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STOKESHILL PLACE;

OR

THE MAN OF BUSINESS.

BY THE AUTHORESS OF

“MRS. ARMYTAGE,”

“MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS,” &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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STOKESHILL PLACE;

OR

THE MAN OF BUSINESS.

CHAPTER I.

I seek for comfort, all in vain,
I fly to shadows for relief,
And call old fancies back again,
And breathe on pleasure's withered leaf.
It may not be !—my lot of thrall
Was dealt me by a mightier hand ;
The grief that came not at my call,
Will not depart at my command !

HERVEY.

MISS WINSTON rejoiced that Mr. Barnsley's absence from town rendered it unnecessary for Margaret to rise that day. Her young friend's room was luckily at the back of the house, and

in some degree removed from the disturbance of the hundreds of knocks at the door, which, on the day following an entertainment in London, announce the grateful visits of the entertained. The upholsterers, who were to set the house in order, were requested to defer their exertions till the following morning; and, when Lady Walmer forced her way in, to congratulate the Barnsleys on the eminent success of their ball and canvass for their grateful acknowledgments, Miss Winston hurried down to meet her, with information that Margaret was so extremely fatigued, that she had sentenced her to two days' complete repose.

“Quite right, my dear Madam, — quite right!” — cried the Countess, who with engagements innumerable upon her hands, had enough of the Barnsleys for the present; more particularly as the publicity of her late extraordinary exertions in their favour, had brought her in all directions reports of the insignificance which rendered them unworthy so vast a stretch of condescension. And away

she flew—a superannuated butterfly, fluttering among overblown roses.

Late in the evening, Margaret awoke, and would have risen to dress, had not Miss Winston persuaded her to prolong her rest. A few hours afterwards, however, she started up again, reminding the kind friend who had scarcely left the room, that Miss Sullivan's letter demanded some acknowledgment.

“Bring me my desk,” said she, “I must write and congratulate her, or they may think I was too ill to hold a pen.”

“To-morrow, my dear,” remonstrated Miss Winston. “You will be calmer, to-morrow; you cannot write to-night.”

“Indeed I can—indeed I *must*!” cried Margaret, attempting to rise. “They shall not fancy me too much overpowered to attend to common courtesies of life.—Pray let me write!

To pacify her agitation, Miss Winston at length consented: and after half-a-dozen illegible attempts, (how different from Margaret's usually decided handwriting and perspicuous style!) she completed a note, which Miss Winston

assured her was not calculated to excite suspicion.

“Accept my thanks for your letter, and sincere congratulations, dear Helen,” she wrote. “When we meet again, I shall express to you more fully than the limits of a letter will permit, my heartfelt wishes for your happiness, and that of Sir Henry Woodgate.”

And when, after the completion of this, Margaret let fall her pen, what a world of visionary happiness faded from her view!—What disenchantment was over-mastering her spirit! What a knell was sounding in her ear!—At length, in a faint voice, she entreated her friend to deliver the note to the servants, who were still up expecting her father’s return from the country, that it might be dispatched early in the morning.

In compliance with this request, Miss Winston went down into the dismantled drawing-room, to ring for Lawton; and, while still standing there,—the light of her solitary taper bringing miserably to view the withered gar-

lands and scattered moss of the preceding night,—she was startled by Barnsley's voice on the stairs; and, in another moment, pale, abrupt, and discomposed, her patron stood beside her.

“Where's Margaret?”—cried he, surprised that the driving of his chaise to the door had not brought down his daughter to receive him.

“She is in bed, Sir.”

“Already?—Why 'tis scarcely twelve o'clock.—Fatigued, I suppose by that cursed ball?”

“Not only fatigued, but ill, Sir,” said Miss Winston, with a degree of gravity intended to recal him to decorum.

“Ill?—why she was well enough last night!”

“Miss Barnsley has been feverish all day; she has probably caught cold.”

“Not she!—I see how it is,—the report has reached her.”

“It has indeed, Sir!” replied Miss Winston, surprised to find him allude so explicitly to the subject.

“ Why it can't be public, yet?—Till the thing was hinted to me last night by Sir Henry Woodgate, I swear I never had the most remote conjecture.”

“ Nor Margaret.”

“ How should she?—Who was likely to talk to *her* on such a subject?—Who broke the thing to her at last?—Sir Henry?”

“ Miss Sullivan herself, Sir; but probably at Sir Henry's request.”

“ Ay, ay—ready enough to speak when it was too late,—close enough while the mischief might have been averted.”

“ Sir Henry may not have been altogether aware of its extent.”

“ He might have asked, then. I am sure he was here often enough. For the last month, we have seen him every day.”

“ Most unfortunately, as things have turned out; for, till lately, poor girl, the impression upon her feelings cannot have been very profound.”

“ Impression upon whose feelings?”—

“ Margaret's.”—

“ Impression about what?—She never seemed to me to care for money; I have often reproached her with her indifference to every thing approaching to business.”

“ Business?”—said the amazed Miss Winston. “ You do not imagine that after refusing Lord Buckhurst and Sir William Ross, Margaret regrets Sir Henry Woodgate in a pecuniary point of view?”—

“ Regret Sir Henry Woodgate?” reiterated Barnsley, amazed in his turn. “ Surely she don’t think he was fighting shy of us, in his warning to me?—Surely she’s not fretting about *that*?”

“ Her illness is unquestionably occasioned by the announcement of Sir Henry’s marriage with Miss Sullivan.”

“ His marriage?—D——n his marriage!—The loss of seven thousand pounds needn’t prevent my daughter making as good a match as with Sir Henry Woodgate.”

“ Not if Margaret’s feelings were equally engaged,” said Miss Winston, shocked at Mr. Barnsley’s unusual tone of excitement, and

ignorant by what circumstance his temper had been so powerfully disturbed.

“ Feeling—feelings !” cried he. “ This is no moment for the indulgence of sentiment ! That rascal Closeman has failed for a hundred and fifty thousand pounds ;—gone—smashed—absconded ;—and I’m a loser by him to the amount of seven thousand pounds.”

“ I am concerned to hear it, Sir,” said Miss Winston calmly ; regarding the misfortune as very secondary to the blow which had been struck upon Margaret’s gentle nature.

“ Just now, too,—after that cursed election had drained me of six thousand,—and this season in town has run me so close !—Upon my soul, I don’t know how to face it.”

“ With prudence and economy” —Miss Winston began.

“ Prudence and economy, indeed. A mighty pleasant prospect !—Just as I am anxious to settle my daughter brilliantly in life, a plausible rascal takes me in,—picks my pocket,—runs off with my property,—and leaves me to the enjoyment of prudence and economy !”

“ Mr. Closeman’s failure must have been productive of great distress in Westerton,” observed Miss Winston. “ The lower classes had so much confidence in him.”

“ Yes,—but show me one of them who had seven thousand pounds in his hands !”

“ Their losses fall proportionably heavy on their small means. The shutting up of the house will, I fear, be the ruin of many.”

“ Yes !—there’s some comfort in that.—Hawkins of Longlands, I fancy, is done up ; and Timmins has lost fifteen hundred pounds. Those fellows will be brought down a peg or two !”

“ Is there no hope of recovering any part of the monecy ?”—demanded Miss Winston, compassionately.

“ None in the world. But just let Closeman show his nose in Kent,—just let me catch the fellow !—So specious as he was when he got that money of mine into his hands ! Harpenden, myself, Wright the tallow-chandler, and two other of the largest creditors, have entered into an agreement not to sign

his certificate, and Wright, I fancy, will be one of the assignees."

"Poor man!—I mean poor Mr. Closeman,"—said Miss Winston, perceiving by her patron's wondering face that he knew not to what to attribute her compassion for the assignee.

"*Poor?*" cried Barnsley, almost furious. "A man who has taken in half the county—a man who has been living in luxury for the last twenty years, on the reputation of a fortune he never possessed?—A man who was thought as safe as the bank?—I vow to Heaven when Sir Henry Woodgate first began to hint last night, in friendly confidence, that if I had any thing considerable in Closeman's hands, I had better look to it, I felt as angry as if he had attacked the solvability of my brother Clement! — Woodgate was actually obliged to speak plain, and explain the why and wherefore of his misgivings, before I could make up my mind to set off for Westerton, and see how matters were going on. I was there by nine,—Closeman's usual hour

of opening. I should have been in time to get out the money if—if—" he paused.

"Indeed," said Miss Winston, fancying he was waiting for an answer.

"If he had opened at all!" continued Barnsley; "but it was already a settled thing. The doors closed an hour earlier than usual, last night. It was perfectly understood in the town that the game was up. As I drove over the bridge, I saw by the way people were assembled all over the town in scattered groups, that something was amiss. Never beheld such confusion!—never witnessed such a sensation!—Poor Hill (Harpenden's partner) was obliged to be bled,—he was so cut up."

"Did you happen to hear, Sir, whether my friends the Dobbsses were losers to any amount?"

"No! I never happen to hear anything about the Dobbsses,—nor do I wish it"—said Barnsley, sharply. "Between elections and one thing or other, I've had enough of them; pray is Margaret asleep?"—

“ She was not, when I came down, Sir ?”

“ I shall step up and see her then. But if she is ill, perhaps I had better avoid all mention of the cause of my leaving town. — The shock might be too much for her.”

“ I wish I thought her in a state to be influenced by any thing of the kind !” — said Miss Winston, with perfect sincerity.

“ You fancy she will see nothing to regret in the loss of seven thousand pounds ? — Then let me tell you, nature has given her an understanding, and *I* an education, to very little purpose.”

“ Nature has endowed her with *a heart* which, I suspect, is more influential than either,” said the governess. “ But perhaps, Sir, you will walk up and communicate this unfortunate intelligence ? — If any thing can rouse my poor child, it will be tidings of an event that involves the welfare of her father.”

But now that Barnsley was *invited* to fulfil his own intentions, his views were altered. “ If Margaret was ill, she had better not be

disturbed; and, as he was himself amazingly fatigued, he should go to bed."

Not an inquiry concerning the *cause* of her indisposition,—not a surmise respecting Miss Winston's allusions to Sir Henry Woodgate. His parental mind was engrossed by the denunciations of Harpenden and Hill which still sounded in his ears. "A regular smash!—they won't pay eighteen pence in the pound!"—

Next morning, Margaret was stirring at an unusually early hour. Having thrown off the numbness produced by excessive fatigue, her intelligent mind became alive to the ignominy of allowing herself to bend under the blow she had received.

"Do not be afraid of me," said she, when returning the affectionate morning salutation of Miss Winston. "I am not going to discredit you,—I am not going to discredit myself, or suffer the world to guess the extent of my disappointment. I shall not indulge in the soft sorrows of a disappointed young lady," she continued, attempting a wretched smile. "I

am quite myself!—I promise never to breathe the name of Sir Henry Woodgate to you again.”

“ Do not promise me *that*, or I shall know that you intend to brood over your afflictions,” observed her wiser friend. “ Talk to me of him freely ; confront with courage all that is past, and all that is to come ; and, by this fair discussion, you will not suffer the business to obtain undue influence over your mind. It is the undivulged sorrow we foster in the depths of our heart, which expands from a weakling into a giant.”

Miss Winston now acquainted her with her father's loss. Margaret made no comment ; and the governess thought it just to direct her sensibilities to his misfortune, by observing that, coming after the vast expenses of his election and season in London, it would produce a serious reduction in his income. Still, Margaret shrugged her shoulders and said nothing. Reared in the lap of luxury,—her very whims provided for, by Barnsley's conscientious liberality towards “ Mary's daughter,”

she knew not the meaning of privation. It was impossible for her to appreciate the value of money.

“ This bankruptcy of Closeman will prove a serious calamity in the neighbourhood of Westerton,” persisted Miss Winston, shocked at her indifference. “ A country bank is the depository of all the little savings of the poor. Many a gray head is this day covered with ashes, by the event! The people in the village—”

“ True !”—interrupted Margaret, seizing the idea. “ Many will lose their all,—many will be ruined,—many will be driven out of their farms and houses!— Poor, poor, Stokeshill! —always fated to misfortune,—always under a cloud !”

At that moment, Barnsley, who since he had been in parliament had made a sort of business-levee of his breakfast-table and breakfasted in the study, leaving Margaret to take her morning meal in her own room, hastened in, to inquire after her —hat on head

and stick in hand,—previously to setting forth for his club.

“ Good morning, my dear; I hope you’re better to-day?—Overdone, I suspect, by that cursed ball!—You stood in a draught the whole evening. You look pale, still, Margaret. If you’re not quite the thing this evening, I shall send for Pennington.”

“ Thank you, papa;—I am still a little tired, I shall be quite well to-morrow. I mean to go to the opera to-night with Lady Walmer.”

“ Right!—stick to Lady Walmer.—After all, Lady Walmer’s the best look-out for you. I see they’re beginning to clear away the trash down stairs, and make the house habitable again.—Every thing will be quiet and comfortable, I hope, by dinner time. I’ve had persons with me on business; and the people laying down the carpets in the drawing room kept up such a devil of a noise, that we could not hear ourselves speak.”

“ I believe it is almost over,” said Margaret, to whose spectral appearance her father

seemed wholly insensible. "I am sorry to hear you have had business of so disagreeable a nature upon your hands."

"Disagreeable?—I believe you!—*Seven thousand pounds* gone like a puff of wind! *Seven thousand!*—There ought to be a law in this commercial country making bankruptcy amenable to the criminal law. A year or two in Newgate would be a lesson to the gentry, who are now allowed to pick one's pocket with impunity!"

He was interrupted. Mrs. Gladstone made her appearance with "a letter for my master," which the butler had requested her to bring up, as it was superscribed "immediate," and Barnsley, tucking his stick under his arm with his usual dispatch-of-business gesture, tore it open and ran his eye over the contents. Apparently, their nature was important; for snatching off his hat, as if the incumbrance impeded his comprehension, and flinging it on a sofa, and himself on a chair, he addressed himself to the re-perusal of the letter.

Margaret, who was now alone with her father,

not wishing to disturb a study which seemed of so absorbing a nature, sat quietly down with her eyes fixed upon his face; and great was her amazement to perceive that at the close of his second reading, the open letter fell from her father's hands. Barnsley's teeth were set,—his hands clenched,—his face ghastly.

“ My dear dear father !” cried Margaret flying towards and hanging over him. “ What has happened ?—What *can* be the matter ?”—

Instead of answering, Barnsley gazed with glassy eyes into her face.

“ Speak, dear dear father !” she cried, seizing his hands in hers. “ Are you ill ?”

“ *Ruined !*”—faltered Barnsley, in a scarcely recognizable tone.—“ Read !”—

And, having raised the letter from the ground, Margaret read rapidly as follows :

“ Sir,

“ As solicitors for the Estate of Messrs. Closeman and Co., I am under the extremely painful necessity of informing you (for partner and self) that upon examination of the deeds

and deposits of the House, the terms of investment of £7,000 made by yourself on the 5th of Dé'cember ult., appear to constitute you a partner in the house. I have submitted the same to Messrs. Harpenden and Hill, whom I understand to be your legal advisers, and who admit the validity of the plea. I ran up to town yesterday for the purpose of taking counsel's opinion; which I herewith enclose you, as well as a copy of your agreement respecting six per cent interest as your share of the balance profits of the house.

I regret extremely, therefore, to be under the necessity of informing you that your name is included in the act of bankruptcy now drawing out; and the surrender of property, &c. &c. will take place on the 20th inst.

Waiting your immediate instructions,

I have the honour to be, dear Sir,

With much respect (for partner and self),

Your very obedient humble servant,

RICH. DOBBS, JUN.

Margaret scarcely dared turn her eyes towards her father.

“Not a guinea left in the world!—Ruin and starvation staring us in the face!”—burst at length from his livid lips.

“My dear father!” faltered Margaret,—“compose yourself!—things may turn out better than you expect.”

“*How?*—Show me *how?*—What do you know of business?—Why should you think yourself wiser than all the world—*Every* thing must go to the creditors.—I have nothing but the coat on my back I can call my own!”—

“You have your daughter!” cried she, involuntarily throwing herself on her knees, and flinging her arms around him,—“your daughter who will abide by you, — your daughter who will work for you — your daughter who will comfort you!”—

“You know not what you promise, child!” cried Barnsley, smiting his brows like a madman.—“You, who have wanted for nothing all your life, cannot guess what it is to want bread.

Beggared as we are, you will be avoided by your friends—shunned by the world.”

“ We shall be shunned by none whose regard is worth preserving,” answered Margaret, grieved at the inaccessibility of that stubborn heart.

“ You talk like a fool, Margaret !” cried Barnsley. “ You will be enlightened to your cost, when you find we have been only endured in society while raised by money to its level ! Henceforth we shall be cast forth like dogs !”

Margaret’s heart was sinking. She perceived the utter insufficiency of her affection to impart happiness to her father ; and of all the misfortunes that had befallen her within the last two days, *that* struck deepest !—

“ All is over for me, then !” she exclaimed, when Barnsley, having snatched his hat, rushed out of the room, resolved to hurry to Lincoln’s Inn, and ascertain from the best advice whether his case was hopeless. “ No one loves me,—my love is necessary to no one !—But two days ago, rejoicing in the wantonness of perfect happiness : and *now* sunk in poverty, disgrace, despair !” —

A flood of tears came to her relief; and, with tears, the human heart invariably softens. Another quarter of an hour brought before her a new view of her position. The filial devotion she had contemplated as a pleasure, became henceforward a duty. "He may repel my advances,—may refuse my offers," she murmured, while reflecting upon the harshness of her father. "But who else will bear with him!—No—no!—a time must come when I shall be necessary to him. Hitherto, my existence has been a dream;—my life is now beginning!—"

A low moan of sympathy startled her from her reverie; as poor Miss Winston, her countenance paralyzed with horror, approached with extended arms.

"My dear child!"—faltered the good woman, clasping her fervently to her breast.

"Thank Heaven!"—cried Margaret Barnsley, returning that kindly pressure,—"thank Heaven, in all my adversity, I have yet a friend!"

CHAPTER II.

Thy daughter, thy flesh and blood?—There is more difference between her flesh and thine, than between jet and ivory!

SHAKSPEARE.

It was late in the evening when Barnsley returned;—his lips parched, his eyes hollow, his voice hoarse,—as though within the last twelve hours, years had passed over his head. Anxious as he knew poor Margaret and the governess to be, touching the result of his errand, he would not, unquestioned, impart a single word of information; and, from the doggedness of his silence, the two sorrowing women naturally inferred the worst.

“ You take things coolly, Margaret !”—said he, at last, harshly misinterpreting the motives of her forbearance. “ It seems a matter of indifference to you, that we should for the future depend on public charity for our support.”

“ God forbid !”—involuntarily exclaimed the heart-broken girl. “ I feel the hopelessness of our situation too severely, father, to harass you with questions.”

“ Had you ever chosen to give a moment’s attention to business, you might know that our case *could* not be altogether hopeless.”

“ Indeed !”—cried Miss Barnsley, with an unbrightened countenance—but careful not to remind him that (only a few hours before) he had himself announced his ruin to be irretrievable.

“ Had you reflected, you might have remembered that Stokeshill being settled upon yourself, could never become available to my creditors. My personalty must go !—Instead of failing for one hundred and fifty thousand pounds, that plausible, grinning rascal at Westerton fails for twenty-five; *one hundred and*

twenty-five thousand pounds of your unfortunate father's property being made answerable for his villany."

"A hundred and twenty-five thousand pounds, —a fortune for a prince!" murmured Miss Winston.

"The hard earnings of your two grandfathers!"—persisted Barnsley, addressing his daughter, and careful not to specify how small a share was attributable to his own inheritance. "Oh Heavens!—if old Trannis could have lived to see this day;—could have dreamed of his fine property being dissipated by my folly, —my wretched, self-seeking folly!"

"*You*, at least, have only to tax yourself with a too generous confidence in the probity of others," said Margaret.

"No such thing!" cried Barnsley, excited out of his usual prudent reserve. "I have to tax myself with the cursed avarice which could not content itself with ordinary gains. I must needs grasp more than my due. I must needs insist on usurious interest; and on my own handwriting the law will condemn

me!—I—I—the most experienced man of business in Kent,—I, so scrupulous in transacting the affairs of others,—actually to put my name to a paper I was too indolent to read;—no! not indolent,—I remember well how the thing occurred!—I was so excited by having just heard of the establishment of those Wynnex hounds, that I should have signed the muster roll of a high-treason conspiracy, without heeding. Yes! I have to thank that fellow Alfred Drewe—I have to thank Lord Shoreham for all that has befallen me!”—

“ You were not aware, then, in giving your signature, that the paper involved you in partnership with the house ? ”—

“ Not in the slightest degree ;—not in the remotest. I thought it a formal receipt,—I read the amount,—I cast my eye on the figures of the rate of interest ;—but beyond, I knew and guessed nothing. How could I suppose that it was assigned me, on the plea of a pretended partnership, a share of the profits of the house ? ”

“ But Stokes Hill must be a valuable property.”

“ Valuable as a residence to a man of six or eight thousand a year. But what does it *return* ? ”

This was a question his companions were not exactly prepared to answer.

“ Surely,” said Margaret mildly, “ by reducing our establishment, and living with the strictest prudence, we might still —— ”

“ Pshaw ! ” cried her father.—“ Live without a guinea in my pocket at that expensive place ? See how old Woodgate got on, under similar circumstances. The sheriff’s officers never off his premises ! ”

Margaret sighed deeply.

“ Then I fear it must be let ? ”—said she looking interrogatingly at her father.

“ *Let !* ” ejaculated Barnsley, pausing in his hasty pacing of the study, in which they were sitting. “ Who is to hire it—completely dismantled, as it will be ? ”—

“ Dismantled ? ”

“ Why do you echo my words ? I know what I say,—I know what I mean !—The estate is secured to yourself by a settlement, of which Winchmore (your grandfather’s partner)

and my brother-in-law, James Heaphy, were trustees. But the furniture,—the fixtures,—the stock—are mere personalty—will be sold for the benefit of the creditors;—and what means have we of buying them in?”—

“Sold?”—ejaculated Margaret—neglecting, in the humiliation of that announcement, her father’s recent prohibition against such reiterations. “Poor Stokes Hill!”—

“Yes! you think more of losing a few favourite gew-gaws, than of your father’s ruin.”

Margaret had too much command of temper to vindicate herself from so unjust an aspersion.

“To-morrow, you may go down and take leave of them all!”—said Barnsley. “To-morrow, you may go down and afford all the worthies with whom we are so popular, fresh opportunity of insulting us. To-morrow, you may gratify yourself by listening to their exultation, that Closeman pays seventeen shillings in the pound, and that John Barnsley and his family are beggars!—Mr. Richard Dobbs sent them the news by express.—No doubt they set the

bells of St. John's ringing when it reached them!"—

"But you will not send me away from you at such a moment?"—faltered Margaret with quivering lips.

"Do you want to remain here, and add to my misery by exposing yourself to the blockheads who are coming to put seals on your father's property?—Do you wish to be asked for your trinkets,—your keys,—your purse?"

"I wish to do nothing, dear father, that may embarrass you," remonstrated Margaret, in tones that would have melted anything but the heart of Barnsley. "But Miss Winston will surely be of use to you in arranging your papers and making out inventories; and let me hope that the affection of your child——"

"No!" cried Barnsley, sternly interrupting her, "Miss Winston can be of no use. The proper officers must make out the lists; as to you, Margaret, you would be only in my way."

"Dear, dear papa!"

“ If you have so mighty an affection for me, why have you of late so thwarted my wishes ?”

“ *Have* I thwarted them ?—Only tell me *how*—that I may not repeat the offence !”

“ You fancy that the only son of the Duke of Grantville will prove such a meek-mouthed ass as his cousin, and come a second time with proposals for your hand ?—No, no—Margaret ! Your day is done. All I ask you is to reflect on the different position in which I should have stood on this fatal discovery, had *you* been provided for by a match with Lord Buckhurst. But as you have made your bed, so you must lie down.”

“ I desire nothing, father, but to share your fortunes, whatever they be,”—said Margaret in a tremulous voice.

“ Where is the kindness of *sharing* fortunes already too scanty ?”—cried the hard-hearted man of business. “ However, it is useless to recur to the past. When Lord Buckhurst reads my name in next Saturday’s Gazette, he may congratulate himself on having avoided a dis-

graceful connexion ; and, when Lady Walmer finds to-morrow, on calling here, that the fastidious Miss Barnsley is gone down into Kent in the stage, (yes ! Margaret start as much as you will,—our carriage is ours no longer,—and for the last shilling in our pockets we are accountable to the creditors)—she will wish the Grantvilles joy of their escape.”

“ I did not flinch at the notion of the stage. I am quite indifferent to my mode of conveyance ; and only grieve at the thought of leaving you to confront these vexations alone,” said Miss Barnsley, almost strengthened by his harshness.

“ I tell you your staying here would create a thousand inconveniences ; it is, in short, out of the question. *I must* be on the spot. At present, thanks to my parliamentary privileges, my position is less imminent than the villany of that fellow Closeman might have made it. Here is my purse, Margaret,” said he, going to his secretaire, and taking out a considerable roll of bank notes and a purse of sovereigns, “ or rather let me deposit it with

Miss Winston, who will be exempted from scrutiny. On her, you can rely for your immediate expenses."

"At what hour do you wish us to go, Sir?" said the governess, receiving the notes to which the urgency of circumstances imparted such value.

"At what hour do *I* wish? You forget Ma'am how little authority my inclinations can just now exercise. Stage coaches have their own hours; while *I*—" he paused. Even the bitterness of Barnsley's spirit, at that moment, recoiled from proclaiming the insignificance to which he found himself reduced.

"But will it not look strange to the servants, Sir," said Miss Winston, profiting by this momentary pause, "and serve to spread prematurely, the news of what has occurred, if Miss Barnsley is thus immediately placed in so public and unusual a situation?"

"Spread the news prematurely?"—cried Barnsley. "Look strange to the servants? What *can* you mean, Ma'am, by raising such frivolous objections!—Do you think we

are in a situation to care for the remarks of servants?—I will answer for it, that before noon to-morrow, not one of them but will have asked for his wages and applied to be off!—The whole affair will be in the Westerton paper.—Perhaps, by this very time, they know all!”

“ Lawton is a respectable man, and much attached to the family,” said Miss Winston, suspecting, and with reason, that she was classed by her patron only among the upper servants.

“ Yes, to the family of Mr. Barnsley of Stokeshill Place. It remains to be proved what he will be to the family of John Barnsley the bankrupt.”

“ If we were to take him with us to-morrow for protection?”—Miss Winston began.

“ No!—he must remain here to give up his plate. Take John with you, if you fancy you can’t stir without a servant.”

“ Sir!—at Miss Barnsley’s age—”

“ Ah! Miss Barnsley must learn now to give up all ideas of that kind!—However,

John is not wanted here. He is a Stokes Hill man, and can readily be discharged in the country. I shall give him orders to attend you."

"At what hour, Sir?"

"The early coach starts at nine, from the other side of Westminster Bridge. I suppose, under all the circumstances, you will be glad to get out of London before people are about."

"Just as you please, Sir; at nine, we will be ready."

"I shall see you, papa before we set off?"—said Margaret, whose articulation was impeded by the state of nervous trepidation to which such a succession of shocks had reduced her tender frame.

"No! I shall wish you good bye *now*, Margaret.—I shall be off at daybreak to Totteridge.—Fagg is down at his place at Totteridge, for his children's Midsummer holidays; and, at present, I have only been able to see his young partner, who knows no more of business than a post.—I must get down

to Fagg,—I must talk with Fagg. Fagg is the only man who has the least insight into my affairs.—I must be up at six—'tis nearly twelve.”

“ We had better retire, then ? ”—said Miss Winston, taking the hint.

“ Yes, yes—take her to bed—she will be better in bed ! Good night, Margaret, you shall hear from me, my dear, in the course of a day or two. You will do no good by fretting. I recommend—ha !—Miss Winston ! lend me your arm !—Support her while I ring for water !—She is gone—she has fainted ! ”

CHAPTER III.

I have

That honourable grief lodged here, which burns
Worse than tears drown!—Nay, do not weep good fools!
There is no cause!—When you shall know your mistress
Hath desired a prison, then abound in weeping.

SHAKSPEARE.

BROKEN as she was in mind and body, Margaret obeyed her father's commands, and departed on the morrow.

“ You are not able to go, my dear,—you will be taken ill on the road,”—said Miss Winston.

“ No !” replied the unhappy girl, “ I have too much courage to fall sick at such a mo-

ment. We should harass my father by remaining here. Let us go."—And they went.

Barnsley's prognostications were negatived, by the deference testified towards Margaret, by every member of the household, the moment the secret of her father's difficulties transpired.

"My dear young lady," said Gladstone, with tears streaming down her cheeks, "command my services and all our services in the way you like best. Heaven knows you have been an angel among us; and all we wish is, to show our respect and gratitude. If I am not in the way, indulge me by letting me go down and take care of you at Stokeshill; if I am an incumbrance, discharge me without ceremony, and promise to take me back should better times admit!"

"Speak to her," said Margaret to Miss Winston, in a scarcely audible voice. "I am too much oppressed to tell them what I feel." And, having pressed poor Gladstone's hand, she quitted the room to enable the governess to express Mr. Barnsley's desire

that all the servants, not absolutely necessary, should quit his house. Their claims would be considered hereafter.

On taking her departure from the home in which, two days before, she had reigned supreme, and happy as loveliness, prosperity, and the supposition of being beloved could make her, Margaret took with her only the friend, to whom, from the first moment of her existence, she had been a sole object of affection. But she noted not this humiliation. To have travelled in a cart or waggon, had been a matter of equal indifference. Her father was sending her from him. She was going from a home no longer theirs, to one which would soon be theirs no longer. She was going from the city, which was about to witness the nuptials of Woodgate and Helen, to a town where her father had already drunk deep of the cup of bitterness, and was about to be trailed ignominiously in the dust!

Throughout the six hours of their journey, though Lawton's almost paternal care had provided that his young lady should be alone,

the governess preserved a considerate silence ; and, on arriving at the Angel at Westerton, the hostess, usually all garrulity, took instant warning from the miserable aspect of Miss Barnsley (whose arrival in such a mode would otherwise have excited a torrent of ejaculations), to conduct Margaret to the most secluded chamber, to bring refreshments un-ordered, and un-ordered convey a private entreaty, in her own name to the Vicarage, for Mrs. Holdfast's carriage for her use : for those whom we call the vulgar, sometimes display a delicacy that might put Almacks and its altitudes to shame.

It was lucky that Miss Winston was on the spot for acknowledgments. Margaret was in no state to notice the kindness heaped upon her. Arrived at Stokes Hill,—installed in her chamber,—(her chamber !)—she suffered them to place her in bed ; and, as she closed her eyes, would have ventured a prayer to Heaven that they might evermore remain un-opened, had she not known that she was the only earthly solace of the poor governess,

and hoped to become the only earthly solace of her father!—Margaret was not in a position to admit of egotism;—others were depending upon her for consolation.—

That evening, that night, and some part of the following day, she remained absorbed in a species of feverish insensibility from which Miss Winston felt that it would be cruel to rouse her. Nature by an effort of her own, at length threw off this lethargy; and the moment Margaret became thoroughly conscious of her situation, her fortitude effected the rest. She rose, resolved upon activity. But to what purpose?—At present, she knew not in what mode her services might be available. She was ignorant in every particular how to proceed; and, as her father had expressly said, “you shall hear from me in a few days,” she dared not write to ask instructions. Sheriffs’ officers, it appeared, were in the house, to prevent any removal of property. But they were out of sight; they gave no offence; they even caused it to be expressed to Miss Barnsley, that they were there merely

for form's sake, and trusted to prove no annoyance to the family.

It was midsummer. All was beauty and luxuriance in the park and gardens. Great exertions had been made by the gardeners, in their young lady's flower garden and conservatory, to greet her return from town; and Nature, whose exertions are evermore accomplishing (and for such ingrates), had wrought her own silent wonders. After the dingy squares and smoke dried parks of London, the beeches and chestnuts of Stokeshill seemed endowed with almost supernatural intensity of verdure. The untrimmed masses of trees, with whose drooping branches the luxuriant grass seemed rising to intermingle, were alive with birds. The grasshopper and cricket were singing below, the thrush and nightingale above. The air was loaded with fragrance,—the thickets were bright with roses,—the blue sky over all, was vivid with its purest transparence. Never had the country appeared in greater perfection. Not so much as a gravelly bank overhung with

heath, thyme, and furze-blossoms, but had a beauty and a brilliancy of its own.

When, in the calm of the second evening, Margaret stole out upon the lawn, unalarmed by the apprehension of meeting or being met, these summer glories burst upon her so overpoweringly, that tears gushed from her eyes. Poor Stokeshill!—how could it look so lovely and breathe so deliciously, when its patrons were condemned to so much suffering! How trimly—how ornate,—how cared for,—its beautiful shrubberies and parterres,—now sentenced to furnish the daily bread of those to whom they had hitherto ministered only delight?—How little did all she looked upon take the colour of the fate to which it was falling!—

It was one of those soft, still, transparent, summer evenings, when the lingering twilight loses itself imperceptibly in moonlight. There was no moment of darkness:—ere the last golden reflection of the setting sun vanished away, the full moon was bringing every tree and flower into notice, with tints more

subdued, but a distinctness peculiar to the hour. Margaret's favourite rose-trees, which with her own hands she had transplanted the preceding autumn near a favourite seat, seemed to look out at her through their blossoms, as if claiming her admiration of their beauty, and wondering why she took so little heed. Alas! she *did* take heed!—She remembered with an acuteness scarcely supportable, how large a portion that spot and its adornments had maintained in her dreams of approaching happiness;—how she had wished it might be beautiful in order that even *he* might admit she had added a charm to Stokeshill!—And now it was before her;—all light,—all loveliness,—all fragrance, ~ all bloom!—and she was alone there, alone in the body, as in the spirit;—“alone beneath the old oak tree,”—unheeded by a single human being!—Of the two companions, with whom she had trusted to revisit the place, her father was away, struggling with his troubles and insensible to her's; and Woodgate away, bewildered by his joys and hopes, and scarcely conscious of her existence.

She had walked for nearly an hour, slowly pacing the most secluded parts of the shrubberies, before she was aware that Miss Winston was following her, watching every faltering step, trembling at every agitated gesture. At length, as she paused in a thicket of acacia trees, whose white blossoms were shedding like snow upon the ground without a breath of air to shake them from the bough, on the verge of the American garden which, even in the moonlight, was bright with the thousand hues of its rhododendrons, azaleas, and kalmias,—the good woman ventured to overtake her.

“ We saw nothing in London so beautiful as this,” said Margaret, pointing to the gorgeous sheeting of bloom,—and taking, unasked, the arm of her friend. “ I little thought I should ever triumph in the beauty of this place from the feelings which it now inspires !”

“ I never saw Stokes Hill in higher perfection,” responded Miss Winston, not wishing to press her by interrogation.

“ Never !—If it should but continue to look as it does, my father will soon obtain a

tenant. Think of having to desire increase of beauty in a beloved object, only to render it attractive to a rival!"

"Since it appears impossible for Mr. Barnsley to remain here, it is desirable to have the place well let," observed the matter-of-fact governess. "But, as your father remarked the other night, Stokeshill is not an advantageous property for the common run of tenants."

"The farm will of course be let separately. For the farm, he is sure of a tenant; and thus, however great our mortifications, my father can only be reduced to comparative poverty. He will still, I should think, retain about a thousand a-year. How many people would consider themselves rich with a thousand a-year!"

Poor Miss Winston sighed a mournful response.

"It would be sinful, therefore, to despond over the pecuniary part of our distresses. Rather let me be grateful to Heaven for preserving my poor father from ruin, by means of this lucky settlement."

“ If you could but bring poor Mr. Barnsley to the same way of thinking !”

“ In time !—We cannot expect him to reconcile himself at once to the loss of so fine a fortune, and through the roguery of one he trusted as a friend. But my father has so much activity of mind, that when his energies once come into play, I am not afraid. The great object with us both must be to leave Kent.”

“ Ah ! Margaret !”—

“ No !—I am not thinking of Hawkhurst—I am thinking of my father. He will have to create a new standard of family importance. It never can be done in his former neighborhood.”

“ His first task, I admit, ought to be to forget Stokes Hill. But yours, my dear—whose life has been spent here—who have known nothing else—”

“ *My* object is my father. If my good offices tend to alleviate his misfortunes, my existence will not be altogether useless.”

Miss Winston affectionately pressed her arm. "Good will come out of evil, then, for both of us!" said she, striving to speak cheerfully. *You* will find your account in Mr. Closeman's bankruptcy, as well as myself!"

"Do *you*, then, benefit by it?"—exclaimed Margaret, greatly surprised. "I little imagined there could be a bright side to such a prospect!"

"Only so far, my dear, that you will scarcely find courage to turn me out of doors, now I have no longer a shilling in the world," resumed the poor woman, with a melancholy smile. "Had *you* continued rich, and I competent, I must have lost you, Margaret! At your marriage, if not sooner, I must have been thrown aside, like a worn-out garment."

"No, no!"—cried Margaret Barnsley, deep emotion thrilling in her bosom.

"My child, you would have had no voice in the business. Your father, or your husband, could not be expected to bear the company of a tiresome old governess,—a sort of *memento mori*

in the family. But charity will now secure me a corner of the house, where I shall see you every day, and be happy."

"But my father always assured me, he had made you independent," said Margaret, in a broken voice.

"My annuity will fall to Mr. Barnsley's creditors; and my small savings (which by his advice I invested in Closeman's bank) are of course gone with the rest!"

"And you are absolutely destitute!" sobbed Margaret, clasping her hands. "You have given us your whole life,—and not so much as bread for your old age in return!—Have I been indeed so selfish as to overlook this, in the thought of my own miseries!—I, who am young—who can work,—who can *want*—"

"No, Margery, you can do neither; nor will circumstances, I trust, render it necessary. *Your* duty will be to bear with a hasty temper, made irritable by adversity,—and to forbear from clinging to recollections of the past."

"And yours! — *You* who have sacrificed

every thing!—who have passed through life without enjoyment—”

“Are you so ungrateful as to say so,—to think so?—My dear child, I have been only too uniformly happy; nay, I shall be so still, if you promise me a nook of house-room, where I may assist your labours and lighten your duties.”

“What right have I to repine!”—was Miss Barnsley’s reflexion at the close of this affecting conversation. “What are my losses to her’s? and how trivial is *my* resignation compared with that of this best of creatures!”—

The following day, however, brought an accession of mortification. Letters poured in upon Miss Barnsley, as they do upon all those who are fated to be extraordinarily glad or extraordinarily sorry, and to whom they consequently prove a peculiar inconvenience. Not an iota of the impertinence of condolence was spared to the bankrupt’s daughter!—Lady Withamstead wrote a long-winded protestation that “she could venture to assert that circumstances produced no alteration in *her* feelings

towards her friends ; that she trusted her old neighbours would not imagine any thing which had occurred would render them less welcome guests at Withamstead Hall ; that she was happy to say “ Lord W.” would lose only £437 by the bankruptcy of Closeman, Barnsley and Co. ; and that as soon as the restoration of domestic tranquillity to the Hall, after the nuptials of her beloved son George with Lady Florinda O’Brallaghan, and her beloved daughter Felicia with the Rev. Dr. Wintingham would permit, Mr. Barnsley and her young friend should come and pay them a quiet visit with no one but their family party.” Margaret’s “ sincere friend and well-wisher” ended by acquainting her, as a bit of county news, that their neighbour Miss Sullivan, was going to bestow herself and her fifty thousand pounds on Sir Henry Woodgate,—and a very pretty couple they were like to make !”

Still more trying than this, were the civilities of Lady Walmer. “ Had I been aware, my dear Miss Barnsley, that your father was in business,” wrote the Countess, “ I should perhaps have more strenuously pressed upon your ac-

ceptance the eligible settlement in life which you so inopportunately rejected while under my protection, I cannot forgive you for having so trifled with your prospects. However, perhaps every thing is for the best. The Duke and Duchess of Grantville are extremely satisfied with the sudden transfer of their son's affections to Lord Tynemouth's youngest daughter; nor do I fancy he has anything to fear from the cruelty of Jessie Devereux. She is a very sweet girl, and not indisposed to become a Marchioness. His marriage will very likely be celebrated at the same time with that of his cousin Miss Sullivan with Sir Henry Woodgate, at the announcement of which, the family seem highly delighted. Pray, my dear Miss B.—let me know at your leisure, how you have got through your embarrassments. Many of my friends inquire concerning you; and I have at present no satisfactory answer to give.

“ *Du reste*, should you find the change in your circumstances render it necessary for you to do something for yourself, let

me be the first to hear of it; as I think I might have opportunities of placing you to your satisfaction. My nephew Lord de Hartenfeld is likely to go to Madras, and his young wife will want a companion; and my cousin Lady Mull (who resides at her husband's castle in the Isle of Sky,) is in want, at this very time, of a nursery governess. Things, however, may turn out better than you expect. Your friend Miss Winston, having been so many years in your family, has probably taken care of herself: but if not, and she is likely to be in distress, remember I am a patroness of the Governess's Friend Society. Your old acquaintances the Devereux are just come in, and beg to unite with me in kind remembrances."

Bad as this was, an accompanying letter from her father was infinitely worse. After elaborate instructions upon various matters of business, and apprizing her that as soon as his docket was struck, every thing at Stokeshill was to be submitted to sale by public auction, he continued—"With respect to Miss Winston, her own sense will point out that in the

reduced state of my circumstances, it is impossible for me to maintain a useless old woman in my establishment. The sooner she provides for herself the better. You must tell her this,—of course, with due regard to her feelings.”

Tell her to provide for herself!—Dismiss her like a menial!—Bid her go forth into the world without a roof to shelter her or a morsel to sustain her. The mother of her childhood,—the friend of her maturity!

To offer a statement of the state of destitution to which poor Miss Winston was reduced, did not occur to Margaret as likely to mollify the feelings of her father. She therefore wrote in reply:—“With respect to Miss Winston, remember that, at present, it would be impossible for me to remain here without her protection. A few weeks, a few months, and we shall better understand our own position. Lady Walmer has promised my poor friend her patronage, and there is no reason to apprehend that she will become a burthen upon any one.”

CHAPTER IV.

See here these cravers that do prize their hours
At a cracked drachm.—Cushions, leaden spoons,
Irons of a doit, doublets that hangmen would
Bury with those that wore them,—these base slaves
Pack up!

SHAKSPEARE.

A FEW more weeks of that bright and balmy season ; and every day became marked by some developed charm in Stokeshill, and some mortifying incident in the progress of Barnsley's affairs. Parliament was up. Sometimes he was in town with his solicitors ;—sometimes at the Place, with the Sheriff's officers. Advertisements of the sale of his effects appeared in all the county,—all the London newspapers. Cata-

logues were made out;—every thing was dislodged from its position and heaped in most admired disorder, according to the taste and fancy of the deputies of the auctioneer; while one of George Robins's Ciceronian manifestoes acquainted England in general, and Kent in particular, that

BY ORDER OF THE ASSIGNEES,

“ON TUESDAY, the 24th of AUGUST, and the following days, he would submit to the public, the genuine property of John Barnsley, Esq. M.P.

A SERVICE OF SOLID SILVER,

comprehending two soup tureens, four hash-dishes with heaters, eight oval ditto in sizes, a haunch dish, two vegetable ditto, with covers, and

FOUR PAIR OF SAUCE BOATS

with other requisites for a family of the first description

OF THE KING'S FIDDLE PATTERN.

Also, a handsome suite of drawing-room furniture, of rich apple-green damask. Brussels carpets, rosewood tables, consoles, &c. &c.

&c.

&c.

&c.

Not an article, from a birch-broom to a dairy dish, was omitted in the frivolous and vexatious catalogue, printed by the identical Westerton press which had perpetuated the electioneering courtesies of Barnsley! A sale ticket was on Margaret's favourite work table,—another on her piano-forte. When all the preparations were complete, she walked calmly through the rooms to contemplate the work of humiliation, the throbbings of her proud heart reminding her that such a lesson might still be useful!

By way of sparing her the spectacle, however, Barnsley had, from the first, been anxious that she should seize the opportunity for her visit to Withamstead. But, for such a trial, at such a moment, Margaret felt her courage insufficient; and as Nurse Molyneux's cottage, a

decent farm-house adjoining the rectory of Stokeshill, and previously to its erection the domicile of the incumbent, had three spare rooms, occasionally let to summer tenants, it was settled that Miss Winston and her charge should become, for a month or two, the inmates of the gratified old woman. Barnsley seemed to take delight in exposing himself to irritation by contact with the minions of the law; but Margaret was glad to shrink into her obscure retreat,—secure, if not from trouble, from observation.

Not a house in the village but would have gladly opened to receive her! The poor are nice observers; and those of Stokeshill discriminated between the daughter and the father. Had Margaret been the sufferer by Closeman's bankruptcy, they would have repressed their exultation at discovering that, instead of losing nineteen shillings in the pound, they would not lose nineteen pence; but as it was Barnsley's loss which was their gain, it was impossible to restrain their two-fold joy. Barnsley to be humiliated!—the

workhouse-grinder to come to want!—The depresser of wages, the raiser of tithes, to be stripped of his spoils. The weigher out of the widow's bread to have his own apportioned; the circumscriber of the orphan's raiment to go thread-bare!—Glorious,—glorious retribution!—

The moral of the case thus settled, its incidents were scarcely less acceptable at Stokes-hill; for there was to be a sale at the Place!—Of all the crises of country life, a sale is the most exciting. By a sale, any one and every one may become a gainer; and a whole neighbourhood is collected in a second, by the warning of a carpet hanging out of a window. Cinnamon Lodge had done nothing for them in this particular;—Cinnamon Lodge, with its spruce lawn and birchbroom shrubberies, had been hired by Closeman of the executor of a deceased Mr. Pinchplumb, grocer in the High Street of Westerton. But Stokes-hill Place, with its service of plate and rosewood consoles, its four-post bedsteads and cut steel fenders, its collection of exotics and all the rest

of its appurtenances, promised a charming enlivenment to the dulness of the autumn. The whole hundred participated in the emotion of the village. Mrs. Timmins, of Westerton Market Place, had an eye to the "library furnitur'." Mrs. Holdfast had obtained a promise from the vicar to bid for "the charott," Mrs. Dobbs had fixed on the "rosood consols:" Mrs. Squills wanted "the *Dirby* breakfast chayney." There was not an article under Barnsley's roof, but some friendly neighbour had pre-appropriated. As the day approached, indeed, rumours gained ground that the sale would be postponed, or altogether evaded. Some insisted, with a magnanimous disdain of the compatibilities of time and place for which rumourers are remarkable, that Colonel Clement Barnsley, on hearing, at Calcutta, of his brother's bankruptcy, had sent him a prodigious fortune per return of fleet; and that as soon as the indigo and averdivats could be sold, Closeman and Co. were to pay twenty-one shillings in the pound. Others, recalling the newspaper paragraphs of the spring, pro-

tested that the Duke of Grantville had bought in the four pair of sauce tureens etc. of Stokes-hill Place, to make a present to the Marchioness of Buckhurst on her nuptials; and divers other hypotheses, equally deserving of credit were successively put forth by the ten thousand tongues of gossip. Still, the tickets remained affixed upon both four post bedsteads and fenders; and Parson Drewe not only continued to bet ten to one that George Robins and the 24th of August would arrive at Stokes-hill Place together, but assiduously to disparage in the county of Kent, the favourite mare of the unfortunate man of business, which he was fully determined to transfer to the hunting stables of Wynnex Vicarage!—

On the 23rd, the Place was opened to public view; and Margaret and Miss Winston were sufficiently molested by clouds of dust through the latticed window of Mrs. Molyneux's cottage, and heard sufficient rattling of carts and carriages towards the Lodge, to make them rejoice that Barnsley was safe in London. Scarcely one of their neighbours

was forbearing on the occasion. With admirable bad taste, Alfred Drewe drove over Lord Shoreham's showy set of greys; and all Westerton, mounted or dismounted, came pouring its way towards the gates. Lady Henry Marston travelled twelve miles, in hopes of finding something to amuse her fashionable correspondents at the expense of the discomfited beauty of the season, who had rejected her for Lady Walmer; while stupid George was driven over by Lady Florinda Holloway, in a new phaeton, on which were emblazoned, with all the learning of Long Acre, the united arms of the houses of Holloway and O' Bralaghan.

It was a heavy day for Margaret. Where is the head or heart of eighteen years' inexperience, to which religion or philosophy ever imparted courage to meet such a reverse with equanimity?—So near the scene of action, too, that to bend her thoughts to any other subject was impossible!—There was more than misfortune in the dethronement her father

was undergoing. There was injury,—there was wrong. It was no fault of his, which thus wrested from him his most intimate possessions ;—the bed in which, for so many years, he had laid down to rest,—the plate on which he had fed,—the desk at which he had laboured for the benefit of mankind. What had he done to merit such spoliation?—How had his useful and inoffensive existence called down such heavy chastisement?—It was lucky that these reflections passed silently through the mind of Margaret; for her venerable friend might perhaps have breathed an involuntary check to her adjurations.

“ Will you let me read to you?” said poor Margaret, when at length so far able to subdue her thronging cares, as to remember that forced occupation is sometimes a relief. And, on obtaining Miss Winston’s assent, who was sitting patiently at work as far as possible out of sight of the window, she drew a chair close to her friend, and with one hand on her knee, read aloud a few pages of Cowper’s *Task*, in a voice

which might have reached the heart of the coldest auditor, aware of the injuries at that moment weighing down her young head.

The following day, these detailed vexations were repeated ; but in the evening, when the stir and tumult of the exhibition was in suspense, Miss Winston invited her drooping charge to refresh herself with a little air in the Vicarage garden. Old Mr. Harden was just then absent at another living possessing claims upon his pastorate doubling the amount of those of Stokeshill, whose small tithes (to the value of a hundred and fifty pounds a year,) served little more than to remunerate the curate, who buried and christened, and preached Sherlock's sermons in his name ; and the garden had been placed at the disposal of Mrs. Molyneux's inmates. But Margaret, though secure from observation among its sober arbours of clipt yew, had not courage to accompany her friend ; and the moment Nurse Molyneux discovered that " the poor thing was left quite lonesome " she betook herself to the sitting room to dis-

appoint her anticipations of the relief of a single solitary hour.

“ Why Miss Margaret, my dear !—all alone by owl-light, as the saying is ? ”—cried the loquacious old woman, bringing in a basket of fruit as a plea for her intrusion.

“ I persuaded Miss Winston to take her evening walk. I fancied being alone might relieve my head-ache.”

“ Head-ache, poor soul !—No wonder you’ve a head-ache,—sitting cooped up all day, in this hot room, when all the world’s about and stirring.—Wouldn’t you like a little mint-tea, my dear ?—Mint tea’s a fine thing for a head-ache.”

“ I like nothing but quiet ! ” said Margaret, in despair.

“ Ah ! just like all young people ! ”—cried Mrs. Molyneux, officiously dusting the table, preparatory to setting out her apricots and green-gages to the best advantage. “ Young people loves to make the most of their troubles. Bless their poor hearts !—as if they wouldn’t

see enough on 'em,—and to spare ; afore they die.”—

“ *I* shall probably see enough of them !” burst involuntarily from the lips of Margaret.

“ Not you, my dear !—When things comes to the worst, as the saying is, 'tis a sign they'll mend. Take my word for it, Miss, your papa will find a silver spoon in his mouth afore he's 'ware on it.”

“ You have heard, I suppose, the foolish report of my uncle Clement's having made my father his heir ?”—

“ Not I, my dear. I was a looking nearer home. What should you say now to a capital tenant for Stokesel Place ?”

“ A tenant already for Stokeseshill ?—I should say that we were sadly lucky !” —said Margaret, with a melancholy smile. “ But who has offered ?” —

“ No one at present, as I'm 'ware on ; but I'll just give you an idea of the business, from first to last. You see, my dear, I never intended, (as I was a telling you o' Thursday),

to set foot in the sale. As an old servant of the house, I knew as my feelings would be hurt. But Mrs. Woods, she stepped in yesterday morning, and Mrs. Abdy she took her tea with me last night; and neither of 'em as would hear of my not getting some sort of inkling how things was going on. Not a single soul o' the genteeler folks of Westerton but was present yesterday, Miss, at the first bid; and by the same token, what should it be but a servant's hall cruet-stand, as was knocked down for two and twenty shilling, to Mrs. Trollope 'o Shoe Lane!—So afore tea was over last night, I half agreed to keep Neighbour Abdy company this morning. And so, says she to me, as I was a sugaring her tea, says she 'Mrs. Molyneux, what 'ud you say if I was to live to see Sir Henry Woodgate the bridegroom, settled at Stokesel Place?'

Margaret started.

“ So in course I answered, my dear, that it 'ud be a sorry day for me to see my young lady turned out o' house and home. But if so be as the thing was to hap, better make way

for a Woodgate than for e'er another. So says Mrs. Abdy says she,—‘ Well!—stranger things have come to pass. For,’ says she, ‘ this morning, soon as ever the lodge gates was open at the Place, comes a young gentleman a horseback, who seemed anxious like not to break in on none o’ the family, and not to be in nobody’s way; but just went over the house and gardens without so much as a question asked; and would hardly stay to look at the forcing-houses, as Bernard Smith the gardener was wanting to show him.’—Well, my dear, scarcely had he mounted his horse and rode into Westerton, afore, (as Mrs. Abdy was a telling me), the people from the lodge was up at the Place with news, as the strange gentleman was neither more nor less than our new member!’—

“ Sir Henry Woodgate?”—

“ Ay, Sir Henry himself, as sure as a gun! And when Bernard heard his name, why then, in course, he recollected having seen him on the hustings; only while they was a-talking together, Bernard remembered his person, but

couldn't put a name on't. Howsever, this morning, as I was a-saying just now, they persisted as I should look at the sale, if it was only to hear the fine dicshonary words as the Lon'on hogshineer makes use on to call a broom or a pair o' bellows by names as they's not used to go by. So (not to be unneighbourly, as they'd set their mind on my company,) I goes;—and a very fine sight it wur, to see all the gentry a walking in the pleasure grounds and a crowding to look at the furnitur. So as I was there, I thought I'd just set it out, and see how things was going; and if you'll believe me, Miss, not an article as is any ways fitted to the house, such as carpets, curtains and the like, but was bought in by young Mrs. Richard Dobbs."

"Do you think the Dobbsses are inclined to hire Stokeshill?"—demanded Margaret, eagerly seizing the idea.

"No, my dear. I war standing as nigh to her chair as I be to yourn; and overheard her a telling old Mrs. Holdfast, as her husband had promised Sir Henry Woodgate to

secure the fixtures ; but Mr. Richard had been called away to town, and so she was acting in his room."

" Perhaps you misunderstood her ? — Perhaps — "

" No, my dear.—Though getting in years, I'm not hard o' hearing. Besides, there was soon no other talk in the house but that Sir Henry Woodgate had made an offer for the property."

" An offer to *purchase* Stokeshill ! "

" It ben't to be sold ; — he's going to take it on lease, in order to be near his constituents (as lawyer Dobbs calls the borough o' Westerton), and to please my Lady Woodgate as is to be,—who, they say, is main fond o' the neighbourhood. I'll just leave you to guess, Miss Margery, if the Stokeshill folks is pleased ! " —

" And you really believe this report to be true ? " —

" As gospel, my dear. You see, Bernard was half out of his wits for joy. For Bernard's uncle, old James Smith, he's been head gar-

dener at Hawkhurst these fifteen year, or thereabout; and Bernard feels as good as sure of keeping his place with the new family; and 'tis a great comfort to the poor fellow, what was so fond of you, Miss Barnsley, to think he was like to have another young missus o' your own kind; cos he tells me as Miss Helen, (though not as fond o' flowers as *you*) is quite the lady."

Margaret vainly tried to refrain from a heavy sigh.

"And then, (as I was a saying to neighbour Woods, who could'nt contain herself at the thought o' having her own young gentleman settled at his own estate) says I, it 'll be so pleasant for poor Miss Margaret to come a visiting to her friend Miss Sullivan as is, Lady Woodgate as is to be, and feel all as one as if she war at home again. And indeed, my dear, if things *was* to turn out so, why, to be sure, this last stroke is the luckiest thing in the var-sal world."

Margaret could not say "amen!"—She felt that she ought to rejoice in a circumstance

tending to enhance the value of her father's small remaining property: but to exult in that which was to bring Woodgate, as master, to that very Stokeshill which it had been the fond dream of her soul to bestow upon him, was impossible.—It was from Helen Sullivan, he was now about to receive it!—Helen's fortune had doubtless enabled him to aspire to the purchase; and would afford the means of figuring there with becoming splendour. Margaret was not only to see the man she loved, happy in the affections of another; but they were to enjoy together the very Eden she had created, while her father and herself were cast out to poverty!—

Her dearest hope, too, since the disasters of her family, had been to avoid all contact with Helen or her lover, till the lapse of years should have obliterated the past. And now, it seemed scarcely possible that the negotiations about to take place could be concluded without a personal interview. The single occasion on which Woodgate and herself had formerly met at Stokeshill, had been painful enough. But to receive him there *now*—in her

humiliation,—in her grief—in her despair,—would be too bitter a trial. Even her usual reflexion—“if for my father’s advantage, so let it be!” failed her on the present occasion.

“I’m sure, my dear Miss,” pursued Mrs. Molyneux, who had been maundering on, uninterrupted, during Miss Barnsley’s reverie,—“it will be a great comfort to think that all your pets and gimcumcracks at Stokesel will go to one as has your particular good will, such as Squire Sullivan’s daughter. I heard Mrs. Richard Dobbs a-saying to Mr. Squills, as he was a putting her into her chay, that they’d got the order to bid for every thing as war your’n, —the pianny and pikturs, and saddle horse, and—”

“Khaled, too?—every thing—*every thing?*”—exclaimed Margaret; and she was on the point of giving herself up to a violent burst of emotion, when Miss Winston, returning at that moment from her walk, fortunately put an end to a conversation so fraught with painful disclosures, and restored poor Margaret to her self-command.

CHAPTER V.

The virtue of prosperity is temperance ; the virtue of adversity is fortitude.

BACON.

THE day succeeding the last of the sale brought a letter from Barnsley, desiring his daughter to remain at the cottage till further orders ; and the week of suspense that followed was indeed a heavy burthen. Mrs. Molyneux brought daily rumours from the village that, “ for sartain sure the Place was let to Sir Henry Woodgate ;” and Miss Winston offered twenty times a day to Margaret the same sage commentary that “ time would show.”

At length, when ten weary days had elapsed, as Margaret was retiring late one night to her humble bed, she was startled by an unusual bustle ; and her father, shabby, haggard, and irritable, made his appearance. He would not allow Miss Winston to be called up. He chose to have tea, and a *tête-à-tête* with his daughter.

“ I was afraid you were never coming down again,” said Margaret, noticing with tearful eyes the change that care had already effected in her father’s manly appearance.

“ You thought, perhaps, I was dawdling away my time in town ?”

“ I concluded you were detained by business.”

“ People who have nothing to do, and are in the habit of enjoying themselves in ease and comfort, are sure to fancy that others have their time at their own disposal !”

Margaret looked down. She felt that a single glance round the homely room in which she was accused of enjoying herself in comfort, might convey too forcible an appeal against the injustice of her father.

“ But whatever you may have concluded,” he resumed, “ I *have* managed to get through a considerable deal of business. I have all but settled matters with Sir Henry Woodgate.”

“ The report is true, then, that he has hired Stokeshill ?”

“ *Hired* Stokeshill ?—Who raised such a report ?—From whom did you hear it ?”

“ It is generally said in the village.”

“ Have you amused yourself, then, Margaret, during my absence, by gossiping with the blackguards of Stokeshill village ?”

“ I heard only through Mrs. Molyneux that the people at home believed Stokeshill to be let to Sir Henry Woodgate.”

“ The people at *home* !” —éjaculated poor Barnsley, with bitterness.

“ But I own, I hoped they were mistaken.”

“ Why should you *hope* any such thing ?” —

“ I imagined that, under all the circumstances, he was one of the last persons you would desire to have for a tenant.”

“ You imagined nonsense !—What can I care who gets Stokeshill, or any thing else be-

longing to me?—The Grand Signior might have it now for aught I care!—But Sir Henry is not to be my tenant. I have made an arrangement with the trustees, and Woodgate has *bought* the Place.”

“Bought the Place!” said Margaret, calmly, as though the announcement conveyed no definite idea to her mind.

“He and his wife will be settled here before Christmas. Why, what are you whimpering at, Margaret?—You have known from the first that Stokeshill was to go. You cannot but perceive, that it is impossible for the property, which is to furnish our sole means of subsistence, to lie like a lump of lead upon our hands? As to the mortification of seeing it pass back again into the enjoyment of the Woodgates, whose name, Heaven knows! has embittered the possession ever since it has been in mine, I have my compensation in the knowledge that the pride of the family has put several thousand pounds in my pocket. I gave them five and thirty thousand. I estimate my improvements and acquisitions at five; and I have got forty-

three!—I asked forty-five; but I found I should lose rather than gain by holding out. A young man on the eve of marriage looks less closely to business than a man with the care of a family on his shoulders. Next year he might have drawn back. In short, we have struck hands on the bargain. The deeds of conveyance are making out, and I shall soon be without a stick or stone I can call my own, and the world before me to begin anew.”

“Forty-three thousand pounds!”—murmured Margaret, whose mind was engrossed by her Sullivan and Woodgate view of the purchase; and who was far from intending to convey a reproof to her father’s lamentations.

“Yes! I understand your taunt!—You mean, that a provision of three and forty thousand pounds, still raises me far above my original condition!—”

“Indeed, my dearest father, I—”

“But what is such a pittance, I should like to know,” interrupted Barnsley, “when tied up with settlements and trusts?—Your cousin

John Heaphy is one of the most pragmatical asses I ever met with !—”

Having never before heard mention of her cousin John Heaphy, Margaret had of course, no opinion to offer in reply.

“ Invested in government securities, the money will only return fifteen hundred a year.”

“ But with fifteen hundred a year, may we not live in the utmost comfort ?—”

“ Yes !—the *utmost* !” sneered Barnsley. “ Even after my certificate is signed, it would be a great satisfaction to Westerton, to return a member with fifteen hundred a year !—a great pride to Lady Walmer to produce in the world the daughter of a bankrupt with fifteen hundred a-year !” —

“ But leaving out of the question parliament and the great world ?”

“ Ay !—leaving out of the question every distinction worth obtaining. By the way, have you spoken to Miss Winston ?—”

“ I—I thought it was understood that all such arrangements were postponed ?”

“ You must have wilfully misunderstood me, then!—What would you have me do with that old woman, without so much as a roof to hide my head under?”

“ She has neither a friend nor a shilling in the world!” exclaimed Margaret, gaining courage from the urgency of the case. “ Father! the whole world will cry shame on us, if, with fifteen hundred a year, we turn her out to starve!”

“ To starve?—why, what has the woman been about for the last twelve years, to lay by nothing out of a hundred guineas a year, regularly paid, and every thing on earth provided for her?—I’m sure it was not dress that ran away with her money.”

“ No!—it was the Westerton Bank. She had invested the whole of her little property with Closeman, and has nothing remaining. The annuity,” continued Margaret, in a lower voice “ is, of course, now out of the question.”

“ Why out of the question?—” cried Barnsley, starting up. “ A pretty person to instruct others, if she is ignorant that, as a bond debt, it takes precedence. As to her savings, the

estate pays seventeen and ninepence in the pound : so she is sure of about a hundred and forty pounds a year."

" Thank Heaven !"

" Besides, for some years to come, she may get another situation. She is not infirm ; she is not much more helpless than she has always been. Even at Westerton, places fit for her are not wanting. Old Mrs. Holdfast has long talked of keeping a companion ; and Mrs. Richard Dobbs's young family will soon want a governess. All that you must settle with her."

" I cannot. On any other point, dear father, you will find me obedient ; but to turn the friend—the mother of my youth, out of doors !—"

" May I inquire out of what doors you are to turn her ? May I ask what roof I have to afford her shelter ?"

Margaret was silent.

" No more of this nonsense !—I have at least a right in my misfortunes to expect acquiescence and co-operation from my daugh-

ter. I have a great deal too much business on my hands to be harassed by your lamentations over parting from a prosy old woman."

After this grievous denunciation, Margaret retired: and all that night, wept in wakeful silence by the side of her friend. When morning came, with a wild and haggard countenance, she prepared to disclose what she knew delay would elicit from the lips of her father, with unmeasured harshness. It was vain to preface the announcement by the consolatory assurance that the annuity was safe. Miss Barnsley was only too well aware that the prospect of their approaching separation would mar these tidings of worldly prosperity.

"Do not afflict yourself thus, my poor child," said the good woman, folding her to her bosom, and in Margaret's distress, losing all consciousness of her own. "Sooner or later, this misery must have come upon me. I have long prepared myself for it, Margaret, and I trust I have prepared *you*. A thorny path lies before you, my child, and you will have to walk in it uncounselled. Prove to me

that my labours have not been thrown away, by submission now, and prudence hereafter."

"And what is to become of you—where will you find a home?" cried the half-distracted girl.

"I have a sum in hand to answer all present exigencies. Your father assures us that my eventual prospects are secured. I shall therefore engage lodgings in Westerton."

"In mean, odious Westerton!—"

"I am less a stranger there than elsewhere. There I shall hear you spoken of—and there my poverty will command respect. Such as my pittance is, my dearest Margaret, remember that it is yours as though your mother offered to share it with you, should any future disaster cause you to need my humble protection. Wherever you go, my blessing will follow you;—wherever you need it, my poor judgment is at your service;—and whether you need it or not, the whole affection of my soul is fixed upon your welfare."

"She judges very discreetly," was Barnsley's sole remark, on hearing, in the course of

the day from his daughter, that the governess had proceeded to Westerton in search of a residence. "She feels that she is an incumbrance to us. In a few days, Margaret, I must remove to town, to be on the spot for the beginning of term. I am only waiting here to give up the Place to Sir Henry Woodgate. The effects seem already thoroughly cleared away. I find I have not so much as a rug to lie on, had I been inclined to sleep in the house."

"I understand it was a condition of the sale that all should be removed within three days."

"Was it?—I know nothing about the matter. Those rogues the Dobbsses have had the ordering of all. The Dobbsses are at the bottom of the whole conspiracy to which I have been sacrificed. That clerk of Closeman's, (Ben Adams, who drew out the agreement) was a nephew to old Dobbs. Manifest collusion.—However, it is useless now to descant upon it."

Barnsley's object in thus hastening the departure of Miss Winston, was not altogether

honourable to his integrity. Himself so lynx-eyed in matters of business, he had no faith in the inconceivable simplicity of the poor governess. He felt sure, not only that her ignorance respecting the annuity was pretended, but that she was perfectly versed in the nature of Margaret's rights in the Stokes-hill estate, on which point he chose to maintain a strict reserve. Already a thousand difficulties had beset him in his negotiations with his nephew, the surviving representative of the trustees of the property; and he had not patience for further opposition.

Much comment was, in fact, excited at Westerton by the peculiarities of the deed securing the Stokes-hill estate to Mrs. Barnsley and her child and children;—the creditors of Closeman and Co. having fancied themselves entitled to Barnsley's life-interest in the property; whereas it appeared on examination, that the trust was absolute in favour of the children; and that the husband, either by accident or design, was excluded from all benefit in the property. Barnsley said "design,"

protesting that old Winchmore, the partner of Mary's father, jealous of the sudden elevation of his clerk, had thought to deter him from the purchase of so vast an estate by insisting on its exclusive appropriation to her benefit ; while he, in the enthusiastic eagerness to become proprietor of Stokeshill Place, would have consented even to a greater sacrifice. But others said " accident ;"—declaring that with all John Barnsley's self-asserted proficiency in the law, he had been over-reached by his former master.

The Dobbsses, senior, and junior, looked astounded but said nothing. They thought it a strange thing that of the two trustees, Winchmore, though represented by an infirm daughter, had never been replaced ; while the other, Mr. Heaphy, a wholesale tradesman in the city, (brother-in law of Barnsley, by marriage with his sister Sally), had exercised no discretion in the business. With him, indeed, the esquire of Stokeshill, after his accession of property, had entertained little intercourse ; with the son who succeeded

him, none. It was remarkable, too, that a small farm, subsequently added to the estate, had been scrupulously annexed by Barnsley to the trust. These singularities, however, affected only his reputation as learned or unlearned in the law. The present crisis proved that Winchmore had done wisely. It was all the better for Barnsley's daughter, and all the worse for the bankrupt's estate. Harpenden and Hill congratulated him on his luck; John Fagg upon his prudence. The assignees looked black and held their peace.

It was Barnsley's turn, however, to look black when Sir Henry Woodgate, uninstructed of the discovery that had taken place, made liberal offers for Stokes Hill. Deeply as he regretted the disadvantageous nature of the property, as the sole stay and support to his family, he felt the difficulty of effecting a transfer. Woodgate's terms, indeed, were such as any reasonable trustee was justified in accepting; and the moment was advantageous for the investment of the purchase money in the funds to create a permanent income

for the daughter, of whom he was the natural custodian. But what species of reason or reasoning might be exercised by his loving kinsman, John Heaphy the younger, Barnsley had still to learn. His sister and her plebeian husband had both departed this life so soon after his brilliant marriage, as to leave him only just time to betray towards them the pitiful disposition of the genuine *parvenu*. Scarcely had he taken possession of Stokeshill, than Cornhill became an abomination in his eyes ; and having got up one of those ever-at-hand family squabbles which afford an excuse to the prosperous branches for alienating themselves from those less thriving, he allowed a coldness to spring up between them, followed by a bitter frost.

The Heaphys were stiff presbyterians, righteous, if not over much, at least over and above the measure of worldly righteousness. Barnsley, though he had never beheld his nephew since he was of an age to canter round the room on his father's walking cane, entertained little doubt that Heaphy despised him as

thoroughly for his parliamentary principles as for his want of kinsmanly affection. But conciliation was now his cue. It was necessary to obtain his nephew's sanction to the sale of Stokeshill; and having ascertained that the representative of his late sister and late trustee had retired from business to a villa at Clapton, he betook himself to the square, solid, brick mansion by the road-side, which a small courtyard enclosed with gates, and flanked on one side by coach-houses and the other by stables, qualified as a country-house. There was a sturdy look about the place which bore no auspicious promise to the applicant.

It may be observed in general, that persons sufficiently independent in mind to run counter to received opinions in so grave a matter as religion by law established, are rarely subjugated by the minor conventions of society;—and John Heaphy, accordingly, from the crown of his trencher hat to the sole of his silver-buckled shoe, defied the customs of the times. Barnsley discerned, after five minutes spent in his presence, that it would be no easy matter to

cajole him out of his opinions, and that his opinions were likely to be those of a man well to do in the world, but ambitious of doing better in the world to come. His uncle's shuffling apologies for his voluntary alienation from his kith and kin, were received with undisguised contempt.

“It has long been my desire,” Barnsley began, “to renew my intercourse with the surviving members of your family. A coolness, my dear Sir, most unluckily arose between your father and myself. The late Mr. Heaphy, you must admit, had his peculiarities——”

“My father was a fair dealing tradesman, and a believing christian,” replied the nephew, stoutly.

“My poor brother-in-law looked upon *my* religious principles as unorthodox; and——”

“You are in error,” interrupted John.

“In error? Believe me, I shall be most happy to find myself mistaken!”

“My father considered you devoid of principles of any sort or kind.”

“Mr. Heaphy!”

“An opinion in which I am myself confirmed, by the tenour of your public and private life.”

“If you take things in *this* tone,” cried Barnsley, rising to depart, “it is impossible for our interview to continue—”

“It was none of my seeking,” observed John Heaphy, wholly unperturbed by the petulance of his kinsman.

“It is easy to perceive the miserable degradation to which I am fallen,” cried Barnsley, with bitterness, “since even my nearest relatives permit themselves to treat me with contempt!”

“Your reproach does not hit my conscience!” replied John Heaphy, without moving a muscle; “you cannot tax me with having fawned upon your fortune, and I cannot tax myself with being influenced by your humbled condition.—I know nothing about you. When I noticed in the Gazette the election of my mother’s brother to be a member of parliament, it moved me no more than when I afterwards saw him gazetted as a bankrupt.”

“The latter qualification ought, at least, to secure me the forbearance which christian mercy assigns to the unfortunate,” said Barnsley, in a deprecating tone.

“If you are in bodily need, Mr. Barnsley,” said John Heaphy, feeling for his purse, “I am happy to——”

“Sir,—I did not come here to ask alms!” cried Barnsley, almost at the end of his patience. “My object is to request your cooperation in a matter of business that involves my remaining property and the interests of my only daughter.”

“To a matter of business I am bound to give my attention,” replied Heaphy, as drily as before. “Be seated. I am at your service.”

Replacing himself, therefore, in the hard horse-hair arm-chair he had pushed aside, Barnsley commenced a recital of his wrongs, of the nature of the trust securing Stokeshill, and the eligibility of the occasion that presented itself for disposing of the property.

“I was not even aware of the trusteeship,

and I know of no authority empowering me to effect any sale thereof," replied John.

"You have a trustee's discretionary power to administer the property in trust, to the best advantage."

"My discretion, then, suggests that a landed investment is the safest of all investments."

"But if I can prove that the money offered is five thousand pounds above the *bona-fide* value?"

"My conscience would then suggest that I have no right to accept it."

"Sir,—the offer was voluntary. I made no proposals to the bidder."

"You can have no objection to wait, then, till my cousin attains her majority."

"The very greatest. It will then be too late. Sir Henry Woodgate is about to marry; he wants to settle at once at Stokeshill Place. Three years hence, with the cares of a family on his shoulders, his enthusiasm will be sobered down and any other house might suit him as well."

“ And any other purchaser, *you!*”

“ No other purchaser will offer half so much. Stokeshill has an imaginary value in Woodgate’s eyes.—He is willing to give a fancy price for it.—He is passionately attached to the place.”

“ So, perhaps, may be my cousin Margaret.”

“ And if she were,—to what purpose her partiality?—When the estate was settled on the late Mrs. Barnsley and her children, I was in possession of five thousand a-year, entitling them to reside there. I have now not a guinea left to support my daughter. If Stokeshill remain unlet (and it has few attractions to a tenant), she must starve; whereas, this money, safely invested, will yield her a provision of fifteen hundred a-year. I appeal to you, Mr. Heaphy, not as my nephew, but as an equitable man, whether a trustee has a right to neglect such an opportunity.”

“ As an equitable man, I should say not. But the iniquities of the human race, Mr. Barnsley, have rendered it necessary to involve them in a web of laws, which, in order to im-

pede the knaveries of the rogue, afford obstacles to the movements of the upright man. I have law, Sir, to consult as much as equity. Have you brought with you any written items of these matters, for my consideration ?”

“ My solicitor, Mr. Fagg, will lay them before your man of business.”

“ Sir, I am my own man of business.”

(Barnsley secretly reverted to the maxim that the man who is his own lawyer, has a fool for his client.)

“ It will be necessary for me also to examine the deed of trust.”

“ There is nothing peculiar in the wording. It contains the customary clauses. It is like all other trusts.”

“ I never knew two trusts conceived in exactly a similar spirit. But there is probably a draught of the same among the papers of my late father.”—

“ You can examine ; but I rather imagine not. The settlement was amicable and voluntary on my part ; a mere family arrangement.”

“ You will have no objection, then, to remit the original document for my perusal ?”—

“ I have it in my pocket,” cried John Barnsley, bringing forth a parchment, not much more bulky than the documents he was in the habit of stowing about his person.

“ Then why not produce it at first ?”—demanded his nephew.

“ I was not aware you were disposed to give your attention to so lengthy a deed.”

“ You must have thought me an idiot, Sir, to act upon it without examination,” retorted Heaphy. And ceremoniously adjusting his spectacles, while Barnsley with almost professional alacrity unfolded the crackling parchment on the old-fashioned, well-rubbed mahogany table; proceeding to recite aloud, and follow with his finger under the nose of his nephew, the various clauses of the trust; insisting especially on one which authorized, under the sanction of the trustees, the sale of the estate; while at every legal recapitulation of the rights and grandeurs of Stokeshill Place, a con-

temptuous grunt escaped the lips of the ex-linen-draper.

“ Well, Sir ? ”—demanded Barnsley, when, having at length reached the seals and signatures, he carefully re-folded the deed and replaced it in his side-pocket,—“ what conclusions have you come to ? ”

“ That as administrator to the late James Heaphy, and trustee for your daughter, I have no power to refuse my co-operation in the disposal of the estate. But it is clearly my duty to wait till your daughter is at years of discretion.”

“ Then we must wait in the workhouse.”

“ So far as my small means may enable me, I——”

“ Mr. Heaphy, I told you before that I did not come hither to beg.”

“ No—you came hither to dictate.”

“ Provided Sir Henry Woodgate’s solicitors are satisfied with the title, are you willing to come forward ? ”

“ I must first see Miss Margaret Barnsley.”

“Whenever it suits you to make an appointment for receiving her.”

“Sir, my house is not a lawyer’s chambers.”

“Whenever it will suit you, then, to meet us in Lincoln’s Inn.”

Such and such like were the difficulties with which Mr. Barnsley had to contend in his negotiations with his nephew. But John Heaphy was one of those whose bark is fiercer than their bite; and his surliness, like that of many another Sampson, waxed mild as May under petticoat government. Fortunately, his legitimate Dalilah was a kind-hearted, motherly woman, who looked upon Margaret Barnsley’s case as though it had been that of her own Kitty or Jane; and she at last succeeded in persuading her husband that it would be merciful, after ascertaining his cousin’s acquiescence, to authorize the sale. It was to hasten the interview demanded, that Barnsley had hurried down to Westerton to fetch Margaret to town; and his unwillingness to acquaint her with the importance of her

decision on the occasion, alone prevented his laying his situation at once fairly before her. Preassured that on appealing to her in presence of the trustees she would acquiesce in all his propositions, he had already proceeded so far as to signify to Sir Henry Woodgate their acceptance of his offer.

CHAPTER VI.

I would your spirit were easier for advice, or stronger for your need.

SHAKSPEARE.

“BUSINESS before pleasure” is a golden rule which most of us regard as iron. But Barnsley, extending the canon, chose that business should precede not only the pleasures, but even the affections of life. He considered it a wonderful concession to allow four days to Margaret for preparing to quit Stokeshill for ever; conceiving that it would be just as easy for her to part from the home of her youth, as to doff aside her excellent preceptress, or pack up her trunk.

It is true that Margaret “added the night

unto the day, and so filled up the measure ;” for she rarely closed her eyes in sleep ; and during the remainder of the day on which, having installed Miss Winston in her mean lodging in Westerton, she took leave of her on the threshold, scarcely refrained from weeping. The preceding day they had visited the village together, to bid adieu to their *protégés*, and receive in return the humble farewell of the poor. It seemed, indeed, a relief to the grateful people, to know that the discarded governess was to settle so near them, and that through *her*, they should still hear of their benefactress ; while the children plucked Margaret by the gown, and offered her flowers from their gardens,—the old their blessings,—the pauper his prayers ;—scanty gifts, but in price above rubies to a heart shrinking from the harshness of civilized life !—At length came the still more painful parting from her venerated friend ; and nothing but a bitter rebuke from her father on the ingratitude towards himself implied by her agony of grief, imposed a restraint upon her sorrow.

And now it was her last day at Stokes-hill!—The Place, freed from the intrusion of the sheriff's officers, already stood there, an empty shell,—a monument of better days, inhabited only by the gardener and his family. Her father was away, giving orders at the farm, and an audience to the overseers over whom his authority was still unabdicating; when Margaret, heart-sick and hopeless, took her way to the house. She visited every chamber; she paused on every spot endeared by reminiscences of the innocent pastimes of her youth; the chamber which had gone by her mother's name,—the window from which she had been accustomed to watch every evening for her father's return. Firm and collected, she bade adieu to the spot where her good old friend had first instructed her to fold her little hands in prayer;—then, with a deep, deep sigh, went her way for ever out of the house!—Unconsciously she wandered into the flower garden.—There had been a few days of mild November weather, such as serves to entice up the gentianella, auricula and violet, under shelter

of the fallen leaves. The winter chrysanthemums were blooming of every hue ; and among them, the ever-blowing China rose and rose of all seasons. There was a feeling of bewilderment in her mind, as she seated herself on the bench beside her favourite oak tree, to muse for the last time over a spot in which she had mused so often. Already the scene was peopled to her imagination with new inhabitants. She beheld Helen,—(not Sullivan, but Woodgate) sweeping majestically under those ancient shades.—She saw young children sporting on that level lawn. She saw happiness, love, prosperity, restored to Stokeshill !—It was only the name of Barnsley that was stricken out of its records !—

But it was not to indulge in such reflections she was there !—Margaret, in the tenderness of her heart, had appropriated to herself a last duty ; and having taken up from a favourite parterre some roses planted by her own hand, carried them to the secluded church-yard which divided the lawns of Stokeshill Place from the adjoining village ; and Bernard Smith, whose

eyes watched wistfully from afar the movements of his young lady, presumed not to come forward and offer his aid. He saw her carefully replant the roses close to the church, beneath an ancient yew-tree, under which was visible the small iron grating opening to the vault where her mother was buried ;—while a third, which at first lay forgotten on the earth, she placed beside the long neglected grave of the unfortunate lover of Agnes Woodgate ; and the old sexton who, on perceiving her, came up to tender his assistance, undertook at her request, to take care of the trees after she should have quitted Stokeshill. For a moment, Margaret loitered at the stile of the church-yard, her mind thrilling with unutterable thoughts ; but when at length she tore herself from the spot and approached Mrs. Molyneux's cottage, she saw that her father was waiting for her, and that it was no time for the indulgence of her feelings. She dried up her tears. She tried to smile when he accosted her ; and her smile was almost as mournful as the wandering ray of late autumnal sunshine, which at that mo-

ment was shedding its pallid glories upon Stokeshill.

She now longed only for the last parting to be over. But such is the inconsistency of human nature that, the following night, when she laid down her aching head on the stifling pillow of an obscure hotel in London, isolated from every thing and every body that was dear to her, the poor girl felt it would be enough for her consolation to breathe once more the air of Stokeshill!—

Even the hotel, however, was an unauthorised luxury. Barnsley represented the necessity of an immediate removal to lodgings; and in the course of the day, they were settled in “a genteel first floor,” where they were to be “done for” by the maid of all work of the house. Barnsley had his own views to accomplish in this studied penuriousness. So miserable a predicament could not fail to appeal forcibly to the compassion of his nephew; for their position must remain unamended, unless he coalesced in the sale of Stokeshill. He congratulated his daughter indeed that none of her

fine London friends were in town at that season of the year, to be shocked by the alteration of their circumstances. But Margaret scarcely heeded the hint. It was not of her fine London friends she was thinking. It was of the good woman who was sitting lonely beside her scanty fire at Westerton. It was of the two who were now all in all to each other, and to one of whom she had so lately fancied herself all in all.

Meanwhile, by much urgency of persuasion, Barnsley contrived that the interview between Heaphy and his cousin should take place the following day; and if Margaret was startled by the straight-forward abruptness of her newly-found relative, sturdy John was scarcely less impressed by the beauty and serene depression of Miss Barnsley. He had seen her name noticed by the newspapers of the preceding spring, as a haunter of vain and frivolous resorts, and expected to find in her a "flaunting, Frenchified Miss," consonant with his misconceived notions of the gay Duchesses and vain Countesses of the great world;—and to

behold her so mild, so fair, so humble, so natural, touched him with contrition. She bore too a strong resemblance to her mother; and Heaphy, amid all his worldly and spiritual pride, retained an affectionate recollection of the pale melancholy Aunt John, who, as a bride, had bestowed toys and sweetmeats on his childhood. His heart yearned towards her daughter; and after receiving from the lips of Margaret a reiterated assurance that the projected sale of Stokeshill Place had her full and eager concurrence, he felt inclined to withdraw his opposition.

Margaret was in fact not only earnest in supporting a plan which her father had traced as the sole means of emerging from his difficulties, but desirous to forward the wishes of the Woodgates. She saw that the comfort of their life lay at her mercy; and hastened to atone for her momentary desire that a single bitter drop might rankle in their golden chalice, in return for the vinegar and hyssop they had presented to her persecuted lips.

“I suppose,” quoth John Heaphy, with a

grim smile, after having received from her, in writing, a declaration of her wishes,—“ I suppose, then, I must risk my consent?—trusting to your conscience, young lady, not to turn upon me hereafter, should funded property fall in value; or a hankering come over your mind after the abode of your young days.”

“ No fear,—no fear,” cried Barnsley; and Margaret patiently and faintly echoed—“ No fear!”

“ Can’t say much for your accommodation here!”—observed John Heaphy, taking up his trencher hat and umbrella.—“ You are but poorly put up.—Suppose, Miss Margaret, now the ice is broke a bit between us, you was to come and bide with my family, while your father’s affairs are on the settle?—We don’t pretend to grandeur. We don’t keep company with Lords.—But a warm fireside, a plain table, and the best offices of Mrs. H. (as good a woman, though I say it, as ever broke bread!) are at your service.”

Margaret, with mechanical thanks, assured

him that it was impossible for her to leave her father.

“*Why* impossible?”—cried Barnsley. “You ought to be aware, my dear, that you are just now very much in my way. The life I am forced to lead, leaves you unprotected here in lodgings; whereas, if you were safe at your cousin’s (since he is so obliging as to be troubled with you) I should live at a coffee-house and despatch my business more expeditiously.”

“You had best accept,” said John Heaphy, stretching out his rough hand cordially to the dispirited girl; and noticing, amid all his own want of polish, the coarseness of mind of his uncle.

“Yes, yes,—she accepts!”—cried Barnsley, regarding the occasion as highly favourable for the propitiation of the sturdy trustee. And Heaphy promised that his good woman would come and fetch her cousin on the morrow.

“Already,” thought poor Margaret, after his departure, “my father is beginning to throw me off!—Instead of allowing me to cheer

his comfortless abode, he seems resolved to make the worst of every thing."—Still, though grieved to be driven away by her father, there was something cheering in the idea of female companionship. Mrs John Heaphy would probably turn out vulgar and disagreeable. But she was the mother and mistress of a family; and Margaret recoiled from the necessity of living wholly amongst men.

A bright contrast to all these miseries, meanwhile, was afforded by the scene at Buckhurst Lodge! November, so dull, so dispiriting, so all but insupportable in London,—is gladdened in the country by jovial hospitality and the sudden display of scarlet jackets; while the weather which sits heavy upon the soul of the citizen, lends elasticity to the frame of the sportsman. The Duke of Grantville's establishment, reduced to torpor from March till September, was ever at its brightest after the first frost, which brought woodcocks to his preserves, and drove foxes out of his coverts; and at this present season, the arrows of Cupid were almost as active at Buckhurst as the double barrels of

Nock and Manton. Lord and Lady Buckhurst were hourly expected home from their bridal excursion; and the marriage of Sir Henry Woodgate with Helen Sullivan awaited only the signature of the writings for the transfer of Stokes Hill Place. John Sullivan, Brereton Sullivan and Lady Margaret, too, were of the party; and the prosperity of her children seemed to infuse new life into Mrs. Sullivan. While her sister, the Duchess, triumphed in the triumph of Homœopathy, Helen attributed all to her mother's satisfaction in her prospects.

The hard heart of old Sullivan might have melted, could he have viewed from his grave the elevation of his children upon the neck of the man he abhorred. Barnsley so lately their equal, was now precipitated into the utmost depths of humiliation. While *they* continued to be served by liveried menials upon glittering plate,—while they had chariots and horsemen at command, and the noblest in the kingdom for their mates, Barnsley was trudging through the mud from a

meeting of his creditors in Basinghall Street, to his solitary mutton-chop at Slaughter's Coffee House, and thence to his smoky lodgings.—So wags the world!—Wreck and ruin on one side,—triumph and exultation on the other; and how rarely, to soften the distance between, that genial spirit of humanity—the divinest of all christian inculcations!—

“ To be sure how strangely things do come about,” cried the silly little bride of Lord Buckhurst, to Miss Sullivan, as they were sorting silks and lambswool, together, for the Duchess's carpet work. “ Who ever would have dreamed, when we were all so cozy together at Wynnex, last year, that within twelve months those Barnsleys would be done up;—you in possession of that poor girl's home, and I of her lover, (for you know Buckhurst certainly *did* admire her,—not that it ever went to the lengths people said,—but he certainly *was* fond of flirting with her). And then your brother, of whom my cousin Lu thought herself so sure, married to my sister-in-law; and poor Shoreham who was by way

of such a fine independent young gentleman, tied to Lady Catalpa's apron string."

"Strange changes, I admit," replied Helen. "And I am sorry for Margaret Barnsley. Margaret has too slight a character to suffer deeply; but it is hard to be lifted as she was out of her sphere, only to be dashed to pieces like the tortoise in the fable, borne by eagles through the air."

"I wonder what is to become of her?" said Flora, yawning.—"Will she be obliged to go out as governess?—She was a tolerably good musician. Do you remember how she used to overpower our barcarolles with Handel and thorough-bass,—just like an organist in petticoats?—How horrid it would be if we have to fall in with her, teaching little girls their notes and A B C, in some family of our acquaintance!—"

"I fancy we have nothing to fear on that score," said Helen, calmly. "Stokeshill Place was settled upon her; and the large sum we are now paying for it, will be Margaret's fortune."

“ Why she will be a *parti* still, then? Who knows?—Perhaps, (if my aunt Shoreham can spare him,) your brother Edward may propose to her again?”

“ I am under no apprehensions that Edward will marry either one of the Drewes or Margaret Barnsley.”

“ Don’t speak so scornfully, my dear. There is no calculating upon the vagrant inclinations of mankind. I can tell you, that even your grim lord and master, (as he won’t arrive from town till Tuesday, I may venture to tell tales of him,) was laying as close a siege this year in town to the attorney’s daughter as if Mr. Barnsley had been Duke of Northumberland.”

“ Allowing as close a siege to be laid to him, perhaps,” replied Miss Sullivan, with a contemptuous smile. “ But even that I admit to have been wrong.”

“ No such thing, my dear!—I met them, you know, night after night, and I never saw a more decided case. Lady Walmer was always complaining that she could not keep the man out of her opera-box; she declared he used to

perch there, looking as glum as a raven,—a perfect kill-joy!”

Miss Sullivan, disdaining to vindicate Woodgate by informing the young Marchioness of his previous engagement to herself, was under the necessity of hearing on, and far more than was agreeable to her.

“ With all one’s respect and regard for Sir Henry Woodgate,” persisted Flora, “ he certainly is no great thing in the way of pleasantness in general society ; and I assure you people used to invite and put up with him chiefly in compliment to his supposed love for Miss Barnsley, who (thanks to Lady Walmer’s puffing,) was positively the rage.”

“ Put up with Sir Henry Woodgate in compliment to Miss Barnsley !” cried Helen, almost off her guard.

“ I don’t mean to tell you that he ever meant to marry her. But that he was desperately in love was evident to the whole of London ; and as he had command over himself to make so great a sacrifice to his pride, I am glad he has been so richly rewarded,”

said Flora, in a complimentary strain; “more particularly, my dear Helen, as you will touch him up,—which he sadly wants. Buckhurst was saying yesterday, that all Woodgate required was a rough-rider like yourself; and he hoped you would not spare either curb or spur.”

“I am obliged to Lord Buckhurst’s civility,” said Helen, with *hauteur*. “At least he will own that upon him, I was never tempted to make trial of my skill.”

“Don’t be affronted, my dear coz,” exclaimed the giddy bride, “I assure you poor Buckhurst meant it all in good part. Only you know he was always horridly afraid of you, because the Duchess and your mother wanted to make up a match between you. And as to Woodgate’s fickleness, now he has once made up his mind, no doubt he will be the most faithful shepherd in the kingdom; more particularly as I am told poor Margaret Barnsley is going out of it.”

This conversation, the result of mere levity on the part of the young Marchioness, who

if she had not talked nonsense must have remained silent, did not dispose Helen Sullivan to receive with indulgence the warm encomiums with which, on his arrival at Buckhurst, her intended bridegroom alluded to the conduct of Margaret. Barnsley, with his usual want of tact, had contrived to bring about an interview between them previously to his daughter's departure for Clapton; and Woodgate could scarcely do justice to his admiration of the mild and feminine demeanour of Margaret under her misfortunes. His sympathy was in every way excited. Much as he had detested the Barnsleys as his supersedors at Stokes-hill, he contemplated them with pity when driven forth into banishment; attributing to the attorney the same local attachments, long cherished by himself. He knew, too, that Margaret had been eager to forward his purchase of Stokes-hill by the cession of her own rights; and when, having been forced into her presence by her father, he found her sitting cold and pale as marble in her solitary abode, the beautiful regularity of her countenance

rendered still more apparent by the absence of all colour and all ornament, he thought her far lovelier than when shining, the observed of all observers, the cynosure of Almack's. It was, perhaps, because her touching humility had so completely fascinated his imagination, that on reaching Norfolk he discerned, for the first time, in the lady of his thoughts a certain loftiness of demeanour almost amounting to *hauteur*; something of her father's self-importance, vivified by the radiance of youth and beauty.

This expression was in fact more than usually disclosed in the countenance of Helen. The most sympathetic marriages are pre-faced by that most antipathetic of antecedents, a settlement,—by which Westminster Hall and all its wigs are arrayed for the discomfiture of Cupid. Certain covenants had been required by the solicitor of the Sullivans, concerning which Helen understood and cared not the scrape of a pen, which were peremptorily declined by the solicitors of Sir Henry Woodgate, who valued not their objections a

grain of pounce. But Mr. Sullivan Brereton Sullivan, having been at the pains to explain to his sister, in some of his lengthiest phrases, that her rights were at stake, and that by ceding to the exactions of Woodgate her family would evince an unbecoming eagerness for the match, Helen readily consented to uphold the propositions of the lawyers.

Sir Henry Woodgate, meanwhile, admonished on his side that the Sullivans, by claiming more than their due, marked their consciousness of the obligation under which he was placing himself by the appropriation of part of his wife's fortune to the purchase of Stokeshill, replied to the savages of Gray's Inn, that by half an hour's conversation with Miss Sullivan, he would undertake to settle the business. He spoke with confidence, for with confidence did he feel; and great was his amazement and disappointment when, on broaching the subject, he found Miss Sullivan adhere to the demands of the solicitors with the most unflinching pertinacity. Her inf-

riority on this point to the disinterestedness he had so recently seen not professed, but practised, by the humbly-born Margaret Barnsley, startled as much as it displeased him.

For the first time he began to notice that Helen was disputatious. Educated with brothers of whom she was fully the equal in capacity, she was accustomed to maintain her point till it was logically overthrown; unconscious or regardless that a woman who has always a reason to give and chooses to give it, however much in the right, is in the wrong:—no accomplishment of womankind being more amiable in the eyes of their lords and masters, than that of knowing when and how to submit to defeat.

Miss Sullivan was perhaps partly piqued into this assumption of superiority by the presence of the two brides, Lady Buckhurst and Lady Margaret Brereton, over whom her brother and cousin exercised a sort of half ironical marital authority; and she chose to show Sir Henry Woodgate at once, that *she* should submit to no such degradation; but

still more probably to her unacknowledged jealousy of Margaret Barnsley. She regarded Margaret as the most poor spirited of her sex ; and when she heard Sir Henry deliberately avow his admiration of the tame resignation of the attorney's daughter, her own high spirit rose fifty degrees in altitude.

There was another cause of dissension, which jarred more painfully on his feelings than all the rest. In the early days of their engagement, Helen had appeared to sanction his invitation to aunt Agnes, to make his home her own, to eat of his bread and drink of his cup, as she was only too well entitled. But now, without any positive declaration of an alteration in her views, Helen evidently considered the measure as provisional ; that Miss Woodgate was to become a guest, not an inmate. It was natural perhaps that some sort of misgiving should exist, unacquainted as she was with the mind and manners of his aunt. But Margaret Barnsley had taken the virtues of Agnes upon trust. Margaret Barnsley had loved her unseen, unknown ;

estimating the nobleness of her character by her conduct towards himself. Here was, indeed, a bitter source of disappointment! Miss Sullivan seemed to consider Stokes Hill Place an eligible purchase only on account of its proximity to Hawkhurst Hill; and while he was not only willing but desirous to render it the happiest of abodes to poor Mrs. Sullivan, his bride was for qualifying as a visitor the relative to whom he absolutely owed a home!—

But these differences of opinion between the lovers, passed wholly unobserved by the gay party at Buckhurst Lodge. The younger couples were too self-engrossed to take heed of them; except when the giddy Flora rallied Helen on her prudery in renouncing *tête-à-tête* walks and drives with one who was so soon to be her husband, while the humdrum Duke and Duchess lauded the propriety of her conduct. The gentlemen thought of nothing but their daily sport; the ladies sang trios, played duets, or stitched Berlin work,—laughing loud without having much to laugh at,—and talking incessantly without having much to talk about.

They formed, in short, a very happy family party.

The course of their own true love had run so smooth, that they fancied most other marriages were arranged in the same matter-of-course sort of way, and left the lovers and the lawyers to settle all dilemmas of their own creation

CHAPTER VII.

Madam, he is married to Octavia,
I pray your highness, patience.

SHAKSPEARE.

MARGARET had scarcely recovered the shock of her unexpected interview with Sir Henry Woodgate, when she found herself transferred to the domicile of her uncouth kindred; and the cordiality of their reception served only to place in painful contrast the indifference with which her father had witnessed her departure. Never had the Heaphys welcomed any one so fair and graceful to their homely abode; and humbled as Margaret was, she commanded commiseration of their kindly hearts.

Ever since the death of his father and mother, fifteen years before, Stokes Hill Place and its inmates had formed a favourite topic of denunciation to John Heaphy. Barnsley, his uncle and godfather, he regarded as one who was living the life, and would die the death of the wicked; having forgot his own people and his father's house, to resign himself to the delusions of sin and Satan; and when having married a wife of his own degree, Heaphy retired from trade to the *otium cum dignitate* of Clapton, his sentiments towards his uncle were gradually instilled into the partner of his destinies and the children born to them. When at length, after sitting with senators and consorting with countesses, uncle Barnsley was gazetted a bankrupt, instead of as they had anticipated a baronet, long and solemn was the exhortation recited by the parents to their children, upon the predestined fall of pride.

But scarcely had the Heaphys, old or young, looked upon cousin Margaret, when their animosities subsided. Her sweet face, saddened

by suffering, exercised a miraculous charm. Three or four Heaphy girls, with straight hair, narrow shoulders and wide mouths, short white sleeves and long red arms, soon clustered familiarly round her, eager to please and be pleased. Sturdy John, after thanking her for coming, bade her not feel herself a stranger among those of her own flesh and blood; and what gratified her more than all, and served to prove a long-existing tie between her and her quaint-looking cousin, was his inquiry after "the good little body of a governess, who had brought up her poor mother who was dead and gone, and to whom her poor mother had been so partial;" while on the other hand, John Heaphy was disposed to form a better opinion of uncle Barnsley, on learning that the good little body had been retained in his establishment to preside over the education of his daughter.

To relate the forlorn situation of her regretted friend to the sympathy of such warm-hearted people, was a comfort to Margaret. Mrs. Heaphy's "Poor soul! Heaven help her!"

was too genuine to be mistrusted; although her half-doubting interrogatory to her husband whether the services of such a woman might not be worth thinking of for the girls, (whose diet of roast mutton and Pinnock, though profiting them much, left ample space for the refinements of life,) was happily negatived.

Margaret was soon reconciled to the peculiarities of her cousin, by hearing from him, for the first time in her life, a description of her mother. John Heaphy, was pleased to recur to the days of his youth,—the brilliant marriage of his uncle,—and the girlish gentleness of the bride. He spoke without shame of his grandfather, old John Barnsley, the retired law-stationer; of his own father, the linen-draper, and of a rich uncle-in-law, a ship-master at Mile End. *These* were the *nobles* of his race;—others were incidentally alluded to of inferior pretensions,—such as Ephraim Barnsley, in the slop-selling line; and Sally Heaphy, who kept a snuff stall in Exeter Change. To all this, Margaret listened with amazement. She now discerned the

motives of her father's reserve; and appreciated the vast stride he had taken after the purchase of Stokeshill Place; and his indiscretion in consorting exclusively with lords and landed esquires, and comporting himself as of their own degree.—The fates had set all right again.—The fates had preserved the pride of Sir Henry Woodgate from calling cousins with the keeper of a snuff-shop in Exeter Change!—

In process of time, the Heaphys were amazed in their turn when, on referring to various political movements of the day, they discovered that Margaret had been on a footing of familiar intercourse with those whom they regarded as the demi-gods of fame; and sturdy John did homage to a distinction that vaunted not itself, but was drawn forth by the common course of conversation. He was one of that peculiar class of the easy-circumstance order of Englishmen, who read nothing but the Holy Scriptures and the unholy newspapers; and by dint of reading them every day and all day long, attain a very sufficient degree of en-

lightenment. Between parliamentary reports and law reports, the money markets and foreign intelligence, great letters and small, he managed to know all that had been passing in the world for the last twenty years, from the Black Sea to Rosamond's Pond; and with a mind unencumbered by any other species of literature, his memory was tenacious of trivialities such as public men fondly believe to be effaced from private recollection!—Not an inconsistency in any official career, but was noted down in the tablets of John Heaphy's brain. Chancellors might have stood reproved by his reminiscences, and lords of the Treasury brought to the blush. Margaret was somewhat amused, indeed, on perceiving how completely at variance was his unsophisticated beau-ideal of certain eminent men, from the realities she had seen lounging in Lady Walmer's opera box.—But she would not undeceive him. If John Barnsley chose to ground his conjectures of modern Downing Street upon his grammar-school experience of Plutarch's Lives, why diminish his reverence

for those through whom he humbly hoped would decrease his assessed taxes, and the price of dry goods and tobaccos?

Her father would have been less forbearing!— But though John Heaphy's board was every day handsomely spread, Barnsley was never invited to sit there as a guest. His nephew evidently did not choose him to partake of his bread and salt. On this, and other accounts, indeed, Margaret found Clapton an uneasy residence; but whenever, in the course of the hurried morning visits he paid his daughter, the question of her return to town was agitated, Mr. Barnsley closed so eagerly with the cordial proposal of the Heaphys that she should remain there a few more weeks, that resistance was impossible. Her visit was a happy incident in the monotonous existence of her worthy cousins. Her conversation cheered their fireside, while her deportment reformed the clumsiness of their girls; and they were as glad to secure, as Barnsley to dispense with, her company. He declared himself overwhelmed with business, but was sanguine that

all would be settled before the meeting of parliament. The sudden death of his partner, friend and enemy, Closeman, threatened, somewhat to delay the settlement of his bankruptcy accounts ; but the purchase money of Stokes-hill was about to be paid into the hands of his banker, the brother of Fagg, his solicitor, who was to share with Mr. Heaphy the trusteeship for the property of the minor.

“ If your uncle Clement had been in England, *he* would have been the properest person,” observed John, after the visit in which his uncle communicated this intelligence. “ That is, if he had chosen to act. The Colonel has not kept up any intercourse with your father these two years past. The Colonel felt huffy at some sort of slight his brother thought fit to show to a gentleman he wrote to introduce to him. He has often inquired what sort of a young woman you were growing up. The Colonel’s getting in years, Margaret ; and he’ll be glad to find a niece waiting for him in England, not too fine a lady to settle his gouty cradle and nightcap.”

John Heaphy's admiration of Margaret's simplicity of character was soon a thousand fold increased. One day, as she sat working in the dull dingy drawing-room whose very firescreens, (those chartered libertines of foppery), consisted in an octagon of lead coloured pasteboard, mounted on an ebony handle,—her thoughts far away,—at Westerton—at Stokeshill—at home,—while Mrs. Heaphy was superintending the well thumbed spelling book of a good-humoured fat little girl, too learned for the nursery, and too noisy for the school-room, a loud ring at the gate bell roused them to the prospect of a visitor. When to Margaret's utter horror, a card bearing the name of Lady Woodgate, was placed in her hand, with an inquiry whether “she would please to see the lady?”—

Such was her first intimation of the existence of a Lady Woodgate! The newspaper paragraph, announcing the marriage, had never happened to meet her eye; and in one of her father's recent visits, he had casually mentioned that there was some hitch in Woodgate's

settlements which would postpone, and might eventually break off the match. Nay, one of those mysterious announcements thrown out, like blue lights in a fog, by the morning papers, in the month of November, to render the dullness of the season more lugubrious.—“ We understand that a certain illustrious family has been perplexed by a misunderstanding likely to frustrate the projected hymeneal festivities that were about to celebrate the marriage of one of its fair members with a Baronet of ancient family,” seemed so directly to point at Helen Sullivan and Woodgate, that Margaret dreamed not the same paragraph had served to enliven the interest of the same dull columns, during the last thirty years.

But the marriage was actually solemnized! Lady Woodgate’s carriage was at the gate, and her card in her hand; and Margaret’s eyes remained fixed upon it as if her senses were forsaking her.

“ Thomas is asking you, my dear cousin, whether you will see the lady?”—demanded Mrs. Heaphy, sticking her indicatorial pin

into Clemmy's spelling book, after the foot-boy had for the third time repeated his message.

The conventional equivocation of "Not at home," rose to the lips of one who had passed a whole season in May Fair; but Margaret, aware that she was now the inmate of a house where no lies were accounted white, checked herself, desired, with a despairing face, that Lady Woodgate might be shown up.

"Do not leave the room; you will do me a very great favour by remaining," she exclaimed, perceiving that the considerate Mrs. Heaphy was about to remove the child and spelling book into the adjoining study.

"I had better go, my dear," cried Mrs. H, gathering up in a bustle from the hearth-rug some dusters she had been preparing for marking ink.

"No—no,—pray stay!" repeated Margaret, trembling so violently that she could not rise from her chair.

"But my Lady may have business to talk

about.—Woodgate, I think, is the name of the family who have bought your father's country seat?"

"Yes—no,—it is of no consequence," faltered Margaret. "But if you wish to show me real kindness, do not leave me a moment alone with her."

Mrs. Heaphy, amazed by a degree of emotion she had never before seen disturb the serenity of Margaret, instantly prepared to comply. She satisfied her sense of propriety however, by dismissing poor Clemmy; whom she hurried out of the room with the bundle of dusters in her fat little arms, just in time to run against the stately figure of Lady Woodgate, as she entered the room.

Margaret advanced to meet her, and receive upon her cold cheek the salutation of other times, still mechanically tendered. After a formal introduction to "my cousin, Mrs. Heaphy,"—they all sat down.

"I am afraid you have had a very cold drive?"—said Margaret, taking no heed of the

magnificent pelisse of purple velvet and sable, by which the bride was defended against the weather.

“ Not *very* cold.—Sir Henry came with me the greater part of the way ; but knowing we must have much to say to each other, he got out, and walked back to town.”

By this announcement, Helen intended to convey to the stupid cousin a hint to put down her strip of muslin, and take her departure. But Mrs. Heaphy sat unmoved ; while Margaret recoiled with bitter anguish. To *her* ear, the words conveyed a boast, a taunt ; and the sense of injury roused her courage.

“ Have you been long in town ?”—she inquired, with assumed self-command.

“ Only a few days, on our way to Hawkhurst. We are at Escudier’s hotel. Mamma will join us in a day or two, when we shall proceed together into Kent.”

“ To spend Christmas ?” mechanically rejoined Margaret.

“ We have no Christmas parties in prospect,” replied Lady Woodgate. “ But it is

necessary for us to be on the spot, to superintend the improvements at Stokeshill Place."

Margaret started.—Poor Margaret!—she had fancied that Stokeshill Place needed no improvement!—

"Woodgate wishes every thing to be finished before we attempt the task of furnishing. Nothing so miserable as having to fly from room to room, before painters and paper-hangers!—so we pass the winter at Hawkhurst with my brother and Lady Margaret Sullivan."

"A very fortunate resource for you," said Margaret patiently. "You will be able to overlook every thing in person."

"I shall not interfere. Sir Henry's object is simply to restore the place as nearly as possible to what it was in his grandfather's time. I speak of all this, my dear Margaret, without reserve; for I am aware that it was in accordance with your desire the Place was disposed of,—and I am vain enough to think you would rather see it in the hands of old friends, than of strangers."

Margaret assented with an almost ghastly

smile. "Has Sir Henry Woodgate seen my father since his arrival in town?" she inquired.

"Yes,—once or twice, I fancy; though all matters relative to Stokeshill, you know, have been adjusted between them this month past. Our people took possession on the 1st; and no time was lost in commencing their operations. Every day, at this season, is precious. Sir Henry does not intend to have a flower-garden near the house. They are removing it below the hill."

"The aspect is a better one," faltered Margaret.

"Mr. Barnsley and my husband had parliamentary business to talk over. There is a report of a dissolution."

"Indeed?—Thank God!"—

"Is it possible that you wish for the disturbance of another election at Westerton?"—

"I have little more to see of Westerton, and my father will be set at liberty. We shall be able to leave town,—perhaps England."

"By the way," resumed Lady Woodgate, "I

saw Mr. Barnsley for a moment, yesterday; (it was in fact from *him* I obtained your address,) and I am concerned to find that circumstances prevent your accepting the little wedding-presents which Woodgate and myself have had the pleasure of offering you."

Margaret looked perplexed.

"I admit that, if you settle in town, Khaled would be an incumbrance; indeed *that* purchase was altogether an idea of Sir Henry's. But the piano, my dear,—the books!—Surely wherever you go, you will want music and books?"—

"Not if we go abroad."

"Ah! you think of going abroad?—But, if you *should* remain in England, Margaret, surely you will oblige us by acceptance?"—

"A thousand thanks!—Objects provoking the recollection of Stokeshill, would give me more pain than pleasure!—I am not the less grateful to Sir Henry Woodgate."

"Do not defraud me of *my* share in your good will, my dear. We are old friends, Margaret, and I trust may long remain so."

Poor Mrs. Heaphy was of opinion that her

cousin was somewhat ungracious in her mode of receiving so many fine presents and fine professions; especially from so grand a lady in so fine a pelisse.

“ I trust you left Mrs. Sullivan in better health ? ”—demanded Margaret, to change the conversation.

“ Mamma is certainly better; but my aunt thinks she will be as ill as ever when she gets to Hawkhurst. The Duke and Duchess are apt to fancy that no one can live out of Norfolk. By the way, Margaret, you do not ask after Buckhurst and his bride?—I am afraid you have not forgiven his rapid recovery from the effects of your cruelty ? ”—

“ I take Lord Buckhurst’s desertion in as good part as he took my refusal,” said Margaret, trying to speak cheerfully. “ But how does Flora look as a matron?—Poor Lord Tynemouth must rejoice at having escaped the martyrdom of balls, by securing a chaperon for Jesse ? ”—

“ Chaperon, my dear? Jessie Devereux is going to be married herself. A sad match!

Some country clergyman whom nobody ever heard of. But I am neglecting the object of my visit. I sadly want you to return and spend the day with me in town."

"Thank you. It is quite out of the question."

"I will send you home at night:—you need not put any one out of the way," said Lady Woodgate, looking spitefully at the tiresome cousin who would not be hinted out of the room."

"You are very kind;—but I am not in spirits for any other society than that of my own family.

"My dear, you must not indulge in low spirits. You have no excuse. *I* consider you very rich, Margaret. How few girls have more than forty thousand pounds!"—

"I was not thinking of fortune."

"You were thinking, perhaps, of your father. But it is no kindness to *him*, Margaret, to mope yourself to death. *Do* come and spend the day with us!—I have a thousand things to say to you, and Woodgate is to get us

a private box at Drury Lane. Pray assist me to persuade her," continued Lady Woodgate, turning towards the dumbmy cousin. "Will it not do her good to go the play?"

Mrs. Heaphy smiled. "Not in *my* opinion!—Mr. H. and myself have scruples against entering a theatre."

"Saints!"—thought Lady Woodgate, turning again towards Margaret. "But you, my dear child, have not fallen into these opinions?" said she.

"I should not choose to be seen in a place of public amusement so soon after my father has been declared insolvent."

"How absurd!—Mr. Barnsley is in no kind of *necessity*!"

"It would give me no pleasure to go," said Margaret, decidedly—almost sternly;—and Lady Woodgate was forced to be content.

"Since you will not accompany me to town," said she, bending forward with a view not to be overheard by Mrs. Heaphy, "let

me speak to you a few minutes alone. I have something important to say.”

“ Pray speak,” replied Margaret. “ My cousin, Mrs. Heaphy, is in the confidence of all my affairs.”

“ But she is not in those of all the world,” replied Lady Woodgate. “ I want to talk to you about my brother Edward.”

“ Any thing you can have to say to me from Mr. Edward Sullivan, may, I assure you, be said here.”

“ Since it is your pleasure to receive proposals in public, like a queen on her throne,” said Helen, greatly annoyed, “ I must still fulfil my promise to my mother by telling you that Ned has written to her from Paris to feel his way with you. My brother’s views, Margaret, are unchanged; he places his hand and fortune once more at your disposal.”

“ I assure you—”

“ Pause ere you reply!” interrupted Helen. “ Consult your conscience whether you have

a right to refuse ten thousand a year and a peerage, (for the Chilton business is to be settled next session.) Disinterestedness is a fine thing; but for your father's sake as well as your own, Edward's propositions merit some consideration."

"They merit my utmost gratitude—but I can give no more," replied Margaret. "You are mistaken in supposing *any* marriage I could make would be advantageous to my father. His maintenance depends on our living together, and together we will live."

"I anticipated your answer!" said Helen, with an air of hauteur. "I wrote to Edward,—I tried to dissuade my mother from these humiliating overtures;—but they insisted. *They* do not understand you, perhaps, so well as I do."

Again Margaret began to tremble at the idea of being *understood* by Lady Woodgate.

"I have only to regret my fruitless errand, and wish you good morning," continued Helen, rising.

"Can I offer any thing to your Ladyship?"

inquired the good-natured Mrs. Heaphy, agreeing with her that it was a dreary expedition to have undertaken for nothing. "The children are at dinner down stairs, upon a nice shoulder of mutton and batter pudding?"

Lady Woodgate bowed condescendingly, but was not tempted by dainties which had announced themselves powerfully on the staircase.

"Perhaps Sir Henry's eloquence might be more efficacious?" said she, ironically addressing Margaret. "Will you give him leave to try his diplomacy in Edward's favour?"

"Do not let Sir Henry have the trouble of coming here," replied Margaret, firmly. "Misfortune is apt to render people morose. I make no apology for my incivility; my only desire is not to be misunderstood."

Lady Woodgate's conscience rebuked her, for she saw big tears gathering under the swollen eyelids of Margaret.

"Let us at all events part in charity!" said she. "You need not treat me as an enemy because you will not accept me as a sister.

Unless you take a kiss of peace at parting, I will carry sad reports of you into Kent. Have you nothing to say to Miss Winston, Margaret?—I find, from your father, she is settled at Westerton; and when we get to Stokeshill, I shall make it a point to afford her every countenance in my power.”

“Thank you,” said the poor girl, feeling she had no right to reject an offer of kindness for one who had so few remaining to be kind. “I have just finished a purse for her. You would do me a favour by leaving it as you pass through Westerton.” And she stooped over the work-box to make up the little parcel and conceal her tears.

“Good morning, pray do not trouble yourself to ring,” said Lady Woodgate, gliding past Mrs. Heaphy, after having received the packet and adieux of Margaret. And as she traversed the hall below, a whole tribe of little Heaphys rushed forth in their greasy pinafores to stare at “cousin’s visitor,” whom Thomas the footboy, had announced to the whole establishment as ‘a lady of title.’”

“ Margaret, my love,—you look very pale,—you seem very faint!” cried her kind-hearted cousin, as soon as the carriage drove from the gate. “ As sure as life, that fine-lady friend of yours had musk upon her pocket-handkerchief!—I thought I perceived it when she whiffed by me.—There!—I’ve set the sash up a bit, and you’ll soon be better.—Deary me! I’m afraid there’s been nobody to see after the poor children all this time at their dinner.”

CHAPTER VIII.

How eagerly ye follow my disgraces
As if it fed ye! And how sleek and wanton
Ye appear in every thing that brings my ruin.
Follow your envious courses, men of malice!

SHAKSPEARE.

IF any thing could increase the respect in which the daughter of Barnsley was held by John Heaphy, it would have been the knowledge thus acquired, that she had “sent to the right-about a couple of young chaps of lords, determined in good or evil to abide by her father.”

“Not, however, that I would have you

tie yourself down against matrimony," said Heaphy. "When the right man comes, it will be no hard matter to make an allowance to your father out of your fortune."

"An *allowance* from a daughter to a father?— You do not think of any thing so monstrous!" cried Margaret, the colour rising into her pale cheeks. "And why speak of *my* fortune?— Is not every thing I have my father's?"

"Not your money, certainly; or he would have it in enjoyment."

"It may not be his in *law* perhaps—"

"Neither in law nor equity!—As one of the five children of an honest stationer, John Barnsley got five thousand pounds to his fortune. The rest,—(and a fine windfall it was!) was your mother's,—every penny of it your mother's;—and it would be hard indeed, Margaret, if your father's folly were to strip you of more than the hundred and twenty-five thousand pounds he has chosen to make ducks and drakes of."

Meanwhile, poor Barnsley's state of feeling was little to be envied. The prognosticated

dissolution had actually taken place; and, though a matter of secondary interest at Clapton, not another topic occupied the world of clubs and coffee houses, of which Barnsley was per force an inhabitant. Not but that the bitter ashes scattered over his destiny reached him even there. Such members of his club as were unconnected with Kent, knew from that vaguest of whispers, common report, that the Honourable member for Westerton had been a partner in a country bank (connected with other houses, connected with the hop trade), which had smashed the preceding summer,—and these, perceiving the guilty word “bankrupt” inscribed in his fallen countenance, avoided him as though it were likely to sour their claret or chill their soup;—while others, who, after hearing and repeating in the spring that his daughter was likely to become Duchess of Grantville, found that another charmer had been promoted to be Marchioness of Buckhurst, chose to settle it that the Grantvilles had refused their consent; that the disappointed girl had vanished, and

was gone no one knew whither,—perhaps as governess—perhaps as apprentice, — perhaps as Heaven knows what. His *quondam* friends now grew very much ashamed of him. In those civilized districts of London, where poverty is a crime and a shabby coat a misdemeanour, Barnsley was as fairly sent to Coventry, as if he had never given a popular ball, or dinners enlivened with magnums of *Clos-de-Vogeot*!—

Still, Barnsley wanted the self-respect necessary to confine himself day after day to the solitary lodging, where he heard nothing but the clicking of his landlord's clock and the creaking of his own boots. Though pierced to the soul by the indignities heaped upon him, — the hand withheld, — the eye averted, — the insolent affability of the vulgar, — he had not courage to flee from the vortex, and hazard an encounter with himself. All was not sound within. There was nothing consolatory in his reflexions. Even in his best actions, instead of following righteousness for righteousness' sake, his virtue had been a well got up

comedy, intended to secure him a good standing in the county of Kent. In his worst—but that accoupt was still pending between himself and Heaven!—

He noted not, indeed, his lack of that kindness of nature which, (like the rays of sunshine that fertilize the earth while they impart geniality to the atmosphere) blesseth even the medium through which it dispenses the beneficence of the Creator to the forlorn of his creatures. Even after suffering persecution, Barnsley had not learned mercy. It is an error to suppose that adversity softens *every* human nature. Adversity perfects the good, but the bad it renders worse; as the vessel of gold is softened by the same furnace which hardens the vessel of clay. Barnsley rebelled against the Providence which chastised him. Looking into his purse rather than into his conscience for the reward of his integrity, and finding it empty, he argued that integrity was little worth; and instead of patiently attempting to root up the tares which, according to the sentence pronounced upon fallen man, were spring-

ing amid the good wheat wherewith he had sowed his ground, he cursed the soil with an exceeding great curse, that it might remain blighted and barren for evermore.—

Such is usually the philosophy of those whose desires are bounded by the rewards and profits of the world. They examine the mighty struggle between egotism and egotism, whether of nations or individuals, which constitutes the movement of social life ; and finding distinctions unworthily conferred, and some profligate adventurer saluted as cousin to the king, proclaim the worthlessness of virtue!—Dazzled by the diadem that crowns the brows of the triumphant Lady Macbeth, they overlook those restless hours when never-slumbering remorse stains her right royal hands with imaginary blood!—

Barnsley, who had been respected for wealth and was despised for poverty, had some right to feel that the molten calf was still the favourite idol of mankind. But was he also justified in believing that chance had made him rich,—that chance had made him poor; while virtue,

so far from availing him, would not so much as purchase a porringer of soup to save him from starvation?—Was he justified in asserting that, —like the once efficient Milan armour, grown useless in the days of Congreve's rockets, and Perkins's guns,—or like the simple shells forming a current coin of savage countries, but laid aside in the progress of civilization,—virtue was obsolete,—a thing incompatible with the existence of railroads and exchequer bills?—

Yet such was the tacit conviction of the Man of Business!—If he did not openly exclaim, like Milton's Satanic hero,

Evil be thou my good!

he was secretly of opinion that whereas, in the infancy of society, strength is virtue,—after the progress of ages, cunning becomes strength; and that, whether you out-fight or out-wit your antagonist, your superiority must be the same.

The principles which tend to people Newgate with swindlers instead of highwaymen, and to place Prince Talleyrand at the head of modern diplomatists, served to satisfy John Barns-

ley that since Closeman by whom he had been defrauded was protected by the law, *he* ought to be protected in his turn, should an opportunity present itself for reprisal. Nay, when the fashionable newspapers acquainted him that in the course of the season Lord Shoreham had netted a sum of eighty thousand pounds, at Crockford's and on the turf—(eighty thousand pounds to the gambler and horse-jockey, while the pains-taking magistrate, the upright senator, was reduced to his last doit,)—he expressed himself somewhat after the tone of Louis XIV, on learning in his latter days the defeat of his army,—“*Dieu a donc oublié tout ce que j'ai fait pour lui!*”—

The man who presumed to arraign the justice of his Maker, was not likely to bow to the decrees of his fellow-creatures; and just as the Duc de la Rochefoucault concocted his crabbed maxims against the honesty of mankind, after being baffled in his courtiership and discarded by the Duchesse de Longueville, John Barnsley, defrauded by a banker's clerk, established it as a fact that Diogenes with his lantern

might have pushed his inquiring way through the seven million population of England, without coming to a stand-still.

Every day did he wax more morose—more misanthropic. Against Closeman, it was useless to rail; for the broken-spirited banker of Westerton was gone to give up his account to a higher tribunal than that of Guildhall. But a new subject for denunciation soon presented itself when the worthy and independent electors of Westerton, finding him at present disqualified by his bankruptcy to represent them in parliament, instead of accepting at his hands a stop-gap member to occupy his seat till his docket was taken off, as it was likely to be before the meeting of parliament, actually got up a deputation to solicit the stupid and honourable George Holloway of Withamstead Hall, to legislate on their behalf in his stead.

This insult was more than he could bear. George Holloway to be the plummet over him;—whose speech on attaining his majority, to a barnful of his father's tenants, had been one of his own earliest acts and inventions after

settling in the county of Kent!—George Holloway, whose blunders he had varnished over;—whose sins as a yeomanry captain he had redeemed; whose ineptitude of mind, whose infirmities of body, he had borne with such neighbourly patience. Twenty years long had he been grieved with him; hoarse with shouting to his deaf ears, harassed with particularising to his dull mind. And now, the Hon. George was driving in his phaeton towards the hustings of Westerton, over the mangled remains of his own prostrate fortunes!

“To be sure, there isn’t a heavier drag in the kingdom than young Hol. (now old Hol’s benched in the House of Humdrums),” said Parson Drewe, when soliciting his nephew’s interest for the heir apparent of Withamstead. “But ’twill be a deuced good thing, you know, to ship the fellow off for town in the middle of the hunting season for he’s such a slow dog; one is always riding over him; and such a deaf post, he can’t so much as hear one beg pardon.”

“What are the blockhead’s principles?”—

demanded Lord Shoreham; much in the tone with which the clown demands of Malvolio in the play, "What are the opinions of Pythagoras concerning wild fowl?"

"Principles?—Oh! *squire* to the backbone!" cried Alfred Drewe, jealous of the honour of his *protégé*;—"Corn laws,—protestant succession,—Magna Charta,—church and state, and all that."

"I trust the gentleman is faviribly disposed towards Ireland!" lisped the saccharine voice of Lady Catalpa,—an intellectual beauty of a certain age, who deigned to preside over the domestic happiness of the young lord,—sacrificing to him a reputation which was at once very black and very blue.

"Ireland—slave trade—factory children,—Poles,—high, low, Jack and the game!" cried Alfred.

"Explain yourself less metaphorically, my dear Mr. Drewe, for I fear I am sadly obtuse!" lisped the Countess, playing with a profusion of glittering rings, adorning hands on which

ink, or some other stain, had left a very dirty impression. "Pray, explain yourself!"

"No, by George!—I never rise to explain—I leave that to my curate!" cried the Parson.

"But what say you, Shoreham?—Is it a go?" And Alfred began to whistle.

"My dear Mr. Drewe, you forget you are not in the kennel!"—said Lady Catalpa, with a tremendous glance, but infinite suavity of tone.

A retort rose to the Parson's lips, which he swallowed, without much difficulty; for the number of affronts he was daily required to digest at the Abbey, rendered him expert in the operation.

"Good morning, Alfred!" added Lord Shoreham. "Lady Catalpa and I are going to luncheon. By the way, if you are writing to Gus, pray mention that I'm sorry I can't accommodate him with the five hundred, about which he bores me by every post—I'm drained as dry as Bagshot Heath.—Let him apply to Baron Nebuchadnezzar Salfiore. He's your man

for loans.—I'm up to trap.—Good morning, Alfred. Look in at the kennel as you go home
In my humble opinion, Blanche wants blistering.—But I leave all that to *you*."

CHAPTER IX.

Sincerity is the most commodious wisdom, and an excellent instrument for the speedy dispatch of business. It saves the labour of investigation and brings things to an issue in a few words.

ADDISON.

MARGARET'S thoughts could not be wholly restrained from wandering into Kent. Miss Winston in her correspondence with her young friend, was wise enough not to abstain from allusion to the Woodgates;—she understood too well the magnifying powers of the imagination to envelop their name in mystery; and her letters informed Margaret that instead of fulfilling his intention of passing some

months at Hawkhurst, Sir Henry was accelerating the preparations for their instalment at Stokeshill. Several rooms were already furnished; and Mrs. Richard Dobbs, a person who contrived to intrude wherever intruders were most undesirable, circulated as the result of her peeping, that the wedding presents of the Grantville and Sullivan families to the young couple were magnificent. Miss Winston did not think it necessary to append Mrs. Dobbs' commentary to the text that "things were about to be done at Stokeshill on a different scale from the poor-spirited style of those Barnsleys; that to the library of carved oak was restored the armorial escutcheons of its groinings; and that although the family pictures of the Woodgates could never again be collected, Miss Agnes had dispatched a fine portrait of old Lady Woodgate in her velvet gown and coif, executed in Flanders, for which the present Lady Woodgate had obtained as companion a magnificent picture of her husband by Lawrence, which made the drawing-room look something like."

In lieu of this intelligence, Miss Winston merely remarked, "Lady Woodgate condescended the other day to give me a morning call. She never was a favourite of mine, and I liked her less than usual. Her opinions are too decided, and her manners twenty years in advance of her age. She is already altered for the worse; and as time is apt to confirm faults like hers, I expect that ten years hence she will become a peremptory disagreeable woman. Nature knew best in bestowing timidity of character upon youth. The progress of time remedies the defect, as it mellows the colours of a picture. My own Margaret who used sometimes to reproach me with not having overcome her shyness in company, has already acquired becoming self-possession; and by the time she has a daughter old enough to introduce into society, will perhaps attain the point of confidence from which Miss Sullivan started at eighteen."

Margaret smiled at the affectionate partiality of her friend; while her fancy readily supplied the details spared her by Miss Winston. She

could not help following Helen in her new *ménage*. She could not help tracing her from room to room,—from shrubbery to shrubbery ; in her own accustomed seat at Stokeshill church, in her own accustomed rounds of charity in Stokeshill village. She fancied her listening impatiently to the bavardage of Nurse Molyneux, and complacently to that of Mrs. Woods, the attendant of little Harry Woodgate. Margaret wondered how soon Agnes would arrive to take her part in the general joy. She wondered what had become of Khaled. She wondered how the new gardens were getting on. But she wondered without curiosity ;—she wondered with silence on her lips, and tears in her eyes !—

One day, when she had been ruminating these sweet and bitter fancies, Barnsley suddenly made his appearance. His last guinea was surrendered ; his certificate signed ; the estate of Closeman and Co. having paid twenty shillings in the pound. His looks were so haggard and wild, that in spite of their pre-determination, the good Heaphys could not

help extending their hospitality to their uncle ; and Barnsley readily agreed to dine with them. He had much to say to Margaret, and much to say to her trustee. Of the former, a great deal was unfolded in a *tête-à-tête* which occurred before dinner, when the host and hostess quitted them on hospitable thoughts intent ; and the result of his communications was apparent in the agitation with which Miss Barnsley entered the dining-room, where cousin John was decanting a bottle of port wine with due regard to its bees-wings.

“ I want to ask you an awkward question,” said she, “ and you are so great a lover of truth, that I venture to ask it in a straight forward manner. Have you and Mrs. Heaphy any thoughts of inviting me to live with you ?”—

John Heaphy set down the decanter with surprise. “ None in the world !” said he, “ for I know you stand in no need of a home. My establishment is not worthy of a young lady of your fortune. But were it in the possibility of events, Margaret, for you to wish

such a thing, my good woman and I would be as glad to have you as if you were born one of our own."

"Thank you—thank you,—you are too good to me!" cried Margaret. "My motive for making this abrupt inquiry is that my father is bent upon going abroad,—that I see plainly he does not wish me to bear him company,—that I am sure he would snatch at any offer of protection for me during his absence;—and that I heartily desire no such offer may be made. I am anxious to be with my father,—I *ought* to be with my father. None can feel that interest in his happiness which his daughter feels. I shall be patient with his infirmities,—I shall rejoice in his pleasures,—I shall study his comforts.—Whether he admit it or not, I know I shall increase his happiness.—Let me beg you, therefore, cousin, to warn Mrs. Heaphy against extending any mistaken kindness to me in presence of my father."

"And you are quite sure, Margaret," said John Heaphy, taking her two hands and looking her steadily in the face, " (for I have a

right to ask it of my ward,) you are quite sure this resolution springs from no hankering after the pleasures of foreign parts?"

"Quite sure."

"All young folks are fond of travel,—why should you be different from the rest?—Come—own it like a honest girl.—You want to see the world?"

"No! on my honour. Were all well with me and mine, I might indulge a wish to visit foreign countries; but as I speak in the presence of heaven, cousin, my *only* desire is to soften the trials of my father."

"You are a good girl!"—cried John Heaphy, relinquishing her hands to dash away a tear. "A noble girl! God will be with you, Margaret, whatever difficulties you may have to combat. Go in peace! You shall have every aid to forward your projects that John Heaphy can afford you."

And so it proved. When in the course of the evening Barnsley threw out a thousand baits for an invitation to Margaret to pass the winter at Clapton, the Heaphys were silent;

till at length, his hints became so evident, that his nephew suddenly broke out with—"ay—ay!—As you say, 'tis a hard thing for young folks to go tramping about the world without knowing whom they may have to put up with. But to my thinking, a roaming life's none the more creditable for their parents. And since 'tis a settled thing that you and my cousin Margery are only to be parted by death or matrimony, (for unless you share in the income the trustees are to pay to her separate hand, what are you to live on, I should like to know?)—take my word for it, uncle, the best thing were to let me look out for a nice snug place for you, hereabouts, where you might eat your mutton in quiet for the remainder of your days."

The threat was enough!—Barnsley saw that both Margaret and her trustee were determined to hamper him with her company; and he had the solace of feeling that while under his own eye, he should have better means of securing her from matrimonial speculators. He was startled, indeed, when Mrs. Heaphy

bantering her cousin, contrived to inform him that Margaret had lately refused a man with ten thousand a year and an impending title; but to the great amazement of his daughter, instead of advocating the cause of Edward Sullivan as she expected, he answered carelessly, "Margaret decided wisely. A man who has been once refused, never forgives the woman whose weakness relents in his favour. Margaret would have been an unhappy woman."

It surprised his daughter still more to observe how little he was affected by having seen Stokeshill in the enjoyment of the object of his former antipathy. Sir Henry Woodgate, it appeared, had deported himself so kindly and judiciously towards him, as almost to have pacified his resentments. Of all the people connected with Westerton, *he* was the one who offered least offence to the mind of Barnsley. The election was at hand, and the mortified man had made up his mind to proceed at once to Belgium in order to escape from the scene; and Margaret had the mortification to find that

within three days, before it was possible for her to receive on English ground a reply from Miss Winston to the announcement of her departure, they were to embark for Ostend. Her father seemed to appease the restlessness of his irritated spirit by this sudden movement. He evidently wanted to quit England and be gone.

Before the day of departure arrived, Margaret had a striking proof of the kindly feeling entertained towards her by her cousin. A comfortable travelling carriage was purchased for her use by John Heaphy.

“ I am a plain man myself, and bring up my family plainly,” said he, in tendering his gift, “ and were I to start for York to-morrow with one of the girls, it would be by the mail. But you, Margaret, have been reared with different notions ; and I see no cause why my ward (for so I choose to think you) with eighteen hundred per annum or thereabouts, is to be thrown pell-mell into the company of foreign papists and adventurers. You have a

right to be comfortably and respectably looked to, and so I have informed your father.”

“ But, my dear cousin, before I offer you my thanks for your kindness, let me once more entreat you to regard that money as absolutely my father’s.”

“ Once and for all, Margaret, understand that I shall pay into your father’s hands till you attain your majority, the interest — so long as he gives me a half-yearly receipt, specifying that it is for your use. After you are of age, or when you marry, you must receive it paid to your separate hand. The deed prolongs the trust for the interest of your children, and should you die childless, the whole reverts to your father; for old Winchmore took care to tie up the property, so that you could never lay a finger on it.”

“ I understand very little of it all!” sighed Margaret, “ though necessity has compelled me to turn my thoughts to such subjects.”

“ Fagg has been suggesting,” resumed Heaphy, “ that we have done very wrong not to make you a creditor upon your father’s es-

tate for the proceeds of Stokeshill, from the moment of your mother's death, when he ceased to have an interest in the property."

" But I resided with him at Stokeshill.

" A father is bound by law to maintain his child. However, no need to trouble *you* on that point, unless I establish my claim. You shall hear from me at Brussels."

The day of departure arrived; and Margaret, though grieved to part from such kind and genuine friends, was delighted to find herself reunited to her father. She felt some portion of their respectability in life returning, from the moment she found herself again under his protection. Barnsley's eagerness to be off was most remarkable. He seemed to have taken an aversion to the very soil of England; and never in the most palmy days of his many-sided fussiness at Stokeshill, was he more fidgetty, more eager, more busy, than when hastening their embarkation at Ramsgate. No sooner was the steam-boat in motion, than drawing a long breath, he threw himself on one of its wooden benches, as if

relieved from a heavy load of care and responsibility.

Even his daughter, thus encouraged, gave way to feelings of delight at the prospect of losing sight and sound of so much that was calculated to perpetuate painful recollections. There was no drawback to her joy at quitting England, saving the lonely situation of poor Miss Winston; and the good woman had expressed herself in her recent letters so reconciled to her lot, so gratified by the respect with which she had been welcomed into the little society of Westerton, that Miss Barnsley was forced to admit she was more appropriately settled, than if about to commence anew the pilgrimage of life.

To Brussels, meanwhile, the travellers took their way, with the intention of passing there the remainder of the winter. It was fine, sparkling, January weather. The novelty and cheeriness of the scene afforded a gladdening contrast to the sad monotony of their recent existence. As they passed the night at Ghent, Margaret could scarcely re-

press a momentary desire to view the mansion once inhabited by the exiled Woodgates. Agnes, she knew, had already quitted it for England ; and the house was probably on view. But what right had she to cherish an interest concerning the Woodgates ? —With a deep sigh, she upbraided herself with indulging such more than frivolous curiosity.—But as they travelled on towards Brussels the following day, a slight remark upon the quaint antiquity of the streets of Ghent, drew forth from Barnsley an avowal that he had risen betimes for the purpose of visiting the place alone.

“ As we seem destined to succeed each other,” said he, with a grim smile, “ I chose to acquaint myself with their abode. A gloomy dignified den,—just such as one can fancy to have been selected by old Sir Richard !”

“ It would not suit you then ?”—said Margaret, not daring to express all the interest she felt in the subject.

“ No matter whether it would or not. Miss

Woodgate intends to keep it. Her servants are still there. She is only gone to visit her nephew. The people of Ghent spoke of her as an angel.—I suppose they could not spare her to Sir Henry and his bride.”

“ Perhaps Miss Woodgate wished to retain a home of her own. There is nothing like independence !”

The word appeared to jar against the very soul of Barnsley. As it escaped his daughter’s lips, he turned towards her with an expression that chilled her blood. Involuntarily she breathed a prayer to heaven that she might never again behold such a look in the countenance of her father.

CHAPTER X.

New characters, new events, new principles, new passions ; a new creation arisen from the ashes of the old.

KIRVAN.

“Time rolls his ceaseless course,” sang poor Sir Walter—(and would that for him it could have remained stationary !) Years shake their dusty feet over our heads, whether the particles dispensed be of gold or arid sand. At the close of five winters from the time of their quitting England, Barnsley and his daughter were still resident in Brussels ; as a scattered seed, wafted by some chance

breeze, takes root lightly in a soil from which it is never more to be rooted up.

Their position in the world was now definite and stable. The antecedents of their life, if even known in the society of Brussels, had made no impression—they were in the enjoyment of a fortune, considerable in the country they inhabited;—they possessed a handsome residence in the park, an agreeable chateau in the environs; a good establishment of servants, carriages, horses;—but, above all, they commanded that respect and deference, which, if rarely conceded to merit in adversity, is just as seldom vouchsafed to splendid vice. To the triumphs of the vile, however brilliant, the homage of the public is invariably qualified; but there was no drawback upon the regard bestowed upon the Barnsleys.

Margaret had now attained her four and twentieth year, the crowning epoch perhaps of English beauty; and if lovely at eighteen, was now a thousand times more attractive. Her's was that high intellectual order of beauty which leaves a vague, but indelible impression;—and “the

mind—the music breathing from the face” might have conveyed the idea of a too lofty mental superiority, but for the exquisite sweetness, the serene repose, breathed by her expressive countenance.—There was grace in every movement of Margaret Barnsley,—melancholy in all her smiles. Her mind was far more cultivated—her manners more polished than of old. The noble and discriminating in Brussels were accustomed to cite her as the most distinguished of her countrywomen whose presence had ever graced their city.

In Barnsley, the lapse of years had effected changes still more remarkable. The habitual society and filial devotedness of his daughter, seemed to have exercised on his character the influence of a beneficent planet. He had grown mild, sedate, studious. His mind, relieved from the wear and tear of incessant business, had submitted to a more legitimate domination; and Margaret was at length rewarded by finding a friend, a companion, nay a counsellor in her father.

Miracles of this description are not however

accomplished by the stroke of a wand. It had needed time—it had needed patience—it had needed the interposing influence of Heaven—to soften that rugged heart into its present mood. The first year of their residence in Belgium, had been to Margaret a year of probation. Jealous, susceptible, starting at straws, her father seemed to misinterpret every word that fell from her lips. His moroseness and gloominess of spirit sometimes induced her to fear for his very reason. He could not *forget*, he *would* not forgive; care like a gnawing worm seemed to have fixed its tooth into his heart! — There was a constant restlessness, a perpetual anxiety about him. He did not sleep—he did not eat;—and the physicians whom in secret his daughter consulted, assured her that change of air and scene was indispensable. Margaret made it her personal entreaty, therefore, that they should travel. She affected a wish to see the world; and they proceeded into Germany, residing successively in all the cities of the empire. Every day brought its advantage. That which tended to

cultivate the mind of the daughter, served to subdue the heart of the father.

Out of reach of English associations, he seemed to gather strength and courage. The suit prosecuted by Heaphy and Fagg in behalf of Margaret's claims, instead of affording satisfaction, had irritated him to frenzy; and when this was not only decided, but decided in her favour so as to redeem upwards of thirty thousand pounds out of the hands of the Philistines, he had no further excuse for the accusations of officious zeal he had been bringing against his nephew.—From that period, his irritation began to subside.

The Barnsleys were passing the summer in Saxony, at the epoch of the Belgian revolution. During the first winter of their residence at Brussels, Margaret had received overtures of patronage from the Countess van Pierrsen, who would have delighted in the opportunity of parading in her own high circles, a beautiful and wealthy English girl, the daughter of a member of parliament, who had occupied, during Sir Henry's minority, the

ancient family mansion of her son. . But Margaret was too high-minded to place herself under the protection of the mother of Woodgate. She knew her own station, and determined to adhere to it. The object of her future life was not to gild over her mediocrity of birth, for the purpose of dazzling the eyes of the vulgar; but to restore peace of mind to her father.

On their return, two years afterwards to the spot from whence they started, the whole system of things was changed. The Countess van Pierssen and her royal patrons were gone to mope at the Hague; and in the new court of Leopold and his bride, these discrepancies and untowardnesses were visible, the immediate consequences of a revolution; but the salient angles of which are worn down by the friction of a few years "working of the system," like a macadamized road, ground into a smooth and consistent surface. So many of the equals, nay the inferiors of the Barnsleys, were warmly welcomed into the court of the citizen kingdom, that there was

every plea for a change of resolution. But Margaret was firm.

“ We have no pretensions to courtiership,” she would reply, in answer to the persuasions of the Vilains XIV, Merodes, and d’Arlembergs, who wished her to share with them the royal galas of the carnival. “ It is a sad argument in favour of my presentation, that others are received at court wholly unqualified for such a distinction.”

Some blamed her humility—some her pride ; but those who condemned her were delighted to form part of the brilliant circle collected round her by the charm of her beauty, and the fame of her fortune. All that was most eminent in Brussels gloried in an intimacy with *la belle Anglaise*.

A peculiar character had been impressed upon Margaret Barnsley by her disappointments in life.—Gentler than ever in her deportment towards others, she was rigidly stern towards herself.—Every part of their establishment which tended to the comfort or credit of her father, was studiedly handsome ; but for

herself, she indulged not in one idle luxury. She wore no ornaments; her dress though composed of rich materials, was invariably plain. She devoted to Miss Winston that portion of her fortune which she would have otherwise apportioned to superfluities; and it might have been inferred, from all this self-denial, that Margaret felt the necessity of some peculiar act of atonement. But it was not so. They had been on the verge of actual beggary; and her sacrifice was the sacrifice of gratitude to Providence, for having preserved her father from that sorest of straits.

Bright and prosperous too as was the land of promise she had achieved, one gloomy monumental cypress was springing in the choicest of its groves. Though to all the world her father appeared sedate, sensible, and cheerful,—though announced by the gossips of Brussels to every new-comer as “a most agreeable, well-informed, gentlemanly Englishman, formerly in parliament, and now devoted to studious pursuits,”—Margaret beheld

in the gray-headed, lank-visaged, thin voiced man who formed the object of her prayers to Heaven, a far different object from that apparent to the world. *She* saw a human being into whose soul the iron had entered, and was still rankling. She had not watched him, sleeping and waking with sensitive tenderness throughout their wanderings, without discovering that an interposing cloud subsisted between himself and Heaven. She dared not indeed attempt to lay her finger on the wound which thrilled him with such frequent anguish, though confident of its existence, as if the ghastly orifice lay festering before her eyes. In moments of his utmost parental tenderness,—of those softened moods of mind when some congenial aspect of nature seems to bring the Almighty into contact with his creatures—such as the hush of evening with its solitary star—the dim moonlight,—the breezy sweetness succeeding to a summer storm,—the majestic progress of an abounding river through plains devoted to the benefit of mankind,—she had seen him convulsed by sudden torture.—She

had seen her father gather himself up, corrected, from some expansion of happy feeling, as if he had no right to be glad,—as if he had *scarcely* a right to be good.

Margaret had not courage to ask herself what this might mean. Wounded tenderness or wounded conscience, alone impresses such permanent depression. Her father was not a man of much depth of feeling:—she dared not pursue the inquiry!—She must not even hazard a conjecture. But the result was not the less clear to her intelligent and upright mind. Her father cherished a secret sorrow in which he did not choose to claim her participation; and she felt that it became her to rejoice soberly in her mirth;—to bear her faculties meekly;—nor for a moment suffer herself to be unduly exalted by the flatteries of society.

For during their residence on the continent, the English heiress had found suitors innumerable. Not a city or bathing place they visited, but brought its Count or Baron to her feet; and at Brussels, when her excel-

lences were appreciated, she might have connected herself with more than one of her countrymen likely to satisfy even the exclusivism of a Lady Walmer.

But, “From Love’s weak childish bow she lived unharmed ;” and neither persuasion nor argument could shake her resolution to devote her future days to her father. If such a sacrifice had been voluntarily conceded while Barnsley was disregarding of her affection, how much more was it sanctified *now* when he seemed to live but in her presence ?—

The English newspapers had long announced the marriage of Lord Chilton of Brereton castle with the Hon. Mary Drewe, youngest daughter of the late Viscount Shoreham ; and though for Edward Sullivan she had never cherished a particle of what is called love, yet having sometimes feared that his perseverance and the force of early association might prove too much for her resolution, she rejoiced in the event. She felt assured that no other human being would obtain sufficient influence over her heart to obliterate the impression, real or ima-

ginary, created by the noble qualities of Sir Henry Woodgate.

Her self-gratulations were not diminished when the Chiltons passed through Brussels on their way to Spa, accompanied by Lady Shoreham and Lucilla Drewe. Edward was not improved by time and matrimony. Having little sympathy with his wife, he had fallen in love with himself for want of some other attachment; and was grown an egotist and an epicure. Lord Chilton passed his life in complaining of the rumpling of the rose leaf. He had always a d——d bad cook,—or d——d bad coachman,—or d———d uneasy carriage,—or tight boots, or even an East wind, or November fog, to swear at!—He wanted to find something wrong because things were going too right with him.—He was angry at having boys instead of girls. He was growing fat and Lady Chilton thin. He hated fat men and thin women.—Nothing so d———d unnatural as a woman shaped like a fish slice; and after meeting at Brussels the idol of his boyhood, more beautiful and more admired

than ever, he passed so fretful a fortnight, that poor Mary's attractions were diminished by another stone. Margaret smilingly congratulated herself, when Lady Chilton's diamonds, and Lady Chilton's distinction at court, excited the spleen of her father, that she had escaped being the *souffre douleur* of an idle, useless, Sybarite.

But the results of this renewal of acquaintance were not altogether satisfactory. Lady Shoreham, worn out by the bickerings of her daughter and son-in-law, having escaped early in the season from Spa, established herself at Brussels for the winter. She was now a declining dowager of moderate income; and Lucilla Drewe inclining towards thirty, sickly and fanciful. The hollow education she had received afforded her no consolation for the loss of youth and beauty. Ten years incessant practice of sonatas on the harp, and crow-quill copyings of *vers de société* into morocco albums, will weary even the flimsiest mind of such pursuits; and poor Lucilla could take refuge from her *ennui* only in some new vagary. Sometimes

she turned evangelical,—sometimes an invalid.—Sometimes the vacuity created by want of that legitimate object of interest—a happy home and family,—took refuge in the infinitesimal quackeries of homœopathy; sometimes in the polemics of some visionary,—raving himself into profitable notoriety. But whether saint or sinner,—sick or sorry,—she was consistent in rendering her mother the victim of her whims.

“ I am sure, my dear, I cannot guess what you do to preserve your sweet complexion!” said Lady Shoreham to Margaret, at their first private interview. “ I declare you are looking younger and prettier than ever.”

“ I have so many occupations,” replied Margaret, “ that I have no leisure to be ill.”

“ I wish I could extend the compliment to your poor father,” whispered the dowager, drawing forward the blonde cap over her rouged cheeks, arranging the false curls on her temples, and contracting her lips to conceal a splendid “ set” by Desirabode. “ Your father is shockingly broken!—Mr. Barnsley is

not fifty-five,—not more than fifty-three,—for he was two years younger than poor dear Lord Shoreham,—and I protest he is quite an old man! His hair is as white as snow.”

“ My father enjoys excellent health,” observed Margaret with a sigh.

“ Which makes the change in his appearance only more extraordinary. For I, who may certainly compliment myself on looking fifteen years younger,—(I *am* five,) have the most wretched constitution!—It is amazing what I go through! coughs that would wear down a giant; and fevers that scorch me to a cinder. Yet, as my maid often assures me, there has not been the slightest variation in my looks for the last ten years. I fancy that at a certain time of life, one comes to a standstill.”—

“ So long as we feel—”

“ And Lucilla!”—civilly interrupted Lady Shoreham, “ did you ever see such a wreck? By daylight, poor dear Lucilla is as yellow as a quince! and so drawn about the mouth—with those two wretched lines which Shoreham calls her parentheses.—So lovely as she was! There

is not a vestige of youth in Lucilla!—Hot rooms and ether!—The young women of the present day enervate themselves into premature old age.”—

“ Surely we ride and walk more than in the days of hoops, hair-powder, and high-heeled shoes ?”—

“ Ride and walk ?—My dear child, Poor dear Lucilla never leaves her room till two o’clock.”

“ But surely other women—”

“ Certainly not, my dear !”—interrupted Lady Shoreham, anticipating all to which she did not choose to listen. “ Look for instance at Lady Woodgate,—Helen Sullivan that was,—Mary’s sister-in-law. As poor dear Mary often says, (when Chilton finds fault with her for being delicate)—Lady Woodgate’s robustness will be the death of hundreds of her sex.—Lady Woodgate is a pattern-woman, and lives by rule; rises at seven,—breakfasts at eight,—scolds the maids, and teaches the boys at nine,—walks at ten, looks after her schools at eleven,—walks again at twelve,—sees the

children at dinner at one,—lunches at two,—rides from three to five,—dines at six,—teas at eight, and passes the rest of the evening in rational conversation; to bed at eleven,—and so forth, from year's end to year's end."

"A very reasonable routine of life," observed Margaret, trusting that the blushes into which she had been startled by this allusion to the name of Woodgate, were subsiding.

"Reasonable?"—As poor dear Lu and Mary often say, "they would as soon be an eight day clock!"—

"Lady Woodgate is probably very happy."

"More than one can assert of Sir Henry I suspect."

"Are they not supposed then to agree?"

"Lady Woodgate is too stately to quarrel; but there is little accordance of feeling between them! All the Sullivans are so proud!"

"Not more so, surely, than the Woodgates?"

"But unluckily, the Sullivans are proud and rich,—the Woodgates proud and poor; so that Helen's pride is constantly fretting

against her husband's. She was always opinionated; and now she is so dictatorial there is no bearing her."

"Is Helen as handsome as ever?"—

"Scarcely a vestige of good looks!—Women on her large scale grow bony when they lose the plumpness of youth. Her countenance is harsh, and her complexion coarse. There is a decidedness about her that is really *too* pronounced. She wants to give the law in our part of the country, as Lady Walmer does in hers. She can't bear people to be visited whom she does not think right and proper. It was entirely her insolence to that horrid Lady Catalpa, by the way, that roused poor dear Shoreham's mettle into marrying the woman; and between politics, and controversy, and one nonsense or other, Lady Woodgate has divided the neighbourhood against itself."

"With so happy a home, I suppose she feels independent of the opinion of the world."—

"Happy?—In my opinion it is anything but happy—I shall be very much surprised

if it do not turn out that she has led Sir Henry into expenses much beyond his means ; —as Lady Margaret observes, she is always for doing things as they are done at Hawkhurst with a fortune five times as large as that of the Woodgates. — Because her extravagance is methodical, she fancies it is not extravagant.”

“ Are their circumstances then involved ?”—inquired Margaret,

“ What else can be the cause of Sir Henry’s melancholy ?—You never saw a man more systematically out of spirits !—If it were not for that excellent creature Agnes, who is there like a halcyon on the troubled waters, he would lead a miserable life.”

“ Miss Woodgate resides with them, then ?—That is some sort of concession on the part of Helen.”

“ Of concession ?—My dear child, it is one of the worst features in the case ! If you could but see the studied civility of Lady Woodgate towards that poor woman,—the laborious effort with which the children are brought up to

recollect not to forget to be properly attentive to their papa's relation!—Never was duty more ostentatiously performed!”—

“ Poor Agnes !”

“ Ay poor Agnes !—Well may you say poor Agnes !—Her youth blighted by the severity, and her age chilled by the coldness of her relations.”—

“ Not of Sir Henry, I trust ?” demanded Margaret with more energy—

“ Oh, no.—Sir Henry really loves her, or she would not remain at Stokeshill.”—

“ She is probably attached to the spot by early reminiscences !” added Margaret with a heavy sigh.

“ Ah ! poor thing !—I could not help thinking, when she returned there, what a strange feeling she must have experienced in visiting the grave of that young man :—*she* a middle aged woman, yet retaining the freshness of feeling of that first attachment !”—

Margaret Barnsley involuntarily recalled to mind the pathetic incident of the disinterment of the young Swedish miner, after

an inhumation of sixty years, which had converted his still surviving mistress into a decrepit old woman. But it was not to Lady Shoreham she chose to indulge in the expression of sentiment.

It was in her heart, she pondered over these things, and grieved in silence over the still overclouded destinies of Woodgate.

CHAPTER XI.

Honour to him who in his fortunes hath the frailty of a man ; in his soul the security of a God !

SENECA.

THE society of Lady Shoreham and her daughter, if it did not increase the brilliancy of the circle of which the Barnsleys formed a part, served to revive a thousand associations at once painful and pleasurable to both father and daughter. For years, the high-toned mind of Margaret had existed in a world of its own. But the spell seemed broken by the arrival of Lucilla Drewe. That

mysterious laceration of spirit on the part of Barnsley which had so powerfully influenced the character of his daughter, gave way for a time on the renewal of his intimacy with his former friends. He seemed to recollect himself,—to draw himself up,—to assume the attitude he had formerly held, and had still in some degree a right to hold.—He threw aside his cares,—*threw* rather than *laid*;—for the effort with which so desirable a change was accomplished, served to damp the satisfaction of his daughter.

To the appeals made by Lucilla Drewe to her compassion, it was indispensable to lend a pitying ear. Lucilla, having no longer beauty or fashion to increase her importance, had been fain to take up with affectation!—

“Do, my dear soul, have mercy on us,”—said she, the first time she could gain the ear of Margaret unobserved, “and assist our *reconnaissances* of the *terra incognita* in which we are to pass the winter. You know all these horrid Brussels people by reputation, or want

of reputation ; pray take care that we do not admit anything *too* dreadful into our society !” —

“ I see no reason why you should not command the best society.”

“ Of course,—nothing can be easier ! I find from Sir William Walsh, the *attaché*, that *your* circle is one of the best.”

Margaret smiled at the inference.

“ No particular care has been taken to render it so. I flatter myself we have little attraction for those whom you term horrid people,—or they for us.” —

“ If I could but say the same of mamma !—*Our* house, my dear Margaret, wherever we go, seems to gather together insects and reptiles like the wicker-traps of tropical countries !—An English ladyship tells for something, you know, with the fifth rste order of English people one meets economizing in such places as Brussels, Florence, Tours ; and unluckily poor dear mamma has all a dowager’s *penchant* for being toadied.—The wretches have only to make up to her,—and she is ready to dine with them,—tea with them,—

écarter with them;—without considering how far her daughter may be compromised by being seen in such company.”

“ I am not aware of any disgraceful company into which Lady Shoreham is likely to fall,” said Margaret, scarcely able to repress a smile, so long it was since she had witnessed the grimaces of English finery.

“ Oh! as to *you*,—I am afraid you are as bad as mamma. I recollect you used to visit those abominable people at Westerton.”

“ I have no pretensions to exclusiveness.”

“ Why the embassy-people assure me you have refused the Prince of Greitz and one of the d’Oultremonts, and might command any society here you thought proper?”

“ I enjoy the society of those I find agreeable. Whether they belong to what you call the fifth rate order or the first, I never pause to inquire.”

“ My dear Margaret, that might do in London or Paris, where caste is so distinctly established. But in places where (as in the

times of those awful country dances in England, when the ladies' maids were called in to make up the couples,) society is not extensive enough to admit of selection—"

"Not of *fastidious* selection—"

"Margaret, Margaret!—I know something of the world. Brussels is the 'lady's last stake,'—the paradise of decayed beauties, and pinchbeck men of fashion. People get on at Brussels who cannot get on elsewhere."

"Then why attempt the risk of passing a winter here?"—demanded Margaret, longing to add: "we did extremely well without you."

"Oh! don't fancy the whim was mine. I would as soon settle in Van Dieman's Land!—I shall try to doze through our *séjour*, in the hope that mamma may economize *écus* enough during the winter, to carry us through next season in town."

But the dainty Lucilla soon found an occupation which rendered her blind to the flagran-
cies of the place. Prince d'Artenberg, one of

the most distinguished courtiers of King Leopold, appeared to surrender himself a captive to her charms ; and no one was at the pains to inform her that d'Artenberg, one of Margaret's unalienable adorers, had no other object in resorting to the mansion of Lady Shoreham, than that of seeking the society of the cruel idol of his affections.

Of the many who had honoured her with their homage, Margaret certainly preferred the Prince. He was a man past the enthusiasm of youth ; in whom it would have delighted her to confide as a friend, could she have induced him to renounce his pretensions as a lover. She had advised him to marry, in the hope of obtaining a valuable accession to the limited circle of her friends ; and on first noticing his advances to Lucilla, started at the idea that he was about to profit by her counsels. For it was not *such* a wife she had intended should fill up the measure of his happiness and her own !—Her confidence was great in the strength of mind

and delicacy of sensibility of the Prince. But she recollected how often wisdom itself is over-mastered by the infatuation which the weakest woman has power to inspire; and doubtful whether his better judgment would secure her sober friend from an indiscreet alliance, felt certain, that it must insure his bitter repentance. A word of warning, however, would be ungenerous towards her countrywoman; nor had she a right to dictate to d'Artenberg upon such a point.

“ I shall lose my friend,—I must be content to lose my friend !” exclaimed Margaret, reverting with regret to the pleasant hours of converse they had been wont to pass together at the little château of Groenenwald occupied by herself and her father during the summer months, where she had first become acquainted with the Prince, to whose magnificent domains it adjoined. “ The companionship of a man of elegant mind and rational pursuits promised to brighten the evening of my days, and render Groenenwald agreeable to my father. But no

matter!—I must reconcile myself to the loss, as I have to others more important. My life has been a life of resignations.”—

But poor Margaret's security of soul was exposed to sad assaults by the pretty, fanciful Lucilla. She was more jealous of Margaret *now*, than when Wynnex Abbey looked down upon Stokeshill Place; for Lady Shoreham, addicted like most frivolous old women to murmurs and complaints, was constantly pointing out to her daughter for emulation, the devotion of Margaret to her father, and for envy, her triumphs in society;—and Lucilla must have been something better than a vain, superficial, disappointed girl of fashion, to resist the opportunity of parading an important conquest before the eyes of her rival.

Even Barnsley was mortified to perceive the attentions of so distinguished a suitor transferred to any thing of the name of Drewe. He had often exhorted Margaret to accept the hand of her noble suitor. His own health was breaking. He felt that she might soon want a protector; and the mild contemplative

character of d'Artenberg seemed to mark them for each other. It was not now with John Barnsley as in the days when he had thrown the proposals of Edward Sullivan at the head of a daughter whom he regarded as a portion of his domestic goods and chattels. He knew her value now;—he knew her superiority over himself. He venerated her high principles,—he loved her gentle practices; and felt that it would be a comfort to him, in laying his dishonoured head in the grave, to bequeath her to the guardianship of one who held so high a place in the aristocracy of a country where he had affixed no stigma upon his child. Barnsley had long ceased to desire that Margaret should become the wife of an Englishman; and, when the letters of Heaphy reproached him with the protraction of his residence abroad, and the probability that it would consign his girl to the arms of a papist husband, he smiled contemptuously at the yearly increasing prejudices of his narrow-minded nephew.

When, therefore, in the course of the car-

nival, a splendid ball was given at the Hotel d'Artenberg of which the fair Lucilla was reported to be the object, Barnsley experienced a degree of vexation which he could not disguise from his daughter.

“ You well know,” said he, in a tone of despondency, “ how little I have attempted to bias your judgment in such matters. I tried to persuade you to become Duchess of Grantville; and experience soon proved the madness of having rejected such a settlement in life. From that period till now, I have refrained from influencing your choice; but I own it was my hope to see you eventually subdued by the deep devotion of Prince d'Artenberg.”

“ Deep indeed,” retorted Margaret, with a smile,—“ since a few advances on the part of Lady Shoreham and her daughter have made him their own. What have I to regret in so versatile an admirer?” —

“ It is your own doing,—it is all your own doing!—Your coldness, your hauteur threw

him into their hands.—Ah! Margaret, — I knew the arrival of those women at Brussels boded us no good. The name of Drewe seems to exercise an evil influence over my destinies. There is a fatal spell for *me* in every thing connected with Kent.”

“ Rather say, a fatal spell for our friend the Prince!” said Margaret, cheerfully. “ For *me*, dearest father, I am too happy and too independent to have a thought for such grievances.”

“ Say not too independent, Margaret,—it is tempting Providence!—I thought myself independent at Stokeshill;—and behold how it ended!—It *may* end so again!”

“ Unless a national bankruptcy should take place, our property is now secure.”

“ Nothing is secure in this world;” said her father;—“ nothing permanent! It will embitter my last moments, Margaret, if I do not leave you to the protection of some honourable man, whose arm will uphold you, and whose opulence surround you with comfort.”

“ I *am* surrounded with comfort!” cried

Margaret. "What can a reasonable being desire beyond what we are now enjoying?"—

"No matter!" exclaimed her father, with one of his gloomy expressions of countenance.

"If you would have me die happy, you must marry!"

Margaret listened without much alarm to this denunciation. Her father was scarcely past the prime of life. She still trusted to enjoy with him years and years of happiness. Her anxiety regarded rather the perils environing their friend, and the future comfort of their neighbourhood at Groenenwald. For Lucilla Drewe no longer alluded to a season in London, but shone as one of the finest of fine ladies at the court balls; while her dresses at the *bals costumés* so much in vogue at Brussels, were chosen from the pictures of Vandyke and Rubens gracing the splendid gallery of the Hotel d'Artenberg.

The season of satins and brocades at length fretted itself to a close; and Margaret, when she saw her little coterie gradually thinned

by the dispersion of its foreign members to the bathing places of France and Germany, began to hope that Lady Shoreham's economies had been successful; and took care to notice to Lucilla that the first drawing-room had put forth its plumage at St. James's, that the opera was in high force, and Almacks in full *éclat*; that Lady Walmer, who was now exercising for her lovely daughter, Lady Eva, the chaperonial care she had formerly bestowed on Miss Barnsley, already announced a ball; and that Lady Henry Marston, who had turned saint, was beginning her weekly expounding parties.—In short, it was time for those who were Londonly intent, to be moving.

But to these announcements, Lucilla listened unmoved. She cared no more for London than for the Sandwich Islands; and was waiting only to ascertain whether d'Artenberg's inclinations pointed towards Spa, Carlsbad, Baden, Wiesbaden, Barèges, or Lucca, in order to determine to which of the mineral springs of Europe she was to be indebted for her annual cure. And

when it appeared that, instead of hastening to either of these gaseous regions, the Prince was intent upon filling the Château d'Artenberg with guests to renew, upon the greensward the pleasures which had grown insipid on glossy parquets, uniting under his splendid roof, all that was distinguished in the circles of literature and the arts with all that was attractive of the diplomatic coteries, Lady Shoreham avowed her intention of passing the spring at Brussels. "It was too early for Spa. They must wait the arrival of their English friends."

Of course it was more agreeable to await them in the beautiful groves of d'Artenberg, than in the now deserted Hotel de Flandres. The Barnsleys were already settled at Groenenwald; and the first promenade suggested by Lucilla to the gay cavalcade which daily set forth from the portico of the Château, was to the little farm which Margaret's taste had embellished.

Even in that land of floriculture, Groenenwald stood renowned and the little domain,

consisting in a beautiful flower garden skirted by a wilderness and copse, was too limited for ambition to find a vacant spot to stock with cares.

Restored to her usual happy peace of mind by the renewal of her simple avocations, Margaret received the gay assemblage with graceful self-possession; and if for a moment she regretted that d'Artenberg had broken in upon their calm neighbourly intercourse of former summers by this brilliancy of hospitality, it was but justice to him to remember that it was her own interdiction which had put an end to his wanderings by her side under the lime groves, and the protestations of attachment with which he had so often interrupted her labours among her rose-trees. Since she had all but exiled him from Groenenwald, it was but natural he should strive to embellish his splendid solitude at Artenberg.

Still, it required patience to bear with the conceit of Lucilla in appropriating him to herself; and with the absurdity of the idlers of the party

who, persuaded that they beheld an impending Princesse d'Artenberg, could not sufficiently applaud the good taste of their host by their homage to the merits of his new dulcinea.

It was impossible, however, for d'Artenberg's unconcealable admiration for the Corinne of Groenenwald, not to excite uneasiness in her rival. Lucilla, not wholly at her ease, exhibited more than her usual share of affectation in the affability with which she condescended to admire the sweet little spot and patronize its Hamadryad. She had already striven to excite a disparaging spirit against Barnsley by whispering to the echoes of the Allée Verte, the secret of his origin and bankruptcy. But d'Artenberg listened unmoved. He knew from Margaret's lips that she was of obscure degree. But her high-minded humility created for her a station of her own; and in spite of his august pedigree and kinsmanship with kings, he felt her to be as much *his* superior, as that of all the Honourable Misses of Great Britain!

Never, indeed, had he felt more conscious

of her perfections than when, after some days' endurance of the empty finicalities of Lucilla Drewe and Lady Shoreham, he caught sight of Margaret in her dress of simple white, between the mossy trunks of her favourite beech trees,—a book in her hand and a smile upon her lips,—happy and happy making at Groenenwald! He could not accost her without emotion. He longed to make a boast of his forbearance with the heartless and frivolous tribe to which he was doing the honours of Artenberg for her sake. He longed to say, “you forbad me to make your house my daily haunt :—you refused to honour me with yours and your father's presence when alone at the château ;—admire with what a host of plagues I have surrounded myself in hopes to silence your scruples !”

Little, however, as the Barnsleys gave him credit for such motives, Margaret feared it might bear the interpretation of a paltry envy if she declined to take part in a brilliant entertainment which the Prince had projected to do honour to his English guests. There was to

be a regatta on the lake fronting the *Château*; and at night, *feux d'artifices* to illuminate the beautiful fountains and *châteaux-d'eau* for which the park of Artenberg is celebrated.—There was to be dancing, music, every thing which the gallantry of a *grand seigneur* could dedicate to the delight of his guests; and Lucilla and her mother, radiant with the consciousness of being queens of the *fête*, having seconded the Prince's invitation, compliance was inevitable.

Never had the fine avenues of Artenberg appeared so majestic in her eyes, as when accompanied by her father, she drove under the tufted shades of the chesnut trees on the appointed day!—May, with its opening roses and delicate verdure, was in its prime. The turf was enamelled with spring flowers. A pair of snowy swans were bridling on the lake, blue as the auspicious sky reflected in its waters. The park, lordly as was its distribution, had all that *riant* aspect which the most cheerful of English landscapes, seems to disdain; and there was a buoyancy in the atmosphere to which even the

heart of Margaret's care-worn father appeared susceptible. As they drew near the palace, of which the fine architectural *façade* was well thrown out by the noble groves sheltering its northern frontage, and discerned the spreading terraces ornamented with statues, and the fountains throwing up their silvery threads into the sunshine, Margaret could not forbear a momentary pang of regret that all this nobleness would be thrown away upon the frippery fancy of a Lucilla Drewe!

“Lady Shoreham may find something here to console her for the mean contraction of the landscape at Wynnex!” observed Barnsley with a bitter glance at the armorial bearings gracing the splendid seigneurial *grille*. “And all this, Margaret, might have been yours—”

“Had I not been contented with Groenenwald and my father!”—interrupted his gentle companion, imprinting an affectionate kiss upon his hand. “Do not reproach me for being contented with home; and least of all to-day, since we have come so far to smile and be merry.”

Barnsley replied by a deep sigh. In spite of himself and his child, there was heaviness in his heart !—

CHAPTER XII.

Just Heaven!—contract the compass of my mind

To fit proportion with my altered state;—

Quench those felicities whose light I find

Reflected in my bosom all too late.

WORDSWORTH.

THERE are moments in every human existence when the heart becomes susceptible of profounder interests and the mind of higher inspirations, than in the common career of life. Often as Margaret Barnsley had been welcomed to that princely domain, never before had she contemplated its magnificence with reference to the importance it might confer on its possessor as an ornament to society, and a benefactor to mankind. In traversing the marble hall, whose

Corinthian columns overlooked a hundred breathing statues of Parian marble, it occurred to her how much such opportunities would be thrown away on the frivolous fair one to whose rule the domains of Artenberg were about to be submitted. She regretted it not for herself, but for the Prince and the country of which she was an adopted daughter.

Yet never had Artenberg welcomed her to his house with more devoted reverence. Appreciating too well the proud feelings of Margaret to render her an object of observation, he testified his regard by the respect and precedence accorded to her father. Arm in arm with his noble neighbour, Barnsley was warmly greeted into a group of the highest of the Belgian *noblesse*, among whom his English proficiency in rural economy was regarded as an invaluable acquisition. It was impossible for Margaret to forbear a glance of triumph towards Lady Shoreham, to ascertain whether *she* observed the consideration which, even in his decadence, waited upon her Kentish neighbour.

But Margaret was not allowed to remain a mere spectator. Simple and sensible, she was a universal favourite. The young respected,—the old loved her.—From the twaddling dowager to the prattling girl of fifteen, all had their welcome for one from whose lips they were secure from flippancy,—from whose brow, from sullenness.—*La belle Anglaise* was so mild, so forbearing, that even that bigot race forgave her protestantism ; so bright, so distinguished, that even the highest and mightiest pardoned her ignoble birth.

As the pleasures of the day proceeded, Artenberg could not refuse himself the gratification, or her the justice, of leading her to the prow of honour in his gay flotilla, and selecting her to open the ball. “*Ma charmante voisine*” had however so often been honoured before with similar distinctions, that no surprise was excited among the Belgian beauties, and no indignation among the Belgian dignitaries. Aware of his preference, nothing appeared more natural than such a distinction offered to the lady of his thoughts ; and they ex-

pected from Lady Shoreham and her daughter a similar approbation of the honours enjoyed by their lovely countrywoman. But Lady Shoreham was suffering from the *migraine* which poor dear Lucilla always took care to inflict upon her mother.

The evening was an evening of peculiar happiness to all but themselves.—The *fête* proved highly successful; for the visitors, alive to the charm attendant on every entertainment connected with the opening summer, were in the mood to be delighted. Barnsley was overjoyed by the homage rendered to the pride and solace of his days; and even Margaret was pleased at being convicted of injustice towards the good taste of a friend whom she esteemed. She gradually lost all fear of an unsatisfactory neighbour at Artenberg.

This discovery imparted, perhaps, unusual graciousness to her manner; for the Prince was evidently as much pleased with his guest, as she with her host; and, as he led her to her carriage at midnight,—the sober period of most continental festivities,—he could not refrain

from whispering a request for permission to visit Groenenwald the following day. Margaret appeared to hesitate; and it was from her father's interference that he received a warm assent to his petition.

Nearly three miles of a road leading through the forest of Artenberg, intervened between the Château and Groenenwald. Barnsley, on entering the carriage, had determined to devote that interval to the renewal of his exhortations to his daughter. But when he found himself seated by her side, with her hand pressed in his, and recollected that the counsels he was about to offer were to interpose a third person between them for evermore, his voice became inaudible; and the cold tears chased each other down his careworn face, as he mused in silence upon the past, the present, and the future.—It was a relief to both when the delicate fragrance of the limegrove adjoining their home, diffused through the still night air, announced that they were close upon Groenenwald,—calm, quiet, sacred Groenenwald!—

The gates flew open as the carriage approached; and, on entering the drawing-room where lights were burning, though through its still open windows, breathed the fresh fragrance of the flower-garden, they were agreeably surprised by the sight of letters from England lying on the table.—Margaret was about to retire to her room, to give her whole attention to one of Miss Winston’s valuable, friendly, motherly letters, when an ejaculation which burst from her father’s lips, arrested her departure.

“ Good God!—my brother arrived in England?—*ill*, too,—in a precarious state?”—cried he; and Margaret taking a seat by her father’s side, waited till he should have completed the perusal of this startling communication.—But, on coming to the close, Mr. Barnsley fell into a reverie little favourable to communication. He sighed deeply,—repeatedly;—and, after a pause, slowly re-perused the letter in his hand.—

“ Yes,—I fear I must go!”—was his first

comment on the intelligence so unexpectedly received.

“ *Go ? — To England ?*” inquired Margaret.

“ To London ! Your uncle Clement’s confidential servant writes me, by his desire, that his master quitted India in February in a dying state, and, though improved by the voyage, has probably only a few weeks to live—perhaps only a few days. He wishes to see me, Margaret. We have not passed through life in brotherly affection, such as ought to bind together, even though parted by time and space, the sons of one father and one mother. I would gladly exchange words of kindness with him on this side the grave !” —

“ Is it not strange that the Heaphys have never written to apprise us of his arrival ?—”

“ They ought to have done so. They perhaps studied their own interest by surrounding poor Clement at such a moment exclusively with their own family.” —

“ No !” —replied Margaret, firmly. “ My

cousin John is the most upright of men. Believe me, he is altogether superior to so vile a motive.”—

“ It is but natural,—nay, it is but right that he should have considered in the first instance the interest of his own children.”

“ Not in the *first* instance. His first duty, was to *himself*,—the duty of integrity !”

Barnsley rose abruptly from his seat. “ No matter what the motive of his silence.—It is clear that poor Clement’s servant has written by his master’s orders.—They are at an hotel in Albemarle Street.—I have no time to lose.”

“ When do we start, then ?” —inquired Margaret.

“ I shall send for post horses that I may reach Brussels by daylight. I must have a passport—I must get money from the banker’s.”

“ We have enough, I fancy, in the house,” observed Margaret. “ I will have the chaise-seat carried to your room,—the imperial will be sufficient for myself.”—

“ You do not surely think of accompanying me ?”—inquired Barnsley, aghast.

“ Not *accompany* you, my dear father ?”—inquired Margaret, with unfeigned surprise. “ And why not ?—you know how long I have been anxious to visit England,—to take a last look at my dear infirm old friend,—to see the good Heaphys ;—you know how reluctantly I have submitted to your aversion to the journey.”

“ Yes !—I own myself averse to such an expedition,” replied her father. “ But a dying brother has sacred claims upon me. I *must* go !”

“ And *I* !—Indeed, dear father, I *must* bear you company. It is now six years since we lived a day apart. I could not bear the separation. You are not so young, not so strong, as you used to be. I should be in hourly uneasiness during your absence ; and *you*,—(yes ! vain as it sounds, I am convinced of it), *you* would be in hourly want of your daughter !”—

“ I should, indeed, my dearest Margaret,”

replied Barnsley, his voice tremulous with emotion.—“ But we must not always indulge in selfish considerations. I cannot be blind to the state of affairs between yourself and the Prince; nor shall anything induce me to create an obstacle to the happy termination of a connexion which is the dearest object of my life. Were you to quit Belgium, it is impossible to guess what mischief might be conjured up against you by those two foolish Wynnex women.”

“ What could Lady Shoreham or her daughter do or say, to bias the opinions of the Prince, which they have not in all probability said or done already?”

“ No matter. Every thing is now in train for an immediate conclusion. Make me happy, Margaret. Remain quietly here; and let the first tidings that reach me in London be the news of your engagement to Prince d’Artenberg!”

“ But surely, dear father, you must perceive,” answered Miss Barnsley, harassed and

uneasy at his persevering opposition, “that were I to remain alone at Groenenwald, it would be impossible for me to receive visits from our friend, either in his own house or this?—”

“Why impossible, Margaret?—You are a woman in years,—a sage in prudence.—Why not see him as usual?”

“Because the foreign world is more rigid than our own; on points of propriety I should be taxed with want of deference to the decurms of life.”

“Since you are so prudish,” resumed her father, almost with a smile, “invite Lady Shoreham and her daughter to become your inmates?”

“They would not come; and even were I to make so great a sacrifice of comfort——”

“At least,” cried Barnsley, peevishly interrupting her, “you will admit that a visit to Clapton would be somewhat less likely to accelerate the object I have at heart, than a residence at Groenenwald; where, if debarred

from seeing you, the Prince would have hourly cognizance of your movements.—”

“ My dear father—your earnestness requires me to be more explicit !”—replied Margaret, firmly. “ Apprehensive of giving you pain, I seem to have encouraged the unlucky error into which you have fallen. Yet such was not my intention. I have never wished to deceive you. I must not suffer you to deceive yourself. Know, therefore, that after the most mature deliberation,—after vainly struggling with my feelings,—after labouring to persuade myself that the time was come for accepting so moderate a share of happiness as awaits the woman wedded to one whom she may esteem but cannot love,—I have made up my mind to decline once more, and for ever, the proposals of Prince d’Artenberg. Nay, I am satisfied that I could even better bear to see our good friend unhappy as the husband of Lucilla Drewe, than render him so myself by my indifference.”

“ You intend in short to refuse him !—Un-

happy girl!—What *right* have you thus to trifle with your happiness,—*with mine*?—Margaret! my health has long been declining! You must perceive it, child. You *must* see that infirmities of mind and body are hastening me towards my end. My brother, you hear, is on his death-bed;—a few short months, dear Margaret, will bring me to mine! Judge, then, what comfort it would have afforded my closing eyes, to fix them, in my last moments, upon the prosperity of my child!—”

“What prosperity can I desire more than that with which Providence has blessed me?”—faltered Margaret, pressing her father’s folded hands to her bosom, and moistening them with tears;—“do not—do not afflict me thus.”

“Still, you will need protection!” replied Barnsley, affected by her emotion, but not to be entreated from his purpose. “You are young, beautiful;—will *you*, who fear to pass a few poor weeks alone at Groenenwald, confront unsupported the trials and perils of the

world?—No—no, Margaret; no—no, my poor dear daughter!—I cannot leave you unprotected.—I cannot die in peace unless I see you the wife of——”

Margaret threw herself into his arms,—perhaps to forestal his declaration. “Grant me but a short time longer for reflection,” she whispered. “This visit to England may bring about strange changes in our destinies. Do not deny me the happiness I have long denied myself—a short renewal of intercourse with those I love.”

“Be it so!”—replied Barnsley, releasing himself from her clasping arms. “I have no right to deny any gratification to the most dutiful of children,—to the child who has denied me nothing; yet I confess I should have been glad to use more expedition and privacy on my journey than is compatible with the presence of a female companion.”

“My dear father,—you know how indifferent I am to fatigue or personal inconvenience!”

“It was not *that* I meant!—No matter!

If evil should come of the journey, do not accuse me of having exposed you to it. And now," he added, interrupting himself as if apprehensive of being betrayed into saying more, "the sooner we commence our preparations the better."

The servants were summoned, and orders given concerning post-horses. It was decided that no attendants should accompany them. The house was given in charge to a confidential *maitre d'hotel*, who had been in their service throughout their residence on the continent; and to *him* Margaret consigned a note of apology to be delivered to Prince d'Artenberg, when he should visit Groenenwald on the morrow. All these matters arranged, Margaret lay down to rest, leaving all further preparation for the journey to the care of her attendant.

She lay down to rest,—she even slept;—but her slumbers, instead of yielding refreshment to her over-excited mind, brought painful and disquieting dreams. The scenes around her were still around her in her sleep, but not as

when her eyes had closed upon them. She was still at Groenenwald; but Groenenwald was a scene of horror and dismay. Strange faces seemed to surround her, united with the familiar faces of her servants, changed and rendered strange by insult and mockery. All was disturbed and disordered, as at Stokeshill in the day of its desolation. She seemed to rush for explanation to her father's room; and, on arriving there, instead of finding Mr. Barnsley quietly sleeping, he was sitting bound in a chair, while rough-looking men ransacked the papers in his desk and secretaire. He was weeping. Yes! there were actually tears of distress—of despair, upon the old man's withered cheeks!—

Margaret started from her pillow at the sight.—She was wide awake.—She found tears upon her *own* cheeks, wrung from her heart by sight of her father's distress.

“How absurd are dreams!”—she murmured half smiling to herself to find her grief imaginary; “or rather, how absurd their in-

'fluence over the mind ! As to the illusions themselves, what can be more natural than that the anticipation of our return to England should summon up associations of mortification and regret !”

She rose. Day was already breaking. Involuntarily she turned her eyes towards her father's window, which was overlooked by her own ; and through the half-drawn curtains, could discern him seated beside his secretaire ; while every now and then a sudden blaze from the fireplace announced that the occupation which, on the eve of a harassing journey, had thus induced him to sacrifice his repose, was the destruction of papers. Mr. Barnsley appeared to be setting his house in order, previously to his departure from the place.

Unwilling to intrude upon his privacy, Margaret dressed herself in haste and hastened to the garden, among whose lime trees the early bees were at work and the black-bird chaunting his matins. Not a soul was yet stirring. All was solitary, sweet, and

gracious. The vines were just in flower on the espaliers; and Margaret repeated to herself, almost aloud, that long before their fruit was clustering she should be again at Groenenwald!—

CHAPTER XIII.

Old crimes to be expiated,—mysterious circumstances to be cleared up,—a fearful future to be hinted at, involved in a fearful past.

COLERIDGE'S "WORTHIES."

FOR the first few leagues of their journey towards the coast, both father and daughter were too much dispirited for conversation. They were quitting home only for a few weeks; but it was so long since they had uprooted themselves from their happy hearth, and Groenewald was now in such perfection of rural beauty, that it was like quitting a bride upon her marriage day, or a first-born child nestling in its first day's cradle.

Nor was it till they had passed through Brussels and encountered the stir and bustle of business, that the spell of their reverie was broken. But the Préfecture de Police and banker were to be visited. Margaret suggested that in Colonel Barnsley's critical state of health, they might experience some sudden necessity for expenditure; while all that her father seemed anxious to impress upon her mind, was his desire to make as little display as possible during their stay in England, and attract as little attention. Attributing this soreness of feeling to the consciousness of his former humiliations as a bankrupt, his daughter was prompt and earnest in repressing his misgivings.

On the following night, as they drew near the continental close of their journey, Miss Barnsley fancied that the perturbation of her father's mind was aggravated by approaching the scene of his former humiliations. He ceased to talk of his brother, who throughout the journey had engrossed his thoughts. He ceased to revert to Groenenwald, to d'Arten-

berg, or the friends they were leaving behind ; but, on entering the hotel at Ostend, seemed absorbed in reminiscences of remoter times. The eventful day when they had first set foot upon the Flemish shore, was to him as yesterday. All intervening scenes or interposing persons were forgotten ;—forgotten his own broken health and altered temper of mind. He was again John Barnsley the bankrupt,—flying from the sight of Stokeshill Place,—flying from the Westerton election,—flying from the contemplation of his misfortunes !—

To Margaret, the same recollections occurred,—but they occurred for joy and exultation. *She* could not but recal to mind the hard and impenitent spirit in which the mortified man had rebelled against the chastening of Heaven, and view with admiration and gratitude the spring of pure water which the touch of the prophet's rod had called forth from the flinty rock. It was now as she could desire with the father whom her soul loved. The world was no longer all in all. He was humble, penitent, tender,—bearing and for-

bearing,—giving and forgiving,—loving and deserving love. He sometimes seemed to smile with contempt at the recollection of the enthralling charm which the mean interests of life had once usurped over his mind, ere he learned that true happiness resides in the interchange of human affections, in the power of doing good to those we love, and the occasion of receiving good at their hands. When Margaret Barnsley called all this to mind, a flush of joy brightened her cheek.—“How differently now,” she thought, “will the Heaphys feel towards my poor father;—how differently will my father himself feel towards poor Miss Winston!—”

If occasionally a thought of Stokeshill Place glanced into her mind, even *that* was now redeemed from mortifying associations.—Margaret of Groenenwald was a very different being from the timid, sensitive Margaret of Wynnex Abbey. By her recent modes of life and progress of character, she felt raised to the level of the Woodgates; she knew herself

to be as high-minded, as noble in heart; and had learned to understand that true nobility consists in that dignity of mind, which Herald's offices can neither give nor take away.—She felt that she could no longer humble herself in spirit before Helen Woodgate! But when the consciousness of this new and presumptuous mood of feeling developed itself in her mind, she checked herself as for a sin, and turned her thoughts elsewhere;—to the joy of being clasped in the venerable arms of her friend,—and of sitting at the board of those who had been her help and stay in time of trouble.—

They sailed. England was soon in sight; and Barnsley's daughter felt the blood flush to her face as she caught the first sight of her native shore. The sound of its familiar tongue would be again in her ears; the aspect of its sweet familiar faces once more before her eyes. *Would they could* summon up around her the hopes and illusions of her youth!—

The moment of disembarkation from a packet

is too much harassed by hurry and importunity, for almost any incident to appear extraordinary. Still, it *did* strike Margaret with surprise as she was ascending the ladder from the deck to the pier, that a strange shabby-looking man should exclaim to another as he stood behind him,—“Here he is, by Jingo! That’s old Barnsley in the cap!—”

Arrived on *terra firma*, however, she was too vehemently assailed by the agents of the various hotels, to take further note of the individual by whom the exclamation was uttered. The idlers around her were commenting aloud and without ceremony upon her beauty: while ejaculations of “Be this here, your Russia leather case, marm?”—“I say Jim, strap the myhogyny box upon that ’ere truck, for the Ri’al!”—beset her on every side. She was glad to take her father’s arm, drop her veil, and follow the commissioner as speedily as possible to their hotel.

Condemned to an hour’s delay, while the

carriage was landed and their effects passed through the Custom-house, the travellers sat down quietly to breakfast,—Barnsley having the vast mainsheet of the Times outspread between himself and his daughter, and Margaret having her eyes fixed on that long forgotten object,—an English tea urn — when the waiter entering the room with an air of dismay, suddenly addressed a half-whisper to Miss Barnsley.

“ If you please, ma’am, p’raps you’d better step into your own room. The officers won’t be kept from coming in,—and may be ’twould be disagreeable to you to be present.”

“ The Custom House officers, papa!” said Margaret, in reply to the inquiring looks of Barnsley. “ I was not aware that they had a right to search the persons of travellers. Pray let them come in!” she added, addressing herself to the waiter. “ I have no smuggled goods in my possession.”

“ Bless your ’cart, ma’am, it ben’t the Custumus officers !—”replied the man, with

flippant familiarity. "The Custumus never meddles with gentlefolks as puts up in an hotel like ourn."

"What is the meaning of all this?" inquired Barnsley, laying down the newspaper, on finding that his daughter misunderstood the intimation she had received.

"Why the meaning is, Sir, if so be you insist on my speaking out afore the lady, as the sheriff's officers have made their way into the hotel, (which is what we're by no means in the 'abit of 'aving 'appen within the doors of such a house as ourn!) and they talk about having a special warrant out again you, Sir."

"You are under a mistake," replied Barnsley, calmly. "I am just arrived from the continent in the Ostend packet, and have not been in England these six years. You are under a mistake."

"No mistake!" replied the waiter, with a grin. "Them chaps are fellows too much up to trap, to make a miss of their man."

"Get out of the room, Sir!"—cried Barns-

ley, incensed by his familiarity,—“and be careful another time how you take these liberties with a stranger.”

The waiter, enraged rather than abashed by this reprimand, retreated only so far as the door; and, having beckoned to some persons in the hall, the two men noticed by Margaret on the pier pushed their way into the room, followed by a third person, of a somewhat higher class of life, who bent down on his entrance towards the baggage standing near the door, and read aloud the superscription of “John Barnsley, Esq.”—then exclaimed with a knowing wink to the waiter—“Ay, ay! all’s straight!—I knew we were on the right lay.”

Astonished beyond expression at these proceedings, Margaret did not notice that the first man who entered the room had his hand upon her father’s shoulder. The only sound she heard was Mr. Barnsley’s exclamation of “Arrest me?—you are under a mistake!—Take care what you are about.”

“No fear o’ that, Squire Barnsley,” replied

the man.—“ I recollect you well enough, though you be too great a gen’leman to remember the likes o’ me. Mayhap you’ll just give a hint to the young lady to make herself scarce, and then we’ll proceed to business.”

“ There is some misunderstanding which will be immediately cleared up,” said Barnsley, addressing the terrified Margaret. “ Retire, my love, to your own room, and I will let you know when these people are gone.”

“ When these people be gone!—I say, Ben, that be a good’un—eh?”

“ Let me remain with you, father,” faltered Margaret; and, perceiving Mr. Barnsley’s countenance assume a ghastly paleness, she hastily filled him a glass of water. “ Let me remain with you.—You know I am not nervous.—If you send me away at such a moment, I shall be miserable!—”

And retiring from the table, she seated herself in the window seat with such an air of resolution, that the men seemed to make up their minds to her presence.

“ You ha’nt kept us long on the wait, Mr. Barnsley,” said one of the men, in an insolent tone. “ We’ve only been on the look-out sin’ last night. Muster Adams there, (hallo, Ben! —come for’ard and show yoursel to an old acquaintance,) Muster Adams said you was as sure to run on the springe, as a weazle into’s hole.”

“ Produce your warrant,” said Barnsley, in a low composed voice, apparently apprized by the presence of Closeman’s former clerk, Ben Adams, the nephew of old Dobbs, of the nature of the charge against him. And, after casting his eyes upon the document, the man of business at once recognized its authority.

“ A special warrant, Squire, signed by old Parson Drewe and young Squire Holloway, observed one of the men.

“ Where am I to go,—whither are you to conduct me?” he demanded, with the same unnatural composure.

“ Bless you, Squire, you seem to have left your wits in forrun parts! —To Maidston, Sir, to be sure,—and may be a’terwards to

jail, where you've sent many a good fellow in your time; and more by token my own father's son—a better nor ever stood in your shoes—for having a hare or two in his possession; only he wur 'quitted innocent as the child unborn at the werry next 'sizes, (which is more I take it than you'll be yourself, tho'f you should bide in quod till doomsday!) So now you've my mind upon the matter!—”

“ Hold your tongue, Sandys; you have no right to be saucy,” said his companion, reproaching the Westerton constable who was paying off his private grudges, “ I advise you to mind your manners, or the Bow Street gentleman what'll be here immegently, will make you sing small.”

At this announcement, Barnsley experienced a gleam of satisfaction. Of Ben Adams he entertained a deep-rooted detestation; and his memory was by this time sufficiently refreshed to recollect Bill Sandys the constable, as one of his most strenuous Westerton antagonists. But a Bow Street officer being comparatively what he was pointedly designated by Bill

Sandys's coadjutor, "a Bow Street gentleman," he waited in earnest expectation of the arrival of one who might perhaps be conciliated to some stretch of courtesy.

But when Goddard the officer entered the room, and Barnsley proffered his request of being conveyed to Maidstone through London, as he had an only brother on his death-bed, a smile passed over the face of the experienced official, seconded by a burst of laughter from Sandys and Adams.

"I say, Ben!—the bait took, 'e see?"—cried Sandys. "The Squire ra'ally believed that'ere letter of yourn war writ by his brother!—Ho!—ho!—ho!"

"Don't put yourself into no sort of trouble on the Colonel's account, Mr. Barnsley," added Adams. "The Colonel's safe, sound, and blazing hot in Calcutta!—'Twas the solicitors of Closeman and Co's. estate, who, having a word or two to say to you in public, put Mr. Richard Dobbs up to a decoy.—No offence, I hope?"

"Enough!"—exclaimed Barnsley, tortured

by the idea that expressions such as these should reach the ears of his daughter. "It is not to *you* I have to exculpate myself. The unjustifiable means by which you——but no matter!—You will have no objection, Sir," he added, addressing Goddard, "to my proceeding to Maidstone in my own carriage, which will be here in less than an hour?"

"None in the world, Sir, if you prefer it. I should recommend, however, for privacy's sake, a hack-chaise. But just as you please. You are of course aware, Sir, that I must accompany you;—that neither myself nor these gentlemen must lose sight of you?—I wish to impose no unnecessary restraint. But my duty requires me not to quit you, till I deposit you in the custody to which at present you stand committed."

"Sir, I offer no resistance,—I make no complaint,"—replied Barnsley, faintly, but steadily. "I only request that you will dismiss those persons for a moment, that I may have a few minutes' interview with my daughter."

"Wait without;—I have my eye upon the

gentleman;—all's safe!" said the London official, motioning with an air of authority his provincial brethren to retire; and retreating to the further corner of the room; ostensibly directing his attention to a splendidly framed portrait of the Duchess of Kent and Princess Victoria, which formed the prospectively loyal ornament of the apartment.

But when Barnsley, relieved from the hateful presence of the myrmidons of the law, turned from the table on which he had been leaning, towards the window-seat into which Margaret had sunk at the commencement of that dreadful scene, he saw at once that his alarm lest his daughter's feelings should be wounded by the insolent coarseness of his foes, was superfluous. Margaret was insensible to what was passing before her. She had not fainted. She sat stiff, and cold, and pale as marble;—her eyes fixed,—her lips motionless. She had watched with the most intense agony the expression of her father's countenance. It was *there* she was to read his sentence of "Guilty" or "Not guilty,"—not in the award

of the law ; and the moment she discerned from his mournful submissiveness of deportment, that the accusation sufficiently serious to deprive him of liberty, was not groundless, despair came upon her soul !—Her heart died within her !—The past was revealed to her as by an electric influence ;—her father's mental agonies,—his secret remorse,—his premature decrepitude,—all was now explained !—

At that moment, Barnsley was moving sedately across the room ; but, when his impaired sight discovered the ghastly immobility of his daughter, he rushed towards her, encircled her frantically with his arms, and clasping her wildly to his bosom, called aloud upon her name.

“ Margaret !—my child !—speak to me !—answer me ! ”—he cried. But Margaret answered not, nor heeded his impetuous endearments.

“ Great God !—her senses are bewildered !—She is dying—she will expire ! ”—cried Barnsley. And the kind-hearted officer, who had purposely averted his eyes from them, and con-

cluded that the passionate exclamations which partially reached his ear were such as he heard called forth, only too often, by the frightful scenes he was in the habit of witnessing, now crossed the room to his assistance; and perceiving, in a second, the almost palsied condition of the young lady, flew to the door to despatch the persons waiting without, for female assistance and medical advice. But, before either could be procured, Margaret, clasped again and again to the bosom of her miserable father, and sprinkled with water by the well-meaning zeal of her attendant, became gradually conscious of her situation. The fixedness of her eyes,—the rigidity of her muscles relaxed;—and, raising her hand, she passed it softly and caressingly over her father's face.

“Thank God!—She knows me!—She is coming to herself!”—cried the unhappy man. And thus released from his worst apprehensions, his sense of his own degraded position returned; and involuntarily he wrung his hands in bitter anguish. “Yet why,—oh! why

should I wish her restored to the knowledge of her father's wretchedness,—her father's shame!" faltered Barnsley. And, kneeling down beside his noble child, he took her two hands in his and bathed them with his tears.

Goddard, meanwhile, having received at the door the requisite restoratives for the sufferer, and with considerate delicacy declined in her name the attendance which in his momentary panic he had summoned, kept lingering as far as possible out of sight and hearing of the tender exhortations passing between the father and his child.

"My Margaret,—support yourself!—for *my* sake, exert your fortitude!—All will yet be well.—I promise you that all shall yet be well!—"

"Do not think of *me*?"—murmured her hoarse accents in reply. "Think of yourself!—What is to be done?—*Whose* help is to be summoned?—whose justice—whose mercy invoked?—Father! I dare not ask who is your enemy—I dare not inquire the nature of your peril!—"

Barnsley moaned heavily—as if all explanation was impossible.

“But if it be *thus*,” resumed Margaret in French, hoping not to be understood by their companion, and inferring from her father’s gestures the guiltiness of his cause;—“if it be *thus*, we have a resource.—I am rich,—you have often reminded me of my independence. Surely my fortune will buy off these people.—Escape is still possible.—A packet is about to sail for Dunkirk. In a few hours, you might be in safety, and the secret of your arrival in England would never transpire!”

Barnsley shook his head.

“You know nothing of such matters,” he replied. “The fellow Adams has more at stake than any bribe in our power to offer. No, Margaret!—I must submit!—I must bear my cross in humility;—I must go through with my appointed trial. Do not despair. My worst pang in parting from you, Margaret, arises from the necessity of leaving you to pursue your journey unprotected.”

“*Leaving me?*”—reiterated the trembling girl.

“ Ah ! why were you not persuaded ! Why did you persist in quitting Groenenwald ! Horrible forebodings even then apprized me of the evil that has befallen us !”

“ Rather let us thank Heaven you have not been suffered to meet them alone.”

“ Half their bitterness had then been spared me !” ejaculated poor Barnsley.

“ No, no father !—You cannot think it—you cannot mean it !—Your consolation lies in your child. Only tell me that your consolation lies in your child !—”

“ *It does !*” replied Barnsley with solemn earnestness ; “ but dreadful is the strait, Margaret, that requires such consolation.—You shrink from the thought of our separation.—Are you aware whither they are about to convey your father ?—”

Margaret shuddered, but could not reply.

“ To a court of criminal justice—perhaps to a felon’s cell !”

“ Whither thou goest, I will go !” answered his daughter, involuntarily using the words of scripture.

“ Not if you would serve me, Margaret!— You must instantly repair to London.—You must see John Heaphy.—You must bring him down to me. Or rather,—for the time is short—the Assizes must be approaching,—let him bring down to me, the best legal adviser he can engage.”

“ But what explanation can I offer to my cousin ?”—inquired Miss Barnsley, after a momentary pause. “ He will require particulars that I am unable to afford;—he will desire to know——”

“ Tell him,” interrupted Barnsley, again speaking in French, and apparently forgetting that the charge not having been circumstantially explained to himself, he admitted by this anticipation his consciousness of guilt,—“ tell him that I am accused of having forged the deed of settlement conveying the Stokeshill estates to yourself upon the death of your mother;—and that I trust to *him* to assist in proving my innocence. It is above all things essential that I should see him with the least possible delay.”

“ At least, suffer me to accompany you to

Maidstone before I proceed to London?—The delay will be but of a few hours.”

“A few hours are of vital importance.—I would fain see my nephew previously to my examination.—Lose not a moment, my dear child,—my dear friend.—The sum of money in your desk,” said he, with a significant glance, “is your own. The carriage is prepared for the journey. You have presence of mind and courage for the enterprize. And now, if you love me, leave me alone with these people, who have duties to perform and seem disposed to perform them with moderation. Farewell! it is but till to-morrow, Margaret,—it is but till to-morrow,”—he continued, fondling her hands in *his* hands, and though striving to inspire her with fortitude, unable to repress the tears that streamed down his withered cheeks.

But Margaret understood his wishes,—understood her duty,—understood the urgency of the case; and rose, resolved to command her feelings, and prepared to exert herself in his behalf. Already, with a sort of stupified distraction, she had advanced several steps towards

the door ; when an impulse, apparently less mechanical, prompted her to return and kneel down by the side of her father, who had sunk into the seat she had quitted, concealing his eyes with a trembling hand, beneath which hot bitter tears were stealing down his face.

The movement of Margaret could not fail, however, to attract his attention ; but, without removing the hand by which the disturbance of his countenance was concealed, he laid the other silently upon her head ;—and that unspoken benediction was balm to the wounded soul of his daughter !—

CHAPTER XIV.

Once or twice she heav'd the name of "father"

Pantingly forth, as it oppress'd her heart.—

Then started forth to deal with grief alone.—

KING LEAR.

It was ten o'clock at night before Margaret Barnsley passed through the suburbs of London, on her way to her cousin's residence. The same moonlight which, three nights before, had seemed to shed peace and hope upon the silent woods of Groenenwald, rendered all clear as daylight during the last few miles of her road. But she did not mark the transition from its pure and mild radiance to the glaring lamps of the metropolis. Her eyes were blinded, and her soul was deadened with

much grief. She had pondered and pondered upon her trials,—past, present, and to come,—till thought itself appeared exhausted.

But, as she approached the dwelling of her cousin, the necessity of rousing herself for explanation prompted her to wipe the cold heavy dew from her forehead, and recall to mind that her duty towards her unhappy parent was a duty of self-exertion. The family at Clapton had retired to rest. An angry watchdog alone acknowledged her postboy's ring at the gate. At length, John Heaphy appeared in person at the wicket, to admonish the intruders at such an hour that they were under a mistake; then to exclaim, with a suddenly brightened countenance, — “Heighday!—my cousin, Margaret!—Better late than never, my dear girl—Come in.—What in the world has brought you to England?—”

He now led the way cordially to the drawing-room, where, having dismissed his wife and daughter to rest after an evening lesson from the volume which, with its silver clasps unclosed, still lay upon the table, the good man

had been sitting at the open window contemplating the solemn stillness of the midnight sky, when startled by her arrival. Having placed her in a chair, John Heaphy bade her once more heartily welcome to England; and, in a few minutes, his wife hurried back into the room, to be overjoyed in her turn, and amazed, and inquisitive.

“ I quitted you in sorrow, and in sorrow, am I come to you again ! ” — was Margaret’s reply to the friends, whose arms were thus spontaneously opened to receive her.

“ In trouble ? — *you ?* ” — exclaimed John Heaphy, knitting his brows. “ Your face tells me that you are not making a jest of us, Margaret ; or I should remind you that scarce a week since, your letters announced your father and yourself to be in the enjoyment of perfect health and felicity. — *What* has befallen you ? ”

“ Misfortunes I have not courage to relate ! ” she replied, in accents hoarse with anguish.

“ Ah ! Margaret, my dear child, ” exclaimed Heaphy, terrified out of his usual composure by the sight of such profound affliction ; “ you would not be forewarned, — you would not

tarry in England,—you would not come home to us!—What good *could* arise from this long sojourning in the tents of Belial?—”

And in a milder voice Mrs. Heaphy reiterated,—“ You should have come home to us before, my dear girl ;—you should have come home to us !” —

“ I am here only too soon at last !” said Margaret, with a deep sigh. She paused.—It was so difficult—it was so *hard* to avow the truth !—She knew that the Heaphys did not love her father. She felt that their judgment would be harsh ;—and, on trying to give utterance to an entreaty for charitable interpretation, burst into tears.

“ Compose yourself,—sit down and compose yourself !” said the kind-hearted Heaphy, drawing aside to leave her time for the recovery of her self-possession.

“ No more composure in this world, for *me* !” —was her emphatic reply, inviting her cousins to re-approach. “ I am more heavily visited than I can bear !—My father is in prison !—My father is about to be put on his trial for a capital crime !—”

“ My uncle Barnsley in prison ?”—cried John, “ in prison in *England* ?—”

Margaret bowed her head in the affirmative.

“ The Lord pardon me !—But I ever misdoubted he had secret sins to answer for !”—was his next involuntary exclamation.

“ He has to answer a cruel and groundless accusation !” said Margaret, with kindling spirit. “ Let not his nearest kinsman be the first to wag a finger against him.”

“ Of what is your father accused ?”—inquired Heaphy, too full of compassion to resent the petulance of his young friend.

But Margaret was silent.

“ On what charge is my unfortunate uncle committed ?” said Heaphy again, — fancying she had not heard his first inquiry.

But still, Margaret found it impossible to answer. — She was struggling for words in which to frame her statement most favourably for her father.

“ They accuse him of having forged the deed by which Stokeshill was secured from

Closeman's creditors," said she, after some further hesitation.

"Closeman's creditors?" interrupted Heaphy. "Do you mean the deed of which I am trustee?—the deed executed five-and-twenty years ago, by Winchmore and my father?—Absurd!—preposterous!—You deceive yourself, my dear Margaret, or others have in charity attempted to deceive you."

"Nay,—it is as I tell you. The assignees of Closeman's estate have got up this tardy accusation. A relation of Mr. Dobbs,—a man named Adams, who was in Closeman's banking-house,—appears to be the conductor of the business."

"Adams?—" interrupted Heaphy. "A short hard-featured chap? Ay! I recollect his raising objections against the trust at the first meeting of your father's creditors. I recollect his being reproved by the commissioners for showing a bad spirit, at the time the docket was taken off.—And now I think on't,—he must be the very fellow who so repeatedly called here last year, to obtain the address of the executors

of the late Mr. Winchmore,—doubtless to obtain access to his papers!—And this person, you say, accuses your father of having *forged* the deed of trust?—”

“ But what interest could poor Mr. Barnsley possibly have in forging a deed which conveyed his property away from himself?”—remonstrated the simple-hearted Mrs. Heaphy.

“ Pho, pho!—His *interest* is plain enough:—let us hope his innocence may be made half as apparent. That deed secured to Margaret the means of saving himself and her from beggary; or the estate would have been subjected to the claims of the creditors for the remainder of my uncle’s life.”

Mrs. Heaphy looked sorry to be convinced.

“ I recollect examining the trust deed—I thought I recognized my father’s handwriting.—I would have said so, if put on my oath!”—said John Heaphy, waxing sore as the notion developed itself that, if the accusation were maintained by proof, *he* might be suspected of connivance in Barnsley’s malefactions. “ But my uncle knew I was no

man of business. It will, perhaps, turn out that the attorney was too deep for me!—Yet who would have been on the look out against fraud in a blood relation!—”

“ Nothing is proved—John!—nothing is proved!” gently remonstrated his wife, moved by womanly sympathy in Margaret’s mortification at the ready belief accorded by her cousin to the charge against her father.

“ Well begun is half done!” replied Heaphy. “ Special warrants are not granted, unless in cases of strong proof and great emergence. Things look black for John Barnsley; and, should the fact be proved, nothing but some sneaking artifice of lawyer-work, such as perhaps his own experience will suggest,—can save him from transportation.”

“ *From transportation?*”—cried Margaret, starting up and clasping her hands in ecstasy. “ Are you *sure* that his sentence would be only transportation?—I thought I had heard—I have been bringing to mind all day some vague connexion between *forgery*—and—*death!*—I—I fancied——”

And, hiding her face in her hands, she laughed aloud in an hysterical paroxysm of joy, to think that the father to whom she owed her existence, would be spared the horrors of an ignominious death! Any other sentence of punishment she could share with him, and lighten to his endurance. She could go forth with him into shame and banishment. She could modify the rigours of *transportation*. Her mind was now comparatively at ease.

Margaret was recalled from these wild ideas by the voice of her cousin, expressing in an undertone to his wife, unlimited indignation at having been made the dupe and tool of his uncle.

“John Barnsley has injured my father’s honest name by involving it in such a transaction!” cried he.—“He has disgraced his sister’s son by placing me in a situation to be committed as an accomplice—a confederate in his crime. I know my innocence and put my trust in God to make it manifest;—no thanks to my uncle Barnsley.”

“ But should he be able to prove the authenticity of the deed ?”—

“ He will *not*!—The more I think of it all, the more apparent becomes the probability of such a charge:—I am only amazed at my previous blindness.—But I never *was*,—I never pretended to be, —a man of business !”

“ John !”—said his wife reproachfully—
“ you seem to have forgotten the presence of this afflicted one.”—

“ I had indeed,—you do well to remind me !”—cried Heaphy, with contrition; and going towards Margaret he affectionately seized her hand. “ But she must be ours now. This must be her home, and *we* her parents—Margaret ! forgive me if I have appeared harsh;—trust me that, in spite of my bluntness, you have not a truer or a warmer friend !”—

“ Prove it, then, by rendering service to my father ! Deal more charitably with one who is in the sorest strait of adversity !”—said Margaret, mildly. “ You must hasten down to him, cousin. You must secure him legal

advice. You must bear witness in his favour."—

“What witness *can* I bear?—I showed my faith in him by acting upon the deed he produced. If, on re-examination, I should have reason to doubt the authenticity of the signature purporting to be my father’s, do you think I would make an affirmation against the dictates of my conscience?”

Barnsley’s daughter cast down her eyes and was silent—

“Margaret! I would not do it for my wife—I would not do it for my child—I would not do it to forward the interests of my creed or of my country!—It is written, thou shalt not do evil that good may come!”—

“You will perhaps refuse to assist me in procuring legal aid for my father?”—said Margaret with dignity.

“I am little versed in law, — God be thanked, I am acquainted with no lawyer!”—said Heaphy, petulantly. Then, as if reproving himself for his uncharitable irritability,

he added—“Where *is* my uncle, dear Margaret,—and when do you return to him?”

“This moment,—if you will bear me company. He is at Maidstone, he is in custody—he bad me lose no time in bringing you to his assistance.”—

And it needed very little further appeal to the Christian sympathies of the rough, but humane man, to determine him to compliance.—It was in vain the Heaphys tried to persuade Margaret to pause for rest and refreshment. The motherly matron fancied, in her singular ignorance of the business of life, that no harm could arise to Barnsley from Margaret’s enjoyment of what she called “a comfortable nap.”—But her husband knew better; satisfied that no time was to be lost, he coincided in Margaret’s activity, and they were soon journeying in the cool of the night, along a road which leading as it did to Maidstone through the town of Westerton and past the palings of Stokeshill Place, was only too mournfully familiar to Margaret Barnsley.—

She was happier indeed, or rather, she was less sunk in despair, than previously to her interview with her cousin. The one fixed idea of a death of shame, was removed;—and all the alternatives that presented themselves, appeared vague and undistinguishable. From time to time during their progress, Heaphy burst forth into ejaculations,—sometimes of anger against her father,—sometimes of compassion towards herself,—sometimes of pity for poor Sir Clement Barnsley, who was expected in England by the autumn fleet, after the recent hard won acquirement of his military honours.

“ We shall pass, I fancy, through the very town your father represented in Parliament?” — said he, as the silvery moonlight began to fade into the grey glimmer of a summer dawn.—“ Nay, we shall surely pass by Stokeshill Place itself?” added he, with a gesture of pity. — “ Stokeshill, — Stokeshill Place! — The Lord forgive us! — What a load of sin and shame has that accursed spot entailed upon my unfortunate kinsman! Un-

christianly was the pride which originally prompted him to make it his, and discard from its gates the flesh and blood whom he thought might disparage him in the eyes of his grand country neighbours ; and behold! the same pride at length induced him to put his life in jeopardy—his soul in peril,—that he might dishonestly retain it in the family !”—

And turning towards Margaret as he concluded these reflections, which burst involuntarily, not maliciously, from his lips, he perceived that her swollen eyes were closed.

“ She is asleep, poor soul !”—thought the good man, the righteousness of whose soul far exceeded its sensibility. He did not suspect that his cousin’s eyes were shut against the coming day, because its light was loathsome to her ; or that she had sealed her ears against his inveteracy, lest she might speak more warmly than facts could justify in defence of her father.—

“ I have been thinking, Margaret,” observed he, when, after an hour’s silence between them, the morning sun streamed too brightly

upon her face to admit of further supposition that she was asleep:—"I have been thinking over all the incidents connected with that deed,—with the disposal of your mother's property,—with the sale of Stokeshill; and, some inconclusive recollection recurs to me that the trust deed was attached as a necessary portion of the title deeds to the conveyance of the estate.—It is vitally important that I should have a sight of the instrument. I should not be sorry for a conference with the young man who purchased the property—(Woodhill—Woods—what was his name?—A knight or baronet if I remember?)—Does he reside at the Place, my dear?—Do you know anything about him?"—

"Of late, very little. The purchaser of Stokeshill Place was a Sir Henry Woodgate, from whose grandfather it was originally bought by my father.—If any material advantage to my father could arise from a communication between you, we change horses at Westerton—you might probably obtain an interview. The hour is un-

seasonable for such a visit; but, at such a crisis, ceremony is out of the question.”—

“ I will, at least, make the attempt—I would fain be a little prepared. As to the *form* of the business, *you* can explain to the gentleman the urgency of the case, which will plead its own apology.”

“ *I* explain?—Nay!—*I* cannot go to Stokes-hill Place!” faltered Margaret. “ Do not ask it of me—do not expect it of me. You will make yourself understood by Sir Henry Woodgate far better than,”—

“ Margaret Barnsley!” — interrupted her cousin, laying his hand, not sternly but impressively on her arm;—“ what judgment shall we form of you if we find you shrink from the first of the long series of ordeals that await your father’s daughter?—What right have you to demand sacrifices from others in his behalf, while you deny him so trifling a service of your own?”—

“ You are right!”—said Margaret, again closing her eyes, as if seeking courage and

patience in self-concentration.—“ I *will* go to Stokeshill Place !—Bear with me yet awhile, cousin :—I am not yet sufficiently schooled by the trying uses of adversity.”

CHAPTER XV.

Nay, to the very lees !—The bitter chalice
Profiteth nothing if but one poor drop
Lag in the cup—Maiden !—God's chastisements
Are dealt in tenderness, to such as thou.

MATURIN.

THE kine were lowing in the pastures and the hinds plodding to their early labours of the day, when, after a change of horses at Westerton, the carriage conveying Heaphy and Miss Barnsley on their heart-breaking errand, turned from the high road and entered the lodge-gates of Stokeshill Place.

Overpowered by a long continuance of

watchfulness, fatigue, and mental struggles, Margaret Barnsley derived no new pang from the aspect of the spot. She was dead in soul to all trivial associations. The house of which she had dreamed in her dreams, and for a glimpse of which she had yearned in her waking hours, was before her,—around her,—and she was scarcely conscious of the fact!—John Heaphy looked forth indeed upon the venerable old trees and fertile glades of the park, and rendered homage to the merits of Stokeshill; but to the chastened spirit of her who had sported in happy childhood on its green lawns, all,—all—was a blank.—

The carriage had been reluctantly admitted by the lodge-keeper, on Heaphy's pleading urgent business with Sir Henry Woodgate; but, as it approached the house gate, a gardener who from the shrubbery had stood watching its progress with wonder, hastened to arrest the further advance of the intruders.

“ I beg your pardon, Sir,” said he, addressing Heaphy, “ but no carriages be admitted at present to come nigh the house, you ben't

aware, perhaps, that my lady be very ill?—Sir Henry don't receive no visits, 'cause Lady Woodgate can't abear the slightest disturbance."

"How unfortunate!"—exclaimed Heaphy. "But if I proceed to the house on foot," he resumed, addressing the zealous domestic, "and send in a letter to Sir Henry?"

"I think your honour'd better defer it till another day. There 've been two Doctors, Sir, besides old Mr. Squills of Westerton called in sin' sunday."

"Bernard Smith!" faltered Margaret, raising herself to press forward and show her face; and though the gardener could by no means recognize that care-crazed countenance, the well-remembered voice reached his heart in a minute.

"Don't you remember me, Bernard?"

"*Miss Barnsley!*—Lord, lord!—I ask your pardon Miss?—I should be an ungrateful fellow indeed if I'd forgot you. I humbly ask your pardon."

"Run, Bernard, to the house, and inquire

of Sir Henry Woodgate if he could grant me the great favour of an immediate interview," interrupted Margaret;—conscious amid all her bewilderment of the importance of every passing minute to her father. And, following the instructions of the gardener, who hastened to do her errand, the postboy leisurely resumed his road up the hill; stopping at length at the point where the sound of their approach might become audible at the house, and annoying to the invalid Lady Woodgate.

“Poor Stokeshill!”—mused Margaret reverting to the youth and prosperity of Helen, which had not sufficed to preserve her from the insidious attacks of disease, “Misfortune seems to set its seal upon every human being connected with Stokeshill!”—

In a few minutes, Bernard Smith returned with a satisfactory message. “Sir Henry Woodgate would have much pleasure in receiving Miss Barnsley.”

At their own suggestion, however, the travellers alighted to walk to the house; and as the overjoyed gardener attended them point-

ing out improvements to Margaret as they went along, and apologizing for alterations, he was all amazement to perceive how little she seemed affected by the destinies of a spot she had once appeared to love so dearly.

“ Miss Barnsley seems to be in sad trouble ; it be all no doubt on my poor lady’s account ! ” —thought he, recurring to the early friendship between Helen and Margaret. But when as they drew near to the hall door and passed close to the group of Lady Woodgate’s children, just issuing forth full of mirth and spirits with their nurses into the brightness of the summer morning,—the young heir, a noble dark haired boy of six,—a lovely curly-headed girl,—and a babe in a flowing mantle ;—and the careless visitor still gave no sign of notice or interest. Bernard Smith was disappointed. It was clear that her heart and its sorrows was not with the Woodgates. She was now ushered into the library—*that library!*—and in two minutes Sir Henry in his dressing gown hurried into the room ; when the deep concern expressed in his countenance, indicating

that he was in some measure aware of the circumstances producing the visit of the travellers, saved them a world of humiliating explanations.

“ I learnt with exceeding sorrow yesterday from one of my brother-magistrates, the occurrence in your family,” said Woodgate, hastily addressing Margaret in a low compassionate voice, as if to spare her the pain of entering upon the subject.—“ The intelligence and the rumours by which it was preceded, are in fact the origin of Lady Woodgate’s indisposition. She has long been in a delicate state, and this sad news has completely over-set her ; which must plead my excuse for the ungracious mode in which you have been received. Can I do anything to serve you ?” he added abruptly,—fancying that Margaret appeared impatient of his apologies.

But to utter a syllable in reply, was out of her power. The voice of Woodgate, softened to words of such kindness,—his manner subdued by a tone of such deference,—affected her more than she had been prepared for.—

So differently had she been accosted within the last four-and-twenty hours, even by those united to her by ties of consanguinity, that she felt grateful for his consideration. Inviting her cousin by an anxious look and gesture, to enter upon the motive of their visit,—she threw herself back, half stupified, into her chair; while John Heaphy, in the straight forward style suggested by his plain good sense, told all he had to tell, and asked all he had to inquire.

But he was disappointed of obtaining all he had hoped to compass by the interview.—John Heaphy's knowledge of legal usages, proved to be as circumscribed as he had himself the preceding evening announced it. A *copy* of the trust deed truly, had been assigned to Sir Henry Woodgate; and even that was deposited with his London solicitors.

“ I am able to answer you with the greater accuracy,” observed Woodgate, “ having been lately on the eve of disposing of the estate.—Stokeshill will be grievously cut up by our projected railroad; and Lady Woodgate, who

has long decided the spot to be injurious to her health, is desirous of getting rid of the property. On this account, it became indispensable to look to our title;—and the confusion likely to be created by the recent discovery,” added he, in a lower voice, “has produced feelings of disappointment highly injurious to her enfeebled state of health.”

Though much of this was lost on Margaret, she heard enough to comprehend that Sir Henry was eager to get rid of Stokeshill Place.

“But if you really wish to be disencumbered of the estate,”—cried she—starting from her lethargy,—“why not at once cancel the sale, why not annihilate the deed of conveyance?—The purchase money you originally paid, is still forthcoming. Resign the property to *me*, and it will be in my power to meet the claims of the assignees and perhaps suspend their proceedings against my father.”—

“Softly, softly!”—cried John Heaphy, while a glance of satisfaction brightened the countenance of Sir Henry. “You talk like

a child, Margaret,—you talk like a woman;—you know even less of law than I know myself. You will ruin yourself, without exculpating your father. As far as I comprehend the extent to which Mr. Barnsley is implicated, an authenticated copy of the original deed, giving *him* a life interest in the Stokeshill estates, has been lately discovered by the fellow Adams among the papers of the late Winchmore, one of the trustees. The existence of this copy (a strong presumption against him) must have been overlooked by your father when, on the discovery of his bankruptcy, he substituted for the original a deed framed according to his own inventions.”—

“ I cannot allow you thus to take his guilt for granted,” cried Margaret, impatient of this accusation in presence of Sir Henry Woodgate.

“ We will not argue upon it now;—I am supposing a case. Under such circumstances, the deed must be *somewhere* deposited. It is clearly not in Sir Henry Woodgate’s pos-

session,—it is certainly not in mine. After being exhibited and attested at the meeting of Closeman's creditors, it was withdrawn for the purpose of completing the sale of Stokeshill. What became of it afterwards?—My mind misgives me that if indeed guilty of the fraud, John Barnsley was too apt a man of business, to suffer it to remain in existence! It is impossible to say what evidence these Dobbs' people may have in their hands: but I should infer that, if the original be still available for their purpose, your father will have counter evidence to produce of its authenticity."

"You think so?" cried Margaret clasping her hands in rapture, while Sir Henry, better acquainted with the evidence adduced before the magistrates, was gravely silent.

"My father would in that case be acquitted, —acquitted without a stain on his character?" —cried the sanguine girl. "The sale of Stokeshill executed by my trustees would be valid, and I should be at liberty to take it off your hands!"

“ Make no such idle propositions!” said Heaphy, sternly. “ The property by this gentleman’s admission has already fallen in value; and—”

“ I rather fear it might prove augmented beyond Miss Barnsley’s inclination for the purchase!” said Sir Henry “ I have increased the domain by repurchasing family property to a larger extent than was altogether prudent; for the embarrassments arising from these acquisitions form in some degree the motive of Lady Woodgate’s desire to get rid of the property. I say this *in confidence*,” added he, addressing Heaphy—“ conceiving you, Sir, to be the legal adviser of Miss Barnsley.”

“ Her near relative and kindest friend!”—interrupted Margaret, looking affectionately upon the uncouth figure of her cousin, whose singular costume might have justified a far more disparaging inference than that of Woodgate. “ But I need not detain you further,” added Miss Barnsley, starting from her chair and moving towards the door. “ We are

hastening to Maidstone,—to my father!—My cousin's expectations of obtaining from you information favourable to his interests, alone induced us to turn aside and harass you by this intrusion. Your kindness must make excuses for the liberty."

And while Heaphy gruffly subscribed to her apologies after Margaret had preceded him out of the room, Sir Henry took a friendly leave of the blunt stranger whom the beautiful, and afflicted daughter of his former colleague had pointed out as a kinsman.

"Be kind to her,—be careful of her," said Sir Henry, in hurried accents, perceiving Miss Barnsley to have quitted the library.—"A grievous trial awaits her!—No hope of establishing the innocence of her father. Unless some flaw in his indictment or other informality should favour his escape, the law will go hard with poor Barnsley."—

While this brief explanation was passing between Woodgate and his mortified visitor,

Margaret on her way to the carriage was encountering an unexpected annoyance.

The secret of her father's arrest not having transpired at Westerton, Bernard Smith, unaware of her motives for desiring her visit to be secret, found it impossible not to circulate the glad intelligence of Miss Barnsley's arrival, among certain old pensioners,—certain hangers-on at the Place;—to whom the recollection of her gentle virtues was doubly endeared by the contrast afforded by Lady Woodgate's haughty demeanour; and the recollection of her liberal benefactions, by contrast arising from the embarrassed finances of Sir Henry. United in a joyous group to bid her welcome, these people awaited her approach to the carriage; while Bernard Smith, hat in hand, and holding a hastily gathered bunch of her favourite flowers in his hand, was stationed beside the steps to bid her farewell.

“ These roses be cut from the last trees as you planted in Stokeshill churchyard, Miss Barnsley,” said he. “ No offence I hope. The

old sexton being dead, I took them in charge; and they are matted in winter and watered in summer, as reg'lar as when poor Simon was alive."

"From the churchyard—from my mother's grave!" was Margaret's only comment; and accepting the disastrous omen, she thanked him, and placed them in her bosom. "You will do me a favour, Bernard," said she, after conquering her emotion sufficiently to say a few conciliatory words to those who were showering blessings on her head,—“by saying nothing at Westerton of this visit. I have no time to explain—no matter!—I shall soon, soon, be among you again.—Good bye.”—

And she sprang into the carriage, and elated almost to wildness by the gleam of hope in her father's favour suggested by John Heaphy; who took his place by her side, amazed and sorrowful to behold her thus groundlessly exulting.

"It was necessary to caution the poor fellow," said she, attributing her cousin's air of surprise to the charge she had imposed

on Bernard Smith. "I hope, *I trust*, poor Miss Winston has been spared the agitation arising from tidings of our miseries. Weak and infirm as she is, the blow would be too much for her. She must hear nothing of our arrival in England, till, on my father's acquittal and release, I hasten to her arms and claim her blessing for her happy child."

John Heaphy, overwhelmed by the intelligence he had received from Sir Henry Woodgate, sat gravely silent. It was a hard task to damp the sanguine hopes of his cousin; almost *too* hard for a heart so full of the best promptings of human nature!—

"Let her at least enjoy a couple of hour's tranquillity, till we get to Maidstone," thought he. "Should things come to the worst, her father will best to break it to her after all.—Good lord! that such a daughter should be wasted on a man like John Barnsley!"

CHAPTER XVI.

Forbear to judge,—for we are sinners all.

SHAKSPEARE.

As they drew near the county-town, however, Margaret's "tranquillity" was by no means such as to verify the good wishes of her kinsman.

On the eve of meeting her father after an absence that seemed an eternity, her restlessness grew painful to witness. The distance appeared endless—the inertness of horses and driver insupportable. She felt that they had delayed too long. They ought to have got off sooner from Clapton;—they ought not to have

diverged from their way on their bootless errand to Stokeshill ;—her impatience betrayed itself in a thousand self-accusations.

It was already nine o'clock. Margaret could not distinctly recall at what time her father had been wont to repair to his justice meetings—his meetings of the quarter-sessions. She fancied that the hour of assembling at Westerton town-hall was ten. But—as even John Heaphy could remind her,—the present was no business of the quarter-sessions. Her father had been arrested by special warrant for a capital crime ; and, if conveyed to Maidstone for examination, it was because the county magistrates were there assembled for the opening of the Assizes.

“ By the way, Margaret, I am perplexed to know where the boy should drive ? ”—said Heaphy, as the neat, white, county-town-looking toll-gate came in view. “ John Barnsley must have spoken beside the mark, my dear, in talking of a gaol, previously to his committal ? — I should fancy he would be kept in custody at the inn, till had up to the

town-hall for examination?—But all this is conjecture.—What do I know of such matters!”

“If we were to proceed at once to the town-hall?”—said Margaret, impatiently.

“The best thing will be for you to remain at the inn, while *I* make the necessary inquiries,” observed her cousin.

“Rather let me remain here in the carriage,” said Margaret, as they reached a street which she recollected as adjoining the gaol. “But pray,—*pray*—do not loiter.—You may easily obtain information.”—

As the chaise door was opened by the postboy for Heaphy’s departure, Margaret fancied that, in the chagrined countenance of a gentleman passing by at the moment, who mechanically raised his eyes to the travellers, she recognized the disagreeable face of Mr. Richard Dobbs!—Nothing was more probable than that he should be at Maidstone. He was there on Assize business,—he was there to give evidence against her father.—She turned away, sickening at the thought!

The town was already astir. The church bells were ringing, and people hurrying hither and thither in discharge of the business of a busy time. Margaret, who fancied that her cousin had only to ask and be answered touching the object of their anxiety, soon grew impatient for Heaphy's return. It was a hot July morning. The boy, dismounted from his smoking horses, took off his hat,—leisurely wiped his forehead with his handkerchief, and dusted his boots with a wisp of hay;—then, pitying himself and his beasts, drew up the carriage into the shade: till Miss Barnsley felt angry at the resignation with which he prepared himself to be kept waiting. At length, after a delay of a quarter of an hour,—twenty minutes,—nearly half an hour,—she determined to set off alone in quest of her father; and commenced her enterprize by requesting to be driven to the principal inn. But at the very moment the carriage entered the gateway, she was accosted by John Heaphy.

“Have you found him?—Where is he?”—was Miss Barnsley's hurried inquiry, attributing

to fatigue the perturbed countenance of her cousin.

“He is *here!*” was the taciturn reply. “You had better alight, Margaret.”

And having taken her arm under his, he conducted his anxious cousin along a corridor which she doubted not would lead to the room where her father was awaiting her. The people of the inn, with whom Heaphy appeared to have been engaged in previous explanation, stood aloof as she passed; —but a door being thrown open by her companion, she was ushered into an empty room!—

“Not *here?*”—said she, attempting to draw back.—“Better take me to him at once!—I am sure my father must be impatient for me. Perhaps,” said she, interrupting herself on seeing that Heaphy made no movement to reopen the door—“perhaps he is engaged?”—

“There are people with him!” replied John Heaphy, in a depressed voice, the singular tone of which his cousin must have been indeed pre-engrossed not to perceive.

“But you have told him that I am here?”—

Heaphy was silent.

“*You*, at least, have seen him?”—she hastily added.

“I have!”

“How did you find him?—He must have passed a dreadful night—he must have suffered greatly—did he complain?”

“No, Margaret!”

And Miss Barnsley, who now caught a glimpse of the horror-stricken countenance of her cousin, became suddenly alarmed.

“You turn away your face, John,” cried she starting from the sofa on which he had placed her, and rushing towards Heaphy. “You are agitated—something is amiss—things are going wrong—speak!—my father has been examined—fatal evidence has been brought forward!—Oh! my dear unhappy father!”

“Compose yourself, Margaret,” said John Heaphy, down whose usually stern, unalterable face, tears were silently rolling.

At sight of his emotion, she grasped his hands!—She could not immediately renew her questions; nor was her kinsman in any state

to afford an answer. The good creature was striving to soften his expressions so as to spare the tender nature of his cousin. But the deep sensibilities struggling in his own bosom, eventually proved too powerful for his control.

“Your father,” said he, at length, with a painful effort, “has escaped the condemnation of human law !”

“Escaped?—Heaven’s mercy be praised !” interrupted Margaret, clasping her uplifted hands in thanksgiving. “He has been acquitted, then, cousin?—He is *safe*?”—

“*He is dead!*”—said Heaphy, no longer able to repress the sobs which burst from his overcharged bosom. But in another moment, he started forward to receive into his arms the insensible form of his cousin. He had intended to break the news gently to her;—he had *intended*,—but the horror excited in his pious mind by gazing upon the breathless remains of his kinsman,—of a man who had presumed to rush from the award of a human tribunal to the eternal condemnation of his maker,

—completely overpowered him. For the first time in his life, John Heaphy was no longer master of himself,—unmanned by the frightful spectacle he had witnessed!—

Nor did the sight of Margaret's ghastly insensibility serve to restore his self-possession. But it was by strangers she was laid on a quiet bed,—tended, watched and comforted,—during the brief intervals between one fainting fit and another; Heaphy was under the necessity of appearing in the inquest-room, as next of kin to the deceased. Though summoned thither as a witness, it was to learn, rather than disclose, that he attended the call; and earnest was the attention he bestowed when the officers by whom the unfortunate Barnsley was escorted to Maidstone, gave evidence of the hourly increasing agitation of their prisoner's mind after parting from his daughter, and his alarming excitement under the irritation of what he persisted in declaring to be an illegal arrest. Within half an hour of his arrival at Maidstone, it appeared, Mr. Barnsley had seized his opportunity (while the attention of Sandys,

was momentarily distracted,) to put a period to his existence.

By what means the implement with which he effected his purpose had been obtained did not appear. The jury was apprized by Heaphy that the unfortunate man had passed three previous nights without rest;—that, on arriving from a hurried journey, under the impression of finding an only brother on his death-bed, he had been arrested and hurried off by the individuals by whose intrigues he was decoyed into the snare:—and after the establishment of facts so likely to produce a paroxysm of mental derangement, the jury proclaimed itself satisfied, in a verdict of—“LUNACY.”

John Heaphy was probably the only person present who addressed a prayer to Heaven, that this certification of Barnsley's irresponsibility for his actions, might be eternally confirmed by the mercy of his Creator !

Had Heaphy been susceptible at that moment of any other feeling towards his uncle than horror at his self-seeking presumption, he might have been gratified by the testimonies

afforded to his memory by the respectable persons assembled. Warm with the sympathy awaiting the newly dead, some loudly expressed their opinion that the charge against poor Barnsley was frivolous and vexatious, and the means by which it had been brought to bear, every way unjustifiable. Among the jury, were several gentlemen of the neighbourhood, who, having seen him depart from Kent, a hale, active, stirring man of business, were unable to gaze unmoved upon the grey-haired and wasted corpse, exhibited to their examination.

High and low were prompt to admit that John Barnsley had been an unfortunate man!—His entanglements had been none of his own creation. He had been driven out of Kent by the subtlety of another; and by the subtlety of another, invited back for persecution. They did not examine very closely into the legalities of the case—the multitude seldom do. It was enough that George Holloway was not on the spot to justify the special warrant he had granted. It was enough that Richard

Dobbs, Benjamin Adams and Co. were alive and flourishing. It was enough that the mangled remains of John Barnsley were lying in a parish shell, redeemed only by the indulgence of a jury from the ignominious penalties inflicted upon self-murder !

If, in matters of love, the absent are ever in the wrong, in matters of legislation the absent are ever in the right. John Barnsley's dethronement from power, and absence from Kent, were of service to his renown. There had been a reaction in his favour. The neighbourhood had suffered by the loss of the man of business ;—the neighbourhood recognized his merits. The parish of Stokeshill had retrograded under the thriftless auspices of the inexperienced Woodgates ; the town of Westerton had stood still under the feuds of rival attornies. The activity of John Barnsley had accordingly come to be regretted ; and his disinterestedness to be honoured in the land.

Lord Shoreham, finding his lady disavowed by the neighbourhood and the neighbourhood of Parson Drewe a serious evil, had shut up

his house and gone abroad. Wynnex Abbey was going to ruin faster than it had been raised to prosperity. The farmers whose fences had been broken down by the Wynnex harriers, and who found Lord Shoreham as much too rigorous in preserving his game as the trustee had been too indifferent, began to talk of the good old times of my Lord's minority; while Timmins the brazier, and other worthies of Westerton, who discovered Lady Woodgate to be fonder of beautifying her grounds than of settling her accounts, decided that the Barnsleys were at least punctual in their payments, and that the long vituperated man of business was a good neighbour after all!—

Such was the decree of the county during Barnsley's absence:—it was more than confirmed on his decease. Kent took part in his wrongs,—Kent took part in his sufferings. It was indebted to him for its perfection of prison discipline;—it was indebted to him for poor-house economy;—it was indebted to him for roads without end, and railroads without a beginning.

A deputation of the country gentlemen assembled at Maidstone by the approach of the Assizes, including Lord Walmer and Lord Henry Marston, waited accordingly upon John Heaphy, with a proposal to show their respect by attending the remains of the deceased to their last abode.

But John was too right-minded to acquiesce!—His uncle had been about to answer for his frailties to the rigour of a human tribunal; and was gone to answer for his crimes to the justice of a divine. To *his* mind, the very deed afforded presumption of guilt; at all events, it was no case and no moment to indulge in the pomps and vanities of life. Having offered his thanks to the deputation, he expressed his determination that the funeral should be as private and unostentatious as possible.

One last home in Kent, meanwhile, was yet John Barnsley's own;—the vault he had constructed for his wife in the church of Stokeshill. "He has a right to lie beside her," mused John Heaphy, after having bowed out the con-

gress of county lords and country gentlemen. “Mary, it is true, was an angel—John Barnsley a sinful man;—but they were conjoined for better for worse, and the grave shall not put them asunder.”

Already, ere Margaret was sufficiently capable of self-government for resistance, he had conveyed his bewildered cousin to Westerton, and placed her in the arms of Miss Winston, which opened to receive her with more than motherly affection; and the sight of her venerable friend produced the first flood of tears which relieved the anguish of Margaret Barnsley.

“Leave her to herself—and you leave her to GOD!”—was the exhortation of the plain spoken John Heaphy to her venerable friend. “He will give her strength for the trial!—*He* will grant her peace when it is good for her to be comforted. The moment the funeral is over, I shall carry you both away with me; Kent is not the place just now for Margaret Barnsley.”

Though Heaphy had eluded the officious

courtesies of the Maidstone deputation, he was not unsupported in his officiation as chief mourner. Sir Henry Woodgate, uninvited, joined the funeral procession; and ministered in the last offices to his rival of Stokes Hill Place. Apprehensive of the shock which the funeral bell, tolling for a Barnsley, might inflict upon her shattered nerves, Lady Woodgate had been persuaded to remove to Hawkhurst Hill, for change of air;—Hawkhurst, which had witnessed for so many years the decline of her mother, and was now fated to witness her own.

Meanwhile, Margaret Barnsley's character was not such as to admit of prolonged extinction of her moral faculties. Her cousin gave her time to recover undisturbed the control of her feelings. He knew that her first wild emotions of despair would subside; and did not desire her to throw off *too* rapidly the depression produced by so severe a chastising of Providence as the loss of a parent, under circumstances so awful. But he rejoiced when a tinge of returning health re-animated

her more than marble paleness, and he beheld her assume that mild holiness of resignation which can murmur amid all its sorrows, —God's will be done!

At Miss Barnsley's entreaty, Heaphy officiated in the arrangement of her pecuniary affairs;—and even hazarded an encounter with the perils and dangers of foreign parts, to supersede the necessity of her return to Brussels. In forwarding the necessary arrangements at Groenenwald, he formed an acquaintance with the mild but high-minded Prince d'Artenberg,—than whom no inhabitant of the continent was, perhaps, better gifted to diminish his prejudices against those who neither spoke his language nor professed his creed. But though John Heaphy consented to be the bearer to Miss Barnsley of the Prince's entreaties for permission to renew in England, a suit securing to her future days a brilliant position in life, he by no means regretted to find that, in renouncing Groenenwald, his kinswoman was bidding an eternal farewell to Belgium;—that Margaret was willing to admit

the claims of the Prince upon her friendship, only on his consenting to withdraw his pretensions as a lover.

Her refusal of this splendid alliance, completed the reverence in which she was held by her cousin. Persuaded that his uncle had been tempted to deviate from the path of rectitude, through an over-covetousness of the things of this world which had devoted his earlier days to business to the exclusion of all the holy charities of life as husband, father, kinsman, friend,—John Heaphy rejoiced to perceive that Barnsley's daughter was as indifferent to the vanities of life as susceptible of every gentler affection of human nature.

At one moment, indeed, she felt inclined to devote the remainder of her days to an unreasonable perpetuation of her sorrows. After the introduction of an unsightly public way over the lawn of Stokeshill Place, the property, though deteriorated as a residence, was sold to great advantage by Sir Henry Woodgate, the house pulled down, and the estate dismembered and apportioned to agri-

cultural purposes. Of the lots into which it was divided, there was a secluded cottage adjoining a small coppice, on the appropriation of which Margaret Barnsley had set her heart.

Fortunately the indulgence of her inclinations was frustrated by a higher bidder; and she submitted with patience discovering that Agnes Woodgate was the successful pretendant, — that good Agnes, who, estranged from her nephew's home by the sullen hauteur of his wife,—was eager to spend the remainder of her days amid the happy haunts of her girlhood.

“ At *her* age, natural enough,” was John Heaphy's remark, on hearing of her purpose. “ But for *you*, Margaret, other duties are in store. In a few months, your uncle will be here. You must not decide upon your future plans till the arrival of Sir Clement. You must not persist in your predilection for a spot so fatal to its successive possessors as Stokes Hill Place.”—

CHAPTER XVII.

Tous ces maux, et d'autres encore,
Sont tombés sur ces fronts de la main du Seigneur!—
Maintenant croyez à l'Aurore!
Maintenant croyez au bonheur!

VICTOR HUGO.

FIVE years elapsed—five years of grave and humble resignation,—ere Margaret Barnsley could bring herself to believe that Providence had earthly compensations in store to requite the sufferings of her youth.

It was perhaps fortunate for her that the uncle by whose arrival in England she was first roused from the state of lethargy into which she had fallen upon the death of her father, proved to be a peevish valetudinarian; by

whose exactions upon her time and affection, her whole exertion was speedily absorbed.

Sir Clement Barnsley, who had returned to his native country prepared to find happiness in his declining years from the companionship of his brother, appeared to *resent* rather than lament the end of his unhappy relative. He knew nothing, indeed, of the details of that fatal event. He was told only that John Barnsley had died suddenly during his own voyage from Calcutta; and his fraternal instincts having long subsided into selfish indolence, he was content to inquire no further. It was enough that he must resign his expectation of maundering in social amity with his brother, over his daily claret; it was enough that the Major-General could no longer command in the Squire a winter-evening listener for his reminiscences of Chingherabad. Destitute of a single friend to enliven the populous solitude of the tawny Invalidery at Cheltenham, Sir Clement began to fancy himself injured by the family which had hastened before into the grave, leaving

him all but lonely on the unfamiliar soil of Great Britain!—

It was some time, indeed, before the worthy Heaphy could persuade him to regard his niece as a substitute for the friend and gossip he had expected to find in his brother; and it was some time before Margaret could be prevailed upon to feel that new duties were assigned her in the necessity of accepting a home with the surviving relative of her father. But when at length installed in the beautiful retreat of Elmbush, purchased by Sir Clement on the Devonshire coast, she found that her efforts to soothe the irritation and secure the comfort of the disappointed egotist, were advantageous in withdrawing her attention from her own misfortunes.

Sir Clement was, in fact, an unsparing claimant on the time of his niece. Separated at an early age from his family, and conscious that he had pushed his way through the world, at the loss of health and enjoyment, to amass a fortune likely to minister to their

happiness rather than his own, he felt that he had a right to command the affection of the heiress on whose head he was about to concentrate his hard-earned gains. Margaret rebelled against this mean appropriation of her tenderness ; but she gave to compassion and a sense of duty, the attentions which were not to be purchased by her uncle's gold. Even from his grave, her father pleaded for the fretful old man who imposed so heavy a burthen on her patience !

In some particulars, however, Sir Clement supplied ample extenuation for the tediousness of his society. He had acceded to Margaret's conditions of affording a refuge to the declining years of her venerable friend ; and when at length Miss Winston closed at Elmbush that blameless life whose mediocrity was elevated by sentiments of the purest womanly tenderness enjoyed and imparted, Margaret's gratitude was called forth by the cordiality with which the old general continued to welcome to his beautiful retreat, the only surviving object of her regard.

Sir Henry Woodgate, who had taken refuge from the loneliness of widowhood in the arduous duties of public life, was in the habit of visiting Elmbush Park during the annual intervals of his official slavery. It was there he found companionship worthy to soothe and elevate the contemplative leisure of ministerial life. It was there he found happiness,—it was there he found sympathy; oblivion for past sorrow, and hopes for years to come!—

Hitherto, however, the almost stern gravity of Miss Barnsley had repressed his declarations of passionate attachment; and had he not done justice to the delicacy of mind which decided that the lapse of years ought to wear out all trace of their former cares and pledges, ere they commenced a new career of prosperity and joy, Sir Henry would have found it difficult to support the long months of absence by which he was made to pay the penalty of a few weeks' enjoyment of her society.

But a period was approaching which was to

affix the crowning seal upon the destinies of Barnsley's daughter. The increasing infirmities of Sir Clement suddenly determined him to pass the ensuing winter in the capital for medical advice, and the solace of his club; and on quitting Elmbush, Margaret felt anxious lest Woodgate might no longer submit to the barriers which absence had enabled her to maintain between them beyond the ordinary term of courtship.

It was on a tranquil evening of the autumn of 1836,—serene as her own soul and sweet as her own nature,—that Margaret, sauntering along the ridge of furzy hills which divides the the domain of Elmbush from the London road, revolved in her mind the changes she was about to experience in quitting the beautiful spot to which she had begun to attach herself. Assigning more importance than was their due, to the influence exercised by country duties and pursuits in the tranquillization of her mind, she dreaded lest, deprived of the interest afforded by her village, her

flower-garden, her poor, she should find the peevishness of her uncle difficult to support. She fancied that the even tenour of her life was about to be fatally destroyed: or that the cares of her early days were, perhaps, on the eve of recommencement.

Such was the auspicious moment at which Sir Henry Woodgate was fated to flutter her spirit with the offer of his heart and hand!

The sight of his travelling carriage was a welcome surprise: the sound of his voice a cheering incident. Prepared by her desponding mood to appreciate at its just value the devotion of a warm, faithful, and confiding heart, she found it impossible to withhold the confession of her long-repressed partiality. Both were too wise, too feeling, to revert to the past; both were soon too happy not to invest every hope of their hearts, every thought of their minds in projects of happiness for the future. Both had suffered deeply, — both had borne patiently. Still in the prime of womanly beauty, Marga-

ret's gentle demeanour was dignified by the inspiration of a pure and contemplative spirit. Lovely as ever, and more than ever loveable, she was the very wife to secure happiness to a man of sense, not *too* wise or *too* good to enjoy the pleasures of a world to the advancement of whose sterling interests his time and thoughts were dedicated.

It was not at Elmbush, however, that the engagement between the happy lovers was to be announced to Sir Clement. When comfortably settled in Hanover Square for the winter, within telegraphic reach of the headquarters of Oriental sociability, their mutual friend, John Heaphy, was deputed to break to his uncle the secret of Margaret's approaching marriage; softened by a promise that his niece would during his lifetime reside in his immediate neighbourhood.

It is now two years since the happy completion of these projects. The happiness of Sir Henry and Lady Woodgate has undergone no change, unless in the ac-

cession of mutual affection produced by the birth of a lovely girl, fair as the happy mother from whose heart she has effaced the last remaining trace of misfortune. The Buckhursts, the Chiltons, whose frivolous affections were based on a less stable foundation, sometimes bend a contemptuous glance from their career of fashionable folly, upon the happy wife and mother whose virtues afford the best reward to one of the most rising of our public men. But even Gus, (a resident of some years standing in the Bench,) and Parson Drewe, (who may be seen any day of the three hundred and sixty-five, sauntering with his hands in his pockets on the pier at Calais,) are heard to admit that, while the ruinous and tenantless condition of Wynnex Abbey during the absenteeism of their flighty nephew affords a humiliating monument to degradation of the house of Drewe, the virtues of Margaret Barnsley have effaced all memory in the county of Kent of the errors of the man of business: — while the distinguished place oc-

cupied by Sir Henry in the respect of society, and the veneration of the country imparts a lasting interest to the site of the now demolished glories of—STOKESHILL PLACE!—

THE END.

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