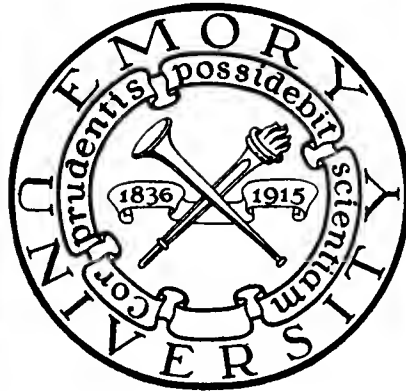


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THE CLINTONS;

OR,

DEEPS AND SHALLOWS OF LIFE.

“Oh we will walk this world
Yoked in all exercise of noble end,
And so thro’ those dark gates across the wild
That no man knows.”

TENNYSON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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THE CLINTONS.

CHAPTER I.

Brother, shun the mist exhaling
From the fen of pride and doubt ;
Neither seek the house of bondage
Walling straitened souls about :
Bats ! who, from their narrow spy-hole,
Cannot see a world without.

CHARLES GAVAN DUFFY.

THE next day Barbara returned to Brighton, accompanied by her brother Harry, who thought it a good opportunity to pay a visit to his father and mother. The former was sorry not to see Frederick again, but Mr. Lynne was pleased at the arrival of his favourite son, though he made

no demonstration of delight, beyond a stiff shake of the hand, and the words, "I am glad to see you, Harry."

Mrs. Lynne overwhelmed her children with questions. They were made to give exact descriptions of all Lilian's bonnets; of the waistcoat worn by Lord Rossendale at the ceremony; of the carriage in which the bride and bridegroom departed; and of a hundred still more trifling parts of the paraphernalia of a Belgravian wedding. But neither son nor daughter were sufficiently explicit in their replies, and at last poor Mrs. Lynne could not refrain from exclaiming:

"Dear me, Barbara! I wish Fred had come home with you, he would have told me everything so delightfully; though Harry, my dear, you mustn't think I am not delighted to see you. You don't think that, I hope, Harry my dear?"

"Of course not, mother," said Harry; and his father solemnly observed, that he supposed Harry had sense enough to know he was

welcome, and not the less so for having his mind filled with better things than such ridiculous vanities.

“Oh! James,” cried Mrs. Lynne, “I should be very sorry indeed to see ridiculous vanities in Harry’s head; but I do wish he could have told me a little more.”

“I never can remember those little things, mother,” said Harry, “and Barbara forgets them too; but we can tell you that Lilian looked perfectly lovely, and that everything went off well.”

“And I liked what I saw of Lord Rossendale very much,” said Barbara.

“I believe him to be a very steady young man,” remarked Mr. Lynne, “at least, he is not dissipated nor extravagant, though I am afraid he is a worldly character. I suppose you saw something of Wilfred, Harry?”

“He dined at aunt Florence’s yesterday, Sir,” said Harry; “he is very busy and quite well.”

“ I don’t think he looks very well,” said Barbara.

“ Oh !” cried their mother, in alarm, “ I hope he is not getting that dreadful influenza !”

“ My dear,” said Mr. Lynne, “ a London curate, who does his duty, as I hope my son does, cannot be expected to look very well. It is hard work. I am glad Wilfred does not shun it.”

“ I think, papa,” said Barbara, “ that Wilfred has grown more fanciful than ever, and he has got hold of some very dangerous notions, I am afraid. He said the wildest things last night ; and he is turning Alice’s head.”

“ Oh, dear !” cried Mrs. Lynne, again alarmed. “ I really hope not. It would be dreadful, if he were to begin again, after all the trouble about Lilian !”

“ I don’t mean anything of that sort, mamma,” said Barbara, “ that’s out of the question. But he has been persuading Alice into all his wild doctrines and mistaken ideas, about not condemning people who do wrong,

and making every one good with poetry, and I don't know what."

"Well," interposed Harry, "he could not have persuaded Alice into anything very fatal in the course of one evening; besides, though I don't stand up for what he did say, I don't think he quite meant what you suppose, Barbara."

"What did he mean, then, Harry? This is really a sad account of him," said their father.

"He has only picked up a few Oxford notions somewhere or other," replied Harry, "and mixed them up with some poetical enthusiasm of his own. But, nevertheless, he is the model of a useful clergyman, better than I shall ever be, Sir!"

"I am very glad, Harry," said Mr. Lynne, "that you do not regard your future responsibilities in a spirit of presumption; but I am surprised that you can think any clergyman 'useful' who advocates the errors of the Oxford school, or who attempts to mix human poetry, or human enthusiasm, with religion"

“But some hymns are very pretty;” observed Mrs. Lynne. “Perhaps Wilfred writes hymns.”

No one took the smallest notice of this suggestion.

“I perfectly agree with you, papa,” said Barbara.

“I’m sure you’re right, Sir,” said Harry, “and I hate all that Oxford humbug. But I do think Wilfred does good; he manages to get employment and assistance for many poor wretches. When I was at his lodgings, I saw ever so many of them, who came to him for advice, or help, or to thank him for what he had done for them. One was a fine young fellow, an Irishman, for whom Wilfred had got some work on a railway, and a situation for his wife; and another was such a pretty girl, mother! she brought Wilfred a bundle of needlework, but he wouldn’t tell me her story.”

“Poor things!” said Mrs. Lynne, “I’m glad Wilfred gives them work. I hope the Irishman wasn’t a Catholic. James, my dear, had you not better write to Wilfred, and tell him to

get rid of all those dreadful ideas Harry says he has taken up?"

"I will certainly do so, Jane," answered her husband.

"I can't think where he acquired them," continued Mrs. Lynne, "or how anybody can have such strange ideas. Everything seems to me so perfectly simple; everything, I mean, that we need have anything to do with."

Good Mrs. Lynne! the simplicity was in her own guileless little mind. But she was indeed a true Christian, and her faith was real, as far as it went. She could not be expected to understand that the man of complex nature, and mind of eagle eye and wing can find in the Christian faith heights and depths where the sight fails from excess of light, and the pinions droop from long soaring. She was as a calm fountain under a rock, a tiny hollow, filled to the very brim with the pure waters of truth, and sheltered from all breezes. Others are like the mountain stream, of ever changing aspect, now rushing rapid in the sunshine, vocal with

joy and praise, now sleeping in the same sunlight, or falling, perhaps, deep into the cold dark chasms of the earth, and lying hidden for a time. But these waters too are the waters of truth, and to the same ocean do they tend, as the runlet from the quiet fountain.

“Wilfred is by no means what a Christian clergyman should be, I fear,” said Mr. Lynne, “he is too fond of indulging his own imagination.”

“He is indeed, papa,” said Barbara, “he is a perfect dreamer.”

“But a worker too,” interposed Harry, “he does not spare himself.”

“What are works !” said Mr. Lynne, “what are the good works of one who is not in the Truth—filthy rags !”

“To be sure,” remarked his wife, “its very sad indeed to think that Wilfred is going about doing good works, like a deluded Papist.”

“And saying that all poets are good,” cried Barbara, “and that they can make others so too !”

“Lamentable indeed,” said Mr. Lynne. “I shall write to him at once.”

“I am sure you will convince him,” placidly observed Mrs. Lynne. “I don’t think Wilfred’s obstinate; though I can’t say he has quite such a sweet disposition as dear Fred. What has dear Fred been doing, Harry?”

“Why, mother, it is not four days since you saw him!”

“I can tell you what he has been doing, mamma,” said Barbara, “idling about, and dangling after Lady Florella Maraford. Lilian told me all about it; and what’s more, I know that Lord Leventon, Lady Florella’s father, does not approve of him by any means.”

“Not approve of Frederick? You really must be mistaken, Barbara!” And the gentle speaker looked almost angry as she spoke.

“Now, Barbara,” remonstrated her brother, “it isn’t fair to tell things in that way. Fred does admire Lady Florella very much, though—”

“And it seems to me quite possible that her

father should object to him, if he has any right feeling," coldly observed Mr. Lynne.

"Oh, James!" cried his wife, "you are too hard upon dear Fred; and I don't understand why Lord Leventon should object to him."

"Even for worldly reasons, he might do so," said her husband. "Frederick is nobody. He has no talents, not much money, and is foolish and extravagant. I would not allow my daughter to marry such a man."

Barbara drew herself up at the idea. To do Barbara justice, she seldom thought about marriage at all, and never in her own case. She had no wishes, thoughts, or conjectures on the subject; but still she could not help drawing herself up, when allusion was made to her marrying."

"I'm sure," said Mrs. Lynne, "that Fred has talents enough, if he would exert them; and his prospects are not at all bad. And really, James, he has quite left off being extravagant; and there never was any one so

handsome; and, altogether, Lady Florella might do worse. Do you know her, Harry?"

"Yes," he replied; "she is the youngest but one of Lord Leventon's seven daughters. There are three married, one an invalid, two out, and one in the school-room. Lady Theresa, the one who goes out with her sister, is very ugly indeed."

"Plain, you mean, Harry," interrupted Mrs. Lynne.

"Nonsense, Jane," growled her husband. "Call things by their right names, Harry."

Harry continued:

"One of their married sisters takes them out, and no one looks after them much, so they do exactly what they like. Lady Theresa is a good-natured girl, ugly as she is, so there is no one to prevent that foolish little sister of hers from flirting with Frederick; and they have gone on, till I begin to think they are both in earnest."

"Well, I hope and trust dear Fred will be

happy," said the mother. "Harry, do you think Lady Florella is all we could wish?"

"I should think not," said Barbara.

"I fear, not quite," was Harry's reply, with a smile.

Harry's smile was not pleasant: there was always something of scorn in it.

"She is a silly little creature, with flaxen ringlets and blue eyes; her complexion is like wax, and she don't speak plain."

"I particularly dislike a defective utterance," remarked Mr. Lynne.

"Poor thing!" said his wife; "how very unpleasant for her—quite a trial."

Harry laughed outright.

"She wouldn't speak plain for the world, mother," he said. "She has, what Fred calls the prettiest lisp imaginable, and the sweetest voice, and she talks a great deal, and as fast as possible; but I don't think she has two ideas in her pretty little head."

"And those unprofitable ones, I fear," inter-

posed Mr. Lynne. "Frederick has, it seems, fixed his idle fancy upon one very like himself; but the fancy will probably not last long."

At all events," said Barbara, "it must come to nothing, as Lord Leventon will never allow it. I don't think we need trouble ourselves much about it."

"Don't you, my dear?" inquired Mrs. Lynne; "then I'll try to put it out of my head. But I can't help being very anxious that dear Fred should do well, and not have any disappointments or misplaced attachments, or things of that sort, like poor dear Wilfred."

"Well, mother, Wilfred has got over all that," said Harry; "he was quite in good spirits last night at Aunt Florence's; he has not a thought about Lilian now."

"I should hope and trust not, indeed," said Mr. Lynne, solemnly.

"And I've a plan for him," continued Harry. "The living of Norneley is in Lord Rosendale's gift. It is an extremely good one, and the rectory is close to Norneley Manor. The

present incumbent is very old, and Lilian has made Lord Rossendale promise to offer Wilfred the living, as soon as it is vacant."

"Oh! I'm so delighted!" exclaimed Mrs. Lynne. "How Wilfred would enjoy a country parsonage! But he's so strange. I'm really afraid, when the time comes, some fancy or other will make him refuse."

"I hope he is not so foolish," said his father. "He always expressed himself willing to accept such an opening. Does he know of Lord Rossendale's promise?"

"Oh! no" said Barbara, "it would never do to tell him. It is a profound secret; pray, mamma, do not let it be known. It is all so doubtful. Wilfred may get something else before the rector of Norneley dies; and I am sure, once settled in a parish, nothing will induce him to change. You see it is only a plan of ours; pray don't build upon it, mamma."

And so Mrs. Lynne's castle-building was cut short in its very commencement. She sighed over the arrested fabric.

“Well, my dear,” she said, “I won’t tell any one, as you do not wish it. But I can’t help thinking about it. Perhaps, if the old rector don’t die for a long time, and if Wilfred gets another living first, then you might have Norneley, Harry—might he not, James?”

“Possibly, my dear,” said her husband; and he looked at his youngest son with a sort of speculative glance.

“What a good-natured creature Lord Rosendale must be!” said Mrs. Lynne.

“He can refuse Lilian nothing just now,” said Harry.

“I hope she will not be unreasonable and selfish,” observed Barbara. “She seems to me extremely fond of her own pleasures.”

“But it was not selfish of her to ask for the living for Wilfred,” said Mrs. Lynne; “though, indeed, after what had passed, it was the very least she could do. Do you like Alice the best of your cousins, Barbara, my dear?”

“As far as I have seen, I certainly do,” she

replied. "She is evidently less worldly-minded than Lilian, and more capable of reflection; and she is all the better for not possessing her sister's vain talents and outward gifts, which are a delusion and a snare."

"Alice has talents, though," observed Harry.

"Very few, I think," said Barbara. "She is decidedly not clever; but she would be sensible and right-minded if there was any one to direct her. She looks up to Wilfred too much, and he guides her mind astray."

"Poor Alice!" said Mrs. Lynne. "What a pity that dear Florence is not a little more serious, and better fit to instruct her children. I hope, Barbara, they will come here soon, and then you can be of use to your cousin, and set her right about everything."

"I think you are quite right, Jane," said her husband, "in wishing your sister to come here. We may be of great use."

Mrs. Lynne's countenance shone with innocent pride at her stern husband's approbation; and she went on building a castle, conscious

that she might do it in safety, and that no one would pull down the edifice.

“That house on the other side of the square,” she said, “would just suit Florence; and I know they will let it by the month; and the sea air would be so good for Alice, who looks pale, Florence tells me; and Alice can be with us every day. I’m sure they will come—and how pleasant it will be!”

Mrs. Lynne contemplated her edifice with joy, and then added to it another story.

“And Mr. Desmond is expected back from Norway every day, and we shall all be so glad to see him, and so will Florence, I know. We shall be delightfully sociable! And Harry, you and Fred will often run down to see us, and Wilfred, too, whenever he has time.”

The castle was complete, and Harry smiled at his mother’s aerial architecture. It had a solid foundation, however, for Mrs. Clinton often talked and wrote of going to Brighton for a little while at the close of the season. Brighton is supposed to be agreeable at that

time. Besides, Mrs. Clinton did wish to see her sister, and also thought Alice would be the better for a few sea breezes. Though other plans were often talked of and contemplated, this one most frequently suggested itself; and Mrs. Lynne did her best to keep the idea alive in her sister's mind.

Mrs. Lynne thought there was no place like Brighton—and truly there is no place so glaring, so verdureless, shelterless, unhomelike as that streak of tinsel on the fair white cliffs of England. But this was not what Mrs. Lynne meant. She was always eloquent when describing the pleasures and advantages of Brighton. Its air—that bitter east wind that whirls in its squares and streets—was balm in her opinion; its esplanade—that long, broad, weary road—was to her the perfection of a walk. Its sandless, rockless beach was beautiful in her eyes, for there had Fred played ducks and drakes in his childhood, and there had Barbara's infant hands toiled at breaking flints. Its society of upstart apothecaries, idle

officers, and flirting girls did not offend Mrs. Lynne's taste, for she revolved in another circle of the Brighton system, and only mingled occasionally in the sober dinner and tea parties, where distinguished clergymen, rival doctors, and useful ladies were wont to congregate. Mrs. Lynne thought there was no place like Brighton, and longed to bring every one to a knowledge of its advantages.

"I did not know Mr. Desmond was expected so soon," said Barbara.

"He may come any day," eagerly replied her mother. "Mrs. Herbert told me so yesterday. I've seen a great deal of Mrs. Herbert, Barbara, since you were away. She had tea with me once, and the dear little girls too, the day your father dined at the Town Hall with that excellent Society that I cannot remember the name of."

"Who's Mrs. Herbert?" said Harry.

"Only Mr. Desmond's governess that mamma has taken a fancy to," answered Barbara.

“Oh!” said Harry, in an indifferent tone. “Who have *you* taken a fancy to, Barbara? Perhaps you reserve your fancy for Mr. Desmond himself!”

Barbara looked silently indignant, and her mother said, in an alarmed tone :

“Dear me, Harry, don’t think of such a thing! I could not bear the idea of poor dear Barbara living in Ireland, mixed up with Mr. Desmond’s Catholic relations.”

“Romanist, my dear,” corrected Mr. Lynne, glancing up from the book he had begun to read.

“Well, Romanist. They would never do for Barbara ; though really I do like Mr. Desmond very much, and the dear little twins are charming, and Mrs. Herbert such an invaluable person, and with such pleasing manners, too !”

“She does not manage the children sensibly,” said Barbara. “Altogether, I do not call her sensible.”

“What an excellent governess you would

make, Barbara!" said Harry, looking at his sister's stern face and rigid figure.

"Ah, but there are few like Barbara," said good Mrs. Lynne.

Here the conversation was interrupted by her excellent husband, who had come to something particularly edifying in his book, which he instantly commenced reading aloud, as was his wont on such occasions; and for a long and weary half-hour, nothing was heard but the deep, firm voice of the reader, the click of Barbara's knitting-needles, and an occasional sigh of approbation from Mrs. Lynne, who thought she thoroughly enjoyed the book, which—poor woman—she could not understand. But she understood that "dear James" admired it, and that was enough.

CHAPTER II.

So bold and frank his bearing, boy,
Should you meet him onward faring, boy,
In Lapland's snow, or Chili's glow,
You'd say, "What news from Erin, boy?"

He has a curious mind, boy,
'Tis jovial, 'tis refined, boy;
'Tis richly fraught with random thought,
And feelings wildly kind, boy.

WOLFE.

THE next day, Harry returned to London, loaded with messages to his aunt, all to the effect that Brighton was Paradise, and that her arrival there was longed for by her sister and her sister's family. That family soon subsided

into its usual state after the excitement of Barbara's visit to London.

The day following that of Harry's return there, saw Barbara composedly taking her very early walk, and Mrs. Lynne sitting down to her stair carpet for the morning, "Just," she said, "as if nothing had happened." As for Mr. Lynne, he employed himself in covering six sheets of thick, rough note-paper with his equally rough opinions coldly and sternly expressed—his theological opinions first; secondly, his opinion of Wilfred's dangerous errors; thirdly and finally, his opinion, or rather his sweeping condemnation, of all pertaining to what he called "the Oxford school." This task concluded, and the letter sealed, directed to the Rev. Wilfred Lynne, and despatched, he rose and went forth, conscious of a duty performed.

The well-spent morning over, the three members of this exemplary family seated themselves at their early dinner, and had just commenced an unexciting conversation about fish

in general and mackarel in particular, when they were startled by a knock at the hall door.

“Nothing very startling,” the reader will say, “in a knock at the door of a serious and useful family residing at Brighton, especially when it is heard at three o’clock on a summer afternoon.” True—but the hand that moves the knocker, or, rather, the spirit that moves the hand, can sometimes give to the inanimate engine a mystic voice, heard and understood, though unconsciously, perhaps, by those to whom that voice is addressed. This may and will be denied; nevertheless, I aver that often, when the familiar knocker-blows strike upon the ear, something strikes upon the heart too—friendly blows from the spirit outside as it springs to meet those it is seeking. Which of us has not felt dim uncalled-for hopes, or numbing shocks of fear, at the sound of some one knock among many that invaded our door the same day, and struck only at our outward ear? But people deny, in these days

of fact, their own experience of spirit influence, and sensuous reality is always set above truth, or, rather, blindly mistaken for it.

But, to return. A knock was heard; and Mrs. Lynne glanced nervously at her husband and daughter, to see if they felt, as she did, that "somebody was coming." Before she had ascertained their participation in her sudden consciousness, the solemn servant solemnly announced "Mr. Desmond," and added, "Shall I say not at home, Sir, as you are at dinner?"

"Oh! dear, no! let Mr. Desmond come up," cried Mrs. Lynne, in such shrill accents of joy, that the solemn servant did not hear his master say: "Wilson, I abhor falsehood. Never say 'Not at home' when it is not true. Show Mr. Desmond up."

Maurice Desmond entered. A tall, strongly, but not heavily-made man, somewhat carelessly attired in garments better suited to the forests of Norway or the bogs of Slievemore than to the spick and span Brighton squares and streets, yet, sitting gracefully on the wearer's form, and

seeming to mark him as something above, and not below, the well-dressed multitude. Independent of costume, there was something in Desmond's appearance which revealed to the most careless glance, that he was well-born, true, and kind—in other words, a gentleman. He was not particularly handsome—his honest, clear, blue Irish eyes had nothing wonderful about them, and neither his nose nor his mouth were faultless. His short fair hair rose in loose waves round his fine forehead, more broad than high; the sun, wind and sea-spray had improved his once too fair complexion into a clear brown, of which his hands partook somewhat too largely. Truthfulness was the principal idea conveyed by his countenance; and there was something else in its expression which brought little children to his side, and kept them there. Sometimes an indomitable will gleamed through his eyes, yet lessened not their softness, and sometimes a cloud of regret would take the sunshine, but not the light, from his countenance. There was that in his face and form

which could only please beholders in proportion as they had the child's and the poet's faculty, of seeing goodness and truth, and forgetting conventional rules and ideas of beauty. A ball-going young lady might call Desmond a bear (if she had never spoken to him), and many ball-going young gentlemen might agree with her. A clever young lady might vote him unfit for her society and that of her literary friends, and, perhaps, call him an ignoramus, though he possessed some knowledge that books cannot teach; but, nevertheless, he had many friends, and his *true* social qualities were widely recognised. No wonder, then, that Mrs. Lynne told him in many incoherent words how glad she was to see him. No wonder that Mr. Lynne invited him almost cordially to sit down and have some luncheon, while Barbara's features assumed a gracious smile. It would not be easy to frown at Maurice Desmond.

“So long since we have met!” said Mrs. Lynne, eagerly heaping mutton on her visitor's

plate. "I don't know how long really, but it seems—"

"Three or four months, my dear," said her husband. "You may remember that Mr. Desmond called on us in London before he went abroad."

"And Barbara was out, I recollect," continued Mrs. Lynne. "You have not seen Barbara for years, I think, Mr. Desmond."

He turned towards the object of so much innocent maternal pride, and murmured something about the pleasure of renewing his acquaintance with Miss Lynne, who bowed stiffly, and then resumed her gracious aspect.

"And we are so glad to see you," again exclaimed Mrs. Lynne. "When did you arrive? Had you a good passage? Are you tired? and oh! tell me! don't you think your dear little girls are very much grown?"

"There is no change in your kindness and good-nature," said Mr. Desmond, "at all events. It does one good to be so cordially received. I landed at Hull yesterday morning ;

I had an excellent passage, and am not at all tired; and I find the children much improved. Katie is quite strong again. I have to thank you, Mrs. Lynne, for a great deal of kindness towards them in my absence—poor little things.”

“They are remarkably well-conducted little girls,” said Mr. Lynne, with unusual amenity.

“Though they have very high spirits,” added Barbara.

“But so good and obedient!” cried Mrs. Lynne. “It really made me quite happy to have them playing about me; there never were such charming children, I think; for you know, Barbara, you were not so lively as they are when you were six years old. Lilian and Alice were charming children, too, but then Alice was not pretty, and both yours are, Mr. Desmond!”

“Are they?” he said, with a smile; “well I believe they are;” and the smile turned to a sigh, as he thought of their child-mother in her distant grave; but the pang was momentary, and he went on talking in his cordial, honest voice,

in which the accent of his country could at times be plainly detected. “ Now tell me about all my friends—your sons, Wilfred especially, and your sister and her family ! how are they all ! and where ? ”

“ My dear boys are all well, ” was Mrs. Lynne’s reply. “ Wilfred has a curacy in London, and Harry is preparing for the Church : dear me ! how I wish he could have stayed one more day, and you would have seen him ; and dear Fred is in London, studying for the bar ; he has grown so good and steady, and really there is no one like dear Fred. ”

Now Mr. Desmond had met dear Fred, and never appreciated him, and he was longing to hear something of the widow and daughters of his friend ; but he was too kind to show the impatience he felt, and he did not interrupt. Barbara had no such weakness, and cut short her mother’s panegyric, by saying abruptly—

“ Mamma ! Mr. Desmond wants to hear about the Clintons ! ”

“ Certainly, my dear, ” said Mrs. Lynne,

“Lilian is married to Lord Rossendale, and Alice is rather delicate; and we hope they will soon come here, then you will meet them.”

“That will be a real pleasure to me,” he answered. “It is not very long since I have seen Mrs. Clinton, but it was only for a few minutes, and both her daughters were out. Lilian! what a pretty child she was! I hope her marriage is a happy one—a good one in the common acceptation of the term, I know it is.”

“I believe it to be a well-suited alliance,” said Mr. Lynne. “Lord Rossendale is a sober-minded young man.”

“It is everything that is charming,” said Mrs. Lynne, “they are most attached to one another, and there is nothing to be wished. Barbara has just returned; she was staying with her aunt Florence, for the wedding.”

Mr. Desmond felt interested in the happiness of his friend's child, and turning to Barbara, asked her whether she liked what she had seen of Lord Rossendale.

“Very much,” said Barbara, graciously; “but of course I could not judge on so short an acquaintance; he may have great faults, but they did not appear, and he seems full of judgment and sense.”

“Of which valuable qualities,” said her father, “there is a sad deficiency in these flighty days.”

“Flighty! my dear James,” cried Mrs. Lynne, “I don’t think we know any flighty people. I hope, James, you don’t mean, dear Florence!”

“I intended no allusion to your sister,” was the reply, “and I have every hope that Lord and Lady Rosendale may prove valuable members of society, as Lilian will of course be improved by her husband’s influence and example.”

“And tell me about Alice,” said Mr. Desmond, “little Alice, that poor Clinton was so fond of. Is she as like him as ever?”

“She is indeed the image of poor Henry,” said Mrs. Lynne, with a half sigh; “she has

just his eyes—and so like him in manner, rather more reserved, perhaps—poor girl, her father's death was a sad thing for her; he perfectly adored her, and, poor child, she does not fascinate, and make friends wherever she goes, as Lilian does.”

“I should like to see her,” said Mr. Desmond, thoughtfully, “poor Clinton's favourite child! and like him, too—” he paused, thinking of his early friend. Mrs. Lynne saw where his thoughts had flown, and said kindly,

“I know what a friend you lost in him—you and my Wilfred—how much he loved you both!”

“Yet I think,” said Barbara, “Wilfred's great intimacy with the Clintons has rather unsettled him, and withdrawn him, perhaps, from better influences.”

“There could be no better influence than Henry Clinton's,” said Mr. Desmond. “No one could live with him and not be the better for it. His friendship was a blessing and a happiness to me for many years, and to Wilfred

from his childhood. He and I know what we have lost."

Barbara looked more severe than usual. Mr. Lynne coldly said, "Your loss was gain to him, I trust," and all were silent for an instant, thinking of the dead.

"And Alice is like him!" With these words Maurice broke the silence, and recalled each thought to the living.

"Alice has not inherited my uncle's good looks," said Barbara; "but I think she somewhat resembles him in mind; she has, however, less intellect."

Maurice Desmond's fancy immediately drew a picture of Alice Clinton, and hung it up in his mind's portrait-gallery. It was afterwards replaced by a better likeness, drawn by imagination, not fancy, and never to be taken down.

"Well," said Mrs. Lynne, "I hope Florence will very soon bring Alice here, and then you can judge for yourself. I hope you mean to remain at Brighton?"

“I think so,” he replied. “It suits the children so well, that until winter commences, I don’t think I shall move. I have been so long away from them, that I don’t wish to leave them again; but I cannot say I like Brighton.”

“It is very extraordinary,” said Mrs. Lynne, “how people can dislike Brighton. I don’t think Mrs. Herbert likes it, although she is so anxious, for little Kate’s sake, to remain here.”

“Mrs. Herbert is the most unselfish, disinterested creature,” said Mr. Desmond. “I cannot say how much I value her.”

“She is anxious to a fault about the children,” remarked Barbara.

“She appears to be an extremely right-minded person,” said Mr. Lynne, “and remarkably well-informed. Pray, who was her husband?”

“Her story is a melancholy one,” said Mr. Desmond. “She was the wife of a gentleman of property, who ruined himself by railway

speculations, and died inextricably embarrassed, leaving her, of course, quite unprovided for. I do not know much about her own family, though I believe she was born and educated in Scotland, by her mother, who is now dead. She never was a governess, nor had she anything to do with teaching, till she came to me; in fact, I should think she was as well born as I am."

"I wonder," said Barbara, "you engaged a person who was not accustomed to tuition."

"What an unpleasant girl Miss Lynne is," thought Mr. Desmond, and replied with a little stiffness of manner:

"I scarcely required a very learned instructress for infants of five years old; but a kind friend, an intelligent Mentor, a good, true, loving woman, who could be to them something of what they have lost—this was what I required, and *this* I ascertained Mrs. Herbert was, before I engaged her."

"I trust," said Mr. Lynne, "that you also ascertained that she was a serious person."

“If you mean religious,” answered Mr. Desmond, “I *did* satisfy myself on that score.”

“Shall you take her to Ireland with you when you return there?” asked Mrs. Lynne.

“Yes,” replied Mr. Desmond, “I certainly hope to do so ; she will be a great advantage to the children when there—some little antidote to their poor grandmother’s spoiling ; and Mrs. Herbert has so much tact that she will not offend my aunt even while opposing her.”

“Oh ! poor Mrs. Desmond !” said Mrs. Lynne in her most sympathising tones, “how can she help spoiling your little girls, the children of those so near and dear to her ? She must love them with all her heart.”

“And therefore, mamma,” said Barbara, “she ought not to spoil them.”

“She is kind, but injudicious, and full of old Irish prejudices,” said Mr. Desmond. “Without Mrs. Herbert, I should not like her influence with the children—at least, not when they are a little older. But I must leave you.

I promised to walk with the children to-day, and it is just their hour.”

He rose, and after a few more farewells than the occasion required, and many promises of future meetings, departed, leaving the Lynnes to the conclusion of their meal.

With his firm, but careless step, he strode quickly along the now crowded Cliff, perfectly unconscious that almost every third person he passed turned round to look at him—a stranger at Brighton, especially a gentleman, is instantly detected; and Mr. Desmond, I must confess, was almost singular-looking, when seen in a Brighton crowd of smart ladies and sleek officers, doctors, and clergymen, with his hasty-looking “tie,” his coat, suggestive of a shooting-jacket, his waistcoat and trowsers of the same material, and his thick shoes, conveying an idea of guns and setters. But he was, as we have said, perfectly unconscious, and walked on, observed but unobserving, till he reached his children’s abode.

They heard his quick step and half-sup-

pressed whistle as he ascended the stairs, and ran to meet him, ready for the promised walk.

“Come to the beach, papa!” cried little Lina, jumping down three steps, “come to the beach, and sit down, and see us play with the waves!”

“Yes, yes, papa!” cried the lesser twin, “come to the beach, and let us show you the sea-gulls, that play with the waves better than we do!”

“Wherever you like,” he said, stooping to stroke back the long, dark curls that had escaped from under Lina’s hat, and kissing the upturned face of his quieter little one, “take me wherever you like, my children.”

And they set forth. If Mr. Desmond had been stared at before, he was now the observed of all observers, as he crossed the street, holding a child by either hand. Every one at Brighton had noticed the beautiful twins, and knew their name and abode, and they unconsciously revealed to the Brighton public that

the oddly-dressed stranger, already a subject of remark, was no other than their father, Mr. Desmond, from Ireland. He was looked upon with more wonder than respect after this discovery.

But he was soon free from the crowd, reclining on the sloping beach, his children, with the reckless grace of childhood, lying beside him; and the small waves playing at his feet, murmuring their soft, rhythmical cadence, the sweetest of all nature's melodies, and seeming to complain of the neglect of their wonted playmates, the twins—who were listening eagerly to their father's voice, as he talked to them of the endless pine-forests, the noble rivers and wild scenery of Norway, and of the midnight sun which looked down on the sleeping children of the North.

Meanwhile Mrs. Herbert sat alone in her deserted school-room. Let us look at her—at the lonely governess, whom no one thinks about.

It would be hard to guess her age. Time

had left traces on her face ; but it had a freshness, too—a look of innocence and truth—childlike truth—that almost contradicted the lines which years and care had drawn. There was no sadness, but a calm, trustful light in her soft blue eyes ; yet it was plain that many tears of bitter sorrow had fallen from them in years past. The lines on her broad, pale forehead seemed to have been caused less by anxious, calculating thought, than by earnest, long-deferred hope—the hope of one whose eyes fail with looking upward. Her features were delicate, but not regular ; her lips reminded one not of chiselled marble, or rosy wax, but merely seemed the fitting outlet for kind and gentle words—for sweet and attractive wisdom—most of all, for heartfelt worship. She was not beautiful, not young ; but serene, earnest, thoughtful—loving and true she was, and none who loved or valued such qualities would fail to see their indication on her countenance.

Her black silk dress, rather loosely made, concealed her form, yet not enough to hide that it had lost the light proportions of youth. Her attitude was nevertheless both graceful and dignified ; and there was something suggestive of harmony in her every movement. All things about her spoke a mind in tune ; there were no discordant elements, no contradictory influences ; her countenance, her form, her movements, all seemed to be the outward expression of a spirit where peace, hope, and love were always dwelling.

She sat at the school-room table, busied in arranging a quantity of the wild scented convolvulus in a tall vase of Parian china, round whose slender shaft she twined the long branches until they almost concealed the base of the classic jar with their delicate foliage and blossom. The air was balmy from their light fragrance, and with each breath she drew, a thousand memories, sad and sweet, came thronging into her heart and brain. Tears

rose to her eyes, shutting from their vision the realities around her, while the eyes of her spirit wandered over the sea-like moors, the purple mountains, and birch-clad glens of her childhood's home ; and not lingering there, rose to the vision, or rather the far-off radiance of another home, whose flowers are not to fade. Nothing of gloom darkened her reverie, though it had a shade of past sorrow ; for how could the dreams of one so lonely be unclouded ? There was no one living on earth to whom her thoughts could turn with entire and requited affection. All she had ever loved were taken from her, her mother, her husband, her infant son, her only sister, not one survived, and as her father had died before her birth, she had not one near relative living. Her little pupils were all she had to love ; and how slender was the tie that bound them to her ! The earth contained no recipient for the strong, high, spiritual affection which was a part of her nature ; therefore she gave it all to the un-

forgotten dead. In a peculiar sense, her treasure was in heaven, and there, too, was her heart. How then could sorrow make it dark?

CHAPTER III.

A soul of lofty clearness, like a night
Of stars, in which the memory of the day
Seems trembling through the meditative air.

BAILEY.

THE same evening, when the children were in bed, Mr. Desmond and Mrs. Herbert sat together, talking of the little sleepers. With almost equal interest they both conversed on the characters and dispositions of the twins, and the father strove to thank Mrs. Herbert for her unceasing care and devotion to his motherless infants.

“ You have made them so good,” he said ;
“ they were never troublesome or wild all the

time they were out with me; and how fond they are of you !”

“ I know they are,” she replied, “ and I value their affection. You know, Mr. Desmond, what a sweet and touching thing is the love of a child; it is a blessing which you possess, and which, I trust, you may never lose.”

“ I could not bear that loss,” he said, half to himself. “ Those children, and my home, are all I have to care for,” he continued sadly.

Mrs. Herbert read his thoughts. How like her own they were ! but where was *her* home ? She would not continue the subject, or obtrude her sympathy, but said quietly :

“ The children are looking forward eagerly to returning to Slievemore. Now that the great event of your return is over, they talk of nothing else but home, and its oak woods and rocky cliffs. It must be a beautiful place !”

“ Yes,” he replied, brightening up, “ it is beautiful—more beautiful than comfortable, I fear. You are fond of scenery, I believe ?”

“I am, indeed; and I long to see Ireland and its people. I always feel that I should like them.”

“But you must prepare for some disappointment both in the beauty of my home and the goodness of my countrymen. We are a disappointing race; we promise, but fail in performing; we are full of talents, and use them more for harm than good; we have strong affections, and yet our constancy is weak; we have quick perceptions, yet always err in judgment; and we never tell the truth.”

“Oh,” said Mrs. Herbert, “that is a most consolatory ending to your sketch of Irish character, for it obliterates all that went before!”

“But I try to be an exception,” he said, “and to speak the truth at all events.”

No one could look in his face and think him false.

“Want of truth is our great failing,” he continued, “and yet the Irish character is not a deceitful one; we are faithful and generous,

though we tell dreadful lies—in short, we are an enigma.”

“Perhaps,” said Mrs. Herbert, “this want of truth proceeds from a quick fancy; and that impulsive character which never stops to think, but speaks eagerly and hurriedly at the promptings of a strong desire to make others see things in the same highly coloured light. I can quite understand the temptation.”

“Yes,” replied Mr. Desmond, “our most excusable untruths spring from this cause; but I fear we are worse than you think us. I have seen many cases in which wilful lies were told to gain an end or avoid an inconvenience—told, too, with an effrontery that there was no shame or effort in the matter. Ah, Mrs. Herbert, you will find us out in time!”

“The Roman Catholic religion is not favourable to the growth of a strong love of truth,” said Mrs. Herbert, “this may account for a great deal.”

“My mother-in-law, Mrs. Desmond, says much more than that,” he answered; “but she

is only too fond of expressing her opinions, and you will hear them soon enough. And, Mrs. Herbert, I should warn you—it is rather a delicate subject, but I know you will understand me—I am excessively fond of Mrs. Desmond, who is my aunt as well as my mother-in-law ; but she is inclined to spoil the children, and I do not like her influence for them, nor the books she gives them, nor the interference she is too fond of using in my establishment. I fear you will have a hard card to play.”

Mrs. Herbert understood perfectly. The children had innocently made her acquainted with many of grandmamma’s notions, and one of her first acts on arriving, had been to take from the school-room book-shelf those three volumes of worse than trash, entitled ‘The Fairchild Family,’ in the first page of which was written, “To my dear little Kate and Lina, from their affectionate grandmother, Katherine Desmond.” Mrs. Herbert knew she would have a hard card to play ; but she did not fear.

“ We shall get on very well,” she said ; “ I can perfectly understand your feelings, Mr. Desmond. I would not on any account check the children’s affection for their grandmother ; but I do not think you need fear anything from her influence.”

“ I am sure,” he said, “ that yours will prevail. I look forward to a happy winter at home—for the children at least ; and you will not dislike Slievemore, I hope ; I must go there for a few days, soon, and have it put in order, if the children will let me go.”

“ They will be sorry to hear you are to leave them again,” she replied ; “ but they will be happy, as your absence is to be short, and they have a great deal of amusement here ; Mrs. Lynne is extremely kind to us always.”

“ What a good creature she is. I have known her a very long time, and almost feel as if she was a sort of aunt of mine. I knew she would be kind to the children. Do you know the rest of the family ?”

“ I have met two of the sons at their mother’s

house, and I meet Miss Lynne constantly—she is very kind to us, too.”

“Is she?” asked Mr. Desmond. “I don’t fancy her—she is so cold and stiff.”

“There is much good in her, I think,” said Mrs. Herbert, “but it is hard to find, under her repelling exterior.”

“Yet she is rather handsome; but it is a sort of beauty that makes one shiver.”

Mrs. Herbert smiled. “We will not judge her,” she said, “but acknowledge her virtues, of which I think kindness is one—at least, a rough, correcting manner, which she means as kindness, and which we should take as such.”

“If we can,” said Mr. Desmond; “but I must bid you good night, Mrs. Herbert. This is my quiet time, and I must devote it to business letters and accounts, for at least an hour before I go to bed.”

They shook hands cordially, and Mr. Desmond went down, and for much more than the time he had named, devoted himself to business, cheerfully and energetically diving into deep ac-

counts, deciphering letters and petitions, rapidly and clearly replying to various applications for advice, assistance, &c., sent him by his agent and by many of his tenants and servants.

Mrs. Herbert went into the children's room, and looked upon the sleeping twins. There is a solemn beauty in the face of a child asleep; one feels awe-struck by the pure, passionless innocence of the still features untraced by thought, sin, or pain, fresh from the Creator's hand, and resting in the light of His smile. Holy is the atmosphere around a sleeping babe.

Lina had fallen asleep in a state of excited joy that would have disturbed the slumbers of an older person—her features were still radiant, even in sleep—and her attitude showed that it had thrown its spell upon her in the midst of joyous restlessness. Her little, round, white arms were flung above her head; one was almost hidden in the tangled masses of her dark hair, and the other lay along the pillow, stretched out as if to seize some passing pleasure; the coverings of her bed were tossed aside,

revealing the symmetry of her infant form and the beautiful expression of her reckless attitude, so full of life and motion, yet so still. Mrs. Herbert gently drew the clothes about her, and kissing the lips parted with a smile—the smile of some heaven-suggested dream—went on to the bed-side of little Kate.

What utter calmness of repose! the long golden hair fell straight along the pale features, and one tiny arm, symmetrical, but not round like Lina's, lay beside the form, whose composed limbs and calm attitude almost suggested the idea of a longer and still calmer sleep. The slow and regular breathing of the child was all that told of life.

“How pale she is!” thought Mrs. Herbert, “she has been over excited, but this quiet sleep will repair it all. Poor child! she has yet to experience the tumult of feeling which banishes repose, if, indeed, she is to face the long, eventful journey of life.”

There was something in the calm, holy purity of the child's pale features which seemed to

refuse a future of toil and struggling ; to turn, in short, from the weary exile of this life, back to its home in another. Mrs. Herbert felt a sensation of awe as she stooped to kiss the pale, pure forehead of the sleeper.

“ I scarcely dare,” she thought, “ to ask God’s blessing for her. It rests upon her now ; and there is something which tells me it will not be withdrawn.”

And Mrs. Herbert turned from the little sleepers, and went into the adjoining room, her own apartment. Closing the door, she was once more alone.

Alone ! a bitter and a weary fate it is, to be alone in every feeling, as she was ; but cheerfully she drank the bitter cup, and gladly she accepted the weariness. The untired traveller scarcely longs for home, while the weary one pines after it, and walks the straighter for his exhaustion.

Long and earnestly she prayed—alas ! save those two children, she had none but herself to pray for. At last she slept, and in the

happy vales of Dreamland, was no longer alone.

The next day, the Lynne family were gratified by the news that Mrs. Clinton and Alice were certainly coming to Brighton. Alice had written to Barbara to announce the fact, and to say that her mother would gladly accept Mrs. Lynne's invitation, and stay a few days at Regency Square, until they had succeeded in finding a house. Alice further said that they had just heard from Lilian, who was at Presburg, and that she and Lord Rosendale had changed their plans, owing to some county business which unexpectedly obliged him to return home before Christmas. She regretted that their tour was cut short, but expressed much pleasure at the thought of seeing her future home, to which Mrs. Clinton and Alice were invited to spend Christmas. Alice concluded her letter by telling Barbara that she had just seen Wilfred, and that he looked worn and over worked.

“I’m so delighted,” cried Mrs. Lynne. “Saturday next—how charming! I’m so glad! oh, poor dear Wilfred! I’m so sorry!”

“My dear Jane,” said Mr. Lynne, “it is a pity you should speak so unthinkingly. You cannot be sorry and glad too.”

“Oh, James! don’t take me up, just now, please, my dear. I really am glad and sorry; glad Florence is coming, and sorry Wilfred looks ill.”

“I comprehend,” said Mr. Lynne. “Barbara, you had better write to Alice, and say that we shall be prepared to receive her and her mother on Saturday.”

“And oh, James!” cried Mrs. Lynne, “do let me ask Wilfred to come on Monday, and get a little change of air, and some rest. I know he can’t come on Saturday; oh, dear! how I wish he could!”

“Jane, you should not wish him to neglect his duty; but I should be very glad you wrote to ask him. Do so, by all means; let him come on Monday. I have much to say to

him, which I trust may be of use. You had better both write immediately."

So Mrs. Lynne and Barbara sat down to write.

"My dear Alice," wrote the latter, "we shall be very glad to see you on Saturday next. Mamma hopes you will stay with us some time; at all events, until you have found a suitable house. I hope you will quite recover your strength, which I regret to hear, has been impaired by the late hours and excitement of the life you have been recently leading. You will find yourself in a very different atmosphere with us, but I trust it will not be a less agreeable one because more wholesome. I anticipate much enjoyment from your society, my dear Alice, and I hope our intercourse may not prove wholly unprofitable. Mamma is now writing to Wilfred, who we hope will join us on Monday. I remain with love to aunt Florence,

"Your affectionate cousin,

"BARBARA LYNNE."

Mrs. Lynne's letter to her son was in a very different strain.

“ My dearest Wilfred,

“ I write just two lines to say that we all want you *very much* to come to us on Monday next, for as many days as you can spare. You won't mind sleeping in the little back room on the ground floor—it is the only *corner* I have to spare, as you know I expect your aunt and cousin on Saturday. I hope, my dear boy, you will bathe every day while you are here, and ride a great deal on the Downs, which are delightful; and the air of the chalk hills, together with the sea-breezes, is really more strengthening than anything; and I am sure you will not be in any danger, though there are so many *dreadful* chalk-pits, because you are not short-sighted, as every body was, who was ever killed that way, unless their horse ran away with them, and fell down a pit; but that will not, I *trust* and *hope*, happen to you, because you will only have a hired horse, and *they* never

run away, because, poor things, they are not strong enough, which is very *cruel* of their owners; but I suppose one cannot prevent animals from being overworked—and so are people sometimes, *like you*, my poor, dear child. I hear you are grown very thin. How I wish you could come Saturday instead of Monday, though your father says it is *wrong* of me; but really I do so wish you could spend a Sunday with us, and hear dear Mr. Pecoek preach in the morning, and Mr. Stridens in the afternoon; though really I don't know whether Mr. Stridens is as good as Mr. Smith of Zion Chapel, who unfortunately is not quite *orthodox*, though I can't conceive why people won't go to hear him, for his doctrine is quite Church of England, and there's not much difference in the service, so I don't think even you could dislike him; and he's so truly pious and *sincere*, I never quite knew why he became a dissenter, but it was really *most* conscientious of him to do so for such a very *little* scruple. I hope, my dear boy, you will not fail to come,

though you cannot come for the Sunday. Your father wishes to speak to you on very *important* matters, and I really hope and *trust* you will be *convinced*, and abandon all the odd notions which I hear you have been picking up. I cannot think how you, who are so young, can *possibly* think of differing from your father and all of us, who *of course* are much wiser than you could be, because we have had *experience*; and no one understands things as well as your dear father, who is *never* mistaken, as you might be. But I hope I am not annoying you, my dear boy, by what I am now saying, which is only meant *for your good*; but I have written more than I intended, and the post is going out, and I am, my dearest Wilfred, your ever affectionate mother,

“JANE LYNNE.

“When you see my darling Fred give him a *thousand* kisses for me and my best love.”

The letters were despatched, and Mrs. Lynne

became supremely happy when Saturday afternoon arrived, and with it Mrs. Clinton and Alice, who brought a message from Wilfred, promising to come on Monday, and spend two or three days with his parents.

Mrs. Lynne received her sister and niece with much enthusiasm and many embraces. Mr. Lynne shook hands stiffly with his sister-in-law, and icily kissed Alice; while Barbara greeted them with what was meant for cordiality, and looked very like it.

“How hot and dusty it is!” cried Mrs. Clinton, untying her bonnet, and flinging off some airy external garment, which could not have added much to her oppression.

“Oh, my dear Florence!” cried Mrs. Lynne, “do come and take off your things, and lie down on the bed and rest, and I’ll sit and talk to you. Barbara, my dear, show dear Alice her room.”

And the four ladies went up-stairs. Mrs. Lynne, at a quick trot, looking over her shoulder at her sister, who followed slowly, filling the

narrow staircase with her flounces, and every moment catching the fringe of her rose-coloured parasol in the banisters. Alice and Barbara followed side by side, rather closely pressed; Barbara's hand resting patronisingly on Alice's shoulder, and her tall, angular form and heavy walk contrasting strongly with Alice's bending figure and unheard footsteps. The cousins entered the little room which Alice was to inhabit; and Barbara, having opened the window and shut the door, proceeded to untie her cousin's bonnet, and put it carefully into the wardrobe.

"Thank you," said Alice. "How tidy you are, Barbara!"

"I have a taste for order," she replied. "Are you tired, Alice? I am very glad you are come, my dear. Shall I stay with you a little while?"

Alice consented, not very willingly; and they sat down together. Alice would have liked to lie on the bed, for she was tired, and her head ached; but there was something in

Barbara's presence that made her feel that to do so would be an extraordinary and unprecedented action. So they sat together on two cane-bottomed chairs ; and Barbara began :

“ We shall enjoy ourselves together very much, and you will get quite strong here, Alice.”

“ I hope so,” she answered, rather sorrowfully. “ I am so tired of London, Barbara, you cannot think how glad I am of a little rest and change, and quiet life.”

“ Naturally,” said Barbara. “ But, Alice, you should not grow inactive. Do you ever walk before breakfast ?”

“ I shall be delighted to do so,” said Alice, “ after a day or two. I will leave off all my bad habits by degrees—late hours and all.”

“ Leave them off at once,” said Barbara.

Alice sighed. Her deprecating glance was lost upon Barbara, who, however, noticed the pale cheek and sunken eyes of her cousin.

“ You're quite knocked up,” she said, abruptly. “ We mustn't expect too much from

you, I suppose. Now go to sleep till dressing-time. I'll leave you. Shall I darken the window?"

"Oh, no!" cried Alice.

"As you please, then. Lie down on the bed, and go to sleep. When one is tired, one can always go to sleep; and you will come down quite fresh."

"Thank you," murmured Alice, scarcely knowing why she said it, but feeling that Barbara meant to be kind. And she *was* kind too, for she left the room.

CHAPTER IV.

Learn, by a mortal yearning, to ascend
Seeking a higher object.

WORDSWORTH.

ALICE did not go to sleep, but lay dreaming—dreaming of her dim future, and wondering whether she would be the better and the happier for the interval of peace which she now hoped for, after the excitement of the summer. Her mind and body were alike exhausted; her energy had all failed. Young as she was, her thoughts and aspirations at that moment were not of action, but rest; calmness and peace she longed for, tired and sick at heart.

She passed a dull, sleepy evening, and did not get on with Barbara, who tried hard to draw her into conversation. At last she confessed to a headache, detected by Mrs. Lynne, and she submitted to be sent to bed, where, like a tired child, tired after a day of factory toil, she fell into a long, deep, dreamless sleep.

Sunday morning came, and she rose refreshed, and able to accompany the rest of the party to church, where the Lynnes invariably went twice, and sometimes three times, on Sundays. Afternoon service over, they all walked homewards along the esplanade; Mr. Lynne between his wife and sister-in-law, followed by Alice and Barbara.

“Are you tired?” said the latter, abruptly after a silence of a minute or two. “You walk as if you were.”

“I am rather tired,” Alice said. “I am out of the habit of walking, and the hot church has given me a headache.”

“Very strange,” observed Barbara, “those

who are the most accustomed to hot rooms always get headaches in hot churches."

Alice coloured, with a feeling something like indignation, but did not reply. Barbara looked at her and said :

" Why, Alice, you do look hot, and tired, too ; how delicate you are !"

Alice felt indignant again ; there was a tone of accusation in her cousin's voice which annoyed her.

" I am not particularly delicate," she replied. " Who are those two little girls, Barbara, running up to my uncle and aunt ?"

" Oh, they are the little Desmonds ; and there are Mr. Desmond and Mrs. Herbert coming up to us : how very tiresome. I do dislike meeting people just after church."

" So do I, generally," said Alice.

Barbara looked at her cousin in pleased surprise, and would have spoken ; but at this moment they overtook the group before them, who had stopped to shake hands with their friends. Mrs Clinton called Alice, and intro-

duced her to Mr. Desmond in a friendly, cordial manner, as if she wished them to be intimate at once.

“ You and my little Alice were friends once,” she said, “ but now I suppose a re-introduction is necessary. Alice, you do not remember Mr. Desmond, your poor father’s friend ?”

Her father’s friend ! With earnest eyes fixed upon his, Alice gave him her hand. He held it for a moment unconsciously, tracing Henry Clinton’s likeness in her every feature. Neither spoke ; but each looked upon the other with deep interest—almost with affection, and both were conscious of a common thought—a common memory—a presence, as it were, which hallowed their meeting.

Mr. Lynne’s strident voice broke the silence.

“ We must not obstruct the way in this manner,” he said. “ Jane, my dear, proceed ; you can continue your conversation with Mrs. Herbert, as you walk homewards together. Desmond ! Florence ! may I request you to proceed ? Come, Barbara !”

As a raw-boned, harsh-voiced sheep-dog urges the unwilling flock onwards, when they linger for a moment beside the road along which he drives them, so did Mr. Lynne's voice and words set the whole party in motion. He followed them with Barbara until they reached the crossing opposite Regency Square, when he once more interrupted them.

"Jane, my dear, this is our way," he said. Good-bye, Desmond. Come, Florence and Alice!"

"No," said Mrs. Clinton, "we are all going to walk a little more. I want to talk to Mr. Desmond. Don't go home, Jane! Alice, come with me!"

"Alice is tired," said Barbara.

Mrs. Lynne murmured incoherently :

"Sunday afternoon—James don't approve of walking—talking. I mean we always go home after church."

"Nonsense!" said Mrs. Clinton.

"Oh, Florence!" cried her sister. Oh, Florence! Florence!"

“Come, Alice, and rest yourself,” commanded Barbara.

“Mamma wants me,” replied Alice; “and I had rather stay out.”

“Very well,” said Barbara; and with three various sorts of horror depicted on their countenances, the Lynnes crossed the streets and disappeared.

“I am so glad we have met,” said Mrs. Clinton, taking Desmond’s arm. “What pretty children!” she continued; “it is the first time I have seen them.”

“Miss Clinton was just such another,” he said, “when I last saw her.”

“It does not seem a year ago,” said Mrs. Clinton; “and now she is grown up, and Lilian married. Ah, Mr. Desmond, it makes me feel very old!”

And she looked up at her companion, who saw no trace of the hand of time on her fresh features and bright hair; nor any shade of care or sorrow in her laughing, thoughtless blue eyes. He would rather not have found her so

unchanged—she, Henry Clinton's widow ! He said nothing ; and the bright eyes were averted with a half-frown at his silence.

Meanwhile Alice hung back, trying to make acquaintance with the little girls. They were rather shy, and appealed to Mrs. Herbert for replies to Alice's questions. Children have, unconsciously, a delightful power of abolishing restraint between grown up people ; there is an atmosphere of reality and truth about a young child which extends itself to those around, banishing conventionalism, and eliciting a comfortable, or it maybe, uncomfortable sincerity in those who come within its influence. "Heaven lies about us in our infancy," and the innocent presence of a child disconcerts the hypocrite, and refreshes the good and true, like a breeze from Paradise.

Thus were Mrs. Herbert and Alice brought together. After a few moments' talk with the children, in which their shyness was permanently conquered, Alice seated herself beside Mrs. Herbert on the shingle, a few steps from

the bench on which Mrs. Clinton and Desmond were sitting, deep in conversation. The little girls ran away in search of sea-weed and mussel-shells—the only productions of that dreary Brighton sea; and Alice and the governess were *tête-à-tête*.

What could it be, that drew their minds together as they talked? What was the mysterious spell that came like a sunbeam into Alice's spirit, slowly and surely thawing the ice of her natural reserve, and freeing the long-bound stream of hidden thought? And why did Mrs. Herbert look with such earnest interest upon her young companion's downcast eyes and drooping head, when a momentary pause occurred, and words gave place to silence more eloquent still?

They spoke first about the children, then of the Lynnes, but only a few words; and then Alice remarked upon her own enjoyment of rest, and early regular hours, after the excitement of London.

“It is so pleasant to be quiet,” she said;

“but I wish we were all in the country, this place is quite as noisy, and more glaring and town-like in many ways than London. I long for the parks, and still more for the green turf and blue river of my home at Richmond.”

“You are fond of the country, then? But of course you enjoyed London—it was your first season, I believe?”

“My first, and I hope my last,” she replied, with a tone of bitterness in her voice, which fell to a whisper.

Mrs. Herbert wondered, but almost understood all, when turning round she saw the shadow that crossed Alice’s face.

“The excitement has tired you,” she said kindly, “but you will soon revive.”

“So my cousin says,” replied Alice; “but she says it differently.”

Mrs. Herbert smiled. “Miss Lynne has often spoken to me of Mrs. Clinton and you,” she said, “and Mrs. Lynne has done so still oftener. I almost feel as if I had known you before.”

Alice experienced very nearly the same feeling with reference to her companion, but did not express it.

“My aunt is the kindest person in the world,” she replied, “and Barbara is good-natured, I think. She told me a good deal yesterday evening about Mr. Desmond and you and the children; but I was so tired and sleepy. I am always tired now.”

“Always tired! not *always* I hope? Not now, as we sit here?”

“Perhaps not just now; but it is not sitting here for half-an-hour that will rest me,” and Alice sighed.

“What sort of rest do you think would satisfy you?” Mrs. Herbert asked.

Alice saw the kind interest that spoke from her companion’s countenance, and gave an inflection to the voice, always so gentle and persuasive.

“Satisfy me,” she said, as if to herself, “I scarcely know; and as for rest, any rest will do—any quiet, peaceful life—anything for repose.”

“*This* is not our rest.”

The long, low wail of the retreating wave, mingled with the speaker’s voice.

“Not peace, but action,” continued Mrs. Herbert; and the succeeding billow cast its spray into the sunlight as she spoke.

“But when we have no sphere of action,” said Alice, “when we are of no use to any one, and no pleasure to ourselves—when one is exhausted in mind and body, and no object is found for the exertion of either one or the other, what is to be done?”

“I do not think such conditions can exist,” said Mrs. Herbert. “There is one object—self-improvement—which we never need lose sight of, and which may always give us an interest in life.”

“But it is so hard to improve oneself, all alone,” replied Alice.

All alone! Mrs. Herbert glanced at Alice’s mother, and saw how it was. Alice did not observe the look.

“In one sense we are never alone,” said

Mrs. Herbert; "and even with regard to our fellow-creatures, we are not unassisted. From almost every one we meet, we can derive some benefit."

"I never could feel that. I always feel that people are wiser and better than I am, and that I ought perhaps to learn from them, but I cannot. I wonder what it can be," continued Alice, "that makes one shut up, as it were, one's whole nature, against people who are very good, and whom all the time one rather likes. For instance"—but Alice checked herself; for the first time in her life, Alice thought she was growing too communicative. What had become of her natural reserve?

"I know what you mean," said Mrs. Herbert, "I have often felt the same; but the feeling should be resisted. We should never 'shut ourselves up,' as you express it. In almost every human heart there is that which we could love and admire, did we but discern it."

"Admire, perhaps," said Alice; "but as

for love—oh! Mrs. Herbert, how little there is that we can really love! how little that really appeals to our affections! In a world like this ‘they run to waste, or water but the desert.’”

Mrs. Herbert felt a pang of compassion, as she heard such words from one so young; and knew by the accent in which they were spoken, and the look that accompanied them, how earnestly they were uttered.

“Miss Clinton,” she said, “I have no right to speak to you as I could wish, our acquaintance is scarcely an hour old; yet let me hope that the time will come when I may talk to you more freely. Though my position and yours seem to place something like a bar between us, you will not think me presumptuous if I sometimes forget this, and talk to you as I long to do.”

Alice looked up gladly and thankfully. Years of friendship could not have convinced her more fully of her companion’s sincerity, than did the look that met her own.

“I think I *could* learn from *you*,” she said; “and if you *will* tell me all you think, I shall be grateful. I am sure we shall often meet.”

“I trust so,” was the reply. “There is even now something like a link between us. I have felt all you describe and more; but time and sorrow, and the long probation of eventful years, has tamed down in me, all that in you is still fresh and struggling within; and I have learnt sweet lessons in a bitter school. I trust you will learn them too, but not as I did.”

She was interrupted by Mrs. Clinton’s voice, calling Alice to come home. “Your aunt dines so early,” Mrs. Clinton said. “It’s very tiresome to have to come in this lovely evening; but we must be punctual, I suppose. Come, Alice.”

Alice rose and shook hands with Mrs. Herbert. “We shall often meet,” she said, as she turned to rejoin her mother and Mr. Desmond, who had both risen, and were walking up the slope of the esplanade.

“I will accompany you to Regency Square, if you will let me,” said Desmond.

The permission was gladly given, and the three walked on.

“I hope you found Mrs. Herbert agreeable, Miss Clinton?” said Mr. Desmond.

“I did indeed,” replied Alice. “I never met any one so—” and she hesitated.

“So what?” said Mrs. Clinton; “so clever, do you mean? Governesses are generally clever, and well educated.”

“So amiable and good, mamma, I meant to say,” replied Alice.

“Miss Clinton has indeed read Mrs. Herbert’s character aright,” remarked Mr. Desmond.

“She has done it in a wonderfully short time,” said Mrs. Clinton with a smile. “What in the world were you talking about, Alice? How did you elicit all this amiability and goodness?”

Alice coloured and looked confused. “I felt that she was kind, mamma,” she answered.

“I cannot well explain what we talked about, not about *things* at all.”

“Not about things!” said Mr. Desmond, “about people then? But I have no right to inquire.”

“About thoughts,” said Alice; “but one never can describe such conversations. How happy your children must be with Mrs. Herbert.”

“They are, indeed,” replied Desmond, “she is perfection, I think; there is nothing I would not entrust to her, no position I would fear to place her in.”

“I was sure of it!” said Alice.

“My dear Alice,” said her mother, in a voice of remonstrance, “how could you possibly be sure? Mr. Desmond has known her for years, and you for half an hour; *he* may be sure, but as for *your* forming a judgment, it is quite ridiculous.”

“Still I can’t help being sure, mamma,” said Alice.

They had now reached the door of Mr.

Lynne's house, where the party separated, Desmond returning to the beach, where he seated himself by Mrs. Herbert's side, and talked of Alice.

Another dull evening ensued to the inmates of Mr. Lynne's house. After dinner he read a long sermon to his guests and assembled servants, during which Mrs. Clinton fidgetted, Mrs. Lynne sighed, Barbara listened, and Alice tried to attend, though her mind *would* return to Mrs. Herbert's conversation, and preach internal sermons with *her* words for texts.

At last it ended, and was followed by tea, that greatest of restoratives, which soon awoke the dormant ideas of the party, and freed their long silent tongues. All but Mr. Lynne—he never touched tea—he objected to secular conversation on Sunday evening; and he had been twice to church and had read a sermon besides. So he established himself in an arm-chair, and taking up a book went to sleep in a studious attitude, and dreamt that he was reading.

His wife and her sister sat together on a

sofa, chattering eagerly—having a good family talk, such as sisters with grown up families rejoice and revel in. Their daughters sat at the table, keeping up an *adagio staccato* duet of conversation, which contrasted with the smooth *presto* movement of the other talk that was going on in a way that would have amused Mr. Lynne, could anything have amused him, and had he been awake.

Alice talked to Barbara about Wilfred, thinking he would form an excellent subject of conversation, being an object of mutual interest and affection. But still they did not “get on ;” at least Alice did not feel that she was advancing towards a friendship for her cousin—nor could Barbara approach one step nearer to her object of discovering what Alice was like.

“How glad you will be to see Wilfred tomorrow,” said Alice.

“To be sure,” replied Barbara, “I am very anxious to see him. I hope, Alice, you do not encourage him in all his wild ideas, as I fear you do !”

“ Wild ideas !” said Alice, “ Wilfred’s ideas seem to me all truth and goodness, and as for *my* encouraging him—why, Barbara, he is a clergyman, and it is to be hoped he is not to be influenced one way or another by an ignorant and inexperienced person like me !”

“ She’s humble,” thought Barbara, and replied : “ Well, my dear, you are very young and have had no advantages, and therefore cannot form an opinion ; but *I* see the evil of Wilfred’s notions, and hope to combat and overthrow them.”

The indignant colour rose to Alice’s brow.

“ I differ from you, Barbara,” she said. “ You cannot alter Wilfred’s opinions, for they are true, and besides, it is not for you, any more than for me, to combat them. Remember his office.”

“ His office don’t make him infallible ! That’s Puseyite nonsense, Alice ! and I am his elder sister, and without vanity, may call myself a person of calmer judgment and more

sense than he is, with all his cleverness and his poetry.”

“ Oh,” cried Alice, “ such faith as Wilfred has is a better guide than judgment ; and the instinct of a trustful, loving nature like his, is worth all the cold ‘ sense ’ that you would give him ! ”

“ And yet,” said Barbara, with a frigid smile, “ a little sense would have saved him lately from a good deal of suffering, for which he may thank what you call his trustful, loving nature ! ”

Alice replied, the tears rising to her eyes.

“ Oh, Barbara ! how can you speak thus of your brother’s bitter sorrow ! how can you blame *him* ! If he has suffered, was it not better—far better—that he *should* suffer, than that he should doubt and mistrust ? Better be deceived a thousand times than learn to doubt and fear. And is he not all the nobler and holier for his sorrow and disappointment ? Others might have been hardened and em-

bittered by such a blow ; but Wilfred is only the more single-hearted, the more self-devoted and earnest, for the failure of his earthly hopes. He ought to be the dearer to you, Barbara, for all that he has borne, when you see how he bears it."

"Of course," said Barbara, "I am very glad he has turned his unhappiness to good account ; and I don't by any means think him most to blame in the affair we are alluding to ; but I don't wish to say what I think of Lilian's conduct."

"She was too thoughtless," interposed Alice.

"Thoughtless and vain," said Barbara, "and Wilfred was foolish, and will grow wiser, I hope."

"Happier, I trust," said Alice ; "more useful, more excellent and true he can scarcely be."

"Dear me, Alice !" remonstrated Barbara, "how enthusiastic you are ! I think you are one of those people, whose geese are all swans !"

There was no answer. Alice longed to talk about Mrs. Herbert, but certainly not to Bar-

bara. While she was thinking how to change the conversation, and seeking a smoother channel for its troubled and unmanageable stream, her cousin suddenly set it flowing in another direction, by abruptly remarking,

“I think I don’t dislike Mr. Desmond!”

“Is he a goose or a swan?” Alice ventured to say.

“Nonsense! He seems a quiet sort of man, and looks sensible enough; don’t you think so?”

“I think he dresses very badly,” said Alice; “but I liked his countenance. He is very Irish.”

“Yes,” said Barbara; “but he is a Protestant.”

“I was thinking of his accent, not his religion,” replied Alice.

“Accents don’t signify,” said Barbara.

It was to be hoped they did not, for no peacock’s accent ever was harsher than Miss Lynne’s.

Alice compared it mentally with Mr. Des-

mond's soft, musical, Celtic intonations, and preferred the latter, Irish as it was. In pursuance of the thought, she said,

“I don't think his accent does signify much, for his voice is pleasant.”

Then Alice yawned, and tried to hide it. Conversing with Barbara was a most toilsome process; at least Alice found it so. It was like walking up a hill of tenacious clay, fastening the foot to the ground at every step. Alice was fairly exhausted.

“My dears!” cried Mrs. Lynne from the distant sofa, “I'm sorry to disturb you, as you are talking together so happily, but it is time to go to bed.”

Mr. Lynne started from his slumbers to light the candles; and with most willing acquiescence every one departed. Alice felt happier than she had done for a long time from sheer relief at being alone and free; for, in the antipathetic presence of Barbara, she felt fairly bound and crushed—unable even to

think when within the range of those cold grey eyes.

And she had much to think over, and some new feelings to wonder at—not to analyse, for this she never did. She often asked herself why there was always within her some source of disquiet, some theme of ever-recurring and uneasy thought; but she never answered her own question, nor even endeavoured to discover the nature and tendencies of these strange inmates of her mind; that unexplored region, that unopened chamber of imagery, secret to all, even its possessor.

So Alice wondered as she gradually fell asleep—wondered first at her extraordinary mental relations with Barbara, whom she esteemed as true, believed to be kind, did not dislike, in the common sense of the word, and yet whose presence almost gave her pain—a sort of cramp of the spirit, harder to bear than direct annoyance would be. Next she wondered why she was so mysteriously attracted

towards Mrs. Herbert, and why she longed so eagerly to see her again—then she recalled nearly every word of their conversation, till sleep came and merged into dreams the thoughts and incidents of the day.

CHAPTER V.

When sorrow all our heart would ask,
We need not shun our daily task,
 And hide ourselves for calm :
The herbs we seek to heal our woe
Familiar by our pathway grow,
 Our common air is balm.

KEBLE.

WILFRED came, but only staid one day ; he could not, he said, spare a longer period from his duties in London. Delighted as Alice was to see her cousin, she had not much enjoyment of his society ; for Barbara fastened on him at once, keeping up a steady warfare against his opinions, tastes, and ideas during the whole

time she was with him. His father also made him a set speech of solemn warning, and gave him several books of Calvinistic divinity, with strict orders to read them. His mother, too, joined in the well-meant persecution, directing her efforts, however, more to his physical than his mental improvement. She sent him back to London with several flannel waistcoats and a considerable quantity of Iceland moss smuggled into his portmanteau ; but her kind intentions were frustrated by her over-secretiveness, for Wilfred, never imagining that *he* was to be the ultimate recipient of all this food and raiment, distributed both among his destitute friends ; thereby, as he thought, fulfilling the donor's intention.

No wonder Mrs. Lynne's maternal anxiety was aroused. Wilfred looked pale and thin, and seemed to be thoroughly overworked. Alice noticed the change with pain ; and in one of the few moments when she could speak to him unheard, she asked him if he had been ill, and told him how altered he looked.

“I am quite well,” he said ; “if I look otherwise, it is only from the want of fresh air, and from being so much in close rooms.”

“Are you often in the way of infection?” asked Alice, looking round to see if his mother was out of hearing.

“Of course,” he replied, “it is my calling. I could not avoid it, were I coward enough to wish to do so.”

“And have you no fears?”

“Why fears?” he answered ; “one can but die !”

Alice often recalled these words in after-years. She had no further conversation with her cousin at that time, as they were interrupted.

Wilfred departed, and the treadmill life of the Lynne family was resumed. Mrs. Clinton very soon became heartily tired of it, and was already beginning to lose her temper about three times a day—generally with her good-natured placid sister, who could not understand “dear Florence’s strange ways,” and at last rather took to heart her abrupt and occasionally unkind

speeches. Mr. Lynne, too, could no longer patiently endure the society and conversation of his frivolous sister-in-law, and Barbara was put out of her way by the presence of her cousin, and by an oppressive self-imposed sense of duty, which made her conceive that Alice's amusement, entertainment, and instruction, all depended upon her unwearied efforts, which she continued, with laudable assiduity, all the time they were together—much to Alice's discomfort, and her own disappointment—for do what she would, Alice could never be amused, entertained, nor instructed by her cousin's exertions.

In a few days, Mrs. Clinton succeeded in finding a suitable house, and having engaged it for a month, she removed with Alice from the gloom of Regency Square, to the glare of Brunswick Terrace. The change was agreeable to all parties.

“Now, my dear,” said Mrs. Lynne to Barbara, as they walked home after installing their relatives in the new house, “now,

my dear, we'll often go to see them, shall we not?"

And at that very moment Mrs. Clinton said, throwing herself into an immense arm-chair, and turning to Alice, "Well! we are free at last, and can do what we like; not that I'm glad to leave Jane; but really there is no bearing that house! Now we can see our friends and enjoy ourselves!"

In Mrs. Clinton's language, "to see her friends," meant to give evening parties, and by "enjoyment," was generally signified the act of sitting up till sunrise, gossiping, or playing whist. Arrangements were immediately commenced for the promotion of these objects, and invitations were sent forth to all those among Mrs. Clinton's numerous acquaintance who were then seeking amusement at Brighton. One of her favourite regiments was then quartered there, which supplied her with men, those desiderata at Brighton parties, and she generally secured the presence of one or two fashionable doctors, who told good stories and

knew how to make themselves agreeable. Consequently Mrs. Clinton became celebrated before she had been a week established at Brunswick Terrace, and Miss Clinton was well known and liked, though eclipsed by her mother.

The beautiful little phaeton and the black ponies were sent for from Richmond, and might be seen every afternoon proceeding swiftly along the cliff, driven by Mrs. Clinton, in a white bonnet, sometimes alone, sometimes accompanied by Alice, and often by one or other of her many "friends."

But Mrs. Clinton, though celebrated, was never considered "fast." She knew the world too well; and, to do her justice, had too much regard for Alice's interests, ever to give cause for the addition of that odious adjective to her name. Her parties were "select" in the truest sense—all who would be admitted to them must be *sans reproche*. No lady who had been "talked about" (and at Brighton there are many such), could possibly obtain from Mrs. Clinton

more notice than a bow, or a card left at her door.

No man, however charming, however much "the fashion," whose name was associated with well-accredited scandal, could ever be found within her doors. Her manners were always quiet and graceful; her conversation pleasing, if not instructive; her dress, though gay, always within the confines of good taste. No wonder she was liked—she could not but be popular. In her house, the gayest found something to enjoy—the gravest, nothing to censure. For the *very* gravest, the class of which Mr. Lynne was the type, never darkened her rooms with their presence.

And how did Alice enjoy this new phase of social life? Not in the slightest degree. This non-enjoyment was morbid and wrong, for she was surrounded with much that should have afforded her rational pleasure; but so it was. All her enjoyment was external to this sphere; it was centered in the one attraction, the one

charm, of Mrs. Herbert's society. For all other conversation she was out of tune. She could not descend to the level of ordinary talk, after listening to her new friend's earnest and serious discourse : it suggested so many hitherto untried themes of thought ; it opened to her view so many true realities, unseen before ; it led her into such a fair and infinite region, such a wide and glorious dreamland, that she could not bring herself to fold her spirit's wings, weary and failing as they were, and stand once more among the withering flowers that form what are called the "realities of life."

She cared for none of these things. She had never been sufficiently practical, never sufficiently interested in the things around her ; her mind had always had too speculative a tendency, and now that the dim and distant space in which it had always loved to wander, was lighted up by the companionship of a wiser mind, this tendency was increased tenfold, and Mrs. Clinton was not far wrong when she said that Alice

lived more in the clouds than ever, and had become quite useless.

And this was the result of Mrs. Herbert's influence. The result! the *seeming* result, I should have said; the temporary, momentary effect of that remedy, whose benefit was to be eternal. A new ingredient was added to her nature; for a moment all was tumult, effervescence, unprofitable, objectless action, and then—then came the true result, and in after years, its fruits. Could we but learn to trust and wait!

There was scarcely a day on which Alice and Mrs. Herbert did not meet. Mrs. Clinton was very glad that Alice should have some one to walk with, as she was not fond of walking herself, and she knew how good it was for her daughter to have daily air and exercise: so Alice often joined the little Desmonds and their governess in their early walks, and sat with them by the sea-side.

Rapidly, but surely, grew this friendship; day

by day the kindred natures of Mrs. Herbert and Alice drew closer and closer to each other ; gradually but swiftly the false instinct of reserve lost its power, and both spirits yielded more and more to the true instinct of sympathy which taught them to love and trust. To Mrs. Herbert, Alice's affection came like a burst of sunshine, after the long grey day of her clouded life ; and she was to Alice as a star of peace and guidance, lighting the stormy waters which threatened her with shipwreck.

Day after day they sat together beside the sea. They did not talk much of themselves—they did not *tell* many of the facts of their lives—yet how little remained concealed ! There was that in each of them which could read the other's thoughts. Well did Mrs. Herbert know how much struggle and suffering had already fallen to Alice's lot, and how much illusion and disappointment her short life had brought her, though Alice told her little of the past. And well could Alice read the spiritual history of

her friend—that tale of repeated sorrows, and hopes transferred from earth to heaven.

They knew each other well, without the help of time. They loved each other deeply, though their love was not the growth of years, but days. There are not many in this selfish, cautious world, who know how this may be; but I write for those to whom it is no falsehood and no mystery, but the tale of their own experience—the truth that has gladdened their lives.

Once, in the early morning, they sat together on the beach, watching the receding tide. The children were busily erecting a castle of sand and pebbles a few yards off, and the pleasant murmur of their voices mingled harmoniously with the cadence of the waves.

“ Listen !” said Mrs. Herbert, “ is not that one of the most perfect of Nature’s anthems? Do you hear how it rises and falls in a measured harmony, and how beautiful is the combination of sound; the loud breaking of the coming wave united with the long low wail of

the retiring one; and then the momentary pause, and the recurrence of the melody?"

Alice's eyes glistened, for she could listen for hours to the sound of the waves, which had for her an unaccountable spell—an influence, calming, and yet suggestive of many thoughts. It was delightful to find that another person loved that glorious though melancholy music, and Alice said so with gleaming eyes.

"We have but to look and listen," Mrs. Herbert said, "to know how much beauty and harmony surround us. Too many of us are unconsciously blind and deaf—as for the voice of the waves, perhaps, you and I have had more time and opportunity for listening to it than most people. It is not wonderful that our ideas should meet."

"They generally do," said Alice. "It is new life to me."

Mrs. Herbert smiled—not the unbelieving smile of scorn that generally followed Alice's sayings. "I quite understand you," she said, "though your expression is strong; but there

are genial moments for all of us, when we feel a sort of spring time within us, as if it was May-day in our minds, and buds and flowers were coming into life over all our fallow fields. My sympathy may be a spring shower to you, as yours is a gleam of May sunshine to me."

"Sunshine!" said Alice; "I who am scarcely in the daylight!"

"You have been too long in the torch-light," replied Mrs. Herbert, "to see clearly now; nevertheless, you have brightened my path, though I will not allow that it was dark before."

"Yet," said Alice, timidly, "yours cannot be a cheerful life."

"I know," she answered, "the life of a governess is always supposed to be particularly solitary, toilsome, and sad; but I have not found it so. The children are an interest and a happiness to me; they are too young to give me any toil; and as for solitude, I have been long, long accustomed to what is generally so called; and now that I know you, there is for the present an end of that. My life is a cheerful one."

“Forgive me !” said Alice, “but I can scarcely believe that you find happiness in it. Your contentment is more than I can understand. You were never intended for the dreary routine of the life you have adopted. I cannot bear to think of your days of anxiety and watching, if not of labour ; and your solitary hours of leisure, spent in occupations that interest no one, and thoughts and feelings for which there is no sympathy. How can you be cheerful? Tell me your secret. Even to me, who have every happiness, life is often dark and cold. No affection is satisfying, no aspiration realised. Is life no struggle to you?”

“It is only since I learned to struggle,” said Mrs. Herbert, “that I found contentment. I believe there are some natures incapable of rest and calmness till they have been raised to a higher faith and stronger love, than the degree of both which suffices to brighten the paths of others. To such restless minds, nothing can bring peace but a constant realisation of the

Unseen; their immortality oppresses them, and refuses to be calmed by earthly pleasures or interests; while they, unconscious of the cause of their vague disquietude, fret impatiently against life and its duties, deeming the world a stony waste, the scene of hard tasks and empty pleasures; and thus duty is neglected or unwillingly performed, and pleasure gives no enjoyment. We often think we struggle when we only fret."

Alice felt how forcibly her companion's words described her own state, and she eagerly wished to hear how the remedy was to be obtained. "You have still to tell me your secret of happiness," she said.

"Action!" was the ready answer, "action, exertion, unwearying effort against indolence—the worm that harbours in unoccupied minds, and changes finally into the hornet, despair! and still more, faith—comprehensive, loving, daily growing faith; not only that which creeds define and intellect analyses, but that which lives in the heart, and must keep it

warm and fresh for ever, though every earthly tie may break, and all hopes for this world be at an end. I cannot in words tell you what I mean, but the day will come when you will feel it, as I may say, with deep humility and thankfulness, that I do. You have imagination, which was given to lead you to such faith as I would describe if words could do it. It makes life not only calm, but beautiful—it throws a light over sorrow and repentance, fairer than the glow of earthly joy—it makes duty a willing service, turns every sacrifice into a free tribute of thanksgiving, and makes the roughest path easy, by showing at every turn and over every obstacle, the beauty of the Promised Land. It is

“That serene and blessed mood
In which the burthen and the mystery
Of all this unintelligible world
Is lightened.”

I do not say that the burden will never be felt: that we can always walk in the full influ-

ence of this divine principle. For all of us there are dark moments, and even hours and days; but we must be content, knowing that the sun shines though we cannot see it for clouds. Having once felt this faith, and obeyed its influence, it is ingratitude to despair, or allow our love to wax cold, though for a time our consciousness of the blessing may be withdrawn.”

“I would give worlds to feel as you do,” said Alice, “but such faith is beyond my reach. I have sometimes conceived of such a state, but never realised or felt it. And though I say, and now feel, while sitting with you beside that glorious sea, that the world is unsatisfying, and that my vain aspirations tend beyond it, it is not always so. You would despise me—no, not despise, but pity—if you knew how in heart and soul I have been carried away to the regions of all frivolity; how I have lived for days without a single aspiration beyond the present, and how attractive to me have been scenes where you

would suppose only the most thoughtless could find pleasure. But that is all over now—I cannot bring my mind to bear on what I know to be the true realities. The pleasure has left me weaker than it found me. It was succeeded by real pain; now both extremes are over, but I am not as I was before, and, I may say it to you—Life is a blank!”

Mrs. Herbert knew enough of Alice’s short career to understand her present disturbed condition. She had not distinctly related any of her past history; but much of it had by random words and momentary confidences, become known to this her only friend—for she could not resist Mrs. Herbert’s ever ready sympathy and gentle counsels. It was inexpressibly delightful to her young spirit to communicate with one who could understand the strange, wayward feelings which had hitherto fermented silently within, and who could calm them by pointing out the beauty of that wisdom which is “a tree of life to them that lay hold of her.”

“Life is a blank,” said Alice, with averted face, pulling to pieces a crimson twig of seaweed. Mrs. Herbert took it gently from her hand, and said :

“It may seem so to you now, while your mind is unstrung and your heart disturbed ; but life is not a blank while any form of beauty and perfection lies upon our path, though that path be over a stony wilderness. Look at this exquisite atom of creation which was in your hands just now, and think how many more such beautiful productions grow in all varied loveliness of form and colour, under that cold sea. This bit of sea-weed came to you as a messenger from a world of hidden loveliness, telling you of that Infinite Goodness whose signature upon all His works is beauty, and who destined you to live when all that mars or defaces that sign has perished. Think where life points to—whose gift it is—to what it should tend ; you will not then see it as a blank !”

Alice sighed.

“To what can my life tend?” she asked. “You have an object and an interest, though I cannot call your lot a bright one; but what have I? Whom can I benefit? What can I do?”

“They also serve, who only stand and wait!”

“Oh!” cried Alice, “there is no harder service! and besides when we stand still, how hard it is not to fall from mere inaction! Temptation is busy with those who ‘stand and wait.’”

“We should stand armed and ready—remembering that we are in the midst of warfare; and we must keep our armour bright, for the moment may come when we shall be called to strenuous action. I agree with you, that to ardent natures, this patient waiting is a severe task. I know still better than you do what is the ‘dull, deep pain, and constant anguish of patience;’ but let her have her perfect work. You will be the more ‘thoroughly furnished for

all good works' when the day of action comes."

"Oh, how difficult it is to live!" said Alice. "How difficult it is to see the truth, and follow it—how difficult to obey!"

"And how beautiful to overcome!" said Mrs. Herbert, "to conquer these difficulties, and live with the sweet lesson of obedience learnt by heart!"

"I trust I could and would obey," said Alice, "if, in this turmoil of voices from the world without, and from contending spirits within, I could hear distinctly the voice of Him whose will I long to learn; but it does not reach me."

"You have but to discern it," Mrs. Herbert replied. "The circumstances in which you are placed, are the expression of God's will concerning you. Act rightly in those circumstances; if they seem to preclude you from doing active good, then, as I said before, accept the duty given you. Stand and wait, but not idly. Stand, asking for the help

that you daily need, even to stand upright. Stand, holding at bay the evil powers that assault you. Stand, keeping down the faults, or rather sins, that overgrow your nature, and slowly but surely kill every fair tree of God's own planting. Stand, resolute and calm, though the ground be hard beneath your feet, and the sun beat upon your head. Stand thus, and you will be supported. This is obedience."

"For me it is," said Alice, "but not for all."

"Accept your post," said Mrs. Herbert. "You were at your baptism enrolled Christ's faithful soldier and servant. The soldier does not choose his place in the battle. There are sentries as well as combatants. And who can believe that those who rebel under one command, would give true obedience to another? For there is no true obedience, while we retain our own will."

"I know you are right," said Alice, in a low voice; and then she was silent, pondering deeply.

Mrs. Herbert saw this, and did not interrupt her ; besides she feared to say too much. She knew well when to be silent, and that such silence would benefit her cause far more than words just then.

The sun was high in the heavens, the children had finished their castle, the tide had turned, and the small waves had begun to threaten the mimic masonry with destruction. Mrs. Herbert rose, and rousing Alice from her abstraction, called the children, and walked up the sloping beach.

Alice followed, leading little Kate who had crept to her side.

It was the children's turn to be talked to, and as the party walked home, they led the conversation. As Alice entered her mother's house, little Kate said :

“ I wish you lived with us, Miss Clinton ! ”

Alice went up-stairs to her room, and sat down to think over Mrs. Herbert's words—but this could not be. She had suddenly come into a very different moral atmosphere, as she

soon found when her mother abruptly entered her room, and said :

“ Dear me, Alice ! how *can* you stay out all day with those children ! really you have no regard for time. I’ve been expecting you this hour, and I wanted you to talk over our invitations for Tuesday week ; and Lord Bourneley has been here, he called early on purpose to find us both at home ; you are too provoking, Alice !”

Poor Alice was too much surprised and alarmed at this unexpected attack, to rejoice at having escaped some of the vapid conversation of the idle butterfly known as Lord Bourneley. She replied timidly :

“ I thought, mamma, you liked my walking with Mrs. Herbert, and it is only just two. We can arrange about the invitations before we go out driving.”

“ No, indeed,” said Mrs. Clinton in a sharp tone, which she reserved entirely for domestic life, “ no, indeed ! You know, Alice, I never think of business in the afternoon. How you

have been wasting all the morning, sitting on the stones with that governess ! It's all very well to walk with her sometimes, you can't walk alone, and it's a convenient opportunity for you to get a little air in the mornings : but I have no idea of your neglecting everything in this sort of way, to sit gossiping with Mrs. Herbert !”

“ Oh, mamma, not gossiping !” cried Alice, “ Mrs. Herbert never gossips, and I am very very sorry, I staid so long out. I did not know you wanted me indeed, mamma.”

Alice's heart was wrung by her mother's careless words. It was bitter to be so misjudged, to be accused of wasting time, when she felt that to that one hour she might owe a future life of time not wasted ; to be reprov'd for neglect of duty, when her heart was teeming with resolves to labour and obey ; to hear such a term as “ gossip” applied to the gentle wisdom of her friend—all this was bitter indeed. The tears sprung to Alice's eyes, and she turned away.

Mrs. Clinton was good-natured after all, and fond of Alice, now that her favourite child had left her.

“Well, my dear,” she said, “I’m sure there’s nothing to cry about; don’t be so late another time, that’s all.”

“Indeed, mamma, I will not,” said Alice.

“The fact is, my dear,” continued Mrs. Clinton, “I don’t quite like your being continually with the Desmonds. Mr. Desmond is quite a young man, you know, and in a place like this, people might make remarks.”

“But I scarcely ever meet him,” said Alice.

“It’s not that, Alice. I should not mind how much you met him, except for the remarks of the world. *He* is not susceptible, I can see, and as for *you*, I don’t suppose any one will ever please you, if you could refuse Sir Aubrey Howard; but when he is at Brighton, I don’t like you to be continually seen with his children. Lord Bourneley asked me whether you were out with the little Desmonds, as if it was

quite a matter of course. That does not please me, Alice."

How Alice hated Lord Bourneley at that moment !

"Mr. Desmond leaves for Ireland to-morrow, mamma," said Alice.

"Yes," said her mother, "and I have no objection to your walking with Mrs. Herbert then ; but, Alice, you must not do it so often when he returns."

Alice submitted, earnestly hoping that Mr. Desmond's stay in Ireland would be prolonged, and little imagining how much she had to do with his intention of returning with all possible haste. It was a relief to find that her walks with Mrs. Herbert might continue at least for the present ; still Alice's spirits were damped by the check she had received, and she could not help thinking less of her good resolutions, than of the difficulty of bearing any diminution of her happy intercourse with her friend.

CHAPTER VI.

It comes—the beautiful, the free,
The crown of all humanity,
 In silence and alone,
To seek the elected one.

It lifts the boughs, whose shadows deep
Are Life's oblivion, the soul's sleep,
 And kisses the closed eyes
Of him, who slumbering lies.

LONGFELLOW.

MR. DESMOND went to Ireland, and Alice received no more rebukes for want of punctuality. She took care not to deserve them, and Mrs. Clinton no longer interfered with her

walks by the sea-side, though she often wondered why Alice enjoyed them so much. They were, indeed, complete enjoyment, though Alice often returned from them pale with deep and anxious thought, and with a shade upon her countenance, which might be taken for sorrow, though far different was its cause. The shadow on the countenance was an index of the light upon the soul; the dawn of that light, which was to shine more and more unto the perfect day, dispelling the external cloud which heralded its birth.

One day the accustomed walk was missed. Mrs Herbert sent Alice a note, saying that a sudden attack of illness confined her to the house; but that she hoped to be well enough on the following day to meet Alice in the accustomed place. The next day came, and she did so; but Alice was startled at the change made by that one day's illness. Mrs. Herbert's eyes were sunken, and her cheeks pale as death. Her step, too, seemed feeble, and her voice altered.

“No, I have not suffered at all,” she said, cheerfully, in answer to Alice’s anxious questions. “In a day or two I shall be quite well again. I have often had these attacks of fainting fits before.”

“Fainting fits!” said Alice; “but that is serious. I hope you had medical advice?”

“Yes,” she replied. “The children’s maid sent for Dr. Johnston, who attends Kate; he soon brought me round.”

“And what did he say was the cause?” asked Alice.

There was no reply. Alice looked anxiously at her companion, over whose pale features stole a faint colour like sunrise light, which fled and left them paler than before.

“The cause?” said Mrs. Herbert, in a low voice. “I knew the cause long before he told me. Alice, this was but one of many warnings that God has mercifully given me, of the change which I am approaching—of the end of my journey through this life. That end will be

called a sudden one, but not sudden to me, thank God!" she added, with the deepest reverence of tone and manner.

Alice was thunderstruck at first; the next moment she refused to believe.

"It cannot be," she said; "it is not as you suppose. There is no danger in your illness."

How positively we always speak when we long to believe our own words, and yet know them to be false!

"I do not say there is danger," said Mrs. Herbert. "This last attack is over, and I may not have another for a long time. Think no more about it, dear Alice."

Alice thought of nothing else, though she said no more, and allowed her friend to change the subject of conversation. Mrs. Herbert talked with more than common cheerfulness, but Alice was strangely dejected. On returning from her walk, she found Mr. Desmond with her mother. How soon he had returned from Ireland! She was heartily sorry to see

him, but tried to control her tell-tale countenance, and receive his warm greeting with due cordiality.

“You came home in very good time to-day, Alice,” said Mrs. Clinton.

“Mrs. Herbert was not very well, mamma,” replied Alice, “and did not stay out long. I do not think she expected Mr. Desmond to-day.”

“No,” said he, “I have come back two days before I intended; and I came here first, knowing that I should not find the children at home at this hour. Is Mrs. Herbert ill? I am very sorry to hear that.”

“She had an attack of fainting fits yesterday,” said Alice, trying to speak steadily. “She tells me she is subject to them. Do you think it is anything serious, Mr. Desmond?”

“I trust not,” he answered (but Alice marked his anxious look). “I know she fears disease of the heart, of which her mother died.”

“Oh!” interrupted Mrs. Clinton, “I dare say she is fanciful. Everybody faints sometimes.”

“Mrs. Herbert would be the last person, mamma, to take fancies about herself.” said Alice.

“Mrs. Herbert is a Phœnix,” said Mrs. Clinton. “Alice thinks there is nothing like her.”

“I am glad Miss Clinton appreciates her,” answered Desmond. “She is, indeed, invaluable. I wish her health was stronger.”

“A delicate governess is a great annoyance,” remarked Mrs. Clinton.

Desmond looked at Alice, and saw how she was pained by her mother’s thoughtlessness.

He rose; and saying that he must go to his children, took rather an abrupt leave of his friends, and withdrew.

“There is something bearish about that man,” said Mrs. Clinton, when the door was shut, “though I rather like him. Remind

me, Alice, to ask him for Tuesday week and the Thursday after. I wish to be civil to him."

"Yes, mamma," said Alice, absently.

"I am sure he would like to marry," continued Mrs. Clinton. "I wonder if he would take a fancy to Barbara!"

"Oh, mamma! not Barbara!" cried Alice, horrified at the idea of seeing her little favourites under the thralldom of such an excellent step-mother.

"Not Barbara! Why not, Alice? She is not very likely to do better; and I'm sure she would make a very good wife, and is much too strong-minded to object to Ireland, or even to Timbuctoo, if her *duty* (the speaker laid a scornful emphasis on the word) led her there."

"It would never do," said Alice. "Besides, mamma, do you think making marriages is a good thing?"

"Making marriages! My dear, how can

you think I would do such a thing? I only mean to bring people together and then leave them to themselves. Did I make Lilian's marriage? Did I ever try to make one for you, Alice?"

"No, mamma," replied Alice, thinking to herself that if Mr. Desmond and Barbara were merely "brought together, and left to themselves," the children's danger would not be very imminent.

"Then do not talk as if I were a match-maker, Alice," said her mother. "I do think, however, that Mr. Desmond would like to marry. I suppose he has no thoughts of Mrs. Herbert?"

"Oh, mamma, what an idea!" Alice cried. "No one would ever think of marrying Mrs. Herbert."

Mrs. Clinton laughed.

"What an opinion you must have of your friend's attractions, Alice! I thought she was all perfection in your eyes."

"So she is," said Alice; "but one would

never think of marriage in connection with her. She is above that, I think!"

"Above that! What new fancy have you taken, Alice? This is really too absurd! Do you intend to be 'above that,' too? May I ask whether you owe these sublime notions of a single life to Mrs. Herbert's instructions, or to Wilfred's visions of Protestant nuns? Are you going to be a Sister of Mercy?"

This was one of Alice's favourite and most secret visions, which was thus abruptly dragged forward and set before her eyes. She did not reply to the question, but answered quietly and timidly:

"I expressed myself badly, mamma. I did not mean what you think; but—"

"Well don't explain," interrupted her mother. "Let us avoid discussion, at all events. I want to talk over our London news. I heard from Mrs. Lester while you were out."

The letter was produced, and talked over. Alice was interested in its contents, and for

a few moments, her anxiety about Mrs. Herbert was held in abeyance, though not subdued. Mrs. Lester's information was as follows: She believed London was very empty and dull, though she did not find it so, all her poor friends being still in their dark and dismal homes, so that her round of visiting continued as it had done through the summer. Lord Leventon and his daughters had left London for their home in ——shire (which, by the way, is not ten miles from Norneley Manor). Frederick Lynne had been more assiduous than ever in his attentions to Lady Florella, until Lord Leventon abruptly put a stop to them by shutting up the young lady and finally taking her away, to the despair of Fred. Harry was at Oxford, pursuing his unwilling studies, and Wilfred was, as usual, working hard among the poor.

Mrs. Lester was looking forward to the return of her brother and Lilian. She had just received a letter from the former, announcing his intention of returning home in

about three weeks, and then immediately receiving a large family party, whom he hoped to retain till after Christmas. Mrs. Lester expressed her pleasure at the thought of meeting Mrs. Clinton and Alice at Norneley Manor.

These were the principal items of "news" contained in the letter, which Mrs. Clinton and Alice read together.

"We shall have a delightful visit at Norneley," said the former. "I am so glad they are coming back!"

"So am I, mamma," said Alice. "I long to see Lillian's home, and still more to see Lillian herself!"

"I dare say she will ask some of the Lynnes," continued Mrs. Clinton. "Fred will long to be asked, that he may meet Lady Florella again. She will marry him, I am sure."

"I thought it was out of the question, mamma," said Alice, "and that Lord Leventon would not hear of it?"

“ Still you will see, my dear, that it will take place. There could hardly be a worse match ; but the young people are obstinate. I am glad neither of them belong to me.”

And Mrs. Clinton seated herself at her writing-table, and began filling cards of invitation, calling Alice to direct them.

Alice obeyed, listening all the while to the haunting question which still kept reverberating unanswered through her mind—“ Is she to die ?”

Meanwhile Desmond was sitting in his little study, a child on each knee, talking of Slieve-more.

“ There are great trees there, Katie,” he said ; “ do you remember them ? Large old firs, that roar like the sea when the wind sweeps through them ; and oaks, broad shady oaks that are green still. You will be glad to go home, and see grandmamma and the old ponies, and your sunny little gardens, children !”

Lina’s joyous voice broke forth in happy anticipation, but Kate was silent.

“My little Katie is sorry to leave Brighton, and the gay shops,” said Desmond.

“Oh no, papa!” said the little girl. “But something prevents my thinking about going home—home to Ireland, I mean.”

“That is your only home, dear,” her father said, “why should you not think of it?”

“I cannot tell, papa,” said the child. “When Lina talks of it, something prevents me—I can’t make you understand, papa!”

Kate was always a strange, imaginative child. Her father was accustomed to her wild sayings. His natural good sense taught him not to excite her by continuing the subject; so, with a pang of anxiety for the frail and delicately organised little being he loved so tenderly, he put the children down, saying—

“Now I have had a long talk with you. Run up-stairs and tell Mrs. Herbert I am quite ready to see her.”

The children disappeared. Mrs. Herbert had expressed a wish to have a few moments’ conversation with him alone. He had been struck

with her look of ill-health, and could not help fearing that she would wish to leave him, for the sake of recruiting her strength with rest, and change of air. The prospect was a distressing one. He had scarcely begun to contemplate it, when Mrs. Herbert entered.

He drew a chair for her beside his own, and waited for her to speak. There was an interval during which he could mark the change that had taken place in her whole look and bearing since he had left her last. On her generally pale face, the colour went and came fitfully. She breathed quickly, as if exhausted with exercise, and the hands that lay crossed upon her lap looked fearfully white and thin upon the black folds of her dress. But her eyes were clear and calm as ever, and in their steady glance he could discern that no mental or nervous agitation was there, to account for the varying colour and hurried breath.

“Mr. Desmond,” she said, at last, “I ought perhaps to have told you before what I now come to tell you. But until yesterday, I hoped

to have been able to continue my duties for some time to come. I find it has been ordered otherwise; and I must relinquish the occupation in which I have found so much happiness. My health will prevent my accompanying you to Ireland."

It was as he feared. What could he say? He could not ask her to cross the sea, in the state she was in. He expressed his concern, his sorrow, at the thought of losing her, his deep obligation for her care and kindness to his children—his hope that she would soon be strong again, if she would take a month's holiday and visit her friends in the country. Perhaps she could do so, and join him in Ireland. His mother-in-law, he said, could take charge of the children till Mrs. Herbert recovered.

She thanked him earnestly for his kindness and expressions of good-will, but firmly declined his proposal.

"It would be utter selfishness," she said, "to accept it. I do not deceive myself, Mr. Des-

mond, nor will I deceive you. The truth is this: I have not long to live. The disease, which by slow and sure degrees has for years been at work, has now gained strength, and will not leave me much longer here. Dr. Johnston confirms my own conviction. I am well now, and may continue so for some days; but I shall soon have another attack. It will not need many more to end all. As long as I can be of any use, I shall gladly remain with you. I have no ties; no relatives who would grieve if they did not see me before I died. But I could not go to Ireland and be a burthen to you there. So that when you leave Brighton we must part."

How calmly and steadily she spoke, and yet what deep feeling and tender thought was revealed in those gentle accents. Mr. Desmond felt the truth of all she said. He tried to reason with her, but it would not do. He tried to talk of hope.. Hope! What was it that lighted her pale countenance with something more than beauty, and shone forth from

her steadfast eyes ! No need to speak of hope to her, though she had none for this lower life. Hers was a hope of stronger pinion, that soared where she would shortly follow it. He spoke, not as calmly as she did, for to him, as to most of us, death was an appalling thought, and he was deeply touched at his friend's danger. But he spoke kindly and anxiously. There was such truth about her, he could not address her with commonplace condolence at her sufferings or expressions of sympathy. Yet his sympathy was revealed in every word and tone. He said but little, and said it with a faltering voice, hesitating, as men do when there is much which they long to express but know not how. She saw his embarrassment, and beneath it his deep concern and sorrow. It was time, she thought, to leave him to reflect and form plans for his children ; and she rose to quit the room.

He opened the door for her, extending his hand towards her as she passed. She gave

him hers, and he held it for a moment with the strong cordial grasp of real friendship.

“If you have a wish on earth,” he said, “which I can satisfy, it will be cruelty not to express it.”

She looked her thanks and left him.

Then he sat down to think. Plainly he saw how it was to be. His children were to lose their second mother, their kind instructress, who to them was all in all. Where would another such be found? Who could ever replace her in her wisdom, her tenderness, her single-hearted devotion to those motherless infants, doubly forlorn when she should leave them? He must consign them to a stranger's care; he would never again leave them for any length of time; he would watch over them day by day. Yet, still a stranger must be the companion of their orphan childhood, the director of their tastes, the guide of their unformed minds.

Heavily the sense of his lonely responsibility fell upon Desmond's mind, which was full of

foreboding fears for the welfare and happiness of his babes. His little daughters ! Boys, in their position, would suffer less. They could struggle through their childhood and adolescence, as he had done himself. But the strong man trembled for the future of his girls, with as deep a fear that day, as on the one when, stricken down by grief, he turned from their young mother's shrouded form, to look on her new-born offspring.

But, thoughtful and anxious as he was, Desmond had a strong and fearless nature and a sanguine spirit. He determined to hope the best, and trust to Providence for his children's future. Of Mrs. Herbert's recovery he had no hope ; he had long feared the event, which now came into startling distinctness before his mind. He resolved to think over the matter steadily, and form his plans for the future entirely with a view to his children's benefit. His own pleasure must no more be thought of. He sighed as he thought of his solitary position, and the life of duty that lay before him, uncheered by

the presence and assistance of friend or wife, alone with his hopes and fears, his cares and responsibilities, his thousand difficulties in his wild sea-side home. He sighed, but he would not recoil from the complicated task.

Then he rose and walked with firm, slow strides up and down the room, thinking—calling up the forces of his inner being—examining himself, his capacities, his hindrances, his strong powers, and his weak points. He could not remember having ever before undertaken this task of self analysis—but now the question “Am I fit for these new duties?” kept forcing itself upon him, and could not otherwise be answered. How was it, that as he searched among the recesses of his being, one image met him at every turn? How was it that when he strove to read rightly the hard manuscript of self-knowledge, one name only seemed to fill the page?—the name of Alice Clinton.

Alice Clinton ! his lost friend’s child, in whom he felt, as he thought, an interest like that of an

elder kinsman—all for her father's sake. Alice, the quiet, dark-eyed girl, whom he scarcely knew, with whom he had never conversed, but whom he cared for as his childrens' friend and kind companion, of whom they were never tired of talking. Could it indeed be Alice Clinton, who thus came between him and his most serious thought? Could it be *her* remembered form, that stood before him, concealing the dark vista of his future which he strove vainly to explore?

The knowledge of his own heart's secret upon his mind broke, like the break of day, lighting up the wide mystery of his life, present and to come. The hitherto unseen landscape glowed in a sunrise tint, all beautiful and distinct in the clear lights and shadows of summer morning, the lowest vales were lighted far into their still depths, and the cold hills shone like glowing silver. Fair beyond description was the scene, lovely the land of promise through which his life's path ran, while he saw it in the light of that new consciousness, that fresh sunburst of

hope. But the whole scene faded into darkness as he thought how rash, how unfounded was that hope ! Nevertheless, he could not cast it out.

How far his thoughts had flown from the subject to which he had resolved to fix them ! he could not now turn them from the discovery, which in his self-examination he had made. How could he calmly make plans for the future, with the disturbing influence of a new-born love causing unrest within ? How could he look forward with steady eye, while that bright, uncertain vision dazzled him with a brilliance that was scarcely the light of hope, but from which he could not turn, to contemplate the cold grey future of a life without its ray ?

In the midst of his musings—if thus may be termed the visionary contemplation in which he was engaged—he was interrupted by the somewhat noisy entrance of his children, whom, he now remembered, he had promised to accompany in their walk. Lina impetuously pulled him by the coat, while Kate, with childish

solemnity, gave him a letter which the post had just brought. "I found it waiting for you in the drawing-room, papa," she said, "and so I brought it down. Please don't read it."

But it was a foreign letter, and in a strange hand ; so he tried his children's patience for a minute or two while he hastily read it. He scarcely understood it, till he came to the signature of Lilian Rossendale.

She had written from Brussels, pressingly inviting him and his children to join her Christmas party at Norneley. She was anxious, she said, to assemble as many relatives and old friends as she could collect, to enjoy her first winter at home, and she considered Mr. Desmond as a friend, though she was personally little known to him. She could not forget his friendship for one whom they both regretted. She wished to arrange her party some time in advance, to avoid disappointment from the pre-engagement of her friends, and she assured Desmond that Lord Rossendale was desirous of making his

acquaintance, and joined her in the hope of seeing him soon at Norneley.

He ran his eye hastily over the letter, and having discovered its purport, yielded at once to his children's impatience, and went out. But when the walk was over, the little girls complained to each other that papa had been "thinking of something else all the time they talked to him." And the little girls were right. The "something else" was this—Alice Clinton would be at Norneley Manor !

CHAPTER VII.

Oh! there is nought on earth worth being known,
But God and our own souls—the God we have
Within our hearts; for it is not the hope,
Nor faith, nor fear, nor notions others have
Of God, can serve us—but the sense and soul
We have of Him within us.

BAILEY.

MR. DESMOND'S return did not greatly interrupt the intercourse of Alice with Mrs. Herbert. Though they did not walk together so often, they frequently met at Mr. Lynne's house, whose invitations Mrs. Herbert was free to accept, now that her little charges were no longer quite alone in her absence. Alice some-

times sat with her friend in the Square, while the children played upon the scanty turf, to which Mr. Lynne's key admitted them. Mrs. Clinton never interfered.

She could not understand the friendship between her daughter and Mr. Desmond's governess; but she had no objection to their intercourse, so long as it did not lead to unpleasant remarks from the world, coupling her daughter's name with that of the Irishman; and she was glad that Alice should be amused in any way. For, of being pleased without being more or less amused, Mrs. Clinton had no idea. She concluded that Mrs. Herbert's conversation must be singularly lively and agreeable in a *tête-à-tête*, and she was delighted that Alice should enjoy it.

Day after day they met. And now by slow degrees the excitement, the morbid pleasure of this new friendship, faded from Alice's mind. Too suddenly raised into a higher sphere of thought, it had been shaken and disturbed; now it began to recover its balance, to breathe

freely, as it were, in the higher atmosphere, to which its companion mind had borne it. The new chords which had been struck, no longer threw into discord the common music of daily life, but enriched it to noble harmonies. From the misty air of lower earth, Alice had risen into the cloudy storm region of the mountain's side, and was now emerging, still on the ascent, into the calm sunlight above the clouds.

Mrs. Herbert led her on—not supporting, not helping her—but pointing ever to the goal, which daily to Alice's eyes grew clearer and her path more straight.

“Do not follow me,” Mrs. Herbert often said to her friend, “in matters of internal faith, I am not your guide. Do not take truths from me; make them your own. See them with your own eyes. Take truth from no man.”

“And the Church?” Alice once replied. “Surely we accept as truth the teachings of the Church?”

“The teachings of the Holy Catholic Church,

as far as she does teach doctrine," said Mrs. Herbert, "are truth — the positive truth of Scripture; but as long as you accept this truth, merely because the Church, or even the Scripture teaches it, it is still not truth to you. You have not made it your own."

"But how can I make it my own?" asked Alice. "When I believe it to be true, is it not my own?"

"Man's being is twofold," said her friend. "He is constituted of will and understanding, called in the Bible, heart, or soul; and spirit, or mind. With the understanding, spirit, or mind, we perceive the truth; we see it, as it were, at a distance, and this we call believing; but with the will, heart, or soul, we take this truth, we make it our own—we love it, act it, live it; and this we must do ourselves, helped by no man, by no Church."

"But not unhelped," said Alice.

"Never unhelped," she replied. "It is the will, or love of God, that continually directs the wills or loves of those who acknowledge and

seek this direction ; and it is the wisdom, or word of God, that communicates with the understanding of man, and causes him to see truth. In this sense, God is the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.”

“ These cannot be new doctrines,” said Alice, half perplexed ; “ but you put them differently ; they are unlike all I have ever heard, or read, and yet the same. But do you believe that all people can see this divine truth, and seeing, can appropriate it by acting with the will what is perceived by the understanding ?”

“ I do,” said Mrs. Herbert. “ If I did not I should be one of those who hold Calvin’s false and gloomy doctrine of predestination. Salvation is offered to all ; and what is salvation but the confirmed knowledge of truth, and the confirmed love of good ? otherwise, the completed regeneration of man’s will and understanding : ‘ Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.’ ”

“ Free !” repeated Alice. “ In spite of

Calvin, I always believed we were free. There are some, however, who think otherwise."

"We are free to accept or refuse the salvation which is offered us, but we become fettered if we indulge in sin. A life of sin, a life of obedience to a corrupt will, whose corruption daily increases, is true bondage—so called throughout the sacred writings. It is bondage, for it enslaves the understanding; it makes man deny truth; it gives him strong delusion, that he may believe a lie. If man's deeds are evil, he will love darkness rather than light. Therefore the devil (or sin personified) is called 'the Father of Lies.'"

"You spoke of a corrupt will," said Alice; "surely every man's will is corrupt by nature."

"In one sense it is. Every child of Adam is born with the hereditary disease of sin, with distorted tendencies towards evil. Left to himself, he must inevitably perish, his will corrupt, his understanding darkened. Besides, evil has its ministers, its hierarchy of powers,

leagued together to obtain recruits from man. But, when our incarnate God said, 'It is finished,' from the cross, the victory was won for us. In the strength of our conquering Redeemer, we too can conquer. We can resist the devil, we can abstain from acts of sin, and if we thus shun evils in the love of truth, (which is meant by taking the shield of faith, and quenching the fiery darts of the wicked one), then may we hope to be restored to our true nature, to the nature which God made. The Physician of souls will heal us. In *returning* and rest we shall be saved."

In words like these, often repeated, and often enlarging much further on the great and glorious subject of man's spiritual position, did Mrs. Herbert endeavour to place before Alice's mind eternal truth in its vast simplicity, the clear outline, drawn in lines of light upon each volume of the vast book of revelation, the universe and the Bible. And day by day Alice began to see aright. Through the drapery of old dogmatic teaching, through the mists of her

own crude ideas, through the "dust of systems and of creeds," the blinding, choking dust ever rising from the arena of controversial strife, through all these confusing media of vision, clearer and clearer shone forth God's definite truth upon Alice's mind.

How to live, and what to live for! the great mystery of life. It was all made plain. First, to lay aside every weight, to wage war with sin, striking down, one after the other, every stronghold of the enemy within, and then to run the race with patience, to build, founded on the rock, the fabric of self-perfectionment. Life was no longer a blank.

Over these things did Alice ponder, as she walked alone early one September morning, to her aunt's house. Mrs. Lynne had not been quite well, and Alice, with an activity which Barbara might have admired, walked over to see the invalid, immediately after breakfast. She found her aunt comfortably established in bed, "taking care of her cold," she said; and the expression was a very good one, and very

true in a sense of which Mrs. Lynne had no idea. I am no more of a doctor than every head of a family should be, but I cannot withhold from the reader my opinion, little worth as it is, that staying in bed really *is* taking care of a cold, and taking such good care of it too, that it will probably increase considerably during the process.

Be this as it may, Mrs. Lynne was in bed, obeying her husband and daughter, whose opinion on the treatment of colds differed from mine. She was delighted to see Alice, and thanked her vehemently for having come.

“I’m a great deal better, my dear,” she said. “Oh yes : I can talk ; my throat is quite well ; talking is very good for me. Now, Alice dear, tell me all about your party last night.”

So Alice related the details of a Brighton evening party, to which I hope the reader is indifferent ; she answered innumerable questions with great accuracy, and told her aunt all about

the impromptu dance with which the evening concluded.

“So you danced with Lord Bourneley, my dear,” said Mrs. Lynne, “and with Captain Travers and Mr. Desmond. I thought Mr. Desmond never danced. Tell me which you liked best.”

“I liked Mr. Desmond best, Aunt Jane, replied Alice. “Lord Bourneley talked about things that don’t interest me, and Captain Travers is not quite natural.”

“Oh, my dear, you know he’s dear Fred’s friend. I am sure he is very superior when you come to know him. What did you wear on your head, Alice?”

“Only pearls,” Alice replied, with a smile at her aunt’s innocent curiosity.

“Well, my dear, it don’t signify much what you wore, and I am sure you have no vanity about it. Your dear mother wore her green brocade, I suppose?”

“Mamma was in pink,” said Alice, getting tired of the subject.

“Pink always became Florence,” said Mrs. Lynne, solemnly. “It became us both. I have it on my nightcap, Alice, you see.

Alice glanced at her aunt’s bows, and said they were extremely becoming.

“But I have nothing to do with such things,” said Mrs. Lynne, “and I really take no interest in them; only I like to think your dear mother looked nice, and you too, Alice. Mr. Desmond did not stay long in Ireland. I suppose he will soon go again?”

“I think not, Aunt Jane,” replied Alice. “Lilian has asked him and his children to Norneley; and he has other friends in the neighbourhood who will, he says, certainly invite him if he goes there, so he thinks of remaining in England till the spring.”

“Ah! that was kind and thoughtful of dear Lilian,” said Mrs. Lynne, “to remember your poor dear father’s friend. I am glad he will not have to go to that out-of-the-way place for the winter, and take those two poor dear little girls across the sea in the middle of the

equinoctial gales. And Mrs. Herbert too; do you know, Alice, I'm afraid she is very delicate. Dr. Johnston says—"

"Oh, aunt!" interrupted Alice, "have you seen him? did you ask him about her? what does he say? Oh! Aunt Jane, tell me."

"My dear, you startle me. Dear me! I really forgot how much you and Mrs. Herbert have taken to each other. I am so very sorry, dear Alice, really I wish I had not told you."

"But tell me more," said Alice, with ill-concealed impatience. "What does Dr. Johnston say?"

"My dear, he says—at least he told me—he thought it was only a question of time. There is something organic the matter, he says. She is not likely to suffer much, but she cannot recover. Oh! my dear Alice, you made me tell you," added Mrs. Lynne, alarmed at her niece's change of countenance.

"I feared it," was all Alice said, her heart sinking at the thought of the coming sorrow.

The confirmation of her fears was a stunning shock, although it was not unexpected.

“How pale you are!” cried Mrs. Lynne; “the room is too hot for you.”

Mrs. Lynne knew nothing of the shock of terror that had driven the blood from Alice’s cheek. Silent emotion was beyond her comprehension. She had at first feared that Alice was overcome by the intelligence of her friend’s danger; but as no shower of tears came to confirm the idea, she attributed Alice’s paleness to another cause.

“No, aunt,” said Alice, trying to speak firmly; “I am quite well.”

Alice’s sorrows seldom sought external manifestation. She was not given to tears—to scenes of any sort. This was less owing to self-control, than to her natural temperament.

Mrs. Lynne was differently constituted, and innocently thought that when people did not cry, they did not care, so she proceeded to say:

“Poor thing! she is such a nice creature,

I was really quite attached to her. It is very sad to think she is so soon to leave us all—and those dear little girls, how sadly they will miss her; and you too, Alice, my dear. I thought you were really quite a friend of hers. You have no idea how fond she is of you—she often talks of you to me—and you are so continually together—”

Alice turned away, and buried her face in her hands. At this moment Mr. Lynne entered the room.

“How are you now, Jane?” he asked.

Alice started at his heavy step and strident voice, but did not turn round; she could not, at that moment.

“Why, there’s Alice!” he exclaimed, catching sight of her. “Good morning, Alice. Why, what’s the matter? Has anything happened?”

“Oh! James,” said Mrs. Lynne. “Oh! Alice dear! Really I’m so sorry I said so much—indeed I had no idea—it’s about poor Mrs. Herbert, James,” she added, addressing

her husband in what was intended for a whisper.

Mr. Lynne instantly walked up to Alice, and laid his heavy hand on her shoulder. She had recovered herself, and raising her head met her uncle's eye.

"I am glad you are not giving way to sorrow as useless as it would be unjustifiable, Alice," said Mr. Lynne.

Indignation, and not sorrow, was now the feeling against which Alice had to struggle. She said nothing, and Mr. Lynne resumed.

"Mrs. Herbert appears to be a most estimable Christian, as far as my opportunities allow me to judge. If she is such, there is nothing to pity in her approaching death. And you, Alice, have no great cause of grief in losing the friend of a few weeks."

"You cannot tell," said Alice, "all she is to me."

"She is no relative," said Mr. Lynne, "there are no ties between you. Ties are not so quickly formed."

No ties! how little he knew of the links that may bind spirits to eternity, whose formation is not the work of time. Alice had nothing to say—she knew how utterly wasted any explanation would be, and the feelings on which her well-meaning uncle trampled were too sacred to be explained.

He was about to commence a lecture on contentment and the regulation of the affections, when Alice, who could endure no more, hastily said she had delayed too long, and that her mother expected her at home.

“Then I will not detain you,” said Mr. Lynne, “another time, perhaps, I may have an opportunity of saying a few words to you. Good-bye, Alice.

He shook her coldly by the hand. Her aunt embraced her affectionately, and she then escaped.

“Poor dear Alice,” sighed Mrs. Lynne, when the door had closed.

“Why should you pity her, Jane,” remonstrated her husband. “There are few young

persons so happily circumstanced in temporal matters ; spiritually, indeed, she is an object of compassion.”

“ I am sorry she is so anxious about Mrs. Herbert,” explained Aunt Jane. “ They are so fond of one another, you know !”

“ They have known each other a very short time, and real affection is the growth of years.”

Yes, Mr. Lynne, in some soils there is no plant of slower growth.

“ Very true,” said his acquiescent wife.” I quite forgot how short their acquaintance is. Oh ! I hope Alice will soon get over it.”

“ I have no doubt she will,” said Mr. Lynne, “ unless she chooses to indulge in idle discontent.”

“ I wonder,” Mrs. Lynne observed, “ that she did not take to Barbara instead of Mrs. Herbert, who is nothing to her, though a very nice person. Barbara is nearer her own age, and is her cousin, and altogether it's quite unaccountable.”

“We can never account for the friendships of an ill-regulated mind,” said Mr. Lynne. “Barbara is clearly the person intended by Providence as Alice’s guide and friend. But she is self-willed, and prefers those who indulge her faults, and confirm her errors.”

Mrs. Lynne sighed over Alice’s depraved taste.

“Well,” she said, “when our dear Lilian comes back, it will divert her mind. Do you know, my dear, Mr. Desmond is going to Norneley Manor; there will be quite a party there. I wonder, James, that we are not asked.”

“Some of us are,” said Mr. Lynne; “Frederick and Wilfred are going. As for ourselves, you know, Jane, we always stay at home at Christmas, and Harry will spend it with us, though I am surprised that Lilian did not ask him with his brothers.”

“Perhaps she had not room for us all, and she left him to us,” was Mrs. Lynne’s ingenious suggestion.

“However that may be,” said Mr. Lynne, “I shall be very glad to see him.”

“I should have liked dear Fred to come,” said the mother; “but I am very glad he will have a pleasant Christmas in the country, and dear Wilfred, too, he wants rest sadly.”

“I hope he will demean himself as a Christian clergyman should, among those scenes of frivolity,” said Mr. Lynne. “But we are both losing time. Do you not intend to get up, Jane?”

Mrs. Lynne expressed her immediate intention of doing so, upon which her husband departed. But she lay thinking for nearly half an hour before she rose. Meanwhile Alice walked home, absorbed in sad thought. She was to lose the friend who had become the object of her deepest affection, and her strongest and most reverent admiration. The friend, whose words had lighted up her hitherto shaded life—the friend who was to her as a guardian-angel, a guiding and inspiring spirit, a sweet companion with whom she had hoped often to

join as they journeyed on through life. This friend she was to lose, the light so lately given was to be quenched, the guide was to be withdrawn, and she must walk alone again, as she had done before. Would not her solitude be sadder, her twilight existence darker, for this short interval of sunshine and companionship?

No! never again would Alice sink back into her former state—never, in her darkest moments would she be left without a ray of that light which, from her friend's spirit, was now reflected on hers. The human influence was to be withdrawn, but that higher influence of which it was the channel would endure for ever.

But Alice, in her deep sorrow, felt not this. Her faith was too young to support her with such exalted hopes in a moment of so much grief and fear. She knew what she was to lose; she little knew what she had gained, and was still to gain.

She went home, and as was her wont, pur-

sued her accustomed occupations, and assisted at the nightly scenes of gaiety to which her mother brought her, without any change in her demeanour, always so quiet and occasionally pre-occupied. And so time passed on, scarcely a day unmarked by a meeting between the friends. Mrs. Herbert was daily becoming weaker, and her attacks of fainting more frequent; but she was still able to continue her duties, and to spend much of her time sitting beside the sea, or in the square, with Alice, whose mind she resolutely but gradually prepared for their approaching separation. Their thoughts, and consequently their conversations, daily assumed a higher and more spiritual tone, and the calmness of the exalted region into which her friend's words bore her spirit, began to infuse itself into Alice's heart, which, in its worst sorrow, was at peace.

CHAPTER VIII.

The invisible world with thee hath sympathised :
Be thine affections raised and solemnised.

WORDSWORTH.

THE shortening days were all that announced to the inhabitants of Brighton, that autumn was advancing. There was no reddening foliage there, no golden fields, no falling leaves to mark the year's decline. Now and then a colder breeze swept along the cliff, and the waves growled more loudly upon the monotonous slope of the beach. The band was more seldom heard upon the Chain Pier, which swarmed no longer with gay parasols, now that

the winds of autumn had begun to blow. Many well-known carriages began to be missed from the King's Road. In daily diminishing groups, the fair equestrians were sprinkled over the broad swells of the Downs. The stars from her Majesty's Theatre, which for a short period had shone from the Brighton stage, were about to set in the provinces. Bathing-machines were one by one hauled to their resting-places, goat-chaises and donkeys stood in melancholy idleness at their stations, doctors' carriages drove at a slower pace, betokening the leisure of their occupants, and popular preachers thought of recruiting their voice by a little rest, now that so many "itching ears" were missing from among their congregations.

Altogether Brighton was growing dull, and Mrs. Clinton tired of it. There is no place so easily abused as Brighton, no place that suffers so much from the tongues of its ungrateful inhabitants, when its adventitious pleasures are over, and they fall upon the natural resources

of the locality ; one to which Nature has been singularly unkind.

Mrs. Clinton and Alice sat together one morning, the former engaged in recounting the many *désagrémens* of the town where she had for a short time so thoroughly enjoyed herself ; the latter employed in drawing, and replying, when occasion offered, to her mother's complaints.

“ What an odious place this is !” said Mrs. Clinton with a sigh, which sounded more impatient than pathetic. “ So hot and glaring ; and altogether so detestable !”

“ Indeed, mamma, I always thought it very hot here ; there is a great want of shade.”

“ And the society is getting so dull !” continued her mother. “ But you, Alice, don't mind that. You have enjoyed yourself here at any rate ; but I suppose you will not be sorry to return to The Hazels.

“ Only for one reason, mamma,” said Alice,

but before Mrs. Clinton could inquire further, a knock was heard at the door.

“Who can this be so early?” said Mrs. Clinton, starting up. “Captain Travers can’t be up yet! Lord Bourneley, I think. Well, anybody’s company is acceptable!”

Mr. Desmond appeared.

He was received as if he was *not* a walking disappointment. Mrs. Clinton shook hands amicably with him, and made room for him between her flounces and the end of the sofa.

“You are out early,” she said. “Alice and I are bored to death. We have been talking about this horrid town, and wishing ourselves out of it. Are you not tired of it, too?”

“It certainly does not suit me,” he replied; “but I dislike a town life anywhere. You are thinking of leaving Brighton?”

“We shall certainly return to Richmond next week,” said Mrs. Clinton. “I long to see my dahlias and China-asters.”

“And are you tired of Brighton too, Miss Clinton?”

“I do not like the place much,” said Alice; “and I shall be very glad to see The Hazels again. But I shall be sorry to leave. How is Mrs. Herbert to-day?”

“I came to tell you about her,” he replied. “I am sorry to say she is not so well. She had another attack this morning; and though it was over when I left her, she is still very ill. But there is no immediate cause for alarm.”

“I trust not,” said Alice, in a low voice.

“If you would come and spend this evening with her,” continued Desmond, “it would be a real kindness. She is very anxious to see you. I am going to dine out.”

“Oh, mamma!” cried Alice, “you will let me go! You can leave me there when you go to dine at Lady Jane Smythe’s, and call for me coming back.”

“But really, Alice,” remonstrated Mrs. Clinton, “that is not so easily arranged. You

forget that Lady Jane expects you as well as me.”

“Oh! but, mamma, on such an occasion as this, you will spare me; and I will write myself to Lady Jane, and tell her all. When she knows that I am spending the evening with a friend who is ill, I am sure she will excuse me.”

All this time, Mr. Desmond’s eyes were fixed on Alice’s eager countenance.

“Pray let Miss Clinton come,” he said. “I am sure you will not refuse.”

“Well, I suppose I must yield,” said Mrs. Clinton. “I dare say Lady Jane will be very much offended; but we are going away so soon, that after all— Now go and write the note at once, Alice. Write a very civil note.”

“Thank you, mamma,” said Alice. She always found it extremely difficult to compose what is generally called “a civil note,” balancing truth and falsehood judiciously, and combining cordiality with formality.

She left the room to execute the task in quiet, and think of her friend, whose state had increased her anxiety to an almost insupportable degree.

“I ought to thank you in Mrs. Herbert’s name,” said Desmond to Mrs. Clinton, “for allowing Miss Clinton to enliven her solitary evening. You are conferring a very great pleasure on one whose pleasures are rare.”

“Your governess and Alice are wonderfully fond of each other,” said Mrs. Clinton. “I am sure Mrs. Herbert is very charming, and I am glad she likes Alice.”

Desmond thought it would be strange if she did not.

“Miss Clinton does not seem very fond of going out,” he said.

He could not help talking about her.

“Alice is not very sociable,” said her mother; “and yet, I assure you, she is a good deal admired—much more than I should have expected. Even when Lilian was going out with her, Alice had some serious admirers.

But it is impossible to please her. No girl was ever more fastidious, which, indeed, I do not regret."

There was something in these words that gave Desmond both pleasure and pain.

"Miss Clinton does not value admiration, I should think," he said.

"Not in the least," said her mother. "It has not the slightest effect on her. But she does not care for many things that most people value, and she is quite enthusiastic about others that interest no one."

"May I look at her drawings?" said Desmond, taking up the sketch-book Alice had left.

"Oh, yes, if you like. But she does not draw well, compared with Lilian."

"Lady Rosendale's drawings must be very good," said Desmond, "if they are superior to these. But most of these are unfinished."

"Alice never finishes," said Mrs. Clinton.

“All those sketches are incomplete designs of her own.”

“But true to nature as far as they go,” said Desmond. “When do you think of going to Norneley Manor? We shall meet there, I hope?”

“In December,” replied Mrs. Clinton. “I am looking forward most anxiously to seeing Lillian again, and her new home. It is a beautiful place, I have always heard. There will be a very pleasant party there—hunting, I believe. You hunt, of course, Mr. Desmond?”

“I am very fond of it,” he answered. “I have plenty of it at home.”

“You will be glad not to lose your favourite sport by remaining in England this winter,” said Mrs. Clinton.

“I shall lose nothing, but gain a very pleasant Christmas, I hope,” he replied. “I had intended returning home, but poor Mrs. Herbert’s state has altered my plans.”

“It is very unfortunate that your home

should be in Ireland," remarked Mrs. Clinton.

Desmond thought of his noble cliffs and their green summits, of his deep woods and heathery mountains, and of the warm hearts that dwelt upon those broad acres of his in the far west. He did not like the remark.

"I do not feel my misfortune, if it is one to have as beautiful a home as mine," he said.

Mrs. Clinton did not remember anything beautiful twenty years ago at Slievemore, and felt rather amused at Desmond's partiality. She rather mischievously proceeded to "draw him out."

A long desultory talk about Ireland ensued, argumentative, political, theological, and bantering by turns, till Desmond, baffled and wearied by his companion's wit and versatility, withdrew, wondering whether Alice shared her mother's aversion to Ireland.

Mrs. Clinton, left to herself, pronounced an internal judgment on the character of her

departed visitor. He was a good creature, but prejudiced, and very far from clever.

At this moment, Alice re-entered with the note. It was despatched after a renewed remonstrance on the part of Mrs. Clinton, who declared that Lady Jane Smythe would be mortally offended, and never ask Alice to dinner again. But Alice argued that, as they were leaving Brighton, that weapon of Lady Jane's wrath would be harmless.

Mrs. Clinton's objections to Alice's spending the evening with her friend gradually gave way, which may partly be attributed to certain exertions on the part of Mr. Lynne, who had some days ago, in a solemn private interview with Mrs. Clinton, warned her against the evil of allowing Alice to make hasty friendships with strangers of heterodox religious principles, instead of confining her intimacies to members of her own family whose society might combine profit with pleasure. Mrs. Clinton never could bear her brother-in-law, and was not *au fond* sorry for an occasion of

showing him how little she valued his opinion, and how totally fruitless his interference had been. Good reasons and bad ones, therefore, combined to afford Alice the anxiously-desired evening with her friend.

Mrs. Clinton went alone to her dinner party, was gratified to find that Lord Bourneley was not there, made a thousand graceful apologies to Lady Jane for Alice's absence, and was very agreeable and lively, as well as decidedly ornamental, all the evening. Let us return to Alice and her friend.

They sat by the window together : Mrs. Herbert supported by pillows, reclined in an arm-chair, and Alice sat beside her, leaning against the window. Both were earnestly looking out into the star-lit night. From that little room, so high in one of the Brighton houses, nothing could be seen of the street below ; not even the beach, except by leaning out of the window to look down. As Alice and her friend were sitting, nothing met their eye but the

broad ocean. There was no detail, no foreground, the calm expanse was all.

It was a glorious autumn night. The crescent moon hung in the heavens, and the eye could roam into the clear depth beyond, and lose itself among the thronging stars. There was not a cloud to mar the sense of immensity and distance—not even a floating film of vapour to remind the beholder of earth's dense atmosphere. Immeasurable and darkly glowing space—myriads of bright worlds—and the vast mirror of the stilled waters—these were all that could be seen.

The elevating influence of the time and scene was deeply felt by the two friends. The calm of eternity was infusing itself into each spirit, and the sense of immortality was strong within them; to one, it was the joyous consciousness of a long imprisoned soul, feeling its liberty at hand. To the other, it was the pang of the fettered captive, half despairing of escape. There was little of earth in the thoughts of

either. Grief hovered at the door of Alice's heart, but it was full of that enthusiastic, earnest faith, which only for a few bright moments in a life, can harbour in a human breast, excluding every darker inmate.

They thought less, at that hallowed moment, of their approaching separation, than of their eternal home, where they would meet again. They felt that the tie between them was not dissolving: that death would but confirm and sanctify it: that "the perishing taint of mortality" belonged not to their affection. They had followed after truth together; their linked spirits had striven towards the source of light: and now to one, the toil was all but over, and the sunlit heaven was at hand.

"Alice," said the happy sufferer, "before I leave you, I ought to thank you—to tell you, if I could, how happy you have made these closing days of my earthly life. But I cannot do it now. We shall meet again where no secrets are hid, and there you will read my gratitude."

“What have I done,” said Alice, “that you should talk of gratitude to me? I, whose life you have brightened, whose soul you have raised from the dust, whose wandering affections you have calmed and directed; I, the solitary, restless spirit, whom you have brought home, and blest with your undying influence—it is I who should express my gratitude, if words can do it!”

“Let it be mutual then,” was the reply. “If I have influenced you for good, your sympathy and kindness drew forth that influence. You have strengthened me in all high hopes and exalted feelings, by sharing them with me. Let us be thankful that we have been allowed to aid each other’s course towards the only reality, that we have looked on the promised land together. When I am there, Alice, do not think yourself alone. The unseen world is no distant region; you will feel that our human sympathy, our true affection, can extend across the barrier, and unite us still, though death has come between.”

“It will be your work,” said Alice, “if I ever learn to realise the unseen. The world beyond will seem to me as an earnestly-desired home, when you have passed its portals. But *this* world—this weary wilderness—how shall I bear it then?”

“Believe me, Alice, when I tell you, looking back upon it from the threshold of eternity, that life need be no wilderness. Where there is so much to call forth gratitude and love, so much to hope for, so much to do and suffer in the cause of truth, weariness should find no place. The stream does not stagnate, but flows ever onward, whether silently among the meadows, fertilizing the ground beside it, or musically over rocky obstacles, where, if it cannot give life to flowers and fruit, it can at least send its tribute of spray and its glad anthem to the heavens. Do not shrink from the untrodden path that lies before you. If briars and thorns are set around it, there are flowers too, and fellow travellers to aid, and weaker spirits to support. And remember,

Alice, where love and faith exist there can be no solitude.”

“I should not feel solitary,” Alice answered, “even without you, on a night like this, when that expanse of tranquil sublimity is before my eyes, and I can look on those countless worlds and dream of the beings, perhaps sinless and perfect, who inhabit them. That bright line upon the sea might almost be a path from heaven to earth, traversed by spirits of peace. And those dark, yet gleaming waters! I could almost think that the spirit of God was brooding over them, as on the eve of creation. There is no solitude on such a night; but I cannot forget the dreary realities of life. I must return to them, and to the world’s bondage.”

“Are there no realities, Alice, but in the things of time and sense? The daily cares of life, the pains and pleasures of our short probation? are these more real than the immortal spirits you have just spoken of, for whose society we are destined? are these more real than the

unchanging glories that imagination reveals? I mean that true imagination which is the supporting handmaid of faith, and helps us to behold the unseen, though darkly still, yet through a clearer glass. Reality is all before us. The spirit pines for it, and feels that it is not of earth. And if, by the world's bondage, you mean the duties and cares from which there is no escape, why should you fear it? Love is a reality, and the most wearisome task imposed by duty becomes easy when done for the love of God or of man. It is not the bondman's taskwork—it is all that children of earth can do to gladden each other's pilgrimage.”

“ But it is hard to feel that the principle of love can be brought to bear on trifles, that such high motives can assist one through the dull, petty details, and trying littlenesses of life. I cannot raise my mind to such high truths, when it is held down by a thousand trifling burdens of earthly care, all too insignificant to

be conquered or endured by an appeal to such exalted principles as you describe.”

“The more exalted the principle, the more it embraces every detail. There is no insignificance to love ; while it aspires to Him who is its source, it extends itself to the immortal part of His creatures, to all the things of nature, which are but symbols of the heavenly ; and it descends, with undiminished dignity, to ennoble every act, every word and thought, every small care and trifling duty, which is entailed upon us by our social position. Look at that clear, glowing moon, now lighting up the whole firmament, and silvering the ocean ; look at that beautiful planet by her side, and higher up, at the red light of Mars. It is to the sun that we owe their varied radiance—the same familiar sun that calls earth’s tiniest blossoms from their buds, and gives life to the ephemera of a summer’s day, that warms the child of the homeless poor, and ripens the food of man. So it is with love ; nothing is too

high for its aspirations, nothing too low for its influence. It is not of earth, but it lingers willingly among us, the tenant of every happy home, the angel guest, who visits us from Heaven and makes an Eden of our wilderness—if you will still call it so.”

“The time will come,” said Alice, “at least, I hope it may, when I shall live under the influence of this principle. I feel all its reality, all its truth; you have made life clear to me; but now that I see my path, now that I know and feel what is the end of my aspirations, how shall I endure the thought of failure? how shall I bear to fall below the standard you have raised for me? I know my difficulties and my weakness. Your presence, and this glorious night, have all but made me for a time unconscious of my burden; but it will fall heavily on me to-morrow.”

“Then bear it fearlessly and hopefully, for it must indeed be borne. The consciousness of your weakness, and of the temptations both from within and from without, that will assail

you, is painful and humiliating perhaps ; but so it must be while you remain in a world of antagonistic powers, open to the wiles of evil as well as to the attractions of good. Evil will at times prevail, else life were no probation ; but let your heart's affection, your ruling love, be fixed on the true and good ; seek and receive the celestial influx, the strength to believe and to act, which is never denied to the prayer of faith ; and though you fall, though your thoughts and feelings may sink, and your faith seem to waver, yet, if you but feel your danger, you will rise from it with renewed energy. Only guard against despair ; and remember that the Apostles said, 'Increase our faith,' even when its divine object was before their bodily eyes. How much more must *we* live in the spirit of that prayer !"

There was silence for a time. Alice's face was buried in her hands, and there was no sound or movement to reveal whither her thoughts had flown. A full stream of moonlight fell on the pale features and raised eyes of

the invalid, now bright with something of the glory they would wear when hid from mortal sight. She looked calmly and steadily upward, with no exulting glance, but with an expression of deep reverence and trusting love, from which the last stain of earthly fear had vanished.

Surely there were blessed spirits near those two, and angels heard Alice's unuttered longings, and bore them homewards; for though she knew it not, they had the force of prayer. Her faith was strengthened.

She raised her head, and looked at her companion's illumined countenance, with a feeling of reverence, which quickly turned to a bitter pang, as the thought occurred to her, how soon death would darken that unearthly radiance, or at least, remove it from her sight.

Mrs. Herbert laid her wasted hand on Alice's head, which had resumed its posture, drooping from the pressure of earthly regret, and said:

“ I can read your thoughts, dear Alice; you

grieve that my release is to precede your own. Perhaps you fear the transit that lies before me ; believe me it has no terrors. I have toiled and struggled through the night of life, and now He who has lightened my darkness, and defended me through the perils and dangers of that night, bids me lie down in the grave, to awake when the morning breaks—that morning whose dayspring is eternal ! Do not fear the change for me. I meet it with solemn awe, but with entire hope and trust, and with that love which casteth out fear. And, Alice, I feel now, when self-deception is at an end, that our affection is a part of our immortal nature. We have loved each other for the sake of the imperishable principle in both of us. We have tried to assist each other's progress towards that life, in which no earth born feeling can exist. We have sought truth together, and ever striven to raise each other from the low influences of worldly things. We have lived with a common object—a common hope ; we journey to a common home. We shall not be parted,

though my pilgrimage is ended first. In our deaths we are not divided, though time may elapse between our entrances into life. Alice, you feel all this now, and though I know that grief will claim its part, I know also that your thoughts will return where I would lead them, and your spirit will be comforted, when mine is awaiting it in heaven !”

There was another pause—a long silence—a time of wordless communion between those two souls, each feeling the other’s influence.

The carriage had come for Alice, and she must go. Mrs. Herbert heard the unwelcome sound, and did not attempt to detain her.

“I shall come again to-morrow morning,” said Alice. “I shall see you again many times before we go — before,” and her voice faltered.

Mrs. Herbert’s quick sympathy detected Alice’s rising emotion, which at a word would overflow. She said quietly.:

“Good-night, dear Alice; I must not delay you. We shall meet again.”

“Oh, many times !” said Alice, as she left the room.

Many times ! They were to meet but *once* again, and then it would not be a transient meeting. Beside “the river of the water of life,” would they meet, but never again on the darker side of the grave.

That night—or rather at the break of the succeeding day—Mrs. Herbert was seized with an attack of the same nature as her former illnesses, but much more severe. Mr. Desmond’s kind old Irish housekeeper had volunteered to sleep in her room, so that she was not wholly without assistance ; but she refused to allow Mr. Desmond to be disturbed.

“You may send for the doctor,” she said, in one of her short intervals of consciousness ; “or, perhaps, Mr. Desmond might fancy afterwards that all had not been done ; but he can do nothing for me.”

The Irishwoman cried bitterly over the “poor lone lady, dying among strangers ;” but, never-

theless, applied the remedies with singular presence of mind.

When Dr. Johnston came she was insensible. No one thought of Mr. Desmond or the children then.

He applied strong stimulants, which restored her to consciousness.

“Take care of Kate,” she said. “Don’t disturb the children.”

“Is there nothing—is there no one,” said the Doctor, deeply moved at her solitary state, “whom you would wish to see?”

“My child! my husband!” she replied. “I shall see them before long! I am going home, thank God!” she said, with a look of radiant joy. “At last all is well!”

She had raised herself as she spoke, but now fell back again. The Irishwoman checked her tears; they could not flow at that solemn time. With instinctive reverence she made the sign of the cross as she bent over the dying woman.

“It is all but over,” said the Doctor, in a low voice. “Poor thing! it is a lonely death!”

Lonely! He could not see the angels that thronged around her, nor the bright heaven-reared infant that waited, foremost of the throng, to meet his mother’s spirit. But she was not lonely, for she knew their presence. Once more consciousness returned; consciousness both of material and spiritual things — the awful double consciousness of the dying.

“My child,” she said once more, “I am coming! Do not leave me, Doctor—are you still there? How bright it is! Raise me,” she said, in faltering accents; “raise me, and let me see the sunrise!”

He raised her, and the first ray of the rising sun was her last glimpse of earthly light. When he laid her down again, she had exchanged it for the light of that celestial city which needs no sun; but the morning

beam rested on the white brow and closed eyes of the corpse, adding to the still features a solemn glory. And thus she entered into rest.

CHAPTER IX.

In the stormy east wind straining,
The pale yellow woods were waning,
The broad stream in his banks complaining,
Heavily the low sky raining
Over towered Camelot.

TENNYSON.

THE hand of winter had begun angrily to strike down the red glories of the woods, and each morning found the night dew spread in crystal splendour over the broad pastures of Norneley Manor. The sorrowful November had passed, leaving the birch, thorns, and ash-trees bare in their winter sleep. The beech still held to its brown and rustling foliage, and the old oaks sadly and slowly shook off one by

one their tawny leaves. Through the woodland rolled the swollen and turbid river, bearing away in fierce triumph the fallen and shrivelled things that had so long robbed it of the summer sunshine. The moist wind moaned sadly among the bare trunks, or rustled through a group of shivering beech-trees, or rose in gloomy playfulness to rattle the topmost branches of the ash, and here and there beat down a sapless twig.

All other voices of the wood were silent. There was no sound or sign of life, save now and then a low snatch of the robin's resolutely cheerful song, or the rushing of a hare through the underwood, which was hung with heavy drops of condensed mist, that fell at intervals on the sodden turf and decaying leaves below. The wind, which through the day had blown in occasional gusts, slight and feeble, as if it too were failing unto death, was now falling into a dead calm. The sun had set unseen, and a darkening mist was all that heralded the approach of night.

Let us leave the weeping forest, ascending from the river by a path which slopes at first gently upward, but soon winds steeply among the Scotch firs and oaks that clothe the hillside, till at last it emerges upon a furze-clad and heathery slope, stretching upward into the veiling mist and downwards to the river, now flowing free of the forest through the fertile pastures of the park. The architecture of a stone bridge of three arches looms far below in the thickening fog, and as we descend the hill, keeping to the left, we come at last to the road or rather carriage drive, which leads over the bridge and up a very gradual acclivity to a rising ground, from whence, among the mysterious giant forms of oaks and limes, the lights of Norneley Manor tremble through the drizzling air.

The house was a large irregular building of red brick and Portland stone, built in the Tudor style, and scarcely showing the many additions which at various periods had been skilfully made.

But I will not pause to describe its exterior, now scarcely discernable through the gathering darkness, but enter at once through the massive oaken portals, and traversing the columned hall and cheerful drawing-room, lead the reader's fancy into the little room where Lilian and her husband sat together before a bright wood fire, whose fitful flashes were the only light in the apartment.

Lord Rossendale reclined in an immense arm-chair of carved oak, luxuriously fitted with many cushions of dark blue velvet, on one of which his head rested, another supporting the arm which moved indolently as his hand strayed among his young wife's glittering curls. She sat on a low stool at his feet, her bright head resting on his knee, and beside her lay, absorbed in canine dreams, her favourite dog, Teagh, a large red Irish setter, Mr. Desmond's gift on her marriage. The flickering fire threw occasional masses of light on the glowing chesnut of its silky coat, on the gold of Lilian's hair, and on the blue and crimson drapery of the room,

creating momentary pictures of glowing colour and undefined form, beautiful in their sudden and mysterious brightness.

“Well, Lilian,” said Lord Rossendale, turning his head slowly, but not raising it from its indolent repose. “Well, Lilian, this is the last evening we shall spend alone for some time. We have had a week to ourselves, at all events.”

“How quickly it has passed,” said Lilian, “and how delightful it has been. I do so enjoy exploring this lovely place, and we have planned so many improvements and done so much already.”

Her husband smiled.

“You have drawn the plan of a terrace garden,” he said, “and I have marked about a hundred trees to be felled. I think that is all we have done as yet; and as for enjoyment, I am delighted, Lilian, that you have enjoyed the odious weather of the last week. It was a great bore that it should rain every day.”

“Oh!” cried Lilian, cheerfully, “nothing

was a bore. We have been very happy ; have we not, Henry ?”

“ Very happy,” echoed Lord Rossendale, with a yawn ; “ but it will be very pleasant to see our friends ; and the moon changes to-morrow. The glass is rising, too, and we may hope for clear weather at last. Then, when everybody comes, we shall do all sorts of pleasant things.”

Lilian laughed gaily, as a child laughs over a promised pleasure ; and the dog, roused by the silvery sound, started up, and fixed its soft, human-looking eyes with timid intelligence on its mistress’s face, laying its fringed feet on the purple folds of her dress.

“ Lie down, Teagh !” cried Lord Rossendale. “ That dog is dreadfully in the way in this small room. Turn her out, Lilian.”

“ No, indeed !” she replied, burying her arms among the soft waves of hair that covered her favourite’s neck ; “ no, indeed, I can’t part with Teagh, even for you, Henry. There is room for us all.”

For a moment, the faintest shadow of a cloud crossed the brow of Lord Rossendale, but it vanished instantly, as Lilian said :

“I wonder what your sister will think of our improvements ! I hope she won't object to so much alteration in her old home.”

“Object !” he replied ; “what an idea ! Of course, Mary will approve of the changes we think proper to make ; they are so evidently for the better ; and Mary is fond of you, Lilian. I hope you will be great friends.”

“Oh ! I suppose we shall,” said Lilian, lightly. “There is no doubt about her coming to-morrow ?”

“Of course not,” replied Lord Rossendale. “We are to send the carriage to the railway station at four ; and I hope your cousin Wilfred will come the next day with Frederick.”

“And on Saturday,” said Lilian, “we have our first dinner-party ; how amusing it will be !”

“Amusing to you, perhaps, to do the

honours for the first time, and receive a quarter of the county, but a great bore to me. That stupid old Leventon, and two of his ugly daughters ; he won't bring Lady Florella, on account of Fred. That prosy Colonel Bankley, whose head is full of his newly-purchased estate ; little Mr. and Mrs. Lappin, who never have an idea beyond their last baby. Doctor Symonds, with his endless stories ; Sir George Barrington, who talks of nothing but hunting, and Lady Barrington, whose whole conversation is an abuse of the 'dreadful hounds' her husband keeps ; and let me see — who else, Lilian ?”

“ You mentioned the clergyman's son and daughter, and some officers from the barracks, I think.”

“ Oh, yes, Mr. and Miss Hornby ; the former a mere student, though long past the age for education, the latter a tract-distributing old maid ; and the officers are your empty-headed friend Travers, now quartered at the

town, and two ensigns unknown, called Black and Green."

"And besides these, we shall have Mary, Wilfred, and Fred. I am sure it will be very pleasant. I mean to like all the people."

"I defy you, Lilian," said her husband, with a scornful smile. "But, perhaps, we may be spared the Hornbys, as their old father is ill; he can't last much longer, for he is past eighty."

"Then Wilfred's turn is coming," said Lilian. "Poor Wilfred! what a happy change it will be for him; and how much he will be liked!"

"I'm sure," said Lord Rossendale, he will be popular, and will visit the poor, and do all that sort of thing to perfection; and at all events, he will be a pleasant neighbour whom one can often ask to dinner, for I suppose, Lilian, he has quite got over his old weakness for you."

"Oh! that's all over," she replied. "Poor

Wilfred ! I know him well ; he would never come here, if that was not at an end. It was just a passing weakness, though," she added, colouring, " he called it the growth of a life-time."

" People always say that when they have known each other long," said Lord Rossendale ; " and it is the established form of love-making between cousins."

And they both laughed, as thus they told the tale of the deep love of years turned to anguish, and then subdued and crushed by such strife—such torture of exertion as they could never dream of. " He had got over it," they said ; and so he had, but not as they imagined.

For another half hour they talked—talked of their plans, their neighbours, their future pleasures, their projected improvements, till the distant roar of a gong warned them to prepare for their last *tête-à-tête* dinner.

" We must get a carpet for these stairs," said Lilian, as they went up together, pausing

to lean on the broad balustrade of carved oak ;
“ those immense stone staircases look so cold
and white.”

“ I don't know about that,” said Lord Ros-
sendale, entering his dressing-room, while
Lilian passed into her own apartments, followed
by her dog, which, to the anguish of the house-
maids, had the right of entrance to all the
penetralia of Norneley Manor.

As they sat together at table, Lord Rossen-
dale contemplated his beautiful wife with
admiring pride, and could not help admitting
a thought of the dazzling effect she would
produce on the Barringtons, Lappins, &c., and
all who were admitted to the happiness of
beholding her presiding at his board. And
beautiful, indeed, she looked, her fair head
enwreathed with ivy, among whose dark leaves
she had placed some of the last white chrysan-
themums that lingered in the conservatory ;
her dress was white, and displayed no other
ornament than a few leaves and flowers similar
to those that adorned her head. She seemed

to realise what a poet or a painter of refined fancy might conceive of some beautiful bacchante, with her drapery of festive white, and her joyous beauty crowned with the leaf sacred to gladness in the olden days of Greece. Beautiful she was, in her every look and movement—most beautiful, when at the close of the evening she stood beside her admiring husband, and sung to him a succession of touching English ballads, or spirited war-songs of times long past—her unaccompanied voice, in its lowest and softest notes, filling the vast room with melody, and her bright eyes flashing with the inspiration of her song, or rather, with the consciousness of her power.

“ You are a wonderful creature, Lillian,” said her husband, as they retired for the night.

And her light laugh echoed through the broad staircase and gallery.

The next day rose bright and clear over the wooded hills and turfy uplands of the park ; the sunlight fell broadly on the surface

of the river, which glided with diminished waters through the vale of Norneley ; the winds were still, and scarcely a leaf fell from the russet beeches and tawny oaks.

Lord Rossendale, rejoicing in the change of weather, strolled out with his gun and the old pointer Bess, (who, by the way, seemed to possess no instinct but love to her master and a suppressed hatred of Teagh), while Lilian, ensconced in the brightest corner of her little room, wrote to her mother, from whom she had that day heard.

We will look over her shoulder—not to see what she is writing—but to read the open letter which lies beside her. It was dated from The Hazels, Richmond.

“ Dearest Lilian,” wrote Mrs. Clinton, “ we hope to be with you on Thursday next. I need not say how we long to see you once more, or how gloomy and miserable everything here seems without you. I am beginning to dislike this place intensely, and shall never be reconciled to it again, I fear. Everything

reminds me of you. The fortnight I have just got through has been about the dullest I ever spent, though Brighton had grown odious before we left it, and Alice's wretched spirits made the last few days there quite unbearable. I told you before of the extraordinary grief she felt at the loss of her friend Mrs. Herbert. It was such an awfully sudden death that I was quite shocked, and your poor Aunt Jane was ill for days after hearing of it; yet I could not but wonder to see Alice take it so deeply to heart, particularly when I remember that on a former most melancholy occasion, she was more composed than any of us; however, she is better now, and begins to employ herself a good deal. I long to get her out of this place, where everything is so depressing. The weather has been dreadful lately, and it is impossible to keep the walks clear of those abominable dead leaves which will never have done falling. We see a good deal of Wilfred, but he does Alice no good, telling her dismal stories of the horrors that go on among the

poor. I hope his visit to you may change the course of his ideas. What a lovely and happy home yours must be, from all descriptions ! And you seem thoroughly to enjoy and admire it ; with all my heart, dear child, I rejoice at your happiness, and trust it may long continue. Write and tell me all about trains, hours, &c. Can you send for us to the station ?

“ Your most affectionate mother,
“ FLORENCE CLINTON.”

To this letter, Lilian wrote a rapturous reply, expressing the greatest joy at the prospect of seeing her mother and sister ; describing the beauty of the scene she now for the first time surveyed to advantage under an illumined though not cloudless sky, and explaining as desired the mysteries of the journey with a clearness which Mr. Bradshaw would do well to imitate in the next edition of that book of problems which he ironically entitles “ Railway Guide.” She enclosed a note to Alice, which ran as follows :

“ How happy we shall be, dearest Alice, on Thursday next! Think of being together again! we two, who till this year were never parted! You shall be so happy here; almost as happy as I am—quite, I hope, in due course of time. You will be perfectly enthusiastic about the beauties of this place; there is no end to all I have to show you, and to the walks and drives I have in contemplation. And you will find all your friends here, Fred and Wilfred, and my sister-in-law, whom you liked so much in London. We expect your new friend, Mr. Desmond and his children very shortly, but of course you know all that. I wonder whether I shall like him, and whether Henry will find his children “a bore!” But I know, Alice, you will take upon yourself the business of their amusement. I write in the greatest hurry, as the gardener is waiting to see me about some alteration which I must commence this very hour. *Au revoir*, dearest Alice,

“ Ever your affectionate sister,

“ LILIAN ROSSENDALE.”

These letters dispatched, Lilian went out to keep her appointment with the gardener, and look on as he marked upon the newly-dug ground the forms of the beds she had designed; she then strolled for half an hour in the shrubbery, followed by Teagh, and confining herself to the broadest and least leaf-strewn walks, and then re-entered the house through the conservatory, where she lingered awhile to think how that, too, might be altered and improved.

The hour that ensued before the arrival of Mrs. Lester, was spent by Lilian in drawing a coloured sketch of what she called the projected improvement in the west front of Norneley Manor, in which she had represented it with a broad terrace, accessible from the drawing-room windows, and bordered by a stone balustrade, on which, at intervals rested urns of classic form, containing plants of scarlet geranium. A few wide stone steps led from this terrace to a geometrical garden, represented in the most glowing colours that could suggest

the idea of flowers in luxuriant bloom, while in the centre rose a marble fountain of simple and correct design.

“ How pleasant it will be,” thought Lilian, as she drew, “ to walk out there on a summer’s evening after dinner, and have coffee ; and how picturesque we should look !” and forthwith she “ fell a thynkyng,” as the old poets say. Her thoughts were of future morning parties, ending with dancing and fireworks, which in summers to come were to grace the scene she was designing ; and she was tempted to fill her picture with the gay, Watteau-like groups then walking about through the realms of her fertile fancy. But at the moment this thought occurred to her, it was put to flight by the sound of her husband’s voice in the corridor, which was quickly followed by his entrance, together with Mrs. Lester, and Bess, the pointer.

“ Here’s Mary,” he cried. “ She picked me up at the Lodge and we came together.”

Lilian with graceful cordiality embraced her sister-in-law, and welcomed her kindly to her

childhood's home ; but before Mrs. Lester could utter the affectionate reply just rising to her lips, the conversation was suddenly engrossed by the two dogs. Bess had detected the sleeping form of Teagh, and sprung upon it with a low growl, which instantly rose to a shrill cry as Teagh's teeth met in the thin, mouse-like ear of the intruder. The battle would have raged loud and long, even to the death, perhaps, had not Lord Rossendale instantly dragged his favourite from the room, and closing the door on her still threatening nose, kicked Teagh over about three yards of carpet, leaving her stretched upon the rug, wailing as spaniels do on such occasions.

“Oh, Henry,” said Mrs. Lester, in her sweet, reproachful voice. “Oh, Henry, don't hurt the dog !”

Lilian's eyes, for the first time, flashed angrily upon her husband as she knelt beside her favourite, stroking its ruffled locks. But she said nothing.

“That dog's always in the way,” mut-

tered Lord Rossendale. "Nonsense, my dear Mary, I haven't hurt her. Come, get up, Lilian."

Mrs. Lester gently took the hand which Lilian had laid on Teagh's offended head; she rose at once, yielding to the gentle influence which quickly dispelled the passing cloud of temper, and said:

"You have not been very well received, Mary. I am sure you did not expect to be greeted by a spectacle of fighting dogs. Come into the drawing-room, Henry. I ordered tea there. Mary, you will like some tea after your journey."

They proceeded to the drawing-room, and happiness and harmony prevailed before the first instalment of tiny cups had been drained. Lord Rossendale even accepted one from his wife's hand, though not without a muttered condemnation of what he called "the tea-drinking system," while the offended Bess was re-admitted, and so far conciliated as to

consent to share a saucer of milk with her beautiful rival.

And here I would fain raise a pæan, or rather sing a new and more refined sort of anacreontic lay, in honour of life's true elixir, tea!—but I must refrain. I would not weary the male reader, for whom the subject has no charms—nor perchance destroy the little interest he may feel in this, my work, by creating in his mind a false *eidolon* of its author, who is not a tea-drinking, scandal-loving, and card-playing old maid; although a lover of that real Hippocrene, that draught of inspiration which calms the fevered mind and warms the chilled imagination—which raises the failing spirits and stirs the dormant fancies of the torpid brain, which renews in all its strength the weary intellect, clears away the mists of the mind, and sets flowing the stagnant waters of thought, brightening and refining them as they pass into expression. Draught of the thinker and the poet, favoured by all whose

finer natures and sensitive organizations can feel its delicate influence—domestic Castaly, sweet Helicon of the fireside!—but I said I would refrain!

CHAPTER X.

Dear friend, far off, my lost desire,
So far, so near in woe and weal ;
Oh ! loved the most when most I feel
There is a lower and a higher.

Known and unknown, human, divine !
Sweet human hand, and lip, and eye,
Dear heavenly friend that canst not die,
Mine, mine, for ever, ever mine !

Strange friend, past, present, and to be !
Loved deeper, darklier understood.
Behold ! I dream a dream of good,
And mingle all the world with thee !

TENNYSON.

LILIAN'S happiness was by no means diminished by the companionship of her sister-in-

law, whose naturally subdued spirits rose at her emancipation from London and its fogs, and who rejoiced to find herself again in the deeply-loved home of her childhood, which she had not visited for years.

She heartily approved of all Lilian's proposed changes, in which she showed her superiority to the majority of sisters-in-law, who generally look with almost pardonable jealousy on the young wife's unconscious desecration of the various shrines where their childhood's memories lie buried. And it is hard to see unmoved the old unsightly tree marked for destruction, into whose hollow we had, in by-gone years, peered to see the owlets in their nest ; hard to watch calmly the utilitarian draining of the reedy pond, where, in past August mornings, we had chased dragon-flies — those winged comets of the daylight ; and gazed with the admiration which, in the child and the poet, is a passion, upon the upturned face of the water-lilies, deeming them too holy for our touch ; and sadder still is it to see the un-

loving hand of a stranger sweeping all that to us was beautiful from what we once called home, and bidding an alien scene appear on the soil whose very clay we love.

But this was not Mrs. Lester's trial, for Lilian, who had not had time to love the place, liked it with all her heart, and would not sacrifice so much as a shrub that her sister-in-law could wish spared. Thus, all was harmony —no *exigeance* on the one side, and no selfishness on the other.

On the day following that of Mrs. Lester's arrival, Wilfred came. Lilian's spirits were not at their highest pitch that morning, for she could not help feeling a certain embarrassment at the prospect of meeting him, for since the day they parted in the back drawing-room at Belgrave Square, they had never met. And Wilfred, too, as he travelled towards Norneley Manor, felt a strange shyness come over him ; and something of a deeper feeling trembled, for a moment, in the inmost recesses of his heart ; but was instantly crushed, or rather turned,

into a silent aspiration for entire strength; and he received such strength—for the next hour saw him standing unmoved, unshaken, in Lilian's presence; breathing, indeed, an atmosphere of sadly sweet memories, perplexed by crowding recollections and by the present spell of her surpassing beauty; but still, in his deepest self, unmoved—gazing, as from a height, on the creature who had so recently ceased to be his only earthly hope and love, and on the lifeless form of that passion which, with his own hand, he had slain, and which even the presence of its object could not call back to life.

He had risen to a calmer region—to the life and peace promised to the “spiritually minded,” and he found happiness under Lilian's roof—deep happiness of his own—and a tender joy in beholding hers, though she derived it from another, and though it was not his privilege to contribute a single ray of the joyous light in which she lived and moved.

The first meeting over, all embarrassment

ceased. Wilfred showed so much kind, brotherly interest in all that concerned Lilian, that she was soon perfectly at ease, and much enjoyed showing him the many beauties of her home.

Saturday, the day fixed for Lilian's first dinner-party, was also the first morning of Lord Rossendale's appearance in the hunting-field since his marriage.

The meet was a distant one, and he left home shortly after daybreak, and did not return till dusk. Lilian, with Mrs. Lester and Wilfred, spent the day in a long exploring walk through the woods. The weather was bright and sunny, and the sharp wind of the preceding day had dried the ground, clearing it, in the open spaces, from the fallen leaves, which lay in drifted heaps among the underwood. To all three, the walk was a great enjoyment—great to Lilian, to whom the beauties of her home had the charm of novelty and the higher charm of possession; greater to Mrs. Lester, fresh from the dark and dreary streets of London,

now buried under its winter blanket of fog; and greatest to Wilfred, whose poet-heart received from the silent influences of nature a joy known to few—a joy of which he was intensely susceptible, but which he did not often share.

“Is there a cottage about here?” asked Wilfred, as they reached a glade in the forest where many paths crossed each other, on some of which the marks of feet were evident.

“I am not sure,” replied Lillian. “I think I see smoke among the trees.”

“It is the gamekeeper’s house,” said Mrs. Lester. “Mrs. Ramsay is an old friend of mine—*was*, I should say—for she can hardly remember me, it is so long since I have been here.”

“Let us pay her a visit,” said Wilfred.

“Oh! she can’t want to see us,” Lillian said. “Mary, we can walk about here while you go into the cottage.”

“But,” remonstrated Mrs. Lester, “they

would be so glad if you would come too, Lilian. Don't you know Mrs. Ramsay? She used to be such a nice, tidy, good-tempered woman—and you don't know what pleasure you would bestow by a visit.”

“Come, Lilian,” said Wilfred, “come and make acquaintance with your vassals, as behoves the Lady of the Manor!”

“Oh!” laughed Lilian, “I am not dignified enough for the character. I shall never be a pattern lady in the manorial line, I fear. But we'll come and see these Ramsays, as you all wish it. Mary, do go first.”

And following a winding path, from which the leaves had been swept, they soon came to the cottage. It was a small white-washed building, its low thatch almost hidden by the spreading boughs of two or three immense oaks at its back. Before it lay a few acres of land partially cleared of trees, but not of water, which stood between the black furrows of the newly-ploughed field, lay in patches on the surface of the small paddock, and formed a round stag-

nant duck-pond, belted with rank sedge and rushes, only a few yards from the cottage.

“As damp as ever, I see,” said Mrs. Lester.

“It must be too flat to drain.”

They entered the cottage. A woman, who was working as she rocked a cradle, rose to welcome them.

“Don’t you remember me?” said Mrs. Lester. “And here is Lady Rossendale come to see you, and her cousin Mr. Lynne.”

A speedy recognition took place; and though the woman’s Saxon heart did not overflow in many words, her great joy at meeting her former friend was apparent. She curtsied low to Lady Rossendale, and bid her kindly welcome, dusting a chair for her as she spoke.

Lilian, with less than her usual grace of manner, thanked the woman and sat down, looking round the interior of the cottage with more of an artist’s glance than that of a friendly visitor, while Wilfred walked to the fireside to talk to a sickly-looking boy who was

seated there, and Mrs. Lester conversed with the woman, inquiring anxiously after various members of her family, and examining the baby with much interest.

“And that’s your eldest boy?” she said, turning towards the child to whom Wilfred was speaking. “I remember his christening, Mrs. Ramsay. He looks delicate.”

“He’s had the fever, ma’am,” replied his mother. “We don’t often escape it, this time of year. It was last November, I lost my poor little Annie with it—but Charlie’s getting over it now. It’s the damp causes it, ma’am.”

“It is very damp, indeed,” said Lilian, thinking she ought to say something.

“Yes, my lady,” replied the woman. “Ramsay means to speak to my lord about moving us to the new lodge.”

“Certainly,” said Lilian; “and I hope your son will soon be well. Now, Wilfred, it’s getting late. Come, Mary. Good morning, Mrs. Ramsay.” And Lady Rossendale rose, and left

the cottage, followed by Mrs. Lester and Wilfred, who, however, lingered a few moments.

“I am glad,” said the former, as they walked homewards, “I am very glad, Lilian, that you think of removing that family—the situation is most unwholesome.”

“Poor people,” said Lilian; “I’ll remind Henry, if I remember, about giving them the new lodge. I hope we shall not catch the fever from that wretched-looking boy.”

“There is no danger,” said Wilfred. “I am experienced in fevers; his was a sort of ague, not infectious; he seemed an intelligent little fellow, I hope I shall see him again.”

“I wonder, Mary,” said Lilian, “how you can find so much to say to those sort of people. I take a great interest in them, of course, and wish them to be comfortable; and I am sure many of them are much better than some of our own class—but really it’s very difficult to talk to them—not for you, Wilfred, your visits are professional, and there is a fixed subject for

you to talk about ; but, Mary, how do you manage ?”

“ I don’t manage,” replied Mrs. Lester ; “ and I don’t talk much. I listen to their stories, which always interest me very much, and I let my interest appear ; I make myself a kind of confidential friend.”

“ That is the great secret of doing good,” said Wilfred, “ coming as a brother or a sister into the poor man’s house, and showing him that though circumstances seem to separate you from him, you still claim the relationship, and wish to share with him his sorrows, and your advantages.”

“ Oh !” cried Lilian, “ can it be that you, Wilfred, are going to be run away with by those wild steeds, Fraternity and Equality ?”

“ Those words, with the holy name of liberty, have been wickedly profaned,” answered Wilfred ; “ their true meaning has been wiped out with blood. Liberty, equality, and fraternity, are not for the bodies or the minds of men here below, but for their souls hereafter ; and

even then, I would except equality, unless taken in the widest sense ; an equal immortality—an equal subjection to the Divinity for all. But even in this life there is, though some may doubt it, an equality of suffering, an equality of liabilities to the great laws of life and nature, an equality which asserts itself at times, and is always acknowledged, when many of all classes find themselves in one common danger, or distress.”

“ Oh ! that’s quite a different thing,” said Lilian. “ Quite different from the disorderly equality that forms the hideous nightmare dream of the Socialist.”

“ And is a contradiction of nature, in which no external things are truly equal,” pursued Wilfred. “ I talk of spiritualities. And as for liberty and fraternity, the latter we all believe and imply, when rich and poor meet in our churches, and unite in calling upon ‘ Our Father which art in Heaven,’ for the same gifts and the same protection, as members of one

family. Of liberty I would only say, 'the truth shall make you free.'

"How we should endeavour," said Mrs. Lester, "to bring truth to the understandings of the poor. There is a feverish thirst for knowledge abroad, and poison is easily imbibed."

"A cup of cold water; a portion, however small, of pure truth, given to one of these little ones," said Wilfred, "will have its reward."

"I never thought of the symbolic meaning of that passage," said Mrs. Lester.

"It seems far fetched," observed Lilian.

"It is the hidden truth," said Wilfred, which almost everywhere in the Scripture lies beneath the obvious one; but we are wandering into another and a wider field of discourse. I hope, Lilian, I have satisfied you that I am not a revolutionist?"

"Only a fanciful philosopher," said Lilian, with a laugh. "You certainly use the watch-words of rebellion in a very innocent sense ;

but I find it hard to follow your subtleties. How you and Alice will dream together, when mamma comes!"

Wilfred smiled.

"I shall enjoy talking to Alice extremely," he said; "her conversation always interests me."

"You and I not being philosophers, Mary," said Lilian.

"Nor is Alice," Wilfred replied; "but everything is enjoyment to me here; the scenery, the rest, and the pleasure of so much society—old friends and new. You cannot think, Lilian, how much you have conferred on me, by asking me here; it is a new life to me, this happy rest in the country."

Lilian wondered at his composure in talking thus to her.

"Well," thought she, "I have wasted a good deal of self-reproach; his passing fancy was soon forgotten, and so much the better."

They returned home, not a little tired from their long walk; but there was time for rest

before dinner, and Lilian came down with her husband to receive their guests, without a trace of weariness on her countenance. All who had come to sit in judgment on the bride, went home with the same admiration of her beauty; and nearly all were equally charmed with her social qualities. Lord Leventon, who sat beside her at dinner, was completely fascinated. Sir George Barrington rather less so, for she did not give him quite his just share of her conversation; but still he observed to his wife, as they rumbled home in the family coach:

“I say, how well Lady Rossendale would look on horseback! We must get her out with the hounds some day!”

To which speech Lady Barrington vouchsafed no answer.

The Lappins were perfectly enchanted with the evening they had spent—or, rather, the half-evening; for the youngest Lappin was a tyrannical baby, and never allowed his mother to be away after ten P.M.

“Lady Rossendale is lovely!” said Mr. Lappin. “How well she was singing, too, when we came away!”

“Yes,” said his little wife. “Don’t you think our Jemima has a great look of her?”

“She has, indeed,” replied Mr. Lappin; “just the same light hair and blue eyes—altogether very like; just as Marianne is to Madame Pasta.”

“And William to the pictures of Nelson,” said Mrs. Lappin.

Whereupon a dialogue commenced, wherein it was endeavoured to ascertain what public character “baby” promised to resemble. The Duke of Wellington was fixed upon just as they reached Warren Cottage.

The evening was a pleasant one to all. Mrs. Lester, with that true politeness that springs from the highest benevolence, a wish to promote happiness wherever it seems most needed, devoted herself to the younger Hornbys, of whom no one else took much notice; and she also conversed much with their old father on

parish matters, in which Wilfred joined, the four forming one of those apparent cliques, which sometimes coagulate in large drawing-rooms.

The Ladies Theresa and Charlotte Maraford played and sung duets, and Messrs. Black and Green turned over the leaves and listened; while Frederick Lynne, who arrived from London in the middle of dinner, kept cautiously aloof from Lady Florella's father and sisters, and talked little, except to Lilian, with whom he contrived to have a good deal of conversation in the course of the evening.

“What a bore old Leventon is!” said Lord Rossendale, when the last of the guests was fairly gone. “How he prosed about everything.”

“About nothing rather,” said Lilian; “and his daughters sung out of tune, but I rather like them. Lady Florella has a cold. Fred, this is addressed to you. Lady Florella has a cold, and could'nt dine here, or else she would have liked it very much indeed. Lady Char-

lotte told me so. What a goose Lady Charlotte is !”

“ But she is very good-natured,” said Fred.

He had good reason to think so, for she always favoured his cause with her sister. Lady Charlotte was a foolish girl of seventeen, not yet emancipated from the school-room, but allowed on rare occasions to appear at country festivities, particularly when her pretty sister was obliged, as on this occasion, to remain in eclipse.

The next day was so dry and sunny, that the whole party walked to the village church, distant about a mile. Fred's eyes brightened as they approached it, and saw Lord Leventon's carriage driving from the door, and its owner, with the Ladies Theresa, Louisa, and Charlotte, entering the building. It did not seem to disturb him, that the right lady was not there; he contrived after the service to exchange a few words; and we must reveal what no one perceived — two scraps of paper — with

Lady Charlotte, and Lilian observed that he seemed mysteriously elated during the walk home.

And the next day, and the next, it became more apparent to Lilian's quick sight that there was some mystery about Fred. That generally social individual seemed to have acquired a love of solitude quite inconsistent, both with his former habits, and his present liveliness, and evident good health and spirits. He was wont daily to disappear after breakfast, Monday on foot, Tuesday on Lord Rosendale's hack ; and remain, no one knew where, till within an hour of dinner-time. It was quite unaccountable. In answer to inquiries, he stated on the first day that he had been "walking about the place," and the second, "riding about the country." These vague replies satisfied all but Lilian. To Wilfred and Mrs. Lester, it seemed perfectly natural that one just escaped from London should like to spend long days in exercise in the open country air, and Lord Ros-

sendale did not concern himself about Fred's amusements, but was always ready to lend him a horse without asking any inconvenient questions. Lilian, however, suffered much from curiosity, and took the first opportunity of asking her cousin the meaning of his mysterious movements.

"Do you ever go towards Leventon Court?" she asked, bravely.

"Oh! sometimes I do," he said; "why shouldn't I?"

"I thought it was not allowed," said Lilian; "you are rather in disgrace there; are you not?"

"Well, Lilian, you needn't tell any one, you know, that I ever go in that direction. I like to look at the place; it's natural, you know. I won't go on doing it after this week. So Lilian, don't go talking about it, and making people suspect."

"Then it's a secret?" said Lilian. "Well, I won't betray you, or ask any more questions;

but remember your promise, and make yourself more agreeable next week."

"Oh! certainly," he replied carelessly, "by all means; and remember *your* promise, Lilian."

After this short dialogue, Lilian felt rather guilty in keeping Fred's secret, for she saw plainly enough that he had not told her all, and that evil might be impending, which it was in her power to avert. However, she reflected that it was not in the smallest degree her business, or that of her husband, to interfere with the actions of Frederick Lynne; and with the interests of the Marafords she had still less to do. It was much better not to meddle. In another day it was all put out of her head by the arrival of Mrs. Clinton and Alice—a joyous event which threw Lilian into a state of happy excitement from the pleasure of receiving her mother and sister for the first time in her own home. Mrs. Clinton went into perfect raptures of admiration at the beauties of Norneley, which Alice more

quietly appreciated, and both were charmed to see that Lilian's looks displayed the highest state of happiness and health. Lilian could not say this to her sister. Alice, she thought, had grown thin, and paler than before; but the change would soon restore her. Mrs. Clinton seemed fresh as ever, and wore her brightest smiles as she entered the house of her favourite child. Fred might absent himself now with perfect impunity, not even Lilian missed him.

The day after the arrival of her mother and sister, Lilian heard from Mr. Desmond in answer to a letter she had written, reminding him of his promised visit. He announced his intention of joining the party at Norneley Manor the following Monday, accompanied by his children.

"You will be glad, Alice, to see your little favourites again," said Lilian.

Alice thought how bitterly they would recall the friend she had lost, but she only said:

"Poor little things! I shall, indeed, be glad

to see them again—how they will enjoy themselves !”

“ I hope they are kept in tolerable order,” said Lord Rossendale. “ Two noisy children are not a very delightful addition to one’s social circle.”

“ Oh ! they won’t come in your way, Henry,” said Mrs. Clinton ; “ they are very good children—besides Alice will make herself useful, and entertain them.”

Alice thought of the melancholy pleasure she would find in thus assuming something of her lost friend’s position, and endeavouring to tread in her steps. She cordially assented to the proposition. She was fond of children, though not accustomed to any but the little Desmonds ; and in her new-born longing for usefulness and action, she rejoiced at the prospect of even this slight employment. For the bitter trial that Alice had just experienced produced no morbid effects, keenly as it was felt. Even when the cruel shock was freshly received, when her

nerves were shaken to the utmost, and the storm of horror, bewilderment, and grief prostrated her frame—still, even then, all was not dark.

When the loved presence was taken for ever from her sight, then the memory of her friend became a living form of spiritual beauty, entering into her soul and dwelling there. Heaven seemed nearer now, for there was one there to whom Alice's heart was knit. It was the home of her lost friend: not lost, indeed, but gone before, as Alice could feel and realise. Her tears fell fast and freely, and it was better so, than that they should freeze about her heart, as when she darkly mourned for her father. The sun shone upon the storm, and amid the heavy rain of tears, gleamed forth the hues of hope. She had lost the sweet companionship, the gentle guidance, without which, she had feared, her spirit would again float adrift and objectless on the sea of life; but it was not so. Severed from human aid, she became conscious

of Divine. Her beacon was withdrawn, but she had learnt to use the compass of conscience, which trembling, wavering still, points ever to the Pole of truth. And as a fixed star in the cloudless heaven, shone forth her friend's example.

Mrs. Herbert's remains lay in the little churchyard at Hove, whither she had often led her pupils, who loved the short walk through the fields. Mr. Desmond raised a plain headstone to her memory, with no inscription beyond her name, and the words; "I am the Resurrection and the Life." This, with a stone cross at the foot of the grave was all that marked where she lay.

The day she left Brighton, Alice rose early to pay her last visit to the spot. The tender fragrance of a few lingering blossoms of the wild convolvulus, attracted her as she past. It was the favourite flower of her friend, and she gathered a few of the lowly wreaths, and hung them on the Cross at Mrs. Herbert's grave. And with their soft incense rose Alice's

earnest though tearful thanksgiving, as she knelt, leaning on the holy symbol, and blessed God for all he had given her in the friend who slept below, and in the strengthened faith and hope granted when that blessing was withdrawn. Unconsciously the words of our Holy Liturgy lent expression to Alice's heartfelt praise. "We bless Thee for all Thy servants departed this life in Thy faith and fear : beseeching Thee to give us grace so to follow their good examples, that with them we may be partakers of Thy heavenly kingdom."

And Alice turned from the spot where all that was mortal of her friend rested, comforted and at peace.

Therefore there was no morose sorrow in her heart ; no gloomy sadness in her manner, when she found herself in the joyous social atmosphere of her sister's house. It was difficult, even impossible, to keep up to the lively spirits of Lilian ; but the effort to seem entirely cheerful was a welcome one, and should be

made. Thus there was no shadow cast on the glad scenes of Norneley by Alice's arrival ; and on the first day of her visit all went on as usual. Lord Rossendale hunted ; Fred disappeared, Lilian and her mother drove to see the beauties of a few neighbouring places, and Mrs. Lester, Alice, and Wilfred walked together to visit several of Lord Rossendale's tenants in whom Mrs. Lester was much interested. Every one came home pleased with his day's amusement, and the evening passed happily, save for the unpleasant circumstance that Lord Rossendale *would* go to sleep. He had had, as he explained, a very hard day's run, and being out of the habit of hunting, he felt extremely tired ; but Lilian would hear of no excuse, and persisted in awakening him, much to his annoyance, and that of all present, who did not enjoy the few bickering words exchanged between their host and hostess every time the former was shaken and pinched into consciousness. But this was the only drawback to the pleasure of the evening

—and it did not continue long, for Lilian soon became tired of repeating her fruitless efforts, and at length allowed her husband to slumber in peace.

CHAPTER XI.

See you scale life's misty highlands
By the light of living truth!

CHARLES GAVAN DUFFY.

“How very late Fred is this morning,” said Lilian, as the whole party sat round the nearly concluded breakfast on Monday.

“Oh, he's always late,” said Mrs. Clinton.

“But never so late as this,” observed Alice, “it is more than half-past ten.”

“I'll go and look for him,” said Wilfred, rising, “he must have fairly overslept himself.”

“Frederick is a strange fellow,” said Lord Rossendale, “he don't care for hunting, he

don't read, he is always by himself, he was quite different in London."

"Did you never notice that before, Henry?" asked Lilian, with a laugh. "Fred has become a mystery. There is nothing very new, however, in his being late for breakfast. But here he comes."

It was not Frederick, but his brother, who entered the room.

"Fred must be gone out," he said, "he is not in his room."

They looked round the table at each other's faces, where strange misgivings could be read.

"What is the matter," asked Wilfred, with characteristic simplicity; "you don't suppose he is not safe? Surely he only went out to take a walk before breakfast."

Lilian laughed.

"I've no doubt he's safe," she said, "but I am afraid he won't come home just yet."

"What do you mean, Lilian," said Lord

Rossendale, sternly. "Do you know anything about it?"

"Oh! I know nothing," replied Lilian, "I can't give any information. Ask his servant."

Acting upon this suggestion, Mr. Lynne's servant was sent for, but he too had disappeared.

"I think Mr. Lynne is gone for good, my lord," said the butler, in reply to Lord Rossendale's questions." The housemaid saw him walking down to the Lodge before daylight this morning; and the postman, on his way here, passed a post-chaise and four going along the north road. So he tells me, my lord."

All looked aghast. The butler retired to talk over the matter with the housekeeper. Neither of those worthies had any difficulty in accounting for the mysterious disappearance.

"He's run off with one of the Lady Marafords," they said. It was a little pleasant excitement for them.

Even Lilian looked shocked, when she saw

the horror that overspread Wilfred's features, as the truth dawned upon his mind. They all rose and stood in groups about the room, silent and bewildered. Mrs. Clinton spoke first.

"What is to be done," she said. "Oh! that foolish boy!"

"Let us wait," said Alice, "perhaps nothing has happened. Perhaps he will come home."

"You are right, Alice," said Wilfred; "we must wait, if we can. He will come, I am sure. Frederick never could be so wicked!"

Lord Rossendale walked angrily up and down the room.

"Disgraceful!" he cried, "disgraceful! And from my house, too!"

"Don't believe it yet," said Mrs. Lester, trying to soothe him.

Lilian stood by, afraid to speak.

Mrs. Clinton did not enjoy the sight of so much serious displeasure darkening every countenance.

"Well," she said, "don't be so dreadfully

shocked. Perhaps it's nothing, after all, and if it is as we fear, let us make the best of it. There's no wickedness in the matter, Wilfred; and I'm sure Lord Leventon will forgive them, and all will be right. Come into the drawing-room, and let us wait there."

They did so, and spent two or three anxious hours of suspense, every moment strengthening their conviction that it was indeed as they from the first suspected. They listened eagerly for every sound, till at length steps were heard and the servant entered. All eyes were bent anxiously upon him, as he said to his master,

"Lord Leventon is here, my lord. He wishes to speak to you on business. I have shown him into your study."

Lord Rossendale instantly left the room without a word.

"It is as we feared," said Lilian, as the door closed after him. "But I hope he will persuade Lord Leventon to forgive them, and then all will be well."

“But he will never forgive himself,” said Wilfred. “My father, too! what horror he will feel; and my poor mother, who is so proud of Frederick!”

“Don’t make matters worse than they need be, Wilfred,” remonstrated Mrs. Clinton, “I’ll write to your mother about it myself; and depend upon it they will come back to-morrow to ask forgiveness in the most approved manner, and it will be granted I have no doubt.”

No one responded to this hopeful speech, and the whole party sat in uneasy silence till Lord Rossendale returned.

“He is gone,” he said. “I could not persuade him to stay. He came here to ask whether we knew anything of Lynne, for his daughter Florella was nowhere to be found; and, like ourselves, his suspicions had been aroused by not seeing her at breakfast. He went himself to her room and found there a note, in which she only told him that she was safe, that he need be under no uneasiness about

her prospects of happiness, and that he should soon hear from her again."

"And did she not name Frederick?" asked Mrs. Clinton.

"No, but Lord Leventon had no difficulty in guessing the companion of her flight. He came here to have his suspicions certified or dispelled. I do think he is rather relieved by knowing the truth. She was his favourite child, and his fears for her safety had been intense. Her cruel note had done nothing to re-assure him."

"Do you think he will forgive them?" asked Lilian.

"He says, never," replied Lord Rossendale. "He declares he will never see his daughter again; nor can he ever forgive her younger sister, Lady Charlotte, who confesses to having assisted their correspondence last week. But he has no determination of character, and I think he will yield, particularly as he tells me that his elder daughters, who never disliked

Fred, are trying hard to win him to forgiveness.”

“Depend upon it,” interrupted Mrs. Clinton, “they will come back to-morrow, and all will be right.”

“Did Lord Leventon consult you at all, Henry?” asked Mrs. Lester.

“It is not likely that I should be consulted by a man thirty years older than myself, Mary,” he replied; “and if I had been, I should have no advice to give. I think both the girls are unpardonable, and in your presence, Wilfred, I will not say what I think of your brother’s conduct.”

“Oh! don’t be so severe, Henry,” cried Lilian.

“One cannot be too severe,” he said, coldly, “on such clandestine proceedings.”

The unwonted blush of shame burned upon Wilfred’s cheek. He felt the truth of the remark just uttered, and it stung him to the soul for his brother’s sake.

“And now,” continued Lord Rossendale, “let us speak no more on this disgraceful subject. Until to-morrow, nothing more can be known. We must try to forget it.”

“Certainly,” said Mrs. Clinton; “what is the use of lamenting over what is done? Let us go out and refresh ourselves after this long, dismal morning. In a few hours Mr. Desmond will be here. We must not give him a cheerless reception.”

On this suggestion, the party dispersed, and, in a very short time, some of them thought no more of the event of the morning, than if it had been a matter of ancient history. But Wilfred sat alone in his room, and wrote to his father to intercede for Fred. Lord Rossendale walked over his farm; Lilian and her mother drove, as usual, though they did not go beyond the grass-drives in the woods; and Mrs. Lester and Alice walked to see the Ramsays in their new cottage. The party had re-assembled, all except Wilfred, by the time Mr. Desmond and

his children arrived. Mrs. Clinton told him at once of the event which threw some slight gloom upon the spirits of all; while Alice attended to the comfort of her sister's little guests.

Mr. Desmond was shocked at the idea of what Mrs. Lynne would suffer at hearing of the delinquency of her favourite son; but his sanguine nature led him to hope that the fugitives would soon be forgiven and re-called by Lord Leventon. The presence of Desmond had a cheering influence, and his fine countenance and cordial manner gladdened all around him. Even Lord Rossendale manifested the pleasure which his guest's arrival had given him; and Wilfred's spirits rose as he listened to Desmond's cheerful and melodious voice. The day, which had begun so darkly, ended cheerily for all—rapturously for one. Desmond sat by Alice nearly the whole evening, and they talked together freely, cordially, like old friends. Wilfred occasionally joined their

conversation, giving it unconsciously a higher tone as he did so. The evening passed as rapidly as the morning had wearily lingered.

The next day there was no news of the fugitives, no message from Leventon Court; but now, that the first excitement had passed off, every one remembered that there was not time as yet for a letter to reach them from Gretna or its neighbourhood. It was not a hunting-day—Lilian and her husband took a conjugal ride together. Mrs. Lester accompanied Mrs. Clinton in the pony-carriage. Alice wandered into the library, and lighting upon an old brown volume of Spenser, whose works she had never read, was soon engaged in following the adventures of the Red Cross Knight and Heavenly Una, forgetful of all present matters. Wilfred and Mr. Desmond strolled out into the woods, renewing the old acquaintance which had begun in the childhood of the former. They found the promise of much enjoyment in each other's society. Dif-

ferent as were their characters and dispositions, they had much in common—the same earnestness of purpose, unawakened perhaps in Desmond, but in Wilfred, definite and strong ; and in the past of both lives there was one point to which their thoughts returned with equal tenderness and regret—the memory of Henry Clinton.

There is no tie like a mutual loss. It often forms the first strand of that many-twisted cable we call friendship. It did so in this case, helped by pleasant reminiscences of Wilfred's school-boy days, when, on rare occasions, Colonel Clinton enjoyed the pleasure of bringing together his nephew and his friend—the earnest child and the true-hearted youth.

They wandered on together till they reached the river-side, where a path, shaded by the red and rustling beeches, followed the course of the stream.

“There must be good fishing here in the season,” said Desmond. “Do you ever fish?”

“It is very long since I have done so,” said Wilfred; “not since old days at Richmond, when my cousins and I used to catch gudgeons. I really forget when the fishing season begins.”

Desmond smiled.

“You despise the sportsman’s lore, I suppose,” he said. “You do not know our times and seasons, our 12th of August, our 1st of September, &c. Your festivals are of another sort.”

“They are,” said Wilfred, good-humouredly. “A London curate can know but little of country amusements. But perhaps he is all the more easily amused when in the country. You can hardly imagine what pleasure I find in a walk like this, for instance.”

“Well, this is indeed a magnificent place,” said Desmond; “any one would enjoy a walk in these glorious woods, at least, in this clear, frosty weather. I wonder what Miss Clinton is doing. She did not join either the riding

or the driving-party. Let us turn back now; we shall get such an immense way from the house if we follow this path."

They turned, and Wilfred said:

"Alice went into the library, just as we came out. She told me she meant to walk with your children as soon as they were ready."

"She is too kind to them," said Desmond, his voice softening as he spoke, "always so gentle, so considerate! How like her father she is!"

"Very like him," said Wilfred, "both in manner, tastes, and appearance. She was his favourite child, too."

"And is she your favourite cousin?" Desmond asked, timidly—for he had misgivings about the evident affection that existed between Alice and Wilfred.

"I never thought of comparing them," replied Wilfred, "but Alice, all her life, has been peculiarly my friend and sister; and we are very fond of each other."

Desmond's misgivings vanished. It was plain that Wilfred was no rival; but was, as he said, to all intents the brother of Alice. True fraternal affection will sometimes exist between cousins, but the cases are rare.

"I hope all the present party intend to remain here till after Christmas," said Desmond. "Lord Rossendale pressed me to do so, and I suppose Mrs. Clinton will?"

"I should think so," replied Wilfred. "I shall remain, unless circumstances oblige me to return. I can be spared till the new year."

"You worked so hard all the summer," said Desmond, "you have a right to some repose now. Your mother says you work yourself to death."

Wilfred smiled.

"My mother is always over-anxious," he said; "but I am well able for the work, and it really is my interest and my pleasure; I have nothing else to do. A country living would give me less work, and be a plea-

santer residence ; but it is not a higher field of labour.”

“ I wish you were my rector,” said Desmond. “ What good you would do in the wilds of Ireland !”

“ But are not your tenants Roman Catholics ?”

“ Many of them are ; but with your kindness and your earnest zeal, you would win many converts.”

“ I scarcely know,” said Wilfred, after a moment’s silence, “ how I should act if placed in the trying position of an Anglican priest in Ireland. I do not think I would attempt to proselytise.”

“ You surprise me, Wilfred,” said Desmond. “ I have not myself thought much on these subjects ; but would you not think it your duty to endeavour to turn souls from a false faith to a true one ?”

“ Could I do so honestly ?” asked Wilfred.

Desmond looked perplexed.

“ Honestly ? of course !” he said. “ Do

you think I meant you to follow the example of the Jesuits, and disguise yourself and your intentions?"

"If any instances of conversion have come under your knowledge," said Wilfred, "will you tell me how they were effected?"

"That is easily done," replied Desmond. "My mother-in-law has succeeded in making more than one convert in my village, merely by reading the Bible to them in their cottages."

"An excellent practice; but I thought the priests would never allow it?"

"Oh! if we only did what the priests allowed for the spiritual good of the people, there would be nothing done."

"It is lamentable," said Wilfred, "that the people should not have more enlightened guides. But is it well to begin by teaching insubordination?"

"The priests do that. They are nearly all rebels and agitators."

"I fear, indeed," said Wilfred, "that instead

of being spiritual pastors, they are too often political wolves. But tell me, how does Mrs. Desmond contrive to read the Bible in the cottages, without subjecting the hearers to the priest's censure?"

"A little boy watches outside to say when the priest appears, and then my aunt puts the Bible into her pocket. It don't seem straightforward, certainly—but what's to be done?"

"I am afraid," said Wilfred, "I must ask you to forgive me if I condemn Mrs. Desmond's plan, well-meant as it is. The Bible is taught, certainly, but with it disobedience and deceit."

"True, perhaps; but one can't do unmixed good; one must be content to do real and great good, and not cease from it, because a little evil is attendant. Besides, it is the fault of the priests, and not of my mother-in-law, if the people are forced to deceive and disobey."

"Not so," said Wilfred. "Whatever the priests may be, we are not to deceive them, or

cause others to do so. It is a good and a holy work to teach and circulate the Scriptures—it is good to liberate men from spiritual despotism and win them to the gentler sway of our branch of the Catholic Church; but if it cannot be done by fair and open means, we must be patient, and wait God's time. The highest and holiest action is not His will, if it can only be done in concealment and equivocation."

"But it can hardly be called equivocation," replied Desmond; "it is only discretion."

"To your aunt it is nothing more, perhaps; but what is it to her poor friends? How do they afterwards reply to the questions of their priest? How do they avoid equivocation? And besides, they learn to believe that such concealment and prevarication is lawful. Will they not end by using for their own interest the means they learnt to consider harmless when applied to higher purposes?"

"I never thought of the matter in that

light," said Desmond; "indeed, I have never thought enough on the subject. But would you then do nothing?"

"There is one way," said Wilfred; "one powerful means, whose efficacy throws all human suggestions into the shade. There is one sure and certain way by which we may hope to benefit man, and help our country at her need, in accordance, and even in obedience to the will of God. This way is open to all—I mean prayer."

Desmond was silent. It was long since he had taken part in such serious converse, but he listened with fixed attention.

"Prayer," continued Wilfred. "There are cases where we can do nothing, it is true, for the good end we have at heart, but we can ask the All-powerful One, and in His own good time will come the fulfilment of our hopes—not in our life time, perhaps; nor will men ever say the deed was ours, nor praise us for active self-devotion. They will thank and bless

God when they see his work, and all will be well. I would that from every domestic altar, every solitary shrine, as from every church in this our land, rose the daily prayer: ‘That it may please Thee to bring into the way of truth all such as have erred and are deceived;’ and I would bid the youngest infant, lisping its nightly prayer at its mother’s knee, to ask a blessing on its Queen and country, with the same simple affection as we strive to inspire when we teach its innocent lips to pray for its father and mother.”

“It would, indeed, be a grievous want of faith,” said Desmond, “to say that such prayer would avail nothing for the public good; but, unless people act, they are generally said to do nothing.”

“And they are bound to act,” said Wilfred, “where they can do so without striking a note discordant to the clear harmony of God’s will. They are bound to act. The prayer of the disobedient sluggard will not avail; but the

prayer of the imprisoned Daniel is heard and answered.

They were now approaching the house, and Desmond's attention was wandering from his companion's words, for he had caught sight of Alice on the terrace, or rather on the ground that had just been levelled, where the terrace was to be. The two children were playing around her, and she stood still, alternately looking at them and at the distant woods and blue hills of the wide landscape.

The children, quickly perceiving the approach of their father and Wilfred, ran to Alice; and both seizing her hands, they dragged her playfully forwards until they all met.

"Oh, papa!" cried little Lina, "we have had such a delightful walk, and we have found such wonderful things! Acorns, and horse-chesnuts, and beech sails!"

"Beech mast, Lina," said Kate, "and scarlet mushrooms, which are pretty, but not good. And we saw some hares, papa, and rabbits; and we smelt a fox, and—"

“You had better tell Lord Rossendale that last discovery,” said Desmond. “Is your walk over now, children?”

“Yes, papa,” replied Lina. “Miss Clinton was going to take us in. She said it was getting damp.”

“But it is less so than I thought, Mr. Desmond,” said Alice. “Shall we let them stay out a little longer?”

“They had better go in,” replied Desmond. “It is past their usual time, and they might catch cold. Run in to Louise, children. Are you going in, Miss Clinton?”

The children had disappeared, but Alice hesitated.

“Come,” said Wilfred, “come and walk with us a little, Alice.”

The clear sunset sky tempted her, and she came, making Desmond supremely happy. They did not return to the woods, but took a path across some upland meadows whence they could see over miles of country, now beautiful with the warm lights and long shadows of a

December sunset. Through the valley ran the river—a stream of molten gold—beyond it the woods rose, crimson in the glowing rays, to the furzy hill top, on which a purple cloud had laid its shadow, deepening the sober green. And further still, glittered the white village and the tall spire of its church, brightly defined against the soft deep blue of the far range of undulating hills.

“What a beautiful scene!” said Desmond. “It reminds me of my own country; but I believe that is not a civil thing to say.”

“Perfectly civil,” said Alice; “at least, I don’t see how it can offend. But an Irish scene must have different, and perhaps more striking features than this.”

“There would not be so much woodland, but in its place a broad plain of bog, which, I really think, Miss Clinton, has a beauty of its own. Its rich brown colour, the silvery specks of water on its surface, and the wonderful play of light and shade, of which in our Irish climate

it is susceptible, make a beautiful object of a bog, sometimes.”

“I can fancy,” said Alice, “how the sunshine and the cloud-shadows would chase each other on the broad plain you describe. But that would not be the only change this landscape would need, to turn it into an Irish one. I fancy that those hills should be replaced by higher and bolder peaks—mountains, in fact.”

“But in Ireland,” replied Desmond, “we should call those mountains. They are extremely like the Wicklow range, as seen from parts of Kildare, which I have visited, where they are always talked of as ‘the mountains.’”

“Just as I believe you call parks, demesnes, cottages, houses, and shops “commercial marts,” said Wilfred.

Desmond laughed.

“It is very true,” said he; “we are fond of deceiving ourselves, and flattering our pride by

securing to ourselves the name when the thing is beyond our reach ; however, the charm is worn out now, for we all know what demesnes and commercial marts are.”

“But the phraseology of a nation gives a good clue to its national character,” said Wilfred. “It is to be seen even in such common phrases as ‘how do you do?’ I can’t remember from what book I picked up this idea, but I read it somewhere. The Italian *far niente* is betrayed by the common greeting, ‘come sta?’ which, by-the-bye, is wonderfully like the ‘how are you?’ of your countrymen, Desmond.”

“For the same reason, I fear.”

“And the French ‘comment vous portez-vous?’ is just what might be expected from that frivolous nation, who think that the *tour-nure* constitutes the man. ‘How do you carry yourself?’ the sentiment is evident, while the English ‘how do you do?’ clearly expresses the

active habits of the country. ‘How do you *do*?’ means ‘how do you act?’ For what practical purpose are you available?”

“Very ingenious,” said Alice.

“Those small things, depend upon it,” continued Wilfred, “are indications of something deeper. There is a great deal in language. Indeed, by tracing back words to their origin we come at facts. For instance, the money-loving spirit of the day has changed the meanings of the good old Saxon words ‘wealth,’ ‘worth.’ The former used to signify welfare, happy condition, health, &c.; and the latter, goodness. Now, a man’s ‘wealth’ means his money, and he is said to be ‘worth’ so many thousands.”

“Yes, that is a significant change of meaning,” said Desmond.

“And a melancholy one,” remarked Alice. “This nineteenth century is a mammon-worshipping, unbelieving age.”

“You are hard upon the times, Miss Clin-

ton," interposed Desmond. "The century is not so bad as all that."

"It is better than the last," said Wilfred, "better than the age of philosophy and reason, falsely so called; the artificial heartless times, when nothing was felt—nothing loved, but every new idea pounded down in the pestle and mortar of the brain till nothing but dust remained. The time when faith was a cold doctrine, and even such faith was rare; when poets strung together laboured conceits into more laboured verse, and toiled after fame, instead of singing as the thrushes do, because God made them poets, and filled their souls with music."

"Ah!" said Desmond, "I am afraid, even now, few poets sing in a thrushlike spirit, but—"

"Oh! there's Lilian!" cried Alice; and as she spoke, the trampling of horses was heard, and Lord and Lady Rossendale came up to

them, crossing the meadow at a quick canter.

Lilian pulled up the magnificent black mare she rode, and said, joyously :

“ We’ve had such a charming ride, Alice ! Sultana went beautifully ; and I’ve made Henry consent to my riding to the meet with him next week ; and I’m going to make a bridle for Sultana of crimson silk ! Will it not be beautiful ! ”

“ Very effective,” said Alice, “ but rather original, certainly.”

“ If you mean to hunt, Lady Rossendale,” said Desmond, “ and wish to have all correct, you must have a snaffle-bit and broad reins.”

“ I should rather see the crimson bridle than that,” said Lord Rossendale ; “ it would look too much like business. I don’t intend, Lilian, to hunt, nor to pretend to do so.”

“ Well, never mind,” said Lilian ; “ don’t begin forbidding me an amusement I have no

taste for, or you will make me wish for it. Let us all go home together.”

They did so, Alice walking beside Lilian's horse, and the three gentlemen following, Lord Rossendale leading his.

CHAPTER XII.

The senses folding thick and dark
About the stifled soul within,
We guess diviner things beyond,
And yearn to them with yearning fond ;
We strike out blindly to a mark
Believed in, but not seen.

MRS. BROWNING.

THE next day there was an incursion of morning visitors ; and as these, like other misfortunes, never come alone, there were about half a dozen several invasions before Lilian was released. Sir George and Lady Barrington came to luncheon. Mrs. Lappin, who had a

taste for twins, came to inspect the little Desmonds. All the rest came to gossip, and to see whether Lord Rossendale looked sufficiently shocked at the elopement which might partly be said to have taken place from his house. He had, however, no idea of remaining in doors, a prey to the "kind inquiries" of his neighbours; therefore, leaving Lilian to her fate (which was shared by Mrs. Clinton and Mrs. Lester), he left the drawing-room just before the third carriage arrived.

Passing through the library, on his way to the side-door of the house, he found Wilfred there, and asked him to come and ride with him to the village, where he had some business. Wilfred consented, and they went together round to the yard to order their horses, which were quickly brought, and mounted.

"What a bore the whole system of morning visiting is," said Lord Rossendale, as they cantered across the turf towards the little gate that formed the nearest outlet to the public

road. "Such nonsense, and such waste of time."

"I am afraid it is so indeed," said Wilfred, "but it is a necessary evil. Neighbours ought to meet, and they cannot all give dinner parties. An occasional meeting, even in a visit of ten minutes, keeps up good feeling and acquaintanceship among neighbours, and is often an opportunity for a few kind words, showing a mutual interest in each other. Such words are never wasted."

"But people never talk anything but nonsense at such times," replied Lord Rossendale, "a few formal greetings, a great many platitudes about the weather, half-a-dozen ill-natured remarks about some mutual friend, and the visitor departs to go through the same ceremony elsewhere."

"If the person visited," said Wilfred, "did not encourage the ill-natured remarks, they would soon cease, and the visitor would learn a useful lesson from finding them unwelcome."

Whenever two people meet, some little mutual good may, and ought to result."

"But it scarcely ever does," said Lord Rossendale. "People when they meet think a great deal more of being amusing, if they can, than of mutual good. I hear a carriage coming after us. Mind your horse, Lynne; he always starts."

But the carriage slackened its pace as it approached them. They drew to the side of the road to let it pass, but it stopped.

"I'm here," said a voice from the interior, "I'm come back."

"Frederick!" cried Wilfred, in amazement, springing from his horse, while Lord Rossendale silently and coldly sat terrifying Lady Florella with his fixed look, as she sunk into the far corner of the chaise.

"Yes!" said Frederick, opening the chaise-door, and showing himself. "We weren't at all comfortable, so we're come back. Will you take us in, Rossendale?"

At this audacious request, Lord Rossendale's features assumed their darkest frown.

"I am surprised, Mr. Lynne," he said, "that such an idea should occur to you. I cannot countenance your proceedings in any way."

"No! no! Freddy, dear!" murmured the lady in the corner. "We won't go to Norneley. We'll go home to papa, and be forgiven."

"Lady Florella is right," said Lord Rossendale.

"Quite right," said Wilfred.

"Oh, Wilfred, I haven't introduced you to Flo," cried Fred. "Flo, that's my brother Wilfred. Shake hands."

And the tinkle of innumerable bracelets and *breloques* rung a merry accompaniment, as Wilfred took in his own, the little hand of his sister-in-law.

"I am glad you have returned," he said, gravely.

"Oh, don't be angry with us—don't look

so displeased," timidly pleaded the young wife—if wife she might be called, whose nuptial vows were taken at the anvil, and not the altar.

"Lady Florella," interposed Lord Rossendale, "allow me to remind you of your intention of proceeding to Leventon Court. It is the best thing you can do."

"Well, we are going there," said Fred, "but I wish, Rossendale, you would come with us, and speak to Lord Leventon for us."

"Oh, do pray!" entreated Lady Florella.

"I cannot interfere," replied Lord Rossendale, "nor will I delay you now. The sooner you seek forgiveness the better. You would do well to proceed."

"Perhaps your brother will come with us?" said the frightened bride to her husband, whose assumed audacity was rapidly failing him.

"Will you come, Wilfred?" he said.

“ My dear Frederick,” replied Wilfred, “ I have not the pleasure of knowing Lady Florella’s family, and therefore, I can have no influence ; besides, you ought clearly to be unaccompanied on such an occasion.”

“ But papa will be so cross,” sobbed Lady Florella, “ and I’m so frightened, Fred.”

“ But I believe Wilfred’s right, Flo,” said her husband. “ Drive on, post-boy !”

And the returning fugitives disappeared round the turn of the road leading to Leventon Court.

Lord Rossendale and Wilfred rode quickly home and told the news, which was joyfully received by all. Mrs. Clinton, who had that morning received a distracted letter from poor Mrs. Lynne, was triumphant.

“ I knew they would come back,” she said. “ They will certainly be forgiven ; Lord Leventon will never resist the entreaties of his favourite daughter.”

But Wilfred seemed anxious and uneasy.

He scarcely spoke during the remainder of the day.

The next morning a note was handed to him. It was from Frederick.

“ All right !” he wrote, “ we’re forgiven ! I’ll tell you all about it. We left the chaise at the second gate and walked up to the house. Flo was in a terrible fright, and she had thin shoes on, and got her feet wet ; and the wind blew her bonnet to pieces, so altogether she was quite cut up, and cried desperately, poor little thing ! We got in at the little side-door leading into the library, and luckily, Lord Leventon was sitting there alone, in his great arm-chair ; so Flo rushed up to him, and threw herself into his arms, begging and praying him to forgive us, and then I came up and took her hand, and said :

“ ‘ I beg your pardon, Sir—’ Really at the moment I could not think of anything else, though I had made a very good speech in the post-chaise.

“So Lord Leventon looked at me, and said nothing; but he held Flo tight, and that was a good sign.

“‘I forgive *you*, Florella,’ he said, at length, trying to speak stiffly.

“‘Oh! forgive Fred, papa!’ cried Flo, pulling me towards him. ‘Forgive Fred, dear papa!’

“I assure you, Wilfred, I felt quite ashamed of myself when I saw the poor old man’s struggle. I saw then, that after all, we had done very wrong. I said so at once.

“‘I don’t deserve to be forgiven,’ I said. ‘I’ve behaved like a scoundrel, I know; but for her sake, forgive me.’

“Flo seized her father’s hand, and tried to raise it towards mine. In a moment or two he yielded, and we shook hands. He’s the best old man in the world. In a few hours all was comfortable; and Charlotte was forgiven too. She has been shut up in her room ever since, for helping us. Really I have given a great

deal of trouble. But it's all over now. Tell them all how well it has ended, and give my love to everybody. How cross Rossendale was yesterday!

“Your affectionate brother,

“FREDERICK LYNNE.

“P.S.—I have written to my mother. What a rage Barbara must have been in! We're to be married over again to-morrow morning.”

There was no one present except Mrs. Clinton when Wilfred received this note. In reply to her eager inquiries, he read it to her, and then put it into the fire. The levity of its tone pained and disappointed him.

“I'm so delighted!” cried Mrs. Clinton; “but it is exactly what I expected. How honourably Frederick has behaved! Why don't you keep his note, Wilfred?”

“I do not like to retain any record of such

an action," he replied, "though I am partly relieved to find that Frederick has not brought upon his wife the permanent displeasure of her father, still I regret his conduct, and I cannot help fearing for his happiness in the end."

"Oh! nonsense!" said his aunt, impatiently. "It's by no means a *mésalliance* for either party. They will do very well. You are never contented, Wilfred!"

And Mrs. Clinton ran away to tell the news, and to triumph in the fulfilment of her prophecy.

All suspense and uncertainty as to the fate of the fugitives being now at an end, everyone thought it was time to be perfectly happy again. Christmas was approaching, and Christmas festivities must be planned and projected. Lilian and her mother laid their heads together—two heads more prolific in the sort of ideas required, could scarcely be found. Lord Rosendale was occasionally consulted, and he was most amiable and objected to nothing. The

house was to be filled—Fred and his bride were to be invited, and various other people, strangers to us, though friends of Lord Rossendale's. The little Desmonds were put into Alice's room, to afford space for the numerous guests, and Alice made no objection to the plan. There was to be a ball one night—on another a little vaudeville was to be acted, and tableaux vivans were to form the attractions of a third. Cards were sent out to every one within thirty miles of Norneley, and Lilian's housekeeper was at her wits' end.

Meanwhile, the three quiet members of the party, Alice, Wilfred, and Desmond, were generally thrown together, Mrs. Lester having been pressed into the service of preparation for the plays and tableaux. She was clever at needlework, and devising costume, and therefore she was in great requisition.

Desmond was becoming daily more absorbed in his attachment to Alice. It was his one only interest. If it was a dream, it was one from which he would never wake. It filled his

heart too entirely to leave room for doubts and fears. It was too deep to be otherwise than calm and satisfying. It was not like the now forgotten love of Sir Aubrey Harcourt—a fever, a disturbance. The shallow stream runs fiercely over its stony bed—all noise and tumult—while the vast river flows still and silently in its depth and might, without a ripple on its surface. Desmond was calm and happy, with that strong love overflowing his heart. It was its own exceeding great reward.

He had never known—never dreamt that such a state of being could exist. How different from the childish affection that drew him as a boy to the side of his playmate cousin—loved tenderly, indeed, while her short life lasted, and mourned sincerely at its close; but never forming, as it were, the atmosphere of his life, as Alice did.

And what was the outward manifestation of this love? It still remained unexpressed by word or sign. Desmond had not even sought

to discover Alice's feelings towards him. He lived upon his own towards her. His love was all in all, concentrated, calm, and silent.

This could not be for ever. The accumulating waters must overflow at length.

And how did Alice feel towards him who held her in his heart ?

She regarded Desmond with cordial affection—yes, affection it may be called, for she saw his earnest truthfulness, his unselfishness, and all the thousand beauties of his character, which was, indeed, one to be loved. Unconsciously she was on more intimate terms with him than she had ever been with any man, except her father and Wilfred. She talked to him almost unreservedly, walked with him, and found great enjoyment in his society. She felt as if he was her brother—as if she had always known him, as if a strong tie of friendship had existed between them for years. There was a comfortable feeling of relationship when they were together ; that any other could exist on either

side, never occurred to Alice. She scarcely considered Desmond a young man. He was her friend, and the friend of her dear brother Wilfred, the parent of those children who were now so dear to her. He had been the friend of her father; why should she not regard him with affection?

They were very happy, those three. Alice, with her newly-calmed and directed soul, and her true, clear views of life; Wilfred, with his conquered self, and his spiritual and elevated nature; and Desmond, brooding in tranquil bliss over his first perfect love. They were happy indeed. And all things seemed to minister to their happiness; the quiet and the liberty of a country life, the freedom from all care, the peaceful atmosphere that hung around them, even when excitement prevailed among their companions, the calm, pure light in which they rested, all tended to make it indeed a happy time, a bower of rest by the road-side, a sunny glade beside the pathway of life to those three.

They were not much noticed by the rest, who were entirely occupied in their preparations for the approaching fêtes. Mrs. Clinton saw that Alice was rapidly recovering her spirits, that every day her step grew lighter, her form more rounded, her colour more bright and healthful, and Mrs. Clinton was satisfied, and thought no more about her ; besides, Mrs. Clinton was to speak the prologue and epilogue of the play, and her head was full of them.

The children grew every day more attached to Alice, and seemed to have transferred to her the love and obedience they once gave to their lost instructress. They were a great deal with her, and she was fond of walking with them out of doors, and talking to them about the various natural objects which attracted their attention. Wilfred, too, was a friend of theirs, and joyously they passed their days at Norneley, the brightest of their bright childhood.

One morning, as Desmond was wandering about the grounds alone, he came suddenly

upon the object of his day-dreams, who was seated upon a fallen tree in a sheltered nook of the forest, the children playing among the fallen leaves at a little distance. She was watching them, and listening to the song of a robin perched close above her head. As the children ran to meet their father, she rose and walked towards him.

Whether it was that Desmond was tired, or that Alice wished to hear the robin's song to the end, or that the children had not completed the imitation bird's-nest on a large scale which they were constructing with twigs and dead leaves, certain it is that Alice resumed her seat on the tree, that Desmond placed himself beside her, and that the little girls returned to their occupation.

“How happy they are!” said Desmond, as their clear laughter rung through the forest, “how thoroughly they enjoy themselves here! They owe it all to you, Miss Clinton; your companionship has been the principal source

of their pleasure ; but they must tire you sometimes."

"No," said Alice. "I like having them with me ; they are an interest and an amusement combined, and I am not easily tired."

"You seem very fond of long walks," remarked Desmond, "and I am glad to see you don't despise thick shoes. Most ladies appear so uncomfortably got up when they venture on a long country walk, but you are an exception."

"Because," said Alice, "I am too fond of walking and exploring the country not to be well provided with all accessories for the purpose."

"And you are not vain enough to care how you look, that is what I admire!"

"But I do care," said Alice, with a smile, "and I think one ought to care ; but my idea of beauty consists partly in fitness, appropriateness, as it were. An object ceases to be beautiful when it does not harmonize with

the things around it, and when it does not seem capable of fulfilling its purposes."

"I think I understand you," said Desmond. "The purpose of shoes is to protect the feet, therefore, shoes, to be beautiful, must be thick, when their wearer takes them into the depths of Norneley Forest."

Alice laughed.

"What you say is perfectly true, ridiculous as it sounds; but I wear thick shoes merely for comfort, believing that what is good and fitting cannot be really ugly, though it may be thought so."

"You remind me of Wilfred's favourite axiom," observed Desmond, "that the true, the good, and the beautiful are inseparable. I wish they were. Miss Hornby is good, and true, but certainly is not beautiful, and I am afraid there are beautiful people in the world, who are neither good nor true."

"Then they are not beautiful morally, which is real beauty: and Miss Hornby may

be internally, morally, truly beautiful. In what you call Wilfred's favourite axiom, he does not allude to what is appreciable by the senses."

Desmond was silent, and seemed puzzled. Abstractions were new to him, but there was a strange sweetness in receiving these new and higher thoughts from Alice's lips. He could as it were, feel her hand upon the door of the hitherto unopened chamber of his innermost self. New powers, new faculties were springing up. The man of action was learning to think, and into his practical and useful mind the light of beauty was dawning. Wilfred and Alice were slowly setting free the wings of his dormant imagination, and calling into life the hidden poetry which lingers in some dark corner of every Celtic nature.

"It is such happiness to be here," he said, after a long dreamy silence, "to be in these delightful moods, free from the world's claims, and the thousand cares which deprive a man like me of all time for thought; and such society and conversation as yours and Wilfred's

adds immeasurably to my enjoyment. In fact, you teach me to enjoy."

"An easy lesson," said Alice; "at least, I think so now."

"Was it ever difficult to you?" asked Desmond. "Could there ever have been in a short, bright life like yours, a time when enjoyment was not easy?"

Alice coloured, and turned aside.

"Our circumstances have nothing to do with our happiness," she said. "There are natures to whom no life is bright, and others who know not what darkness is. Some must learn contentment, which is the first step to enjoyment."

"I can't understand discontent," said Desmond, "as long as one is well, and blessed with friends, and property enough to live comfortably and avoid debt. I can understand being a little dull sometimes, not discontented."

"My idea of discontent," said Alice, "is the jar and friction of idle powers, undirected faculties, and struggling, objectless wishes. Sometimes the mind is like a long-neglected

harp, the wind howls among its strings, waking them to melancholy discord, and the hand that strives to call forth harmonies from the uncared-for instrument, only raises jarring notes. But put it in tune, and then it will express all melodies ; and when no hand is near, the winds will call soft music from its chords.”

“ Ah, but all minds are not harps,” said Desmond. “ You speak of natures like your own.”

“ No,” replied Alice ; “ I do not speak entirely from experience. There is music in all natures, I think, if it were called forth. Some minds are more complicated instruments than others—have, as it were, a wider range of notes, and are capable of higher music and wilder discord ; but all may be tuned to a strain of simple melody, or left to alternate silence and monotonous jarring—the kind of state you mean by ‘ being a little dull sometimes.’ ”

Desmond thought of the unawakened harmonies that seemed to stir and breathe within him when Alice was near. He felt conscious of the long silent lyre that slept in his heart ;

he did not speak, but sat looking down, in a trance of thought. Alice rose.

“We must come home,” she said. “I promised Lilian I would be in by four. She wants me to help her about the theatre.”

Desmond rose unwillingly, and calling the children, they walked homewards together. A throng of wild, incoherent thoughts and hopes, so long the quiet, silent tenants of his heart, were rising tumultuously to his lips, and clamouring for expression. Another half-hour in the still, dark forest, and the words, till now unbreathed, would have been spoken ; but he controlled himself, and walked silently beside Alice, calming down the rash impulse with every step.

The time was not yet come. An hour ago he dared not harbour a thought that it was at hand ; now he was dreaming of some not distant day when he might tell his love ; and silently listening to the sweet music of his hope, he walked by Alice’s side, unconscious even of her voice as she talked to the children who flitted round her path.

They parted at the threshold of the house. Alice and the twins entered, leaving Desmond still lingering on the lawn, where rested the golden light of the setting sun, fringing the trees with flame, and stretching its fiery wing to the far horizon of glowing hills that burned upon the cold, grey, eastern sky.

And Alice joined her sister in the mimic theatre, and spent an hour there, arranging draperies, scenes, &c., and directing workmen and workwomen with all diligence and alacrity, to the delight of Mrs. Clinton, who marvelled to see Alice in such good spirits.

Lilian was charmed with her sister's ready assistance, and Lord Rossendale acknowledged her services with grave courtesy as he stalked across the room, pausing a moment to test, by a severe shake, the strength of a wooden framework just erected for the support of the drop-scene. He was a true Englishman, *qui s'amusait tristement*, and he took a deep and serious interest in the festive preparations now going on, even as he did in the solemn occupation of following the ——shire hounds. His

darkly thoughtful countenance almost seemed to cast a shadow on the gay scarlet drapery which Lilian and Alice held up for his inspection.

“It ought to be two shades brighter, Lilian,” he said, in a serious tone. “It will not stand out from the red back ground.”

Lilian laughed at his solemnity.

“I don’t see the joke,” he said. “Lilian, send for some scarlet cloth of a better shade, and put that aside.”

And whistling for Bess, he passed on, and left the room.

“I can write to —— for the cloth,” said Alice.

“Oh, nonsense!” laughed Lilian; “no such thing! It’s only Henry’s fancy. I shall make up the curtains of this, and he will forget all about it.”

“But I can so easily write for more,” persisted Alice.

“I won’t have it,” Lilian laughingly replied.

And the red curtains were cut out and made, but Lord Rossendale did not forget.

The evening that followed was delightful to all the party, which received no additions from without the walls of Norneley that night.

Lilian contributed a great deal of music to the general pleasure, and Lord Rosendale and his sister enjoyed a game of chess as in old times. Mrs. Clinton's still fresh voice joined Lilian's in various Italian duets, and accompanied her daughter to perfection through the complicated harmonies of many a German solo or old English madrigal—such music as could arrest the most eager words on Wilfred's lips, and exclude even Desmond's voice from the ears of Alice, who sat between him and her cousin on a distant sofa, in happy, but serious conversation.

“We are quite a council of three,” said Desmond. “What a mistake it is to say that three people can't get on together.”

Strange as it may seem, Desmond did not wish Wilfred away, when Alice was beside him. He felt almost that Wilfred was a link between them, that they were more together when he too was present; and besides, it was a delight to him to listen to their unrestrained converse, joining it at intervals, and hanging upon Alice's words reverently and lovingly, albeit they were addressed to another.

Jealousy—even the innocent jealousy of common lovers—was not in Desmond's nature. All three were thoroughly happy in each other's society, and the swift evening hours passed but too rapidly to each of them, in pleasant, earnest converse; such truthful talk about realities, as is generally avoided by society-talkers; those children who pick straws and rubbish from the scum of life's stream, and make "subjects" of them, instead of putting aside the floating dross, and like wiser children (for we are but infant spirits) standing in the cleared waters to search for the gold-dust washed from the inaccessible Truth-mountains.

END OF VOL. II.

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