together.” It had never occurred to poor Lady Rowley, since the day in which her husband had been made a knight, at the advice of the Colonial Minister, in order that the inhabitants of some island might be gratified by the opportunity of using the title, that she and her children had thereby become aristocrats. Were her daughter Nora to marry Mr. Glascock, Nora would become an

aristocrat,—or would, rather, be ennobled,—all which Lady Rowley understood perfectly.

"I don't know that London society is very exclusive in that respect," said Lady Rowley.

"I guess you are pretty particular," said Miss Petrie, "and it seems to me you don't have much regard to intellect or erudition,—but fix things up straight according to birth and money."

"I hope we are not quite so bad as that," said Lady Rowley. "I do not know London well myself, as I have passed my life in very distant places."

"The distant places are, in my estimation, the best. The further the mind is removed from the contamination incidental to the centres of long-established luxury, the more chance it has of developing itself according to the intention of the Creator, when he bestowed his gifts of intellect upon us." Lady Rowley, when she heard this eloquence, could hardly believe that such a man as Mr. Glascock should really be intent upon marrying such a lady as this who was sitting next to her.

In the meantime, Nora and the real rival were together, and they also were talking of Mr. Glascock. Caroline Spalding had said that Mr. Glascock had spoken to her of Nora Rowley, and Nora acknowledged that there had been some acquaintance between them in London. "Almost more than that, I should have thought," said Miss Spalding, "if one might judge by his manner of speaking of you."

"He is a little given to be enthusiastic," said Nora, laughing.

"The least so of all mankind, I should have said. You must know he is very intimate in this house. It

begun in this way;—Olivia and I were travelling together, and there was—a difficulty, as we say in our country when three or four gentlemen shoot each other. Then there came up Mr. Glascock and another gentleman. By-the-bye, the other gentleman was your brother-in-law."

"Poor Mr. Trevelyan!"

"He is very ill;—is he not?"

"We think so. My sister is with us, you know. That is to say, she is at Siena to-day."

"I have heard about him, and it is so sad. Mr. Glascock knows him. As I said, they were travelling together, when Mr. Glascock came to our assistance. Since that, we have seen him very frequently. I don't think he is enthusiastic—except when he talks of you."

"I ought to be very proud," said Nora.

"I think you ought,—as Mr. Glascock is a man whose good opinion is certainly worth having. Here he is. Mr. Glascock, I hope your ears are tingling. They ought to do so, because we are saying all manner of fine things about you."

"I could not be well spoken of by two on whose good word I should set a higher value," said he.

"And whose do you value the most?" said Caroline.

"I must first know whose eulogium will run the highest."

Then Nora answered him. "Mr. Glascock, other people may praise you louder than I can do, but no one will ever do so with more sincerity." There was a pretty earnestness about her as she spoke, which Lady Rowley ought to have heard. Mr. Glascock bowed, and Miss Spalding smiled, and Nora blushed.

"If you are not overwhelmed now," said Miss Spalding, "you must be so used to flattery, that it has no longer any effect upon you. You must be like a drunkard, to whom wine is as water, and who thinks that brandy is not strong enough."

"I think I had better go away," said Mr. Glascock, "for fear the brandy should be watered by degrees." And so he left them.

Nora had become quite aware, without much process of thinking about it, that her former lover and this American young lady were very intimate with each other. The tone of the conversation had shewn that it was so;—and, then, how had it come to pass that Mr. Glascock had spoken to this American girl about her,—Nora Rowley? It was evident that he had spoken of her with warmth, and had done so in a manner to impress his hearer. For a minute or two they sat together in silence after Mr. Glascock had left them, but neither of them stirred. Then Caroline Spalding turned suddenly upon Nora, and took her by the hand. "I must tell you something," said she, "only it must be a secret for awhile."

"I will not repeat it."

"Thank you, dear. I am engaged to him,—as his wife. He asked me this very afternoon, and nobody knows it but my aunt. When I had accepted him, he told me all the story about you. He had very often spoken of you before, and I had guessed how it must have been. He wears his heart so open for those whom he loves, that there is nothing concealed. He had seen you just before he came to me. But perhaps I am wrong to tell you that now. He ought to have been thinking of you again at such a time."

"I did not want him to think of me again."

"Of course you did not. Of course I am joking. You might have been his wife if you wished it. He has told me all that. And he especially wants us to be friends. Is there anything to prevent it?"

"On my part? Oh, dear, no;—except that you will be such grand folk, and we shall be so poor."

"We!" said Caroline, laughing. "I am so glad that there is a 'we.'"

CHAPTER XII.

The future Lady Peterborough.

"If you have not sold yourself for British gold, and for British acres, and for British rank, I have nothing to say against it," said Miss Wallachia Petrie that same evening to her friend Caroline Spalding.

"You know that I have not sold myself, as you call it," said Caroline. There had been a long friendship between these two ladies, and the younger one knew that it behoved her to bear a good deal from the elder. Miss Petrie was honest, clever, and in earnest. We in England are not usually favourably disposed to women who take a pride in a certain antagonism to men in general, and who are anxious to shew the world that they can get on very well without male assistance; but there are many such in America who have noble aspirations, good intellects, much energy, and who are by no means unworthy of friendship. The hope in regard to all such women,—the hope entertained not by themselves, but by those who are solicitous for them,—is that they will be cured at last by a husband and half-a-dozen children. In

regard to Wallachia Petrie there was not, perhaps, much ground for such hope. She was so positively wedded to women's rights in general, and to her own rights in particular, that it was improbable that she should ever succumb to any man;—and where would be the man brave enough to make the effort? From circumstances Caroline Spalding had been the beloved of her heart since Caroline Spalding was a very little girl; and she had hoped that Caroline would through life have borne arms along with her in that contest which she was determined to wage against man, and which she always waged with the greatest animosity against men of the British race. She hated rank; she hated riches; she hated monarchy;—and with a true woman's instinct in battle, felt that she had a specially strong point against Englishmen, in that they submitted themselves to dominion from a woman monarch. And now the chosen friend of her youth,—the friend who had copied out all her poetry, who had learned by heart all her sonnets, who had, as she thought, reciprocated all her ideas, was going to be married,—and to be married to an English lord! She had seen that it was coming for some time, and had spoken out very plainly, hoping that she might still save the brand from the burning. Now the evil was done; and Caroline Spalding, when she told her news, knew well that she would have to bear some heavy reproaches.

“How many of us are there who never know whether we sell ourselves or not?” said Wallachia. “The senator who longs for office, and who votes this way instead of that in order that he may get it, thinks that he is voting honestly. The minister who calls himself a teacher of God's word, thinks that it is God's

word that he preaches when he strains his lungs to fill his church. The question is this, Caroline;—would you have loved the same man had he come to you with a woodman's axe in his hand or a clerk's quill behind his ear? I guess not."

"As to the woodman's axe, Wally, it is very well in theory; but—"

"Things good in theory, Caroline, will be good also when practised. You may be sure of that. We dislike theory simply because our intelligences are higher than our wills. But we will let that pass."

"Pray let it pass, Wally. Do not preach me sermons to-night. I am so happy, and you ought to wish me joy."

"If wishing you joy would get you joy, I would wish it you while I lived. I cannot be happy that you should be taken from us whither I shall never see you again."

"But you are to come to us. I have told him so, and it is settled."

"No, dear; I shall not do that. What should I be in the glittering halls of an English baron? Could there be any visiting less fitting, any admixture less appropriate? Could I who have held up my voice in the Music Hall of Lacedæmon, amidst the glories of the West, in the great and free State of Illinois, against the corruption of an English aristocracy,—could I, who have been listened to by two thousand of my countrywomen,—and men,—while I spurned the unmanly, inhuman errors of primogeniture,—could I, think you, hold my tongue beneath the roof of a feudal lord!" Caroline Spalding knew that her friend could not hold

her tongue, and hesitated to answer. There had been that fatal triumph of a lecture on the joint rights of men and women, and it had rendered poor Wallachia Petrie unfit for ordinary society.

"You might come there without talking politics, Wally," said Caroline.

"No, Caroline; no. I will go into the house of no man in which the free expression of my opinion is debarred me. I will not sit even at your table with a muzzled tongue. When you are gone, Caroline, I shall devote myself to what, after all, must be the work of my life, and I shall finish the biographical history of our great hero in verse,—which I hope may at least be not ephemeral. From month to month I shall send you what I do, and you will not refuse me your friendly criticism,—and, perhaps, some slight meed of approbation,—because you are dwelling beneath the shade of a throne. Oh, Caroline, let it not be a upas tree!"

The Miss Petries of the world have this advantage,—an advantage which rarely if ever falls to the lot of a man,—that they are never convinced of error. Men, let them be ever so much devoted to their closets, let them keep their work ever so closely veiled from public scrutiny, still find themselves subjected to criticism, and under the necessity of either defending themselves or of succumbing. If, indeed, a man neither speaks, nor writes,—if he be dumb as regards opinion,—he passes simply as one of the crowd, and is in the way neither of convincing nor of being convinced; but a woman may speak, and almost write, as she likes, without danger of being wounded by sustained conflict. Who would have the courage to begin with such a one

as Miss Petrie, and endeavour to prove to her that she is wrong from the beginning. A little word of half-dissent, a smile, a shrug, and an ambiguous compliment which is misunderstood, are all the forms of argument which can be used against her. Wallachia Petrie, in her heart of hearts conceived that she had fairly discussed her great projects from year to year with indomitable eloquence and unanswerable truth,—and that none of her opponents had had a leg to stand upon. And this she believed because the chivalry of men had given to her sex that protection against which her life was one continued protest.

"Here he is," said Caroline, as Mr. Glascock came up to them. "Try and say a civil word to him, if he speaks about it. Though he is to be a lord, still he is a man and a brother."

"Caroline," said the stern monitress, "you are already learning to laugh at principles which have been dear to you since you left your mother's breast. Alas, how true it is, 'You cannot touch pitch and not be defiled.'"

The further progress of these friendly and feminine amenities was stopped by the presence of the gentleman who had occasioned them. "Miss Petrie," said the hero of the hour, "Caroline was to tell you of my good fortune, and no doubt she has done so."

"I cannot wait to hear the pretty things he has to say," said Caroline, "and I must look after my aunt's guests. There is poor Signor Bernarosci without a soul to say a syllable to him, and I must go and use my ten Italian words."

"You are about to take with you to your old country, Mr. Glascock," said Miss Petrie, "one of the

brightest stars in our young American firmament." There could be no doubt, from the tone of Miss Petrie's voice, that she now regarded this star, however bright, as one of a sort which is subjected to falling.

"I am going to take a very nice young woman," said Mr. Glascock.

"I hate that word woman, sir, uttered with the half-hidden sneer which always accompanies its expression from the mouth of a man."

"Sneer, Miss Petrie!"

"I quite allow that it is involuntary, and not analysed or understood by yourselves. If you speak of a dog, you intend to do so with affection, but there is always contempt mixed with it. The so-called chivalry of man to woman is all begotten in the same spirit. I want no favour, but I claim to be your equal."

"I thought that American ladies were generally somewhat exacting as to those privileges which chivalry gives them."

"It is true, sir, that the only rank we know in our country is in that precedence which man gives to woman. Whether we maintain that, or whether we abandon it, we do not intend to purchase it at the price of an acknowledgment of intellectual inferiority. For myself, I hate chivalry;—what you call chivalry. I can carry my own chair, and I claim the right to carry it whithersoever I may please."

Mr. Glascock remained with her for some time, but made no opportunity for giving that invitation to Monkshams of which Caroline had spoken. As he said afterwards, he found it impossible to expect her to attend to any subject so trivial; and when, afterwards, Caroline told him, with some slight mirth,—the capa-

bility of which on such a subject was coming to her with her new ideas of life,—that, though he was partly saved as a man and a brother, still he was partly the reverse as a feudal lord, he began to reflect that Wallachia Petrie would be a guest with whom he would find it very difficult to make things go pleasantly at Monkham. "Does she not bully you horribly?" he asked.

"Of course she bullies me," Caroline answered; "and I cannot expect you to understand as yet how it is that I love her and like her; but I do. If I were in distress to-morrow, she would give everything she has in the world to put me right."

"So would I," said he.

"Ah, you;—that is a matter of course. That is your business now. And she would give everything she has in the world to set the world right. Would you do that?"

"It would depend on the amount of my faith. If I could believe in the result, I suppose I should do it."

"She would do it on the slightest hope that such giving would have any tendency that way. Her philanthropy is all real. Of course she is a bore to you."

"I am very patient."

"I hope I shall find you so,—always. And, of course, she is ridiculous—in your eyes. I have learned to see it, and to regret it; but I shall never cease to love her."

"I have not the slightest objection. Her lessons will come from over the water, and mine will come from—where shall I say?—over the table. If I can't talk her down with so much advantage on my side, I ought to be made a woman's-right man myself."

Poor Lady Rowley had watched Miss Petrie and Mr. Glascock during those moments that they had been together, and had half believed the rumour, and had half doubted, thinking in the moments of her belief that Mr. Glascock must be mad, and in the moments of unbelief that the rumours had been set afloat by the English Minister's wife with the express intention of turning Mr. Glascock into ridicule. It had never occurred to her to doubt that Wallachia was the eldest of that family of nieces. Could it be possible that a man who had known her Nora, who had undoubtedly loved her Nora,—who had travelled all the way from London to Nuncombe Putney to ask Nora to be his wife,—should within twelve months of that time have resolved to marry a woman whom he must have selected simply as being the most opposite to Nora of any female human being that he could find? It was not credible to her; and if it were not true, there might still be a hope. Nora had met him, and had spoken to him, and it had seemed that for a moment or two they had spoken as friends. Lady Rowley, when talking to Mrs. Spalding, had watched them closely; and she had seen that Nora's eyes had been bright, and that there had been something between them which was pleasant. Suddenly she found herself close to Wallachia, and thought that she would trust herself to a word.

"Have you been long in Florence?" asked Lady Rowley in her softest voice.

"A pretty considerable time, ma'am;—that is, since the fall began."

What a voice;—what an accent;—and what words! Was there a man living with sufficient courage to take

this woman to England, and shew her to the world as Lady Peterborough?

"Are you going to remain in Italy for the summer?" continued Lady Rowley.

"I guess I shall;—or, perhaps, locate myself in the purer atmosphere of the Swiss mountains."

"Switzerland in summer must certainly be much pleasanter."

"I was thinking at the moment of the political atmosphere," said Miss Petrie; "for although, certainly, much has been done in this country in the way of striking off shackles and treading sceptres under foot, still, Lady Rowley, there remains here that pernicious thing,—a king. The feeling of the dominion of a single man,—and that of a single woman is, for aught I know, worse,—with me so clouds the air, that the breath I breathe fails to fill my lungs." Wallachia, as she said this, put forth her hand, and raised her chin, and extended her arm. She paused, feeling that justice demanded that Lady Rowley should have a right of reply. But Lady Rowley had not a word to say, and Wallachia Petrie went on. "I cannot adapt my body to the sweet savours and the soft luxuries of the outer world with any comfort to my inner self, while the circumstances of the society around me are oppressive to my spirit. When our war was raging all around me I was light-spirited as the lark that mounts through the morning sky."

"I should have thought it was very dreadful," said Lady Rowley.

"Full of dread, of awe, and of horror, were those fiery days of indiscriminate slaughter; but they were not days of desolation, because hope was always there

by our side. There was a hope in which the soul could trust, and the trusting soul is ever light and buoyant."

"I dare say it is," said Lady Rowley.

"But apathy, and serfdom, and kinghood, and dominion, drain the fountain of its living springs, and the soul becomes like the plummet of lead, whose only tendency is to hide itself in subaqueous mud and unsavoury slush."

Subaqueous mud and unsavoury slush! Lady Rowley repeated the words to herself as she made good her escape, and again expressed to herself her conviction that it could not possibly be so. The "subaqueous mud and unsavoury slush," with all that had gone before it about the soul was altogether unintelligible to her; but she knew that it was American buncom of a high order of eloquence, and she told herself again and again that it could not be so. She continued to keep her eyes upon Mr. Glascock, and soon saw him again talking to Nora. It was hardly possible, she thought, that Nora should speak to him with so much animation, or he to her, unless there was some feeling between them which, if properly handled, might lead to a renewal of the old tenderness. She went up to Nora, having collected the other girls, and said that the carriage was then waiting for them. Mr. Glascock immediately offered Lady Rowley his arm, and took her down to the hall. Could it be that she was leaning upon a future son-in-law? There was something in the thought which made her lay her weight upon him with a freedom which she would not otherwise have used. Oh!—that her Nora should live to be Lady Peterborough! We are apt to abuse mothers for want-

ing high husbands for their daughters;—but can there be any point in which the true maternal instinct can shew itself with more affectionate enthusiasm? This poor mother wanted nothing for herself from Mr. Glascock. She knew very well that it was her fate to go back to the Mandarins, and probably to die there. She knew also that such men as Mr. Glascock, when they marry beneath themselves in rank and fortune, will not ordinarily trouble themselves much with their mothers-in-law. There was nothing desired for herself. Were such a match accomplished, she might, perhaps, indulge herself in talking among the planter's wives of her daughter's coronet; but at the present moment there was no idea even of this in her mind. It was of Nora herself, and of Nora's sisters, that she was thinking,—for them that she was plotting,—that the one might be rich and splendid, and the others have some path opened for them to riches and splendour. Husband-hunting mothers may be injudicious; but surely they are maternal and unselfish. Mr. Glascock put her into the carriage, and squeezed her hand;—and then he squeezed Nora's hand. She saw it, and was sure of it. "I am so glad you are going to be happy," Nora had said to him before this. "As far as I have seen her, I like her so much." "If you do not come and visit her in her own house, I shall think you have no spirit of friendship," he said. "I will," Nora had replied;—"I will." This had been said up-stairs, just as Lady Rowley was coming to them, and on this understanding, on this footing, Mr. Glascock had pressed her hand.

As she went home, Lady Rowley's mind was full of doubt as to the course which it was best that she should follow with her daughter. She was not unaware

how great was the difficulty before her. Hugh Stanbury's name had not been mentioned since they left London, but at that time Nora was obstinately bent on throwing herself away upon the "penny-a-liner." She had never been brought to acknowledge that such a marriage would be even inappropriate, and had withstood gallantly the expression of her father's displeasure. But with such a spirit as Nora's, it might be easier to prevail by silence than by many words. Lady Rowley was quite sure of this,—that it would be far better to say nothing further of Hugh Stanbury. Let the cure come, if it might be possible, from absence and from her daughter's good sense. The only question was whether it would be wise to say any word about Mr. Glascock. In the carriage she was not only forbearing but flattering in her manner to Nora. She caressed her girl's hand and spoke to her,—as mothers know how to speak when they want to make much of their girls, and to have it understood that those girls are behaving as girls should behave. There was to be nobody to meet them to-night, as it had been arranged that Sir Marmaduke and Mrs. Trevelyan should sleep at Siena. Hardly a word had been spoken in the carriage; but up-stairs, in their drawing-room, there came a moment in which Lucy and Sophie had left them, and Nora was alone with her mother. Lady Rowley almost knew that it would be most prudent to be silent;—but a word spoken in season;—how good it is! And the thing was so near to her that she could not hold her peace. "I must say, Nora," she began, "that I do like your Mr. Glascock."

"He is not my Mr. Glascock, mamma," said Nora, smiling.

"You know what I mean, dear." Lady Rowley had not intended to utter a word that should appear like pressure on her daughter at this moment. She had felt how imprudent it would be to do so. But now Nora seemed to be leading the way herself to such discourse. "Of course, he is not your Mr. Glascock. You cannot eat your cake and have it, nor can you throw it away and have it."

"I have thrown my cake away altogether, and certainly I cannot have it." She was still smiling as she spoke, and seemed to be quite merry at the idea of regarding Mr. Glascock as the cake which she had declined to eat.

"I can see one thing quite plainly, dear."

"What is that, mamma?"

"That in spite of what you have done, you can still have your cake whenever you choose to take it."

"Why, mamma, he is engaged to be married!"

"Mr. Glascock?"

"Yes, Mr. Glascock. It's quite settled. Is it not sad?"

"To whom is he engaged?" Lady Rowley's solemnity as she asked this question was piteous to behold.

"To Miss Spalding,—Caroline Spalding."

"The eldest of those nieces?"

"Yes;—the eldest."

"I cannot believe it."

"Mamma, they both told me so. I have sworn an eternal friendship with her already."

"I did not see you speaking to her."

"But I did talk to her a great deal."

"And he is really going to marry that dreadful woman?"

"Dreadful, mamma!"

"Perfectly awful! She talked to me in a way that I have read about in books, but which I did not before believe to be possible. Do you mean that he is going to be married to that hideous old maid,—that bell-clapper?"

"Oh, mamma, what slander! I think her so pretty."

"Pretty!"

"Very pretty. And, mamma, ought I not to be happy that he should have been able to make himself so happy? It was quite, quite, quite impossible that I should have been his wife. I have thought about it ever so much, and I am so glad of it! I think she is just the girl that is fit for him."

Lady Rowley took her candle and went to bed, professing to herself that she could not understand it. But what did it signify? It was, at any rate, certain now that the man had put himself out of Nora's reach, and if he chose to marry a republican virago, with a red nose, it could now make no difference to Nora. Lady Rowley almost felt a touch of satisfaction in reflecting on the future misery of his married life.

CHAPTER XIII.

Casalunga.

SIR MARMADUKE had been told at the Florence post-office that he would no doubt be able to hear tidings of Trevelyan, and to learn his address, from the officials in the post-office at Siena. At Florence he had been introduced to some gentleman who was certainly of importance,—a superintendent who had

clerks under him and who was a big man. This person had been very courteous to him, and he had gone to Siena thinking that he would find it easy to obtain Trevelyan's address,—or to learn that there was no such person there. But at Siena he and his courier together could obtain no information. They rambled about the huge cathedral and the picturesque market-place of that quaint old city for the whole day, and on the next morning after breakfast they returned to Florence. They had learned nothing. The young man at the post-office had simply protested that he knew nothing of the name of Trevelyan. If letters should come addressed to such a name, he would keep them till they were called for; but, to the best of his knowledge, he had never seen or heard the name. At the guard-house of the gendarmerie they could not, or would not, give him any information, and Sir Marmaduke came back with an impression that everybody at Siena was ignorant, idiotic, and brutal. Mrs. Trevelyan was so dispirited as to be ill, and both Sir Marmaduke and Lady Rowley were disposed to think that the world was all against them. "You have no conception of the sort of woman that man is going to marry," said Lady Rowley.

"What man?"

"Mr. Glascock! A horrid American female, as old almost as I am, who talks through her nose, and preaches sermons about the rights of women. It is incredible! And Nora might have had him just for lifting up her hand." But Sir Marmaduke could not interest himself much about Mr. Glascock. When he had been told that his daughter had refused the heir to a great estate and a peerage, it had been matter of regret; but he

had looked upon the affair as done, and cared nothing now though Mr. Glascock should marry a transatlantic Xantippe. He was angry with Nora because by her obstinacy she was adding to the general perplexities of the family, but he could not make comparisons on Mr. Glascock's behalf between her and Miss Spalding,—as his wife was doing, either mentally or aloud, from hour to hour. "I suppose it is too late now," said Lady Rowley, shaking her head.

"Of course it is too late. The man must marry whom he pleases. I am beginning to wonder that anybody should ever want to get married. I am indeed."

But what are the girls to do?"

"I don't know what anybody is to do. Here is a man as mad as a March hare, and yet nobody can touch him. If it was not for the child, I should advise Emily to put him out of her head altogether."

But though Sir Marmaduke could not bring himself to take any interest in Mr. Glascock's affairs, and would not ask a single question respecting the fearful American female whom this unfortunate man was about to translate to the position of an English peeress, yet circumstances so fell out that before three days were over he and Mr. Glascock were thrown together in very intimate relations. Sir Marmaduke had learned that Mr. Glascock was the only Englishman in Florence to whom Trevelyan had been known, and that he was the only person with whom Trevelyan had been seen to speak while passing through the city. In his despair, therefore, Sir Marmaduke had gone to Mr. Glascock, and it was soon arranged that the two gentlemen should renew the search at Siena together, without having

with them either Mrs. Trevelyan or the courier. Mr. Glascock knew the ways of the people better than did Sir Marmaduke, and could speak the language. He obtained a passport to the good offices of the police at Siena, and went prepared to demand rather than to ask for assistance. They started very early, before breakfast, and on arriving at Siena at about noon, first employed themselves in recruiting exhausted nature. By the time that they had both declared that the hotel at Siena was the very worst in all Italy, and that a breakfast without eatable butter was not to be considered a breakfast at all, they had become so intimate that Mr. Glascock spoke of his own intended marriage. He must have done this with the conviction on his mind that Nora Rowley would have told her mother of his former intention, and that Lady Rowley would have told Sir Marmaduke; but he did not feel it to be incumbent on himself to say anything on that subject. He had nothing to excuse. He had behaved fairly and honourably. It was not to be expected that he should remain unmarried for ever for the sake of a girl who had twice refused him. "Of course there are very many in England," he said, "who will think me foolish to marry a girl from another country."

"It is done every day," said Sir Marmaduke.

"No doubt it is. I admit, however, that I ought to be more careful than some other persons. There is a title and an estate to be perpetuated, and I cannot, perhaps, be justified in taking quite so much liberty as some other men may do; but I think I have chosen a woman born to have a high position, and who will make her own way in any society in which she may be placed."

"I have no doubt she will," said Sir Marmaduke, who had still sounding in his ears the alarming description which his wife had given him of this infatuated man's proposed bride. But he would have been bound to say as much had Mr. Glascock intended to marry as lowly as did King Cophetua.

"She is highly educated, gentle-mannered, as sweetly soft as any English girl I ever met, and very pretty. You have met her, I think."

"I do not remember that I have observed her."

"She is too young for me, perhaps," said Mr. Glascock; "but that is a fault on the right side." Sir Marmaduke, as he wiped his beard after his breakfast, remembered what his wife had told him about the lady's age. But it was nothing to him. "She is four-and-twenty, I think," said Mr. Glascock. If Mr. Glascock chose to believe that his intended wife was four-and-twenty instead of something over forty, that was nothing to Sir Marmaduke.

"The very best age in the world," said he.

They had sent for an officer of the police, and before they had been three hours in Siena they had been told that Trevelyan lived about seven miles from the town, in a small and very remote country house, which he had hired for twelve months from one of the city hospitals. He had hired it furnished, and had purchased a horse and small carriage from a man in the town. To this man they went, and it soon became evident to them that he of whom they were in search was living at this house, which was called Casalunga, and was not, as the police officer told them, on the way to any place. They must leave Siena by the road for Rome, take a turn to the left about a mile beyond

the city gate, and continue on along the country lane till they saw a certain round hill to the right. On the top of that round hill was Casalunga. As the country about Siena all lies in round hills, this was no adequate description;—but it was suggested that the country people would know all about it. They got a small open carriage in the market-place, and were driven out. Their driver knew nothing of Casalunga, and simply went whither he was told. But by the aid of the country people they got along over the unmade lanes, and in little more than an hour were told, at the bottom of the hill, that they must now walk up to Casalunga. Though the hill was round-topped, and no more than a hill, still the ascent at last was very steep, and was paved with stones set edgeway in a manner that could hardly have been intended to accommodate wheels. When Mr. Glascock asserted that the signor who lived there had a carriage of his own, the driver suggested that he must keep it at the bottom of the hill. It was clearly not his intention to attempt to drive up the ascent, and Sir Marmaduke and Mr. Glascock were therefore obliged to walk. It was now in the latter half of May, and there was a blazing Italian sky over their heads. Mr. Glascock was acclimated to Italian skies, and did not much mind the work; but Sir Marmaduke, who never did much in walking, declared that Italy was infinitely hotter than the Mandarins, and could hardly make his way as far as the house door.

It seemed to both of them to be a most singular abode for such a man as Trevelyan. At the top of the hill there was a huge entrance through a wooden gateway, which seemed to have been constructed with the intention of defying any intruders not provided

with warlike ammunition. The gates were, indeed, open at the period of their visit, but it must be supposed that they were intended to be closed at any rate at night. Immediately on the right, as they entered through the gates, there was a large barn, in which two men were coopering wine vats. From thence a path led slanting to the house, of which the door was shut, and all the front windows blocked with shutters. The house was very long, and only of one story for a portion of its length. Over that end at which the door was placed there were upper rooms, and there must have been space enough for a large family with many domestics. There was nothing round or near the residence which could be called a garden, so that its look of desolation was extreme. There were various large barns and outhouses, as though it had been intended by the builder that corn and hay and cattle should be kept there; but it seemed now that there was nothing there except the empty vats at which the two men were coopering. Had the Englishmen gone farther into the granary, they would have seen that there were wine-presses stored away in the dark corners.

They stopped and looked at the men, and the men halted for a moment from their work and looked at them; but the men spoke never a word. Mr. Glascock then asked after Mr. Trevelyan, and one of the coopers pointed to the house. Then they crossed over to the door, and Mr. Glascock finding there neither knocker nor bell, first tapped with his knuckles, and then struck with his stick. But no one came. There was not a sound in the house, and no shutter was removed. "I don't believe that there is a soul here," said Sir Marmaduke.

"We'll not give it up till we've seen it all at any rate," said Mr. Glascock. And so they went round to the other front.

On this side of the house the tilled ground, either ploughed or dug with the spade, came up to the very windows. There was hardly even a particle of grass to be seen. A short way down the hill there were rows of olive trees, standing in prim order and at regular distances, from which hung the vines that made the coopering of the vats necessary. Olives and vines have pretty names, and call up associations of landscape beauty. But here they were in no way beautiful. The ground beneath them was turned up, and brown, and arid, so that there was not a blade of grass to be seen. On some furrows the maize or Indian corn was sprouting, and there were patches of growth of other kinds,—each patch closely marked by its own straight lines; and there were narrow paths, so constructed as to take as little room as possible. But all that had been done had been done for economy, and nothing for beauty. The occupiers of Casalunga had thought more of the produce of their land than of picturesque or attractive appearance.

The sun was blazing fiercely hot, hotter on this side, Sir Marmaduke thought, even than on the other; and there was not a wavelet of a cloud in the sky. A balcony ran the whole length of the house, and under this Sir Marmaduke took shelter at once, leaning with his back against the wall. "There is not a soul here at all," said he.

"The men in the barn told us that there was," said Mr. Glascock; and, at any rate, we will try the windows." So saying, he walked along the front of the house, Sir

Marmaduke following him slowly, till they came to a door, the upper half of which was glazed, and through which they looked into one of the rooms. Two or three of the other windows in this frontage of the house came down to the ground, and were made for egress and ingress; but they had all been closed with shutters, as though the house was deserted. But they now looked into a room which contained some signs of habitation. There was a small table with a marble top, on which lay two or three books, and there were two arm-chairs in the room, with gilded arms and legs, and a morsel of carpet, and a clock on a shelf over a stove, and—a rocking-horse. "The boy is here, you may be sure," said Mr. Glascock. "The rocking-horse makes that certain. But how are we to get at any one!"

"I never saw such a place for an Englishman to come and live in before," said Sir Marmaduke. "What on earth can he do here all day!" As he spoke the door of the room was opened, and there was Trevelyan standing before them, looking at them through the window. He wore an old red English dressing-gown, which came down to his feet, and a small braided Italian cap on his head. His beard had been allowed to grow, and he had neither collar nor cravat. His trousers were unbraced, and he shuffled in with a pair of slippers, which would hardly cling to his feet. He was paler and still thinner than when he had been visited at Willesden, and his eyes seemed to be larger, and shone almost with a brighter brilliancy.

Mr. Glascock tried to open the door, but found that it was closed. "Sir Marmaduke and I have come to visit you," said Mr. Glascock, aloud. "Is there any

means by which we can get into the house?" Trevelyan stood still and stared at them. "We knocked at the front door, but nobody came," continued Mr. Glascock. "I suppose this is the way you usually go in and out."

"He does not mean to let us in," whispered Sir Marmaduke.

"Can you open this door," said Mr. Glascock, "or shall we go round again?" Trevelyan had stood still contemplating them, but at last came forward and put back the bolt. "That is all right," said Mr. Glascock, entering. "I am sure you will be glad to see Sir Marmaduke."

"I should be glad to see him,—or you, if I could entertain you," said Trevelyan. His voice was harsh and hard, and his words were uttered with a certain amount of intended grandeur. "Any of the family would be welcome were it not——"

"Were it not what?" asked Mr. Glascock.

"It can be nothing to you, sir, what troubles I have here. This is my own abode, in which I had flattered myself that I could be free from intruders. I do not want visitors. I am sorry that you should have had trouble in coming here, but I do not want visitors. I am very sorry that I have nothing that I can offer you, Mr. Glascock."

"Emily is in Florence," said Sir Marmaduke.

"Who brought her? Did I tell her to come? Let her go back to her home. I have come here to be free from her, and I mean to be free. If she wants my money, let her take it."

"She wants her child," said Mr. Glascock.

"He is my child," said Trevelyan, "and my right

to him is better than hers. Let her try it in a court of law, and she shall see. Why did she deceive me with that man? Why has she driven me to this? Look here, Mr. Glascock;—my whole life is spent in this seclusion, and it is her fault."

"Your wife is innocent of all fault, Trevelyan," said Mr. Glascock.

"Any woman can say as much as that;—and all women do say it. Yet,—what are they worth?"

"Do you mean, sir, to take away your wife's character?" said Sir Marmaduke, coming up in wrath. "Remember that she is my daughter, and that there are things which flesh and blood cannot stand."

"She is my wife, sir, and that is ten times more. Do you think that you would do more for her than I would do,—drink more of Esill? You had better go away, Sir Marmaduke. You can do no good by coming here and talking of your daughter. I would have given the world to save her;—but she would not be saved."

"You are a slanderer!" said Sir Marmaduke, in his wrath.

Mr. Glascock turned round to the father, and tried to quiet him. It was so manifest to him that the balance of the poor man's mind was gone, that it seemed to him to be ridiculous to upbraid the sufferer. He was such a piteous sight to behold, that it was almost impossible to feel indignation against him. "You cannot wonder," said Mr. Glascock, advancing close to the master of the house, "that the mother should want to see her only child. You do not wish that your wife should be the most wretched woman in the world."

"Am not I the most wretched of men? Can any-

thing be more wretched than this? Is her life worse than mine? And whose fault was it? Had I any friend to whom she objected? Was I untrue to her in a single thought?"

"If you say that she was untrue, it is a falsehood," said Sir Marmaduke.

"You allow yourself a liberty of expression, sir, because you are my wife's father," said Trevelyan, "which you would not dare to take in other circumstances."

"I say that it is a false calumny,—a lie! and I would say so to any man on earth who should dare to slander my child's name."

"Your child, sir! She is my wife;—my wife;—my wife!" Trevelyan, as he spoke, advanced close up to his father-in-law; and at last hissed out his words, with his lips close to Sir Marmaduke's face. Your right in her is gone, sir. She is mine,—mine,—mine! And you see the way in which she has treated me, Mr. Glascock. Everything I had was hers; but the words of a grey-haired sinner were sweeter to her than all my love. I wonder whether you think that it is a pleasant thing for such a one as I to come out here and live in such a place as this? I have not a friend,—a companion,—hardly a book. There is nothing that I can eat or drink? I do not stir out of the house,—and I am ill;—very ill! Look at me. See what she has brought me to! Mr. Glascock, on my honour as a man, I never wronged her in a thought or a word."

Mr. Glascock had come to think that his best chance of doing any good was to get Trevelyan into conversation with himself, free from the interruption of Sir Marmaduke. The father of the injured woman could not bring himself to endure the hard words that were

spoken of his daughter. During this last speech he had broken out once or twice; but Trevelyan, not heeding him, had clung to Mr. Glascock's arm. "Sir Marmaduke," said he, "would you not like to see the boy?"

"He shall not see the boy," said Trevelyan. "You may see him. He shall not. What is he that he should have control over me?"

"This is the most fearful thing I ever heard of," said Sir Marmaduke. "What are we to do with him?"

Mr. Glascock whispered a few words to Sir Marmaduke, and then declared that he was ready to be taken to the child. "And he will remain here?" asked Trevelyan. A pledge was then given by Sir Marmaduke that he would not force his way farther into the house, and the two other men left the chamber together. Sir Marmaduke, as he paced up and down the room alone, perspiring at every pore, thoroughly uncomfortable and ill at ease, thought of all the hard positions of which he had ever read, and that his was harder than them all. Here was a man married to his daughter, in possession of his daughter's child, manifestly mad,—and yet he could do nothing to him! He was about to return to the seat of his government, and he must leave his own child in this madman's power! Of course, his daughter could not go with him, leaving her child in this madman's hands. He had been told that even were he to attempt to prove the man to be mad in Italy, the process would be slow; and, before it could be well commenced, Trevelyan would be off with the child elsewhere. There never was an embarrassment, thought Sir Marmaduke, out of which it was so impossible to find a clear way.

In the meantime, Mr. Glascock and Trevelyan were visiting the child. It was evident that the father, let him be ever so mad, had discerned the expediency of allowing some one to see that his son was alive and in health. Mr. Glascock did not know much of children, and could only say afterwards that the boy was silent and very melancholy, but clean, and apparently well. It appeared that he was taken out daily by his father in the cool hours of the morning, and that his father hardly left him from the time that he was taken up till he was put to bed. But Mr. Glascock's desire was to see Trevelyan alone, and this he did after they had left the boy. "And now, Trevelyan," he said, "what do you mean to do?"

"To do?"

"In what way do you propose to live? I want you to be reasonable with me."

"They do not treat me reasonably."

"Are you going to measure your own conduct by that of other people? In the first place, you should go back to England. What good can you do here?" Trevelyan shook his head, but remained silent. "You cannot like this life."

"No, indeed. But whither can I go now that I shall like to live?"

"Why not home?"

"I have no home."

"Why not go back to England? Ask your wife to join you, and return with her. She would go at a word." The poor wretch again shook his head. "I hope you think that I speak as your friend," said Mr. Glascock.

"I believe you do."

"I will say nothing of any imprudence; but you cannot believe that she has been untrue to you?" Trevelyan would say nothing to this, but stood silent waiting for Mr. Glascock to continue. "Let her come back to you—here; and then, as soon as you can arrange it, go to your own home."

"Shall I tell you something?" said Trevelyan.

"What is it?"

He came up close to Mr. Glascock, and put his hand upon his visitor's shoulder. "I will tell you what she would do at once. I dare say that she would come to me. I dare say that she would go with me. I am sure she would. And directly she got me there, she would—say that I was—mad! She,—my wife, would do it! He,—that furious, ignorant old man below, tried to do it before. His wife said that I was mad." He paused a moment, as though waiting for a reply; but Mr. Glascock had none to make. It had not been his object, in the advice which he had given, to entrap the poor fellow by a snare, and to induce him so to act that he should deliver himself up to keepers; but he was well aware that wherever Trevelyan might be, it would be desirable that he should be placed for awhile in the charge of some physician. He could not bring himself at the spur of the moment to repudiate the idea by which Trevelyan was actuated. "Perhaps you think that she would be right?" said Trevelyan.

"I am quite sure that she would do nothing that is not for the best," said Mr. Glascock.

"I can see it all. I will not go back to England, Mr. Glascock. I intend to travel. I shall probably leave this and go to—to—to Greece, perhaps. It is a healthy place, this, and I like it for that reason; but

I shall not stay here. If my wife likes to travel with me, she can come. But,—to England I will not go."

"You will let the child go to his mother?"

"Certainly not. If she wants to see the child, he is here. If she will come,—without her father,—she shall see him. She shall not take him from hence. Nor shall she return to live with me, without full acknowledgment of her fault, and promises of an amended life. I know what I am saying, Mr. Glascock, and have thought of these things perhaps more than you have done. I am obliged to you for coming to me; but now, if you please, I would prefer to be alone."

Mr. Glascock, seeing that nothing further could be done, joined Sir Marmaduke, and the two walked down to their carriage at the bottom of the hill. Mr. Glascock, as he went, declared his conviction that the unfortunate man was altogether mad, and that it would be necessary to obtain some interference on the part of the authorities for the protection of the child. How this could be done, or whether it could be done in time to intercept a further flight on the part of Trevelyan, Mr. Glascock could not say. It was his idea that Mrs. Trevelyan should herself go out to Casalunga, and try the force of her own persuasion.

"I believe that he would murder her," said Sir Marmaduke.

"He would not do that. There is a glimmer of sense in all his madness, which will keep him from any actual violence."

CHAPTER XIV.

I can sleep on the Boards.

THREE days after this there came another carriage to the bottom of the hill on which Casalunga stood, and a lady got out of it all alone. It was Emily Trevelyan, and she had come thither from Siena in quest of her husband and her child. On the previous day Sir Marmaduke's courier had been at the house with a note from the wife to the husband, and had returned with an answer, in which Mrs. Trevelyan was told that, if she would come quite alone, she should see her child. Sir Marmaduke had been averse to any further intercourse with the man, other than what might be made in accordance with medical advice, and, if possible, with government authority. Lady Rowley had assented to her daughter's wish, but had suggested that she should at least be allowed to go also,—at any rate, as far as the bottom of the hill. But Emily had been very firm, and Mr. Glascock had supported her. He was confident that the man would do no harm to her, and he was indisposed to believe that any interference on the part of the Italian Government could be procured in such a case with sufficient celerity to be of use. He still thought it might be possible that the wife might prevail over the husband, or the mother over the father. Sir Marmaduke was at last obliged to yield, and Mrs. Trevelyan went to Siena with no other companion but the courier. From Siena she made the journey quite alone; and having learned the circumstances of the house from Mr. Glascock, she got out of the carriage, and walked up the hill. There were still the two men

coopering at the vats, but she did not stay to speak to them. She went through the big gates, and along the slanting path to the door, not doubting of her way;— for Mr. Glascock had described it all to her, making a small plan of the premises, and even explaining to her the position of the room in which her boy and her husband slept. She found the door open, and an Italian maid-servant at once welcomed her to the house, and assured her that the signor would be with her immediately. She was sure that the girl knew that she was the boy's mother, and was almost tempted to ask questions at once as to the state of the household; but her knowledge of Italian was slight, and she felt that she was so utterly a stranger in the land that she could dare to trust no one. Though the heat was great, her face was covered with a thick veil. Her dress was black, from head to foot, and she was as a woman who mourned for her husband. She was led into the room which her father had been allowed to enter through the window; and here she sat, in her husband's house, feeling that in no position in the world could she be more utterly separated from the interests of all around her. In a few minutes the door was opened, and her husband was with her, bringing the boy in his hand. He had dressed himself with some care; but it may be doubted whether the garments which he wore did not make him appear thinner even and more haggard than he had looked to be in his old dressing-gown. He had not shaved himself, but his long hair was brushed back from his forehead, after a fashion quaint and very foreign to his former ideas of dress. His wife had not expected that her child would come to her at once,— had thought that some entreaties would be necessary,

some obedience perhaps exacted from her, before she would be allowed to see him; and now her heart was softened, and she was grateful to her husband. But she could not speak to him till she had had the boy in her arms. She tore off her bonnet, and then clinging to the child, covered him with kisses. "Louey, my darling! Louey; you remember mamma?" The child pressed himself close to his mother's bosom, but spoke never a word. He was cowed and overcome, not only by the incidents of the moment, but by the terrible melancholy of his whole life. He had been taught to understand, without actual spoken lessons, that he was to live with his father, and that the former woman-given happinesses of his life were at an end. In this second visit from his mother he did not forget her. He recognised the luxury of her love; but it did not occur to him even to hope that she might have come to rescue him from the evil of his days. Trevelyan was standing by, the while, looking on; but he did not speak till she addressed him.

"I am so thankful to you for bringing him to me," she said.

"I told you that you should see him," he said. "Perhaps it might have been better that I should have sent him by a servant; but there are circumstances which make me fear to let him out of my sight."

"Do you think that I did not wish to see you also? Louis, why do you do me so much wrong? Why do you treat me with such cruelty?" Then she threw her arms round his neck, and before he could repulse her,—before he could reflect whether it would be well that he should repulse her or not,—she had

covered his brow and cheeks and lips with kisses.

"Louis," she said; "Louis, speak to me!"

"It is hard to speak sometimes," he said.

"You love me, Louis?"

"Yes;—I love you. But I am afraid of you!"

"What is it that you fear? I would give my life for you, if you would only come back to me and let me feel that you believed me to be true." He shook his head, and began to think,—while she still clung to him. He was quite sure that her father and mother had intended to bring a mad doctor down upon him, and he knew that his wife was in her mother's hands. Should he yield to her now,—should he make her any promise,—might not the result be that he would be shut up in dark rooms, robbed of his liberty, robbed of what he loved better than his liberty,—his power as a man. She would thus get the better of him and take the child, and the world would say that in this contest between him and her he had been the sinning one, and she the one against whom the sin had been done. It was the chief object of his mind, the one thing for which he was eager, that this should never come to pass. Let it once be conceded to him from all sides that he had been right, and then she might do with him almost as she willed. He knew well that he was ill. When he thought of his child, he would tell himself that he was dying. He was at some moments of his miserable existence fearfully anxious to come to terms with his wife, in order that at his death his boy might not be without a protector. Were he to die, then it would be better that his child should be with its mother. In his happy days, immediately after his marriage, he had made a will, in

which he had left his entire property to his wife for her life, providing for its subsequent descent to his child,—or children. It had never even occurred to his poor shattered brain that it would be well for him to alter his will. Had he really believed that his wife had betrayed him, doubtless he would have done so. He would have hated her, have distrusted her altogether, and have believed her to be an evil thing. He had no such belief. But in his desire to achieve empire, and in the sorrows which had come upon him in his unsuccessful struggle, his mind had wavered so frequently, that his spoken words were no true indicators of his thoughts; and in all his arguments he failed to express either his convictions or his desires. When he would say something stronger than he intended, and it would be put to him by his wife, by her father or mother, or by some friend of hers, whether he did believe that she had been untrue to him, he would recoil from the answer which his heart would dictate, lest he should seem to make an acknowledgment that might weaken the ground upon which he stood. Then he would satisfy his own conscience by assuring himself that he had never accused her of such sin. She was still clinging to him now as his mind was working after this fashion. "Louis," she said, "let it all be as though there had been nothing."

"How can that be, my dear?"

"Not to others;—but to us it can be so. There shall be no word spoken of the past." Again he shook his head. "Will it not be best that there should be no word spoken?"

"Forgiveness may be spoken with the tongue,"

he said, beginning to quote from a poem which had formerly been frequent in his hands.

"Cannot there be real forgiveness between you and me,—between husband and wife who, in truth, love each other? Do you think that I would tell you of it again?" He felt that in all that she said there was an assumption that she had been right, and that he had been wrong. She was promising to forgive. She was undertaking to forget. She was willing to take him back to the warmth of her love, and the comfort of her kindness,—but was not asking to be taken back. This was what he could not and would not endure. He had determined that if she behaved well to him, he would not be harsh to her, and he was struggling to keep up to his resolve. He would accuse her of nothing,—if he could help it. But he could not say a word that would even imply that she need forget,—that she should forgive. It was for him to forgive;—and he was willing to do it, if she would accept forgiveness. "I will never speak a word, Louis," she said, laying her head upon his shoulder. "Your heart is still hardened," he replied slowly.

"Hard to you?"

"And your mind is dark. You do not see what you have done. In our religion, Emily, forgiveness is sure, not after penitence, but with repentance."

"What does that mean?"

"It means this, that though I would welcome you back to my arms with joy, I cannot do so, till you have—confessed your fault."

"What fault, Louis? If I have made you unhappy, I do, indeed, grieve that it has been so."

"It is of no use," said he. "I cannot talk about

it. Do you suppose that it does not tear me to the very soul to think of it?"

"What is it that you think, Louis?" As she had been travelling thither, she had determined that she would say anything that he wished her to say,—make any admission that might satisfy him. That she could be happy again as other women are happy, she did not expect; but if it could be conceded between them that by-gones should be by-gones, she might live with him and do her duty, and, at least, have her child with her. Her father had told her that her husband was mad; but she was willing to put up with his madness on such terms as these. What could her husband do to her in his madness that he could not do also to the child? "Tell me what you want me to say, and I will say it," she said.

"You have sinned against me," he said, raising her head gently from his shoulder.

"Never!" she exclaimed. "As God is my judge, I never have!" As she said this, she retreated and took the sobbing boy again into her arms.

He was at once placed upon his guard, telling himself that he saw the necessity of holding by his child. How could he tell? Might there not be policemen down from Florence, ready round the house, to seize the boy and carry him away. Though all his remaining life should be a torment to him, though infinite plagues should be poured upon his head, though he should die like a dog, alone, unfriended, and in despair, while he was fighting this battle of his, he would not give way. "That is sufficient," he said. "Louey must return now to his own chamber."

"I may go with him?"

"No, Emily. You cannot go with him now. I will thank you to release him, that I may take him." She still held the little fellow closely pressed in her arms. "Do not reward me for my courtesy by further disobedience," he said.

"You will let me come again?" To this he made no reply. "Tell me that I may come again."

"I do not think that I shall remain here long."

"And I may not stay now?"

"That would be impossible. There is no accommodation for you."

"I could sleep on the boards beside his cot," said Mrs. Trevelyan.

"That is my place," he replied. "You may know that he is not disregarded. With my own hands I tend him every morning. I take him out myself. I feed him myself. He says his prayers to me. He learns from me, and can say his letters nicely. You need not fear for him. No mother was ever more tender with her child than I am with him." Then he gently withdrew the boy from her arms, and she let her child go, lest he should learn that there was a quarrel between his father and his mother. "If you will excuse me," he said, "I will not come down to you again to-day. My servant will see you to your carriage."

So he left her; and she, with an Italian girl at her heels, got into her vehicle, and was taken back to Siena. There she passed the night alone at the inn, and on the next morning returned to Florence by the railway.

CHAPTER XV.

Will they despise him?

GRADUALLY the news of the intended marriage between Mr. Glascock and Miss Spalding spread itself over Florence, and people talked about it with that energy which subjects of such moment certainly deserve. That Caroline Spalding had achieved a very great triumph, was, of course, the verdict of all men and of all women; and I fear that there was a corresponding feeling that poor Mr. Glascock had been triumphed over, and, as it were, subjugated. In some respects he had been remiss in his duties as a bachelor visitor to Florence,—as a visitor to Florence who had manifestly been much in want of a wife. He had not given other girls a fair chance, but had thrown himself down at the feet of this American female in the weakest possible manner. And then it got about the town that he had been refused over and over again by Nora Rowley. It is too probable that Lady Rowley in her despair and dismay had been indiscreet, and had told secrets which should never have been mentioned by her. And the wife of the English minister, who had some grudges of her own, lifted her eyebrows and shook her head and declared that all the Glascocks at home would be outraged to the last degree. "My dear Lady Rowley," she said, "I don't know whether it won't become a question with them whether they should issue a commission de lunatico." Lady Rowley did not know what a commission de lunatico meant, but was quite willing to regard poor Mr. Glascock as a lunatic. "And there is poor Lord Peterborough at

He knew he was Right, III.

Naples just at death's door," continued the British Minister's wife. In this she was perhaps nearly correct; but as Lord Peterborough had now been in the same condition for many months, as his mind had altogether gone, and as the doctor declared that he might live in his present condition for a year, or for years, it could not fairly be said that Mr. Glascock was acting without due filial feeling in engaging himself to marry a young lady. "And she such a creature!" said Lady Rowley, with emphasis. This the British Minister's wife noticed simply by shaking her head. Caroline Spalding was undoubtedly a pretty girl; but, as the British Minister's wife said afterwards, it was not surprising that poor Lady Rowley should be nearly out of her mind.

This had occurred a full week after the evening spent at Mr. Spalding's house; and even yet Lady Rowley had never been put right as to that mistake of hers about Wallachia Petrie. That other trouble of hers, and her eldest daughter's journey to Siena, had prevented them from going out; and though the matter had often been discussed between Lady Rowley and Nora, there had not as yet come between them any proper explanation. Nora would declare that the future bride was very pretty and very delightful; and Lady Rowley would throw up her hands in despair and protest that her daughter was insane. "Why should he not marry whom he likes, mamma?" Nora once said, almost with indignation.

"Because he will disgrace his family."

"I cannot understand what you mean, mamma. They are, at any rate, as good as we are. Mr. Spalding stands quite as high as papa does."

"She is an American," said Lady Rowley.

"And her family might say that he is an Englishman," said Nora.

"My dear, if you do not understand the incongruity between an English peer and a Yankee—female, I cannot help you. I suppose it is because you have been brought up within the limited society of a small colony. If so, it is not your fault. But I had hoped you had been in Europe long enough to have learned what was what. Do you think, my dear, that she will look well when she is presented to her Majesty as Lord Peterborough's wife?"

"Splendid," said Nora. "She has just the brow for a coronet."

"Heavens and earth!" said Lady Rowley, throwing up her hands. "And you believe that he will be proud of her in England?"

"I am sure he will."

"My belief is that he will leave her behind him, or that they will settle somewhere in the wilds of America,—out in Mexico, or Massachusetts, or the Rocky Mountains. I do not think that he will have the courage to shew her in London."

The marriage was to take place in the Protestant church at Florence early in June, and then the bride and bridegroom were to go over the Alps, and to remain there subject to tidings as to the health of the old man at Naples. Mr. Glascock had thrown up his seat in Parliament, some month or two ago, knowing that he could not get back to his duties during the present session, and feeling that he would shortly be called upon to sit in the other House. He was thus free to use his time and to fix his days as he pleased;

and it was certainly clear to those who knew him, that he was not ashamed of his American bride. He spent much of his time at the Spaldings' house, and was always to be seen with them in the Cascade and at the Opera. Mrs. Spalding, the aunt, was, of course, in great glory. A triumphant, happy, or even simply a splendid marriage, for the rising girl of a family is a great glory to the maternal mind. Mrs. Spalding could not but be aware that the very air around her seemed to breathe congratulations into her ears. Her friends spoke to her, even on indifferent subjects, as though everything was going well with her,—better with her than with anybody else; and there came upon her in these days a dangerous feeling, that in spite of all the preachings of the preachers, the next world might perhaps be not so very much better than this. She was, in fact, the reverse of the medal of which poor Lady Rowley filled the obverse. And the American Minister was certainly an inch taller than before, and made longer speeches, being much more regardless of interruption. Olivia was delighted at her sister's success, and heard with rapture the description of Monkham, which came to her second-hand through her sister. It was already settled that she was to spend her next Christmas at Monkham, and perhaps there might be an idea in her mind that there were other eldest sons of old lords who would like American brides. Everything around Caroline Spalding was pleasant,—except the words of Wallachia Petrie.

Everything around her was pleasant till there came to her a touch of a suspicion that the marriage which Mr. Glascock was going to make would be detrimental to her intended husband in his own country. There

were many in Florence who were saying this besides the wife of the English Minister and Lady Rowley. Of course Caroline Spalding herself was the last to hear it, and to her the idea was brought by Wallachia Petrie. "I wish I could think you would make yourself happy,—or him," Wallachia had said, croaking.

"Why should I fail to make him happy?"

"Because you are not of the same blood, or race, or manners as himself. They say that he is very wealthy in his own country, and that those who live around him will look coldly on you."

"So that he does not look coldly, I do not care how others may look," said Caroline proudly.

"But when he finds that he has injured himself by such a marriage in the estimation of all his friends,—how will it be then?"

This set Caroline Spalding thinking of what she was doing. She began to realise the feeling that perhaps she might not be a fit bride for an English lord's son, and in her agony she came to Nora Rowley for counsel. After all, how little was it that she knew of the home and the country to which she was to be carried! She might not, perhaps, get adequate advice from Nora, but she would probably learn something on which she could act. There was no one else among the English at Florence to whom she could speak with freedom. When she mentioned her fears to her aunt, her aunt of course laughed at her. Mrs. Spalding told her that Mr. Glascock might be presumed to know his own business best, and that she, as an American lady of high standing,—the niece of a minister!—was a fitting match for any Englishman, let him be ever so much a lord. But Caroline was not comforted by this,

and in her suspense she went to Nora Rowley. She wrote a line to Nora, and when she called at the hotel, was taken up to her friend's bed-room. She found great difficulty in telling her story, but she did tell it. "Miss Rowley," she said, "if this is a silly thing that he is going to do, I am bound to save him from his own folly. You know your own country better than I do. Will they think that he has disgraced himself?"

"Certainly not that," said Nora.

"Shall I be a load round his neck? Miss Rowley, for my own sake I would not endure such a position as that, not even though I love him. But for his sake! Think of that. If I find that people think ill of him,—because of me——!"

"No one will think ill of him."

"Is it esteemed needful that such a one as he should marry a woman of his own rank. I can bear to end it all now; but I shall not be able to bear his humiliation, and my own despair, if I find that I have injured him. Tell me plainly,—is it a marriage that he should not make?" Nora paused for a while before she answered, and as she sat silent the other girl watched her face carefully. Nora on being thus consulted, was very careful that her tongue should utter nothing that was not her true opinion as best she knew how to express it. Her sympathy would have prompted her to give such an answer as would at once have made Caroline happy in her mind. She would have been delighted to have been able to declare that these doubts were utterly groundless, and this hesitation needless. But she conceived that she owed it as a duty from one woman to another to speak the truth as she conceived it on so momentous an occasion, and she was not sure

but that Mr. Glascock would be considered by his friends in England to be doing badly in marrying an American girl. What she did not remember was this,—that her very hesitation was in fact an answer, and such an answer as she was most unwilling to give. "I see that it would be so," said Caroline Spalding.

"No;—not that."

"What then? Will they despise him,—and me?"

"No one who knows you can despise you. No one who sees you can fail to admire you." Nora, as she said this, thought of her mother, but told herself at once that in this matter her mother's judgment had been altogether destroyed by her disappointment. "What I think will take place will be this. His family, when first they hear of it will be sorry."

"Then," said Caroline, "I will put an end to it."

"You can't do that, dear. You are engaged, and you haven't a right. I am engaged to a man, and all my friends object to it. But I shan't put an end to it. I don't think I have a right. I shall not do it any way, however."

"But if it were for his good?"

"It couldn't be for his good. He and I have got to go along together somehow."

"You wouldn't hurt him," said Caroline.

"I won't if I can help it, but he has got to take me along with him anyhow; and Mr. Glascock has got to take you. If I were you, I shouldn't ask any more questions."

"It isn't the same. You said that you were to be poor, but he is very rich. And I am beginning to understand that these titles of yours are something like kings' crowns. The man who has to wear them

can't do just as he pleases with them. Noblesse oblige. I can see the meaning of that, even when the obligation itself is trumpery in its nature. If it is a man's duty to marry a Talbot because he's a Howard, I suppose he ought to do his duty." After a pause she went on again. "I do believe that I have made a mistake. It seemed to be absurd at the first to think of it, but I do believe it now. Even what you say to me makes me think it."

"At any rate you can't go back," said Nora enthusiastically.

"I will try."

"Go to himself and ask him. You must leave him to decide it at last. I don't see how a girl when she is engaged, is to throw a man over unless he consents. Of course you can throw yourself into the Arno."

"And get the water into my shoes,—for it wouldn't do much more at present."

"And you can—jilt him," said Nora.

"It would not be jilting him."

"He must decide that. If he so regards it, it will be so. I advise you to think no more about it; but if you speak to anybody it should be to him." This was at last the result of Nora's wisdom, and then the two girls descended together to the room in which Lady Rowley was sitting with her other daughters. Lady Rowley was very careful in asking after Miss Spalding's sister, and Miss Spalding assured her that Olivia was quite well. Then Lady Rowley made some inquiry about Olivia and Mr. Glascock, and Miss Spalding assured her that no two persons were ever such allies, and that she believed that they were together at this moment investigating some old church. Lady Rowley

simpered, and declared that nothing could be more proper, and expressed a hope that Olivia would like England. Caroline Spalding, having still in her mind the trouble that had brought her to Nora, had not much to say about this. "If she goes again to England I am sure she will like it," replied Miss Spalding.

"But of course she is going," said Lady Rowley.

"Of course she will some day, and of course she'll like it," said Miss Spalding. "We both of us have been there already."

"But I mean Monkham's," said Lady Rowley, still simpering.

"I declare I believe mamma thinks that your sister is to be married to Mr. Glascock!" said Lucy.

"And so she is;—isn't she?" said Lady Rowley.

"Oh, mamma!" said Nora, jumping up. "It is Caroline;—this one, this one, this one,"—and Nora took her friend by the arm as she spoke,—"it is this one that is to be Mrs. Glascock."

"It is a most natural mistake to make," said Caroline.

Lady Rowley became very red in the face, and was unhappy. "I declare," she said, "that they told me it was your elder sister."

"But I have no elder sister," said Caroline, laughing.

"Of course she is oldest," said Nora,—"and looks to be so, ever so much. Don't you, Miss Spalding?"

"I have always supposed so."

"I don't understand it at all," said Lady Rowley, who had no image before her mind's eye but that of Wallachia Petrie, and who was beginning to feel that she had disgraced her own judgment by the criticisms

she had expressed everywhere as to Mr. Glascock's bride. "I don't understand it at all. Do you mean that both your sisters are younger than you, Miss Spalding?"

"I have only got one, Lady Rowley."

"Mamma, you are thinking of Miss Petrie," said Nora, clapping both her hands together.

"I mean the lady that wears the black bugles."

"Of course you do;—Miss Petrie. Mamma has all along thought that Mr. Glascock was going to carry away with him the republican Browning!"

"Oh, mamma, how can you have made such a blunder!" said Sophie Rowley. "Mamma does make such delicious blunders."

"Sophie, my dear, that is not a proper way of speaking."

"But, dear mamma, don't you?"

"If somebody has told me wrong, that has not been my fault," said Lady Rowley.

The poor woman was so evidently disconcerted that Caroline Spalding was quite unhappy. "My dear Lady Rowley, there has been no fault. And why shouldn't it have been so. Wallachia is so clever, that it is the most natural thing in the world to have thought."

"I cannot say that I agree with you there," said Lady Rowley, somewhat recovering herself.

"You must know the whole truth now," said Nora, turning to her friend, "and you must not be angry with us if we laugh a little at your poetess. Mamma has been frantic with Mr. Glascock because he has been going to marry,—whom shall I say,—her edition of you. She has sworn that he must be insane. When we have sworn how beautiful you were, and how nice,

and how jolly, and all the rest of it,—she has sworn that you were at least a hundred, and that you had a red nose. You must admit that Miss Petrie has a red nose."

"Is that a sin?"

"Not at all in the woman who has it; but in the man who is going to marry it,—yes. Can't you see how we have all been at cross-purposes, and what mamma has been thinking and saying of poor Mr. Glascock? You mustn't repeat it, of course; but we have had such a battle here about it. We thought that mamma had lost her eyes and her ears and her knowledge of things in general. And now it has all come out! You won't be angry?"

"Why should I be angry?"

"Miss Spalding," said Lady Rowley, "I am really unhappy at what has occurred, and I hope that there may be nothing more said about it. I am quite sure that somebody told me wrong, or I should not have fallen into such an error. I beg your pardon,—and Mr. Glascock's!"

"Beg Mr. Glascock's pardon, certainly," said Lucy.

Miss Spalding looked very pretty, smiled very gracefully, and coming up to Lady Rowley to say good-bye, kissed her on her cheeks. This overcame the spirit of the disappointed mother, and Lady Rowley never said another word against Caroline Spalding or her marriage. "Now, mamma, what do you think of her?" said Nora, as soon as Caroline was gone.

"Was it odd, my dear, that I should be astonished at his wanting to marry that other woman?"

"But, mamma, when we told you that she was young and pretty and bright!"

"I thought that you were all demented. I did indeed. I still think it a pity that he should take an American. I think that Miss Spalding is very nice, but there are English girls quite as nice-looking as her." After that there was not another word said by Lady Rowley against Caroline Spalding.

Nora, when she thought of it all that night, felt that she had hardly spoken to Miss Spalding as she should have spoken as to the treatment in England which would be accorded to Mr. Glascock's wife. She became aware of the effect which her own hesitation must have had, and thought that it was her duty to endeavour to remove it. Perhaps, too, the conversion of her mother had some effect in making her feel that she had been wrong in supposing that there would be any difficulty in Caroline's position in England. She had heard so much adverse criticism from her mother that she had doubted in spite of her own convictions;—but now it had come to light that Lady Rowley's criticisms had all come from a most absurd blunder. "Only fancy;"—she said to herself;—"Miss Petrie coming out as Lady Peterborough! Poor mamma!" And then she thought of the reception which would be given to Caroline, and of the place the future Lady Peterborough would fill in the world, and of the glories of Monkham's! Resolving that she would do her best to counteract any evil which she might have done, she seated herself at her desk, and wrote the following letter to Miss Spalding:—

"MY DEAR CAROLINE,

"I am sure you will let me call you so, as had you not felt towards me like a friend, you would not

have come to me to-day and told me of your doubts. I think that I did not answer you as I ought to have done when you spoke to me. I did not like to say anything off-hand, and in that way I misled you. I feel quite sure that you will encounter nothing in England as Mr. Glascock's wife to make you uncomfortable, and that he will have nothing to repent. Of course Englishmen generally marry Englishwomen; and, perhaps, there may be some people who will think that such a prize should not be lost to their countrywomen. But that will be all. Mr. Glascock commands such universal respect that his wife will certainly be respected, and I do not suppose that anything will ever come in your way that can possibly make you feel that he is looked down upon. I hope you will understand what I mean.

"As for your changing now, that is quite impossible. If I were you, I would not say a word about it to any living being; but just go on,—straight forward,—in your own way, and take the good the gods provide you,—as the poet says to the king in the ode. And I think the gods have provided for you very well,—and for him.

"I do hope that I may see you sometimes. I cannot explain to you how very much out of your line 'we' shall be;—for of course there is a 'we.' People are more separated with us than they are, I suppose, with you. And my 'we' is a very poor man, who works hard at writing in a dingy newspaper office, and we shall live in a garret and have brown sugar in our tea, and eat hashed mutton. And I shall have nothing a year to buy my clothes with. Still I mean to do it; and I don't mean to be long before I do do it. When

a girl has made up her mind to be married, she had better go on with it at once, and take it all afterwards as it may come. Nevertheless, perhaps, we may see each other somewhere, and I may be able to introduce you to the dearest, honestest, very best, and most affectionate man in the world. And he is very, very clever.

"Yours very affectionately,
"NORA ROWLEY.

"Thursday morning."

CHAPTER XVI.

Mr. Glascock is Master.

CAROLINE SPALDING, when she received Nora's letter, was not disposed to give much weight to it. She declared to herself that the girl's unpremeditated expression of opinion was worth more than her studied words. But she was not the less grateful or the less loving towards her new friend. She thought how nice it would be to have Nora at that splendid abode in England of which she had heard so much,—but she thought also that in that splendid abode she herself ought never to have part or share. If it were the case that this were an unfitting match, it was clearly her duty to decide that there should be no marriage. Nora had been quite right in bidding her speak to Mr. Glascock himself, and to Mr. Glascock she would go. But it was very difficult for her to determine on the manner in which she would discuss the subject with him. She thought that she could be firm if her mind were once made up. She believed that perhaps she was by nature more firm than he. In all their intercourse together he

had ever yielded to her; and though she had been always pleased and grateful, there had grown upon her an idea that he was perhaps too easy,—that he was a man as to whom it was necessary that they who loved him should see that he was not led away by weakness into folly. But she would want to learn something from him before her decision was finally reached, and in this she foresaw a great difficulty. In her trouble she went to her usual counsellor,—the Republican Browning. In such an emergency she could hardly have done worse. "Wally," she said, "we talk about England, and Italy, and France, as though we knew all about them; but how hard it is to realise the difference between one's own country and others."

"We can at least learn a great deal that is satisfactory," said Wallachia. "About one out of every five Italians can read a book, about two out of every five Englishmen can read a book. Out of every five New Englanders four and four-fifths can read a book. I guess that is knowing a good deal."

"I don't mean in statistics."

"I cannot conceive how you are to learn anything about any country except by statistics. I have just discovered that the number of illegitimate children—"

"Oh, Wally, I can't talk about that,—not now at least. What I cannot realise is this,—what sort of a life it is that they will lead at Monkham's."

"Plenty to eat and drink, I guess; and you'll always have to go round in fine clothes."

"And that will be all?"

"No;—not all. There will be carriages and horses, and all manner of people there who won't care much about you. If he is firm,—very firm;—if he have that

firmness which one does not often meet, even in an American man, he will be able, after a while, to give you a position as an English woman of rank." It is to be feared that Wallachia Petrie had been made aware of Caroline's idea as to Mr. Glascock's want of purpose.

"And that will be all?"

"If you have a baby, they'll let you go and see it two or three times a day. I don't suppose you will be allowed to nurse it, because they never do in England. You have read what the Saturday Review says. In every other respect the Saturday Review has been the falsest of all false periodicals, but I guess it has been pretty true in what it has said about English women."

"I wish I knew more about it really."

"When a man has to leap through a window in the dark, Caroline, of course he doubts whether the feather bed said to be below will be soft enough for him."

"I shouldn't fear the leap for myself, if it wouldn't hurt him. Do you think it possible that society can be so formed that a man should lose caste because he doesn't marry just one of his own set?"

"It has been so all over the world, my dear. If like to like is to be true anywhere, it should be true in marriage."

"Yes;—but with a difference. He and I are like to like. We come of the same race, we speak the same language, we worship the same God, we have the same ideas of culture and of pleasures. The difference is one that is not patent to the eye or to the ear. It is a difference of accidental incident, not of nature or of acquirement."

"I guess you would find, Caroline, that a jury of English matrons sworn to try you fairly, would not find you to be entitled to come among them as one of themselves."

"And how will that affect him?"

"Less powerfully than many others, because he is not impassioned. He is, perhaps—lethargic."

"No, Wally, he is not lethargic."

"If you ask me I must speak. It would harass some men almost to death; it will not do so with him. He would probably find his happiness best in leaving his old country and coming among your people."

The idea of Mr. Glascock,—the future Lord Peterborough,—leaving England, abandoning Monkham, deserting his duty in the House of Lords, and going away to live in an American town, in order that he might escape the miseries which his wife had brought upon him in his own country, was more than Caroline could bear. She knew that, at any rate, it would not come to that. The lord of Monkham would live at Monkham, though the heavens should fall—in regard to domestic comforts. It was clear to Caroline that Wallachia Petrie had in truth never brought home to her own imagination the position of an English peer. "I don't think you understand the people at all," she said angrily.

"You think that you can understand them better because you are engaged to this man!" said Miss Petrie, with well-pronounced irony. "You have found generally that when the sun shines in your eyes your sight is improved by it! You think that the love-talk of a few weeks gives clearer instruction than the laborious reading of many volumes and thoughtful converse with

thinking persons! I hope that you may find it so, Caroline." So saying Wallachia Petrie walked off in great dudgeon.

Miss Petrie, not having learned from her many volumes and her much converse with thoughtful persons to read human nature aright, was convinced by this conversation that her friend Caroline was blind to all results, and was determined to go on with this dangerous marriage, having the rays of that sun of Monkham's so full upon her eyes that she could not see at all. She was specially indignant at finding that her own words had no effect. But, unfortunately, her words had had much effect; and Caroline, though she had contested her points, had done so only with the intention of producing her Mentor's admonitions. Of course it was out of the question that Mr. Glascock should go and live in Providence, Rhode Island, from which thriving town Caroline Spalding had come; but, because that was impossible, it was not the less probable that he might be degraded and made miserable in his own home. That suggested jury of British matrons was a frightful conclave to contemplate, and Caroline was disposed to believe that the verdict given in reference to herself would be adverse to her. So she sat and meditated, and spoke not a word further to any one on the subject till she was alone with the man that she loved.

Mr. Spalding at this time inhabited the ground floor of a large palace in the city, from which there was access to a garden which at this period of the year was green, bright, and shady, and which as being in the centre of a city was large and luxurious. From one end of the house there projected a covered terrace,

or loggia, in which there were chairs and tables, sculptured ornaments, busts, and old monumental relics let into the wall in profusion. It was half chamber and half garden,—such an adjunct to a house as in our climate would give only an idea of cold, rheumatism, and a false romance, but under an Italian sky is a luxury daily to be enjoyed during most months of the year. Here Mr. Glascock and Caroline had passed many hours,—and here they were now seated, late in the evening, while all others of the family were away. As far as regarded the rooms occupied by the American Minister, they had the house and garden to themselves, and there never could come a time more appropriate for the saying of a thing difficult to be said. Mr. Glascock had heard from his father's physician, and had said that it was nearly certain now that he need not go down to Naples again before his marriage. Caroline was trembling, not knowing how to speak, not knowing how to begin;—but resolved that the thing should be done. "He will never know you, Carry," said Mr. Glascock. "It is, perhaps, hardly a sorrow to me, but it is a regret."

"It would have been a sorrow perhaps to him had he been able to know me," said she, taking the opportunity of rushing at her subject.

"Why so? Of all human beings he was the softest-hearted."

"Not softer-hearted than you, Charles. But soft hearts have to be hardened."

"What do you mean? Am I becoming obdurate?"

"I am, Charles," she said. "I have got something to say to you. What will your uncles and aunts and

your mother's relations say of me when they see me at Monkham's?"

"They will swear to me that you are charming; and then,—when my back is turned,—they'll pick you to pieces a little among themselves. I believe that is the way of the world, and I don't suppose that we are to do better than others."

"And if you had married an English girl, a Lady Augusta Somebody,—would they pick her to pieces?"

"I guess they would,—as you say."

"Just the same?"

"I don't think anybody escapes, as far as I can see. But that won't prevent their becoming your bosom friends in a few weeks time."

"No one will say that you have been wrong to marry an American girl?"

"Now, Carry, what is the meaning of all this?"

"Do you know any man in your position who ever did marry an American girl;—any man of your rank in England?" Mr. Glascock began to think of the case, and could not at the moment remember any instance. "Charles, I do not think you ought to be the first."

"And yet somebody must be first, if the thing is ever to be done;—and I am too old to wait on the chance of being the second."

She felt that at the rate she was now progressing she would only run from one little suggestion to another, and that he, either wilfully or in sheer simplicity, would take such suggestions simply as jokes; and she was aware that she lacked the skill to bring the conversation round gradually to the point which she was bound to reach. She must make another dash, let it

be ever so sudden. Her mode of doing so would be crude, ugly,—almost vulgar she feared; but she would attain her object and say what she had to say. When once she had warmed herself with the heat which argument would produce, then, she was pretty sure, she would find herself at least as strong as he. "I don't know that the thing ought to be done at all," she said. During the last moment or two he had put his arm round her waist; and she, not choosing to bid him desist from embracing her, but unwilling in her present mood to be embraced, got up and stood before him. "I have thought, and thought, and thought, and feel that it should not be done. In marriage, like should go to like." She despised herself for using Wallachia's words, but they fitted in so usefully, that she could not refrain from them. "I was wrong not to know it before, but it is better to know it now, than not to have known it till too late. Everything that I hear and see tells me that it would be so. If you were simply an Englishman, I would go anywhere with you; but I am not fit to be the wife of an English lord. The time would come when I should be a disgrace to you, and then I should die."

"I think I should go near dying myself," said he, "if you were a disgrace to me." He had not risen from his chair, and sat calmly looking up into her face.

"We have made a mistake, and let us unmake it," she continued. "I will always be your friend. I will correspond with you. I will come and see your wife."

"That will be very kind!"

"Charles, if you laugh at me, I shall be angry with you. It is right that you should look to your

future life, as it is right that I should do so also. Do you think that I am joking? Do you suppose that I do not mean it?"

"You have taken an extra dose this morning of Wallachia Petrie, and of course you mean it."

"If you think that I am speaking her mind and not my own, you do not know me."

"And what is it you propose?" he said, still keeping his seat and looking calmly up into her face.

"Simply that our engagement should be over."

"And why?"

"Because it is not a fitting one for you to have made. I did not understand it before, but now I do. It will not be good for you to marry an American girl. It will not add to your happiness, and may destroy it. I have learned, at last, to know how much higher is your position than mine."

"And I am to be supposed to know nothing about it?"

"Your fault is only this,—that you have been too generous. I can be generous also."

"Now, look here, Caroline, you must not be angry with me if on such a subject I speak plainly. You must not even be angry if I laugh a little."

"Pray do not laugh at me!—not now."

"I must a little, Carry. Why am I to be supposed to be so ignorant of what concerns my own happiness and my own duties? If you will not sit down, I will get up, and we will take a turn together." He rose from his seat, but they did not leave the covered terrace. They moved on to the extremity, and then he stood hemming her in against a marble table in the corner. "In making this rather wild proposition, have you considered me at all?"

"I have endeavoured to consider you, and you only."

"And how have you done it? By the aid of some misty, far-fetched ideas respecting English society, for which you have no basis except your own dreams,—and by the fantasies of a rabid enthusiast."

"She is not rabid," said Caroline earnestly; "other people think just the same."

"My dear, there is only one person whose thinking on this subject is of any avail, and I am that person. Of course, I can't drag you into church to be married, but practically you can not help yourself from being taken there now. As there need be no question about our marriage,—which is a thing as good as done——"

"It is not done at all," said Caroline.

"I feel quite satisfied you will not jilt me, and as I shall insist on having the ceremony performed, I choose to regard it as a certainty. Passing that by, then, I will go on to the results. My uncles, and aunts, and cousins, and the people you talk of, were very reasonable folk when I last saw them, and quite sufficiently alive to the fact that they had to regard me as the head of their family. I do not doubt that we shall find them equally reasonable when we get home; but should they be changed, should there be any sign shewn that my choice of a wife had occasioned displeasure,—such displeasure would not affect you."

"But it would affect you."

"Not at all. In my own house I am master,—and I mean to continue to be so. You will be mistress there, and the only fear touching such a position is

that it may be recognised by others too strongly. You have nothing to fear, Carry."

"It is of you I am thinking."

"Nor have I. What if some old women, or even some young women, should turn up their noses at the wife I have chosen, because she has not been chosen from among their own countrywomen, is that to be a cause of suffering to us? Can not we rise above that,—lasting as it would do for a few weeks, a month or two perhaps,—say a year,—till my Caroline shall have made herself known? I think that we are strong enough to live down a trouble so light." He had come close to her as he was speaking, and had again put his arm round her waist. She tried to escape from his embrace,—not with persistency, not with the strength which always suffices for a woman when the embrace is in truth a thing to be avoided, but clutching at his fingers with hers, pressing them rather than loosening their grasp. "No, Carry," he continued; "we have got to go through with it now, and we will try and make the best of it. You may trust me that we shall not find it difficult,—not, at least, on the ground of your present fears. I can bear a heavier burden than you will bring upon me."

"I know that I ought to prove to you that I am right," she said, still struggling with his hand.

"And I know that you can prove nothing of the kind. Dearest, it is fixed between us now, and do not let us be so silly as to raise imaginary difficulties. Of course you would have to marry me, even if there were cause for such fears. If there were any great cause, still the game would be worth the candle. There could be no going back, let the fear be what it might.

But there need be no fear if you will only love me." She felt that he was altogether too strong for her,—that she had mistaken his character in supposing that she could be more firm than he. He was so strong that he treated her almost as a child;—and yet she loved him infinitely the better for so treating her. Of course, she knew now that her objection, whether true or unsubstantial, could not avail. As he stood with his arm round her, she was powerless to contradict him in anything. She had so far acknowledged this that she no longer struggled with him, but allowed her hand to remain quietly within his. If there was no going back from this bargain that had been made,—why, then, there was no need for combating. And when he stooped over her and kissed her lips, she had not a word to say. "Be good to me," he said, "and tell me that I am right."

"You must be master, I suppose, whether you are right or wrong. A man always thinks himself entitled to his own way."

"Why, yes. When he has won the battle, he claims his captive. Now, the truth is this, I have won the battle, and your friend, Miss Petrie, has lost it. I hope she will understand that she has been beaten at last out of the field." As he said this, he heard a step behind them, and turning round saw Wallachia there almost before he could drop his arm.

"I am sorry that I have intruded on you," she said very grimly.

"Not in the least," said Mr. Glascock. "Caroline and I have had a little dispute, but we have settled it without coming to blows."

"I do not suppose that an English gentleman ever absolutely strikes a lady," said Wallachia Petrie.

"Not except on strong provocation," said Mr. Glascock. "In reference to wives, a stick is allowed as big as your thumb."

"I have heard that it is so by the laws of England," said Wallachia.

"How can you be so ridiculous, Wally!" said Caroline. "There is nothing that you would not believe."

"I hope that it may never be true in your case," said Wallachia.

A couple of days after this Miss Spalding found that it was absolutely necessary that she should explain the circumstances of her position to Nora. She had left Nora with the purpose of performing a very high-minded action, of sacrificing herself for the sake of her lover, of giving up all her golden prospects, and of becoming once again the bosom friend of Wallachia Petrie, with this simple consolation for her future life,—that she had refused to marry an English nobleman because the English nobleman's condition was unsuited to her. It would have been an episode in female life in which pride might be taken;—but all that was now changed. She had made her little attempt,—had made it, as she felt, in a very languid manner, and had found herself treated as a child for doing so. Of course she was happy in her ill success; of course she would have been broken-hearted had she succeeded. But, nevertheless, she was somewhat lowered in her own esteem, and it was necessary that she should acknowledge the truth to the friend whom she had consulted. A day or two had passed before she found herself alone with

Nora, but when she did so she confessed her failure at once.

"You told him all, then?" said Nora.

"Oh yes, I told him all. That is, I could not really tell him. When the moment came I had no words."

"And what did he say?"

"He had words enough. I never knew him to be eloquent before."

"He can speak out if he likes," said Nora.

"So I have found,—with a vengeance. Nobody was ever so put down as I was. Don't you know that there are times when it does not seem to be worth your while to put out your strength against an adversary? So it was with him. He just told me that he was my master, and that I was to do as he bade me."

"And what did you say?"

"I promised to be a good girl," said Caroline, "and not to pretend to have any opinion of my own ever again. And so we kissed, and were friends."

"I dare say there was a kiss, my dear."

"Of course there was;—and he held me in his arms, and comforted me, and told me how to behave;—just as you would do a little girl. It's all over now, of course; and if there be a mistake, it is his fault. I feel that all responsibility is gone from myself, and that for all the rest of my life I have to do just what he tells me."

"And what says the divine Wallachia?"

"Poor Wally! She says nothing, but she thinks that I am a castaway and a recreant. I am a recreant, I know;—but yet I think that I was right. I know I could not help myself."

"Of course you were right, my dear," said the sage Nera. "If you had the notion in your head, it was wise to get rid of it; but I knew how it would be when you spoke to him."

"You were not so weak when he came to you."

"That was altogether another thing. It was not arranged in heaven that I was to become his captive."

After that Wallachia Petrie never again tried her influence on her former friend, but admitted to herself that the evil was done, and that it could not be remedied. According to her theory of life, Caroline Spalding had been wrong, and weak,—had shown herself to be comfort-loving and luxuriously-minded, had looked to get her happiness from soft effeminate pleasures rather than from rational work and the useful, independent exercise of her own intelligence. In the privacy of her little chamber Wallachia Petrie shed,—not absolute tears,—but many tearful thoughts over her friend. It was to her a thing very terrible that the chosen one of her heart should prefer the career of an English lord's wife to that of an American citizeness, with all manner of capability for female voting, female speech-making, female poetising, and, perhaps, female political action before her. It was a thousand pities! "You may take a horse to water,"—said Wallachia to herself, thinking of the ever-freshly springing fountain of her own mind, at which Caroline Spalding would always have been made welcome freely to quench her thirst,—"but you cannot make him drink if he be not athirst." In the future she would have no friend. Never again would she subject herself to disgrace of such a failure. But the sacrifice was to be made, and she knew that it was bootless to waste her

words further on Caroline Spalding. She left Florence before the wedding, and returned alone to the land of liberty. She wrote a letter to Caroline explaining her conduct, and Caroline Spalding shewed the letter to her husband,—as one that was both loving and eloquent.

"Very loving and very eloquent," he said. "But, nevertheless, one does think of sour grapes."

"There I am sure you wrong her," said Caroline.

CHAPTER XVII.

Mrs. French's Carving Knife.

DURING these days there were terrible doings at Exeter. Camilla had sworn that if Mr. Gibson did not come to, there should be a tragedy, and it appeared that she was inclined to keep her word. Immediately after the receipt of her letter from Mr. Gibson she had had an interview with that gentleman in his lodgings, and had asked him his intentions. He had taken measures to fortify himself against such an attack; but, whatever those measures were, Camilla had broken through them. She had stood before him as he sat in his arm-chair, and he had been dumb in her presence. It had perhaps been well for him that the eloquence of her indignation had been so great that she had hardly been able to pause a moment for a reply. "Will you take your letter back again?" she had said. "I should be wrong to do that," he had lisped out in reply, "because it is true. As a Christian minister I could not stand with you at the altar with a lie in my mouth." In no other way did he attempt to excuse

himself,—but that, twice repeated, filled up all the pause which she made for him.

There never had been such a case before,—so impudent, so cruel, so gross, so uncalled for, so unmanly, so unnecessary, so unjustifiable, so damnable,—so sure of eternal condemnation! All this she said to him with loud voice, and clenched fist, and starting eyes,—regardless utterly of any listeners on the stairs, or of outside passers in the street. In very truth she was moved to a sublimity of indignation. Her low nature became nearly poetic under the wrong inflicted upon her. She was almost tempted to tear him with her hands, and inflict upon him at the moment some terrible vengeance which should be told of for ever in the annals of Exeter. A man so mean as he, so weak, so cowardly, one so little of a hero;—that he should dare to do it, and dare to sit there before her, and to say that he would do it! “Your gown shall be torn off your back, sir, and the very boys of Exeter shall drag you through the gutters!” To this threat he said nothing, but sat mute, hiding his face in his hands. “And now tell me this, sir;—is there anything between you and Bella?” But there was no voice in reply. “Answer my question, sir. I have a right to ask it.” Still he said not a word. “Listen to me. Sooner than that you and she should be man and wife, I would stab her! Yes, I would;—you poor, paltry, lying, cowardly creature!” She remained with him for more than half an hour, and then banged out of the room flashing back a look of scorn at him as she went. Martha, before that day was over, had learned the whole story from Mr. Gibson’s cook, and had told her mistress.

"I did not think he had so much spirit in him," was Miss Stanbury's answer. Throughout Exeter the great wonder arising from the crisis was the amount of spirit which had been displayed by Mr. Gibson.

When he was left alone he shook himself, and began to think that if there were danger that such interviews might occur frequently he had better leave Exeter for good. As he put his hand over his forehead, he declared to himself that a very little more of that kind of thing would kill him. When a couple of hours had passed over his head he shook himself again, and sat down and wrote a letter to his intended mother-in-law.

"I do not mean to complain," he said, "God knows I have no right; but I cannot stand a repetition of what has occurred just now. If your younger daughter comes to see me again I must refuse to see her, and shall leave the town. I am ready to make what reparation may be possible for the mistake into which I have fallen.

"T. G."

Mrs. French was no doubt much afraid of her younger daughter, but she was less afraid of her than were other people. Familiarity, they say, breeds contempt; and who can be so familiar with a child as its parent? She did not in her heart believe that Camilla would murder anybody, and she fully realised the conviction that, even after all that was come and gone, it would be better that one of her daughters should have a husband than that neither should be so blessed. If only Camilla could be got out of Exeter for a few

months,—how good a thing it would be for them all! She had a brother in Gloucester,—if only he could be got to take Camilla for a few months! And then, too, she knew that if the true rights of her two daughters were strictly and impartially examined, Arabella's claim was much stronger than any that Camilla could put forward to the hand of Mr. Gibson.

"You must not go there again, Camilla," the mother said.

"I shall go whenever I please," replied the fury.

"Now, Camilla, we may as well understand each other. I will not have it done. If I am provoked, I will send to your uncle at Gloucester." Now the uncle at Gloucester was a timber merchant, a man with protuberant eyes and a great square chin,—known to be a very stern man indeed, and not at all afraid of young women.

"What do I care for my uncle? My uncle would take my part."

"No, he would not. The truth is, Camilla, you interfered with Bella first."

"Mamma, how dare you say so!"

"You did, my dear. And these are the consequences."

"And you mean to say that she is to be Mrs. Gibson?"

"I say nothing about that. But I do not see why they shouldn't be married if their hearts are inclined to each other."

"I will die first!"

"Your dying has nothing to do with it, Camilla."

"And I will kill her!"

"If you speak to me again in that way I will

write to your uncle at Gloucester. I have done the best I could for you both, and I will not bear such treatment."

"And how am I treated?"

"You should not have interfered with your sister."

"You are all in a conspiracy together," shouted Camilla, "you are! There never was anybody so badly treated,—never,—never,—never! What will everybody say of me?"

"They will pity you, if you will be quiet."

"I don't want to be pitied;—I won't be pitied. I wish I could die,—and I will die! Anybody else would, at any rate, have had their mother and sister with them!" Then she burst into a flood of real, true, womanly tears.

After this there was a lull at Heavitree for a few days. Camilla did not speak to her sister, but she condescended to hold some intercourse with her mother, and to take her meals at the family table. She did not go out of the house, but she employed herself in her own room, doing no one knew what, with all that new clothing and household gear which was to have been transferred in her train to Mr. Gibson's house. Mrs. French was somewhat uneasy about the new clothing and household gear, feeling that, in the event of Bella's marriage, at least a considerable portion of it must be transferred to the new bride. But it was impossible at the present moment to open such a subject to Camilla;—it would have been as a proposition to a lioness respecting the taking away of her whelps. Nevertheless, the day must soon come in which something must be said about the clothing and household gear. All the property that had been sent into the

house at Camilla's orders could not be allowed to remain as Camilla's perquisites, now that Camilla was not to be married. "Do you know what she is doing, my dear?" said Mrs. French to her elder daughter.

"Perhaps she is picking out the marks," said Bella.

"I don't think she would do that as yet," said Mrs. French.

"She might just as well leave it alone," said Bella, feeling that one of the two letters would do for her. But neither of them dared to speak to her of her occupation in these first days of her despair.

Mr. Gibson in the meantime remained at home, or only left his house to go to the Cathedral or to visit the narrow confines of his little parish. When he was out he felt that everybody looked at him, and it seemed to him that people whispered about him when they saw him at his usual desk in the choir. His friends passed him merely bowing to him, and he was aware that he had done that which would be regarded by every one around him as unpardonable. And yet,—what ought he to have done? He acknowledged to himself that he had been very foolish, mad,—quite demented at the moment,—when he allowed himself to think it possible that he should marry Camilla French. But having found out how mad he had been at that moment, having satisfied himself that to live with her as his wife would be impossible, was he not right to break the engagement? Could anything be so wicked as marrying a woman whom he—hated? Thus he tried to excuse himself; but yet he knew that all the world would condemn him. Life in Exeter would be impossible, if no way to social pardon could be opened for

him. He was willing to do anything within bounds in mitigation of his offence. He would give up fifty pounds a year to Camilla for his life,—or he would marry Bella. Yes; he would marry Bella at once,—if Camilla would only consent, and give up that idea of stabbing some one. Bella French was not very nice in his eyes; but she was quiet, he thought, and it might be possible to live with her. Nevertheless, he told himself over and over again that the manner in which unmarried men with incomes were set upon by ladies in want of husbands was very disgraceful to the country at large. That mission to Natal which had once been offered to him would have had charms for him now, of which he had not recognised the force when he rejected it.

"Do you think that he ever was really engaged to her?" Dorothy said to her aunt. Dorothy was now living in a seventh heaven of happiness, writing love-letters to Brooke Burgess every other day, and devoting to this occupation a number of hours of which she ought to have been ashamed; making her purchases for her wedding,—with nothing, however, of the magnificence of a Camilla,—but discussing everything with her aunt, who urged her on to extravagances which seemed beyond the scope of her own economical ideas; settling, or trying to settle, little difficulties which perplexed her somewhat, and wondering at her own career. She could not of course be married without the presence of her mother and sister, and her aunt,—with something of a grim courtesy,—had intimated that they should be made welcome to the house in the Close for the special occasion. But nothing had been said about Hugh. The wedding was to be in the Cathedral, and

Dorothy had a little scheme in her head for meeting her brother among the aisles. He would no doubt come down with Brooke, and nothing perhaps need be said about it to Aunt Stanbury. But still it was a trouble. Her aunt had been so good that Dorothy felt that no step should be taken which would vex the old woman. It was evident enough that when permission had been given for the visit of Mrs. Stanbury and Priscilla, Hugh's name had been purposely kept back. There had been no accidental omission. Dorothy, therefore, did not dare to mention it,—and yet it was essential for her happiness that he should be there. At the present moment Miss Stanbury's intense interest in the Stanbury wedding was somewhat mitigated by the excitement occasioned by Mr. Gibson's refusal to be married. Dorothy was so shocked that she could not bring herself to believe the statement that had reached them through Martha.

"Of course he was engaged to her. We all knew that," said Miss Stanbury.

"I think there must have been some mistake," said Dorothy. "I don't see how he could do it."

"There is no knowing what people can do, my dear, when they're hard driven. I suppose we shall have a lawsuit now, and he'll have to pay ever so much money. Well, well, well! see what a deal of trouble you might have saved!"

"But, he'd have done the same to me, aunt;—only, you know, I never could have taken him. Isn't it better as it is, aunt? Tell me."

"I suppose young women always think it best when they can get their own ways. An old woman like me has only got to do what she is bid."

"But this was best, aunt;—was it not?"

"My dear, you've had your way, and let that be enough. Poor Camilla French is not allowed to have hers at all. Dear, dear, dear! I didn't think the man would ever have been such a fool to begin with;—or that he would ever have had the heart to get out of it afterwards." It astonished Dorothy to find that her aunt was not loud in reprobation of Mr. Gibson's very dreadful conduct.

In the meantime Mrs. French had written to her brother at Gloucester. The maid-servant, in making Miss Camilla's bed, and in "putting the room to rights," as she called it,—which description probably was intended to cover the circumstances of an accurate search,—had discovered, hidden among some linen,—a carving knife! such a knife as is used for the cutting up of fowls; and, after two days' interval, had imparted the discovery to Mrs. French. Instant visit was made to the pantry, and it was found that a very aged but unbroken and sharply-pointed weapon was missing. Mrs. French at once accused Camilla, and Camilla, after some hesitation, admitted that it might be there. Molly, she said, was a nasty, sly, wicked thing, to go looking in her drawers, and she would never leave anything unlocked again. The knife, she declared, had been taken upstairs, because she had wanted something very sharp to cut,—the bones of her stays. The knife was given up, but Mrs. French thought it best to write to her brother, Mr. Crump. She was in great doubt about sundry matters. Had the carving knife really pointed to a domestic tragedy;—and if so, what steps ought a poor widow to take with such a daughter? And what ought to be done about Mr. Gibson? It ran

through Mrs. French's mind that unless something were done at once, Mr. Gibson would escape scot-free. It was her wish that he should yet become her son-in-law. Poor Bella was entitled to her chance. But if Bella was to be disappointed,—from fear of carving knives, or for other reasons,—then there came the question whether Mr. Gibson should not be made to pay in purse for the mischief he had done. With all these thoughts and doubts running through her head, Mrs. French wrote to her brother at Gloucester.

There came back an answer from Mr. Crump, in which that gentleman expressed a very strong idea that Mr. Gibson should be prosecuted for damages with the utmost virulence, and with the least possible delay. No compromise should be accepted. Mr. Crump would himself come to Exeter and see the lawyer as soon as he should be told that there was a lawyer to be seen. As to the carving knife, Mr. Crump was of opinion that it did not mean anything. Mr. Crump was a gentleman who did not believe in strong romance, but who had great trust in all pecuniary claims. The Frenches had always been genteel. The late Captain French had been an officer in the army, and at ordinary times and seasons the Frenches were rather ashamed of the Crump connection. But now the timber merchant might prove himself to be a useful friend.

Mrs. French shewed her brother's letter to Bella,—and poor Bella was again sore-hearted, seeing that nothing was said in it of her claims. "It will be dreadful scandal to have it all in the papers!" said Bella.

"But what can we do?"

"Anything would be better than that," said Bella. "And you don't want to punish Mr. Gibson, mamma."

"But, my dear, you see what your uncle says. What can I do, except go to him for advice?"

"Why don't you go to Mr. Gibson yourself, mamma?"

But nothing was said to Camilla about Mr. Crump;—nothing as yet. Camilla did not love Mr. Crump, but there was no other house except that of Mr. Crump's at Gloucester to which she might be sent, if it could be arranged that Mr. Gibson and Bella should be made one. Mrs. French took her eldest daughter's advice, and went to Mr. Gibson;—taking Mr. Crump's letter in her pocket. For herself she wanted nothing,—but was it not the duty of her whole life to fight for her daughters? Poor woman! If somebody would only have taught her how that duty might best be done, she would have endeavoured to obey the teaching. "You know I do not want to threaten you," she said to Mr. Gibson; "but you see what my brother says. Of course I wrote to my brother. What could a poor woman do in such circumstances except write to her brother?"

"If you choose to set the bloodhounds of the law at me, of course you can," said Mr. Gibson.

"I do not want to go to law at all;—God knows I do not!" said Mrs. French. Then there was a pause. "Poor dear Bella!" ejaculated Mrs. French.

"Dear Bella!" echoed Mr. Gibson.

"What do you mean to do about Bella?" asked Mrs. French.

"I sometimes think that I had better take poison and have done with it!" said Mr. Gibson, feeling himself to be very hard pressed.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Bella Victrix.

MR. CRUMP arrived at Exeter. Camilla was not told of his coming till the morning of the day on which he arrived; and then the tidings were communicated, because it was necessary that a change should be made in the bed-rooms. She and her sister had separate rooms when there was no visitor with them, but now Mr. Crump must be accommodated. There was a long consultation between Bella and Mrs. French, but at last it was decided that Bella should sleep with her mother. There would still be too much of the lioness about Camilla to allow of her being regarded as a safe companion through the watches of the night. "Why is Uncle Jonas coming now?" she asked.

"I thought it better to ask him," said Mrs. French.

After a long pause, Camilla asked another question.

"Does Uncle Jonas mean to see Mr. Gibson?"

"I suppose he will," said Mrs. French.

"Then he will see a low, mean fellow;—the lowest, meanest fellow that ever was heard of! But that won't make much difference to Uncle Jonas. I wouldn't have him now, if he was to ask me ever so;—that I wouldn't!"

Mr. Crump came, and kissed his sister and two nieces. The embrace with Camilla was not very affectionate. "So your Joe has been and jilted you?" said Uncle Jonas;—"it's like one of them clergymen. They say so many prayers, they think they may do almost anything afterwards. Another man would have had his head punched."

"The less talk there is about it the better," said Camilla.

On the following day Mr. Crump called by appointment on Mr. Gibson, and remained closeted with that gentleman for the greater portion of the morning. Camilla knew well that he was going, and went about the house like a perturbed spirit during his absence. There was a look about her that made them all doubt whether she was not, in truth, losing her mind. Her mother more than once went to the pantry to see that the knives were right; and, as regarded that sharp-pointed weapon, was careful to lock it up carefully out of her daughter's way. Mr. Crump had declared himself willing to take Camilla back to Gloucester, and had laughed at the obstacles which his niece might, perhaps, throw in the way of such an arrangement. "She mustn't have much luggage;—that is all," said Mr. Crump. For Mr. Crump had been made aware of the circumstances of the trousseau. About three o'clock Mr. Crump came back from Mr. Gibson's, and expressed a desire to be left alone with Camilla. Mrs. French was prepared for everything; and Mr. Crump soon found himself with his younger niece.

"Camilla, my dear," said he, "this has been a bad business."

"I don't know what business you mean, Uncle Jonas."

"Yes, you do, my dear;—you know. And I hope it won't come too late to prove to you that young women shouldn't be too keen in setting their caps at the gentlemen. It's better for them to be hunted, than to hunt."

"Uncle Jonas, I will not be insulted."

"Stick to that, my dear, and you won't get into a scrape again. Now, look here. This man can never be made to marry you, anyhow."

"I wouldn't touch him with a pair of tongs, if he were kneeling at my feet!"

"That's right; stick to that. Of course, you wouldn't now, after all that has come and gone. No girl with any spirit would."

"He's a coward and a thief, and he'll be——damned for what he has done, some of these days!"

"T-ch, t-ch, t-ch! That isn't a proper way for a young lady to talk. That's cursing and swearing."

"It isn't cursing and swearing;—it's what the Bible says."

"Then we'll leave him to the Bible. In the meantime, Mr. Gibson wants to marry some one else, and that can't hurt you."

"He may marry whom he likes;—but he shan't marry Bella—that's all!"

"It is Bella that he means to marry."

"Then he won't. I'll forbid the banns. I'll write to the bishop. I'll go to the church and prevent its being done. I'll make such a noise in the town that it can't be done. It's no use your looking at me like that, Uncle Jonas. I've got my own feelings, and he shall never marry Bella. It's what they have been intending all through, and it shan't be done!"

"It will be done."

"Uncle Jonas, I'll stab her to the heart, and him too, before I'll see it done! Though I were to be killed the next day, I would. Could you bear it?"

"I'm not a young woman. Now, I'll tell you what I want you to do."

"I'll not do anything."

"Just pack up your things, and start with me to Gloucester to-morrow."

"I—won't!"

"Then you'll be carried, my dear. I'll write to your aunt, to say that you're coming; and we'll be as jolly as possible when we get you home."

"I won't go to Gloucester, Uncle Jonas. I won't go away from Exeter. I won't let it be done. She shall never, never, never be that man's wife!"

Nevertheless, on the day but one after this, Camilla French did go to Gloucester. Before she went, however, things had to be done in that house which almost made Mrs. French repent that she had sent for so stern an assistant. Camilla was at last told, in so many words, that the things which she had prepared for her own wedding must be given up for the wedding of her sister; and it seemed that this item in the list of her sorrows troubled her almost more than any other. She swore that whither she went there should go the dresses, and the handkerchiefs, and the hats, the bonnets, and the boots. "Let her have them," Bella had pleaded. But Mr. Crump was inexorable. He had looked into his sister's affairs, and found that she was already in debt. To his practical mind, it was an absurdity that the unmarried sister should keep things that were wholly unnecessary, and that the sister that was to be married should be without things that were needed. There was a big trunk, of which Camilla had the key, but which, unfortunately for her, had been deposited in her mother's room. Upon this she sat, and swore that nothing should move her but a promise that her plunder should remain untouched.

But there came this advantage from the terrible question of the wedding raiments,—that in her energy to keep possession of them, she gradually abandoned her opposition to her sister's marriage. She had been driven from one point to another till she was compelled at last to stand solely upon her possessions. "Perhaps we had better let her keep them," said Mrs. French. "Trash and nonsense!" said Mr. Crump. "If she wants a new frock, let her have it; as for the sheets and tablecloths, you'd better keep them yourself. But Bella must have the rest."

It was found on the eve of the day on which she was told that she was to depart that she had in truth armed herself with a dagger or clasp knife. She actually displayed it when her uncle told her to come away from the chest on which she was sitting. She declared that she would defend herself there to the last gasp of her life; but of course the knife fell from her hand the first moment that she was touched. "I did think once that she was going to make a poke at me," Mr. Crump said afterwards; "but she had screamed herself so weak that she couldn't do it."

When the morning came, she was taken to the fly and driven to the station without any further serious outbreak. She had even condescended to select certain articles, leaving the rest of the hymeneal wealth behind her. Bella, early on that morning of departure, with great humility, implored her sister to forgive her; but no entreaties could induce Camilla to address one gracious word to the proposed bride. "You've been cheating me all along!" she said; and that was the last word she spoke to poor Bella.

She went, and the field was once more open to the

amorous Vicar of St. Peter's-cum-Pumpkin. It is astonishing how the greatest difficulties will sink away, and become as it were nothing, when they are encountered face to face. It is certain that Mr. Gibson's position had been one most trying to the nerves. He had speculated on various modes of escape;—a curacy in the north of England would be welcome, or the duties of a missionary in New Zealand,—or death. To tell the truth, he had, during the last week or two, contemplated even a return to the dominion of Camilla. That there should ever again be things pleasant for him in Exeter seemed to be quite impossible. And yet, on the evening of the day but one after the departure of Camilla, he was seated almost comfortably with his own Arabella! There is nothing that a man may not do, nothing that he may not achieve, if he have only pluck enough to go through with it.

"You do love me?" Bella said to him. It was natural that she should ask him; but it would have been better perhaps if she had held her tongue. Had she spoken to him about his house, or his income, or the servants, or the duties of his parish church, it would have been easier for him to make a comfortable reply.

"Yes;—I love you," he replied; "of course I love you. We have always been friends, and I hope things will go straight now. I have had a great deal to go through, Bella, and so have you;—but God will temper the wind to the shorn lambs." How was the wind to be tempered for the poor lamb who had gone forth shorn down to the very skin!

Soon after this Mrs. French returned to the room, and then there was no more romance. Mrs. French

had by no means forgiven Mr. Gibson all the trouble he had brought into the family, and mixed a certain amount of acrimony with her entertainment of him. She dictated to him, treated him with but scant respect, and did not hesitate to let him understand that he was to be watched very closely till he was actually and absolutely married. The poor man had in truth no further idea of escape. He was aware that he had done that which made it necessary that he should bear a great deal, and that he had no right to resent suspicion. When a day was fixed in June on which he should be married at the church of Heavitree, and it was proposed that he should be married by banns, he had nothing to urge to the contrary. And when it was also suggested to him by one of the prebendaries of the Cathedral that it might be well for him to change his clerical duties for a period with the vicar of a remote parish in the north of Cornwall,—so as to be out of the way of remark from those whom he had scandalised by his conduct,—he had no objection to make to that arrangement. When Mrs. MacHugh met him in the Close, and told him that he was a gay Lothario, he shook his head with a melancholy self-abasement, and passed on without even a feeling of anger. "When they smite me on the right cheek, I turn unto them my left," he said to himself, when one of the cathedral vergers remarked to him that after all he was going to be married at last. Even Bella became dominant over him, and assumed with him occasionally the air of one who had been injured.

Bella wrote a touching letter to her sister,—a letter that ought to have touched Camilla, begging for forgiveness, and for one word of sisterly love. Camilla

answered the letter, but did not send a word of sisterly love. "According to my way of thinking, you have been a nasty sly thing, and I don't believe you'll ever be happy. As for him, I'll never speak to him again." That was nearly the whole of her letter. "You must leave it to time," said Mrs. French wisely; "she'll come round some day." And then Mrs. French thought how bad it would be for her if the daughter who was to be her future companion did not "come round" some day.

And so it was settled that they should be married in Heavitree Church,—Mr. Gibson and his first love,—and things went on pretty much as though nothing had been done amiss. The gentleman from Cornwall came down to take Mr. Gibson's place at St. Peter's-cum-Pumpkin, while his duties in the Cathedral were temporarily divided among the other priest-vicars,—with some amount of grumbling on their part. Bella commenced her modest preparations without any of the eclat which had attended Camilla's operations, but she felt more certainty of ultimate success than had ever fallen to Camilla's lot. In spite of all that had come and gone, Bella never feared again that Mr. Gibson would be untrue to her. In regard to him, it must be doubted whether Nemesis ever fell upon him with a hand sufficiently heavy to punish him for the great sins which he had manifestly committed. He had encountered a bad week or two, and there had been days in which, as has been said, he thought of Natal, of ecclesiastical censures, and even of annihilation; but no real punishment seemed to fall upon him. It may be doubted whether, when the whole arrangement was settled for him, and when he heard that Camilla had

yielded to the decrees of Fate, he did not rather flatter himself on being a successful man of intrigue,—whether he did not take some glory to himself for his good fortune with women, and pride himself amidst his self-reproaches for the devotion which had been displayed for him by the fair sex in general. It is quite possible that he taught himself to believe that at one time Dorothy Stanbury was devotedly in love with him, and that when he reckoned up his sins she was one of those in regard to whom he accounted himself to have been a sinner. The spirit of intrigue with women, as to which men will flatter themselves, is customarily so vile, so mean, so vapid a reflection of a feeling, so aimless, resultless, and utterly unworthy! Passion exists and has its sway. Vice has its votaries,—and there is, too, that worn-out longing for vice, “prurient, yet passionless, cold-studied lewdness,” which drags on a feeble continuance with the aid of money. But the commonest folly of man in regard to women is a weak taste for intrigue, with little or nothing on which to feed it;—a worse than feminine aptitude for male coquetry, which never ascends beyond a desire that somebody shall hint that there is something peculiar; and which is shocked and retreats backwards into its boots when anything like a consequence forces itself on the apprehension. Such men have their glory in their own estimation. We remember how Falstaff flouted the pride of his companion whose victory in the fields of love had been but little glorious. But there are victories going now-a-days so infinitely less glorious, that Falstaff’s page was a Lothario, a very Don Juan, in comparison with the heroes whose praises are too often sung by their own lips. There is this recom-

pense,—that their defeats are always sung by lips louder than their own. Mr. Gibson, when he found that he was to escape apparently unscathed,—that people standing respectably before the world absolutely dared to whisper words to him of congratulation on this third attempt at marriage within little more than a year, took pride to himself, and bethought himself that he was a gay deceiver. He believed that he had selected his wife,—and that he had done so in circumstances of peculiar difficulty! Poor Mr. Gibson,—we hardly know whether most to pity him, or the unfortunate, poor woman who ultimately became Mrs. Gibson.

"And so Bella French is to be the fortunate woman after all," said Miss Stanbury to her niece.

"It does seem to me to be so odd," said Dorothy.

"I wonder how he looked when he proposed it."

"Like a fool,—as he always does."

Dorothy refrained from remarking that Miss Stanbury had not always thought that Mr. Gibson looked like a fool, but the idea occurred to her mind. "I hope they will be happy at last," she said.

"Pshaw! Such people can't be happy, and can't be unhappy. I don't suppose it much matters which he marries, or whether he marries them both, or neither. They are to be married by banns, they say,—at Heavitree."

"I don't see anything bad in that."

"Only Camilla might step out and forbid them," said Aunt Stanbury. "I almost wish she would."

"She has gone away, aunt,—to an uncle who lives at Gloucester."

"It was well to get her out of the way, no doubt. They'll be married before you now, Dolly."

"That won't break my heart, aunt."

"I don't suppose there'll be much of a wedding. They haven't anybody belonging to them, except that uncle at Gloucester." Then there was a pause. "I think it is a nice thing for friends to collect together at a wedding," continued Aunt Stanbury.

"I think it is," said Dorothy, in the mildest, softest voice.

"I suppose we must make room for that black sheep of a brother of yours, Dolly,—or else you won't be contented."

"Dear, dear, dearest aunt!" said Dorothy, falling down on her knees at her aunt's feet.

CHAPTER XIX.

Self-sacrificed.

TREVELYAN, when his wife had left him, sat for hours in silence pondering over his own position and hers. He had taken his child to an upper room, in which was his own bed and the boy's cot, and before he seated himself, he spread out various toys which he had been at pains to purchase for the unhappy little fellow,—a regiment of Garibaldian soldiers, all with red shirts, and a drum to give the regiment martial spirit, and a soft fluffly Italian ball, and a battledore and a shuttlecock,—instruments enough for juvenile joy, if only there had been a companion with whom the child could use them. But the toys remained where the father had placed them, almost unheeded, and the child sat looking out of the window, melancholy,

silent, and repressed. Even the drum did not tempt him to be noisy. Doubtless he did not know why he was wretched, but he was fully conscious of his wretchedness. In the meantime the father sat motionless, in an old worn-out but once handsome leathern arm-chair, with his eyes fixed against the opposite wall, thinking of the wreck of his life.

Thought deep, correct, continued, and energetic is quite compatible with madness. At this time Trevelyan's mind was so far unhinged, his ordinary faculties were so greatly impaired, that they who declared him to be mad were justified in their declaration. His condition was such that the happiness and welfare of no human being,—not even his own,—could safely be entrusted to his keeping. He considered himself to have been so injured by the world, to have been the victim of so cruel a conspiracy among those who ought to have been his friends, that there remained nothing for him but to flee away from them and remain in solitude. But yet, through it all, there was something approaching to a conviction that he had brought his misery upon himself by being unlike to other men; and he declared to himself over and over again that it was better that he should suffer than that others should be punished. When he was alone his reflections respecting his wife were much juster than were his words when he spoke either with her, or to others, of her conduct. He would declare to himself not only that he did not believe her to have been false to him, but that he had never accused her of such crime. He had demanded from her obedience, and she had been disobedient. It had been incumbent upon him,—so ran his own ideas, as expressed to him-

self in these long unspoken soliloquies,—to exact obedience, or at least compliance, let the consequences be what they might. She had refused to obey or even to comply, and the consequences were very grievous. But, though he pitied himself with a pity that was feminine, yet he acknowledged to himself that her conduct had been the result of his own moody temperament. Every friend had parted from him. All those to whose counsels he had listened, had counselled him that he was wrong. The whole world was against him. Had he remained in England, the doctors and lawyers among them would doubtless have declared him to be mad. He knew all this, and yet he could not yield. He could not say that he had been wrong. He could not even think that he had been wrong as to the cause of the great quarrel. He was one so miserable and so unfortunate,—so he thought,—that even in doing right he had fallen into perdition!

He had had two enemies, and between them they had worked his ruin. These were Colonel Osborne and Bozzle. It may be doubted whether he did not hate the latter the more strongly of the two. He knew now that Bozzle had been untrue to him, but his disgust did not spring from that so much as from the feeling that he had defiled himself by dealing with the man. Though he was quite assured that he had been right in his first cause of offence, he knew that he had fallen from bad to worse in every step that he had taken since. Colonel Osborne had marred his happiness by vanity, by wicked intrigue, by a devilish delight in doing mischief; but he, he himself, had consummated the evil by his own folly. Why had he not

taken Colonel Osborne by the throat, instead of going to a low-born, vile, mercenary spy for assistance? He hated himself for what he had done;—and yet it was impossible that he should yield.

It was impossible that he should yield;—but it was yet open to him to sacrifice himself. He could not go back to his wife and say that he was wrong; but he could determine that the destruction should fall upon him and not upon her. If he gave up his child and then died,—died, alone, without any friend near him, with no word of love in his ears, in that solitary and miserable abode which he had found for himself,—then it would at least be acknowledged that he had expiated the injury that he had done. She would have his wealth, his name, his child to comfort her,—and would be troubled no longer by demands for that obedience which she had sworn at the altar to give him, and which she had since declined to render to him. Perhaps there was some feeling that the coals of fire would be hot upon her head when she should think how much she had received from him and how little she had done for him. And yet he loved her, with all his heart, and would even yet dream of bliss that might be possible with her,—had not the terrible hand of irresistible Fate come between them and marred it all. It was only a dream now. It could be no more than a dream. He put out his thin wasted hands and looked at them, and touched the hollowness of his own cheeks, and coughed that he might hear the hacking sound of his own infirmity, and almost took glory in his weakness. It could not be long before the coals of fire would be heaped upon her head.

"Louey," he said at last, addressing the child who had sat for an hour gazing through the window without stirring a limb or uttering a sound; "Louey, my boy, would you like to go back to mamma?" The child turned round on the floor, and fixed his eyes on his father's face, but made no immediate reply. "Louey, dear, come to papa and tell him. Would it be nice to go back to mamma?" And he stretched out his hand to the boy. Louey got up, and approached slowly and stood between his father's knees. "Tell me, darling;—you understand what papa says?"

"Altro!" said the boy, who had been long enough among Italian servants to pick up the common words of the language. Of course he would like to go back. How indeed could it be otherwise?

"Then you shall go to her, Louey."

"To-day, papa?"

"Not to-day, nor to-morrow."

"But the day after?"

"That is sufficient. You shall go. It is not so bad with you that one day more need be a sorrow to you. You shall go,—and then you will never see your father again!" Trevelyan as he said this drew his hands away so as not to touch the child. The little fellow had put out his arm, but seeing his father's angry gesture had made no further attempt at a caress. He feared his father from the bottom of his little heart, and yet was aware that it was his duty to try to love papa. He did not understand the meaning of that last threat, but slunk back, passing his untouched toys, to the window, and there seated himself again, filling his mind with the thought that when two more

long long days should have crept by, he should once more go to his mother.

Trevelyan had tried his best to be soft and gentle to his child. All that he had said to his wife of his treatment of the boy had been true to the letter. He had spared no personal trouble, he had done all that he had known how to do, he had exercised all his intelligence to procure amusement for the boy;—but Loney had hardly smiled since he had been taken from his mother. And now that he was told that he was to go and never see his father again, the tidings were to him simply tidings of joy. "There is a curse upon me," said Trevelyan; "it is written down in the book of my destiny that nothing shall ever love me!"

He went out from the house, and made his way down by the narrow path through the olives and vines to the bottom of the hill in front of the villa. It was evening now, but the evening was very hot, and though the olive trees stood in long rows, there was no shade. Quite at the bottom of the hill there was a little sluggish muddy brook, along the sides of which the reeds grew thickly and the dragon-flies were playing on the water. There was nothing attractive in the spot, but he was weary, and sat himself down on the dry hard bank which had been made by repeated clearing of mud from the bottom of the little rivulet. He sat watching the dragon-flies as they made their short flights in the warm air, and told himself that of all God's creatures there was not one to whom less power of disporting itself in God's sun was given than to him. Surely it would be better for him that he should die, than live as he was now living without

any of the joys of life. The solitude of Casalunga was intolerable to him, and yet there was no whither that he could go and find society. He could travel if he pleased. He had money at command, and, at any rate as yet, there was no embargo on his personal liberty. But how could he travel alone,—even if his strength might suffice for the work? There had been moments in which he had thought that he would be happy in the love of his child,—that the companionship of an infant would suffice for him if only the infant would love him. But all such dreams as that were over. To repay him for his tenderness his boy was always dumb before him. Louey would not prattle as he had used to do. He would not even smile, or give back the kisses with which his father had attempted to win him. In mercy to the boy he would send him back to his mother;—in mercy to the boy if not to the mother also. It was in vain that he should look for any joy in any quarter. Were he to return to England, they would say that he was mad!

He lay there by the brook-side till the evening was far advanced, and then he arose and slowly returned to the house. The labour of ascending the hill was so great to him that he was forced to pause and hold by the olive trees as he slowly performed his task. The perspiration came in profusion from his pores, and he found himself to be so weak that he must in future regard the brook as being beyond the tether of his daily exercise. Eighteen months ago he had been a strong walker, and the snow-bound paths of Swiss mountains had been a joy to him. He paused as he was slowly dragging himself on, and looked up at the wretched,

desolate, comfortless abode which he called his home. Its dreariness was so odious to him that he was half-minded to lay himself down where he was, and let the night air come upon him and do its worst. In such case, however, some Italian doctor would be sent down who would say that he was mad. Above all the things, and to the last, he must save himself from that degradation.

When he had crawled up to the house, he went to his child, and found that the woman had put the boy to bed. Then he was angry with himself in that he himself had not seen to this, and kept up his practice of attending the child to the last. He would, at least, be true to his resolution, and prepare for the boy's return to his mother. Not knowing how otherwise to manage it, he wrote that night the following note to Mr. Glaslock;—

* Cassalunga, Thursday night.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"Since you last were considerate enough to call upon me I have resolved to take a step in my affairs which, though it will rob me of my only remaining gratification, will tend to lessen the troubles under which Mrs. Trevelyan is labouring. If she desires it, as no doubt she does, I will consent to place our boy again in her custody,—trusting to her sense of honour to restore him to me should I demand it. In my present unfortunate position I cannot suggest that she should come for the boy. I am unable to support the excitement occasioned by her presence. I will, however, deliver up my darling either to you, or to any messenger sent by you whom I can trust. I beg

heartily to apologise for the trouble I am giving you, and to subscribe myself yours very faithfully,

“LOUIS TREVELYAN.

“The Hon. C. Glascock.

“P.S.—It is as well, perhaps, that I should explain that I must decline to receive any visit from Sir Marmaduke Rowley. Sir Marmaduke has insulted me grossly on each occasion on which I have seen him since his return home.”

CHAPTER XX.

The Baths of Lucca.

JUNE was now far advanced, and the Rowleys and the Spaldings had removed from Florence to the Baths of Lucca. Mr. Glascock had followed in their wake, and the whole party were living at the Baths in one of those hotels in which so many English and Americans are wont to congregate in the early weeks of the Italian summer. The marriage was to take place in the last week of the month; and all the party were to return to Florence for the occasion,—with the exception of Sir Marmaduke and Mrs. Trevelyan. She was altogether unfitted for wedding joys, and her father had promised to bear her company when the others left her. Mr. Glascock and Caroline Spalding were to be married in Florence, and were to depart immediately from thence for some of the cooler parts of Switzerland. After that Sir Marmaduke and Lady Rowley were to return to London with their daughters, preparatory to that dreary journey back to the Mandarins; and they had not even yet resolved what they had

better do respecting that unfortunate man who was living in seclusion on the hill-top near Siena. They had consulted lawyers and doctors in Florence, but it had seemed that everybody there was afraid of putting the law in force against an Englishman. Doubtless there was a law in respect to the custody of the insane; and it was admitted that if Trevelyan were dangerously mad something could be done; but it seemed that nobody was willing to stir in such a case as that which now existed. Something, it was said, might be done at some future time; but the difficulties were so great that nothing could be done now.

It was very sad, because it was necessary that some decision should be made as to the future residence of Mrs. Trevelyan and of Nora. Emily had declared that nothing should induce her to go to the Islands with her father and mother unless her boy went with her. Since her journey to Casalunga she had also expressed her unwillingness to leave her husband. Her heart had been greatly softened towards him, and she had declared that where he remained, there would she remain,—as near to him as circumstances would admit. It might be that at last her care would be necessary for his comfort. He supplied her with means of living, and she would use these means as well as she might be able in his service.

Then there had arisen the question of Nora's future residence. And there had come troubles and storms in the family. Nora had said that she would not go back to the Mandarins, but had not at first been able to say where or how she would live. She had suggested that she might stay with her sister, but her father had insisted that she could not live on the in-

come supplied by Trevelyan. Then, when pressed hard, she had declared that she intended to live on Hugh Stanbury's income. She would marry him at once,—with her father's leave, if she could get it, but without it if it needs must be so. Her mother told her that Hugh Stanbury was not himself ready for her; he had not even proposed so hasty a marriage, nor had he any home fitted for her. Lady Rowley, in arguing this, had expressed no assent to the marriage, even as a distant arrangement, but had thought thus to vanquish her daughter by suggesting small but insuperable difficulties. On a sudden, however, Lady Rowley found that all this was turned against her, by an offer that came direct from Mr. Glascock. His Caroline, he said, was very anxious that Nora should come to them at Monkham as soon as they had returned home from Switzerland. They intended to be there by the middle of August, and would hurry there sooner, if there was any intermediate difficulty about finding a home for Nora. Mr. Glascock said nothing about Hugh Stanbury; but, of course, Lady Rowley understood that Nora had told all her troubles and hopes to Caroline, and that Caroline had told them to her future husband. Lady Rowley, in answer to this, could only say that she would consult her husband.

There was something very grievous in the proposition to Lady Rowley. If Nora had not been self-willed and stiff-necked beyond the usual self-willedness and stiff-neckedness of young women she might have been herself the mistress of Monkham. It was proposed now that she should go there to wait till a poor man should have got together shillings enough to buy a few chairs and tables, and a bed to lie upon! The

thought of this was very bitter. "I cannot think, Nora, how you could have the heart to go there," said Lady Rowley.

"I cannot understand why not, mamma. Caroline and I are friends, and surely he and I need not be enemies. He has never injured me; and if he does not take offence, why should I?"

"If you don't see it, I can't help it," said Lady Rowley.

And then Mrs. Spalding's triumph was terrible to Lady Rowley. Mrs. Spalding knew nothing of her future son-in-law's former passion, and spoke of her Caroline as having achieved triumphs beyond the reach of other girls. Lady Rowley bore it, never absolutely telling the tale of her daughter's fruitless victory. She was too good at heart to utter the boast;—but it was very hard to repress it. Upon the whole she would have preferred that Mr. Glascock and his bride should not have become the fast friends of herself and her family. There was more of pain than of pleasure in the alliance. But circumstances had been too strong for her. Mr. Glascock had been of great use in reference to Trevelyan, and Caroline and Nora had become attached to each other almost on their first acquaintance. Here they were together at the Baths of Lucca, and Nora was to be one of the four bridesmaids. When Sir Marmaduke was consulted about this visit to Monkham, he became fretful, and would give no answer. The marriage, he said, was impossible, and Nora was a fool. He could give her no allowance more than would suffice for her clothes, and it was madness for her to think of stopping in England. But he was so full of cares that he could come

to no absolute decision on this matter. Nora, however, had come to a very absolute decision.

"Caroline," she said, "if you will have me, I will go to Monkams."

"Of course we will have you. Has not Charles said how delighted he would be?"

"Oh yes,—your Charles," said Nora, laughing.

"He is mine now, dear. You must not expect him to change his mind again. I gave him the chance, you know, and he would not take it. But, Nora, come to Monkams, and stay as long as it suits. I have talked it all over with him, and we both agree that you shall have a home there. You shall be just like a sister. Olivia is coming too after a bit; but he says there is room for a dozen sisters. Of course it will be all right with Mr. Stanbury after a while." And so it was settled among them that Nora Rowley should find a home at Monkams, if a home in England should be wanted for her.

It wanted but four days to that fixed for the marriage at Florence, and but six to that on which the Rowleys were to leave Italy for England, when Mr. Glascock received Trevelyan's letter. It was brought to him as he was sitting at a late breakfast in the garden of the hotel; and there were present at the moment not only all the Spalding family, but the Rowleys also. Sir Marmaduke was there and Lady Rowley, and the three unmarried daughters; but Mrs. Trevelyan, as was her wont, had remained alone in her own room. Mr. Glascock read the letter, and read it again, without attracting much attention. Caroline, who was of course sitting next to him, had her eyes upon him, and could see that the letter moved him;

but she was not curious, and at any rate asked no question. He himself understood fully how great was the offer made,—how all-important to the happiness of the poor mother,—and he was also aware, or thought that he was aware, how likely it might be that the offer would be retracted. As regarded himself, a journey from the Baths at Lucca to Casalunga and back before his marriage, would be a great infliction on his patience. It was his plan to stay where he was till the day before his marriage, and then to return to Florence with the rest of the party. All this must be altered, and sudden changes must be made, if he decided on going to Siena himself. The weather now was very hot, and such a journey would be most disagreeable to him. Of course he had little schemes in his head, little amatory schemes for prænuptial enjoyment, which, in spite of his mature years, were exceedingly agreeable to him. The chestnut woods round the Baths of Lucca are very pleasant in the early summer, and there were excursions planned in which Caroline would be close by his side,—almost already his wife. But, if he did not go, whom could he send? It would be necessary at least that he should consult her, the mother of the child, before any decision was formed.

At last he took Lady Rowley aside, and read to her the letter. She understood at once that it opened almost a heaven of bliss to her daughter;—and she understood also how probable it might be that that wretched man, with his shaken wits, should change his mind. "I think I ought to go," said Mr. Glascock.

"But how can you go now?"

"I can go," said he. "There is time for it. It

need not put off my marriage,—to which of course I could not consent. I do not know whom I could send."

"Monnier could go," said Lady Rowley, naming the courier.

"Yes;—he could go. But it might be that he would return without the child, and then we should not forgive ourselves. I will go, Lady Rowley. After all, what does it signify? I am a little old, I sometimes think, for this philandering. You shall take his letter to your daughter, and I will explain it all to Caroline."

Caroline had not a word to say. She could only kiss him, and promise to make him what amends she could when he came back. "Of course you are right," she said. "Do you think that I would say a word against it, even though the marriage were to be postponed?"

"I should;—a good many words. But I will be back in time for that, and will bring the boy with me."

Mrs. Trevelyan, when her husband's letter was read to her, was almost overcome by the feelings which it excited. In her first paroxysm of joy she declared that she would herself go to Siena, not for her child's sake, but for that of her husband. She felt at once that the boy was being given up because of the father's weakness,—because he felt himself to be unable to be a protector to his son,—and her woman's heart was melted with softness as she thought of the condition of the man to whom she had once given her whole heart. Since then, doubtless, her heart had revolted from him. Since that time there had come hours in which she had almost hated him for his cruelty to her. There had been moments in which she had almost cursed his name because of the aspersion which it had seemed that he had thrown

upon her. But this was now forgotten, and she remembered only his weakness. "Mamma," she said, "I will go. It is my duty to go to him." But Lady Rowley withheld her, explaining that were she to go, the mission might probably fail in its express purpose. "Let Louey be sent to us first," said Lady Rowley, "and then we will see what can be done afterwards."

And so Mr. Glascock started, taking with him a maid-servant who might help him with the charge of the child. It was certainly very hard upon him. In order to have time for his journey to Siena and back, and time also to go out to Casalunga, it was necessary that he should leave the Baths at five in the morning. "If ever there was a hero of romance, you are he!" said Nora to him.

"The heroes of life are so much better than the heroes of romance," said Caroline.

"That is a lesson from the lips of the American Browning," said Mr. Glascock. "Nevertheless, I think I would rather ride a charge against a Paynim knight in Palestine than get up at half-past four in the morning."

"We will get up too, and give the knight his coffee," said Nora. They did get up, and saw him off; and when Mr. Glascock and Caroline parted with a lovers' embrace, Nora stood by as a sister might have done. Let us hope that she remembered that her own time was coming.

There had been a promise given by Nora, when she left London, that she would not correspond with Hugh Stanbury while she was in Italy, and this promise had been kept. It may be remembered that Hugh had made a proposition to his lady-love, that she should

walk out of the house one fine morning, and get herself married without any reference to her father's or her mother's wishes. But she had not been willing to take upon herself as yet independence so complete as this would have required. She had assured her lover that she did mean to marry him some day, even though it should be in opposition to her father, but that she thought that the period for filial persuasion was not yet over; and then, in explaining all this to her mother, she had given a promise neither to write nor to receive letters during the short period of her sojourn in Italy. She would be an obedient child for so long;—but, after that, she must claim the right to fight her own battle. She had told her lover that he must not write; and, of course, she had not written a word herself. But now, when her mother threw it in her teeth that Stanbury would not be ready to marry her, she thought that an unfair advantage was being taken of her,—and of him. How could he be expected to say that he was ready, —deprived as he was of the power of saying anything at all?

"Mamma," she said, the day before they went to Florence, "has papa fixed about your leaving England yet? I suppose you'll go now on the last Saturday in July?"

"I suppose we shall, my dear."

"Has not papa written about the berths?"

"I believe he has, my dear."

"Because he ought to know who are going. I will not go."

"You will not, Nera. Is that a proper way of speaking?"

"Dear mamma, I mean it to be proper. I hope it

is proper. But is it not best that we should understand each other? All my life depends on my going or my staying now. I must decide."

"After what has passed, you do not, I suppose, mean to live in Mr. Glascock's house?"

"Certainly not. I mean to live with,—with,—with my husband. Mamma, I promised not to write, and I have not written. And he has not written,—because I told him not. Therefore, nothing is settled. But it is not fair to throw it in my teeth that nothing is settled."

"I have thrown nothing in your teeth, Nora."

"Papa talks sneeringly about chairs and tables. Of course, I know what he is thinking of. As I cannot go with him to the Mandarins, I think I ought to be allowed to look after the chairs and tables."

"What do you mean, my dear?"

"That you should absolve me from my promise, and let me write to Mr. Stanbury. I do not want to be left without a home."

"You cannot wish to write to a gentleman and ask him to marry you!"

"Why not? We are engaged. I shall not ask him to marry me,—that is already settled; but I shall ask him to make arrangements."

"Your papa will be very angry if you break your word to him."

"I will write, and show you the letter. Papa may see it, and if he will not let it go, it shall not go. He shall not say that I broke my word. But, mamma, I will not go out to the Islands. I should never get back again, and I should be broken-hearted." Lady Rowley had nothing to say to this; and Nora went and wrote

her letter. "Dear Hugh," the letter ran, "Papa and mamma leave England on the last Saturday in July. I have told mamma that I cannot return with them. Of course, you know why I stay. Mr. Glascock is to be married the day after to-morrow, and they have asked me to go with them to Monkham's some time in August. I think I shall do so, unless Emily wants me to remain with her. At any rate, I shall try to be with her till I go there. You will understand why I tell you all this. Papa and mamma know that I am writing. It is only a business letter, and, therefore, I shall say no more, except that I am ever and always yours,—NORA." "There," she said, handing her letter to her mother, "I think that that ought to be sent. If papa chooses to prevent its going, he can."

Lady Rowley, when she handed the letter to her husband, recommended that it should be allowed to go to its destination. She admitted that, if they sent it, they would thereby signify their consent to her engagement;—and she alleged that Nora was so strong in her will, and that the circumstances of their journey out to the Antipodes were so peculiar, that it was of no avail for them any longer to oppose the match. They could not force their daughter to go with them. "But I can cast her off from me, if she be disobedient," said Sir Marmaduke. Lady Rowley, however, had no desire that her daughter should be cast off, and was aware that Sir Marmaduke, when it came to the point of casting off, would be as little inclined to be stern as she was herself. Sir Marmaduke, still hoping that firmness would carry the day, and believing that it behoved him to maintain his parental authority, ended the discussion by keeping possession of the letter, and saying

that he would take time to consider the matter. "What security have we that he will ever marry her, if she does stay?" he asked the next morning. Lady Rowley had no doubt on this score, and protested that her opposition to Hugh Stanbury arose simply from his want of income. "I should never be justified," said Sir Marmaduke, "if I were to go and leave my girl as it were in the hands of a penny-a-liner." The letter, in the end, was not sent; and Nora and her father hardly spoke to each other as they made their journey back to Florence together.

Emily Trevelyan, before the arrival of that letter from her husband, had determined that she would not leave Italy. It had been her purpose to remain somewhere in the neighbourhood of her husband and child; and to overcome her difficulties,—or be overcome by them, as circumstances might direct. Now her plans were again changed,—or, rather, she was now without a plan. She could form no plan till she should again see Mr. Glascock. Should her child be restored to her, would it not be her duty to remain near her husband? All this made Nora's line of conduct the more difficult for her. It was acknowledged that she could not remain in Italy. Mrs. Trevelyan's position would be most embarrassing; but as all her efforts were to be used towards a reconciliation with her husband, and as his state utterly precluded the idea of a mixed household,—of any such a family arrangement as that which had existed in Curzon Street,—Nora could not remain with her. Mrs. Trevelyan herself had declared that she would not wish it. And, in that case, where was Nora to bestow herself when Sir Marmaduke and Lady Rowley had sailed? Caroline offered to curtail

those honeymoon weeks in Switzerland, but it was impossible to listen to an offer so magnanimous and so unreasonable. Nora had a dim romantic idea of sharing Priscilla's bedroom in that small cottage near Nuncombe Putney, of which she had heard, and of there learning lessons in strict economy;—but of this she said nothing. The short journey from the Baths of Lucca to Florence was not a pleasant one, and the Rowley family were much disturbed as they looked into the future. Lodgings had now been taken for them, and there was the great additional doubt whether Mrs. Trevelyan would find her child there on her arrival.

The Spaldings went one way from the Florence station, and the Rowleys another. The American Minister had returned to the city some days previously, —drawn there nominally by pleas of business, but, in truth, by the necessities of the wedding breakfast,—and he met them at the station. "Has Mr. Glascock come back?" Nora was the first to ask. Yes;—he had come. He had been in the city since two o'clock, and had been up at the American Minister's house for half a minute. "And has he brought the child?" asked Caroline, relieved of doubt on her own account. Mr. Spalding did not know;—indeed, he had not interested himself quite so intently about Mrs. Trevelyan's little boy, as had all those who had just returned from the Baths. Mr. Glascock had said nothing to him about the child, and he had not quite understood why such a man should have made a journey to Siena, leaving his sweetheart behind him, just on the eve of his marriage. He hurried his women-kind into their carriage, and they were driven away; and then Sir Marmaduke

was driven away with his women-kind. Caroline Spalding had perhaps thought that Mr. Glascock might have been there to meet her.

CHAPTER XXI.

Mr. Glascock as Nurse.

A MESSAGE had been sent by the wires to Trevelyan, to let him know that Mr. Glascock was himself coming for the boy. Whether such message would or would not be sent out to Casalunga Mr. Glascock had been quite ignorant;—but it could, at any rate, do no harm. He did feel it hard as in this hot weather he made the journey, first to Florence, and then on to Siena. What was he to the Rowleys, or to Trevelyan himself, that such a job of work should fall to his lot at such a period of his life? He had been very much in love with Nora, no doubt; but, luckily for him, as he thought, Nora had refused him. As for Trevelyan,—Trevelyan had never been his friend. As for Sir Marmaduke,—Sir Marmaduke was nothing to him. He was almost angry even with Mrs. Trevelyan as he arrived tired, heated, and very dusty, at Siena. It was his purpose to sleep at Siena that night, and to go out to Casalunga early the next morning. If the telegram had not been forwarded, he would send a message on that evening. On inquiry, however, he found that the message had been sent, and that the paper had been put into the Signore's own hand by the Sieneese messenger. Then he got into some discourse with the landlord about the strange gentleman at Casalunga. Trevelyan was beginning to become the subject of gossip in the town, and people were

saying that the stranger was very strange indeed. The landlord thought that if the Signore had any friends at all, it would be well that such friends should come and look after him. Mr. Glascock asked if Mr. Trevelyan was ill. It was not only that the Signore was out of health,—so the landlord heard,—but that he was also somewhat— And then the landlord touched his head. He eat nothing, and went nowhere, and spoke to no one; and the people at the hospital to which Casalunga belonged were beginning to be uneasy about their tenant. Perhaps Mr. Glascock had come to take him away. Mr. Glascock explained that he had not come to take Mr. Trevelyan away,—but only to take away a little boy that was with him. For this reason he was travelling with a maid-servant,—a fact for which Mr. Glascock clearly thought it necessary that he should give an intelligible and credible explanation. The landlord seemed to think that the people at the hospital would have been much rejoiced had Mr. Glascock intended to take Mr. Trevelyan away also.

He started after a very early breakfast, and found himself walking up over the stone ridges to the house between nine and ten in the morning. He himself had sat beside the driver and had put the maid inside the carriage. He had not deemed it wise to take an undivided charge of the boy even from Casalunga to Siena. At the door of the house, as though waiting for him, he found Trevelyan, not dirty as he had been before, but dressed with much appearance of smartness. He had a brocaded cap on his head, and a shirt with a laced front, and a worked waistcoat, and a frockcoat, and coloured bright trowsers. Mr. Glascock knew at

once that all the clothes which he saw before him had been made for Italian and not for English wear; and could almost have said that they had been bought in Siena and not in Florence. "I had not intended to impose this labour on you, Mr. Glascock," Trevelyan said, raising his cap to salute his visitor.

"For fear there might be mistakes, I thought it better to come myself," said Mr. Glascock. "You did not wish to see Sir Marmaduke?"

"Certainly not Sir Marmaduke," said Trevelyan, with a look of anger that was almost grotesque.

"And you thought it better that Mrs. Trevelyan should not come."

"Yes;—I thought it better;—but not from any feeling of anger towards her. If I could welcome my wife here, Mr. Glascock, without a risk of wrath on her part, I should be very happy to receive her. I love my wife, Mr. Glascock. I love her dearly. But there have been misfortunes. Never mind. There is no reason why I should trouble you with them. Let us go in to breakfast. After your drive you will have an appetite."

Poor Mr. Glascock was afraid to decline to sit down to the meal which was prepared for him. He did mutter something about having already eaten, but Trevelyan put this aside with a wave of his hand as he led the way into a spacious room, in which had been set out a table with almost a sumptuous banquet. The room was very bare and comfortless, having neither curtains nor matting, and containing not above half a dozen chairs. But an effort had been made to give it an air of Italian luxury. The windows were thrown open, down to the ground, and the table was decorated with fruits and three or four long-necked

bottles. Trevelyan waved with his hand towards an arm-chair, and Mr. Glascock had no alternative but to seat himself. He felt that he was sitting down to breakfast with a madman; but if he did not sit down, the madman might perhaps break out into madness. Then Trevelyan went to the door and called aloud for Catarina. "In these remote places," said he, "one has to do without the civilisation of a bell. Perhaps one gains as much in quiet as one loses in comfort." Then Catarina came with hot meats and fried potatoes, and Mr. Glascock was compelled to help himself.

"I am but a bad trencherman myself," said Trevelyan, "but I shall lament my misfortune doubly if that should interfere with your appetite." Then he got up and poured out wine into Mr. Glascock's glass. "They tell me that it comes from the Baron's vineyard," said Trevelyan, alluding to the wine-farm of Ricasoli, "and that there is none better in Tuscany. I never was myself a judge of the grape, but this to me is as palatable as any of the costlier French wines. How grand a thing would wine really be, if it could make glad the heart of man. How truly would one worship Bacchus if he could make one's heart to rejoice. But if a man have a real sorrow, wine will not wash it away,—not though a man were drowned in it, as Clarence was."

Mr. Glascock hitherto had spoken hardly a word. There was an attempt at joviality about this breakfast,—or, at any rate, of the usual comfortable luxury of hospitable entertainment,—which, coming as it did from Trevelyan, almost locked his lips. He had not come there to be jovial or luxurious, but to perform a most melancholy mission; and he had brought with

him his saddest looks, and was prepared for a few sad words. Trevelyan's speech, indeed, was sad enough, but Mr. Glascock could not take up questions of the worship of Bacchus at half a minute's warning. He eat a morsel, and raised his glass to his lips, and felt himself to be very uncomfortable. It was necessary, however, that he should utter a word. "Do you not let your little boy come in to breakfast?" he said.

"He is better away," said Trevelyan gloomily.

"But as we are to travel together," said Mr. Glascock, "we might as well make acquaintance."

"You have been a little hurried with me on that score," said Trevelyan. "I wrote certainly with a determined mind, but things have changed somewhat since then."

"You do not mean that you will not send him?"

"You have been somewhat hurried with me, I say. If I remember rightly, I named no time, but spoke of the future. Could I have answered the message which I received from you, I would have postponed your visit for a week or so."

"Postponed it! Why,—I am to be married the day after to-morrow. It was just as much as I was able to do, to come here at all." Mr. Glascock now pushed his chair back from the table, and prepared himself to speak up. "Your wife expects her child now, and you will never break her heart by refusing to send him."

"Nobody thinks of my heart, Mr. Glascock."

"But this is your own offer."

"Yes, it was my own offer, certainly. I am not going to deny my own words, which have no doubt been preserved in testimony against me."

"Mr. Trevelyan, what do you mean?" Then, when he was on the point of boiling over with passion, Mr. Glascock remembered that his companion was not responsible for his expressions. "I do hope you will let the child go away with me," he said. "You cannot conceive the state of his mother's anxiety, and she will send him back at once if you demand it."

"Is that to be in good faith?"

"Certainly, in good faith. I would lend myself to nothing, Mr. Trevelyan, that was not said and done in good faith."

"She will not break her word, excusing herself, because I am—mad?"

"I am sure that there is nothing of the kind in her mind."

"Perhaps not now; but such things grow. There is no iniquity, no breach of promise, no treason that a woman will not excuse to herself,—or a man either,—by the comfortable self-assurance that the person to be injured is—mad. A hound without a friend is not so cruelly treated. The outlaw, the murderer, the perjurer has surer privileges than the man who is in the way, and to whom his friends can point as being—mad!" Mr. Glascock knew or thought that he knew that his host in truth was mad, and he could not, therefore, answer this tirade by an assurance that no such idea was likely to prevail. "Have they told you, I wonder," continued Trevelyan, "how it was that, driven to force and an ambuscade for the recovery of my own child, I waylaid my wife and took him from her? I have done nothing to forfeit my right as a man to the control of my own family. I demanded that the boy should be sent to me, and she paid no attention to

my words. I was compelled to vindicate my own authority; and then, because I claimed the right which belongs to a father, they said that I was—mad! Ay, and they would have proved it, too, had I not fled from my country and hidden myself in this desert. Think of that, Mr. Glascock! Now they have followed me here,—not out of love for me; and that man whom they call a governor comes and insults me; and my wife promises to be good to me, and says that she will forgive and forget! Can she ever forgive herself her own folly, and the cruelty that has made shipwreck of my life? They can do nothing to me here; but they would entice me home because there they have friends, and can see doctors,—with my own money,—and suborn lawyers, and put me away,—somewhere in the dark, where I shall be no more heard of among men! As you are a man of honour, Mr. Glascock,—tell me; is it not so?"

"I know nothing of their plans,—beyond this, that you wrote me word that you would send them the boy."

"But I know their plans. What you say is true. I did write you word,—and I meant it. Mr. Glascock, sitting here alone from morning to night, and lying down from night till morning, without companionship, without love, in utter misery, I taught myself to feel that I should think more of her than of myself."

"If you are so unhappy here, come back yourself with the child. Your wife would desire nothing better."

"Yes;—and submit to her, and her father, and her mother. No,—Mr. Glascock; never, never. Let her come to me."

"But you will not receive her."

"Let her come in a proper spirit, and I will receive her. She is the wife of my bosom, and I will receive her with joy. But if she is to come to me and tell me that she forgives me,—forgives me for the evil that she has done,—then, sir, she had better stay away. Mr. Glascock, you are going to be married. Believe me,—no man should submit to be forgiven by his wife. Everything must go astray if that be done. I would rather encounter their mad doctors, one of them after another till they had made me mad;—I would encounter anything rather than that. But, sir, you neither eat nor drink, and I fear that my speech disturbs you."

It was like enough that it may have done so. Trevelyan, as he had been speaking, had walked about the room, going from one extremity to the other with hurried steps, gesticulating with his arms, and every now and then pushing back with his hands the long hair from off his forehead. Mr. Glascock was in truth very much disturbed. He had come there with an express object; but, whenever he mentioned the child, the father became almost rabid in his wrath. "I have done very well, thank you," said Mr. Glascock. "I will not eat any more, and I believe I must be thinking of going back to Siena."

"I had hoped you would spend the day with me, Mr. Glascock."

"I am to be married, you see, in two days; and I must be in Florence early to-morrow. I am to meet my—wife, as she will be, and the Rowleys, and your wife. Upon my word I can't stay. Won't you just say a word to the young woman and let the boy be got ready?"

"I think not;—no, I think not."

"And am I to have had all this journey for nothing? You will have made a fool of me in writing to me."

"I intended to be honest, Mr. Glascock."

"Stick to your honesty, and send the boy back to his mother. It will be better for you, Trevelyan."

"Better for me! Nothing can be better for me. All must be worst. It will be better for me, you say; and you ask me to give up the last drop of cold water wherewith I can touch my parched lips. Even in my hell I had so much left to me of a limpid stream, and you tell me that it will be better for me to pour it away. You may take him, Mr. Glascock. The woman will make him ready for you. What matters it whether the fiery furnace be heated seven times, or only six;—in either degree the flames are enough! You may take him;—you may take him!" So saying, Trevelyan walked out of the window, leaving Mr. Glascock seated in his chair. He walked out of the window and went down among the olive trees. He did not go far, however, but stood with his arm round the stem of one of them, playing with the shoots of a vine with his hand. Mr. Glascock followed him to the window and stood looking at him for a few moments. But Trevelyan did not turn or move. There he stood gazing at the pale, cloudless, heat-laden, motionless sky, thinking of his own sorrows, and remembering too, doubtless, with the vanity of a madman, that he was probably being watched in his reverie.

Mr. Glascock was too practical a man not to make the most of the offer that had been made to him, and he went back among the passages and called for Catarina. Before long he had two or three women with him, in-

cluding her whom he had brought from Florence, and among them Louey was soon made to appear, dressed for his journey, together with a small trunk in which were his garments. It was quite clear that the order for his departure had been given before that scene at the breakfast-table, and that Trevelyan had not intended to go back from his promise. Nevertheless Mr. Glascock thought it might be as well to hurry his departure, and he turned back to say the shortest possible word of farewell to Trevelyan in the garden. But when he got to the window, Trevelyan was not to be found among the olive trees. Mr. Glascock walked a few steps down the hill, looking for him, but seeing nothing of him, returned to the house. The elder woman said that her master had not been there, and Mr. Glascock started with his charge. Trevelyan was manifestly mad, and it was impossible to treat him as a sane man would have been treated. Nevertheless, Mr. Glascock felt much compunction in carrying the child away without a final kiss or word of farewell from its father. But it was not to be so. He had got into the carriage with the child, having the servant seated opposite to him,—for he was moved by some undefinable fear which made him determine to keep the boy close to him, and he had not, therefore, returned to the driver's seat,—when Trevelyan appeared standing by the road-side at the bottom of the hill. "Would you take him away from me without one word!" said Trevelyan bitterly.

"I went to look for you but you were gone," said Mr. Glascock.

"No, sir, I was not gone. I am here. It is the last time that I shall ever gladden my eyes with his

brightness. Louey, my love, will you come to your father?" Louey did not seem to be particularly willing to leave the carriage, but he made no loud objection when Mr. Glascock held him up to the open space above the door. The child had realised the fact that he was to go, and did not believe that his father would stop him now; but he was probably of opinion that the sooner the carriage began to go on the better it would be for him. Mr. Glascock, thinking that his father intended to kiss him over the door, held him by his frock; but the doing of this made Trevelyan very angry. "Am I not to be trusted with my own child in my arms?" said he. "Give him to me, sir. I begin to doubt now whether I am right to deliver him to you." Mr. Glascock immediately let go his hold of the boy's frock and leaned back in the carriage. "Louey will tell papa that he loves him before he goes?" said Trevelyan. The poor little fellow murmured something, but it did not please his father, who had him in his arms. "You are like the rest of them, Louey," he said; "because I cannot laugh and be gay, all my love for you is nothing;—nothing! You may take him. He is all that I have;—all that I have;—and I shall never see him again!" So saying he handed the child into the carriage, and sat himself down by the side of the road to watch till the vehicle should be out of sight. As soon as the last speck of it had vanished from his sight, he picked himself up, and dragged his slow footsteps back to the house.

Mr. Glascock made sundry attempts to amuse the child, with whom he had to remain all that night at Siena; but his efforts in that line were not very successful. The boy was brisk enough, and happy, and

social by nature; but the events, or rather the want of events of the last few months, had so cowed him, that he could not recover his spirits at the bidding of a stranger. "If I have any of my own," said Mr. Glascock to himself, "I hope they will be of a more cheerful disposition."

As we have seen, he did not meet Caroline at the station,—thereby incurring his lady-love's displeasure for the period of half-a-minute; but he did meet Mrs. Trevelyan almost at the door of Sir Marmaduke's lodgings. "Yes, Mrs. Trevelyan; he is here"

"How am I ever to thank you for such goodness?" said she. "And Mr. Trevelyan;—you saw him?"

"Yes;—I saw him."

Before he could answer her further she was upstairs, and had her child in her arms. It seemed to be an age since the boy had been stolen from her in the early spring in that unknown, dingy street near Tottenham Court Road. Twice she had seen her darling since that,—twice during his captivity; but on each of these occasions she had seen him as one not belonging to herself, and had seen him under circumstances which had robbed the greeting of almost all its pleasure. But now he was her own again, to take whither she would, to dress and to undress, to feed, to coax, to teach, and to caress. And the child lay up close to her as she hugged him, putting up his little cheek to her chin, and burying himself happily in her embrace. He had not much as yet to say, but she could feel that he was contented.

Mr. Glascock had promised to wait for her a few minutes,—even at the risk of Caroline's displeasure,—and Mrs. Trevelyan ran down to him as soon as the

first craving of her mother's love was satisfied. Her boy would at any rate be safe with her now, and it was her duty to learn something of her husband. It was more than her duty;—if only her services might be of avail to him. "And you say he was well?" she asked. She had taken Mr. Glascock apart, and they were alone together, and he had determined that he would tell her the truth.

"I do not know that he is ill,—though he is pale and altered beyond belief."

"Yes;—I saw that."

"I never knew a man so thin and haggard."

"My poor Louis!"

"But that is not the worst of it."

"What do you mean, Mr. Glascock?"

"I mean that his mind is astray, and that he should not be left alone. There is no knowing what he might do. He is so much more alone there than he would be in England. There is not a soul who could interfere."

"Do you mean that you think—that he is in danger—from himself?"

"I would not say so, Mrs. Trevelyan; but who can tell? I am sure of this,—that he should not be left alone. If it were only because of the misery of his life, he should not be left alone."

"But what can I do? He would not even see papa."

"He would see you."

"But he would not let me guide him in anything. I have been to him twice, and he breaks out,—as if I were—a bad woman."

"Let him break out. What does it matter?"

"Am I to own to a falsehood,—and such a falsehood?"

"Own to anything, and you will conquer him at once. That is what I think. You will excuse what I say, Mrs. Trevelyan."

"Oh, Mr. Glascock, you have been such a friend! What should we have done without you?"

"You cannot take to heart the words that come from a disordered reason. In truth, he believes no ill of you."

"But he says so."

"It is hard to know what he says. Declare that you will submit to him, and I think that he will be softened towards you. Try to bring him back to his own country. It may be that were he to—die there, alone, the memory of his loneliness would be heavy with you in after days." Then, having so spoken, he rushed off, declaring, with a forced laugh, that Caroline Spalding would never forgive him.

The next day was the day of the wedding, and Emily Trevelyan was left all alone. It was of course out of the question that she should join any party the purport of which was to be festive. Sir Marmaduke went with some grumbling, declaring that wine and severe food in the morning were sins against the plainest rules of life. And the three Rowley girls went, Nora officiating as one of the bridesmaids. But Mrs. Trevelyan was left with her boy, and during the day she was forced to resolve what should be the immediate course of her life. Two days after the wedding her family would return to England. It was open to her to go with them, and to take her boy with her. But a few days since how happy she would have been could

she have been made to believe that such a mode of returning would be within her power! But now she felt that she might not return and leave that poor, suffering wretch behind her. As she thought of him she tried to interrogate herself in regard to her feelings. Was it love, or duty, or compassion which stirred her? She had loved him as fondly as any bright young woman loves the man who is to take her away from everything else, and make her a part of his house and of himself. She had loved him as Nora now loved the man whom she worshipped and thought to be a god, doing godlike work in the dingy recesses of the D. R. office. Emily Trevelyan was forced to tell herself that all that was over with her. Her husband had shown himself to be weak, suspicious, unmanly,—by no means like a god. She had learned to feel that she could not trust her comfort in his hands,—that she could never know what his thoughts of her might be. But still he was her husband, and the father of her child; and though she could not dare to look forward to happiness in living with him, she could understand that no comfort would be possible to her were she to return to England and to leave him to perish alone at Casalunga. Fate seemed to have intended that her life should be one of misery, and she must bear it as best she might.

The more she thought of it, however, the greater seemed to be her difficulties. What was she to do when her father and mother should have left her? She could not go to Casalunga if her husband would not give her entrance; and if she did go, would it be safe for her to take her boy with her? Were she to remain in Florence she would be hardly nearer to him

for any useful purpose than in England; and even should she pitch her tent at Siena, occupying there some desolate set of huge apartments in a deserted palace, of what use could she be to him? Could she stay there if he desired her to go; and was it probable that he would be willing that she should be at Siena while he was living at Casalunga,—no more than two leagues distant? How should she begin her work; and if he repulsed her, how should she then continue it?

But during these wedding hours she did make up her mind as to what she would do for the present. She would certainly not leave Italy while her husband remained there. She would for a while keep her rooms in Florence, and there should her boy abide. But from time to time,—twice a-week perhaps,—she would go down to Siena and Casalunga, and there form her plans in accordance with her husband's conduct. She was his wife, and nothing should entirely separate her from him, now that he so sorely wanted her aid.

CHAPTER XXII.

Mr. Glascock's Marriage completed.

THE Glascock marriage was a great affair in Florence;—so much so, that there were not a few who regarded it as a strengthening of peaceful relations between the United States and the United Kingdom, and who thought that the Alabama claims and the question of naturalisation might now be settled with comparative ease. An English lord was about to marry the niece of an American Minister to a foreign court.

The bridegroom was not, indeed, quite a lord as yet, but it was known to all men that he must be a lord in a very short time, and the bride was treated with more than usual bridal honours because she belonged to a legation. She was not, indeed, an ambassador's daughter, but the niece of a daughterless ambassador, and therefore almost as good as a daughter. The wives and daughters of other ambassadors, and the other ambassadors themselves, of course, came to the wedding; and as the palace in which Mr. Spalding had apartments stood alone, in a garden, with a separate carriage entrance, it seemed for all wedding purposes as though the whole palace were his own. The English Minister came, and his wife,—although she had never quite given over turning up her nose at the American bride whom Mr. Glascock had chosen for himself. It was such a pity, she said, that such a man as Mr. Glascock should marry a young woman from Providence, Rhode Island. Who in England would know anything of Providence, Rhode Island? And it was so expedient, in her estimation, that a man of family should strengthen himself by marrying a woman of family. It was so necessary, she declared, that a man when marrying should remember that his child would have two grandfathers, and would be called upon to account for four great-grandfathers. Nevertheless Mr. Glascock was—Mr. Glascock; and, let him marry whom he would, his wife would be the future Lady Peterborough. Remembering this, the English Minister's wife gave up the point when the thing was really settled, and benignly promised to come to the breakfast with all the secretaries and attachés belonging to the legation, and all the wives and daughters thereof.

What may a man not do, and do with éclat, if he be heir to a peer and have plenty of money in his pocket?

Mr. and Mrs. Spalding were covered with glory on the occasion; and perhaps they did not bear their glory as meekly as they should have done. Mrs. Spalding laid herself open to some ridicule from the British Minister's wife because of her inability to understand with absolute clearness the condition of her niece's husband in respect to his late and future seat in Parliament, to the fact of his being a commoner and a nobleman at the same time, and to certain information which was conveyed to her, surely in a most unnecessary manner, that if Mr. Glascock were to die before his father her niece would never become Lady Peterborough, although her niece's son, if she had one, would be the future lord. No doubt she blundered, as was most natural; and then the British Minister's wife made the most of the blunders; and when once Mrs. Spalding ventured to speak of Caroline as her ladyship, not to the British Minister's wife, but to the sister of one of the secretaries, a story was made out of it which was almost as false as it was ill-natured. Poor Caroline was spoken of as her ladyship backward and forwards among the ladies of the legation in a manner which might have vexed her had she known anything about it; but, nevertheless, all the ladies prepared their best flounces to go to the wedding. The time would soon come when she would in truth be a "ladyship," and she might be of social use to any one of the ladies in question.

But Mr. Spalding was, for the time, the most disturbed of any of the party concerned. He was a tall, thin, clever Republican of the North,—very fond of hearing himself talk, and somewhat apt to take ad-

vantage of the courtesies of conversation for the purpose of making unpardonable speeches. As long as there was any give and take going on in the *mêlée* of words he would speak quickly and with energy, seizing his chances among others; but the moment he had established his right to the floor,—as soon as he had won for himself the position of having his turn at the argument, he would dole out his words with considerable slowness, raise his hand for oratorical effect, and proceed as though Time were annihilated. And he would go further even than this, for,—fearing by experience the escape of his victims,—he would catch a man by the button-hole of his coat, or back him ruthlessly into the corner of a room, and then lay on to him without quarter. Since the affair with Mr. Glascock had been settled, he had talked an immensity about England,—not absolutely taking honour to himself because of his intended connection with a lord, but making so many references to the aristocratic side of the British constitution as to leave no doubt on the minds of his hearers as to the source of his arguments. In old days, before all this was happening, Mr. Spalding, though a courteous man in his personal relations, had constantly spoken of England with the bitter indignation of the ordinary American politician. England must be made to disgorge. England must be made to do justice. England must be taught her place in the world. England must give up her claims. In hot moments he had gone further, and had declared that England must be whipped. He had been specially loud against that aristocracy of England which, according to a figure of speech often used by him, was always feeding on the vitals of the people. But now all this was very much

changed. He did not go the length of expressing an opinion that the House of Lords was a valuable institution; but he discussed questions of primogeniture and hereditary legislation, in reference to their fitness for countries which were gradually emerging from feudal systems, with an equanimity, an impartiality, and a perseverance which soon convinced those who listened to him where he had learned his present lessons, and why. "The conservative nature of your institutions, sir," he said to poor Sir Marmaduke at the Baths of Lucca a very few days before the marriage, "has to be studied with great care before its effects can be appreciated in reference to a people who, perhaps, I may be allowed to say, have more in their composition of constitutional reverence than of educated intelligence." Sir Marmaduke, having suffered before, had endeavoured to bolt; but the American had caught him and pinned him, and the Governor of the Mandarins was impotent in his hands. "The position of the great peer of Parliament is doubtless very splendid, and may be very useful," continued Mr. Spalding, who was intending to bring round his argument to the evil doings of certain scandalously extravagant young lords, and to offer a suggestion that in such cases a committee of aged and respected peers should sit and decide whether a second son, or some other heir should not be called to the inheritance both of the title and the property. But Mrs. Spalding had seen the sufferings of Sir Marmaduke, and had rescued him. "Mr. Spalding," she had said, "it is too late for politics, and Sir Marmaduke has come out here for a holiday." Then she took her husband by the arm, and led him away helpless.

In spite of these drawbacks to the success,—if ought can be said to be a drawback on success of which the successful one is unconscious,—the marriage was prepared with great splendour, and everybody who was anybody in Florence was to be present. There were only to be four bridesmaids, Caroline herself having strongly objected to a greater number. As Wallachia Petrie had fled at the first note of preparation for these trivial and unpalatable festivities, another American young lady was found; and the sister of the English secretary of legation, who had so maliciously spread that report about her "ladyship," gladly agreed to be the fourth.

As the reader will remember, the whole party from the Baths of Lucca reached Florence only the day before the marriage, and Nora at the station promised to go up to Caroline that same evening. "Mr. Glascock will tell me about the little boy," said Caroline; "but I shall be so anxious to hear about your sister." So Nora crossed the bridge after dinner, and went up to the American Minister's palatial residence. Caroline was then in the loggia, and Mr. Glascock was with her; and for a while they talked about Emily Trevelyan and her misfortunes. Mr. Glascock was clearly of opinion that Trevelyan would soon be either in an asylum or in his grave. "I could not bring myself to tell your sister so," he said; "but I think your father should be told,—or your mother. Something should be done to put an end to that fearful residence at Casalunga." Then by degrees the conversation changed itself to Nora's prospects; and Caroline, with her friend's hand in hers, asked after Hugh Stanbury.

"You will not mind speaking before him,—will

you?" said Caroline, putting her hand on her own lover's arm.

"Not unless he should mind it," said Nora, smiling. She had meant nothing beyond a simple reply to her friend's question, but he took her words in a different sense, and blushed as he remembered his visit to Nuncombe Putney.

"He thinks almost more of your happiness than he does of mine," said Caroline; "which isn't fair, as I am sure that Mr. Stanbury will not reciprocate the attention. And now, dear, when are we to see you?"

"Who on earth can say?"

"I suppose Mr. Stanbury would say something,—only he is not here."

"And papa won't send my letter," said Nora.

"You are sure that you will not go out to the Islands with him?"

"Quite sure," said Nora. "I have made up my mind so far as that."

"And what will your sister do?"

"I think she will stay. I think she will say good-bye to papa and mamma here in Florence."

"I am quite of opinion that she should not leave her husband alone in Italy," said Mr. Glascock.

"She has not told us with certainty," said Nora; "but I feel sure that she will stay. Papa thinks she ought to go with them to London."

"Your papa seems to have two very intractable daughters," said Caroline.

"As for me," declared Nora, solemnly, "nothing shall make me go back to the Islands,—unless Mr. Stanbury should tell me to do so."

"And they start at the end of July?"

"On the last Saturday."

"And what will you do then, Nora?"

"I believe there are casual wards that people go to."

"Casual wards!" said Caroline.

"Miss Rowley is condescending to poke her fun at you," said Mr. Glascock.

"She is quite welcome, and shall poke as much as she likes; only we must be serious now. If it be necessary, we will get back by the end of July;—won't we, Charles?"

"You will do nothing of the kind," said Nora.

"What!—give up your honeymoon to provide me with board and lodgings! How can you suppose that I am so selfish or so helpless? I would go to my aunt, Mrs. Outhouse."

"We know that that wouldn't do," said Caroline.

"You might as well be in Italy as far as Mr. Stanbury is concerned."

"If Miss Rowley would go to Monkham, she might wait for us," suggested Mr. Glascock. "Old Mrs. Richards is there; and though of course she would be dull——"

"It is quite unnecessary," said Nora. "I shall take a two-pair back in a respectable feminine quarter, like any other young woman who wants such accommodation, and shall wait there till my young man can come and give me his arm to church. That is about the way we shall do it. I am not going to give myself any airs, Mr. Glascock, or make any difficulties. Papa is always talking to me about chairs and tables and frying-pans, and I shall practise to do with as few of them as possible. As I am headstrong about having my young man,—and I own that I am headstrong about that,—"

I guess I've got to fit myself for that sort of life." And Nora, as she said this, pronounced her words with something of a nasal twang, imitating certain country-women of her friend's.

"I like to hear you joking about it, Nora; because your voice is so cheery and you are so bright when you joke. But, nevertheless, one has to be reasonable, and to look the facts in the face. I don't see how you are to be left in London alone, and you know that your aunt Mrs. Outhouse,—or at any rate your uncle,—would not receive you except on receiving some strong anti-Stanbury pledge."

"I certainly shall not give an anti-Stanbury pledge."

"And, therefore, that is out of the question. You will have a fortnight or three weeks in London, in all the bustle of their departure, and I declare I think that at the last moment you will go with them."

"Never!—unless he says so."

"I don't see how you are even to meet—'him,' and talk it over."

"I'll manage that. My promise not to write lasts only while we are in Italy."

"I think we had better get back to England, Charles, and take pity on this poor destitute one."

"If you talk of such a thing I will swear that I will never go to Monkams. You will find that I shall manage it. It may be that I shall do something very shocking,—so that all your patronage will hardly be able to bring me round afterwards; but I will do something that will serve my purpose. I have not gone so far as this to be turned back now." Nora, as she spoke of having "gone so far," was looking at Mr. Glascock, who was seated in an easy arm-chair close

to the girl whom he was to make his wife on the morrow, and she was thinking, no doubt, of the visit which he had made to Nuncombe Putney, and of the first ir-retrievable step which she had taken when she told him that her love was given to another. That had been her Rubicon. And though there had been periods with her since the passing of it, in which she had felt that she had crossed it in vain, that she had thrown away the splendid security of the other bank without obtaining the perilous object of her ambition,—though there had been moments in which she had almost regretted her own courage and noble action, still, having passed the river, there was nothing for her but to go on to Rome. She was not going to be stopped now by the want of a house in which to hide herself for a few weeks. She was without money, except so much as her mother might be able, almost surreptitiously, to give her. She was without friends to help her,—except these who were now with her, whose friendship had come to her in so singular a manner, and whose power to aid her at the present moment was cruelly curtailed by their own circumstances. Nothing was settled as to her own marriage. In consequence of the promise that had been extorted from her that she should not correspond with Stanbury, she knew nothing of his present wishes or intention. Her father was so offended by her firmness that he would hardly speak to her. And it was evident to her that her mother, though disposed to yield, was still in hopes that her daughter, in the press and difficulty of the moment, would allow herself to be carried away with the rest of the family to the other side of the world. She knew all this,—but she had made up her mind that she would not be

carried away. It was not very pleasant, the thought that she would be obliged at last to ask her young man, as she called him, to provide for her; but she would do that and trust herself altogether in his hands sooner than be taken to the Antipodes. "I can be very resolute if I please, my dear," she said, looking at Caroline. Mr. Glascock almost thought that she must have intended to address him.

They sat there discussing the matter for some time through the long, cool, evening hours, but nothing could be settled further,—except that Nora would write to her friend as soon as her affairs had begun to shape themselves after her return to England. At last Caroline went into the house, and for a few minutes Mr. Glascock was alone with Nora. He had remained, determining that the moment should come, but now that it was there he was for awhile unable to say the words that he wished to utter. At last he spoke. "Miss Rowley, Caroline is so eager to be your friend."

"I know she is, and I do love her so dearly. But, without joke, Mr. Glascock, there will be as it were a great gulf between us."

"I do not know that there need be any gulf, great or little. But I did not mean to allude to that. What I want to say is this. My feelings are not a bit less warm or sincere than hers. You know of old that I am not very good at expressing myself."

"I know nothing of the kind."

"There is no such gulf as what you speak of. All that is mostly gone by, and a nobleman in England, though he has advantages as a gentleman, is no more than a gentleman. But that has nothing to do with

what I am saying now. I shall never forget my journey to Devonshire. I won't pretend to say now that I regret its result."

"I am quite sure you don't."

"No; I do not;—though I thought then that I should regret it always. But remember this, Miss Rowley,—that you can never ask me to do anything that I will not, if possible, do for you. You are in some little difficulty now."

"It will disappear, Mr. Glascock. Difficulties always do."

"But we will do anything that we are wanted to do; and should a certain event take place——"

"It will take place some day."

"Then I hope that we may be able to make Mr. Stanbury and his wife quite at home at Monkham's." After that he took Nora's hand and kissed it, and at that moment Caroline came back to them.

"To-morrow, Mr. Glascock," she said, "you will, I believe, be at liberty to kiss everybody; but to-day you should be more discreet."

It was generally admitted among the various legations in Florence that there had not been such a wedding in the City of Flowers since it had become the capital of Italia. Mr. Glascock and Miss Spalding were married in the chapel of the legation,—a legation chapel on the ground floor having been extemporised for the occasion. This greatly enhanced the pleasantness of the thing, and saved the necessity of matrons and bridesmaids packing themselves and their finery into close fusty carriages. A portion of the guests attended in the chapel, and the remainder, when the ceremony was over, were found strolling about the shady garden.

The whole affair of the breakfast was very splendid and lasted some hours. In the midst of this the bride and bridegroom were whisked away with a pair of grey horses to the railway station, and before the last toast of the day had been proposed by the Belgian Councillor of Legation, they were half way up the Apennines on their road to Bologna. Mr. Spalding behaved himself like a man on the occasion. Nothing was spared in the way of expense, and when he made that celebrated speech, in which he declared that the republican virtue of the New World had linked itself in a happy alliance with the aristocratic splendour of the Old, and went on with a simile about the lion and the lamb, everybody accepted it with good humour in spite of its being a little too long for the occasion.

"It has gone off very well, mamma; has it not?" said Nora, as she returned home with her mother to her lodgings.

"Yes, my dear; much, I fancy, as these things generally do."

"I thought it was so nice. And she looked so very well. And he was so pleasant, and so much like a gentleman;—not noisy, you know,—and yet not too serious."

"I dare say, my love."

"It is easy enough, mamma, for a girl to be married, for she has nothing to do but to wear her clothes and look as pretty as she can. And if she cries and has a red nose it is forgiven her. But a man has so difficult a part to play! If he tries to carry himself as though it were not a special occasion, he looks like a fool that way; and if he is very special, he looks like

a fool the other way. I thought Mr. Glascock did it very well."

"To tell you the truth, my dear, I did not observe him."

"I did,—narrowly. He hadn't tied his cravat at all nicely."

"How you could think of his cravat, Nora, with such memories as you must have, and such regrets, I cannot understand."

"Mamma, my memories of Mr. Glascock are pleasant memories, and as for regrets,—I have not one. Can I regret, mamma, that I did not marry a man whom I did not love,—and that I rejected him when I knew that I loved another? You cannot mean that, mamma."

"I know this;—that I was thinking all the time how proud I should have been, and how much more fortunate he would have been, had you been standing there instead of that American young woman." As she said this Lady Rowley burst into tears, and Nora could only answer her mother by embracing her. They were alone together, their party having been too large for one carriage, and Sir Marmaduke having taken his two younger daughters. "Of course, I feel it," said Lady Rowley, through her tears. "It would have been such a position for my child! And that young man,—without a shilling in the world; and writing in that way, just for bare bread!" Nora had nothing more to say. A feeling that in herself would have been base, was simply affectionate and maternal in her mother. It was impossible that she should make her mother see it as she saw it.

There was but one intervening day and then the

Rowleys returned to England. There had been, as it were, a tacit agreement among them that, in spite of all their troubles, their holiday should be a holiday up to the time of the Glascock marriage. Then must commence at once the stern necessity of their return home,—home, not only to England, but to those antipodean islands from which it was too probable that some of them might never come back. And the difficulties in their way seemed to be almost insuperable. First of all there was to be the parting from Emily Trevelyan. She had determined to remain in Florence, and had written to her husband saying that she would do so, and declaring her willingness to go out to him, or to receive him in Florence at any time and in any manner that he might appoint. She had taken this as a first step, intending to go to Casalunga very shortly, even though she should receive no answer from him. The parting between her and her mother and father and sisters was very bitter. Sir Marmaduke, as he had become estranged from Nora, had grown to be more and more gentle and loving with his elder daughter, and was nearly overcome at the idea of leaving her in a strange land, with a husband near her, mad, and yet not within her custody. But he could do nothing,—could hardly say a word,—toward opposing her. Though her husband was mad, he supplied her with the means of living; and when she said that it was her duty to be near him, her father could not deny it. The parting came. "I will return to you the moment you send to me," were Nora's last words to her sister. "I don't suppose I shall send," said Emily. "I shall try to bear it without assistance."

Then the journey from Italy to England was made

without much gratification or excitement, and the Rowley family again found themselves at Gregg's Hotel.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Cropper and Burgess.

WE must now go back to Exeter and look after Mr. Brooke Burgess and Miss Dorothy Stanbury. It is rather hard upon readers that they should be thus hurried from the completion of hymeneals at Florence, to the preparations for other hymeneals in Devonshire; but it is the nature of a complex story to be entangled with many weddings towards its close. In this little history there are, we fear, three or four more to come. We will not anticipate by alluding prematurely to Hugh Stanbury's treachery, or death,—or the possibility that he after all may turn out to be the real descendant of the true Lord Peterborough and the actual inheritor of the title and estate of Monkham, nor will we speak of Nora's certain fortitude under either of these emergencies. But the instructed reader must be aware that Camilla French ought to have a husband found for her; that Colonel Osborne should be caught in some matrimonial trap,—as, how otherwise should he be fitly punished?—and that something should be at least attempted for Priscilla Stanbury, who from the first has been intended to be the real heroine of these pages. That Martha should marry Giles Hickbody, and Barty Burgess run away with Mrs. MacHugh, is of course evident to the meanest novel-expounding capacity; but the fate of Brooke Burgess and of Dorothy

will require to be evolved with some delicacy and much detail.

There was considerable difficulty in fixing the day. In the first place Miss Stanbury was not very well,—and then she was very fidgety. She must see Brooke again before the day was fixed, and after seeing Brooke she must see her lawyer. "To have a lot of money to look after is more plague than profit, my dear," she said to Dorothy one day; "particularly when you don't quite know what you ought to do with it." Dorothy had always avoided any conversation with her aunt about money since the first moment in which she had thought of accepting Brooke Burgess as her husband. She knew that her aunt had some feeling which made her averse to the idea that any portion of the property which she had inherited should be enjoyed by a Stanbury after her death, and Dorothy, guided by this knowledge, had almost convinced herself that her love for Brooke was treason either against him or against her aunt. If, by engaging herself to him, she should rob him of his inheritance, how bitter a burden to him would her love have been! If, on the other hand, she should reward her aunt for all that had been done for her by forcing herself, a Stanbury, into a position not intended for her, how base would be her ingratitude! These thoughts had troubled her much, and had always prevented her from answering any of her aunt's chance allusions to the property. For her, things had at last gone very right. She did not quite know how it had come about, but she was engaged to marry the man she loved. And her aunt was, at any rate, reconciled to the marriage. But when Miss Stanbury declared that she did not know what to do about the

property, Dorothy could only hold her tongue. She had had plenty to say when it had been suggested to her that the marriage should be put off yet for a short while, and that, in the meantime, Brooke should come again to Exeter. She swore that she did not care for how long it was put off,—only that she hoped it might not be put off altogether. And as for Brooke's coming, that, for the present, would be very much nicer than being married out of hand at once. Dorothy, in truth, was not at all in a hurry to be married, but she would have liked to have had her lover always coming and going. Since the courtship had become a thing permitted, she had had the privilege of welcoming him twice at the house in the Close; and that running down to meet him in the little front parlour, and the getting up to make his breakfast for him as he started in the morning, were among the happiest epochs of her life. And then, as soon as ever the breakfast was eaten, and he was gone, she would sit down to write him a letter. Oh, those letters, so beautifully crossed, more than one of which was copied from beginning to end because some word in it was not thought to be sweet enough;—what a heaven of happiness they were to her! The writing of the first had disturbed her greatly, and she had almost repented of the privilege before it was ended; but with the first and second the difficulties had disappeared; and, had she not felt somewhat ashamed of the occupation, she could have sat at her desk and written him letters all day. Brooke would answer them, with fair regularity, but in a most cursory manner,—sending seven or eight lines in return for two sheets fully crossed; but this did not discompose her in the least. He was worked hard at his

office, and had hundreds of other things to do. He, too, could say,—so thought Dorothy,—more in eight lines than she could put into as many pages.

She was quite happy when she was told that the marriage could not take place till August, but that Brooke must come again in July. Brooke did come in the first week of July, and somewhat horrified Dorothy by declaring to her that Miss Stanbury was unreasonable. "If I insist upon leaving London so often for a day or two," said he, "how am I to get anything like leave of absence when the time comes?" In answer to this Dorothy tried to make him understand that business should not be neglected, and that, as far as she was concerned, she could do very well without that trip abroad which he had proposed for her. "I'm not going to be done in that way," said Brooke. "And now that I am here she has nothing to say to me. I've told her a dozen times that I don't want to know anything about her will, and that I'll take it all for granted. There is something to be settled on you, that she calls her own."

"She is so generous, Brooke."

"She is generous enough, but she is very whimsical. She is going to make her whole will over again, and now she wants to send some message to Uncle Barty. I don't know what it is yet, but I am to take it. As far as I can understand, she has sent all the way to London for me, in order that I may take a message across the Close."

"You talk as though it were very disagreeable, coming to Exeter," said Dorothy, with a little pout.

"So it is,—very disagreeable."

"Oh, Brooke!"

"Very disagreeable if our marriage is to be put off by it. I think it will be so much nicer making love somewhere on the Rhine than having snatches of it here, and talking all the time about wills and tenements and settlements." As he said this, with his arm round her waist and his face quite close to hers,—shewing thereby that he was not altogether averse even to his present privileges,—she forgave him.

On that same afternoon, just before the banking hours were over, Brooke went across to the house of Cropper and Burgess, having first been closeted for nearly an hour with his aunt,—and, as he went, his step was sedate and his air was serious. He found his uncle Barty, and was not very long in delivering his message. It was to his effect,—that Miss Stanbury particularly wished to see Mr. Bartholomew Burgess on business, at some hour on that afternoon or that evening. Brooke himself had been made acquainted with the subject in regard to which this singular interview was desired; but it was not a part of his duty to communicate any information respecting it. It had been necessary that his consent to certain arrangements should be asked before the invitation to Barty Burgess could be given; but his present mission was confined to an authority to give the invitation.

Old Mr. Burgess was much surprised, and was at first disposed to decline the proposition made by the "old harridan," as he called her. He had never put any restraint on his language in talking of Miss Stanbury with his nephew, and was not disposed to do so now, because she had taken a new vagary into her head. But there was something in his nephew's manner which at last induced him to discuss the matter rationally.

"And you don't know what it's all about?" said Uncle Barty.

"I can't quite say that. I suppose I do know pretty well. At any rate, I know enough to think that you ought to come. But I must not say what it is."

"Will it do me or anybody else any good?"

"It can't do you any harm. She won't eat you."

"But she can abuse me like a pickpocket, and I should return it, and then there would be a scolding match. I always have kept out of her way, and I think I had better do so still."

Nevertheless Brooke prevailed,—or rather the feeling of curiosity which was naturally engendered prevailed. For very, very many years Barty Burgess had never entered or left his own house of business without seeing the door of that in which Miss Stanbury lived,—and he had never seen that door without a feeling of detestation for the owner of it. It would, perhaps, have been a more rational feeling on his part had he confined his hatred to the memory of his brother, by whose will Miss Stanbury had been enriched, and he had been, as he thought, impoverished. But there had been a contest, and litigation, and disputes, and contradictions, and a long course of those incidents in life which lead to rancour and ill blood, after the death of the former Brooke Burgess; and, as the result of all this, Miss Stanbury held the property and Barty Burgess held his hatred. He had never been ashamed of it, and had spoken his mind out to all who would hear him. And, to give Miss Stanbury her due, it must be admitted that she had hardly been behind him in the warmth of her expression,—of which old Barty was well aware. He hated, and knew that he was hated

in return. And he knew, or thought that he knew, that his enemy was not a woman to relent because old age and weakness and the fear of death were coming on her. His enemy, with all her faults, was no coward. It could not be that now at the eleventh hour she should desire to reconcile him by any act of tardy justice,—nor did he wish to be reconciled at this, the eleventh hour. His hatred was a pleasant excitement to him. His abuse of Miss Stanbury was a chosen recreation. His unuttered daily curse, as he looked over to her door, was a relief to him. Nevertheless he would go. As Brooke had said,—no harm could come of his going. He would go, and at least listen to her proposition.

About seven in the evening his knock was heard at the door. Miss Stanbury was sitting in the small up-stairs parlour, dressed in her second best gown, and was prepared with considerable stiffness and state for the occasion. Dorothy was with her, but was desired in a quick voice to hurry away the moment the knock was heard, as though old Barty would have jumped from the hall door into the room at a bound. Dorothy collected herself with a little start, and went without a word. She had heard much of Barty Burgess, but had never spoken to him, and was subject to a feeling of great awe when she would remember that the grim old man of whom she had heard so much evil would soon be her uncle. According to arrangement, Mr. Burgess was shewn upstairs by his nephew. Barty Burgess had been born in this very house, but had not been inside the walls of it for more than thirty years. He also was somewhat awed by the occasion, and followed his nephew without a word. Brooke was to

remain at hand, so that he might be summoned should he be wanted; but it had been decided by Miss Stanbury that he should not be present at the interview. As soon as her visitor entered the room she rose in a stately way, and curtsayed, propping herself with one hand upon the table as she did so. She looked him full in the face meanwhile, and curtsaying a second time asked him to seat himself in a chair which had been prepared for him. She did it all very well, and it may be surmised that she had rehearsed the little scene, perhaps more than once, when nobody was looking at her. He bowed, and walked round to the chair and seated himself; but finding that he was so placed that he could not see his neighbour's face, he moved his chair. He was not going to fight such a duel as this with the disadvantage of the sun in his eyes.

Hitherto there had hardly been a word spoken. Miss Stanbury had muttered something as she was curtsaying, and Barty Burgess had made some return. Then she began: "Mr. Burgess," she said, "I am indebted to you for your complaisance in coming here at my request." To this he bowed again. "I should not have ventured thus to trouble you were it not that years are dealing more hardly with me than they are with you, and that I could not have ventured to discuss a matter of deep interest otherwise than in my own room." It was her room now, certainly, by law; but Barty Burgess remembered it when it was his mother's room, and when she used to give them all their meals there,—now so many, many years ago! He bowed again, and said not a word. He knew well that she could sooner be brought to her point by his silence than by his speech.

She was a long time coming to her point. Before she could do so she was forced to allude to times long past, and to subjects which she found it very difficult to touch without saying that which would either belie herself, or seem to be severe upon him. Though she had prepared herself, she could hardly get the words spoken, and she was greatly impeded by the obstinacy of his silence. But at last her proposition was made to him. She told him that his nephew, Brooke, was about to be married to her niece, Dorothy; and that it was her intention to make Brooke her heir in the bulk of the property which she had received under the will of the late Mr. Brooke Burgess. "Indeed," she said, "all that I received at your brother's hands shall go back to your brother's family unimpaired." He only bowed, and would not say a word. Then she went on to say that it had at first been a matter to her of deep regret that Brooke should have set his affections upon her niece, as there had been in her mind a strong desire that none of her own people should enjoy the reversion of the wealth, which she had always regarded as being hers only for the term of her life; but that she had found that the young people had been so much in earnest, and that her own feeling had been so near akin to a prejudice, that she had yielded. When this was said Barty smiled instead of bowing, and Miss Stanbury felt that there might be something worse even than his silence. His smile told her that he believed her to be lying. Nevertheless she went on. She was not fool enough to suppose that the whole nature of the man was to be changed by a few words from her. So she went on. The marriage was

a thing fixed, and she was thinking of settlements, and had been talking to lawyers about a new will.

"I do not know that I can help you," said Barty, finding that a longer pause than usual made some word from him absolutely necessary.

"I am going on to that, and I regret that my story should detain you so long, Mr. Burgess." And she did go on. She had, she said, made some saving out of her income. She was not going to trouble Mr. Burgess with this matter,—only that she might explain to him that what she would at once give to the young couple, and what she would settle on Dorothy after her own death, would all come from such savings, and that such gifts and bequests would not diminish the family property. Barty again smiled as he heard this, and Miss Stanbury in her heart likened him to the devil in person. But still she went on. She was very desirous that Brooke Burgess should come and live at Exeter. His property would be in the town and the neighbourhood. It would be a seemly thing,—such was her words,—that he should occupy the house that had belonged to his grandfather and his great-grandfather; and then, moreover,—she acknowledged that she spoke selfishly,—she dreaded the idea of being left alone for the remainder of her own years. Her proposition at last was uttered. It was simply this, that Barty Burgess should give to his nephew, Brooke, his share in the bank.

"I am damned, if I do!" said Barty Burgess, rising up from his chair.

But before he had left the room he had agreed to consider the proposition. Miss Stanbury had of course

known that any such suggestion coming from her without an adequate reason assigned, would have been mere idle wind. She was prepared with such adequate reason. If Mr. Burgess could see his way to make the proposed transfer of his share of the bank business, she, Miss Stanbury, would hand over to him, for his life, a certain proportion of the Burgess property which lay in the city, the income of which would exceed that drawn by him from the business. Would he, at his time of life, take that for doing nothing which he now got for working hard? That was the meaning of it. And then, too, as far as the portion of the property went,—and it extended to the houses owned by Miss Stanbury on the bank side of the Close,—it would belong altogether to Barty Burgess for his life. "It will simply be this, Mr. Burgess;—that Brooke will be your heir,—as would be natural."

"I don't know that it would be at all natural," said he. "I should prefer to choose my own heir."

"No doubt, Mr. Burgess,—in respect to your own property," said Miss Stanbury.

At last he said that he would think of it, and consult his partner; and then he got up to take his leave. "For myself," said Miss Stanbury, "I would wish that all animosities might be buried."

"We can say that they are buried," said the grim old man,—"but nobody will believe us."

"What matters,—if we could believe it ourselves?"

"But suppose we didn't. I don't believe that much good can come from talking of such things, Miss Stanbury. You and I have grown too old to swear a friendship. I will think of this thing, and if I find that it can be made to suit without much difficulty, I

will perhaps entertain it." Then the interview was over, and old Barty made his way down-stairs, and out of the house. He looked over to the tenements in the Close which were offered to him, every circumstance of each one of which he knew, and felt that he might do worse. Were he to leave the bank, he could not take his entire income with him, and it had been long said of him that he ought to leave it. The Croppers, who were his partners,—and whom he had never loved,—would be glad to welcome in his place one of the old family who would have money; and then the name would be perpetuated in Exeter, which, even to Barty Burgess, was something.

On that night the scheme was divulged to Dorothy, and she was in ecstasies. London had always sounded bleak and distant and terrible to her; and her heart had misgiven her at the idea of leaving her aunt. If only this thing might be arranged! When Brooke spoke the next morning of returning at once to his office, he was rebuked by both the ladies. What was the Ecclesiastical Commission Office to any of them, when matters of such importance were concerned? But Brooke would not be talked out of his prudence. He was very willing to be made a banker at Exeter, and to go to school again and learn banking business; but he would not throw up his occupation in London till he knew that there was another ready for him in the country. One day longer he spent in Exeter, and during that day he was more than once with his uncle. He saw also the Messrs. Cropper, and was considerably chilled by the manner in which they at first seemed to entertain the proposition. Indeed, for a couple of hours he thought that the scheme must be abandoned.

It was pointed out to him that Mr. Barty Burgess's life would probably be short, and that he—Barty—had but a small part of the business at his disposal. But gradually a way to terms was seen,—not quite so simple as that which Miss Stanbury had suggested; and Brooke, when he left Exeter, did believe it possible that he, after all, might become the family representative in the old banking-house of the Burgesses.

"And how long will it take, Aunt Stanbury?" Dorothy asked.

"Don't you be impatient, my dear."

"I am not the least impatient; but of course I want to tell mamma and Priscilla. It will be so nice to live here and not go up to London. Are we to stay here,—in this very house?"

"Have you not found out yet that Brooke will be likely to have an opinion of his own on such things?"

"But would you wish us to live here, aunt?"

"I hardly know, dear. I am a foolish old woman, and cannot say what I would wish. I cannot bear to be alone."

"Of course we will stay with you."

"And yet I should be jealous if I were not mistress of my own house."

"Of course you will be mistress."

"I believe, Dolly, that it would be better that I should die. I have come to feel that I can do more good by going out of the world than by remaining in it." Dorothy hardly answered this in words, but sat close by her aunt, holding the old woman's hand and caressing it, and administering that love of which Miss

Stanbury had enjoyed so little during her life and which had become so necessary to her.

The news about the bank arrangements, though kept of course as a great secret, soon became common in Exeter. It was known to be a good thing for the firm in general that Barty Burgess should be removed from his share of the management. He was old-fashioned, unpopular, and very stubborn; and he and a certain Mr. Julius Cropper, who was the leading man among the Croppers, had not always been comfortable together. It was at first hinted that old Miss Stanbury had been softened by sudden twinges of conscience, and that she had confessed to some terrible crime in the way of forgery, perjury, or perhaps worse, and had relieved herself at last by making full restitution. But such a rumour as this did not last long or receive wide credence. When it was hinted to such old friends as Sir Peter Mancrudy and Mrs. MacHugh, they laughed it to scorn,—and it did not exist even in the vague form of an undivulged mystery for above three days. Then it was asserted that old Barty had been found to have no real claim to any share in the bank, and that he was to be turned out at Miss Stanbury's instance;—that he was to be turned out, and that Brooke had been acknowledged to be the owner of the Burgess share of her business. Then came the fact that old Barty had been bought out, and that the future husband of Miss Stanbury's niece was to be the junior partner. A general feeling prevailed at last that there had been another great battle between Miss Stanbury and old Barty, and that the old maid had prevailed now as she had done in former days.

Before the end of July the papers were in the

lawyer's hands, and all the terms had been fixed. Brooke came down again and again, to Dorothy's great delight, and displayed considerable firmness in the management of his own interest. If Fate intended to make him a banker in Exeter instead of a clerk in the Ecclesiastical Commission Office, he would be a banker after a respectable fashion. There was more than one little struggle between him and Mr. Julius Cropper, which ended in accession of respect on the part of Mr. Cropper for his new partner. Mr. Cropper had thought that the establishment might best be known to the commercial world of the West of England as "Croppers' Bank;" but Brooke had been very firm in asserting that if he was to have anything to do with it the old name should be maintained.

"It's to be 'Cropper and Burgess,'" he said to Dorothy one afternoon. "They fought hard for 'Cropper, Cropper, and Burgess;'—but I wouldn't stand more than one Cropper."

"Of course not," said Dorothy, with something almost of scorn in her voice. By this time Dorothy had gone very deeply into banking business.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"I wouldn't do it, if I was you."

MISS STANBURY at this time was known all through Exeter to be very much altered from the Miss Stanbury of old;—or even from the Miss Stanbury of two years since. The Miss Stanbury of old was a stalwart lady who would play her rubber of whist five nights a week, and could hold her own in conversation against the best woman in Exeter,—not to speak of her

acknowledged superiority over every man in that city. Now she cared little for the glories of debate; and though she still liked her rubber, and could wake herself up to the old fire in the detection of a revoke or the claim for a second trick, her rubbers were few and far between, and she would leave her own house on an evening only when all circumstances were favourable, and with many precautions against wind and water. Some said that she was becoming old, and that she was going out like the snuff of a candle. But Sir Peter Mancrudy declared that she might live for the next fifteen years, if she would only think so herself. "It was true," Sir Peter said, "that in the winter she had been ill, and that there had been danger as to her throat during the east winds of the spring;—but those dangers had passed away, and, if she would only exert herself, she might be almost as good a woman as ever she had been." Sir Peter was not a man of many words, or given to talk frequently of his patients; but it was clearly Sir Peter's opinion that Miss Stanbury's mind was ill at ease. She had become discontented with life, and therefore it was that she cared no longer for the combat of tongues, and had become cold even towards the card-table. It was so in truth; and yet perhaps the lives of few men or women had been more innocent, and few had struggled harder to be just in their dealings and generous in their thoughts.

There was ever present to her mind an idea of failure and a fear lest she had been mistaken in her views throughout her life. No one had ever been more devoted to peculiar opinions, or more strong in the use of language for their expression; and she was so far

true to herself, that she would never seem to retreat from the position she had taken. She would still scorn the new fangles of the world around her, and speak of the changes which she saw as all tending to evil. But, through it all, there was an idea present to herself that it could not be God's intention that things should really change for the worse, and that the fault must be in her, because she had been unable to move as others had moved. She would sit thinking of the circumstances of her own life and tell herself that with her everything had failed. She had loved, but had quarrelled with her lover; and her love had come to nothing—but barren wealth. She had fought for her wealth and had conquered;—and had become hard in the fight, and was conscious of her own hardness. In the early days of her riches and power she had taken her nephew by the hand,—and had thrown him away from her because he would not dress himself in her mirror. She had believed herself to be *right, and would not, even now, tell herself that she had been wrong; but there were doubts, and qualms of conscience, and an uneasiness,—because her life had been a failure. Now she was seeking to appease her self-accusations by sacrificing everything for the happiness of her niece and her chosen hero; but as she went on with the work she felt that all would be in vain, unless she could sweep herself altogether from off the scene. She had told herself that if she could bring Brooke to Exeter, his prospects would be made infinitely brighter than they would be in London, and that she in her last days would not be left utterly alone. But as the prospect of her future life came nearer to her, she saw, or thought that she saw, that

there was still failure before her. Young people would not want an old woman in the house with them;—even though the old woman would declare that she would be no more in the house than a tame cat. And she knew herself also too well to believe that she could make herself a tame cat in the home that had so long been subject to her dominion. Would it not be better that she should go away somewhere,—and die?

"If Mr. Brooke is to come here," Martha said to her one day, "we ought to begin and make the changes, ma'am."

"What changes? You are always wanting to make changes."

"If they was never made till I wanted them they'd never be made, ma'am. But if there is to be a married couple there should be things proper. Anyways, ma'am, we ought to know;—oughtn't we?"

The truth of this statement was so evident that Miss Stanbury could not contradict it. But she had not even yet made up her mind. Ideas were running through her head which she knew to be very wild, but of which she could not divest herself. "Martha," she said, after a while, "I think I shall go away from this myself."

"Leave the house, ma'am?" said Martha, awe-struck.

"There are other houses in the world, I suppose, in which an old woman can live and die."

"There is houses, ma'am, of course."

"And what is the difference between one and another?"

"I wouldn't do it, ma'am, if I was you. I wouldn't do it if it was ever so. Sure the house is big enough

for Mr. Brooke and Miss Dorothy along with you. I wouldn't go and make such change as that;—I wouldn't indeed, ma'am." Martha spoke out almost with eloquence, so much expression was there in her face. Miss Stanbury said nothing more at the moment, beyond signifying her indisposition to make up her mind to anything at the present moment. Yes;—the house was big enough as far as rooms were concerned; but how often had she heard that an old woman must always be in the way, if attempting to live with a newly-married couple? If a mother-in-law be unendurable, how much more so one whose connection would be less near? She could keep her own house no doubt, and let them go elsewhere; but what then would come of her old dream, that Burgess, the new banker in the city, should live in the very house that had been inhabited by the Burgesses, the bankers of old? There was certainly only one way out of all these troubles, and that way would be that she should—go from them and be at rest.

Her will had now been drawn out and completed for the third or fourth time, and she had made no secret of its contents either with Brooke or Dorothy. The whole estate she left to Brooke, including the houses which were to become his after his uncle's death; and in regard to the property she had made no further stipulation. "I might have settled it on your children," she said to him, "but in doing so I should have settled it on hers. I don't know why an old woman should try to interfere with things after she has gone. I hope you won't squander it, Brooke."

"I shall be a steady old man by that time," he said.

"I hope you'll be steady at any rate. But there it is, and God must direct you in the use of it, if He will. It has been a burthen to me; but then I have been a solitary old woman." Half of what she had saved she proposed to give Dorothy on her marriage, and for doing this arrangements had already been made. There were various other legacies, and the last she announced was one to her nephew, Hugh. "I have left him a thousand pounds," she said to Dorothy,—"so that he may remember me kindly at last." As to this, however, she exacted a pledge that no intimation of the legacy was to be made to Hugh. Then it was that Dorothy told her aunt that Hugh intended to marry Nora Rowley, one of the ladies who had been at the Clock House during the days in which her mother had lived in grandeur; and then it was also that Dorothy obtained leave to invite Hugh to her own wedding. "I hope she will be happier than her sister," Miss Stanbury said, when she heard of the intended marriage.

"It wasn't Mrs. Trevelyan's fault, you know, aunt."

"I say nothing about anybody's fault; but this I do say, that it was a very great misfortune. I fought all that battle with your sister Priscilla, and I don't mean to fight it again, my dear. If Hugh marries the young lady, I hope she will be more happy than her sister. There can be no harm in saying that."

Dorothy's letter to her brother shall be given, because it will inform the reader of all the arrangements as they were made up to that time, and will convey the Exeter news respecting various persons with whom our story is concerned.

"The Cloon, July 20, 186—.

"DEAR HUGH,

"The day for my marriage is now fixed, and I wish with all my heart that it was the same with you. Pray give my love to Nora. It seems so odd that, though she was living for a while with mamma at Nuncombe Putney, I never should have seen her yet. I am very glad that Brooke has seen her, and he declares that she is quite *magnificently beautiful*. Those are his own words.

"We are to be married on the 10th of August, a Wednesday, and now comes my great news. Aunt Stanbury says that you are to come and stay in the house. She bids me tell you so with her love; and that you can have a room as long as you like. *Of course, you must come*. In the first place, you must because you are to give me away, and Brooke wouldn't have me if I wasn't given away properly; and then it will make me so happy that you and Aunt Stanbury should be friends again. You can stay as long as you like, but, of course, you must come the day before the wedding. We are to be married in the Cathedral, and there are to be two clergymen, but I don't yet know who they will be;—not Mr. Gibson, certainly, as you were good enough to suggest.

"Mr. Gibson is married to Arabella French, and they have gone away somewhere into Cornwall. Camilla has come back, and I have seen her once. She looked ever so fierce, as though she intended to declare that she didn't mind what anybody may think. They say that she still protests that she never will speak to her sister again.

"I was introduced to Mr. Barty Burgess the other

day. Brooke was here, and we met him in the Close. I hardly knew what he said to me, I was so frightened; but Brooke said that he meant to be civil, and that he is going to send me a present. I have got a quantity of things already, and yesterday Mrs. MacHugh sent me such a beautiful cream-jug. If you'll come in time on the 9th, you shall see them all before they are put away.

"Mamma and Priscilla are to be here, and they will come on the 9th also. Poor, dear mamma is, I know, terribly flurried about it, and so is Aunt Stanbury. It is so long since they have seen each other. I don't think Priscilla feels it the same way, because she is so brave. Do you remember when it was first proposed that I should come here? I am so glad I came,—because of Brooke. He will come on the 9th, quite early, and I do so hope you will come with him.

"Yours most affectionately,

"DOROTHY STANBURY.

"Give my best, best love to Nora."

CHAPTER XXV.

Lady Rowley conquered.

WHEN the Rowleys were back in London, and began to employ themselves on the terrible work of making ready for their journey to the Islands, Lady Rowley gradually gave way about Hugh Stanbury. She had become aware that Nora would not go back with them,—unless under an amount of pressure which she would find it impossible to use. And if Nora did

not go out to the Islands, what was to become of her unless she married this man? Sir Marmaduke, when all was explained to him, declared that a girl must do what her parents ordered her to do. "Other girls live with their fathers and mothers, and so must she." Lady Rowley endeavoured to explain that other girls lived with their fathers and mothers, because they found themselves in established homes from which they are not disposed to run away; but Nora's position was, as she alleged, very different. Nora's home had latterly been with her sister, and it was hardly to be expected that the parental authority should not find itself impaired by the interrègnum which had taken place. Sir Marmaduke would not see the thing in the same light, and was disposed to treat his daughter with a high hand. If she would not do as she was bidden, she should no longer be daughter of his. In answer to this Lady Rowley could only repeat her conviction that Nora would not go out to the Mandarins; and that as for disinheriting her, casting her off, cursing her, and the rest,—she had no belief in such doings at all. "On the stage they do such things as that," she said; "and, perhaps, they used to do it once in reality. But you know that it's out of the question now. Fancy your standing up and cursing at the dear girl, just as we are all starting from Southampton!" Sir Marmaduke knew as well as his wife that it would be impossible, and only muttered something about the "dear girl" behaving herself with great impropriety.

They were all aware that Nora was not going to leave England, because no berth had been taken for her on board the ship, and because, while the other girls were preparing for their long voyage, no prepara-

tions were made for her. Of course she was not going. Sir Marmaduke would probably have given way altogether immediately on his return to London, had he not discussed the matter with his friend Colonel Osborne. It became, of course, his duty to make some inquiry as to the Stanbury family, and he knew that Osborne had visited Mrs. Stanbury when he made his unfortunate pilgrimage to the porch of Cockchaffington Church. He told Osborne the whole story of Nora's engagement, telling also that other most heart-breaking tale of her conduct in regard to Mr. Glascock, and asked the Colonel what he thought about the Stanburys. Now the Colonel did not hold the Stanburys in high esteem. He had met Hugh, as the reader may perhaps remember, and had had some intercourse with the young man, which had not been quite agreeable to him, on the platform of the railway station at Exeter. And he had also heard something of the ladies at Nuncombe Putney during his short sojourn at the house of Mrs. Crocket. "My belief is, they are beggars," said Colonel Osborne.

"I suppose so," said Sir Marmaduke, shaking his head.

"When I went over to call on Emily,—that time I was at Cockchaffington, you know, when Trevelyan made himself such a d— fool,—I found the mother and sister living in a decentish house enough; but it wasn't their house."

"Not their own, you mean?"

"It was a place that Trevelyan had got this young man to take for Emily, and they had merely gone there to be with her. They had been living in a

little bit of a cottage; a sort of a place that any—any ploughman would live in. Just that kind of cottage."

"Goodness gracious!"

"And they've gone to another just like it;—so I'm told."

"And can't ne do anything better for them than that?" asked Sir Marmaduke.

"I know nothing about him. I have met him, you know. He used to be with Trevelyan;—that was when Nora took a fancy for him, of course. And I saw him once down in Devonshire, when I must say he behaved uncommonly badly,—doing all he could to foster Trevelyan's stupid jealousy."

"He has changed his mind about that, I think."

"Perhaps he has; but he behaved very badly then. Let him shew up his income;—that, I take it, is the question in such a case as this. His father was a clergyman, and therefore I suppose he must be considered to be a gentleman. But has he means to support a wife, and keep up a house in London? If he has not, that is an end to it, I should say."

But Sir Marmaduke could not see his way to any such end, and, although he still looked black upon Nora, and talked to his wife of his determination to stand no contumacy, and hinted at cursing, disinheriting, and the like, he began to perceive that Nora would have her own way. In his unhappiness he regretted this visit to England, and almost thought that the Mandarins were a pleasanter residence than London. He could do pretty much as he pleased there, and could live quietly, without the trouble which encountered him now on every side.

Nora, immediately on her return to London, had written a note to Hugh, simply telling him of her arrival and begging him to come and see her. "Mamma," she said, "I must see him, and it would be nonsense to say that he must not come here. I have done what I have said I would do, and you ought not to make difficulties." Lady Rowley declared that Sir Marmaduke would be very angry if Hugh were admitted without his express permission. "I don't want to do anything in the dark," continued Nora, "but of course I must see him. I suppose it will be better that he should come to me than that I should go to him?" Lady Rowley quite understood the threat that was conveyed in this. It would be much better that Hugh should come to the hotel, and that he should be treated then as an accepted lover. She had come to that conclusion. But she was obliged to vacillate for awhile between her husband and her daughter. Hugh came of course, and Sir Marmaduke, by his wife's advice, kept out of the way. Lady Rowley, though she was at home, kept herself also out of the way, remaining above with her two other daughters. Nora thus achieved the glory and happiness of receiving her lover alone.

"My own true girl!" he said, speaking with his arms still round her waist.

"I am true enough; but whether I am your own,—that is another question."

"You mean to be?"

"But papa doesn't mean it. Papa says that you are nobody, and that you haven't got an income; and thinks that I had better go back and be an old maid at the Mandarins."

"And what do you think yourself, Nora?"

"What do I think? As far as I can understand, young ladies are not allowed to think at all. They have to do what their papas tell them. That will do, Hugh. You can talk without taking hold of me."

"It is such a time since I have had a hold of you, —as you call it."

"It will be much longer before you can do so again, if I go back to the Islands with papa. I shall expect you to be true, you know; and it will be ten years at the least before I can hope to be home again."

"I don't think you mean to go, Nora."

"But what am I to do? That idea of yours of walking out to the next church and getting ourselves married sounds very nice and independent, but you know that it is not practicable."

"On the other hand, I know it is."

"It is not practicable for me, Hugh. Of all things in the world I don't want to be a Lydia. I won't do anything that anybody shall ever say that your wife ought not to have done. Young women when they are married ought to have their papas' and mammas' consent. I have been thinking about it a great deal for the last month or two, and I have made up my mind to that."

"What is it all to come to, then?"

"I mean to get papa's consent. That is what it is to come to."

"And if he is obstinate?"

"I shall coax him round at last. When the time for going comes, he'll yield then."

"But you will not go with them?" As he asked

this he came to her and tried again to take her by the waist; but she retreated from him, and got herself clear from his arm. "If you are afraid of me, I shall know that you think it possible that we may be parted."

"I am not a bit afraid of you, Hugh."

"Nora, I think you ought to tell me something definitely."

"I think I have been definite enough, sir. You may be sure of this, however;—I will not go back to the Islands."

"Give me your hand on that."

"There is my hand. But, remember;—I had told you just as much before. I don't mean to go back. I mean to stay here. I mean;—but I do not think I will tell you all the things I mean to do."

"You mean to be my wife?"

"Certainly;—some day, when the difficulty about the chairs and tables can settle itself. The real question now is,—what am I to do with myself when papa and mamma are gone?"

"Become Mrs. H. Stanbury at once. Chairs and tables! You shall have chairs and tables as many as you want. You won't be too proud to live in lodgings for a few months?"

"There must be preliminaries, Hugh,—even for lodgings, though they may be very slender. Papa goes in less than three weeks now, and mamma has got something else to think of than my marriage garments. And then there are all manner of difficulties, money difficulties and others, out of which I don't see my way yet." Hugh began to asseverate that it was his business to help her through all money difficulties

as well as others; but she soon stopped his eloquence. "It will be by-and-by, Hugh, and I hope you'll support the burden like a man; but just at present there is a hitch. I shouldn't have come over at all;—I should have stayed with Emily in Italy, had I not thought that I was bound to see you."

"My own Darling!"

"When papa goes, I think that I had better go back to her."

"I'll take you!" said Hugh, picturing to himself all the pleasures of such a tour together over the Alps.

"No you won't, because that would be improper. When we travel together we must go Darby and Joan fashion, as man and wife. I think I had better go back to Emily, because her position there is so terrible. There must come some end to it, I suppose soon. He will be better, or he will become so bad that,—that medical interference will be unavoidable. But I do not like that she should be alone. She gave me a home when she had one;—and I must always remember that I met you there." After this there was of course another attempt with Hugh's right arm, which on this occasion was not altogether unsuccessful. And then she told him of her friendship for Mr. Glascock's wife, and of her intention at some future time to visit them at Monkham.

"And see all the glories that might have been your own," he said.

"And think of the young man who has robbed me of them all! And you are to go there too, so that you may see what you have done. There was a time, Hugh, when I was very nearly pleasing all my friends

and shewing myself to be a young lady of high taste and noble fortune,—and an obedient, good girl."

"And why didn't you?"

"I thought I would wait just a little longer. Because,—because,—because——. Oh, Hugh, how cross you were to me afterwards when you came down to Nuncombe and would hardly speak to me!"

"And why didn't I speak to you?"

"I don't know. Because you were cross, and surly, and thinking of nothing but your tobacco, I believe. Do you remember how we walked to Liddon, and you hadn't a word for anybody?"

"I remember I wanted you to go down to the river with me, and you wouldn't go."

"You asked me only once, and I did so long to go with you. Do you remember the rocks in the river? I remember the place as though I saw it now; and how I longed to jump from one stone to another. Hugh, if we are ever married, you must take me there, and let me jump on those stones."

"You pretended that you could not think of wetting your feet."

"Of course I pretended,—because you were so cross, and so cold. Oh, dear! I wonder whether you will ever know it all."

"Don't I know it all now?"

"I suppose you do, nearly. There is mighty little of a secret in it, and it is the same thing that is going on always. Only it seems so strange to me that I should ever have loved any one so dearly,—and that for next to no reason at all. You never made yourself very charming that I know of;—did you?"

"I did my best. It wasn't much, I dare say."

"You did nothing, sir,—except just let me fall in love with you. And you were not quite sure that you would let me do that."

"Nora, I don't think you do understand."

"I do;—perfectly. Why were you cross with me, instead of saying one nice word when you were down at Nuncombe? I do understand."

"Why was it?"

"Because you did not think well enough of me to believe that I would give myself to a man who had no fortune of his own. I know it now, and I knew it then; and therefore I wouldn't dabble in the river with you. But it's all over now, and we'll go and get wet together like dear little children, and Priscilla shall scold us when we come back."

They were alone in the sitting-room for more than an hour, and Lady Rowley was patient up-stairs as mothers will be patient in such emergencies. Sophie and Lucy had gone out and left her; and there she remained telling herself, as the weary minutes went by, that as the thing was to be, it was well that the young people should be together. Hugh Stanbury could never be to her what Mr. Glascock would have been,—a son-in-law to sit and think about, and dream of, and be proud of,—whose existence as her son-in-law would in itself have been a happiness to her out in her banishment at the other side of the world; but nevertheless it was natural to her, as a soft-hearted loving mother with many daughters, that any son-in-law should be dear to her. Now that she had gradually brought herself round to believe in Nora's marriage, she was disposed to make the best of Hugh, to remember that he was certainly a clever man, that he

was an honest fellow, and that she had heard of him as a good son and a kind brother, and that he had behaved well in reference to her Emily and Trevelyan. She was quite willing now that Hugh should be happy, and she sat there thinking that the time was very long, but still waiting patiently till she should be summoned. "You must let me go for mamma for a moment," Nora said. "I want you to see her and make yourself a good boy before her. If you are ever to be her son-in-law, you ought to be in her good graces." Hugh declared that he would do his best, and Nora fetched her mother.

Stanbury found some difficulty in making himself a "good boy" in Lady Rowley's presence; and Lady Rowley herself, for some time, felt very strongly the awkwardness of the meeting. She had never formally recognised the young man as her daughter's accepted suitor, and was not yet justified in doing so by any permission from Sir Marmaduke; but, as the young people had been for the last hour or two alone together, with her connivance and sanction, it was indispensable that she should in some way signify her parental adherence to the arrangement. Nora began by talking about Emily, and Trevelyan's condition and mode of living were discussed. Then Lady Rowley said something about their coming journey, and Hugh, with a lucky blunder, spoke of Nora's intended return to Italy. "We don't know how that may be," said Lady Rowley. "Her papa still wishes her to go back with us."

"Mamma, you know that that is impossible," said Nora.

"Not impossible, my love."

"But she will not go back," said Hugh. "Lady

Rowley, you would not propose to separate us by such a distance as that?"

"It is Sir Marmaduke that you must ask."

"Mamma, mamma!" exclaimed Nora, rushing to her mother's side, "it is not papa that we must ask,—not now. We want you to be our friend. Don't we, Hugh? And, mamma, if you will really be our friend, of course, papa will come round."

"My dear Nora!"

"You know he will, mamma; and you know that you mean to be good and kind to us. Of course I can't go back to the Islands with you. How could I go so far and leave him behind? He might have half-a-dozen wives before I could get back to him—"

"If you have not more trust in him than that——!"

"Long engagements are awful bores," said Hugh, finding it to be necessary that he also should press forward his argument.

"I can trust him as far as I can see him," said Nora, "and therefore I do not want to lose sight of him altogether."

Lady Rowley of course gave way and embraced her accepted son-in-law. After all it might have been worse. He saw his way clearly, he said, to making six hundred a year, and did not at all doubt that before long he would do better than that. He proposed that they should be married some time in the autumn, but was willing to acknowledge that much must depend on the position of Trevelyan and his wife. He would hold himself ready at any moment, he said, to start to Italy, and would do all that could be done by a brother. Then Lady Rowley gave him her blessing,

and kissed him again,—and Nora kissed him too, and hung upon him, and did not push him away at all when his arm crept round her waist. And that feeling came upon him which must surely be acknowledged by all engaged young men when they first find themselves encouraged by mammas in the tak'ng of liberties which they have hitherto regarded as mysteries to be hidden, especially from maternal eyes,—that feeling of being a fine fat calf decked out with ribbons for a sacrifice.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Four o'Clock in the Morning.

ANOTHER week went by and Sir Marmaduke had even yet not surrendered. He quite understood that Nora was not to go back to the Islands. And had visited Mr. and Mrs. Outhouse at St. Diddulph's in order to secure a home for her there, if it might be possible. Mr. Outhouse did not refuse, but gave the permission in such a fashion as to make it almost equal to a refusal. "He was," he said, "much attached to his niece Nora, but he had heard that there was a love affair." Sir Marmaduke, of course, could not deny the love affair. There was certainly a love affair of which he did not personally approve, as the gentleman had no fixed income and as far as he could understand no fixed profession. "Such a love affair," thought Mr. Outhouse, "was a sort of thing that he didn't know how to manage at all. If Nora came to him, was the young man to visit at the house, or was he not?" Then Mrs. Outhouse said something as to the necessity of an anti-Stanbury plege on Nora's part,

and Sir Marmaduke found that that scheme must be abandoned. Mrs. Trevelyan had written from Florence more than once or twice, and in her last letter had said that she would prefer not to have Nora with her. She was at that time living in lodgings at Siena and had her boy there also. She saw her husband every other day; but nevertheless,—according to her statements,—her visits to Casalunga were made in opposition to his wishes. He had even expressed a desire that she should leave Siena and return to England. He had once gone so far as to say that if she would do so, he would follow her. But she clearly did not believe him, and in all her letters spoke of him as one whom she could not regard as being under the guidance of reason. She had taken her child with her once or twice to the house, and on the first occasion Trevelyan had made much of his son, had wept over him, and professed that in losing him he had lost his only treasure; but after that he had not noticed the boy, and latterly she had gone alone. She thought that perhaps her visits cheered him, breaking the intensity of his solitude; but he never expressed himself gratified by them, never asked her to remain at the house, never returned with her into Siena, and continually spoke of her return to England as a step which must be taken soon,—and the sooner the better. He intended to follow her, he said; and she explained very fully how manifest was his wish that she should go, by the temptation to do so which he thought that he held out by this promise. He had spoken, on every occasion of her presence with him, of Sir Marmaduke's attempt to prove him to be a madman; but declared that he was afraid of no one in England, and would

face all the lawyers in Chancery Lane and all the doctors in Savile Row. Nevertheless, so said Mrs. Trevelyan, he would undoubtedly remain at Casalunga till after Sir Marmaduke should have sailed. He was not so mad but that he knew that no one else would be so keen to take steps against him as would Sir Marmaduke. As for his health, her account of him was very sad. "He seemed," she said, "to be withering away. His hand was mere skin and bone. His hair and beard so covered his thin long cheeks, that there was nothing left of his face but his bright, large, melancholy eyes. His legs had become so frail and weak that they would hardly bear his weight as he walked; and his clothes, though he had taken a fancy to throw aside all that he had brought with him from England, hung so loose about him that they seemed as though they would fall from him. Once she had ventured to send out to him from Siena a doctor to whom she had been recommended in Florence; but he had taken the visit in very bad part, had told the gentleman that he had no need for any medical services, and had been furious with her, because of her offence in having sent such a visitor. He had told her that if ever she ventured to take such a liberty again, he would demand the child back, and refuse her permission inside the gates of Casalunga. "Don't come, at any rate, till I send for you," Mrs. Trevelyan said in her last letter to her sister. "Your being here would do no good, and would, I think, make him feel that he was being watched. My hope is, at last, to get him to return with me. If you were here, I think this would be less likely. And then why should you be mixed up with such unutterable sadness and distress

more than is essentially necessary? My health stands wonderfully well, though the heat here is very great. It is cooler at Casalunga than in the town,—of which I am glad for his sake. He perspires so profusely that it seems to me he cannot stand the waste much longer. I know he will not go to England as long as papa is there;—but I hope that he may be induced to do so by slow stages as soon as he knows that papa has gone. Mind you send me a newspaper, so that he may see it stated in print that papa has sailed."

It followed as one consequence of these letters from Florence that Nora was debarred from the Italian scheme as a mode of passing her time till some house should be open for her reception. She had suggested to Hugh that she might go for a few weeks to Nuncombe Putney, but he had explained to her the nature of his mother's cottage, and had told her that there was no hole there in which she could lay her head. "There never was such a forlorn young woman," she said. "When papa goes I shall literally be without shelter." There had come a letter from Mrs. Clascock,—at last it was signed Caroline Glascock, though another name might have been used,—dated from Milan, saying that they were hurrying back to Naples even at that season of the year, because Lord Peterborough was dead. "And she is Lady Peterborough!" said Lady Rowley, unable to repress the expression of the old regrets. "Of course she is Lady Peterborough, mamma; what else should she be?—though she does not so sign herself." "We think," said the American peress, "that we shall be at Monkham's before the end of August, and Charles says that you are to come just the same. There will be nobody else there, of course,

because of Lord Peterborough's death." "I saw it in the paper," said Sir Marmaduke, "and quite forgot to mention it."

That same evening there was a long family discussion about Nora's prospects. They were all together in the gloomy sitting-room at Gregg's Hotel, and Sir Marmaduke had not yielded. The ladies had begun to feel that it would be well not to press him to yield. Practically he had yielded. There was now no question of cursing and of so-called disinheritance. Nora was to remain in England, of course with the intention of being married to Hugh Stanbury; and the difficulty consisted in the need of an immediate home for her. It wanted now but twelve days to that on which the family were to sail from Southampton, and nothing had been settled. "If papa will allow me something ever so small, and will trust me, I will live alone in lodgings," said Nora.

"It is the maddest thing I ever heard," said Sir Marmaduke.

"Who would take care of you, Nora?" asked Lady Rowley.

"And who would walk about with you?" said Lucy!

"I don't see how it would be possible to live alone like that," said Sophie.

"Nobody would take care of me, and nobody would walk about with me, and I could live alone very well," said Nora. "I don't see why a young woman is to be supposed to be so absolutely helpless as all that comes to. Of course it won't be very nice, —but it need not be for long."

"Why not for long?" asked Sir Marmaduke.

"Not for very long," said Nora.

"It does not seem to me," said Sir Marmaduke, after a considerable pause, "that this gentleman himself is so particularly anxious for the match. I have heard no day named, and no rational proposition made."

"Papa, that is unfair, most unfair,—and ungenerous."

"Nora," said her mother, "do not speak in that way to your father."

"Mamma, it is unfair. Papa accuses Mr. Stanbury of being,—being lukewarm and untrue,—of not being in earnest."

"I would rather that he were not in earnest," said Sir Marmaduke.

"Mr. Stanbury is ready at any time," continued Nora. "He would have the banns at once read, and marry me in three weeks,—if I would let him."

"Good gracious, Nora!" exclaimed Lady Rowley.

"But I have refused to name any day, or to make any arrangement, because I did not wish to do so before papa had given his consent. That is why things are in this way. If papa will but let me take a room till I can go to Monkham, I will have everything arranged from there. You can trust Mr. Glascock for that, and you can trust her."

"I suppose your papa will make you some allowance," said Lady Rowley.

"She is entitled to nothing, as she has refused to go to her proper home," said Sir Marmaduke.

The conversation, which had now become very disagreeable, was not allowed to go any further. And

it was well that it should be interrupted. They all knew that Sir Marmaduke must be brought round by degrees, and that both Nora and Lady Rowley had gone as far as was prudent at present. But all trouble on this head was suddenly ended for this evening by the entrance of the waiter with a telegram. It was addressed to Lady Rowley, and she opened it with trembling hands,—as ladies always do open telegrams. It was from Emily Trevelyan. "Louis is much worse. Let somebody come to me. Hugh Stanbury would be the best."

In a few minutes they were so much disturbed that no one quite knew what should be done at once. Lady Rowley began by declaring that she would go herself. Sir Marmaduke of course pointed out that this was impossible, and suggested that he would send a lawyer. Nora professed herself ready to start immediately on the journey, but was stopped by a proposition from her sister Lucy that in that case Hugh Stanbury would of course go with her. Lady Rowley asked whether Hugh would go, and Nora asserted that he would go immediately as a matter of course. She was sure he would go, let the people at the D. R. say what they might. According to her there was always somebody at the call of the editor of the D. R. to do the work of anybody else, when anybody else wanted to go away. Sir Marmaduke shook his head, and was very uneasy. He still thought that a lawyer would be best, feeling, no doubt, that if Stanbury's services were used on such an occasion, there must be an end of all opposition to the marriage. But before half-an-hour was over Stanbury was sent for. The boots of the hotel went off in a cab to the office of the D. R. with

a note from Lady Rowley. "Dear Mr. Stanbury,— We have had a telegram from Emily, and want to see you, *at once*. Please come. We shall sit up and wait for you till you do come.—E. R."

It was very distressing to them because, let the result be what it might, it was all but impossible that Mrs. Trevelyan should be with them before they had sailed, and it was quite out of the question that they should now postpone their journey. Were Stanbury to start by the morning train on the following day, he could not reach Siena till the afternoon of the fourth day; and let the result be what it might when he arrived there, it would be out of the question that Emily Trevelyan should come back quite at once, or that she should travel at the same speed. Of course they might hear again by telegram, and also by letter; but they could not see her, or have any hand in her plans. "If anything were to happen, she might have come with us," said Lady Rowley.

"It is out of the question," said Sir Marmaduke gloomily. "I could not give up the places I have taken."

"A few days more would have done it."

"I don't suppose she would wish to go," said Nora. "Of course she would not take Louey there. Why should she? And then I don't suppose he is so ill as that."

"There is no saying," said Sir Marmaduke. It was very evident that, whatever might be Sir Marmaduke's opinion, he had no strongly-developed wish for his son-in-law's recovery.

They all sat up waiting for Hugh Stanbury till eleven, twelve, one, and two o'clock at night. The

"boots" had returned saying that Mr. Stanbury had not been at the office of the newspaper, but that, according to information received, he certainly would be there that night. No other address had been given to the man, and the note had therefore of necessity been left at the office. Sir Marmaduke became very fretful, and was evidently desirous of being liberated from his night watch. But he could not go himself, and shewed his impatience by endeavouring to send the others away. Lady Rowley replied for herself that she should certainly remain in her corner on the sofa all night, if it were necessary; and as she slept very soundly in her corner, her comfort was not much impaired. Nora was pertinacious in refusing to go to bed. "I should only go to my own room, papa, and remain there," she said. "Of course I must speak to him before he goes." Sophie and Lucy considered that they had as much right to sit up as Nora, and submitted to be called geese and idiots by their father.

Sir Marmaduke had arisen with a snort from a short slumber, and had just sworn that he and everybody else should go to bed, when there came a ring at the front-door bell. The trusty boots had also remained up, and in two minutes Hugh Stanbury was in the room. He had to make his excuses before anything else could be said. When he reached the D. R. Office between ten and eleven, it was absolutely incumbent on him to write a leading article before he left it. He had been in the reporter's gallery of the House all the evening, and he had come away laden with his article. "It was certainly better that we should remain up, than that the whole town should be disappointed," said Sir Marmaduke, with something of a sneer.

"It is so very, very good of you to come," said Nora.

"Indeed it is," said Lady Rowley; "but we were quite sure you would come." Having kissed and blessed him as her son-in-law, Lady Rowley was now prepared to love him almost as well as though he had been Lord Peterborough.

"Perhaps, Mr. Stanbury, we had better shew you this telegram," said Sir Marmaduke, who had been standing with the scrap of paper in his hand since the ring of the bell had been heard. Hugh took the message and read it. "I do not know what should have made my daughter mention your name," continued Sir Marmaduke;—"but as she has done so, and as perhaps the unfortunate invalid himself may have alluded to you, we thought it best to send for you."

"No doubt it was best, Sir Marmaduke."

"We are so situated that I cannot go. It is absolutely necessary that we should leave town for Southampton on Friday week. The ship sails on Saturday."

"I will go as a matter of course," said Hugh. "I will start at once,—at any time. To tell the truth, when I got Lady Rowley's note, I thought that it was to be so. Trevelyan and I were very intimate at one time, and it may be that he will receive me without displeasure."

There was much to be discussed, and considerable difficulty in the discussion. This was enhanced, too, by the feeling in the minds of all of them that Hugh and Sir Marmaduke would not meet again,—probably for many years. Were they to part now on terms of close affection, or were they to part almost as strangers?

Had Lucy and Sophie not persistently remained up, Nora would have faced the difficulty, and taken the bull by the horns, and asked her father to sanction her engagement in the presence of her lover. But she could not do it before so many persons, even though the persons were her own nearest relatives. And then there arose another embarrassment. Sir Marmaduke, who had taught himself to believe that Stanbury was so poor as hardly to have the price of a dinner in his pocket,—although, in fact, our friend Hugh was probably the richer man of the two,—said something about defraying the cost of the journey. "It is taken altogether on our behalf," said Sir Marmaduke. Hugh became red in the face, looked angry, and muttered a word or two about Trevelyan being the oldest friend he had in the world,—“even if there were nothing else.” Sir Marmaduke felt ashamed of himself,—without cause, indeed, for the offer was natural,—said nothing further about it; but appeared to be more stiff and ungainly than ever.

The Bradshaw was had out and consulted, and nearly half an hour was spent in poring over that wondrous volume. It is the fashion to abuse Bradshaw,—we speak now especially of Bradshaw the Continental,—because all the minutest details of the autumn tour, just as the tourist thinks that it may be made, cannot be made patent to him at once without close research amidst crowded figures. After much experience we make bold to say that Bradshaw knows more, and will divulge more in a quarter of an hour, of the properest mode of getting from any city in Europe to any other city more than fifty miles distant, than can be learned in that first city in a single morning with the

aid of a courier, a carriage, a pair of horses, and all the temper that any ordinary tourist possesses. The Bradshaw was had out, and it was at last discovered that nothing could be gained in the journey from London to Siena by starting in the morning. Intending as he did to travel through without sleeping on the road, Stanbury could not do better than leave London by the night mail train, and this he determined to do. But when that was arranged, then came the nature of his commission. What was he to do? No commission could be given to him. A telegram should be sent to Emily the next morning to say that he was coming; and then he would hurry on and take his orders from her.

They were all in doubt, terribly in doubt, whether the aggravated malady of which the telegram spoke was malady of the mind or of the body. If of the former nature then the difficulty might be very great indeed; and it would be highly expedient that Stanbury should have some one in Italy to assist him. It was Nora who suggested that he should carry a letter of introduction to Mr. Spalding, and it was she who wrote it. Sir Marmaduke had not foregathered very closely with the English Minister, and nothing was said of assistance that should be peculiarly British. Then, at last, about three or four in the morning came the moment for parting. Sir Marmaduke had suggested that Stanbury should dine with them on the next day before he started, but Hugh had declined, alleging that as the day was at his command it must be devoted to the work of providing for his absence. In truth, Sir Marmaduke had given the invitation with a surly voice, and Hugh, though he was ready to go to the

North Pole for any others of the family, was at the moment in an aggressive mood of mind towards Sir Marmaduke.

"I will send a message directly I get there," he said, holding Lady Rowley by the hand, "and will write fully,—to you,—immediately."

"God bless you, my dear friend!" said Lady Rowley, crying.

"Good night, Sir Marmaduke," said Hugh.

"Good night, Mr. Stanbury."

Then he gave a hand to the two girls, each of whom, as she took it, sobbed, and looked away from Nora. Nora was standing away from them, by herself, and away from the door, holding on to her chair, and with her hands clasped together. She had prepared nothing,—not a word, or an attitude, not a thought, for this farewell. But she had felt that it was coming, and had known that she must trust to him for a cue for her own demeanour. If he could say adieu with a quiet voice, and simply with a touch of the hand, then would she do the same,—and endeavour to think no worse of him. Nor had he prepared anything; but when the moment came he could not leave her after that fashion. He stood a moment hesitating, not approaching her, and merely called her by her name,—“Nora!” For a moment she was still; for a moment she held by her chair; and then she rushed into his arms. He did not much care for her father now, but kissed her hair and her forehead, and held her closely to his bosom. “My own, own Nora!”

It was necessary that Sir Marmaduke should say something. There was at first a little scene between all the women, during which he arranged his depart-

ment. "Mr. Stanbury," he said, "let it be so. I could wish for my child's sake, and also for your own, that your means of living were less precarious." Hugh accepted this simply as an authority for another embrace, and then he allowed them all to go to bed.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Trevelyan discourses on Life.

STANBURY made his journey without pause or hindrance till he reached Florence, and as the train for Siena made it necessary that he should remain there for four or five hours, he went to an inn, and dressed and washed himself, and had a meal, and was then driven to Mr. Spalding's house. He found the American Minister at home, and was received with cordiality; but Mr. Spalding could tell him little or nothing about Trevelyan. They went up to Mrs. Spalding's room, and Hugh was told by her that she had seen Mrs. Trevelyan once since her niece's marriage, and that then she had represented her husband as being very feeble. Hugh, in the midst of his troubles, was amused by a second and a third, perhaps by a fourth, reference to "Lady Peterborough." Mrs. Spalding's latest tidings as to the Trevelyan had been received through "Lady Peterborough" from Nora Rowley. "Lady Peterborough" was at the present moment at Naples, but was expected to pass north through Florence in a day or two. They, the Spaldings themselves, were kept in Florence in this very hot weather by this circumstance. They were going up to the Tyrolese mountains for a few weeks as soon as "Lady Peterborough" should have left them for Eng-

land. "Lady Peterborough" would have been so happy to make Mr. Stanbury's acquaintance, and to have heard something direct from her friend Nora. Then Mrs. Spalding smiled archly, showing thereby that she knew all about Hugh Stanbury and his relation to Nora Rowley. From all which, and in accordance with the teaching which we got,—alas, now many years ago,—from a great master on the subject, we must conclude that poor, dear Mrs. Spalding was a snob. Nevertheless, with all deference to the memory of that great master, we think that Mrs. Spalding's allusions to the success in life achieved by her niece were natural and altogether pardonable; and that reticence on the subject,—a calculated determination to abstain from mentioning a triumph which must have been very dear to her,—would have betrayed on the whole a condition of mind lower than that which she exhibited. While rank, wealth, and money are held to be good things by all around us, let them be acknowledged as such. It is natural that a mother should be as proud when her daughter marries an Earl's heir as when her son becomes Senior Wrangler; and when we meet a lady in Mrs. Spalding's condition who purposely abstains from mentioning the name of her titled daughter, we shall be disposed to judge harshly of the secret workings of that lady's thoughts on the subject. We prefer the exhibition, which we feel to be natural. Mr. Spalding got our friend by the button-hole, and was making him a speech on the perilous condition in which Mrs. Trevelyan was placed; but Stanbury, urged by the circumstances of his position, pulled out his watch, pleaded the hour, and escaped.

He found Mrs. Trevelyan waiting for him at the station at Siena. He would hardly have known her,—not from any alteration that was physically personal to herself, not that she had become older in face, or thin, or grey, or sickly,—but that the trouble of her life had robbed her for the time of that brightness of apparel, of that pride of feminine gear, of that sheen of high-bred womanly bearing with which our wives and daughters are so careful to invest themselves. She knew herself to be a wretched woman, whose work in life now was to watch over a poor prostrate wretch, and who had thrown behind her all ideas of grace and beauty. It was not quickly that this condition had come upon her. She had been unhappy at Nuncombe Putney; but unhappiness had not then told upon the outward woman. She had been more wretched still at St. Diddulph's, and all the outward circumstances of life in her uncle's parsonage had been very wearisome to her; but she had striven against it all, and the sheen and outward brightness had still been there. After that her child had been taken from her, and the days which she had passed in Manchester Street had been very grievous;—but even yet she had not given way. It was not till her child had been brought back to her, and she had seen the life which her husband was living, and that her anger,—hot anger,—had been changed to pity, and that with pity love had returned, it was not till this point had come in her sad life that her dress became always black and sombre, that a veil habitually covered her face, that a bonnet took the place of the jaunty hat that she had worn, and that the prettinesses of her life were laid aside. "It is very good of you to come," she said; "very good.

I hardly knew what to do, I was so wretched. On the day that I sent he was so bad that I was obliged to do something." Stanbury, of course, inquired after Trevelyan's health, as they were being driven up to Mrs. Trevelyan's lodgings. On the day on which she had sent the telegram her husband had again been furiously angry with her. She had interfered, or had endeavoured to interfere, in some arrangements as to his health and comfort, and he had turned upon her with an order that the child should be at once sent back to him, and that she should immediately quit Siena. "When I said that Louey could not be sent, —and who could send a child into such keeping, —he told me that I was the basest liar that ever broke a promise, and the vilest traitor that had ever returned evil for good. I was never to come to him again, —never; and the gate of the house would be closed against me if I appeared there."

On the next day she had gone again, however, and had seen him, and had visited him on every day since. Nothing further had been said about the child, and he had now become almost too weak for violent anger. "I told him you were coming, and though he would not say so, I think he is glad of it. He expects you to-morrow."

"I will go this evening, if he will let me."

"Not to-night. I think he goes to bed almost as the sun sets. I am never there myself after four or five in the afternoon. I told him that you should be there to-morrow, —alone. I have hired a little carriage, and you can take it. He said specially that I was not to come with you. Papa goes certainly on

next Saturday?" It was a Saturday now,—this day on which Stanbury had arrived at Siena.

"He leaves town on Friday."

"You must make him believe that. Do not tell him suddenly, but bring it in by degrees. He thinks that I am deceiving him. He would go back if he knew that papa were gone."

They spent a long evening together, and Stanbury learned all that Mrs. Trevelyan could tell him of her husband's state. There was no doubt, she said, that his reason was affected; but she thought the state of his mind was diseased in a ratio the reverse of that of his body, and that when he was weakest in health, then were his ideas the most clear and rational. He never now mentioned Colonel Osborne's name, but would refer to the affairs of the last two years as though they had been governed by an inexorable Fate which had utterly destroyed his happiness without any fault on his part. "You may be sure," she said, "that I never accuse him. Even when he says terrible things of me,—which he does,—I never excuse myself. I do not think I should answer a word, if he called me the vilest thing on earth." Before they parted for the night many questions were of course asked about Nora, and Hugh described the condition in which he and she stood to each other. "Papa has consented, then?"

"Yes,—at four o'clock in the morning,—just as I was leaving them."

"And when is it to be?"

"Nothing has been settled, and I do not as yet know where she will go to when they leave London."

I think she will visit Monkham when the Glascock people return to England."

"What an episode in life,—to go and see the place, when it might all now have been hers!"

"I suppose I ought to feel dreadfully ashamed of myself for having marred such promotion," said Hugh.

"Nora is such a singular girl;—so firm, so headstrong, so good, and so self-reliant that she will do as well with a poor man as she would have done with a rich. Shall I confess to you that I did wish that she should accept Mr. Glascock, and that I pressed it on her very strongly? You will not be angry with me?"

"I am only the more proud of her;—and of myself."

"When she was told of all that he had to give in the way of wealth and rank, she took the bit between her teeth and would not be turned an inch. Of course she was in love."

"I hope she may never regret it;—that is all."

"She must change her nature first. Everything she sees at Monkham will make her stronger in her choice. With all her girlish ways, she is like a rock;—nothing can move her."

Early on the next morning Hugh started alone for Casalunga, having first, however, seen Mrs. Trevelyan. He took out with him certain little things for the sick man's table;—as to which, however, he was cautioned to say not a word to the sick man himself. And it was arranged that he should endeavour to fix a day for Trevelyan's return to England. That was to be the one object in view. "If we could get him to England," she said, "he and I would, at any rate, be

together, and gradually he would be taught to submit himself to advice." Before ten in the morning, Stanbury was walking up the hill to the house, and wondering at the dreary, hot, hopeless desolation of the spot. It seemed to him that no one could live alone in such a place, in such weather, without being driven to madness. The soil was parched and dusty, as though no drop of rain had fallen there for months. The lizards, glancing in and out of the broken walls, added to the appearance of heat. The vegetation itself was of a faded yellowish green, as though the glare of the sun had taken the fresh colour out of it. There was a noise of grasshoppers and a hum of flies in the air, hardly audible, but all giving evidence of the heat. Not a human voice was to be heard, nor the sound of a human foot, and there was no shelter; but the sun blazed down full upon everything. He took off his hat, and rubbed his head with his handkerchief as he struck the door with his stick. Oh God, to what misery had a little folly brought two human beings who had had every blessing that the world could give within their reach!

In a few minutes he was conducted through the house, and found Trevelyan seated in a chair under the verandah which looked down upon the olive trees. He did not even get up from his seat, but put out his left hand and welcomed his old friend. "Stanbury," he said, "I am glad to see you,—for auld lang syne's sake. When I found out this retreat, I did not mean to have friends round me here. I wanted to try what solitude was;—and, by heaven, I've tried it!" He was dressed in a bright Italian dressing-gown, or woollen paletot, —Italian, as having been bought in Italy, though,

doubtless, it had come from France,—and on his feet he had green worked slippers, and on his head a brocaded cap. He had made but little other preparation for his friend in the way of dressing. His long dishevelled hair came down over his neck, and his beard covered his face. Beneath his dressing-gown he had on a night-shirt and drawers, and was as dirty in appearance as he was gaudy in colours. "Sit down and let us two moralise," he said. "I spend my life here doing nothing,—nothing,—nothing; while you cudgel your brain from day to day to mislead the British public. Which of us two is taking the nearest road to the devil?"

Stanbury seated himself in a second arm-chair, which there was there in the verandah, and looked as carefully as he dared to do at his friend. There could be no mistake as to the restless gleam of that eye. And then the affected air of ease, and the would-be cynicism, and the pretence of false motives, all told the same story. "They used to tell us," said Stanbury, "that idleness is the root of all evil."

"They have been telling us since the world began so many lies, that I for one have determined never to believe anything again. Labour leads to greed, and greed to selfishness, and selfishness to treachery, and treachery straight to the devil,—straight to the devil. Ha, my friend, all your leading articles won't lead you out of that. What's the news? Who's alive? Who dead? Who in? Who out? What think you of a man who has not seen a newspaper for two months; and who holds no conversation with the world further than is needed for the cooking of his polenta and the cooling of his modest wine-flask?"

"You see your wife sometimes," said Stanbury.

"My wife! Now, my friend, let us drop that subject. Of all topics of talk it is the most distressing to man in general, and I own that I am no exception to the lot. Wives, Stanbury, are an evil, more or less necessary to humanity, and I own to being one who has not escaped. The world must be populated, though for what reason one does not see. I have helped,—to the extent of one male bantling; and if you are one who consider population desirable, I will express my regret that I should have done no more."

It was very difficult to force Trevelyan out of this humour, and it was not till Stanbury had risen apparently to take his leave that he found it possible to say a word as to his mission there. "Don't you think you would be happier at home?" he asked.

"Where is my home, Sir Knight of the midnight pen?"

"England is your home, Trevelyan."

"No, sir; England was my home once; but I have taken the liberty accorded to me by my Creator of choosing a new country. Italy is now my nation, and Casalunga is my home."

"Every tie you have in the world is in England."

"I have no tie, sir;—no tie anywhere. It has been my study to untie all the ties; and, by Jove, I have succeeded. Look at me here. I have got rid of the trammels pretty well,—haven't I?—have unshackled myself, and thrown off the paddings, and the wrappings, and the swaddling clothes. I have got rid of the conventionalities, and can look Nature straight in the face. I don't even want the Daily Record, Stanbury;—think of that!"

Stanbury paced the length of the terrace, and then stopped for a moment down under the blaze of the sun, in order that he might think how to address this philosopher. "Have you heard," he said at last, "that I am going to marry your sister-in-law, Nora Rowley?"

"Then there will be two more full-grown fools in the world certainly, and probably an infinity of young fools coming afterwards. Excuse me, Stanbury, but this solitude is apt to make one plain-spoken."

"I got Sir Marmaduke's sanction the day before I left."

"Then you got the sanction of an illiterate, ignorant, self-sufficient, and most contemptible old man; and much good may it do you."

"Let him be what he may, I was glad to have it. Most probably I shall never see him again. He sails from Southampton for the Mandarins on this day week."

"He does,—does he? May the devil sail along with him!—that is all I say. And does my much respected and ever-to-be-beloved mother-in-law sail with him?"

"They all return together,—except Nora."

"Who remains to comfort you? I hope you may be comforted;—that is all. Don't be too particular. Let her choose her own friends, and go her own gait, and have her own way, and do you be blind and deaf and dumb and properly submissive; and it may be that she'll give you your breakfast and dinner in your own house,—so long as your hours don't interfere with her pleasures. If she should even urge you beside yourself by her vanity, folly, and disobedience,—so that at last you are driven to express your feeling,—no

doubt she will come to you after a while and tell you with the sweetest condescension that she forgives you. When she has been out of your house for a twelvemonth or more, she will offer to come back to you, and to forget everything,—on condition that you will do exactly as she bids you for the future."

This attempt at satire, so fatuous, so plain, so false, together with the would-be jaunty manner of the speaker, who, however, failed repeatedly in his utterances from sheer physical exhaustion, was excessively painful to Stanbury. What can one do at any time with a madman? "I mentioned my marriage," said he, "to prove my right to have an additional interest in your wife's happiness."

"You are quite welcome, whether you marry the other one or not;—welcome to take any interest you please. I have got beyond all that, Stanbury;—yes, by Jove, a long way beyond all that."

"You have not got beyond loving your wife, and your child, Trevelyan?"

"Upon my word, yes;—I think I have. There may be a grain of weakness left, you know. But what have you to do with my love for my wife?"

"I was thinking more just now of her love for you. There she is at Siena. You cannot mean that she should remain there?"

"Certainly not. What the deuce is there to keep her there?"

"Come with her then to England."

"Why should I go to England with her? Because you bid me, or because she wishes it,—or simply because England is the most damnable, puritanical, God-forgotten, and stupid country on the face of the globe?"

I know no other reason for going to England. Will you take a glass of wine, Stanbury?" Hugh declined the offer. "You will excuse me," continued Trevelyan; "I always take a glass of wine at this hour." Then he rose from his chair, and helped himself from a cupboard that was near at hand. Stanbury watching him as he filled his glass, could see that his legs were hardly strong enough to carry him. And Stanbury saw, moreover, that the unfortunate man took two glasses out of the bottle. "Go to England indeed. I do not think much of this country; but it is, at any rate, better than England."

Hugh perceived that he could do nothing more on the present occasion. Having heard so much of Trevelyan's debility, he had been astonished to hear the man speak with so much volubility and attempts at high-flown spirit. Before he had taken the wine he had almost sunk into his chair, but still he had continued to speak with the same fluent would-be cynicism. "I will come and see you again," said Hugh, getting up to take his departure.

"You might as well save your trouble, Stanbury; but you can come if you please, you know. If you should find yourself locked out, you won't be angry. A hermit such as I am must assume privileges."

"I won't be angry," said Hugh, good-humouredly.

"I can smell what you are come about," said Trevelyan. "You and my wife want to take me away from here among you, and I think it best to stay here. I don't want much for myself, and why should I not live here? My wife can remain at Siena if she pleases, or she can go to England if she pleases. She must give me the same liberty;—the same liberty,—the

same liberty." After this he fell a-coughing violently, and Stanbury thought it better to leave him. He had been at Casalunga about two hours, and did not seem as yet to have done any good. He had been astonished both by Trevelyan's weakness, and by his strength; by his folly and by his sharpness. Hitherto he could see no way for his future sister-in-law out of her troubles.

When he was with her at Siena, he described what had taken place with all the accuracy in his power. "He has intermittent days," said Emily. "To-morrow he will be in quite another frame of mind,—melancholy, silent perhaps, and self-reproachful. We will both go to-morrow, and we shall find probably that he has forgotten altogether what has passed to-day between you and him."

So their plans for the morrow were formed.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Say that you forgive me.

On the following day, again early in the morning, Mrs. Trevelyan and Stanbury were driven out to Casalunga. The country people along the road knew the carriage well, and the lady who occupied it, and would say that the English wife was going to see her mad husband. Mrs. Trevelyan knew that these words were common in the people's mouths, and explained to her companion how necessary it would be to use these rumours, to aid her in putting some restraint over her husband even in this country, should they fail in their effort to take him to England. She saw the doctor in Siena constantly, and had learned from him

how such steps might be taken. The measure proposed would be slow, difficult, inefficient, and very hard to set aside, if once taken;—but still it might be indispensable that something should be done. "He would be so much worse off here than he would be at home," she said;—"if we could only make him understand that it would be so." Then Stanbury asked about the wine. It seemed that of late Trevelyan had taken to drink freely, but only of the wine of the country. But the wine of the country in these parts is sufficiently stimulating, and Mrs. Trevelyan acknowledged that hence had arisen a further cause of fear.

They walked up the hill together, and Mrs. Trevelyan, now well knowing the ways of the place, went round at once to the front terrace. There he was, seated in his arm-chair, dressed in the same way as yesterday, dirty, dishevelled, and gaudy with various colours; but Stanbury could see at once that his mood had greatly changed. He rose slowly, dragging himself up out of his chair, as they came up to him, but shewing as he did so,—and perhaps somewhat assuming,—the impotency of querulous sickness. His wife went to him, and took him by the hand, and placed him back in his chair. He was weak, he said, and had not slept, and suffered from the heat; and then he begged her to give him wine. This she did, half filling for him a tumbler, of which he swallowed the contents greedily. "You see me very poorly, Stanbury,—very poorly," he said, seeming to ignore all that had taken place on the previous day.

"You want change of climate, old fellow," said Stanbury.

"Change of everything;—I want change of every-

thing," he said. "If I could have a new body and a new mind, and a new soul!"

"The mind and soul, dear, will do well enough, if you will let us look after the body," said his wife, seating herself on a stool near his feet. Stanbury, who had settled beforehand how he would conduct himself, took out a cigar and lighted it;—and then they sat together silent, or nearly silent, for half an hour. She had said that if Hugh would do so, Trevelyan would soon become used to the presence of his old friend, and it seemed that he had already done so. More than once, when he coughed, his wife fetched him some drink in a cup, which he took from her without a word. And Stanbury the while went on smoking in silence.

"You have heard, Louis," she said at last, "that, after all, Nora and Mr. Stanbury are going to be married?"

"Ah;—yes; I think I was told of it. I hope you may be happy, Stanbury;—happier than I have been." This was unfortunate, but neither of the visitors winced, or said a word.

"It will be a pity that papa and mamma cannot be present at the wedding," said Mrs. Trevelyan.

"If I had to do it again, I should not regret your father's absence; I must say that. He has been my enemy. Yes, Stanbury,—my enemy. I don't care who hears me say so. I am obliged to stay here, because that man would swear every shilling I have away from me if I were in England. He would strive to do so, and the struggle in my state of health would be too much for me."

"But Sir Marmaduke sails from Southampton this very week," said Stanbury.

"I don't know. He is always sailing, and always coming back again. I never asked him for a shilling in my life, and yet he has treated me as though I were his bitterest enemy."

"He will trouble you no more now, Louis," said Mrs. Trevelyan.

"He cannot trouble you again. He will have left England before you can possibly reach it."

"He will have left other traitors behind him,—though none as bad as himself," said Trevelyan.

Stanbury, when his cigar was finished, rose and left the husband and wife together on the terrace. There was little enough to be seen at Casalunga, but he strolled about looking at the place. He went into the huge granary, and then down among the olive trees, and up into the sheds which had been built for beasts. He stood and teased the lizards, and listened to the hum of the insects, and wiped away the perspiration which rose to his brow even as he was standing. And all the while he was thinking what he would do next, or what say next, with the view of getting Trevelyan away from the place. Hitherto he had been very tender with him, contradicting him in nothing, taking from him good humouredly any absurd insult which he chose to offer, pressing upon him none of the evil which he had himself occasioned, saying to him no word that could hurt either his pride or his comfort. But he could not see that this would be efficacious for the purpose desired. He had come thither to help Nora's sister in her terrible distress, and he must take upon himself to make some plan for giving this aid. When he had thought of all this and made his plan, he sauntered back round the house on to the terrace. She

was still there, sitting at her husband's feet, and holding one of his hands in hers. It was well that the wife should be tender, but he doubted whether tenderness would suffice.

"Trevelyan," he said, "you know why I have come over here?"

"I suppose she told you to come," said Trevelyan.

"Well; yes; she did tell me. I came to try and get you back to England. If you remain here, the climate and solitude together will kill you."

"As for the climate, I like it;—and as for solitude, I have got used even to that."

"And then there is another thing," said Stanbury.

"What is that?" asked Trevelyan, starting.

"You are not safe here."

"How not safe?"

"She could not tell you, but I must." His wife was still holding his hand, and he did not at once attempt to withdraw it; but he raised himself in his chair, and fixed his eyes fiercely on Stanbury. "They will not let you remain here quietly," said Stanbury.

"Who will not?"

"The Italians. They are already saying that you are not fit to be alone; and if once they get you into their hands,—under some Italian medical board, perhaps into some Italian asylum, it might be years before you could get out,—if ever. I have come to tell you what the danger is. I do not know whether you will believe me."

"Is it so?" he said, turning to his wife.

"I believe it is, Louis."

"And who has told them? Who has been putting them up to it?" Now his hand had been withdrawn.

"My God, am I to be followed here too with such persecution as this?"

"Nobody has told them,—but people have eyes."

"Liar, traitor, fiend!—it is you!" he said, turning upon his wife.

"Louis, as I hope for mercy, I have said not a word to any one that could injure you."

"Trevelyan, do not be so unjust, and so foolish," said Stanbury. "It is not her doing. Do you suppose that you can live here like this and give rise to no remarks? Do you think that people's eyes are not open, and that their tongues will not speak? I tell you, you are in danger here."

"What am I to do? Where am I to go? Can not they let me stay till I die? Whom am I hurting here? She may have all my money, if she wants it. She has got my child."

"I want nothing, Louis, but to take you where you may be safe and well."

"Why are you afraid of going to England?" Stanbury asked.

"Because they have threatened to put me—in a madhouse."

"Nobody ever thought of so treating you," said his wife.

"Your father did,—and your mother. They told me so."

"Look here, Trevelyan. Sir Marmaduke and Lady Rowley are gone. They will have sailed, at least, before we can reach England. Whatever may have been either their wishes or their power, they can do nothing now. Here something would be done,—very soon; you may take my word for that. If you will return with

me and your wife, you shall choose your own place of abode. Is not that so, Emily?"

"He shall choose everything. His boy will be with him, and I will be with him, and he shall be contradicted in nothing. If he only knew my heart towards him!"

"You hear what she says, Trevelyan?"

"Yes; I hear her."

"And you believe her?"

"I'm not so sure of that. Stanbury, how should you like to be locked up in a madhouse and grin through the bars till your heart was broken. It would not take long with me, I know."

"You shall never be locked up;—never be touched," said his wife.

"I am very harmless here," he said, almost crying; "very harmless. I do not think anybody here will touch me," he added afterwards. "And there are other places. There are other places. My God, that I should be driven about the world like this!" The conference was ended by his saying that he would take two days to think of it, and by his then desiring that they would both leave him. They did so, and descended the hill together, knowing that he was watching them,—that he would watch them till they were out of sight from the gate;—for, as Mrs. Trevelyan said, he never came down the hill now, knowing that the labour of ascending it was too much for him. When they were at the carriage they were met by one of the women of the house, and strict injunctions were given to her by Mrs. Trevelyan to send on word to Siena if the Signore should prepare to move. "He cannot go far without my knowing it," said she,

"because he draws his money in Siena, and lately I have taken to him what he wants. He has not enough with him for a long journey." For Stanbury had suggested that he might be off to seek another residence in another country, and that they would find Casalunga vacant when they reached it on the following Tuesday. But he told himself almost immediately,—not caring to express such an opinion to Emily,—that Trevelyan would hardly have strength even to prepare for such a journey by himself.

On the intervening day, the Monday, Stanbury had no occupation whatever, and he thought that since he was born no day had ever been so long. Siena contains many monuments of interest, and much that is valuable in art,—having had a school of painting of its own, and still retaining in its public gallery specimens of its school, of which as a city it is justly proud. There are palaces there to be beaten for gloomy majesty by none in Italy. There is a cathedral which was to have been the largest in the world, and than which few are more worthy of prolonged inspection. The town is old, and quaint, and picturesque, and dirty, and attractive,—as it becomes a town in Italy to be. But in July all such charms are thrown away. In July Italy is not a land of charms to an Englishman. Poor Stanbury did wander into the cathedral, and finding it the coolest place in the town, went to sleep on a stone step. He was awoken by the voice of the priests as they began to chant the vespers. The good-natured Italians had let him sleep, and would have let him sleep till the doors were closed for the night. At five he dined with Mrs. Trevelyan, and then endeavoured to while away the evening thinking of Nora

with a pipe in his mouth. He was standing in this way at the hotel gateway, when, on a sudden, all Siena was made alive by the clatter of an open carriage and four on its way through the town to the railway. On looking up, Stanbury saw Lord Peterborough in the carriage,—with a lady whom he did not doubt to be Lord Peterborough's wife. He himself had not been recognised, but he slowly followed the carriage to the railway station. After the Italian fashion, the arrival was three-quarters of an hour before the proper time, and Stanbury had full opportunity of learning their news and telling his own. They were coming up from Rome, and thought it preferable to take the route by Siena than to use the railway through the Maremma; and they intended to reach Florence that night.

"And do you think he is really mad?" asked Lady Peterborough.

"He is undoubtedly so mad as to be unfit to manage anything for himself, but he is not in such a condition that any one would wish to see him put into confinement. If he were raving mad there would be less difficulty, though there might be more distress."

A great deal was said about Nora, and both Lord Peterborough and his wife insisted that the marriage should take place at Monkham. "We shall be home now in less than three weeks," said Caroline, "and she must come to us at once. But I will write to her from Florence, and tell her how we saw you smoking your pipe under the archway. Not that my husband knew you in the least."

"Upon my word no," said the husband,—"one didn't expect to find you here. Good-bye. I hope

you may succeed in getting him home. I went to him once, but could do very little." Then the train started, and Stanbury went back to Mrs. Trevelyan.

On the next day Stanbury went out to Casalunga alone. He had calculated, on leaving England, that if any good might be done at Siena it could be done in three days, and that he would have been able to start on his return on the Wednesday morning,—or on Wednesday evening at the latest. But now there did not seem to be any chance of that;—and he hardly knew how to guess when he might get away. He had sent a telegram to Lady Rowley after his first visit, in which he had simply said that things were not at all changed at Casalunga, and he had written to Nora each day since his arrival. His stay was prolonged at great expense and inconvenience to himself; and yet it was impossible that he should go and leave his work half finished. As he walked up the hill to the house he felt very angry with Trevelyan, and prepared himself to use hard words and dreadful threats. But at the very moment of his entrance on the terrace, Trevelyan professed himself ready to go to England. "That's right, old fellow," said Hugh. "I am so glad." But in expressing his joy he had hardly noticed Trevelyan's voice and appearance.

"I might as well go," he said. "It matters little where I am, or whether they say that I am mad or sane."

"When we have you over there, nobody shall say a word that is disagreeable."

"I only hope that you may not have the trouble of burying me on the road. You don't know, Stanbury, how ill I am. I cannot eat. If I were at the

bottom of that hill, I could no more walk up it than I could fly. I cannot sleep, and at night my bed is wet through with perspiration. I can remember nothing,—nothing but what I ought to forget."

"We'll put you on to your legs again when we get you to your own climate."

"I shall be a poor traveller,—a poor traveller; but I will do my best."

When would he start? That was the next question. Trevelyan asked for a week, and Stanbury brought him down at last to three days. They would go to Florence by the evening train on Friday, and sleep there. Emily should come out and assist him to arrange his things on the morrow. Having finished so much of his business, Stanbury returned to Siena.

They both feared that he might be found on the next day to have departed from his intention; but no such idea seemed to have occurred to him. He gave instructions as the notice to be served on the agent from the Hospital as to his house, and allowed Emily to go among his things and make preparations for the journey. He did not say much to her; and when she attempted, with a soft half-uttered word, to assure him that the threat of Italian interference, which had come from Stanbury, had not reached Stanbury from her, he simply shook his head sadly. She could not understand whether he did not believe her, or whether he simply wished that the subject should be dropped. She could elicit no sign of affection from him, nor would he willingly accept such from her;—but he allowed her to prepare for the journey, and never hinted that his purpose might again be liable to change. On the Friday, Emily with her child, and Hugh with all

their baggage, travelled out on the road to Casalunga, thinking it better that there should be no halt in the town on their return. At Casalunga, Hugh went up the hill with the driver, leaving Mrs. Trevelyan in the carriage. He had been out at the house before in the morning, and had given all necessary orders;—but still at the last moment he thought that there might be failure. But Trevelyan was ready, having dressed himself up with a laced shirt, and changed his dressing-gown for a blue frock-coat, and his brocaded cap for a Paris hat, very pointed before and behind, and closely turned up at the sides. But Stanbury did not in the least care for his friend's dress. "Take my arm," he said, "and we will go down, fair and easy. Emily would not come up because of the heat." He suffered himself to be led, or almost carried down the hill; and three women, and the coachman, and an old countryman who worked on the farm, followed with the luggage. It took about an hour and a half to pack the things; but at last they were all packed, and corded, and bound together with sticks, as though it were intended that they should travel in that form to Moscow. Trevelyan the meanwhile sat on a chair which had been brought out for him from one of the cottages, and his wife stood beside him with her boy. "Now then we are ready," said Stanbury. And in that way they bade farewell to Casalunga. Trevelyan sat speechless in the carriage, and would not even notice the child. He seemed to be half dreaming and to fix his eyes on vacancy. "He appears to think of nothing now," Emily said that evening to Stanbury. But who can tell how busy and how troubled are the thoughts of a madman!

They had now succeeded in their object of inducing their patient to return with them to England; but what were they to do with him when they had reached home with him? They rested only a night at Florence; but they found their fellow-traveller so weary, that they were unable to get beyond Bologna on the second day. Many questions were asked of him as to where he himself would wish to take up his residence in England; but it was found almost impossible to get an answer. Once he suggested that he would like to go back to Mrs. Fuller's cottage at Willesden, from whence they concluded that he would wish to live somewhere out of London. On his first day's journey, he was moody and silent,—wilfully assuming the airs of a much-injured person. He spoke hardly at all, and would notice nothing that was said to him by his wife. He declared once that he regarded Stanbury as his keeper, and endeavoured to be disagreeable and sullenly combative; but on the second day, he was too weak for this, and accepted, without remonstrance, the attentions that were paid to him. At Bologna they rested a day, and from thence both Stanbury and Mrs. Trevelyan wrote to Nora. They did not know where she might be now staying, but the letters, by agreement, were addressed to Gregg's Hotel. It was suggested that lodgings, or, if possible, a small furnished house, should be taken in the neighbourhood of Mortlake, Richmond, or Teddington, and that a telegram as well as letter should be sent to them at the Paris hotel. As they could not travel quick, there might be time enough for them in this way to know whither they should go on their reaching London.

They stayed a day at Bologna, and then they went on again,—to Turin, over the mountains to Chambery, thence to Dijon, and on to Paris. At Chambery they remained a couple of days, fancying that the air there was cool, and that the delay would be salutary to the sick man. At Turin, finding that they wanted further assistance, they had hired a courier, and at last Trevelyan allowed himself to be carried in and out of the carriages and up and down the hotel stairs almost as though he were a child. The delay was terribly grievous to Stanbury, and Mrs. Trevelyan, perceiving this more than once, begged him to leave them, and to allow her to finish the journey with the aid of the courier. But this he could not do. He wrote letters to his friends at the D. R. office, explaining his position as well as he could, and suggesting that this and that able assistant should enlighten the British people on this and that subject, which would,—in the course of nature, as arranged at the D. R. office,—have fallen into his hands. He and Mrs. Trevelyan became as brother and sister to each other on their way home,—as, indeed, it was natural that they should do. Were they doing right or wrong in this journey that they were taking? They could not conceal from themselves that the labour was almost more than the poor wretch could endure; and that it might be, as he himself had suggested, that they would be called on to bury him on the road. But that residence at Casalunga had been so terrible,—the circumstances of it, including the solitude, sickness, madness, and habits of life of the wretched hermit, had been so dangerous,—the probability of interference on the part of some native authority so great, and the chance of the house being left in Trevelyan's possession

so small, that it had seemed to him that they had no other alternative; and yet, how would it be if they were killing him by the toil of travelling? From Chambéry, they made the journey to Paris in two days, and during that time Trevelyan hardly opened his mouth. He slept much, and ate better than he had done in the hotter climate on the other side of the Alps.

They found a telegram at Paris, which simply contained the promise of a letter for the next day. It had been sent by Nora, before she had gone out on her search. But it contained one morsel of strange information; "Lady Milborough is going with me." On the next day they got a letter, saying that a cottage had been taken, furnished, between Richmond and Twickenham. Lady Milborough had known of the cottage, and everything would be ready then. Nora would herself meet them at the station in London, if they would, as she proposed, stay a night at Dover. They were to address to her at Lady Milborough's house, in Eccleston Square. In that case, she would have a carriage for them at the Victoria Station, and would go down with them at once to the cottage.

There were to be two days more of weary travelling, and then they were to be at home again. She and he would have a house together as husband and wife, and the curse of their separation would, at any rate, be over. Her mind towards him had changed altogether since the days in which she had been so indignant, because he had set a policeman to watch over her. All feeling of anger was over with her now. There is nothing that a woman will not forgive a man, when he is weaker than she is herself.

The journey was made first to Dover, and then to

London. Once, as they were making their way through the Kentish hop-fields, he put out his hand feebly, and touched hers. They had the carriage to themselves, and she was down on her knees before him instantly. "Oh, Louis! Oh, Louis! say that you forgive me!" What could a woman do more than that in her mercy to a man?

"Yes;—yes; yes," he said; "but do not talk now; I am so tired."

CHAPTER XXIX.

A real Christian.

In the meantime the Rowleys were gone. On the Monday after the departure of Stanbury for Italy, Lady Rowley had begun to look the difficulty about Nora in the face, and to feel that she must do something towards providing the poor girl with a temporary home. Everybody had now agreed that she was to marry Hugh Stanbury as soon as Hugh Stanbury could be ready, and it was not to be thought of that she should be left out in the world as one in disgrace or under a cloud. But what was to be done? Sir Marmaduke was quite incapable of suggesting anything. He would make her an allowance, and leave her a small sum of ready money;—but as to residence, he could only suggest again and again that she should be sent to Mrs. Outhouse. Now Lady Rowley was herself not very fond of Mrs. Outhouse, and she was aware that Nora herself was almost as averse to St. Diddulph's as she was to the Mandarins. Nora already knew that she had the game in her own hands. Once when in her presence her father suggested the near relationship and prudent

character and intense respectability of Mrs. Outhouse, Nora, who was sitting behind Sir Marmaduke, shook her head at her mother, and Lady Rowley knew that Nora would not go to St. Diddulph's. This was the last occasion on which that proposition was discussed.

Throughout all the Trevelyan troubles Lady Milborough had continued to shew a friendly anxiety on behalf of Emily Trevelyan. She had called once or twice on Lady Rowley, and Lady Rowley had of course returned the visits. She had been forward in expressing her belief that in truth the wife had been but little if at all to blame, and had won her way with Lady Rowley, though she had never been a favourite with either of Lady Rowley's daughters. Now, in her difficulty, Lady Rowley went to Lady Milborough, and returned with an invitation that Nora should come to Eccleston Square, either till such time as she might think fit to go to Monkams, or till Mrs. Trevelyan should have returned, and should be desirous of having her sister with her. When Nora first heard of this she almost screamed with surprise, and, if the truth must be told, with disappointment also.

"She never liked me, mamma."

"Then she is so much more good-natured."

"But I don't want to go to her merely because she is good-natured enough to receive a person she dislikes. I know she is very good. I know she would sacrifice herself for anything she thought right. But, mamma, she is such a bore!"

But Lady Rowley would not be talked down, even by Nora, in this fashion. Nora was somewhat touched with an idea that it would be a fine independent thing to live alone, if it were only for a week or two, just

because other young ladies never lived alone. Perhaps there was some half-formed notion in her mind that permission to do so was part of the reward due to her for having refused to marry a lord. Stanbury was in some respects a Bohemian, and it would become her, she thought, to have a little practice herself in the Bohemian line. She had, indeed, declined a Bohemian marriage, feeling strongly averse to encounter the loud displeasure of her father and mother;—but as long as everything was quite proper, as long as there should be no running away, or subjection of her name to scandal, she considered that a little independence would be useful and agreeable. She had looked forward to sitting up at night alone by a single tallow candle, to stretching a beefsteak so as to last her for two days' dinners, and perhaps to making her own bed. Now, there would not be the slightest touch of romance in a visit to Lady Milborough's house in Eccleston Square, at the end of July. Lady Rowley, however, was of a different opinion, and spoke her mind plainly. "Nora, my dear, don't be a fool. A young lady like you can't go and live in lodgings by herself. All manner of things would be said. And this is such a very kind offer! You must accept it,—for Hugh's sake. I have already said that you would accept it."

"But she will be going out of town."

"She will stay till you can go to Monkham's,—if Emily is not back before then. She knows all about Emily's affairs; and if she does come back,—which I doubt, poor thing,—Lady Milborough and you will be able to judge whether you should go to her." So it was settled, and Nora's Bohemian Castle in the Air fell into shatters.

The few remaining days before the departure to Southampton passed quickly, but yet sadly. Sir Marmaduke had come to England expecting pleasure,—and with that undefined idea which men so employed always have on their return home that something will turn up which will make them going back to that same banishment unnecessary. What Governor of Hong-Kong, what Minister to Bogota, what General of the Forces at the Gold Coast, ever left the scene of his official or military labours without a hope, which was almost an expectation, that a grateful country would do something better for him before the period of his return should have arrived? But a grateful country was doing nothing better for Sir Marmaduke, and an ungrateful Secretary of State at the Colonial Office would not extend the term during which he could regard himself as absent on special service. How thankful he had been when first the tidings reached him that he was to come home at the expense of the Crown, and without diminution of his official income! He had now been in England for five months, with a per diem allowance, with his very cabs paid for him, and he was discontented, sullen, and with nothing to comfort him but his official grievance, because he could not be allowed to extend his period of special service more than two months beyond the time at which those special services were in truth ended! There had been a change of Ministry in the last month, and he had thought that a Conservative Secretary of State would have been kinder to him. "The Duke says I can stay three months with leave of absence;—and have half my pay stopped. I wonder whether it ever enters into his august mind that even a Colonial Governor must eat and drink." It

was thus he expressed his great grievance to his wife. "The Duke," however, had been as inexorable as his predecessor, and Sir Rowley, with his large family, was too wise to remain to the detriment of his pocket. In the meantime the clerks in the office, who had groaned in spirit over the ignorance displayed in his evidence before the committee, were whispering among themselves that he ought not to be sent back to his seat of government at all.

Lady Rowley also was disappointed and unhappy. She had expected so much pleasure from her visit to her daughter, and she had received so little! Emily's condition was very sad, but in her heart of hearts perhaps she groaned more bitterly over all that Nora had lost, than she did over the real sorrows of her elder child. To have had the cup at her lip, and then not to have tasted it! And she had the solace of no communion in this sorrow. She had accepted Hugh Stanbury as her son-in-law, and not for worlds would she now say a word against him to any one. She had already taken him to her heart, and she loved him. But to have had it almost within her grasp to have had a lord, the owner of Monkams, for her son-in-law! Poor Lady Rowley!

Sophie and Lucy, too, were returning to their distant and dull banishment without any realisation of their probable but unexpressed ambition. They made no complaint, but yet it was hard on them that their sister's misfortune should have prevented them from going,—almost to a single dance. Poor Sophie and poor Lucy! They must go, and we shall hear no more about them. It was thought well that Nora should not go down with them to Southampton. What good would

her going do? "God bless you, my darling," said the mother, as she held her child in her arms.

"Good-bye, dear mamma."

"Give my best love to Hugh, and tell him that I pray him with my last word to be good to you." Even then she was thinking of Lord Peterborough, but the memory of what might have been was buried deep in her mind.

"Nora, tell me all about it," said Lucy.

"There will be nothing to tell," said Nora.

"Tell it all the same," said Lucy. "And bring Hugh out to write a book of travels about the Mandarins. Nobody has ever written a book about the Mandarins." So they parted; and when Sir Marina- duke and his party were taken off in two cabs to the Waterloo Station, Nora was taken in one cab to Eccleston Square.

It may be doubted whether any old lady since the world began ever did a more thoroughly Christian and friendly act than this which was now being done by Lady Milborough. It was the end of July, and she would already have been down in Dorsetshire, but for her devotion to this good deed. For, in truth, what she was doing was not occasioned by any express love for Nora Rowley. Nora Rowley was all very well, but Nora Rowley towards her had been flippant, impatient, and, indeed, not always so civil as a young lady should be to the elderly friends of her married sister. But to Lady Milborough it had seemed to be quite terrible that a young girl should be left alone in the world, without anybody to take care of her. Young ladies, according to her views of life, were fragile plants that wanted much nursing before they could be allowed to

be planted out in the gardens of the world as married women. When she heard from Lady Rowley that Nora was engaged to marry Hugh Stanbury,—“You know all about Lord Peterborough, Lady Milborough; but it is no use going back to that now,—is it? And Mr. Stanbury has behaved so exceedingly well in regard to poor Louis,”—when Lady Milborough heard this, and heard also that Nora was talking of going to live by herself in—lodgings!—she swore to herself, like a goodly Christian woman, as she was, that such a thing must not be. Eccleston Square in July and August is not pleasant, unless it be to an inhabitant who is interested in the fag-end of the parliamentary session. Lady Milborough had no interest in politics,—had not much interest even in seeing the social season out to its dregs. She ordinarily remained in London till the beginning or middle of July, because the people with whom she lived were in the habit of doing so;—but as soon as ever she had fixed the date of her departure, that day to her was a day of release. On this occasion the day had been fixed,—and it was unfixed, and changed, and postponed, because it was manifest to Lady Milborough that she could do good by remaining for another fortnight. When she made the offer she said nothing of her previous arrangements. “Lady Rowley, let her come to me. As soon as her friend Lady Peterborough is at Monkham, she can go there.”

Thus it was that Nora found herself established in Eccleston Square. As she took her place in Lady Milborough's drawing-room, she remembered well a certain day, row two years ago, when she had first heard of the glories of Monkham in that very house. Lady Milborough, as good-natured then as she was now, had

brought Mr. Glascock and Nora together, simply because she had heard that the gentleman admired the young lady. Nora, in her pride, had resented this as interference,—but felt that the thing had been done, and, though she had valued the admiration of the man, had ridiculed the action of the woman. As she thought of it now she was softened by gratitude. She had not on that occasion been suited with a husband, but she had gained a friend. "My dear," said Lady Milborough, as at her request Nora took off her hat, "I am afraid that the parties are mostly over,—that is, those I go to; but we will drive out every day, and the time won't be so very long."

"It won't be long for me, Lady Milborough;—but I cannot but know how terribly I am putting you out."

"I am never put out, Miss Rowley," said the old lady, "as long as I am made to think that what I do is taken in good part."

"Indeed, indeed it shall be taken in good part," said Nora,—*"indeed it shall."* And she swore a solemn silent vow of friendship for the dear old woman.

Then there came letters and telegrams from Chambery, Dijon, and Paris, and the joint expedition in search of the cottage was made to Twickenham. It was astonishing how enthusiastic and how loving the elder and the younger lady were together before the party from Italy had arrived in England. Nora had explained everything about herself,—how impossible it had been for her not to love Hugh Stanbury; how essential it had been for her happiness and self-esteem that she should refuse Mr. Glascock; how terrible had been the tragedy of her sister's marriage. Lady Mil-

borough spoke of the former subject with none of Lady Rowley's enthusiasm, but still with an evident partiality for her own rank, which almost aroused Nora to indignant eloquence. Lady Milborough was contented to acknowledge that Nora might be right, seeing that her heart was so firmly fixed; but she was clearly of opinion that Mr. Glascock, being Mr. Glascock, had possessed a better right to the prize in question than could have belonged to any man who had no recognised position in the world. Seeing that her heart had been given away, Nora was no doubt right not to separate her hand from her heart; but Lady Milborough was of opinion that young ladies ought to have their hearts under better control, so that the men entitled to the prizes should get them. It was for the welfare of England at large that the eldest sons of good families should marry the sweetest, prettiest, brightest, and most lovable girls of their age. It is a doctrine on behalf of which very much may be said.

On that other matter, touching Emily Trevelyan, Lady Milborough frankly owned that she had seen early in the day that he was the one most in fault. "I must say, my dear," she said, "that I very greatly dislike your friend, Colonel Osborne."

"I am sure that he meant not the slightest harm,—no more than she did."

"He was old enough, and ought to have known better. And when the first hint of an uneasiness in the mind of Louis was suggested to him, his feelings as a gentleman should have prompted him to remove himself. Let the suspicion have been ever so absurd, he should have removed himself. Instead of that, he went after her,—into Devonshire."

"He went to see other friends, Lady Milborough."

"I hope it may have been so;—I hope it may have been so. But he should have cut off his hand before he rang at the door of the house in which she was living. You will understand, my dear, that I acquit your sister altogether. I did so all through, and said the same to poor Louis when he came to me. But Colonel Osborne should have known better. Why did he write to her? Why did he go to St. Diddulph's? Why did he let it be thought that,—that she was especially his friend. Oh dear; oh dear; oh dear! I am afraid he is a very bad man."

"We had known him so long, Lady Milborough."

"I wish you had never known him at all. Poor Louis! If he had only done what I told him at first, all might have been well." "Go to Naples, with your wife," I said. "Go to Naples." If he had gone to Naples, there would have been no journeys to Siena, no living at Casalunga, no separation. But he didn't seem to see it in the same light. Poor dear Louis. I wish he had gone to Naples when I told him."

While they were going backwards and forwards, looking at the cottage at Twickenham and trying to make things comfortable there for the sick man, Lady Milborough hinted to Nora that it might be distasteful to Trevelyan, in his present condition, to have even a sister-in-law staying in the house with him. There was a little chamber which Nora had appropriated to herself, and at first it seemed to be taken for granted that she should remain there at least till the 10th of August, on which day Lady Peterborough had signified that she and her husband would be ready to receive their visitor. But Lady Milborough slept on the

suggestion, and on the next morning hinted her disapprobation. "You shall take them down in the carriage, and their luggage can follow in a cab;—but the carriage can bring you back. You will see how things are then."

"Dear Lady Milborough, you would go out of town at once if I left you."

"And I shall not go out of town if you don't leave me. What difference does it make to an old woman like me? I have got no lover coming to look for me, and all I have to do is to tell my daughter-in-law that I shall not be there for another week or so. Augusta is very glad to have me, but she is the wisest woman in the world, and can get on very well without me."

"And as I am the silliest, I cannot."

"You shall put it in that way if you like it, my dear. Girls in your position often do want assistance. I dare say you think me very straight-laced, but I am quite sure Mr. Stanbury will be grateful to me. As you are to be married from Monkham, it will be quite well that you should pass thither through my house as an intermediate resting-place, after leaving your father and mother." By all which Lady Milborough intended to express an opinion that the value of the article which Hugh Stanbury would receive at the altar would be enhanced by the distinguished purity of the hands through which it had passed before it came into his possession;—in which opinion she was probably right as regarded the price put upon the article by the world at large, though it may perhaps be doubted whether the recipient himself would be of the same opinion.

"I hope you know that I am grateful, whatever he may be," said Nora, after a pause.

"I think that you take it as it is meant, and that makes me quite comfortable."

"Lady Milborough, I shall love you for ever and ever. I don't think I ever knew anybody so good as you are,—or so nice."

"Then I shall be more than comfortable," said Lady Milborough. After that there was an embrace, and the thing was settled.

CHAPTER XXX.

Trevelyan back in England.

NORA, with Lady Milborough's carriage, and Lady Milborough's coach and footman, and with a cab ready for the luggage close behind the carriage, was waiting at the railway station when the party from Dover arrived. She soon saw Hugh upon the platform, and ran to him with her news. They had not a word to say to each other of themselves, so anxious were they both respecting Trevelyan. "We got a bed-carriage for him at Dover," said Hugh; "and I think he has borne the journey pretty well;—but he feels the heat almost as badly as in Italy. You will hardly know him when you see him." Then, when the rush of passengers was gone, Trevelyan was brought out by Hugh and the courier, and placed in Lady Milborough's carriage. He just smiled as his eye fell upon Nora, but he did not even put out his hand to greet her.

"I am to go in the carriage with him," said his wife.

"Of course you are,—and so will I and Louey. I think there will be room: it is so large. There is a

cab for all the things. Dear Emily, I am so glad to see you."

"Dearest Nora! I shall be able to speak to you by-and-bye, but you must not be angry with me now. How good you have been."

"Has not she been good? I don't understand about the cottage. It belongs to some friend of hers; and I have not been able to say a word about the rent. It is so nice;—and looks upon the river. I hope that he will like it."

"You will be with us?"

"Not just at first. Lady Milborough thinks I had better not,—that he will like it better. I will come down almost every day, and will stay if you think he will like it."

These few words were said while the men were putting Trevelyan into the carriage. And then another arrangement was made. Hugh hired a second cab, in which he and the courier made a part of the procession; and so they all went to Twickenham together. Hugh had not yet learned that he would be rewarded by coming back alone with Nora in the carriage.

The cottage by the River Thames, which, as far as the party knew, was nameless, was certainly very much better than the house on the top of the hill at Casalunga. And now, at last, the wife would sleep once more under the same roof with her husband, and the separation would be over. "I suppose that is the only words he spoke in Nora's hearing that evening. Before she started on her return journey, the two sisters were together for a few minutes, and each told her own budget of news in short, broken fragments.

There was not much to tell. "He is so weak," said Mrs. Trevelyan, "that he can do literally nothing. He can hardly speak. When we give him wine, he will say a few words, and his mind seems then to be less astray than it was. I have told him just simply that it was all my doing,—that I have been in fault all through, and every now and then he will say a word, to shew me that he remembers that I have confessed."

"My poor Emily!"

"It was better so. What does it all matter? He had suffered so, that I would have said worse than that to give him relief. The pride has gone out of me so, that I do not regard what anybody may say. Of course, it will be said that I—went astray, and that he forgave me."

"Nobody will say that, dearest; nobody. Lady Milberough is quite aware how it all was."

"What does it signify? There are things in life worse even than a bad name."

"But he does not think it?"

"Nora, his mind is a mystery to me. I do not know what is in it. Sometimes I fancy that all facts have been forgotten, and that he merely wants the childish gratification of being assured that he is the master. Then, again, there come moments, in which I feel sure that suspicion is lurking within him, that he is remembering the past, and guarding against the future. When he came into this house, a quarter of an hour ago, he was fearful lest there was a mad doctor lurking about to pounce on him. I can see in his eye that he had some such idea. He hardly notices Lucy, — though there was a time, even at Casalunga, when he would not let the child out of his sight."

"What will you do now?"

"I will try to do my duty;—that is all."

"But you will have a doctor?"

"Of course. He was content to see one in Paris, though he would not let me be present. Hugh saw the gentleman afterwards, and he seemed to think that the body was worse than the mind." Then Nora told her the name of a doctor whom Lady Milborough had suggested, and took her departure along with Hugh in the carriage.

In spite of all the sorrow that they had witnessed and just left, their journey up to London was very pleasant. Perhaps there is no period so pleasant among all the pleasant periods of love-making as that in which the intimacy between the lovers is so assured, and the coming event so near, as to produce and to endure conversation about the ordinary little matters of life;—what can be done with the limited means at their mutual disposal; how that life shall be begun which they are to lead together; what idea each has of the other's duties; what each can do for the other; what each will renounce for the other. There was a true sense of the delight of intimacy in the girl who declared that she had never loved her lover so well as when she told him how many pairs of stockings she had got. It is very sweet to gaze at the stars together; and it is sweet to sit out among the haycocks. The reading of poetry together, out of the same book, with brows all close, and arms all mingled, is very sweet. The pouring out of the whole heart in written words, which the writer knows would be held to be ridiculous by any eyes, and any ears, and any sense, but the eyes and ears and sense of the dear one to whom they

are sent, is very sweet;—but for the girl who has made a shirt for the man that she loves, there has come a moment in the last stitch of it, sweeter than any that stars, haycocks, poetry, or superlative epithets have produced. Nora Rowley had never as yet been thus useful on behalf of Hugh Stanbury. Had she done so, she might perhaps have been happier even than she was during this journey;—but, without the shirt, it was one of the happiest moments of her life. There was nothing now to separate them but their own prudential scruples;—and of them it must be acknowledged that Hugh Stanbury had very few. According to his shewing, he was as well provided for matrimony as the gentleman in the song, who came out to woo his bride on a rainy night. In live stock he was not so well provided as the Irish gentleman to whom we allude; but in regard to all other provisions for comfortable married life, he had, or at a moment's notice could have, all that was needed. Nora could live just where she pleased;—not exactly in Whitehall Gardens or Belgrave Square; but the New Road, Lupus Street, Montague Place, the North Bank, or Kennington Oval, with all their surrounding crescents, terraces, and rows, offered, according to him, a choice so wide, either for lodgings or small houses, that their only embarrassment was in their riches. He had already insured his life for a thousand pounds, and, after paying yearly for that, and providing a certain surplus for saving, five hundred a year was the income on which they were to commence the world. “Of course, I wish it were five thousand for your sake,” he said; “and I wish I were a Cabinet Minister, or a duke, or a brewer; but, even in heaven, you know all the angels

can't be archangels." Nora assured him that she would be quite content with virtues simply angelic. "I hope you like mutton-chops and potatoes; I do," he said. Then she told him of her ambition about the beef-steak, acknowledging that, as it must now be shared between two, the glorious idea of putting a part of it away in a cupboard must be abandoned. "I don't believe in beef-steaks," he said. "A beef-steak may mean anything. At our club, a beef-steak is a sumptuous and expensive luxury. Now, a mutton-chop means something definite, and must be economical."

"Then we will have the mutton-chops at home," said Nora, "and you shall go to your club for the beef-steak."

When they reached Eccleston Square, Nora insisted on taking Hugh Stanbury up to Lady Milborough. It was in vain that he pleaded that he had come all the way from Dover on a very dusty day,—all the way from Dover, including a journey in a Hansom cab to Twickenham and back, without washing his hands and face. Nora insisted that Lady Milborough was such a dear, good, considerate creature, that she would understand all that, and Hugh was taken into her presence. "I am delighted to see you, Mr. Stanbury," said the old lady, "and hope you will think that Nora is in good keeping."

"She has been telling me how very kind you have been to her. I do not know where she could have bestowed herself if you had not received her."

"There, Nora;—I told you he would say so. I won't tell tales, Mr. Stanbury; but she had all manner of wild plans which I knew you wouldn't approve.

But she is very amiable, and if she will only submit to you as well as she does to me——”

“I don't mean to submit to him at all, Lady Milborough;—of course not. I am going to marry for liberty.”

“My dear, what you say, you say in joke; but a great many young women of the present day do, I really believe, go up to the altar and pronounce their marriage vows, with the simple idea that as soon as they have done so, they are to have their own way in everything. And then people complain that young men won't marry! Who can wonder at it?”

“I don't think the young men think much about the obedience,” said Nora. “Some marry for money, and some for love. But I don't think they marry to get a slave.”

“What do you say, Mr. Stanbury?” asked the old lady.

“I can only assure you that I sha'n't marry for money,” said he.

Two or three days after this Nora left her friend in Eccleston Square, and domesticated herself for awhile with her sister. Mrs. Trevelyan declared that such an arrangement would be comfortable for her, and that it was very desirable now, as Nora would so soon be beyond her reach. Then Lady Milborough was enabled to go to Dorsetshire, which she did not do, however, till she had presented Nora with the veil which she was to wear on the occasion of her wedding. “Of course I cannot see it, my dear, as it is to take place at Monkham; but you must write and tell me the day;—and I will think of you. And you, when you put on the veil, must think of me.” So they

parted, and Nora knew that she had made a friend for life.

When she first took her place in the house at Twickenham as a resident, Trevelyan did not take much notice of her;—but, after awhile, he would say a few words to her, especially when it might chance that she was with him in her sister's absence. He would speak of dear Emily, and poor Emily, and shake his head slowly, and talk of the pity of it. "The pity of it, Iago; oh, the pity of it," he said once. The allusion to her was so terrible that she almost burst out in anger, as she would have done formerly. She almost told him that he had been as wrong throughout as was the jealous husband in the play whose words he quoted, and that his jealousy, if continued, was likely to be as tragical. But she restrained herself, and kept close to her needle,—making, let us hope, an auspicious garment for Hugh Stanbury. "She has seen it now," he continued; "she has seen it now." Still she went on with her hemming in silence. It certainly could not be her duty to upset at a word all that her sister had achieved. "You know that she has confessed?" he asked.

"Pray, pray do not talk about it, Louis."

"I think you ought to know," he said. Then she rose from her seat and left the room. She could not stand it, even though he were mad,—even though he were dying!

She went to her sister and repeated what had been said. "You had better not notice it," said Emily. "It is only a proof of what I told you. There are times in which his mind is as active as ever it was, but it is active in so terrible a direction!"

"I cannot sit and hear it. And what am I to say when he asks me a question as he did just now? He said that you had confessed."

"So I have. Do none confess but the guilty? What is all that we have read about the Inquisition and the old tortures? I have had to learn that torturing has not gone out of the world;—that is all."

"I must go away if he says the same thing to me so again."

"That is nonsense, Nora. If I can bear it, cannot you? Would you have me drive him into violence again by disputing with him upon such a subject?"

"But he may recover;—and then he will remember what you have said."

"If he recovers altogether he will suspect nothing. I must take my chance of that. You cannot suppose that I have not thought about it. I have often sworn to myself that though the world should fall around me, nothing should make me acknowledge that I had ever been untrue to my duty as a married woman, either in deed, or word, or thought. I have no doubt that the poor wretches who were tortured in their cells used to make the same resolutions as to their confessions. But yet, when their nails were dragged out of them, they would own to anything. My nails have been dragged out, and I have been willing to confess anything. When he talks of the pity of it, of course I know what he means. There has been something, some remainder of a feeling, which has still kept him from asking me that question. May God, in his mercy, continue to him that feeling!"

"But you would answer truly?"

"How can I say what I might answer when the

torturer is at my nails? If you knew how great was the difficulty to get him away from that place in Italy and bring him here; and what it was to feel that one was bound to stay near him, and that yet one was impotent,—and to know that even that refuge must soon cease for him, and that he might have gone out and died on the road-side, or have done anything which the momentary strength of madness might have dictated,—if you could understand all this, you would not be surprised at my submitting to any degradation which would help to bring him here."

Stanbury was often down at the cottage, and Nora could discuss the matter better with him than with her sister. And Stanbury could learn more thoroughly from the physician who was now attending Trevelyan what was the state of the sick man, than Emily could do. According to the doctor's idea there was more of ailment in the body than in the mind. He admitted that his patient's thoughts had been forced to dwell on one subject till they had become distorted, untrue, jaundiced, and perhaps mono-maniacal; but he seemed to doubt whether there had ever been a time at which it could have been decided that Trevelyan was so mad as to make it necessary that the law should interfere to take care of him. A man,—so argued the doctor,—need not be mad because he is jealous, even though his jealousy be ever so absurd. And Trevelyan, in his jealousy, had done nothing cruel, nothing wasteful, nothing infamous. In all this Nora was very little inclined to agree with the doctor, and thought nothing could be more infamous than Trevelyan's conduct at the present moment,—unless, indeed, he could be screened from infamy by that plea of madness. But

then there was more behind. Trevelyan had been so wasted by the kind of life which he had led, and possessed by nature stamina so insufficient to resist such debility, that it was very doubtful whether he would not sink altogether before he could be made to begin to rise. But one thing was clear. He should be contradicted in nothing. If he chose to say that the moon was made of green cheese, let it be conceded to him that the moon was made of green cheese. Should he make any other assertion equally removed from the truth, let it not be contradicted. Who would oppose a man with one foot in the grave?

"Then, Hugh, the sooner I am at Monkham's the better," said Nora, who had again been subjected to innuendoes which had been unendurable to her. This was on the 7th of August, and it still wanted three days to that on which the journey to Monkham's was to be made.

"He never says anything to me on the subject," said Hugh.

"Because you have made him afraid of you. I almost think that Emily and the doctor are wrong in their treatment, and that it would be better to stand up to him and tell him the truth." But the three days passed away, and Nora was not driven to any such vindication of her sister's character towards her sister's husband.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Monkhams.

On the 10th of August Nora Rowley left the cottage by the river-side at Twickenham, and went down to Monkhams. The reader need hardly be told that Hugh brought her up from Twickenham and sent her off in the railway carriage. They agreed that no day could be fixed for their marriage till something further should be known of Trevelyan's state. While he was in his present condition such a marriage could not have been other than very sad. Nora, when she left the cottage, was still very bitter against her brother-in-law, quoting the doctor's opinion as to his sanity, and expressing her own as to his conduct under that supposition. She also believed that he would rally in health, and was therefore, on that account, less inclined to pity him than was his wife. Emily Trevelyan of course saw more of him than did her sister, and understood better how possible it was that a man might be in such a condition as to be neither mad nor sane;—not mad, so that all power over his own actions need be taken from him; nor sane, so that he must be held to be accountable for his words and thoughts. Trevelyan did nothing, and attempted to do nothing, that could injure his wife and child. He submitted himself to medical advice. He did not throw away his money. He had no Bozzle now waiting at his heels. He was generally passive in his wife's hands as to all outward things. He was not violent in rebuke, nor did he often allude to their past unhappiness. But he still maintained, by a word spoken every now and

then, that he had been right throughout in his contest with his wife,—and that his wife had at last acknowledged that it was so. She never contradicted him, and he became bolder and bolder in his assertions, endeavouring on various occasions to obtain some expression of an assent from Nora. But Nora would not assent, and he would scowl at her, saying words, both in her presence and behind her back, which implied that she was his enemy. "Why not yield to him?" her sister said the day before she went. "I have yielded, and your doing so cannot make it worse."

"I can't do it. It would be false. It is better that I should go away. I cannot pretend to agree with him, when I know that his mind is working altogether under a delusion." When the hour for her departure came, and Hugh was waiting for her, she thought that it would be better that she should go, without seeing Trevelyan. "There will only be more anger," she pleaded. But her sister would not be contented that she should leave the house in this fashion, and urged at last, with tears running down her cheeks, that this might possibly be the last interview between them.

"Say a word to him in kindness before you leave us," said Mrs. Trevelyan. Then Nora went up to her brother-in-law's bed-side, and told him that she was going, and expressed a hope that he might be stronger when she returned. And as she did so she put her hand upon the bed-side, intending to press his in token of affection. But his face was turned from her, and he seemed to take no notice of her. "Louis," said his

wife, "Nora is going to Monkham. You will say good-bye to her before she goes?"

"If she be not my enemy, I will," said he.

"I have never been your enemy, Louis," said Nora, "and certainly I am not now."

"She had better go," he said. "It is very little more that I expect of any one in this world;—but I will recognise no one as my friend who will not acknowledge that I have been sinned against during the last two years;—sinned against cruelly and utterly." Emily, who was standing at the bed-head, shuddered as she heard this, but made no reply. Nor did Nora speak again, but crept silently out of the room;—and in half a minute her sister followed her.

"I feared how it would be," said Nora.

"We can only do our best. God knows that I try to do mine."

"I do not think you will ever see him again," said Hugh to her in the train.

"Would you have had me act otherwise? It is not that it would have been a lie. I would not have minded that to ease the shattered feelings of one so infirm and suffering as he. In dealing with mad people I suppose one must be false. But I should have been accusing her; and it may be that he will get well, and it might be that he would then remember what I had said."

At the station near Monkham she was met by Lady Peterborough in the carriage. A tall footman in liveries came on to the platform to shew her the way and to look after her luggage, and she could not fail to remember that the man might have been her own servant, instead of being the servant of her who now

sat in Lord Peterborough's carriage. And when she saw the carriage, and her ladyship's great bay horses, and the glittering harness, and the respectably responsible coachman, and the arms on the panel, she smiled to herself at the sight of these first outward manifestations of the rank and wealth of the man who had once been her lover. There are men who look as though they were the owners of bay horses and responsible coachmen and family blazons,—from whose outward personal appearance, demeanour, and tone of voice, one would expect a following of liveries and a magnificence of belongings; but Mr. Glascock had by no means been such a man. It had suited his taste to keep these things in abeyance, and to place his pride in the oaks and elms of his park rather than in any of those appanages of grandeur which a man may carry about with him. He could talk of his breed of sheep on an occasion, but he never talked of his horses; and though he knew his position and all its glories as well as any nobleman in England, he was ever inclined to hang' back a little in going out of a room, and to bear himself as though he were a small personage in the world. Some perception of all this came across Nora's mind as she saw the equipage, and tried to reflect, at a moment's notice, whether the case might have been different with her, had Mr. Glascock worn a little of his tinsel outside when she first met him. Of course she told herself that had he worn it all on the outside, and carried it ever so gracefully, it could have made no difference.

It was very plain, however, that, though Mr. Glascock did not like bright feathers for himself, he chose that his wife should wear them. Nothing could be

prettier than the way in which Caroline Spalding, whom we first saw as she was about to be stuck into the interior of the diligence, at St. Michel, now filled her carriage as Lady Peterborough. The greeting between them was very affectionate, and there was a kiss in the carriage, even though the two pretty hats, perhaps, suffered something. "We are so glad to have you at last," said Lady Peterborough. "Of course we are very quiet; but you won't mind that." Nora declared that no house could be too quiet for her, and then said something of the melancholy scene which she had just left. "And no time is fixed for your own marriage? But of course it has not been possible. And why should you be in a hurry? We quite understand that this is to be your home till everything has arranged itself." There was a drive of four or five miles before they reached the park gates, and nothing could be kinder or more friendly than was the new peeress; but Nora told herself that there was no forgetting that her friend was a peeress. She would not be so ill-conditioned as to suggest to herself that her friend patronised her;—and, indeed, had she done so, the suggestion would have been false;—but she could not rid herself of a certain sensation of external inferiority, and of a feeling that the superiority ought to be on her side, as all this might have been hers,—only that she had not thought it worth her while to accept it. As these ideas came into her mind, she hated herself for entertaining them; and yet, come they would. While she was talking about her emblematic beef-steak with Hugh, she had no regret, no uneasiness, no conception that any state of life could be better for her than that state in which an emblematic

beef-steak was of vital importance; but she could not bring her mind to the same condition of unalloyed purity while sitting with Lady Peterborough in Lord Peterborough's carriage. And for her default in this respect she hated herself.

"This is the beginning of the park," said her friend.

"And where is the house?"

"You can't see the house for ever so far yet; it is two miles off. There is about a mile before you come to the gates, and over a mile afterwards. One has a sort of feeling when one is in that one can't get out,—it is so big." In so speaking, it was Lady Peterborough's special endeavour to state without a boast facts which were indifferent, but which must be stated.

"It is very magnificent," said Nora. There was in her voice the slightest touch of sarcasm, which she would have given the world not to have uttered;—but it had been irrepressible.

Lady Peterborough understood it instantly, and forgave it, not attributing to it more than its true meaning, acknowledging to herself that it was natural. "Dear Nora," she said,—not knowing what to say, blushing as she spoke,—"the magnificence is nothing; but the man's love is everything."

Nora shook herself, and determined that she would behave well. The effort should be made, and the required result should be produced by it. "The magnificence, as an adjunct, is a great deal," she said; "and for his sake, I hope that you enjoy it."

"Of course I enjoy it."

"Wallachia's teachings and preachings have all been thrown to the wind, I hope."

"Not quite all. Poor dear Wally! I got a letter from her the other day, which she began by saying that she would atone her correspondence to my changed condition in life. I understood the reproach so thoroughly! And, when she told me little details of individual men and women, and of things she had seen, and said not a word about the rights of women, or even of politics generally, I felt that I was a degraded creature in her sight. But, though you laugh at her, she did me good,—and will do good to others. Here we are inside Monkams, and now you must look at the avenue."

Nora was now rather proud of herself. She had made the effort, and it had been successful; and she felt that she could speak naturally, and express her thoughts honestly. "I remember his telling me about the avenue the first time I ever saw him;—and here it is. I did not think then that I should ever live to see the glories of Monkams. Does it go all the way like this to the house?"

"Not quite;—where you see the light at the end the road turns to the right, and the house is just before you. There are great iron gates, and terraces, and wondrous paraphernalia before you get up to the door. I can tell you Monkams is quite a wonder. I have to shut myself up every Wednesday morning, and hand the house over to Mrs. Crutch, the housekeeper, who comes out in a miraculous brown silk gown, to shew it to visitors. On other days, you'll find Mrs. Crutch quite civil and useful;—but on Wednesdays, she is majestic. Charles always goes off among his sheep on that day, and I shut myself up with a pile of books in a little

room. You will have to be imprisoned with me. I do so long to peep at the visitors."

"And I dare say they want to peep at you."

"I proposed at first to shew them round myself;—but Charles wouldn't let me."

"It would have broken Mrs. Crutch's heart."

"That's what Charles said. He thinks that Mrs. Crutch tells them that I'm locked up somewhere, and that that gives a zest to the search. Some people from Nottingham once did break into old Lady Peterborough's room, and the shew was stopped for a year. There was such a row about it! It prevented Charles coming up for the county. But he wouldn't have got in; and therefore it was lucky, and saved money."

By this time Nora was quite at her ease; but still there was before her the other difficulty, of meeting Lord Peterborough. They were driven out of the avenue, and round to the right, and through the iron gate, and up to the huge front door. There, upon the top step, was standing Lord Peterborough, with a billycock hat and a very old shooting coat, and nankeen trousers, which were considerably too short for him. It was one of the happinesses of his life to dress just as he pleased as he went about his own place; and it certainly was his pleasure to wear older clothes than any one else in his establishment. "Miss Rowley," he said, coming forward to give her a hand out of the carriage, "I am delighted that you should see Monkham at last."

"You see I have kept you to your promise. Caroline has been telling me everything about it; but she is not quite a complete guide as yet. She does not

know where the seven oaks are. Do you remember telling me of the seven oaks?"

"Of course I do. They are five miles off;—at Clatton farm, Carry. I don't think you have been near Clatton yet. We will ride there to-morrow." And thus Nora Rowley was made at home at Monklands.

She was made at home, and after a week or two she was very happy. She soon perceived that her host was a perfect gentleman, and as such, a man to be much loved. She had probably never questioned the fact, whether Mr. Glascock was a gentleman or not, and now she did not analyse it. It probably never occurred to her, even at the present time, to say to herself that he was certainly that thing, so impossible of definition, and so capable of recognition; but she knew that she had to do with one whose presence was always pleasant to her, whose words and acts towards her extorted her approbation, whose thoughts seemed to her to be always good and manly. Of course she had not loved him, because she had previously known Hugh Stanbury. There could be no comparison between the two men. There was a brightness about Hugh which Lord Peterborough could not rival. Otherwise,—except for this reason,—it seemed to her to be impossible that any young woman should fail to love Lord Peterborough when asked to do so.

About the middle of September there came a very happy time for her, when Hugh was asked down to shoot partridges,—in the doing of which, however, all his brightness did not bring him near in excellence to his host. Lord Peterborough had been shooting partridges all his life, and shot them with a precision which excited Hugh's envy. To own the truth, Stan-

bury did not shoot well, and was treated rather with scorn by the gamekeeper; but in other respects he spent three or four of the happiest days of his life. He had his work to do, and after the second day over the stubbles, declared that the exigencies of the D. R. were too severe to enable him to go out with his gun again; but those rambles about the park with Nora, for which, among the exigencies of the D. R., he did find opportunity, were never to be forgotten.

"Of course I remember that it might have been mine," she said, sitting with him under an old, hollow, withered sloping stump of an oak, which still, however, had sufficient of a head growing from one edge of the trunk to give them the shade they wanted; "and if you wish me to own to regrets,—I will."

"It would kill me, I think, if you did; and yet I cannot get it out of my head that if it had not been for me your rank and position in life might have been so—so suitable to you."

"No, Hugh; there you're wrong. I have thought about it a good deal, too; and I know very well that the cold beef-steak in the cup-board is the thing for me. Caroline will do very well here. She looks like a peeress, and bears her honours grandly; but they will never harden her. I, too, could have been magnificent with fine feathers. Most birds are equal to so much as that. I fancy that I could have looked the part of the fine English lady, and could have patronised clergymen's wives in the country, could have held my own among my peers in London, and could have kept Mrs. Crutch in order; but it would have hardened me, and I should have learned to think that to be a lady of fashion was everything."

"I do not believe a bit of it."

"It is better as it is, Hugh;—for me at least. I had always a sort of conviction that it would be better, though I had a longing to play the other part. Then you came, and you have saved me. Nevertheless, it is very nice, Hugh, to have the oaks to sit under." Stanbury declared that it was very nice.

But still nothing was settled about the wedding. Trevelyan's condition was so uncertain that it was very difficult to settle anything. Though nothing was said on the subject between Stanbury and Mrs. Trevelyan, and nothing written between Nora and her sister, it could not but be remembered that should Trevelyan die, his widow would require a home with them. They were deterred from choosing a house by this reflection, and were deterred from naming a day also by the consideration that were they to do so, Trevelyan's state might still probably prevent it. But this was arranged, that if Trevelyan lived through the winter, or even if he should not live, their marriage should not be postponed beyond the end of March. Till that time Lord Peterborough would remain at Monkham, and it was understood that Nora's invitation extended to that period.

"If my wife does not get tired of you, I shall not," Lord Peterborough said to Nora. "The thing is that when you do go we shall miss you so terribly." In September, too, there happened another event which took Stanbury to Exeter, and all needful particulars as to t'at event shall be narrated in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Mrs. Brooke Burgess.

It may be doubted whether there was a happier young woman in England than Dorothy Stanbury when that September came which was to make her the wife of Mr. Brooke Burgess, the new partner in the firm of Cropper and Burgess. Her early aspirations in life had been so low, and of late there had come upon her such a succession of soft showers of success,—mingled now and then with slight threatenings of storms which had passed away,—that the Close at Exeter seemed to her to have become a very Paradise. Her aunt's temper had sometimes been to her as the threat of a storm, and there had been the Gibson marriage treaty, and the short-lived opposition to the other marriage treaty which had seemed to her to be so very preferable; but everything had gone at last as though she had been Fortune's favourite,—and now had come this beautiful arrangement about Cropper and Burgess, which would save her from being carried away to live among strangers in London! When she first became known to us on her coming to Exeter, in compliance with her aunt's suggestion, she was timid, silent, and altogether without self-reliance. Even they who knew her best had never guessed that she possessed a keen sense of humour, a nice appreciation of character, and a quiet reticent wit of her own, under that staid and frightened demeanour. Since her engagement with Brooke Burgess it seemed to those who watched her that her character had become changed, as does that of a flower when it opens itself in its growth. The

sweet gifts of nature within became visible, the petals sprang to view, and the leaves spread themselves, and the sweet scent was felt upon the air. Had she remained at Nuncombe, it is probable that none would ever have known her but her sister. It was necessary to this flower that it should be warmed by the sun of life, and strengthened by the breezes of opposition, and filled by the showers of companionship, before it could become aware of its own loveliness. Dorothy was one who, had she remained ever unseen in the retirement of her mother's village cottage, would have lived and died ignorant of even her own capabilities for enjoyment. She had not dreamed that she could win a man's love,—had hardly dreamed till she had lived at Exeter that she had love of her own to give back in return. She had not known that she could be firm in her own opinion, that she could laugh herself and cause others to laugh, that she could be a lady and know that other women were not so, that she had good looks of her own and could be very happy when told of them by lips that she loved. The flower that blows the quickest is never the sweetest. The fruit that ripens tardily has ever the finest flavour. It is often the same with men and women. The lad who talks at twenty as men should talk at thirty, has seldom much to say worth the hearing when he is forty; and the girl who at eighteen can shine in society with composure, has generally given over shining before she is a full-grown woman. With Dorothy the scent and beauty of the flower, and the flavour of the fruit, had come late; but the fruit will keep, and the flower will not fall to pieces with the heat of an evening.

"How marvellously your bride has changed since

she has been here," said Mrs. MacHugh to Miss Stanbury. "We thought she couldn't say boo to a goose at first; but she holds her own now among the best of 'em."

"Of course she does;—why shouldn't she? I never knew Stanbury yet that was a fool."

"They are a wonderful family, of course," said Mrs. MacHugh; "but I think that of all of them she is the most wonderful. Old Barty said something to her at my house yesterday that wasn't intended to be kind."

"When did he ever intend to be kind?"

"But he got no change out of her. 'The Burgesses have been in Exeter a long time,' she said, 'and I don't see why we should not get on at any rate as well as those before us.' Barty grunted and growled and slunk away. He thought she would shake in her shoes when he spoke to her."

"He has never been able to make a Stanbury shake in her shoes yet," said the old lady.

Early in September, Dorothy went to Nuncombe Putney to spend a week with her mother and sister at the cottage. She had insisted on this, though Priscilla had hinted, somewhat unnecessarily, that Dorothy, with her past comforts and her future prospects, would find the accommodation at the cottage very limited. "I suppose you and I, Pris, can sleep in the same bed, as we always did," she said, with a tear in each eye. Then Priscilla had felt ashamed of herself, and had bade her come.

"The truth is, Dolly," said the elder sister, "that we feel so unlike marrying and giving in marriage at Nuncombe, that I'm afraid you'll lose your brightness

and become dowdy, and grim, and misanthropic, as we are. When mamma and I sit down to what we call dinner, I always feel that there is a grace hovering in the air different to that which she says."

"And what is it, Pris?"

"Pray, God, don't quite starve us, and let everybody else have indigestion. We don't say it out loud, but there it is; and the spirit of it might damp the orange blossoms."

She went of course, and the orange blossoms were not damped. She had long walks with her sister round by Niddon and Riddleigh, and even as far distant as Cockchaffington, where much was said about that wicked Colonel as they stood looking at the porch of the church. "I shall be so happy," said Dorothy, "when you and mother come to us. It will be such a joy to me that you should be my guests."

"But we shall not come."

"Why not, Priscilla?"

"I know it will be so. Mamma will not care for going, if I do not go."

"And why should you not come?"

"For a hundred reasons, all of which you know, Dolly. I am stiff, impracticable, ill-conditioned, and very bad at going about visiting. I am always thinking that other people ought to have indigestion, and perhaps I might come to have some such feeling about you and Brooke."

"I should not be at all afraid of that."

"I know that my place in the world is here, at Nuncombe Putney. I have a pride about myself, and think that I never did wrong but once,—when I let mamma go into that odious Clock House. It is a bad

pride, and yet I'm proud of it. I hav'n't got a gown fit to go and stay with you, when you become a grand lady in Exeter. I don't doubt you'd give me any sort of gown I wanted."

"Of course I would. Ain't we sisters, Pris?"

"I shall not be so much your sister as he will be your husband. Besides, I hate to take things. When Hugh sends money, and for mamma's sake it is accepted, I always feel uneasy while it lasts, and think that that plague of an indigestion ought to come upon me also. Do you remember the lamb that came when you went away? It made me so sick."

"But, Priscilla;—isn't that morbid?"

"Of course it is. You don't suppose I really think it grand. I am morbid. But I am strong enough to live on, and not get killed by the morbidity. Heaven knows how much more there may be of it;—forty years, perhaps, and probably the greater portion of that absolutely alone;—"

"No;—you'll be with us then,—if it should come."

"I think not, Dolly. Not to have a hole of my own would be intolerable to me. But, as I was saying, I shall not be unhappy. To enjoy life, as you do, is I suppose out of the question for me. But I have a satisfaction when I get to the end of the quarter and find that there is not half-a-crown due to any one. Things get dearer and dearer, but I have a comfort even in that. I have a feeling that I should like to bring myself to the straw a day." Of course there were offers made of aid,—offers which were rather prayers,—and plans suggested of what might be done between Brooke and Hugh; but Priscilla declared that all such plans were odious to her. "Why should you

be unhappy about us?" she continued. "We will come and see you,—at least I will,—perhaps once in six months, and you shall pay for the railway ticket; only I won't stay, because of the gown."

"Is not that nonsense, Pris?"

"Just at present it is, because mamma and I have both got new gowns for the wedding. Hugh sent them, and ever so much money to buy bonnets and gloves."

"He is to be married himself soon,—down at a place called Monkham. Nora is staying there."

"Yes;—with a lord," said Priscilla. "We sha'n't have to go there, at any rate."

"You liked Nora when she was here?"

"Very much;—though I thought her self-willed. But she is not worldly, and she is conscientious. She might have married that lord herself if she would. I do like her. When she comes to you at Exeter, if the wedding gown isn't quite worn out, I shall come and see her. I knew she liked him when she was here, but she never said so."

"She is very pretty, is she not? He sent me her photograph."

"She is handsome rather than pretty. I wonder why it is that you two should be married, and so grandly married, and that I shall never, never have any one to love."

"Oh, Priscilla, do not say that. If I have a child will you not love it?"

"It will be your child;—not mine. Do not suppose that I complain. I know that it is right. I know that you ought to be married and I ought not. I know that there is not a man in Devonshire who would take

me, or a man in Devonshire whom I would accept. I know that I am quite unfit for any other kind of life than this. I should make any man wretched, and any man would make me wretched. But why is it so? I believe that you would make any man happy."

"I hope to make Brooke happy."

"Of course you will, and therefore you deserve it. We'll go home now, dear, and get mamma's things ready for the great day."

On the afternoon before the great day all the visitors were to come, and during the forenoon old Miss Stanbury was in a great fidget. Luckily for Dorothy, her own preparations were already made, so that she could give her time to her aunt without injury to herself. Miss Stanbury had come to think of herself as though all the reality of her life had passed away from her. Every resolution that she had formed had been broken. She had had the great enemy of her life, Barty Burgess, in the house with her upon terms that were intended to be amicable, and had arranged with him a plan for the division of the family property. Her sister-in-law, whom in the heyday of her strength she had chosen to regard as her enemy, and with whom even as yet there had been no reconciliation, was about to become her guest, as was also Priscilla,—whom she had ever disliked almost as much as she had respected. She had quarrelled utterly with Hugh,—in such a manner as to leave no possible chance of a reconciliation,—and he also was about to be her guest. And then, as to her chosen heir, she was now assisting him in doing the only thing, as to which she had declared that if he did do it, he should not be her heir. As she went about the house, under an idea that such a

multiplicity of persons could not be housed and fed without superhuman exertion, she thought of all this, and could not help confessing to herself that her life had been very vain. It was only when her eyes rested on Dorothy, and she saw how supremely happy was the one person whom she had taken most closely to her heart, that she could feel that she had done anything that should not have been left undone. "I think I'll sit down now, Dorothy," she said, "or I sha'n't be able to be with you to-morrow."

"Do, aunt. Everything is all ready, and nobody will be here for an hour yet. Nothing can be nicer than the rooms, and nothing ever was done so well before. I'm only thinking how lonely you'll be when we're gone."

"It'll be only for six weeks."

"But six weeks is such a long time."

"What would it have been if he had taken you up to London, my pet? Are you sure your mother wouldn't like a fire in her room, Dorothy?"

"A fire in September, aunt?"

"People live so differently. One never knows."

"They never have but one fire at Nuncombe, aunt, summer or winter."

"That's no reason they shouldn't be comfortable here." However, she did not insist on having the fire lighted.

Mrs. Stanbury and Priscilla came first, and the meeting was certainly very uncomfortable. Poor Mrs. Stanbury was shy, and could hardly speak a word. Miss Stanbury thought that her visitor was haughty, and, though she endeavoured to be gracious, did it with a struggle. They called each other ma'am, which

made Dorothy uneasy. Each of them was so dear to her, that it was a pity that they should glower at each other like enemies. Priscilla was not at all shy; but she was combative, and, as her aunt said of her afterwards, would not keep her prickles in. "I hope, Priscilla, you like weddings," said Miss Stanbury to her, not knowing where to find a subject for conversation.

"In the abstract I like them," said Priscilla. Miss Stanbury did not know what her niece meant by liking weddings in the abstract, and was angry.

"I suppose you do have weddings at Nuncombe Putney sometimes," she said.

"I hope they do," said Priscilla, "but I never saw one. To-morrow will be my first experience."

"Your own will come next, my dear," said Miss Stanbury.

"I think not," said Priscilla. "It is quite as likely to be yours, aunt." This, Miss Stanbury thought, was almost an insult, and she said nothing more on the occasion.

Then came Hugh and the bridegroom. The bridegroom, as a matter of course, was not accommodated in the house, but he was allowed to come there for his tea. He and Hugh had come together; and for Hugh a bed-room had been provided. His aunt had not seen him since he had been turned out of the house, because of his bad practices, and Dorothy had anticipated the meeting between them with alarm. It was, however, much more pleasant than had been that between the ladies. "Hugh," she said stiffly, "I am glad to see you on such an occasion as this."

"Aunt," he said, "I am glad of any occasion that can get me an entrance once more into the dear old

house. I am so pleased to see you." She allowed her hand to remain in his a few moments, and murmured something which was intended to signify her satisfaction. "I must tell you that I am going to be married myself, to one of the dearest, sweetest, and loveliest girls that ever were seen, and you must congratulate me."

"I do, I do; and I hope you may be happy."

"We mean to try to be; and some day you must let me bring her to you, and shew her. I shall not be satisfied, if you do not know my wife." She told Martha afterwards that she hoped that Mr. Hugh had sown his wild oats, and that matrimony would sober him. When, however, Martha remarked that she believed Mr. Hugh to be as hardworking a young man as any in London, Miss Stanbury shook her head sorrowfully. Things were being very much changed with her; but not even yet was she to be brought to approve of work done on behalf of a penny newspaper.

On the following morning, at ten o'clock, there was a procession from Miss Stanbury's house into the Cathedral, which was made entirely on foot;—indeed, no assistance could have been given by any carriage, for there is a back entrance to the Cathedral, near to the Lady Chapel, exactly opposite Miss Stanbury's house. There were many of the inhabitants of the Close there, to see the procession, and the cathedral bells rang out their peals very merrily. Brooke, the bridegroom, gave his arm to Miss Stanbury, which was, no doubt, very improper,—as he should have appeared in the church as coming from quite some different part of the world. Then came the bride, hanging on her brother, then two bridesmaids,—friends of

Dorothy's, living in the town; and, lastly, Priscilla with her mother, for nothing would induce Priscilla to take the part of a bridesmaid. "You might as well ask an owl to sing to you," she said. "And then all the frippery would be thrown away upon me." But she stood close to Dorothy, and when the ceremony had been performed, was the first, after Brooke, to kiss her.

Everybody acknowledged that the bride was a winsome bride. Mrs. MacHugh was at the breakfast, and declared afterwards that Dorothy Burgess,—as she then was pleased to call her,—was a girl very hard to be understood. "She came here," said Mrs. MacHugh, "two years ago, a plain, silent, shy, dowdy young woman, and we all said that Miss Stanbury would be tired of her in a week. There has never come a time in which there was any visible difference in her, and now she is one of our city beauties, with plenty to say to everybody, with a fortune in one pocket and her aunt in the other, and everybody is saying what a fortunate fellow Broke Burgess is to get her. In a year or two she'll be at the top of everything in the city, and will make her way in the county too."

The compiler of this history begs to add his opinion to that of "everybody," as quoted above by Mrs. MacHugh. He thinks that Brooke Burgess was a very fortunate fellow to get his wife.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Acquitted.

DURING this time, while Hugh was sitting with his love under the oak trees at Monkham, and Dorothy was being converted into Mrs. Brooke Burgess in Exeter Cathedral, Mrs. Trevelyan was living with her husband in the cottage at Twickenham. Her life was dreary enough, and there was but very little of hope in it to make its dreariness supportable. As often happens in periods of sickness, the single friend who could now be of service to the one or to the other was the doctor. He came daily to them, and with that quick growth of confidence which medical kindness always inspires, Trevelyan told to this gentleman all the history of his married life,—and all that Trevelyan told to him he repeated to Trevelyan's wife. It may therefore be understood that Trevelyan, between them, was treated like a child.

Dr. Nevill had soon been able to tell Mrs. Trevelyan that her husband's health had been so shattered as to make it improbable that he should ever again be strong either in body or in mind. He would not admit, even when treating his patient like a child, that he had ever been mad, and spoke of Sir Marmaduke's threat as unfortunate. "But what could papa have done?" asked the wife.

"It is often, no doubt, difficult to know what to do; but threats are seldom of avail to bring a man back to reason. Your father was angry with him, and yet declared that he was mad. That in itself was hardly rational. One does not become angry with a madman."

One does not become angry with a madman; but

while a man has power in his hands over others, and when he misuses that power grossly and cruelly, who is there that will not be angry? The misery of the insane more thoroughly excites our pity than any other suffering to which humanity is subject; but it is necessary that the madness should be acknowledged to be madness before the pity can be felt. One can forgive, or, at any rate, make excuses for any injury when it is done; but it is almost beyond human nature to forgive an injury when it is a-doing, let the condition of the doer be what it may. Emily Trevelyan at this time suffered infinitely. She was still willing to yield in all things possible, because her husband was ill,—because perhaps he was dying; but she could no longer satisfy herself with thinking that all that she admitted,—all that she was still ready to admit,—had been conceded in order that her concessions might tend to soften the afflictions of one whose reason was gone. Dr. Nevill said that her husband was not mad;—and indeed Trevelyan seemed now to be so clear in his mind that she could not doubt what the doctor said to her. She could not think that he was mad,—and yet he spoke of the last two years as though he had suffered from her almost all that a husband could suffer from a wife's misconduct. She was in doubt about his health. "He may recover," the doctor said; "but he is so weak that the slightest additional ailment would take him off." At this time Trevelyan could not raise himself from his bed, and was carried, like a child, from one room to another. He could eat nothing solid, and believed himself to be dying. In spite of his weakness,—and of his savage memories in regard to the past,—he treated his wife on all ordinary subjects

with consideration. He spoke much of his money, telling her that he had not altered, and would not alter, the will that he had made immediately on his marriage. Under that will all his property would be hers for her life, and would go to their child when she was dead. To her this will was more than just,—it was generous in the confidence which it placed in her; and he told his lawyer, in her presence, that, to the best of his judgment, he need not change it. But still there passed hardly a day in which he did not make some allusion to the great wrong which he had endured, throwing in her teeth the confessions which she had made,—and almost accusing her of that which she certainly never had confessed, even when, in the extremity of her misery at Casalunga, she had thought that it little mattered what she said, so that for the moment he might be appeased. If he died, was he to die in this belief? If he lived, was he to live in this belief? And if he did so believe, was it possible that he should still trust her with his money and with his child?

"Emily," he said one day, "it has been a terrible tragedy, has it not?" She did not answer his question, sitting silent as it was her custom to do when he addressed her after such fashion as this. At such times she would not answer him; but she knew that he would press her for an answer. "I blame him more than I do you," continued Trevelyan,—"*infinitely more*. He was a serpent intending to sting me from the first,—not knowing perhaps how deep the sting would go." There was no question in this, and the assertion was one which had been made so often that she could let it pass. "You are young, Emily, and it may be that you will marry again."

"Never," she said, with a shudder. It seemed to her then that marriage was so fearful a thing that certainly she could never venture upon it again.

"All I ask of you is, that should you do so, you will be more careful of your husband's honour."

"Louis," she said, getting up and standing close to him, "tell me what it is that you mean." It was now his turn to remain silent, and hers to demand an answer. "I have borne much," she continued, "because I would not vex you in your illness."

"You have borne much?"

"Indeed and indeed, yes. What woman has ever borne more!"

"And I?" said he.

"Dear Louis, let us understand each other at last. Of what do you accuse me? Let us, at any rate, know each other's thoughts on this matter, of which each of us is ever thinking."

"I make no new accusation."

"I must protest then against your using words which seem to convey accusation. Since marriages were first known upon earth, no woman has ever been truer to her husband than I have been to you."

"Were you lying to me then at Casalunga when you acknowledged that you had been false to your duties?"

"If I acknowledged that, I did lie. I never said that; but yet I did lie,—believing it to be best for you that I should do so. For your honour's sake, for the child's sake, weak as you are, Louis, I must protest that it was so. I have never injured you by deed or thought."

"And yet you have lied to me! Is a lie no injury;—and such a lie! Emily, why did you lie to

me? You will tell me to-morrow that you never lied, and never owned that you had lied."

Though it should kill him, she must tell him the truth now. "You were very ill at Casalunga," she said, after a pause.

"But not so ill as I am now. I could breathe that air. I could live there. Had I remained I should have been well now,—but what of that?"

"Louis, you were dying there. Pray, pray listen to me. We thought that you were dying; and we knew also that you would be taken from that house."

"That was my affair. Do you mean that I could not keep a house over my head?" At this moment he was half lying, half sitting, in a large easy chair in the little drawing-room of their cottage, to which he had been carried from the adjoining bed-room. When not excited, he would sit for hours without moving, gazing through the open window, sometimes with some pretext of a book lying within the reach of his hand; but almost without strength to lift it, and certainly without power to read it. But now he had worked himself up to so much energy that he almost raised himself up in his chair, as he turned towards his wife. "Had I not the world before me, to choose a house in?"

"They would have put you somewhere, and I could not have reached you."

"In a madhouse, you mean. Yes;—if you had told them."

"Will you listen, dear Louis? We knew that it was our duty to bring you home; and as you would not let me come to you, and serve you, and assist you to come here where you are safe,—unless I owned that you had been right, I said that you had been right."

"And it was a lie,—you say now?"

"All that is nothing. I can not go through it; nor should you. There is the only question. You do not think that I have been——? I need not say the thing. You do not think that?" As she asked the question, she knelt beside him, and took his hand in hers, and kissed it. "Say that you do not think that, and I will never trouble you further about the past."

"Yes;—that is it. You will never trouble me!"

She glanced up into his face and saw there the old look which he used to wear when he was at Willesden and at Casalunga; and there had come again the old tone in which he had spoken to her in the bitterness of his wrath:—the look and the tone, which had made her sure that he was a madman. "The craft and subtlety of women passes everything!" he said. "And so at last I am to tell you that from the beginning it has been my doing. I will never say so, though I should die in refusing to do it."

After that there was no possibility of further conversation, for there came upon him a fit of coughing, and then he swooned; and in half-an-hour he was in bed, and Dr. Nevill was by his side. "You must not speak to him at all on this matter," said the doctor. "But if he speaks to me?" she asked. "Let it pass," said the doctor. "Let the subject be got rid of with as much ease as you can. He is very ill now, and even this might have killed him." Nevertheless, though this seemed to be stern, Dr. Nevill was very kind to her, declaring that the hallucination in her husband's mind did not really consist of a belief in her infidelity, but arose from an obstinate determination to yield nothing. "He does not believe it; but he feels that

were he to say as much, his hands would be weakened and yours strengthened."

"Can he then be in his sane mind?"

"In one sense all misconduct is proof of insanity," said the doctor. "In his case the weakness of the mind has been consequent upon the weakness of the body."

Three days after that Nora visited Twickenham from Monkham in obedience to a telegram from her sister. "Louis," she said, "had become so much weaker, that she hardly dared to be alone with him. Would Nora come to her?" Nora came of course, and Hugh met her at the station, and brought her with him to the cottage. He asked whether he might see Trevelyan, but was told that it would be better that he should not. He had been almost continually silent since the last dispute which he had with his wife; but he had given little signs that he was always thinking of the manner in which he had been brought home by her from Italy, and of the story she had told him of her mode of inducing him to come. Hugh Stanbury had been her partner in that struggle, and would probably be received, if not with sullen silence, then with some attempt at rebuke. But Hugh did see Dr. Nevill, and learned from him that it was hardly possible that Trevelyan should live many hours. "He has worn himself out," said the doctor, "and there is nothing left in him by which he can lay hold of life again." Of Nora her brother-in-law took but little notice, and never again referred in her hearing to the great trouble of his life. He said to her a word or two about Monkham, and asked a question now and again as to Lord Peterborough,—whom, however, he always called Mr. Glascock; but Hugh Stanbury's name was never men-

tioned by him. There was a feeling in his mind that at the very last he had been duped in being brought to England, and that Stanbury had assisted in the deception. To his wife he would whisper little petulant regrets for the loss of the comforts of Casalunga, and would speak of the air of Italy and of Italian skies and of the Italian sun, as though he had enjoyed at his Sienese villa all the luxuries which climate can give, and would have enjoyed them still had he been allowed to remain there. To all this she would say nothing. She knew now that he was failing quickly, and there was only one subject on which she either feared or hoped to hear him speak. Before he left her for ever and ever would he tell her that he had not doubted her faith?

She had long discussions with Nora on the matter, as though all the future of her life depended on it. It was in vain that Nora tried to make her understand that if hereafter the spirit of her husband could know anything of the troubles of his mortal life, could ever look back to the things which he had done in the flesh, then would he certainly know the truth, and all suspicion would be at an end. And if not, if there was to be no such retrospect, what did it matter now, for these few last hours before the coil should be shaken off, and all doubt and all sorrow should be at an end? But the wife, who was soon to be a widow, yearned to be acquitted in this world by him to whom her guilt or her innocence had been matter of such vital importance. "He has never thought it," said Nora.

"But if he would say so! If he would only look it! It will be all in all to me as long as I live in this world." And then, though they had determined between them-

selves in spoken words never to regard him again as one who had been mad, in all their thoughts and actions towards him they treated him as though he were less responsible than an infant. And he was mad;—mad though every doctor in England had called him sane. Had he not been mad he must have been a fiend,—or he could not have tortured, as he had done, the woman to whom he owed the closest protection which one human being can give to another.

During these last days and nights she never left him. She had done her duty to him well, at any rate since the time when she had been enabled to come near him in Italy. It may be that in the first days of their quarrel, she had not been regardful, as she should have been, of a husband's will,—that she might have escaped this tragedy by submitting herself to the man's wishes, as she had always been ready to submit herself to his words. Had she been able always to keep her neck in the dust under his foot, their married life might have been passed without outward calamity, and it is possible that he might still have lived. But if she erred, surely she had been scourged for her error with scorpions. As she sat at his bedside watching him, she thought of her wasted youth, of her faded beauty, of her shattered happiness, of her fallen hopes. She had still her child,—but she felt towards him that she herself was so sad a creature, so sombre, so dark, so necessarily wretched from this time forth till the day of her death, that it would be better for the boy that she should never be with him. There could be nothing left for her but garments dark with woe, eyes red with weeping, hours sad from solitude, thoughts weary with memory. And even yet,—if he would only now say

that he did not believe her to have been guilty, how great would be the change in her future life!

Then came an evening in which he seemed to be somewhat stronger than he had been. He had taken some refreshment that had been prepared for him, and, stimulated by its strength, had spoken a word or two both to Nora and to his wife. His words had been of no especial interest,—alluding to some small detail of his own condition, such as are generally the chosen topics of conversation with invalids. But he had been pronounced to be better, and Nora spoke to him cheerfully, when he was taken into the next room by the man who was always at hand to move him. His wife followed him, and soon afterwards returned, and bade Nora good night. She would sit by her husband, and Nora was to go to the room below, that she might receive her lover there. He was expected out that evening, but Mrs. Trevelyan said that she would not see him. Hugh came and went, and Nora took herself to her chamber. The hours of the night went on, and Mrs. Trevelyan was still sitting by her husband's bed. It was still September, and the weather was very warm. But the windows had been all closed since an hour before sunset. She was sitting there thinking, thinking, thinking. Dr. Nevill had told her that the time now was very near. She was not thinking now how very near it might be, but whether there might yet be time for him to say that one word to her.

"Emily," he said, in the lowest whisper.

"Darling!" she answered, turning round and touching him with her hand.

"My feet are cold. There are no clothes on them."

She took a thick shawl and spread it double across the bottom of the bed, and put her hand upon his arm. Though it was clammy with perspiration, it was chill, and she brought the warm clothes up close round his shoulders. "I can't sleep," he said. "If I could sleep, I shouldn't mind." Then he was silent again, and her thoughts went harping on, still on the same subject. She told herself that if ever that act of justice were to be done for her, it must be done that night. After a while she turned round over him ever so gently, and saw that his large eyes were open and fixed upon the wall.

She was kneeling now on the chair close by the bed head, and her hand was on the rail of the bedstead supporting her. "Louis," she said, ever so softly.

"Well."

"Can you say one word for your wife, dear, dear, dearest husband?"

"What word?"

"I have not been a harlot to you;—have I?"

"What name is that?"

"But what a thing, Louis! Kiss my hand, Louis, if you believe me." And very gently she laid the tips of her fingers on his lips. For a moment or two she waited, and the kiss did not come. Would he spare her in this the last moment left to him either for justice or for mercy? For a moment or two the bitterness of her despair was almost unendurable. She had time to think that were she once to withdraw her hand, she would be condemned for ever;—and that it must be withdrawn. But at length the lips moved, and with struggling ear she could hear the sound of the tongue within, and the verdict of the dying man had been

given in her favour. He never spoke a word more either to annul it or to enforce it.

Some time after that she crept into Nora's room. "Nora," she said, waking the sleeping girl, "it is all over."

"Is he——dead?"

"It is all over. Mrs. Richards is there. It is better than an hour since now. Let me come in." She got into her sister's bed, and there she told the tale of her tardy triumph. "He declared to me at last that he trusted me," she said,—almost believing that real words had come from his lips to that effect. Then she fell into a flood of tears, and after a while she also slept.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Conclusion.

At last the maniac was dead, and in his last moments he had made such reparation as was in his power for the evil that he had done. With that slight touch of his dry fevered lips he had made the assertion on which was to depend the future peace and comfort of the woman whom he had so cruelly misused. To her mind the acquittal was perfect; but she never explained to human ears,—not even to those of her sister,—the manner in which it had been given. Her life, as far as we are concerned with it, has been told. For the rest, it cannot be but that it should be better than that which was passed. If there be any retribution for such sufferings in money, liberty, and outward comfort, such retribution she possessed;—for all that had been his, was now hers. He had once suggested what she should do, were she even to be married again; and

she had felt that of such a career there could be no possibility. Anything but that! We all know that widow's practices in this matter do not always tally with wives' vows; but, as regards Mrs. Trevelyan, we are disposed to think that the promise will be kept. She has her child, and he will give her sufficient interest to make life worth having.

Early in the following spring Hugh Stanbury was married to Nora Rowley in the parish church of Monkham, — at which place by that time Nora found herself to be almost as much at home as she might have been under other circumstances. They had prayed that the marriage might be very private; — but when the day arrived there was no very close privacy. The parish church was quite full, there were half-a-dozen bridesmaids, there was a great breakfast, Mrs. Crutch had a new brown silk gown given to her, there was a long article in the county gazette, and there were short paragraphs in various metropolitan newspapers. It was generally thought among his compeers that Hugh Stanbury had married into the aristocracy, and that the fact was a triumph for the profession to which he belonged. It shewed what a Bohemian could do, and that men of the press in England might gradually hope to force their way almost anywhere. So great was the name of Monkham! He and his wife took for themselves a very small house near the Regent's Park, at which they intend to remain until Hugh shall have enabled himself to earn an additional two hundred a-year. Mrs. Trevelyan did not come to live with them, but kept the cottage near the river at Twickenham. Hugh Stanbury was very averse to any protracted connection with comforts to be obtained from

poor Trevelyan's income, and told Nora that he must hold her to her promise about the beefsteak in the cupboard. It is our opinion that Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Stanbury will never want for a beefsteak and all comfortable additions until the inhabitants of London shall cease to require newspapers on their breakfast tables.

Brooke and Mrs. Brooke established themselves in the house in the Close on their return from their wedding tour, and Brooke at once put himself into intimate relations with the Messrs. Croppers, taking his fair share of the bank work. Dorothy was absolutely installed as mistress in her aunt's house with many wonderful ceremonies, with the unlocking of cupboards, the outpouring of stores, the giving up of keys, and with many speeches made to Martha. This was all very painful to Dorothy, who could not bring herself to suppose it possible that she should be the mistress of that house, during her aunt's life. Miss Stanbury, however, of course persevered, speaking of herself as a worn-out old woman, with one foot in the grave, who would soon be carried away and put out of sight. But in a very few days things got back into their places, and Aunt Stanbury had the keys again. "I knew how it would be, miss," said Martha to her young mistress, "and I didn't say nothing, 'cause you understand her so well."

Mrs. Stanbury and Priscilla still live at the cottage, which, however, to Priscilla's great disgust, has been considerably improved and prettily furnished. This was done under the auspices of Hugh, but with funds chiefly supplied from the house of Brooke, Dorothy, and Co. Priscilla comes into Exeter to see her sister, perhaps, every other week; but will never sleep away

from home, and very rarely will eat or drink at her sister's table. "I don't know why, I don't," she said to Dorothy, "but somehow it puts me out. It delays me in my efforts to come to the straw a day." Nevertheless, the sisters are dear friends.

I fear that in some previous number a half promise was made that a husband should be found for Camilla French. That half-promise cannot be treated in the manner in which any whole promise certainly would have been handled. There is no husband ready for Cammy French. The reader, however, will be delighted to know that she made up her quarrel with her sister and Mr. Gibson, and is now rather fond of being a guest at Mr. Gibson's house. On her first return to Exeter after the Gibsons had come back from their little Cornish rustication, Camilla declared that she could not and would not bring herself to endure a certain dress of which Bella was very fond;—and as this dress had been bought for Camilla with special reference to the glories of her anticipated married life, this objection was almost natural. But Bella treated it as absurd, and Camilla at last gave way.

It need only further be said that though Giles Hickbody and Martha are not actually married as yet,—men and women in their class of life always moving towards marriage with great precaution,—it is quite understood that the young people are engaged, and are to be made happy together at some future time.

THE END.

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