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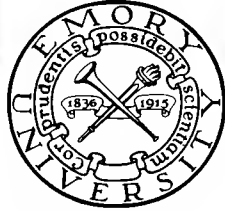
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THE
SORROWS OF GENTILITY.

BY
GERALDINE E. JEWSBURY.

AUTHOR OF
"CONSTANCE HERBERT," "MARIAN WITHERS," "HALF SISTERS," "ZOE,"
ETC., ETC.

'Corge Dandin vous l'avez voulu.'—MOLIERE.

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1864.

TO
JOHN FORSTER, ESQ.

THIS BOOK

IS

INSCRIBED

BY THE AUTHOR.

THE SORROWS OF GENTILITY.

CHAPTER I.

“SHABBY gentility” is to social life what “Brummagen wares” are to the things they imitate. In both cases there is elaborate workmanship bestowed on a worthless material, to produce the result which the honest Jew desired, when he directed that his mock silver spoons should be “stamped with a *dog*, which was to be made as much like a *lion* as possible.”

Counterfeits mark a high degree of civilisation, and great cultivation of the arts and sciences they represent; but of all the mournful expenditure of human faculty and human energy. the struggles of “shabby gentility” are the most deplorable, The contrivance, the zeal, the patience, displayed in making the results of a sixpence (honest, unpretending coin that it is! with its exact value on the face of it) pass for the result of that handsome, truly prosperous piece of money, the half-crown! would suffice to carry a Chancellor of the Exchequer through a difficult budget. After all, it is only sixpennyworth of imitation—the *dog* made to look like a *lion*. But the strain, and the pain, and the burden of pretence are no mean addition

to the inevitable load of difficulties laid on the shoulders of all the children of men, when they come into this unlucky world—unlucky, because it is endowed with the hard name of being a wicked one.

The market town of Dunnington is situated in the heart of one of the midland counties, and lies on the main road to London. It is a quiet, sleepy little town, and consists of one long straggling street, and half another, which runs up a hill, at the top of which is the old church, standing in the midst of its church-yard, and commanding a view of one of the fairest and richest agricultural districts that England can boast; the broad meadows studded like parks, with fine old timber and hedge-rows, which, in their ample luxuriance, must have been the growth of many years.

Dunnington has neither trade nor manufactures; but it boasts an INN worthy of the “hostels” of old, which gained for England the fame of having the best in the world. It was an old building, and might have stood in the time of Shakespeare, from its appearance. The house was built round three sides of a large yard, the fourth side of which was occupied by stables, which extended backwards to some distance. A pair of large coach gates afforded admittance from the street.

The house had a singularly inviting appearance, with its dazzling whitewash, and the dark red tiles that paved the entrance hall.

A choice breed of pigeons cooed and sunned themselves among the old chimney-stacks, or stepped up and down the moss-grown roof.

Altogether, this Inn, which bore the sign of the “Metringham Arms,” on a beam extending across the street, had a look of comfort, good cheer, and homely farm-yard rusticity, which made it much more attractive than the stately, imposing race of

hotels which have grown up since the days when the "Mettingham Arms" was in its glory.

This house was kept by Simon Morley. He was a farmer as well as an innkeeper, and held a farm under Lord Mettingham, who was the chief landowner on that side of the county.

The rent-days were always kept at the "Mettingham Arms," which not only made a high festival in the house, but was equivalent to a handsome per centage off his rent.

Simon Morley, from small beginnings, had amassed some money, and even possessed a little land of his own.

He kept dogs, and took out a game license; he was passionately fond of field sports, and it was a great sporting neighbourhood. He was a hard rider, a hard drinker, an excellent shot, the best judge of horse-flesh in the whole county; he was a capital companion, told excellent stories, and sang equally excellent songs; he possessed a vein of shrewd caustic wit, and was altogether rather a notable character. His social virtues might have been the ruin of his prosperity had they not been joined to other qualities. He was a hard hand at driving a bargain, and an adept in the art of making money; he had also a tight grip to keep what he made, in spite of his apparent joviality.

In appearance he was a portly good-looking man. He wore drab breeches, yellow-topped boots, striped waistcoats of a pattern long since vanished, and ample coats of broad cloth cut sporting wise.

Mrs. Morley, his wife, had once been a county beauty, and still possessed a certain full-blown comeliness. She presided over the house, and assisted her husband heart and soul in the business of money-making, which indeed both of them believed to be the "chief end of man."

Under her auspices the fame of the comforts of the house was

so well established, that most of the travellers who had to pass through the town so contrived their journey as either to dine or to sleep at the "Mettingham Arms."

There was no great display of plate or china, but the linen was sumptuous in its delicate fineness. There was not such poultry to be found for ten miles round; and Mrs. Morley's pork pies, covered all over as they were with extraordinary hieroglyphical ornaments of pastry, and her cheesecakes (to which those of Prince What's-his-name, in the "Arabian Nights," could not be compared) were famed far and near. The beds were all hung with fair white dimity, and the sheets laid up in lavender still retained the fragrance of the hedge-rows and meadows. To crown all the attractions, there was the motherly good-humoured face of Mrs. Morley, as she appeared smiling at the entrance of the house to welcome her guests, or to bid them farewell; no wonder they were so numerous and so well contented!

Nothing could be more happy, respectable, or prosperous, than the lot of Simon Morley and his Gertrude.

We must own to one drawback. The "love of money," which is "the root of all evil," had struck its fibres into the heart of this well-respected couple. They loved money, they desired to make money, they respected money more than any other earthly thing: it was their only standard of value.

The people in the neighbourhood were all high Tories, as is the custom in purely agricultural districts, and the Morleys shared in the traditional respect for the county families, beginning of course with Lord Mettingham, their landlord, who, in their eyes, was second only to the king. They had no temptation to imitate their betters, nor to struggle into a station above their own.

They were too busy for much visiting. An occasional tea

party, followed by a sumptuous supper, to which the lawyer, the doctor, and the principal shopkeeper of the place were invited, and from time to time an appearance at church in the very richest satin gown and very handsomest bonnet that money could furnish, satisfied all Mrs. Morley's aspirations after social distinction; whilst Simon Morley rode to all the markets round on his clever little mare, and combined social amusement with profit, by driving hard bargains for his barley and wheat.

The only thing that Simon Morley and his wife despised was—poverty. Poverty, no matter how gilded by genius, education, or connections—poverty was the deadly sin of their decalogue. Mrs. Morley revered the vicar; but she looked down upon the curate, in spite of his cloth, though she frequently sent him presents of game or poultry, and tithings of the good things that might be left after a county dinner or rent day.

This worthy couple were blessed with two children, a son and a daughter. The son, Simon Morley trained up after his own fashion. Whilst scarcely able to walk, he was set on horseback and allowed the run of the stable-yard, mounted on the box beside the coachman and post-boys, who delighted in his spirit. He trotted on his little pony, beside his father, when he went to the neighbouring towns—was taken out coursing, and allowed a gun of his own, when other boys were poaching after birds' nests and playing at marbles. The only beating on record which Simon Morley ever bestowed upon his son was for once allowing himself to be thrown by a strange horse: the boy's arm was broken by the fall, and his father tended him like a nurse until he recovered, and then gave him a hearty chastisement for being so unskilful.

The curate instilled a little reading and writing into him, and at the age of twelve he was sent to school to finish his education, and to be fitted to assist his father in his business.

The girl was three years younger than her brother. She was named Gertrude after her mother, who regarded her as her own peculiar property. With the bringing up of her son she did not interfere, but the daughter was the pride of her heart.

She had not much notion of the value of education for its own sake; but when she found that the three daughters of the prosperous haberdasher were sent to a boarding school, she determined that her Gertrude should "hold up her head with the best of them." Whilst Gertrude was a child she had a luxurious nursery, and revelled in an unlimited abundance of toys; she was never contradicted, and her white frocks were miracles of fine lace and embroidery. She was a clever child, giving promise of great beauty, and as spoiled as it was possible for a child in circumstances so favourable for encouraging the growth of naughtiness.

At eight years of age she was sent to school "to be taught everything," as her mother compendiously phrased it.

This early removal from the previous indulgences of home was in some respects very beneficial to the young Gertrude. She had a natural aptitude for receiving instruction, and acquired a very creditable proficiency in the various accomplishments taught in the establishment, so that the three Misses Le French, who conducted it, considered her, except for the drawback of her vulgar connexions, as a great credit to their school.

Alas! with her innocent geography, and history, and tapestry work, and French, and music, she imbibed other instructions that were not so harmless. She learned that it was "very low to keep an inn;" that when she left school she would occupy a very inferior position in the world to that of the Miss de Montfords, daughters of Sir Thomas de Montford, a baronet whose family dated from the time of Henry the Second. One young lady, whose father was a rich banker, more than once declared

with a toss of her head, "that her mamma would take her away from the school when she knew that an inn-keeper's daughter was received!"

These things rankled in the heart of the little Gertrude. At first, with the natural independence of childhood, she rebutted these impertinences, by declaring that "her papa kept a great many more carriages and horses than theirs, and that when she went home at the holidays she had a maid to dress her and a man-servant to ride behind her on horseback." The great check, however, to the superciliousness of her young companions were the contents of those large parcels of good things which generally came to her every week. Everybody can recollect the temporary importance which the receipt of a "parcel from home" confers on a school girl.

But, as she grew older, she pondered upon these things. Accidentally, she came to the knowledge of the fact, that at first the Misses Le French had refused to tarnish the gentility of their school by receiving the daughter of an inn-keeper, and had only been softened by the payment of double stipend and unlimited extras; even that would scarcely have sufficed, had not the interesting appearance of the little Gertrude herself made the relaxation in her favour unobjectionable so far as she was concerned.

The thought that she had been received on sufferance was gall and wormwood to the poor girl, and cost her many secret tears. The three Misses Le French would have risen up in all the stately "pomp of virtue," had they been told that there was the slightest deficiency in the strict morality and propriety they inculcated upon their pupils. But the fact unfortunately remained, that not one word to prepare her for the difficult duties of her lot did Gertrude ever hear—nothing to strengthen her, to turn her thoughts from vanity, to teach her the dignity of

fulfilling her duties in the station of life in which she had been placed.

When she was seventeen she was to leave school—a finished young lady—whom her mother hoped to find a great help and comfort to her in keeping the books and giving an eye to the bar!

The day before “breaking up,” after the distribution of the prizes, at which Gertrude had carried off the “prize for dancing and deportment” and the “prize for music,” she was sent for by the three Misses Le French into their parlour.

“We have sent for you, my dear,” said the eldest Miss Le French, smoothing her delicate lavender-coloured gloves, “to give you a little good advice before you leave us. We have every reason to be satisfied with your attention to your studies, and your general good conduct, since you have been under our care; we are sorry to part with you, and we shall ever retain a feeling of interest in your welfare. In the home to which you are returning (I would wish to speak with all due respect for your worthy parents, who must have made many sacrifices to give you so good an education); still, in your home you will be exposed to many disadvantages, and it is to warn you against these that is my object in now speaking to you. Keep yourself as much as you can to yourself, and associate as little as possible with the inferior persons who come about the house. If it should chance that any of your former schoolmates should travel your way, I would not advise you to put yourself forward to recognise them, but rather keep yourself retired—recollecting the essential difference of your stations—for whatever your education may have been, never cease to remember that the station of your father and mother is the only rightful station you can claim; but in the resources of your education, and in the exercise of your various accomplishments (which I earnestly

entreat you to keep up) I have no doubt that you may pass your time not unhappily. I should certainly recommend you to spend not less than three hours a-day in keeping up your proficiency on the harp. You might also practice your drawing with advantage. I presume your mother will allow you to have a private sitting-room, and to that I would advise you to confine yourself as much as possible."

The eldest Miss Le French ceased to speak, and the second sister took up the word.

"I have a little to add to my sister's admirable remarks; I only say to you, be as select as possible in your acquaintance, and above all, shun scenes of vulgar gaiety. I think you might find it advantageous to join yourself to some visiting, or missionary, or sewing society, which is under good patronage. It might be the means of making you acquainted with highly respectable persons, and be a mode of getting on in society; added to which you would have the satisfaction to know that you were doing good."

"And, my dear Miss Morley," said the young Miss Le French, "I hope, after the education you have had with us, that I need not exhort you to be remarkably guarded in your manners to those of the other sex. You are certainly attractive in your appearance, which, in your position, will be a source of danger to you. It is not a point upon which I can or ought to enlarge, —your own good sense will show you what I mean. I only say, to be sure of the intentions of any young man you allow to address you, and do not be flattered into the belief that a young man has any serious intentions unless he tells you so in precise terms. I have written your name in this excellent little book, which I present to you as a token of remembrance, and I hope its admonitions may be of use in times of perplexity."

Here Miss Louisa Le French gave Gertrude an elegantly bound copy of "Dr. Gregory's Advice to his Daughters," to which were added "Mrs. Chapone's Letters." The two elder sisters also presented her with a testimony of their regard; and the next day a chaise from the "Mettingham Arms" came to take Gertrude "home for good."

CHAPTER II.

WHEN Gertrude arrived at home the house was in a state of great bustle; an earl's travelling carriage had driven up a moment before, and the occupants were stopping to dine. All Mrs. Morley's faculties were, for the instant, fully engaged, and she had only time to bestow a moment's greeting upon Gertrude.

Gertrude made her own way to the nursery, which had now become her bedroom, where she was left undisturbed, though the sounds from below made it evident that her tranquillity was not shared by the rest of the house.

After awhile she proceeded to the sitting-room, which had usually been hers during the vacations, but it was now occupied, and she again retreated to her bedroom, the only spot which, it appeared, she could call her own.

The last admonitions of Miss Le French rung in her ears and rankled in her heart. They had given a definite shape to the vague thoughts which had long been stirring within her, and she felt a disgust amounting to shame at the home to which she had returned. It was twelve months since she had seen it, the preceding holidays having been spent at school; so that all

the peculiarities of home had lost much of their old familiar air, and struck her with an unpleasing sense of novelty. Weary of being alone, and deterred from going in search of her mother by the certainty that she would be engaged, Gertrude was reduced to study Miss Le French's parting gift to beguile the time. It added to her discomfort, for its admonitions were all addressed to young women eligibly situated in life, in highly refined and fastidious circles.

At length she was summoned to dinner; on her way down stairs she ran against a valet who was bringing up his master's portmanteau, and encountered several ladies' maids who were hurrying about in a state of importance. The dinner was laid in the little lantern-like bar, which consisted nearly altogether of windows, having been thus constructed to enable Mrs. Morley to cast a look on all sides, upon the doings of the men-servants and maid-servants of her establishment.

Simon Morley was extended in his three-cornered easy chair, in his splashed boots and spurs, just as he had come in from a long ride. He looked up from his newspaper as Gertrude entered.

"Why, Ger, how long have you been here? Nobody ever found time to tell me you were at home; but you might have come to look for one. Well, give us a kiss, and tell us what they have taught you at school. Have you learned to *Pwly-voo*? And how did you leave Madam Le French,—any of them likely to be married?"

Having made these inquiries he seemed to have come to the end of all he had to say, and Gertrude, who always felt afraid of her father, did not know how to keep up the conversation, when her brother's entrance made a diversion.

He was a fine-looking, rather heavy young man, dressed

something between a farmer and a sportsman. He had a hearty voice, a florid complexion, and provincial accent.

“Why, bless us, Ger, is that you? I could not think what fine lady my father had with him! Why, one is afraid to touch you.” He gave her a hug that nearly dislocated her shoulders, and then pushed her away to a little distance to contemplate her appearance in detail.

“And what in the name of wonder do you call this?” said he, taking up the corner of her muslin apron, an elaborate specimen of female industry, a trophy of her own needlework during three successive half-years. “It beats all I ever saw. What is the use of it I would like to know, it comes to pieces with a touch?” As he spoke, he had, all unintentionally, given the corner he held a jerk which caused an extensive fracture.

“Dear—how rough you are!” said Gertrude pettishly. “I wish you would not meddle with me, it is so rude.”

“Come, come, a needle and a thread will make all right, and, I am sure, you are not within a few stitches to mend it after taking so many to make it; I did not intend mischief.”

But Gertrude, fresh from the unrumpled propriety which the Misses Le French exacted from their pupils, was sadly discomposed at the roughness of her father and brother. There had never been much companionship between them. Simon Morley had always considered Gertrude as his wife’s concern; he had never interfered in her bringing up beyond grumbling at the amount of her boarding-school bill, the exact total of which, however, he never knew, as his wife only told him a partial amount, the remainder being supplied from her own dexterous economies; otherwise, Gertrude’s education would not have reached a second half year. As to her brother, he was older than herself, and had always tormented her with the practical

jokes and mischievous tricks which cubs of boys so much delight in inflicting on their sisters; consequently the love between them was not very striking; in fact, there was a standing feud.

Mrs. Morley's entrance prevented further dispute; she had been detained, to legislate about a bed-room, and the dinner was nearly cold before they sat down to it.

After dinner, Simon Morley went out with his son to look at a field of grass which was almost ready for mowing; and Mrs. Morley sat down at her little table in her own corner to balance her cash and enter the transactions of the morning into her private book. Gertrude was stealing off to her own room, when her mother called her back, and bid her bring her work and keep her company. Mrs. Morley was far too busy to talk, but Gertrude sat still, and that did as well. The afternoon sun streamed through the windows, and the room was oppressively hot.

"Do you always sit here in an afternoon, mother?" said Gertrude at last, looking up from the apron she was mending.

"Ay, to be sure; where else should I be?" replied her mother, with some surprisc. "I had it done up before you came back, and made quite a nice place of it, thinking it would be pleasant for you. I have quite looked forward to having you with me; now you are come home you can be a deal of help, for I have more than I can do sometimes."

Gertrude was ready to cry; but just then the three dashing Miss Slocums entered in a body, and more than filled the little room with their fine bonnets and fine manners.

They were country beauties, and country fortunes, and in both capacities considered they had the right to take the lead, and lay down the law on all points of manners and fashion to the little town of Dunnington.

The eldest, a tall, well-formed young woman, of two or three and twenty, was on the point of marriage with a young farmer, who had a little money of his own, and the farm he occupied had been held by his fathers before him for several generations. He was the best match in the neighbourhood, and had been celebrated for his rural gallantries, so that Miss Arabella was considered to have achieved a rather brilliant conquest. Miss Emma, the second sister, was somewhat of a hoyden (which she considered dashing and spirited),—would ride after the hounds, and leap a five-barred gate—could row, and play at cricket—and was the favourite partner at all the dances and merry-makings in the neighbourhood; she was the type of a *lionne* in higher life. Miss Matilda, the younger, was a pretty, fair-looking girl, who was considered by her sisters and the rest of the town as decidedly “bookish;” because she read all the tales and poetry she could lay hands upon, and every year bought herself a pocket-book containing the words of the songs which had been “sung with applause” during the season, and extracts from the most moving scenes of some recent novel. Her secret aspiration was to receive the homage of a lawful lover like those she had read about. These young women and Gertrude had played and quarrelled together from their earliest years; of late there had been a certain ill-defined jealousy, as they fancied Gertrude was getting above them in their pretensions, and they came fully prepared to assert their own superiority if they found her inclined to dispute it. They were extremely curious to see what she would be like after so long a sojourn “at boarding-school.”

After the first burst of kisses and exclamations there came a pause; the natural current of their souls could not flow comfortably in the presence of Mrs. Morley. Gertrude was invited

to come out for a walk, which she gladly did. Once in the open fields, beyond the church, there was no end to the outpouring of their souls. Gertrude being a new comer, had to be the first listener. She had to hear all the history of the rise and progress of Miss Slocum's engagement,—to hear "what particular attentions" a handsome young man, who drove his own gig and horse, and travelled for his father, was paying Miss Emma,—and finally she had to listen to Miss Matilda's rapturous description of the charms of a detachment of cavalry which had been quartered at Dunnington a few weeks previously. On this point all the sisters spoke at once, and united in assuring Gertrude that there never were such interesting, charming, delightful creatures as the officers, who had not any pride in them, but had ordered the band to play a whole half-hour beyond the usual time in front of the "Mettingham Arms," and that two of them had made acquaintance with their father, and had come upstairs into the tea-room to look at their drawings and to hear Matilda play and sing.

The amount of wisdom in the unrestrained private conversation of all young girls is pretty much on an average. The Miss Slocums were not more foolish than the general run of good-natured, good-humoured girls, full of youthful spirits, unsobered by any of the realities of life; their communications were much the same as those which pass among all girls, gentle or simple; the difference would be found to lie in the tone and manner, rather than the matter of discourse. Folly is folly, whether delivered in clear silvery tones, with the choicest grammar and accent, or with the boisterous manners, noisy voices, and strong provincial inflections with which the Miss Slocums uttered their opinions. Gertrude was as foolish at heart as any girl need be,—the vanity and folly of the con-

versation did not strike her; but the vulgarity of her companions did. The refinement she had been taught at school had reference only to externals, and went no further than the regulation of voice and manner. She was anxious to get home, but the Miss Slocums would not hear of her passing their door without coming in to speak to their mother, who was an invalid.

CHAPTER III.

THEY found old Mrs. Slocum sitting in a padded arm-chair, in a little stuffy dark back-parlour behind the shop. She was knitting a lamb's-wool stocking, her only, and never-ending occupation.

"Here is Gertrude Morley come in to see you mother," said Miss Slocum in a loud key, for her mother was deaf.

"Well, I should never have known her! My dear Gertrude, welcome home!" and poor Gertrude was nearly stifled in the embrace which the fat old lady inflicted upon her. It was not a pleasant process, as Mrs. Slocum was always perfumed with the odour of camphorated liniment, which she used for her rheumatism. She made no pretension to be anything; she was just a good-natured, motherly, vulgar woman, who had helped her husband in his shop until he grew rich, and now she aspired to nothing beyond the luxury of sitting in the chimney-corner of the little back-room, whence she could overlook the shop through a little pane of glass in the wall, and knit her lamb's-wool stocking without molestation.

Mr. Slocum, a little pousy man in black velveteen small-clothes and grey worsted stockings, came in so soon as he heard their voices, and claimed the privilege of old acquaintance to

welcome Gertrude home with a hearty kiss, and as Gertrude had been taught that such things were highly improper, she felt very much shocked accordingly.

“Nay, pretty one, never hang down your head and look shy about me,” said the old man, cheerily; “I am an old fellow, but I should have made any young one jealous who had seen me! Why, dear heart o’ me, all the young chaps in the country will be coming courting here, and I shall never keep the peace among them all, churchwarden as I am! Eh, wife! does it not make you feel young again to see all these fine young lasses around you?”

Mrs. Slocum replied that Miss Gertrude was a very fine young lady, and that it would be a great comfort to Mrs. Morley to have her at home.

The Misses Slocum had a large room upstairs, which they called the “Tea-room;” and it was the pride of their hearts, for in those primitive days a “tea room” was a great distinction.

Persons in the said Mrs. Slocum’s rank of life generally sat in a sort of parlour kitchen, with a morsel of carpet on the red-tiled floor, and a few comforts in the shape of arm chairs for the old folks, and a large sofa covered with chintz, and stuffed with feathers. Even those who possessed “parlours” seldom thought of sitting in them except on Sundays; so that when the Misses Slocum after leaving school turned a large empty apartment upstairs into a “tea-room,” where they sat every day of the week playing on the harpsichord, and looking out of the window at everything who went up the street, the whole town felt insulted at their pride, and prophesied nothing short of bankruptcy to their father. This had not, however, hindered several other families, who thought themselves “quite as good as the Slocums,” from following their example.

When Gertrude had seen and admired the tea-room and all its glories, she was allowed to return home.

If Gertrude had chosen to make the best of her position, she might have found several eligible acquaintances in the town, for the average of human nature is pretty much the same everywhere; but as they were all more or less wanting in education and manner, she considered them all as beneath her notice. The people thought her proud and conceited, and “nothing at all remarkable for all the money she had cost;” whilst the young men declared that she was not to be compared with Emma Slocum. After she had been at home about a week, as she was one morning preparing to retire, as she usually did, to her own room, her mother said :

“Come, Gertrude, you must not always be playing; I want you to take my place in the bar a little. You must begin to give your mind to something useful after all the money spent on you. I can tell you that your father went into one of his passions when he heard what the last bill came to—I must say I think Miss Le French has charged shamefully—but I pacified him by saying what a good girl you were, and how useful you would be to me.”

The passionate indignation with which Gertrude heard this terrified her mother, who would have yielded the point and allowed her to employ herself as she pleased; but when her father found how matters were, he declared with an oath that she should help her mother or go out to service, for he would harbour no child who thought herself too good to keep company with her own father and mother; and then he vented the remainder of his wrath upon his wife, declaring it to be her fault for breeding up her daughter a fine lady, and giving her a new-fangled education above her station. He declared that if

he heard of any more nonsense, or saw any sullenness, he would lay his whip across her shoulders, and turn her out of doors.

Gertrude was terrified at his violence, and completely subdued. Henceforth she took her appointed place at her mother's little table, made out the bills, kept the books, and did everything that was required of her. She saved her father the expense of another servant, which was all he cared for. Her mother thought that so long as she was not too much confined, and had plenty of handsome clothes, trinkets, and pocket-money, that she could not help being happy. She was very proud of her, and secretly cherished the hope that she would make a great match, and ride in her coach.

Poor Gertrude was very much to be pitied. Her position, at the best, was seriously objectionable for any young woman; but she had been so completely unfitted for it by the absurdly unsuitable education her mother's vanity had bestowed, that the door was opened to many more dangers than would otherwise have beset her.

Gertrude's appearance was too striking not to attract attention. She had many adorers; but she turned a cold ear to them all, for none of them could have removed her from the scenes she loathed.

Her mother encouraged her to hold her head high. She was not without a secret hope that some young nobleman, as he passed through, might fall in love with her daughter and marry her; no other solution ever occurred to her unsophisticated mind. And as time rolled on, Gertrude grew still more impatient of her situation; it seemed to her impossible that she could endure it much longer.

CHAPTER IV.

THIS state of things continued for some time, or rather continued to get worse and worse, for Gertrude grew every day more wretched and discontented.

One morning, as she sat down after breakfast to her desk to write out a bill "for the gentleman in No. 13," her mother entered with an open letter in her hand.

"Here, Gertrude, read this letter, and tell me what it all means. It is franked by Lord Mettingham himself, and there is a letter enclosed to you which I have not read. Who is Mr. Mellish, of Palace House?"

"Miss Mellish was a schoolfellow of mine," said Gertrude, "and we used to be great friends; but her father is a very proud old man, and forbid her to correspond with me, and I thought she had forgotten all about me. What can she have to say to me now?"

"Well, read these aloud to me, for I cannot well make out the writing without my spectacles, which I have put down somewhere. But do not hurry; finish what you are doing first."

As soon as she was at liberty, Gertrude read the letters. The first was from Mr. Mellish, written with stately politeness, requesting Mrs. Morley to allow her daughter to come for a few weeks to Palace House, to visit his daughter, who was, unhappily, confined to her couch by a spinal affection, and who

had expressed a great desire to have the company of her old school companion. It was written in a courtly style, with many flourishes, about the retirement in which her fair daughter would have to live whilst with them, and many professions of gratitude for the favour he was entreating ; but there was an affectation of urbanity throughout which went far to justify Gertrude's report of his being very proud.

The other letter was from the daughter, written in a natural and affectionate strain, entreating Gertrude to come if possible, as she was very ill, and wished to see her more than any one else in the world. The fact was, that Miss Mellish having fallen into a state of confirmed ill health, it had become desirable to engage a companion for her, and she had, with infinite difficulty, persuaded her father to invite Gertrude Morley, her great school-friend, to see if she would not be eligible for the situation. Of course, nothing was said of this ulterior view in the letter of introduction—but as everything in the world could be explained if we only knew the reason of it, this is the explanation of the letters which so much surprised Mrs. Morley and Gertrude.

When Simon Morley was told of this invitation, he declared that "Gertrude should not go, as it would only make her more set up and conceited than she already was ; that being brought up along with fine folks had made her good for nothing, and that with his consent she should go no more amongst them."

But Mrs. Morley was too proud that her daughter should have received such a friendly invitation from real gentlefolks not to determine on having it accepted. She saw in it the realisation of her dreams for Gertrude's advancement.

She coaxed, scolded, persuaded, and used all the matrimonial sagacity she had gained by so many years' experience, and at

length carried her point. Gertrude departed in the best chaise belonging to the "Mettingham Arms," and the Miss Slocums giggled and kissed their hands to her from the window of their "Tea-room," whilst they "wondered what people could see in Gertrude Morley to make such a fuss about her!" Mr. Mellish was to send his own carriage to meet her at the last stage, and Mrs. Morley took care that every one in Dunnington should be aware of that fact.

It may easily be conceived that this visit was not likely to make Gertrude more content with her condition in life. Although, owing to the invalid condition of Miss Mellish, there was no gaiety going on at Palace House, yet the visitors who from time to time came to the house were so different to her associates at home, the tranquil elegance of the domestic environments contrasted so forcibly with the constant bustle and stall-fed plenty of the home she had left, that her dissatisfaction increased to positive disgust, and a determination was formed to emancipate herself at all risks.

Amongst the visitors at Palace House was a young Irishman, the son of an old friend of Mr. Mellish. He was a wild, hot-brained, rollicking, good-looking young fellow, professing to be a barrister, but trusting to his uncle, an Irish Baronet, who had once done something for government, to obtain for him some appointment which should be an easier mode of getting on in the world than plodding at a profession. He was the son of an admiral, who had been dead some years, leaving a widow and two children slenderly provided with everything except "good expectations."

This young man, Augustus Donnelly by name, had been taught that he was divinely handsome, and might make his fortune by marrying an heiress. It was the chief article of faith in which

he had been educated. Perhaps he would have fulfilled his destiny if he had not met Gertrude Morley. But his star brought him to Palace House during her visit. He saw her, fell desperately in love with her, and at the end of a week proposed to her. Gertrude was not the least in the world in love with him ; he was too noisy and too full of spirits. Her taste inclined towards sentimental officers and interesting young clergymen. Augustus Donnelly, with his florid complexion, laughing eyes, and boisterous spirits, did not touch her fancy in the least, and it is probable that she would have rejected him —if the post that morning, which had brought her a sudden recal home to assist her mother in the preparations for an election dinner, had not made Mr. Donnelly seem the better alternative.

He knew that his prospects in life would not stand parental inquiry, and he was far too deeply in love to think with composure of any opposition : he pleaded for an elopement. At first Gertrude refused to listen to this, but in her secret heart she feared that if he once saw her home and her relations he might withdraw from the connexion : it seemed her only chance of escape. She hesitated, and at last consented. The next day she left Palace House, in spite of all entreaties to prolong her stay. Augustus Donnelly having borrowed fifty pounds from a friend, “to enable him to run away with an heiress,” met her at the end of the first stage, and they rushed off to matrimony and Gretna Green together.

Poor Gertrude was not quite seventeen, which must be taken as her excuse.

CHAPTER V.

MRS. MORLEY was immersed in the preparations for an election dinner, which was to be held at the "Mettingham Arms" the next day, and when the post-boy, who had been sent with a chaise to meet Gertrude at the last stage, returned without her, Mrs. Morley was excessively provoked at her daughter's thoughtlessness in neglecting her summons at such an important time; but she was not thrown into the anxiety that might have been expected. She fancied that Gertrude had been persuaded at the last minute to remain for some party—and, after a few expressions of impatience at her daughter's inordinate love of pleasure, she hurried away to the kitchen, where her presence was imperatively called for.

The next morning the house was full of bustle; as early as nine o'clock the guests began to arrive, although the dinner was not to take place until two, and Mrs. Morley was at her wits' end what to do with them in the meantime; the yard was already almost filled with their different vehicles, and the quiet street thronged with loungers. To add to the complication, it was market-day, also. In the midst of the bustle, the lame postman brought in a letter, which Mrs. Morley, busy as she was, opened directly. It came from Gertrude, and told, in a few cold words, of her flight and intended marriage, "to get away from home," as she expressed it.

Poor Mrs. Morley fainted on reading the letter.

She was lifted to a sofa in the little bar, and her husband, who was out in the field superintending the arrangement of the dinner-table in the marquee, was summoned home by the intelligence that "Missis was took very bad indeed, and perhaps dead by that time."

It was fortunate for Mrs. Morley that her condition excited her husband's commiseration, and turned his wrath into another channel, for his fits of passion were terrible; when he had read the letter, it needed the sight of his wife, in a swoon that looked like death, to stop the current of curses and reproaches that rose to his lips. He put a degree of restraint upon himself, which, for such a violent tempered man, was wonderful. He did not speak a single word, but lifted his wife from the sofa, and carried her upstairs.

At length she opened her eyes.

"Oh, Simon, do you know all, and have you sent to stop her? I'll go and fetch her back myself,—you shall not keep me here. A man she hardly knows,—a swindler, perhaps!"

She attempted to rise, but fell back on the bed, from weakness.

"This is a bad job, for sure, mistress; you will have a sore heart enough without any words of mine. Maybe it is a judgment on the pride that bred her up above her station. But I will never bring it up against you. Only never speak her name to me, nor ask me to forgive her; for, as I am a living man, I never will; and let her keep out of my road, or I might do that I would be sorry for after."

Mrs. Morley was more frightened by her husband's unwonted calmness than she would have been by the most violent explosion.

“Oh, Simon! Simon!” she screamed; “what are you after? You are thinking something dreadful,—I see it by your face. It is all my fault;—I taught her to be proud, and I am the cause of this day’s shame. Beat me if you will, but forgive her.”

“She wants no forgiveness of mine;—she cares nothing for us;—she has cast off her parents. Let her drop; never speak about her again.”

Poor Mrs. Morley’s passion of grief was terrible to witness, but it only hardened her husband’s heart against the daughter, who was the cause of it. But time was getting on, and the dinner hour approached; the confusion below was increasing; business must be attended to, whether his daughter had run away or not;—so leaving his wife to the care of Mrs. Slocum, who had been summoned in the emergency, he went about the necessary business of the day to all appearance as though nothing had happened. It was remarked, however, that although he drank hard, it seemed that day to take no effect upon him.

Next morning, Mrs. Morley was seen going about as usual.

The talking and gossiping from one end of Dunnington to the other was great. There was no ill-will towards poor Mrs. Morley in all the wise sentences that were pronounced against her and her mode of bringing up her daughter; but, in a small, stagnant country town, gossip and scandal is the salt of life, and it was too much to expect from human nature that such an event as an elopement should take place without giving rise to more commentaries than ever were written on a disputed text.

The next Saturday, however, amongst the announcements in the “County Courier,” appeared the following: “Married, on the 3rd instant, at Gretna Green, and afterwards by the Rev. James Price, Augustus Donnelly, Esq., son of the late Rear-

Admiral Donnelly, and nephew of Sir Mortimer O'Grady, of Kilshire Castle, in the County of Tipperary, to Gertrude, only daughter of Mr. Simon Morley, of Dunnington, Hunts."

"La!" said Miss Matilda Slocum, throwing down the paper, "so Gertrude Morley is really married after all, and to the nephew of a baronet! What would her father and mother have more, that they take on so about it?"

"Depend upon it," said her eldest sister, who was diligently stitching at some article for her own trousseau—"depend upon it, that there is more in it than we know. It is not likely that a gentleman should run away to marry a girl, when he might have had her quietly for asking."

"He must have been very much in love," sighed Miss Matilda. "I wonder whether she came down a rope ladder on a moonlight night."

"Do not let your mind run upon such things, I desire—they sound very unbecoming from a young woman," replied her sister, sententiously; who, being on the point of marriage herself, thought it due to her position to assume the airs of a matron elect.

"I wonder how many horses they had to their carriage," said Miss Emma Slocum. "It must have been famous fun!—much better than we shall have at your wedding. I wish Gertrude's father would forgive her, and then she would come home, and we should hear all about it. The first time I see Mr. Morley I shall tell him that he ought."

"I beg, girls," said their mother, looking up from her knitting, "that you will, all of you, hold your foolish tongues, and never make any remark either to Mr. or Mrs. Morley. You are young, giddy things, and cannot know the hurt it gives to fathers and mothers when their children are unkind. Mrs.

Morley was over proud in bringing up her daughter above her place; but it has come home to her now, poor soul. I have seen all along how it would be. Gertrude despised her home, and looked down on her parents because they were just common, homely people;—I have seen it in her face this long while that she would go through fire and water to get away, and a fine hand she has made of it, I'll be bound. She ran away to be married; but I am much mistaken if, before six months are over, she would not run further and faster to be unmarried again. She has despised and thrown off her own father and mother—and many a sore heart she will feel for it before she dies.”

Mrs. Slocum replaced the spectacles which she had taken off, and resumed her knitting. She had felt very jealous of Mrs. Morley, and she had been offended at the high manners of her daughter; but now that her self-love had been appeased by the event, all her natural kind-heartedness returned, and she sympathized none the less warmly “that she had always foreseen the end.”

Gertrude's name was never mentioned at home. She had written one letter, begging, in a light, airy style, to be forgiven, and excusing herself on the ground that “she was not happy at home.”

Poor Mrs. Morley would fain have taken all the blame upon herself, and tried to intercede with her husband; but, after the first attempt, she never ventured to speak on the subject again. Simon Morley was not a man to trifle with.

Her mother sent Gertrude all the clothes she had left at home, and she smuggled amongst them whatever she could think of that was likely to be useful. Also, she wrote a letter which was nearly illegible from the tears that dropped upon it,

telling her to write no more till her father should be softened. She enclosed a ten-pound note, which Simon Morley discovered, and his wife had to endure the most terrible anger he had ever shown since their marriage.

After this, things went on at the "Mettingham Arms" apparently much as usual. A handsome, buxom young woman was engaged to assist Mrs. Morley. The prosperity of the house increased, and Simon Morley had the reputation of being a rich man, and was respected accordingly.

But poor Mrs. Morley never properly held up her head afterwards. She never spoke of her daughter, but she mourned after her. She still went about the house as usual, and kept it going, from long habit; but the spirit of old times was gone.

Gradually her health declined; and when her son, who had fallen in love with her good-looking assistant, formally desired the consent of his parents to marry her, Mrs. Morley persuaded her husband to give up the "Mettingham Arms" to the young couple, and to retire himself to a pretty little farm he had recently purchased. To this he at length agreed; and, after a gay wedding at the parish church, the old Mr. and Mrs. Morley resigned the house, and Mr. and Mrs. Simon Morley the younger reigned in their stead.

This took place about two years after Gertrude's elopement.

CHAPTER VI.

It may sound immoral, but it is no less a matter of fact, that the idle and good-for-nothing who hang about in the world expecting "strokes of fortune," generally receive them. Those who become burdens on their friends—who are always in want of "just a few pounds," to enable them to go to America, to India, or to Heaven, to take possession of a "most excellent situation"—are always those who will be found to have had the most remarkable instances of "good luck" in the course of their life; but then they have never been any the better for it.

Those who trust to prosaic, plodding industry and their own exertions, meet with all manner of difficulties, but seldom or never with a genuine stroke of "good luck." They shape their lives according to the natural laws of cause and effect—they reap what they have honestly sown. Whereas the "good luck" and "strokes of fortune," when practically interpreted, mean only receiving what has not been earned, and in most cases not deserved,—and, like the seed in the parable, which fell where there was stony ground, "having no root, dried up and withered away." Augustus Donnelly, the husband of Gertrude, was always on the look out for "good luck."

He had always intended to make his great stroke of fortune by marrying an heiress, but he had married Gertrude instead;

so that avenue to prosperity was closed against him. But, to do him justice, he was so desperately in love with his wife, that he never gave a thought to what he had missed. When he found that her father was a rich innkeeper, it was certainly a severe shock to his family pride,—for he had more than an Irishman's ordinary contempt for trade and low connections. He comforted himself by reflecting on the great convenience it would be to have a rich father-in-law, who, of course, would be only too glad to pay handsomely for the honour his family had received in his name and self. He accordingly wrote, in a condescending style, to Simon Morley, inquiring what settlement he was prepared to make on his daughter, talked largely of his family and connexions, and begged him to say by return of post when he should order his man of business to meet Mr. Morley's solicitor, and concluded by expressing his intention of very shortly bringing his fair bride to plead in person for restoration of her father's favour!

The effect of such a letter upon Simon Morley may be conceived. He did not mention it to his wife. If he had, Mrs. Morley would have been at no loss to explain the terrible humour he came home in that night, which exceeded all she had ever known in the course of her matrimonial experience, and which she attributed to a bad day's sport, and his favourite mare going lame. If she had seen her husband that day, she would have known how the poor mare came to be lame.

Mr. Augustus Donnelly did not show his wife the answer to his letter; neither did he tell her that he had ever written to her father. If Gertrude had known this, she would have known also why her husband spoke unkindly to her for the first time, and why he was so extremely sarcastic in his reflections upon "low money-getting people."

As the advantages of this marriage seemed rigidly limited to bestowing a beautiful wife upon him, and nothing else, Mr. Augustus once more opened his mouth to Fortune, in the hope that she would put something into it.

In the meantime, he did not see very clearly how they were to get away from Scotland. The fifty pounds he had last borrowed was all spent, and they were living on credit at a little inn in a country town, until his uncle should do something for him, or until something turned up. The inn was a naked, hungry-looking red-brick house,—neither clean nor comfortable. The town was small; and as they knew no one, they were reduced to the society of each other. Under these circumstances, the charming spirits of Mr. Augustus Donnelly flagged considerably; and though he became much more grave and silent, his wife did not find him any the more agreeable for the change; and except for the gentility of being a visitor, she was still living in an inn, without any of the comforts she had enjoyed at home. But Gertrude endured stoically, and hoped for better things.

At the end of a week, the landlady, waiter, and servants began to behave very coolly, not to say insolently, to their guests in the three-cornered parlour,—and Mr. Augustus began seriously to look about for ways and means.

A clatter in the stable-yard drew him from the window, whence he was watching two dogs fighting, and caused him to hasten to the spot, whistling as he went—

“O dear, what can the matter be!”

He found the commotion was occasioned by the arrival of a shooting party on their way from the moors. Amongst them Augustus found Lord Southend, an old college friend, very rich and very good-natured, who had helped Augustus more than

once; but he liked him, and though he foresaw an inroad on his purse, it did not prevent his greeting him very cordially.

When he heard the story of his runaway marriage, and how he and his bride were actually in pawn for their bill, he laughed, declared it better sport than anything he had met with on the moors, saw Gertrude, declared she was handsome enough to excuse a man's doing a more desperate thing for her sake,—lent him money “to get away from that cursed hole,”—and carried him off to dine at a bachelor's party in the neighbourhood.

Gertrude was, of course, alone all day. Her mother's letter, which had followed them from place to place, arrived about an hour after her husband's departure. For the first time her undutiful and unkind behaviour to her mother smote upon her conscience, and she wept bitterly. She would have written words of repentance, but the conclusion of the letter, “do not answer this—it would only aggravate your father and bring anger upon me, which I could ill bear just now,” drove her away from this sorrowful consolation. She thought of writing to Mrs. Slocum, and to send a message by that means to her mother; but though somewhat softened, Gertrude's pride was still too strong to allow her to communicate to any of her old acquaintance until she could give a more flourishing account of herself. “Those Misses Slocum would only triumph over me: I will wait until Augustus obtains the government situation he is expecting; and besides, after all, my mother would rather not hear from me just yet.”

The thought of the Misses Slocum hardened her flagging resolution, and all her hatred to Dunnington returned with renewed strength.

Mr. Augustus Donnelly did not return from his dinner-party

until early the next morning, and then it was in the condition that "choice spirits" generally are when they have been enjoying themselves for many hours in each other's society. He, however, told Gertrude that Lord Southend had offered to give them both a place in his carriage—that he intended to drop Gertrude with his mother and sister, and to go on himself to London, to look after the situation his uncle said had as good as been promised for him.

Gertrude was too thankful to get away, to realise the part allotted to her in this scheme. Her husband had been lucky at cards—so that, with the loan from his friend, he was pretty well in cash, even after defraying their bill; and he bid Gertrude "keep the money her mother had sent, to make a figure before his relations."

CHAPTER VII.

THEY departed that day, and Gertrude had the satisfaction of travelling in company with a real lord, and in a barouche like those which used to change horses at the "Mettingham Arms;" but she did not find herself very happy—the thought of the mother-in-law and sister-in-law she was about to encounter weighed on her spirits, and she wondered how they would be pleased at having her "dropped" so unceremoniously amongst them.

They stopped one night on the road (Lord Southend of course paying all the expenses), and about the middle of the next day arrived at the little clean old-fashioned town, unpolluted by trade or manufactures, where it had seemed good to the Dowager Mrs. Donnelly and her daughter to take up their abode.

The earl himself alighted at the chief hotel, and engaged Augustus to dine with him after he had paid his respects sufficiently to his people at home. He shook hands with Gertrude, and told her that he hoped she would soon come to London and shine as became her beauty.

The carriage stopped a few moments afterwards before a large old-fashioned stone house, full of dismal-looking windows, in a street where the grass grew up luxuriantly amongst the

stones. A double flight of stone steps led up to the door, garnished with iron studs and an immense brass knocker, which seemed capable of beating it down, as it sounded a thundering accompaniment to the sepulchral peal of the bell, which reverberated through the house at the summons of the aristocratic supercilious footman.

“You surely are not going to leave me here, Augustus?” said Gertrude, frightened at the noise they made, and sick with anticipation of the introduction that awaited her.

“Do not be childish, Gertrude, I desire,” replied her husband; “you are only going to see my mother.”

The door was by this time opened by a small footboy in somewhat faded livery and clumsy shoes. Augustus sprang out of the carriage and assisted the trembling Gertrude.

“Tell your mistress that her son and his lady are here, and then see to getting the luggage. You had best send for some one to help you.”

“Yes, sir. If you please, sir, what name shall I say, sir? Missis did say she was not at home, sir.”

“Do as I bid you, and be off with you,” replied Mr. Augustus, imperiously.

“Please to come this way, sir,” said the boy, submissively, leading the way across a large hall, paved in black and white, and ushering them into the drawing-room—a lofty room with walls painted lead colour, and windows hung with drab moreen curtains trimmed with borders of black cotton velvet; a gilt mirror over the chimney-piece was surmounted by a black eagle, holding a festoon of glass drops from his beak; girandoles, festooned in a similar manner, stood upon the mantel-shelf; the hearth-rug was turned back, and the small hard-stuffed settee was thriftily covered with a duster, whilst an array of

black cane chairs, with gilt knobs, stood in order against the walls.

“This room does not look as if it saw much company!” said Mr. Augustus, looking round; and it isn’t myself that would trouble it if I staid here. What is it you are crying for at all?” said he, turning to his wife, “just when you ought to look like the pretty creature you are, to do me credit.”

Further exhortation was cut short by the entrance of the Dowager Mrs. Donnelly herself. Mr. Augustus embraced his mother very dutifully, and before she had time for more than a look of astonishment, took the hand of poor Gertrude, who was ready to sink into the ground, and said, “This is the new daughter I have brought to surprise you. She will keep up the character of the Donnellys for having none but handsome women in the family. She feels a little bashful just now, at coming amongst strangers.”

Mrs. Donnelly turned with the air of a Roman matron towards Gertrude, and deposited a dignified kiss upon her cheek, saying—

“I trust you will have no cause to regret the day you entered our family; but although elopements have received the sanction of numerous examples in high society, yet I must confess it is not the mode in which I would have desired my son to receive his wife.”

“There now, that’s enough,” said Mr. Augustus, impatiently. “Can you not tell her that you are glad to see her, and no more about it. It might be the first runaway match in the family, but didn’t Sir Tiberius O’Connor run away with our great aunt, Judith (and she on the eve of marrying another), and have I not heard you call her the mirror of the family? What is the use of being so hard on your own lawful daughter-in-law.”

"I owe it to our sex, Augustus, to protest against whatever bears the shadow of impropriety. A young woman cannot keep her reputation too spotless; but having said thus much, I trust that we shall none of us have reason to regret the step that she has taken."

If Gertrude had not been brought to her in an earl's travelling carriage, Mrs. Donnelly's reception of her daughter-in-law would have been much more severe; but as Gertrude was in the odour of good company, Mrs. Donnelly permitted her rigid propriety to relax, and invited them into the breakfast-room, where there was a fire.

This was not one of her days for being visible to callers. The sound of the carriage had disturbed her in the midst of some very homely employments, and she had hastily retired to improve her somewhat *negligé* toilet. A gown of dashed black satin, which had once been a gala dress, as proved by the traces of bugles and embroidery which lingered upon it, had been smartened up by the addition of a large brooch, like a tombstone, bearing the miniature of the deceased admiral in the full splendour of his naval uniform; a gauze cap, that might have been cleaner, but which could not have been finer, covered the locks of her auburn *toupée*, and her thick white stockings were cased in strong stuff shoes. She was a portly, stately dame of fifty. At the first glance, she looked to be a kind, motherly woman; but there was a certain hard self-complacency about her face that afforded little hope of any spontaneous warmth; a stereotyped sweetness in her smile, and a hard grey eye that never joined in it at all. She was extremely affable, for she had the fixed idea that being of a distinguished family she must behave accordingly. Her fortune was narrow, but her manners were ample, to compensate for it.

Gertrude, who had been often told by her husband that his mother was the most distinguished ornament of the Court at Dublin, and the "life and soul of every party at the Castle," was greatly impressed by this elaborate suavity, and followed her mother-in-law, as she glided from the drawing-room, with the implicit reverence due to the great lady she believed her to be.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE room to which they were now introduced was much smaller than the one they had quitted. The furniture was old, and the carpet wanted mending; but there was a small dusty fire, and the evidences of being inhabited, so that its appearance was not so desolate.

By the time that Gertrude had taken off her bonnet, Miss Sophia Donnelly, who had been out paying a round of calls, returned. She was a tall, large-featured young woman, with her hair (which was more red than auburn) arranged in large curls on each side of her face. She was very showily attired, and her manners and bearing were intended to represent a highly-bred, fashionable lady—indeed, she had no doubt that they did—but Gertrude thought she was hard and insolent, and not to be compared to her mother.

Miss Sophia was very glad to see her brother, and she presented her cheek to Gertrude with an air of supercilious coldness which was quite sincere and natural.

After these greetings had subsided, Mrs. Donnelly beckoned her daughter out of the room to a domestic conference.

Mr. Augustus Donnelly had taken his mother by surprise; and surprises are always hazardous, and seldom pleasant—they never fall at the right time.

It was Wednesday, when Mrs. Donnelly always gave what she called a "scrap dinner" to her household. Indeed, though Mrs. Donnelly talked a great deal about "Irish hospitality," there were more "banian-days" than festivals in her calendar—as all the servants who had ever lived with her could testify.

On this especial day, the "scraps" were unusually scanty. A very small portion of potato-hash, and the crusts of the week boiled into what Mrs. Donnelly termed "a most nutritious bread pudding," was the dinner she had decreed for herself and her household—consisting of her daughter, two maid-servants, and the footboy before-mentioned. The addition of two hungry persons would increase the scarcity to a famine.

"My dear child," began Mrs. Donnelly, "was there ever anything so unlucky? Nothing in the house! What is to be done?"

"It is just like Augustus!" said Miss Sophia. "He was always thoughtless! Who was his wife—do you know? I will get out the best plate, at any rate, and then the dinner itself will be of little consequence,—that is, if she has been accustomed to good society."

"Well, but we must have something to eat," rejoined the matron.

"They may make out with anything in the kitchen," replied Miss Sophia. "Porridge and treacle, if there is nothing else. And as for ourselves, with what there is, and a few tarts from the pastrycook's, we shall do very well."

"But there will not be enough for us, my love," replied her mother, shaking her head.

"Then let the cook prepare a few eggs, after that receipt Lady Killaloo gave you,—only she need not use above half the quantity of butter. I do not see what more is required. I will

lay the cloth myself, and you will see that it will look quit a stylish little dinner. Nothing can be so vulgar as a heavy over-loaded table."

"You are such a dear contriving creature," said her mother, kissing her. "What a treasure you will be to somebody!"

If Gertrude had desired style, she certainly ought to have been satisfied with her present position. The dinner was served in due time, Lady Killaloo's eggs at the top, and the potato-hash at the bottom of the table, but each served up in a plated dish; and the spoons, forks, and the silver waiter, on which everything was handed, were emblazoned with the Donnelly crest wherever it could be placed. The footboy had been made to put on his best coat, and the crest was also on all his buttons. Nothing could be more hospitable than the manner in which Mrs. Donnelly presided over the table; and as, luckily, Gertrude was too much agitated by her novel position to have any appetite, and her husband having the prospect of a dinner with Lord Southend was too prudent to spoil it by partaking too heartily of his mother's family fare, there was a small remainder sent away to the kitchen.

After a tumbler of punch, made of genuine "potheen" (which was the only article of which Mrs. Donnelly was really liberal), Mr. Augustus declared he was due at the "Elephant," where Southend was waiting dinner for him,—adding, in an off-hand manner:

"I shall take a run up to town with him, and leave Gertrude here to keep you company, till I have looked about me, and found something to settle down upon. Southend says there is a place in the Treasury which would be just the thing for me, and that it is in his father's gift."

At this announcement, Gertrude's eyes filled with tears she

could not restrain. Mrs. Donnelly's brow clouded over, though she attempted to look amiable; she thought of the increase to her household expenditure, and the burden to her resources which her daughter-in-law seemed likely to prove. Miss Sophia, who already felt the anti-pathetic affinity of a sister-in-law, was indignant at the imposition, and thought that she had much better pay a visit to her own relations.

"Why how cast down you all seem at my proposal!" said Augustus. "What can any of you suggest better I would like to know?"

Mrs. Donnelly cleared her throat, and for a moment seemed somewhat embarrassed, but speedily recovering her usual bland complacency, she said,—

"There are several things to be considered, my dear Augustus, which you seem to forget. I am charmed with our dear Gertrude, and am willing to consider her as a daughter of my own. If we were rich she should be welcome as the flowers in May; but my income is not large, and every farthing I can save goes to make a portion for your sister. Another inmate, however charming, will be a great additional expense. For a few days I will rejoice to have her; but if she is to remain longer——"

"Oh, if it is the bite and the sup you grudge to the wife of your only son, it is no obligation she shall lie under, or me either," interrupted Augustus, furiously. "Her own people have turned their backs on her, for having fancied me without their leave, and now you are haggling and screwing to make a profit out of her! I am ashamed for the credit of the family."

"I do not see what reason the friends of any young person have to cast her off for entering into our family," interposed his sister, haughtily. "They must be people utterly ignorant

of the value of good connexions. Money may be picked up by the road-side, but an old family, like ours, is getting rarer every day; and any young woman in the land might think herself honoured by an alliance with us."

"Faith then, Sophy dear, I wish you would take a walk and pick up a little of that same money you speak of by the road-side. I have not found the lane yet that is paved with gold; and I am doubting it is a long way till I get to the turning. Gertrude's father there is rolling in wealth, but not a penny or a halfpenny of it will he give us; and till I get the little place I have in prospect, it is not much of that same money you so despise I shall have to bless myself with. When I have it, what comes for me comes for you; and neither I nor Gertrude will count the days you stop with us, nor talk of payment either; so you will not lose what you spend on us. Gertrude *must* stay here—I cannot take her with me."

Gertrude sat by, listening with burning cheeks, ready to sink into the earth whilst this discourse went on. But there was no resource—she had brought it on herself. At last she said, in a faltering voice, scarcely audible,—

"I am not without money altogether. Perhaps this will pay for me until my husband has a home to receive me," and she laid on the table the ten-pound note which her mother had sent.

Everybody felt awkward at this straightforward proceeding. Mrs. Donnelly became entangled by a long explanatory sentence, owing to the difficulty of saying what should mean at once both Yes and No.

Miss Donnelly looked contemptuously at her, as a person utterly destitute of manner and tact.

Mr. Augustus Donnelly had the grace to feel ashamed of him-

self for half a second ; but on looking at his watch, he saw that his time was up, and that " it was impossible to keep Southend waiting." He rose hastily, kissed Gertrude, bid her take care of herself, and that he would soon write for her to join him ; bade a somewhat cold adieu to his mother and sister, and departed—leaving orders that his portmanteau should be packed and sent after him to the " Elephant " in the course of a couple of hours.

Heavily and sadly passed the evening to poor Gertrude. Mrs. Donnelly entertained her with histories of bygone festivities at Dublin Castle in which she had played a distinguished part, and gave her an account of all the stylish families with whom she and her daughter were on visiting terms.

Miss Donnelly brought out a little book of vellum, bound in crimson velvet, wherein she had occupied her leisure hours in emblazoning the arms of the Donnelly family, from the earliest tradition to the present time, with the quarterings of their different intermarriages. This book was the solace of her leisure hours. She now brought it, and inquired of Gertrude what was her father's crest, and what arms he bore, that she might enter them into the " family-book."

" The Mettringham Arms," said Gertrude, confusedly.

" Ah ! then you are a branch of the Mettringham family ?" said the lady, with a smile of complacency. " I thought the family name had been Cressy ? you are connected through a female branch perhaps ?"

" My father is a tenant of Lord Mettringham's, and our house is called the ' Mettringham Arms,' " said Gertrude, desperately.

Mother and daughter exchanged looks of dismay. Miss Sophia Donnelly closed the book, saying, coldly, " Of course, then, you have no heraldic bearings at all ?"

There ensued an awkward pause. At length Mrs. Donnelly inquired whether Gertrude would not like to retire to rest, after the fatigues of the day?

“I will show you the chamber which is to be your own;” and lighting a small end of candle stuck into a plated candlestick, she conducted Gertrude to a large cold-looking bedroom, with a scrap of carpet round a large hearse-like bedstead. An old-fashioned worm-eaten toilet-glass, a relict of the prosperity of the Donnellys, stood in the bow window, and faded chalk drawings of some ancient children of the Donnelly race adorned the walls. Comfort was left unattempted.

Trusting that she would sleep well, Mrs. Donnelly kissed her with considerable stateliness of manner, and withdrew, leaving Gertrude to meditate on the advantages of the “unexceptionable connexion” she had formed.

“Good heavens! that Augustus, who might have married anybody, should have formed such a *mésalliance!*” exclaimed Miss Sophia, when alone with her mother.

CHAPTER IX.

WHEN Gertrude awoke the next morning she had a vague feeling of unhappiness; the recollection of the events of the preceding day gradually became more distinct. She thought that Augustus had not been kind to leave her a stranger amongst his own people, and, in a manner, dependent upon them; and when she recollected how much both his mother and sister looked down upon all "who did not belong to a good family," the thought of her own deficiencies in that respect made her afraid of meeting them again. It weighed upon her like a crime, that she was "the daughter of an innkeeper;" and though she would thankfully have changed her father into a Marquis, the fact remained the same. It was an error of Destiny, quite beyond her power to remedy.

Under such a weight of real unhappiness and fancied ignominy, the poor girl was quite crushed. She, however, met her sorrows in the established feminine way, and wept bitterly; an inarticulate protest against them which eased her mind considerably, and when she could cry no longer she got up and dressed herself.

When she descended to the breakfast-parlour no one was there. The aspect of the breakfast-table was very different to what she had been accustomed to at home. The flimsy table-

cloth, in want both of darning and washing,—the tarnished spoons and tea-pot (for Mrs. Donnelly seldom allowed her plate to be cleaned, for fear of wearing it),—and the half-cut loaf, stale and dry,—looked anything but an inviting breakfast-table. The fire that struggled in the grate was made chiefly of dusty, half-burned cinders, which Gertrude was trying to coax into a blaze when her august mother-in-law entered. If there was one thing that Mrs. Donnelly disliked more than another, it was to see any one meddle with her fires; Gertrude had, unwittingly, added another sin to the previous list of her offences. Mrs. Donnelly greeted her with stately politeness, and hoped she had rested well. Miss Sophia coldly wished her good morning, and they all sat down to breakfast.

The morning costume of the ladies consisted of very dingy old silk dresses,—for they economised greatly upon their washing bills, and the dresses that had become too old and too shabby to meet the eyes of men and angels were condemned to be worn “the first thing in the morning,” by way of getting the wear out of them to the uttermost farthing. Gertrude, in her pretty, fresh-looking, chintz morning-wrapper, and her undeniable gracefulness and beauty, was as great a contrast to them as possible. Both the ladies were constrained to own to themselves that “she looked very stylish certainly,” and that no one could have guessed that she had been a barmaid in her father’s inn. But they liked her none the better for that: it did not wash out the original sin of her low birth. If she had been the ugliest and poorest of patrician daughters, they would have knelt down and worshipped her. The same feeling was at work in Gertrude: it hindered her from feeling any comfort in her own advantages, and equally prevented her appreciating the dirt and discomfort which surrounded her stylish connexions.

The two ladies had conversed till deep in the night as to the best mode of meeting the terrible blow which this marriage had given to the Donnelly family; whether Gertrude was to be degraded to the condition of a disgraced relative, and treated as a misfortune, or whether it would be more "creditable to the family" to make the best of the match which their "dear chivalrous Augustus had been led into."

"So generous of him to marry her, and so uncalled for," said Miss Sophia, indignantly; "for surely people in that class could never have expected it from a man in the position of Augustus!"

"No, my dear," said her mother, majestically; "you allow your feelings to carry you too far. If this poor young creature confided herself to his honour, he would have been no true Donnelly if he had deceived her. I feel the misfortune of this connexion as much as you do, but I would not have owned him for my son if he had acted dishonourably."

"I hope she will not fancy that she has come into the family as an equal," said Miss Sophia.

"That she never can," rejoined Mrs. Donnelly, with dignity; "but as Christians, and as reasonable beings, we must make the best of this unfortunate occurrence."

So it was decided, that no matter how she had entered, Gertrude being now, at all events, a member of the Donnelly family, must be endowed to the world with Donnelly virtues, and boasted of accordingly. But, as poor Gertrude found, this did not include either comfort or consideration for her in private.

This day being the day on which, in every week, Mrs. Donnelly was visible to callers, a fire was ordered to be lighted in the drawing-room; and whilst Miss Sophia proceeded to ar-

range the room for company, Mrs. Donnelly offered to take Gertrude over the house.

“I make a point, my dear, of looking minutely into my domestic matters, and, as you have had no experience, you may learn something from seeing the arrangements of an old house-keeper like myself. Our housekeeping is, as I may say, traditional; for the Donnellys have been a family since the days of the old kings of Ireland, and in a parchment which is still in our possession, there is recorded the hospitality which one of our ancestors offered to the last King of Ulster. Although time and change have somewhat impoverished us, we can yet give a true Irish welcome to our friends; ‘hospitality and no formality’ is, as it ever has been, our boast.”

Mrs. Donnelly was unconsciously mollified by the respectful reverence with which Gertrude listened to all the claims she put forth on behalf of her family, and it was not without a certain graciousness that she conducted Gertrude over the large, dreary, haunted-looking mansion, which served as a oasket for the dignity of Mrs. Donnelly.

Some of the rooms were unfurnished, and those in use were fitted up much in the style of the room appropriated to Gertrude. An air of dinginess pervaded everything, but every article of furniture was placed in an attitude of pretension so as to show its good qualities to the best advantage, and there was not a chair, or table, or chest, upon which Mrs. Donnelly did not expatiate with the eloquence of an auctioneer. A heavy, carved, black oak cabinet was the object of her peculiar admiration; first, it was made of “bog oak,” found on the Donnelly estate, before it was confiscated; in the next place, it bore the date of 1572, and Mrs. Donnelly showed Gertrude how the family arms were carved upon it. There was not a cracked

china cup, or old japan box, or rickety chest of drawers, which was not displayed to Gertrude's eyes as something especially rare and precious, with a family legend attached to it, until she almost believed that Mrs. Donnelly must, somehow, belong to the royal family.

When they had gone through all the rooms, Mrs. Donnelly said, with great affability, "And now, my dear, we will proceed to the kitchen; there is nothing derogatory in being a vigilant housekeeper. I make a point of looking into every item of my domestic expenditure. I have known ladies of the highest birth who did the same; my old friend Lady Sarah Lazenby, now Countess of Rosherville, in the county of Tipperary, always goes round Castle Rosherville every day, and not a fire is ever lighted, or a potato boiled, without her knowledge."

"Is she not very stingy?" asked Gertrude.

"That which is a virtue, and highly becoming in persons who have a position in the world, often looks quite otherwise in those of inferior station," replied Mrs. Donnelly, severely; "and allow me to add, that a young person in your rank of life ought not, even in thought, to question what is done by one so much above you."

Gertrude had a distinct recollection of this Countess of Rosherville, who had stopped at the "Mettingham Arms" some months previously, with a carriage full of children and nurses whom she had installed in the best parlour, and declining dinner, luncheon, or any meal called by a name, sent out a bottle of weak broth which had been brought in the pocket of the carriage to be warmed for their refreshment; and, like the old woman "who lived in a shoe," gave it to them without any bread.

One of Poor Richard's proverbs says that "A fat kitchen

makes a lean will." Mrs. Donnelly's kitchen would have no such result to answer for; it was bare, and lean, and pinched, to the last degree.

Mrs. Donnelly peered into the cupboards and pans with the dignity of a priestess; she went to the coal-cellar and portioned out the coals for the day's consumption, and then counted the potatoes for dinner.

Gertrude, accustomed to liberal housekeeping, was astonished to see everything put under lock and key, even to the crusts of bread left from the morning's breakfast.

"It is in this department, my dear Gertrude, that economy may be best shown. A lady who is judicious in the management of her kitchen may make fifty pounds go as far as a hundred would go in the hands of others. Always have something to show for your money."

Gertrude observed that the sides of the kitchen-floor were curiously speckled with pipe-clay to imitate marble.

"Ah!" said Mrs. Donnelly, complacently, "that is an idea of my own. I tell the girl when she has done her work that she may amuse herself by marbling the floor; it has a pretty effect, and is a nice little employment for her."

"Does she like to do it?" asked Gertrude, simply. She was again unlucky in her question.

"Persons in our class never ask servants what they like," replied her mother-in-law, loftily, and turned away to give orders for dinner.

CHAPTER X.

THE domestic affairs being despatched, Mrs. Donnelly proceeded to her room to dress for receiving company, and in due time reappeared, all bland and smiling, in a handsome flowered-silk gown and a stately turban, with the brooch which contained the likeness of the departed admiral, in full uniform, reposing upon her matronly bosom; while her bony fingers were adorned with sundry large ancestral-looking rings of some value.

Miss Sophia had in the meanwhile arranged the room to its best advantage, and it certainly looked much more comfortable than on the previous day. The sofa and chairs were uncovered; sundry cushions covered with old brocade were displayed. A flagree card-box and some old-fashioned silver toys were laid out where they could best be seen; a screen, worked in coloured silks by Miss Sophia herself, had been placed in an advantageous perspective; the book of heraldry was of course in full sight, and Miss Sophia, in a pea-green lustre, sat before a work-box in the form of a cottage, working the Donnelly crest (a wild-cat rampant with long whiskers proper), in its lawful colours, on a kettle-holder. Gertrude seated herself, and began to embroider a muslin flounce with an elaborate pattern of sprigs and eyelet-holes.

“Mamma,” said Miss Sophia, “I thought that Mrs. Augustus had gone up to dress when you went. We shall have a host of callers this morning; I dare say Lady Elrington will be in town to-day, and she never comes without paying us a visit.”

Gertrude looked up and coloured.

“It cannot be expected, my dear,” said the old lady, “that you should know the points of dress and etiquette which are required by the society in which we move. I ought to have told you what to do; but there is yet time for you to put on any little simple dress, not quite so *matiné* as the one you wear.

Gertrude felt extremely annoyed at the tone of both the ladies; but she rose without speaking to do her mother-in-law’s bidding. As she left the room she heard Miss Sophia say—

“I hope she will not make herself look like a bar-maid.”

When Gertrude returned she found several visitors seated in the drawing-room, to whom the old lady formally presented her, saying, with much dignity, “My daughter-in-law, Mrs. Augustus Donnelly.”

Fresh visitors followed in quick succession—for the arrival of the “bride” the previous day had already been reported all over the town, and everybody came to see what she was like; the most contradictory reports were afloat concerning the young lady whom Mr. Augustus Donnelly had married. The visitors chiefly consisted of the wives and daughters of professional men, for Springfield being an assize town, lawyers and physicians made the staple of the genteel portion of the population. There were a few widows of good family with narrow jointures, and one or two members of families of some consideration in the neighbourhood, who came with great *éclat* in their carriages. Altogether the Donnellys had not held such a brilliant levee for many months. The conversation turned upon general news,

scandal, and the concerns of their neighbours generally. Gertrude was struck with the similarity of all she heard with the daily occurrences of Dunnington, but then she had the comfort of knowing that she was admitted to sit in a highly select society, and that everybody she saw would certainly have felt insulted had they known they were in company with an inn-keeper's daughter.

Mrs. Donnelly was detailing, with great emphasis, the shameful ingratitude of Mrs. Pelly's cook, who had refused to delay her marriage with the butcher until Christmas to oblige her mistress—when she was interrupted by the announcement of Lady Elrington—*the* grand person in the neighbourhood!

A thin cross-looking old lady, dressed in a style of many years back, came tottering into the room on an ebony crutch stick. Mrs. Donnelly and her daughter received her with great *empressement*, and she was placed in an easy chair beside the fire. Gertrude was not presented to her, but the quick restless eye of the old lady soon discovered her.

“Who is that?” she asked, tapping her snuff-box—“a visitor?”

“That is my daughter-in-law; the young person with whom my poor dear enthusiastic Augustus ran away. They came from the north yesterday with Lord Southend. Augustus had business in London, and we prevailed upon him to leave his young wife with us for a little time. I had great difficulty, I assure you, for it is a most romantic attachment on both sides.”

“That is all as it should be,” said the old lady. “She is a pretty young creature, and has begun her cares early. Of what family is she?”

Mrs. Donnelly felt this to be a most impertinent question, but

Lady Elrington was a privileged person, and besides Mrs. Donnelly's chief objection was, that she could not answer it with satisfaction. Had Gertrude been a member of a noble family she would have volunteered the information; as it was, she replied with an air of reserve: "My son met with Miss Morley at Palace House, where she was on a visit to Miss Mellish. She comes, I believe, from one of the midland counties; she is in great disgrace with her own family, and I have not liked to distress her with enquiries." Lady Elrington did not trouble herself to listen to Mrs. Donnelly, but beckoning Gertrude to come and sit beside her, she began a skilful cross-examination.

Mrs. Donnelly and Miss Sophia were in a fever of anxiety lest the fatal fact of the "Mettingham Arms" should be elicited, for Lady Elrington was an inveterate gossip, and seldom failed to ferret out anything she wished to ascertain about her neighbours. Poor Gertrude was sadly embarrassed; she felt more acutely than ever the disgrace of coming out of an inn, her morbid susceptibility on that point having become exaggerated by the twenty-four hours she had passed under her mother-in-law's roof. She had not the hardihood necessary to deny, nor the moral courage to assert the fact; she felt inclined to cry, and it would no doubt have ended in that, if Mrs. Donnelly had not come to her rescue with a piece of news which she had boldly improvised for the occasion.

"Have you heard that young Frederick Hindmarsh is going to marry old Mrs. Ulverstone? He declares as a reason that he is tired of going to law with her, and will try if going to church will answer any better; but they are keeping it a great secret."

"Godness gracious! you do not mean to tell me that for a

fact?" said the old lady, relinquishing Gertrude and turning briskly round to Mrs. Donnelly.

"Indeed I do," replied the unabashed matron. "My cook had it from the Hindmarsh's coachman, and it is my opinion that many would do a more desperate thing to keep a fine slice of an estate in the family."

"Well! what will the world come to? It is a disgrace to society! Why, she is old enough to be his great-grandmother!"

There was, as everybody well knew, a deadly feud between Lady Elrington and Mrs. Ulverstone. Mrs. Donnelly had effectually diverted her attention from Gertrude. After a few more exclamations, Lady Elrington luckily heard one of her horses cough—a sound to which she was nervously alive. She rose briskly to her feet, saying, "Why did you not tell me all this before? I must go now, for 'Bob' is coughing; but mind you collect all the information you can about this match, and tell me everything;" and with hasty adieus she departed, to the great relief of all the three ladies.

This was the last of their visitors, and the performance being now concluded, everthing about the house subsided to its ordinary condition. The boy retired into his old livery—Mrs. Donnelly mounted the black dress which she was in the process of "wearing out"—Miss Sophia carefully covered up the drawing-room furniture, removing the small objects which adorned it, and then exchanged her pea-green lustre for the dyed silk she usually wore in the house of an afternoon. They met again in the little breakfast-room to dine, as well as they could, on Mrs. Donnelly's household fare.

When the cloth was removed, and the door shut upon the footboy, Mrs. Donnelly, who was very particular "not to speak of anything before the servants" (which, however, did not

hinder them from knowing everything that passed in the parlour), turned to Gertrude, with an air that would have become the mother of the Gracchi, and said—

“I do not doubt, my dear, but that you suffered as much as ourselves during your interview this morning with Lady Elington. Her curiosity was not unnatural, and I, as the mother of your husband, wish to be informed more fully about the connexion my son so hastily formed. I must know all, in order to decide what to tell our friends, when they inquire to whom Augustus Donnelly is married.”

“I don't think we have many relations,” said Gertrude, “and I have heard my mother say that it was a great comfort when married people had no relations to interfere with them, and that she and my father had lived happily for that very reason. I believe my grandfather was farm-servant to Squire Clifden for many years, who set him up in a little road-side inn, and let him some land, and he made a great deal of money for one in his situation. My father has always boasted that he has been lucky in the world—my mother's father was a farmer.”

“Many of our old English families have fallen into the rank of yeomen,” observed Miss Sophia, “from becoming impoverished by the Crusades and the Civil Wars—some of those yeoman families can show a clear genealogy for more than five hundred years.”

“I wish we could,” said Gertrude, humbly; but I never heard that we belonged to anybody.”

“Have you no relations whom we might own without a blush?” rejoined Miss Sophia.

“My father and my mother are the best off in the world of all their relations. There was an aunt of my mother's, who used to take in sewing—she had been a housemaid in some gen-

tleman's family; and my father had an only brother, who went to sea, where he was lost."

"It is altogether a most disastrous connexion," said Miss Sophia, in a tone of despair. "I do not see what we can do better than be extremely grieved about it, and treat it as the misfortune which it really is. Augustus ought to have remembered what was due to his family—it will be the ruin of all his prospects in life; and it is quite enough to exclude us from good society. We cannot insult our friends by forcing them to accept Gertrude; and I think we must decline visiting while she remains with us."

"My daughter is a fanatic about gentle blood," said Mrs. Donnelly. "She sees the evil of this connexion in an exaggerated light. I confess that, with me, good character is the first requisite; and if you prove well conducted and well disposed, I trust I have too much the feelings of a Christian and a gentlewoman to visit upon your head the misfortune of your lowly birth. For our own sakes we shall speak of you as little as possible; and if you go into society with us, remember that you have no claims of your own to such a distinction, and never forget that you have been raised from your proper station by your husband's generosity. It is as well, perhaps, that your own family have cast you off; for, of course, there could be no association between us and them."

"Thou intend to allow her to visit with us?" said Miss Sophia, discontentedly.

"Yes, my love. She is known to be under our roof. Some of our friends have already seen her. As the wife of Augustus, she will be noticed out of respect to us. When Sir John Matching ran away from home, and married an obscure young woman, whose family was even more objectionable than Ger-

trude's, his mother took her by the hand. I recollect her saying to me, with tears in her eyes,—‘Mrs. Donnelly, I would give all my jointure that the girl were dead; but it is bad policy to tread down our own connexions.’ Poor woman! it nearly broke her heart. Many and many a time she came to weep over her griefs with me. I was her dearest friend.”

“There ought to be a law making such marriages invalid,” said Miss Sophia, with a spiteful look at Gertrude.

Gertrude's tears were by this time falling fast—humiliated, helpless, and miserable, she could not defend herself against the contumely heaped upon her. She rose to take refuge in her own room, saying, between her sobs, “I hope Augustus will soon have a home to take me to—I would never have married him if I had thought it would come to this.”

“Poor young creature!” said Mrs. Donnelly. “She seems acutely sensible of her unfortunate origin. I am sorry for her.”

“I can feel no sympathy for sorrow which people like her bring upon themselves by intruding where they have no right. She seems to be a most ill-regulated young woman. I wonder how Augustus could become so infatuated with her.”

Poor Gertrude, after crying till she could cry no longer, sat down and wrote an indignant letter to her husband, entreating him to send for her directly, “as she neither could nor would put up with such insulting treatment.” When it was finished, a most unexpected difficulty presented itself;—she did not know how to address it. Augustus had left her no direction!

She was in this dilemma when she was summoned to tea. There was a dull and sullen respite to her annoyances; no one spoke. Mrs. Donnelly told no more histories of her triumphs at the Viceregal Court; Miss Sophia was engrossed in her

work, and Gertrude in her own thoughts. She was meditating a bold resolve how to speak to her mother-in-law about her board and lodging. This she effected with an address of which she had believed herself not capable.

Mrs. Donnelly, who feared she had allowed the moment for making a bargain to escape, was restored to a comfortable frame of mind by the prospect of having ten additional shillings a-week to go upon for house-keeping. As Gertrude was an inevitable misfortune to the family, she felt this as a small consolation, and she wished her daughter-in-law good night with something of the blandness with which she treated the world in general.

CHAPTER XI.

PEOPLE who will not bear a little will be obliged in the end to bear a great deal. Gertrude did not know this aphorism, but she was in the course of working out the truth of it by painful and practical experience.

She had been unhappy at home because she had a disgust to the natural duties entailed upon her there. For this her mother was in some degree to blame, by the unsuitable and showy education she had given her daughter. But everybody must bear in their own persons the results of their own doings, lucky if their own follies are not complicated and aggravated by the misdoings of others. Nature rigidly exacts natural effects from their legitimate causes, without inquiring who is to blame; therefore, making excuses, and laying the fault on others (although it may be a soothing process to human nature), is of no avail, except as a cordial to the self-love that would otherwise be too mortally wounded.

To release herself from the annoyances of home, Gertrude had eloped with and married Mr. Augustus Donnelly, whom she scarcely knew, and whom she did not love at all, whereby she mortgaged her whole future life, incurred difficulties, duties, and responsibilities of the most serious nature. That whole future life, supposing her to have become possessed of wisdom and

patience by special miracle, would only have enabled her to struggle till death to correct the one great cardinal mistake she had made on starting, without ever being able to do so. For it is to be observed, that in all matters of life and morals, a thousand small things are *not* equivalent to one great thing, however different the case may be in arithmetic.

It is doubtless very pathetic to see amiable persons meritoriously struggling against the consequence of some bygone folly; but if people could once for all convince themselves that Nature never indulges in pathetic emotions, but sternly executes her own laws, they would perhaps be more careful how they infringed them.

To return, however, to Gertrude.

Several days passed, during which she heard nothing from Augustus, and she did not like to ask either Mrs. Donnelly or Miss Sophia for his address, lest they should fancy she wished to complain. In the meanwhile she had "appeared at church"—which in a country place is equivalent to being presented at Court—and numerous invitations to social tea drinkings and evening parties, together with a few set dinner parties, had followed. Mrs. Donnelly had no reason to complain that her acquaintance and friends were remiss in their attentions. But all the consoling influence of this neighbourly consideration was blunted, not to say embittered, by the consciousness that Gertrude was not, and never could or would be, a credit to the family; whilst Miss Sophia was further aggravated by seeing her plebeian sister-in-law not only take precedence of her, but enjoy a great deal more attention and popularity than had ever fallen to her own lot. Gertrude was a novelty, and with her graceful appearance, pleasing manners, and accomplishments (which were much rarer in those days even in respectable

society than they are now), she had a great success : if her confidence in herself had not been so mercilessly trodden down at home, she might have become a leader in the set to which she was now introduced. But her triumphs abroad were bitterly expiated at home.

It was in vain that Gertrude endeavoured by her submissive behaviour, and by all manner of little ingratiating ways, to propitiate her contemptuous relatives. One-tenth part of this forbearance and gentleness, if it had been exerted at home towards her own parents, would not only have gladdened their hearts, but would have sufficed to turn away all the more practical and obvious objections to her position. As it was, they wasted their sweetness on the desert air—so far as her august mother and sister-in-law were concerned.

It was in vain that she painted a velvet cushion for the book of heraldry, and presented Miss Sophia with an elaborately worked set of India muslin robings. Equally in vain was it that she made a beautiful filagree tea-caddy for Mrs. Donnelly, with the observation that it was the pattern of one which the Duchess of Leith had given to Miss Mellish. It only provoked a disconsolate regret that Gertrude's connexion with the aristocracy should be of so shadowy a nature. All her attempts at conciliation were treated as mere matters of course—a tribute from her inferiority to which they were entitled.

People who live in a constant strain to catch hold of a rank in life above their natural standing, cannot afford to indulge in any kind-heartedness ; they are victims to a social strappado—they have nothing solid to stand upon, and are painfully suspended from above. A weight like Gertrude attached to the Donnelly pretensions was a cruel aggravation of their difficulties. No wonder Mrs. Donnelly's natural blandness of demeanour failed at such a stretch,

“I wonder,” said Miss Sophia, sneeringly, “that you have never thought it worth while to keep up your acquaintance with this Miss Mellish. If she invited you to stay with her under your former objectionable circumstances, she would be more likely, I should think, to do so now that they exist no longer, and you are become a member of respectable society.”

“I wrote to Miss Mellish whilst we were in the north,” replied Gertrude, meekly, “but her father returned the letter unopened, and requested me not to write again. I felt it a good deal, but I know it was not her doing.”

“No doubt Mr. Mellish felt like a father,” said Mrs. Donnelly, sentimentally. “He, with his old family descent, would be keenly alive to the desecration of an unequal alliance, and I own that I feel obliged to him for his sympathy with us.”

“But,” persisted Miss Sophia, “now that we have so generously received you, and countenanced you, he need not feel the objection that was quite natural, and even laudable, whilst you were a mere adventuress, and it was doubtful even whether your marriage would be valid. My opinion is, that you should write again to Miss Mellish, and enclose it in an humble letter to her father representing this.”

“It would be of no avail,” replied Gertrude, sadly; “for Mr. Mellish declared that it was the want of respect I had shown towards my own parents which had decided him thus to break off my acquaintance with his daughter. Besides,” added she, with more spirit than she had hitherto shown, “I would not write again under any circumstances, after he had once said he did not choose his daughter to continue the acquaintance.”

“Then I must say,” rejoined Miss Sophia, with emphasis, “that you show wonderfully little idea of what you owe to *us*, and extreme indifference to the only compensation in your power

for the disgrace you have brought upon us. But I do not wonder at the course Mr. Mellish has pursued, for you are the very last person with whom I would desire a sister or relative of mine to associate. It is our great and lamentable misfortune that the law of the land has given you the right to bear our name."

Miss Sophia petulantly opened the book of heraldry, and began to work at an illuminated index—an idea that she had picked up at Lady Elrington's, where they had all dined the preceding week. She did not deign to speak to Gertrude again for the remainder of that day.

CHAPTER XII.

WE ought to have stated that Gertrude received several letters from her husband during this period: the first had come about a week after his departure. They were all to much the same purport, viz., that he adored her, and only endured his life in the hope of being soon re-united to her; but that, as he had not yet obtained the situation, he could not send for her. He, however, seemed to be finding many distractions, from his incidental mention of races, excursions, water-parties, &c.

In his later letters he told her that he had something in prospect, that Southend was moving heaven and earth in his favour, and that there was no doubt that he would have something given to him soon; adding, with exquisite fatuity, "but, of course, unless it is something worth having, I shall refuse to accept it."

In conclusion, he always begged Gertrude to take care of herself, and to stint herself in nothing. But he did not send her any money, and her pecuniary resources were rapidly dwindling away under the payment of her weekly stipend, and frequent small loans to her mother-in-law, which were never repaid; to say nothing of various petty expenses to which she was subjected.

When she had inhabited this domestic purgatory for about

two months, Gertrude one fine morning received a letter bearing a large handsome official seal. This time it was a letter worth its postage! It announced that the incomparable Augustus had at length received a place adequate to his merits—a delightful “situation under government” with a salary of six hundred pounds a-year, and many perquisites, whilst the duties were nothing to speak of. The letter was full of expressions of delight at the prospect of being re-united to his adored Gertrude, whom he entreated to come to him without delay. A postscript was added, which was characteristic enough of the man :

“If you want money, let me know, and I will send you some.

“Lord Southend has agreed to let us have a house of his in Queen Square, rent free : and I am busy getting it ready for you. It has been a long while empty, and would be all the better for paint and whitewash ; but it will serve our purpose till something else offers.”

The fact was, that Augustus had been on the point of enclosing Gertrude a five-pound note, but on second thoughts he had recollected that he was going to Tunbridge with Lord Southend and a few others, and that the money would be very handy. So he altered the enclosure he was about to make for the postscript we have recorded. The passage about the house was quite true ; but he intended Gertrude to infer that he was investing his money in furniture, which was *not* true, for he was ordering it in upon credit.

The receipt of this letter changed at once the aspect of Gertrude's fortune. The news it contained made a pleasant excitement, and gratified the maternal pride of Mrs. Donnelly's heart and revived her hopes. Augustus had received a “government situation ;” he was amongst people who appreciated his merits ; he would, after all, restore the fortunes of his family, and it

would be charming to be invited to make her home of his house in London!

As these ideas passed through her mind, she wished that she had not been quite so parsimonious in her housekeeping, nor so severe in her strictures upon her son's wife, of whose power to prevent the realisation of her London dreams she became suddenly aware.

Under the combined influence of all these motives, she grew expansive and affectionate towards her "dear Gertrude," as she called her twice in a quarter of an hour.

As to Miss Sophia, to do her justice, it must be confessed that she did not become more amiable in the least; in fact, she was suffering under such strong spasms of envy and jealousy, that amiability would have been a very uncommon symptom.

London was the subject of Miss Sophia's deepest thoughts by day and night; to pass "a season in London" had been the great object of her desire all her life—at least ever since she had arrived at years to know all the meaning contained in the phrase, and it was a very long time since she had acquired this knowledge. She believed herself peculiarly formed to shine in society, and she made no doubt of achieving great triumphs, and forming an alliance worthy of her illustrious name and descent, if she had a career once opened to her talents. Now when, by a stroke of good fortune, such a consummation was brought within sight—almost within her reach—she, Sophia Donnelly, by some unaccountable mistake, was left to vegetate in the genteel obscurity of a country town; whilst Gertrude, who had no claims, who was scarcely good enough to be her lady's maid, was called from her very side to live in the paradise of London, and preside over an establishment of her own!

It was enough to break her heart, and in those days of tight lacing it did make her feel very poorly indeed.

"Upon my word you are an extremely fortunate young woman," said she, in a tone impossible to describe; and with a look of lofty detestation at Gertrude, she swept out of the room.

Gertrude was, however, too enchanted at the prospect of her liberation to care either for the civilities of her mother-in-law or for the spite of her sister. Her newly-announced prosperity made her tolerant; she bore no malice for past affronts—she thought only how she might the soonest leave her present abode.

She wrote to Augustus telling him how happy his letter had made her, and modestly requesting him to send her a little money, explaining how it happened that she had spent her own.

Augustus bestowed a very unfilial epithet upon his mother; but as he had now become as impatient to see Gertrude again as a spoiled child for a promised toy, he wasted no time in unprofitable words. The money he had originally intended to send her had been nearly spent, and the first instalment of his salary was not due—but this did not materially embarrass him, for borrowing money seemed quite as natural as to have it lawfully belong to him. He only paused to think which of his friends he had not applied to for the longest period, and went to him. The sun of his success had not yet set. His friend consented to lend him the means of sending for his wife, on the promise that he should be repaid the first quarter day. Augustus had many similar engagements to meet, but he firmly believed in the mysterious and unlimited powers of his "salary," and he did not understand the laws of arithmetic.

Part of the money he immediately despatched to Gertrude,

and strolling along after putting the letter in the post he saw a shawl that took his fancy, and he bought it as a surprise for Gertrude on her arrival.

The house which Lord Southend had placed at the disposal of his friend was a large gloomy mansion. It had been long untenanted, and was much too large for them, to say nothing of its being out of repair; but Augustus did not much trouble himself about the dilapidations that were out of sight. The first floor was in pretty good condition, and it was all they would need. He went to a broker, and desiring him to furnish the first floor, a garret, and kitchen, in the best style, he philosophically abandoned the remainder of the dwelling.

Female eyes might have seen many deficiencies, but when the rooms had been well scoured, and the walls cleaned, and the venerable cobwebs removed which had hung on them so long with immunity, and the broker had laid down the carpets, and brought in a supply of furniture, which, though old and of various fashions, had still a certain air of good society lingering about the various articles; and when the windows were cleaned, and the daylight could find its way through the heavy and somewhat worm-eaten frames, the improvement was so great that Augustus thought the place a perfect paradise, and Lord Southend, who occasionally strolled in to see how Augustus was getting on, said, "that he had no idea the old ruin could have been made so pleasant," and declared his intention of coming very often to see him when he was settled.

Lord Southend was very rich, and very good-natured, but it was with a half disdainful, impassive generosity, that took no note of what it did, or what it gave. Many people lived in his prosperity, like mites in a cheese, and he hardly knew it. But he had a real liking for Augustus, he had taken a good deal of

trouble to get him placed in his situation, and had conferred many benefits on him. Originally he had liked Augustus, because he amused him; but gradually he had grown to feel attached to him, because he was the work of his own hands. Augustus was gentlemanlike, also he was an agreeable companion; he was easy to help, and had the rare merit of accepting favours gracefully—therein lay his chief talent. In spite of his propensity to borrow money, and to expect his friends to make his fortune, he was never felt as the burden which necessitous people nearly always are to those on whom they hang. He was not a bore; he had many friends who rather liked to help him; but Lord Southend was the sheet-anchor of his fortune.

At length all the preparations were completed. The establishment consisted of a middle-aged, respectable female servant, recommended by the housekeeper at Southend House, and a boy who cleaned the knives and shoes, and brushed the clothes of Augustus, and wore the species of livery which it had pleased the tailor to invent for him.

Augustus, who had never enjoyed anything in his life so much as furnishing this house, was as impatient as a child for Gertrude to arrive, that she might see all that had been done.

Gertrude did not delay the preparations for her departure. Thanks to the newly developed benevolence of her mother-in-law, the last days of her sojourn were much pleasanter than the first. The prospect of getting rid of an unwelcome guest always stimulates one's almost extinct sentiment of hospitality into a vivacity that is quite wonderful.

Mrs. Donnelly not only assisted Gertrude in her packing, but she made her a present of an old naval trunk that had belonged to her husband, with the inevitable Donnelly arms

painted on the lid. Also, by way of setting her up in house-keeping, she gave her a pair of scales—a cookery book, entitled “Frugality and Elegance”—some pickles, made on a principle of her own, that is to say, with salt and water, instead of vinegar, and some preserves made with molasses instead of sugar, and much good advice how to behave as became a Donnelly. She was not bad at heart, this old lady. If she had been rich, or even easy in her circumstances, she would have been very kind in her way to all who would have allowed her family pretensions; but her fortune was very threadbare, she lived in a constant struggle for ways and means to keep “cloth of gold and cloth of fricze” together; and all her energies were needed to take care of herself and her daughter.

As to Miss Sophia, when she came to reflection she became, if not gracious, at least less insolent, and even went so far as to present Gertrude with a fan, by way at once of atonement and propitiation.

At length the day of her departure came, and Gertrude took her place in the mail which was to carry her to London.

Augustus was waiting for her when the coach stopped at the end of the journey. He was transported with delight, and wondered more than ever how he had endured living apart from her so long. Gertrude on her side was very glad to see him again; and when they arrived at the house, and she saw it looking so cheerful, with good fires in all the rooms, and lighted up as if for an illumination, and the table which he had laid for supper with his own hands—it was such a contrast to all she had left behind, that she felt a regard for her husband she had never felt before.

Tired as she was with her long journey, Augustus made her go over the rooms, and pointed out all their charming pecu-

liarities; whilst Gertrude praised everything, and found everything perfect. Until that moment she did not know how very miserable she had been; and she felt like one in a dream, or rather without knowing whether the past or the present were the reality.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE next morning rose in a London fog, and the glowing cheerfulness of the previous evening was quenched in the thick yellow clammy atmosphere which penetrated every corner of the house and every pore of the skin. The bed-room grate was filled with the ashes of the burned out fire, and the floor was encumbered with open trunks, the contents of which were strewn about in every direction; but Gertrude had too much cause of thankfulness within her heart to feel her spirits depressed by the thickest and heaviest fog which ever perplexed the streets. She dressed herself in high spirits, and the breakfast passed over as pleasantly as the supper had done—indeed, the fog was a source of wonder to her, and she made her husband “laugh consumedly” by her astonishment at such a natural phenomenon.

Augustus must have had a vague notion that his wife had not been happy under his paternal roof; but as he did not want the trouble of knowing disagreeable details, if any there were, he contented himself with asking her carelessly how she got along with his mother and sister.

Gertrude felt too happy to care about past grievances; and it was much to her credit that, instead of trying to excite his

sympathy, she replied quietly, "Oh! pretty well, except sometimes"—and then began to talk of something else.

After breakfast she had to see the house again; it did not look to great advantage in the fog—but Gertrude was determined to be pleased, and only begged him to lock the doors of the empty rooms, "that they might not harbour thieves!" Then she descended into the kitchen—her own kitchen! To all women—young married women especially—the "*kitchen*" has a deeper sound of pride and sovereignty than the drawing-room. She ordered dinner for the first time in her own house, and did her best to dazzle the eyes of the respectable, but somewhat consequential, servant, by her display of housekeeping wisdom, which, of course, did not impose upon her in the least; but the good looks and gentle manners of Gertrude propitiated her good-will, though, naturally, she much preferred "the master," whom she had already pronounced to be a "real gentleman." She thought Gertrude "very young to have the care of a house," and prophesied that "she was sure to be imposed upon in London; but she was a nice little body, who gave herself no airs, and who had been used to liberal ways."

The remainder of the morning was occupied in unpacking and in establishing herself AT HOME. Augustus forgot all about the office and his own business there, to remain at home with Gertrude, and help her in her arrangements. He was as full of spirits as a schoolboy; the charm of having "a house of his own" had already begun to work. He developed the most wonderful talent as a carpenter; he knocked up a set of shelves for the "store-room," and transferred two old boxes into beautiful foot-stools. There was no end to the genius he showed, and it all was accompanied by the most beautiful schemes for making Gertrude "the happiest woman in the world." She

was to have "everything she wished for;" and encouraged to think of everything she would like best!

In the afternoon the fog cleared off, and one of the friends of Augustus called, curious to see what Gertrude was like, but ostensibly to bring tickets for the theatre.

Gertrude had never seen a play in her life, and was half wild with delight at the prospect of going to one. Her unbounded and unsophisticated admiration of all she saw greatly amused her two companions.

Gertrude was not remarkably clever, but she was natural and unpretending, and extremely good-tempered, which is always a stock-in-trade of agreeableness sufficient to make a woman very popular with nine out of every ten people she meets; added to this, there was with Gertrude a certain straightforward way of saying and doing everything that gave an impress of character and piquancy to what might otherwise have been insipid.

The consequence was that Gertrude became a great favourite with all her husband's friends.

Gertrude had often thought of her mother: the recollection of her own neglect and disobedience lay an unacknowledged weight upon her heart, and had aggravated all her sufferings under Mrs. Donnelly. Still she was not come to her right mind; and she had delayed writing to Mrs. Slocum (the only channel ever left open) until she could send news of herself which should command the respect and envy of the Misses Slocum. Her mother's anxiety was of secondary importance compared with what "these Slocums" would think of her position! Now, however, that she was installed in a house of her own, and her husband had a "situation under government," her vanity raised no more obstacles, and her first employment

was to write her mother a long letter, under cover to Mrs. Slocum.

There ensued a few very happy months in the life of Gertrude.

Augustus was fond of his wife, and very proud of her, and with husbands, their estimation of their wives goes a great deal by the degree of pride they are able to take in them.

He spent all his time at home, when not at his business, and knew no pleasure but that of taking her about to see all the sights of London: he went nowhere without her, and bid fair to become quite a domestic character.

Careless as had been his own habits, he showed discretion in the associates he introduced to his wife. They were mostly young men, like himself, for during his bachelor-life he had not had occasion to cultivate female society; but they all treated Gertrude with great respect, and showed her much kindness in many ways.

She made the house very pleasant, and those who had the *entrée* to it liked to go there. It certainly was a questionable position for a young woman to be placed in; but Gertrude had never been brought up in society, and she did not know but what it was the most natural thing in the world for her husband to bring his bachelor-friends home. She never dreamed that it was possible for a "married woman" to flirt, or to endeavour to attract any man's attention except her husband's. She had a vague idea that, sooner or later, every woman, "after she was married," settled down into something like her mother, or old Mrs. Slocum. Meanwhile, she conducted herself with a certain unconcious prudence, an instinctive delicacy and modesty, that effectually kept her from any practical danger that might have arisen from her exposed position. However essential

an "accomplished seducer" or an "insidious villain" may be to novels, still many women pass through life as entirely unmolested by them as by the wild beasts in Wombwell's menagerie. Gertrude, happily, was ignorant of their existence. The real danger that beset both her and her husband was the prosaic one of running into debt, and spending a great deal more money than they could afford.

The charming dinners and little suppers, which they gave abundantly, and their excursions and parties to the Play, ran away with all the salary due to Augustus for the first quarter; and, of course, the debts previously contracted had to stand over for their hope of liquidation to the next quarter-day. The loans were all luckily from friends who did not press for payment, and the chief creditor was the broker from whom the furniture had been hired, and he was pacified by a small instalment and a promissory note. They had three more months before them.

But this pleasant state of things came to an end, and, like many other misfortunes, arrived in the disguise of something highly fortunate.

CHAPTER XIV.

WHEN Lord Southend's mother arrived in London for the season, her son told her the history of Augustus and his wife, and entreated her notice and protection for Gertrude.

Old Lady Southend was, in her way, as proud of her rank and birth as Mrs. Donnelly herself; and much as she loved her son, would sooner have seen him dead than the victim of a *mésalliance*; but she was too lofty and too self-sustained to need any support for her pretensions from external aid. She had no fear of compromising her dignity by admitting persons of a lower station into her society, if she happened to like them. She never forgot that she was "Lady Southend;" and whatever she chose to do was right in her own eyes. She was, moreover, though abundantly whimsical and impertinent, rather kind-hearted than otherwise, and did not want for good sense.

When her son made his petition in behalf of Gertrude, she made no difficulty; she liked to know who and what the people were with whom her son frequented, but she very sensibly told him that he was doing his present *protégés* no real kindness in introducing them to society above their ways and means. "However," she added, "that is their concern; you shall never make a request to me in vain. I will see the wife; and if she is inoffensive, and not vulgar, I will try what I can do with her.

Let her call on me to-morrow at twelve o'clock." This message was duly conveyed, and received by Augustus and Gertrude with becoming gratitude.

The next morning Gertrude dressed herself with great care. At her earnest request Augustus stopped at home to give his opinion and advice as to what she should wear. When her toilet was completed, he declared she looked like an angel, and handed her into the glass coach which he had been to fetch himself.

Gertrude felt terribly nervous when she was ushered into the old lady's dressing-room; but the visit passed over better than she expected. Lady Southend understood all about her at a glance; but she was pleased with her appearance, and with her unaffected manner of replying to all the questions she was asked. After an audience of half-an-hour Gertrude was graciously dismissed.

Augustus was waiting to receive her on her return home.

"Well, and how did you get on?" he asked, impatiently.

"Very well, indeed. She is as plain as possible in all her ways, and I felt as much at my ease as if I had known her all my life. I wonder why she is said to be so proud; she did not show herself so to me. I don't think she is the grand court lady your mother is, for example."

"You see my mother feels herself obliged to keep up her dignity, or else people would not know who she is; while everybody knows that her ladyship is her ladyship."

Shortly afterwards Gertrude and Augustus received an invitation to an assembly at Southend House, which involved the necessity of a new dress for Gertrude, and a new waistcoat, of the most expensive fashion, for Augustus, and a great expenditure for a coach to take them and bring them back.

The assembly was large and dull. Gertrude was acquainted with no one. Lady Southend was too busy to pay much attention to her. Lord Southend spoke to her when she came in, and presented a partner to her, but he himself was obliged to be elsewhere. Augustus was at a card-table, playing much higher than he ought to have done; and Gertrude, when the dance was over, sat down in a distant corner between two fat old ladies covered with diamonds. They looked at her as though surprised at her intrusion, but preserved a lofty silence. Gertrude ventured a timid observation; but instead of a reply she obtained a look which effectually silenced her, and left the feeling that she had committed some unpardonable breach of politeness.

She sat looking at the moving brilliant crowd before her,—looking at the rooms and the decorations,—repeating to herself, to fix it as a fact upon her memory, which was not hereafter to be denied, that she was at “Southend House,”—at “Lady Southend’s assembly,”—a member of the same company with Lords, Dukes, Countesses, and even Princesses for anything she knew to the contrary! She thought of Mrs. Donnelly and Miss Sophia; and in fancying to herself all that they would say and think if they could see her there, she disguised the dullness of the present moment, and the very little real satisfaction she enjoyed in this realisation of all her most ambitious dreams.

Our dreams and desires, when they seem to be the most completely realised, generally come to us with some essential element omitted, which makes them consequently fall very flat and savourless. Gertrude’s secret day-dreams had been to mix in good society,—to go to the balls and parties of persons of real quality and distinction. Here she was, in the midst of a party of the *élite* of the land! She was in the very best society

possible, and yet she found it dull, and she was doing anything but enjoying herself. She felt overlooked and neglected, and neglect is neglect; however extenuating the circumstances, the effect is equally unpleasant. Gertrude, in her reveries and air castles, had never contemplated such an accident!

At length Augustus came to seek her; the evening was at an end, it was time to go home. He looked flushed and vexed, he had lost a great deal of money, he had drunk more wine than he ought to have done, and had got into a dispute. With some difficulty they gained their coach; and wearied and dissatisfied with their *début* in fashionable life, they retired to rest almost without speaking to each other. Gertrude was only jaded, but Augustus was sulky.

In a day or two, however, the actual honour and glory of having spent an evening in such high society expanded in full bloom.

Gertrude took occasion to write to her august mother-in-law a full account of their visit, adding, for the benefit of Miss Sophia, a graphic description of the different dresses, the style in which the ladies wore their hair, not failing to celebrate with raptures the superb diamonds and other jewels which had flashed upon her eyes.

This letter was intended to be a sort of mild revenge for all the contumely which she had endured at the hands of the ladies to whom it was addressed. She knew it would be gall and wormwood to Miss Sophia, and she therefore added every detail she could recollect, speaking of it, at the same time, in a calm unexcited tone, as if the ordinary tenour of her life lay in the ranks of the aristocracy. She spoke familiarly of Lord Southend "sitting in her drawing-room and poking all the fire out of the grate," and added a variety of little incidents about the tickets

brought to her for the opera, and her unlimited command of boxes for the theatre.

She had to pay dearly for this little vengeance, though, to be sure, the event *must* have come sooner or later, but it certainly brought about the crisis much sooner than it would otherwise have occurred.

Mrs. Donnelly read the letter through with compressed lips, and then handed it to her daughter, only observing, "Upon my word, it will be well if that young woman's head be not turned at the rate she seems going on."

Miss Sophia read it, and burst fairly into tears, exclaiming between her sobs:—

"The mode in which she speaks of things and persons so much above her, is perfectly audacious! It is really too bad to see such advantages falling to the lot of a low creature who has disgraced our family, whilst WE, its natural representatives, are buried in this obscure hole, seeing no one, hearing nothing, and going nowhere. Really, ma'am, I do not see but that we have as good a right to live in London as Augustus and his precious wife!"

"Gently, my dear, gently," replied her mother. "You are such a dear impulsive creature! It is the dearest wish of my heart to see you in the metropolis, moving in the circle to which you were born, and admired as you ought to be; but leave me to manage with your brother. Unless we act with judgment, his wife will have influence enough with him to keep such a formidable rival as you would be at a distance. You must make your calls without me to day; you can excuse me to our friends on the plea of illness."

Miss Sophia suffered herself to be comforted, and departed on her round of morning calls, taking with her, however, Ger-

trude's letter, with which she failed not to edify her audience, and to impress upon them that her brother and his wife were persons of importance in the very best circles of society! Lady Southend's party did plenty of duty.

"How far a little candle shed its rays!
So shines a good deed in this naughty world."

CHAPTER XV.

ABOUT a fortnight after the foregoing incident, as Augustus and Gertrude were at breakfast, a letter arrived from Mrs. Donnelly to her son. She spoke pathetically of her "failing health," and her desire to procure better medical advice than their town afforded; she declared her intention of coming up to London, with Sophia, if she could succeed in letting her house for the term of her absence, and begged Augustus to inquire about lodgings for them.

"I tell you what," said Augustus, helping himself to a middle piece of buttered toast, and tossing the letter to Gertrude, "a capital idea has just struck me; there is room enough in this house for all of us without quarrelling; and if my mother were to let her house and to bring her furniture here, we might send this we are using back to the broker; we are paying a tremendous price for the use of it, I can tell you; the man sent in his bill again yesterday. It is a most extravagant way of going to work; I would never hire furniture again."

Poor Gertrude could only gasp out, "You surely do not mean your mother and sister to live with us here!"

"And why not, pray?"

"Oh, no, please not, dear Augustus, it will be so dreadful."

"If you will assign any good reason that it should not be as

I wish, I will attend to you; but you seem to have no idea of the necessity of economy, and to indulge in nothing but your own fancies."

"Indeed, I don't care how saving we are, and I will try to be so; but you do not know what it is to live with your mother, or you would not talk of having her to live with us."

This was the nearest approach to a complaint Gertrude had ever made; but it had no effect upon her husband, who just then was possessed solely by the idea of the wonderful advantage of having furniture without paying for it. He desired Gertrude "not to be foolish," and went off to his office, where, in the natural course of things, not having much to do, with the precipitancy of a procrastinating man, he wrote off to his mother proposing that she should bring her furniture to London, and that they should all live together."

CHAPTER XVI.

“A LETTER from London, ma'am ; elevenpence, if you please,” said Mrs. Donnelly's foot-boy, entering the breakfast-room with the missive in question on a silver waiter.

“Postage is very expensive,” said Miss Sophia, querulously ; “I hope it is not one of Gertrude's flimsy, vain letters, about her visits and grand parties at home and abroad. It is wonderful to see the audacity of that young woman ; she mixes in good society as though she had been born to it. She will bring Augustus to the *Gazette* for his foolish indulgence of all her whims.”

Mrs. Donnelly had been reading her letter, unheeding the pearls and diamonds which which were distilling from the lips of her fair daughter ; she now looked up and said, “What is it, my dear ? What has annoyed you ? Read this to comfort you, and tell me if I am not a good general where the interest of my darling Sophia is concerned.”

Miss Sophia read her brother's letter with a satisfaction that, in spite of her efforts, showed itself upon her countenance ; she was provoked at feeling so pleased.

“You observe,” said she, “that Gertrude does not appear in all this : depend upon it, she will do all in her power to hinder

our going to live in London. She hates us, of that I am convinced."

"No, my dear, to do Gertrude justice, she has never failed in the due respect she owes both to you and to me. I am inclined to think that, inexperienced as she is, she has got embarrassed amongst the details of housekeeping. A young creature out of the schoolroom, how should she know any better! The heart of poor Augustus was always in the right place; he would be glad to have his poor old mother to give an eye to his household affairs. I do not deny that it will be for his ultimate benefit, but I own I am pleased that he wishes us to share his home and his prosperity."

"And are we to be under the dominion of Gertrude?" asked Miss Sophia, sharply; "it will be more than I can endure with composure to see her at the head of the family, whilst you, ma'am, are to be made a mere cypher; for my part, I see little to rejoice at in the arrangement."

"Gently, my dear. Of course I am not going to leave my own peaceful and well loved home to live with two young people like Augustus and Gertrude without some distinct understanding of our relative position. You may depend upon it that I shall consult both your dignity and my own."

"When do you suppose we shall go?" said Miss Sophia abruptly, after a pause.

"It will take some time to arrange my affairs here, and we had better not seem too eager to agree to the proposal. Many things will have to be settled before we come to any definite conclusion; I shall, however, write to your brother by the next post."

Mrs. Donnelly piqued herself upon her powers of diction, and certainly it was not always easy to discover what she meant by

what she said. She wrote a letter to Augustus, dilating upon the charms of the town of Springfield, the beauty of the surrounding neighbourhood, the pleasant society, the extreme respect and esteem which she enjoyed, and the charm that everybody found in the conversation, manners, and elegant accomplishments of Miss Sophia; of the great convenience and spaciousness of her house (which was her own); of the small expense at which she was able to keep up an equality with the best families in the county—in fact, it was an elaborate essay on the blessings and comforts that surrounded the mother of Augustus, suggesting the question, what equivalent he could offer that she should leave all this paradise of advantages to live in noisy, dark, smoky London? She flattered his vanity as a man, praised his conduct as a son, enlarged on her own affection as a mother, and, in conclusion, regretted gently, but very gently, that a man like him should not have a wife in every respect worthy of him, and capable of appreciating him as he deserved.

The old lady, to do her justice, was quite sincere in her flattery—she candidly believed that her son Augustus and her daughter Sophia were peculiar specimens of human perfection; but the flattery, in this instance, was employed to carry a point upon which she had set her heart, and was not an overflow of maternal affection, as she intended Augustus to believe.

The letter despatched, she awaited the result, like a spider in her web, with confidence and composure. Poor Gertrude, in the meanwhile, was not inactive. The prospect of having her mother-in-law and sister-in-law for permanent inmates was too dreadful for her not to use all means to avert it. All the comfort of her future life was at stake. She divined that she should obtain nothing by appealing to her husband's justice or

to his affection, or to any quality the exercise of which entailed the smallest sacrifice of his own convenience. Lord Southend called in whilst she was disconsolately thinking what she should say to Augustus to persuade him not to make her so very miserable. He had always been very kind to Gertrude; he had a frank and cordial regard for her, and wondered how she could ever have been so much in love with his friend Augustus as to make a runaway match with him. Finding her this afternoon in low spirits, he good-naturedly endeavoured to find out the cause. Gertrude, with the impulsive straightforwardness which was the chief feature of her character, told him the terrible infliction that was impending.

Lord Southend felt very sorry for her, and was insensibly flattered by being so frankly taken into her confidence. He promised to talk to Augustus, and to dissuade him from his project. He exhorted Gertrude to keep up her spirits, and finally delivered the message he had brought from his mother, to the effect that she would call for Gertrude that evening to go to the theatre to see Mrs. Siddons.

This was very effectual distraction to her thoughts for the time being. Augustus came in—he was in high good humour—delighted to hear of the invitation. He was always pleased to have Gertrude noticed by Lady Southend, or by any one whom he considered a person of importance. Gertrude felt the advantage, and determined to use it.

Lady Southend called for her at the appointed time, and brought her back. Augustus was at home—he came to the door to receive Gertrude, and to make his bow to her ladyship—his vanity was gratified—and Gertrude shone with the reflected lustre of Lady Southend's favour. Gertrude's virtues had never produced half the effect of this visit to the theatre

with Lady Southend. Gertrude was not given to metaphysics, she accepted facts as she found them.

There was a bright fire, and a nice little supper all ready. After supper Mr. Augustus mixed himself a tumbler of whisky toddy—and Gertrude, feeling this to be a propitious moment, led the conversation to the projected introduction of Mrs. Donnelly into their household.

She told him of the life she had led with his mother, she described their “sitting for company,” and the domestic eclipse afterwards, the genteel card and supper parties, and the household fasts that succeeded; but she made it amusing rather than pathetic. She spoke also of the contumely to which she herself had been subjected—but she touched lightly on this, for Augustus had an idea of his mother’s dignity that was wonderful, and she had impressed Gertrude herself with the idea that she was the very type and ideal of a great lady—faith is a great solvent, the toughest and stubbornest *facts*—of contrary facts, melt under its influence like wax.

About his sister she was less reserved—there is a natural enmity between sisters-in-law—they always speak candidly of each other.

The result was, that by the time Mr. Augustus had come to the end of his second tumbler he saw matters in quite a different point of view to what they had appeared before.

“Well, my dear girl!” said he, rising, “you shall never be made miserable by me or mine—you are a good girl, and I am proud of you. You shall keep the money, and manage everything as you please. Lord Southend says you are the most prudent woman he knows.”

“Well, then, dear Augustus,” interrupted Gertrude, anxious

to bring him back to the main question, "you promise me that your mother shall not come to live with us?"

"You may set your mind at rest about that—I will write again to tell her we have changed our plans."

"Write again to her! Oh, Augustus, surely you have not written already without talking the matter over," said poor Gertrude, in dismay.

"Why, you see I had half-an-hour at the office to spare, and I thought it might as well be done at once as put off. I owed the old lady a letter, besides. I only sounded her upon the subject; but I will write again to-morrow, I promise, or you may do so yourself. My dear Gertrude, you are a sensible woman, and if every wife could talk to her husband as rationally as you do, there would be more happy marriages."

Gertrude was not altogether re-assured even by this compliment. She felt a misgiving as to the effect of her husband's letter; but it was clearly of no use to say more just then—so resolving that her first occupation the next day should be to write to her majestic mother-in-law, she lighted her bed candle and went up stairs.

CHAPTER XVII.

LETTERS took longer to travel in those days; Gertrude's letter crossed Mrs. Donnelly's. Mr. Augustus had already slightly relapsed from his faith in his wife's opinion; his mother's letter appealed to all his weak points; a fit of filial devotion came over him, and he thought it would be an admirable compromise to invite his mother and sister for a long visit.

"See, Gertrude," said he, "my mother seems to have as little wish to give up her house to live with us, as you can have that she should do so; read it for yourself. But I tell you what, we ought to invite the old lady and Sophia to come for a visit: I should be unnatural if I did not. I will write her an affectionate letter, and say we both hope to see them for as long as they can make it convenient—what do you say to that?"

Gertrude could have said a great deal; but she had the prudence to be silent. It was not "a time to speak."

Poor Gertrude, with her innocent stratagems, was no match for Mrs. Donnelly's determination. Fortune was against her too.

It happened (providentially, as Mrs. Donnelly deemed it; but quite the reverse, as Gertrude viewed the matter) that a lady of Mrs. Donnelly's acquaintance wrote at this time to inquire into the probability of success there would be for a first-rate Boarding-school for young ladies at Springfield.

Mrs. Donnelly immediately wrote to intimate that a first-rate Boarding-school was the one thing needed to put the finishing touch to the prosperity of Springfield. She enumerated at least a dozen families who were ardently desirous to see the advent of an accomplished school-mistress. She dwelt on all the advantages of the situation, declared that a competent person would find at once an opening both to fame and fortune, and concluded by offering to let her own house at a moderate rent, as she was about to accept the invitation of her son to go up to London to superintend his house, as his young wife was delicate and unequal to the fatigue! This letter brought the answer she desired. The lady allowed herself to be persuaded; she agreed to take Mrs. Donnelly's house on a lease, and Mrs. Donnelly showed herself an admirable hand at driving a bargain. Several weeks of necessity elapsed whilst this affair was pending, during which, as Gertrude received no reply to her letter, she had begun to flatter herself that her invitation had been dismissed, and that her mother-in-law was afraid of the long journey: she never referred to the subject, from a vague fear of bringing some reality upon herself. One day Augustus said, "By-the-bye, it is strange my mother has taken no notice of your letter. I wonder whether it reached her."

"Oh yes," said Gertrude, faintly, "I have no fear about that. I dare say, now we have spoken of it, that we shall hear very soon."

Two days afterwards, a letter addressed to Augustus, in the well-known handwriting of Mrs. Donnelly, sealed with the enormous coat of arms in a lozenge, was lying on the breakfast table when they came down stairs. It was short and to the purpose, and left no room for any hope or illusion. She stated that she had "re-considered her dear son's proposal—that an

advantageous opportunity to let her house having offered, she had felt it her duty to accept it, and that she felt happy at the prospect of spending the evening of her days in the midst of her dear children."

"Well, there is nothing for it now," said Mr. Augustus, giving Gertrude his mother's letter, "and perhaps, after all, it may be for the best—who knows; anyhow we shall have the furniture, which will be a great saving. Do you know we are paying at the rate of eighty pounds a year for these sticks of things? I tell you what, my dear girl, you must be more frugal; our expenses are terrible. I am sure I don't know how the money goes."

"Does your mother intend to pay us for their board?" asked Gertrude.

"Good heavens, how you talk," said Mr. Augustus, indignantly; "do you think I am going to charge my own mother and sister for every bit they put into their mouths—where did you get such notions I would like to know?"

"But in that case, our expenses would be increased instead of lessened."

"How do you make that out? What is enough for one is enough for two, as everybody knows."

"But you will find that more in the house will make a great difference. My mother used to say——"

"Your mother!" said Mr. Augustus, scornfully; "and do you consider that anything your mother could ever say would apply to mine? Your mother never gave you sixpence towards housekeeping, nor a stool nor a chair towards furnishing; you never brought me a farthing of money. You talk because I think it right to have my own mother and sister to live with me—what is it to you if I choose to spend my money on them?"

Poor Gertrude was crying too bitterly to reply. Possibly it was the only answer her husband would have understood. He had never seen her cry in that way before.

But it was not about him or his unkindness she was weeping; it was the sharp sting of her own conscience which gave bitterness to her husband's words. She had despised her father and mother, and now there was no eye to pity her; whatever happened, she had deserved everything; it was her own disobedience that had brought her mother into contempt: it was the bitterest moment she had yet known. Mr. Augustus felt very awkward: he had not intended his words to mean anything beyond the ill-temper of the moment.

“Come, come, Ger., don't take on in that way. I am very sorry if I hurt you: I did not mean it. Come, come, this is our first real quarrel; you must forgive and forget. There, that will do—give me a kiss, and wipe your eyes.”

But that was not so easily done. With a strong effort of self-control, however, she rose and left the breakfast-table—she went to her own room and struggled to recover her composure. In a short time she returned. Her husband had begun to feel uncomfortable; but when she came back so quietly, he thought it was only an ordinary fit of temper, because she had been contradicted, and by a natural revulsion of sentiment, he applauded himself for his firmness, and instead of apologising or endeavouring to soothe her feelings, he only said:

“I hope you are in a better humour, and capable of listening to reason. I will write myself to my mother to settle this business; but it will look more respectful if you write also, and say that you entirely approve of the arrangement, and thank her for the sacrifice she must have made in giving up her house.”

And so it was arranged. Mrs. Donnelly proposed to pay for an extra servant. This and the use of her furniture was to be considered an equivalent to all other expenses.

Gertrude still hoped that something might occur to prevent them coming,—pleasant things that seem certain are so often hindered from coming to pass. But all went on rapidly and smoothly; not a single hitch occurred in any of the arrangements. Gertrude's heart died within her when packages after packages of heavy furniture began to arrive, and all the ready money in the house was consumed to pay for the carriage.

Every chair and table, as it emerged from its wrappings, was associated in Gertrude's mind with the dreary time of her purgatory. When their own things had been sent back to the broker, and Mrs. Donnelly's furniture arranged in their stead, it looked like a bad dream come true. Her own pleasant home was gone, and her mother-in-law's household gods stood in its place. Things went on in their appointed course; shortly after the furniture had all arrived, Mrs. Donnelly and her daughter contrived to be brought up to town themselves by old Lady Elrington.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ALL Gertrude's anticipations of discomfort were more than realised, and that very speedily.

For the first few days Gertrude continued to direct the house and to give the orders as usual; Mrs. Donnelly having her faculties strictly engaged in taking possession of her new dwelling, and making herself as comfortable in it "as she owed it to herself to be." She was very fond of talking of what "she owed to herself;" and, to do her justice, she was very scrupulous in her attempts to discharge this debt.

It was a delicate question of precedence as to which of the two ladies belonged the lawful right of administering the affairs of the household. Mrs. Donnelly had agreed to contribute a certain quota to the domestic expenses; the use of her furniture being a set-off against her immunity from rent and taxes; but it had been left undecided who was to manage the funds.

The first day, when they were all sitting down to dinner, Gertrude unwarily offered the head of the table to her mother-in-law, who took it without hesitation, saying, with an amiable frankness,

"I am not quite sure that I have a right to this place, but I have been so accustomed to preside over my family, that I do

not think I could dine in comfort at any other part of the table."

"And indeed, ma'am," said Miss Sophia, as she took without scruple the best seat next the fire, "I am sure that your children would be sorry to see you give place for any new comer whatever."

Augustus looked for a moment as if he did not quite understand why Gertrude should be deposed in her own house, but he did not like to interfere with his mother, so he only shrugged his shoulders and said,—“Settle it amongst yourselves;” at the same time drawing a chair for Gertrude close beside himself, and taking hold of her hand. He felt obliged to Gertrude for submitting quietly, and not involving him in any dispute; for Mr. Augustus Donnelly loved an easy life, and hated trouble more than anything else in the world.

During dinner Mrs. Donnelly looked at all the dishes with critical eyes, and enquired pleasantly of Gertrude, “whether she had expected company to dinner?”

Gertrude blushed; she felt that her mother-in-law thought her extravagant.

“Gertrude knows I like a good dinner, and always gives me one; I see nothing out of the way in this,” said Augustus.

Mrs. Donnelly compressed her lips and made a stately motion with her head, as though to say she was more than answered; but in a little while she returned to the attack:—

“If you have any bread not quite so new as this I shall be glad of it. Do you generally use bread that is quite new?”

Again Gertrude felt that, in spite of the bland smile which accompanied this speech, her mother-in-law saw another defect in her housekeeping. None but young housekeepers know the

refined cruelty of questions like these, from those who are considered experienced managers.

“Do your servants help themselves?” asked Mrs. Donnelly, towards the close of dinner; “or do you cut off what you consider proper for them? In establishments where there is not a confidential housekeeper to take the head of the second table, it is quite customary for the mistress to carve for the kitchen; by this means all waste is prevented, and the joint is not rendered unsightly by unskilful carving. Lady Rosherville, when in Ireland, always cuts the meat for the servants’ dinner, and she has told me that she effects an immense saving by so doing; for, if left to themselves, servants will eat none but the choicest morsels.”

Gertrude replied that Margaret always seemed very careful; but she felt that her mother-in-law looked upon her as very incompetent to manage a house.

For three days Gertrude went about with the eye of Mrs. Donnelly upon her, following in silence all she did, till Gertrude felt quite nervous and lost all confidence in herself. On the fourth day after her arrival, Mrs. Donnelly said, with a pleasant smile, “My dear Gertrude, you have never invited me to see your kitchen, and I own, that to an old-fashioned housekeeper like myself the kitchen is by far the most interesting department of the house; though young people like you, naturally do not much care to enter it.”

Gertrude, of course, acquiesced; and the old lady, tying a green silk calash over her head, descended to the kitchen, casting her cold grey scrutinising eyes into every quarter, but saying nothing. At length, when they entered the pantry, she triumphantly pointed out a dish of cold potatoes, saying mildly, “I told you, my dear, that I thought you cooked more than were

needed; if these are fried with a little butter or dripping, they will be delicious, and they will be amply sufficient. By the way, what shall you do with the bones of that fine fish we had yesterday?"

Gertrude looked confused, but at length replied, "I suppose they are thrown away."

"You are a dear, inexperienced creature!" said the old lady, tapping Gertrude's cheek with her bony finger. "I see that I shall have to give you some lessons in the science of economy; I have a receipt for making a charmingly delicious soup from cold fish bones and broken remnants. I have often tasted it when on a visit to Lady Killaloo; she is an admirable house-wife, and turns everything to profit;—but it is very cold to stand here, and I begin to feel my poor rheumatism growing worse; I will leave you to give your own orders."

"If you please, ma'am," said the servant, when the tapping of the old lady's shoes had ceased, "I should be glad to know who is going to be my mistress; I can do very well with you, and against master I have not a word to say, I could live with you both with the greatest pleasure,—but I am not going to be overlooked, nor have my pantry pryed into by that old lady. I was not engaged for her; I have been a servant thirteen years, and I have never been used to such ways." She put down a tea-cup she had been washing, and gave her head a jerk which was meant to give emphasis to her words.

"Oh, dear Margaret," said Poor Gertrude, in a despairing tone, "I have enough to vex me, don't add to it; I am myself obliged to give in to Mrs. Donnelly. You know she is your master's mother."

"I am sure I don't wish to be unaccommodating, but right

is right, and if you choose to let yourself be put upon, it is no reason why I should, and I won't either."

Gertrude felt that her troubles were only beginning, and she was not mistaken. Old Mrs. Donnelly had changed her manner towards her daughter-in-law, and now treated her with a gracious amiability which presented no flaw in its varnish, yet she was not the less indignant to see the root Gertrude had taken in her own house, and the ascendancy she was acquiring over her husband. She felt that unless she made an immediate struggle, she and her daughter Sophia would be reduced to secondary personages, a thing not to be contemplated.

She contrived to be alone with her son, and began to praise Gertrude. She declared that she loved her as a daughter, and expanded upon the happiness of being all united in one family. She then gently, but distinctly, imputed to Gertrude a dangerous ignorance of domestic affairs, and hinted at the waste and useless extravagance which went on in the house.

All men are sensitively alive to the expenses of housekeeping, and have wonderful theories of economy, by which money is to be saved, without perceptibly curtailing any of the comforts or luxuries which are only to be had for money; they are always ready to believe that with "good management" a house may be kept in luxury on "next to nothing." Accordingly, when his mother discoursed on the wonders of economy, Augustus lent a willing ear.

People generally keep their virtues at the expense of their neighbours, and Augustus, who did not know how to deny himself anything, was penetrated at the idea of Gertrude's extravagance, and said that he "had always thought she spent more money than there was any occasion for."

Mrs. Donnelly pursued her advantage. She affected to desire

for herself "nothing but an easy chair by the chimney-corner, and to be allowed to nurse herself in peace." She spoke plaintively of her infirmities, and said that when she gave up her own house, it was to be relieved from domestic anxieties, and released from all household cares.

Mr. Augustus was fully awakened to the inestimable advantage of having a woman like his mother at the head of affairs, and the more she seemed disposed to decline, the more urgent he was that she should accept the post.

"But, my dear son," said she, at length, as if yielding to his importunity, "your wife will feel hurt, and I confess I should not wish her to dislike me. I only wish to live quietly, and to have the love of my children. The Donnellys were always a united family."

"I will settle it all with Gertrude," said Mr. Augustus, majestically. "She will not make any objections when I tell her that it is my wish she should resign the housekeeping to you; as, indeed, it is only proper, seeing that you are the head of the house."

Mr. Augustus went immediately to find his wife, and told her what he had resolved upon, in that indescribable tone of precipitate authority which husbands often assume to carry a point upon which discussion might bring defeat.

"But——" began Gertrude, when she understood the proposal.

"Now, my dear Gertrude," interrupted he, "do not be foolish. I am sure you do not care a straw for ordering the dinner and keeping the keys, which, by the way, you are always losing."

"I only mislaid them once," said Gertrude.

"No matter, it will be much better for all of us that my

mother should have the ordering of everything ; she is used to it, and will do it much better than you."

"Then have I made you uncomfortable, and managed badly?" said poor Gertrude, tearfully.

"Oh no, I don't say that; only you have spent a great deal of money, and my mother can make it all right."

There was nothing for Gertrude but submission, and from that day Mrs. Donnelly assumed "the power of the keys," and conducted herself in all respects as the supreme mistress of the house.

Gertrude submitted. Necessity teaches this wisdom to the most stubborn-hearted, only it takes more pressure to break the will of some than of others, but we may be assured that there is neither dignity nor discretion in standing a siege against what must be done sooner or later.

There is all the difference in the world between the rational wisdom of accepting the duties imposed upon us by circumstances and endeavouring to discharge them faithfully, and the being sullenly and stubbornly broken by the pressure of events, struggling blindly and stupidly like a wild beast in a net. In one case, real good is brought out of apparent evil; in the other, it is only the beginning of sorrows, the yielding of a driven beast to torture and blows, of which he knows not the meaning.

Gertrude submitted, as we have said, but she had not yet learned to look at her troubles as a lesson of which she had to learn the significance; she saw no farther than her mother-in-law's tyranny and her husband's weakness.

In the meanwhile Mrs. Donnelly carried things with a magnificent hand. To be sure, it may be remarked, in passing, that she was engaged in a constant warfare with servants; not one

could be induced to stay a month in the house; but as she had augmented the household by another domestic, they were not often left altogether without one. Mrs. Donnelly, however, never failed to attribute these domestic broils to her superior surveillance, and her vigilant attention to the good of the family, which brought evils to light which otherwise might have slumbered undetected.

The whole social system was also revised. Instead of the improvised parties and pleasant little suppers, Mrs. Donnelly, who had fished up some old acquaintances, as dreary and stately as herself, now gave solemn weekly receptions, in imitation of those in fashionable life.

There was an air of mildewed pretension about these parties, which effectually took all life and enjoyment out of them;—there were card-tables, conversation, and refreshments, which were rigidly “stylish,” both in their material and in the manner of being served. Mrs. Donnelly was quite as particular that her jellies, and custards, and pastry, should be from a confectioner who had received the sanction of good society, as that her guests should, one and all, be irreproachable on the score of gentility. They were very Pharisees in the rigour with which they observed the tests of belonging to an exclusively select circle.” They none of them cordially liked each other, because the height of their social ambition was to be, or to be thought to be, intimate with people of a higher position in the world than themselves; it stood to reason that they could not sit down and be comfortable amongst each other; when Mrs. Donnelly was making excuses to herself for knowing Mrs. Mackintosh, because “Mrs. Mackintosh, although looking vulgar, was the daughter of the Honourable Mrs. Irving, and was often invited to spend Christmas with some of her high relations,”

Mrs. Irving made very similar excuses to herself for frequenting Mrs. Donnelly; everybody who went to the house had *some* pretension, and made the most of it.

Lord Southend was persuaded once or twice to look in upon these gatherings; but the profuse urbanity of his reception by Mrs. Donnelly quite suffocated his good-nature; in fact, he never would have gone there thrice if it had not been for the wicked amusement of seeing Miss Sophia's industrious attempt to catch him in her toils.

This estimable young lady, although so keenly alive to the misery entailed on families by an unequal marriage, a misfortune which, as she had suffered from it herself, ought to have quickened her sensibilities, perhaps sought to make reprisals upon fate, or to efface the stain her family had received; or, possibly, from purely and simply the desire to make a good match for herself;—at any rate, without troubling her head about the grief and despair it would cause Lord Southend's noble mother, Miss Sophia deliberately laid herself out to captivate that nobleman, and spared no charm or seduction within her power to induce him to lay his heart and his title at her feet. She came up to London penetrated with this design, and, to do her justice, she did not shrink from prosecuting it to the best of her ability.

Perseverance will work wonders; but Lord Southend had a mother on one side and a mistress on the other, who, from different motives, watched very jealously the female society he frequented. Miss Sophia did not know this, and worked her spider's webs with unflagging energy.

The young men who had been in the habit of calling without any ceremony, and making little parties of pleasure, in which Gertrude was always included, found themselves disturbed from

the pleasant footing they had enjoyed. Certain days in the week no visitors at all were admitted, and when they were received they found it almost as formidable to face Mrs. Donnelly, sitting in state for the receipt of calls, as to be presented at a levee, to say nothing of not ever being able to have a word with Gertrude, who, silent and overshadowed in what used to be the pleasant parlour of old, but which was now transformed into a state drawing-room, seemed reduced to a cypher, and to have lost all the unaffected gaiety of heart which had made her such a pleasant companion. The terrible Miss Sophia, with her etiquette graces and stiffened affability, was always in the foreground, and ready to intercept all the attention destined to Gertrude.

To make amends, they were invited to dinner-parties, all conducted according to the rubric of the established order of those things. The expensive display of these dinners was expiated and ransomed by Mrs. Donnelly's economies on the comforts of the family for many days after.

Anybody who takes the trouble to give dinners may find plenty of guests to come and eat them; however much the young men might have preferred the old order of things, still they were not the less willing to come to these dinner-parties when they were invited. Augustus liked the novel importance of sitting at the head of his own table, and seeing the regularity with which the courses succeeded each other, and the precise propriety with which each dish stood in its right position. He felt proud at being the head of the Donnelly family, and as he instinctively dined out for a week after these "family dinners," he, by that means, avoided the reaction of his mother's hospitality. He knew by instinct how long the recoil would last.

Tickets for the theatre, for concerts, and other amusements were still occasionally brought in; but Mrs. Donnelly cleverly contrived that Sophia should be the one to profit by them.

“The dear girl has been so closely confined to the house by her attendance upon me during my illness, that I am anxious she should have some little recreation; indeed, it is absolutely needful for her health. I am sure Gertrude will not refuse to stay at home with me; my book or a cheerful companion are the only amusements I desire.”

As Gertrude made no complaint, Augustus was easily persuaded to acquiesce in the arrangement; but he soon found that his sister was not half so agreeable as his wife. She was always fancying that her place was not so good as it ought to have been,—that people of higher quality were sitting somewhere else; and she tormented the rest of the party with questions about their “select acquaintance,” or plagued them to introduce their friends when those friends chanced to be “distinguished looking.”

They soon grew tired of this substitution, and when it was found that Gertrude made her “health” a reason for refusing to go into public, they left off bringing tickets, and Augustus took to his old bachelor habits, except there was company at home, when his mother made a great point of his appearing.

Old Lady Southend called to see Gertrude soon after Mrs. Donnelly and Miss Sophia had installed themselves. Of course they were presented to her, and spared no pains to propitiate such an august presence. Lady Southend did not like them at all; and when Mrs. Donnelly entered into some genealogical statistics to prove that they had mutually ancestors in common, Lady Southend replied with lofty impertinence, which Mrs. Donnelly took with the meekness of an angel.

Some time elapsed, and an invitation arrived for Gertrude and Augustus to another assembly at Southend House, but none came for the two ladies.

"There must be some mistake," said Miss *S*ophia.—"Lady Southend is too polite and too much in the habits of good society to have intended such an omission," said Mrs. Donnelly.—"The footman may have dropped the cards on his way."—"They may have been left elsewhere by mistake."—There was no end to the excited and anxious surmises that were hazarded by Mrs. Donnelly and her daughter.

Augustus was appealed to. He ventured to ask Lord Southend if there were any mistake, who shook his head, and said, "My mother only invites those she chooses."

It was an established and premeditated fact, on which no shadow of doubt remained. Lady Southend had said to her son: "I have invited your friend Donnelly and his pretty wife, but I shall have nothing to do with his mother or sister. They are of the style of women who are vulgar, hard, pretentious, and mean,—and not even amusing."

"She is insupportable, certainly, with her genealogical tree, and I am sure I don't want either of them here. I am glad you have asked Gertrude; she is a good little creature, and I am sure those women torment her."

The end of the matter was, that Gertrude was obliged, for the sake of peace, to write a refusal, alleging her health as the excuse. Augustus went alone. This incident, trifling as it may seem, rendered Gertrude's position still more unpleasant: both the ladies vented upon her the disappointment of their chief object and ambition, and chose to consider her in some way or other as the cause of it.

CHAPTER XIX.

GERTRUDE'S excuse about her health was not altogether imaginary. She was expecting soon to be confined, and she was suffering both in health and spirits from her situation.

In the hopes, however, which the prospect of such an event awoke in her heart, she found consolation for her annoyances, and was, indeed, able to feel very indifferent to many things that would have seemed insupportable.

Like many other women, she fancied that she should not survive her trial. The thought of her mother lay heavy on her mind; the desire to see her once more awoke with a vain feverish earnestness which aggravated her bodily indisposition. She felt real remorse for her undutifulness, and she would have made any sacrifice to be able to fall on her mother's neck and ask her forgiveness. This was denied her; but she wrote again through Mrs. Slocum, telling her mother all that was in her heart. This time there was no vain boasting of her position in the world, nor even any complaints of Mrs. Donnelly; the letter was filled with earnest yearnings to see her mother again, and to be forgiven. She entreated her to write a single line.

This line of forgiveness did not come, though Gertrude watched for it with sickening heart day after day, till hope died away, and a vague fear that something dreadful must have

happened took its place. She fancied that her mother was dead, and her only comfort was the hope that she was soon to die too.

Things were not so bad as Gertrude feared. It had happened that when Gertrude's letter arrived, old Mr. Slocum was dangerously ill, and in the anxiety of attending to him and the fatigue of nursing him, Gertrude's letter was laid aside to be read when there was more leisure. It naturally got mislaid, and Mrs. Slocum forgot all about it, until six months afterwards, when she chanced to open a drawer full of old remnants of silk, old papers, broken trinkets, and scraps of all kinds, such as old housekeepers accumulate—this letter of Gertrude's, with its seal unbroken, met her eyes.

Mrs. Slocum's distress and self-reproach were extreme; but she put on her bonnet and went that very afternoon to her old friend, and they read the letter together. The old lady told her daughters, on her return, that it "was the most moving thing she ever read, as good as a sermon, and quite a parable to children to teach them what comes of grieving their parents."

It would have been a great comfort to Gertrude could she have known all the happiness her letter gave her mother, when at length she received it. She had long forgiven her daughter, and fretted after her every day that came; but this letter quite obliterated the recollection of her fault, and Gertrude seemed to her the very best and kindest child that ever lived. She would have resented it as an injury if any one had told her that her daughter had been undutiful.

It makes one very sad to think how little a mother's heart will rejoice upon.

In the meanwhile, Gertrude was confined of a very fine little girl, which in due time was christened *Clarissa*, that being a

family name amongst the Donnellys. Gertrude wished to have had it named after herself and her mother, but she was overruled.

Mrs. Donnelly gave a very splendid party at the christening. Lord Southend and old Lady Elrington were two of the sponsors; Miss Sophia volunteered to be the other.

Augustus was of course very proud and very pleased with the event; and he bought his wife a magnificent lace veil and a beautiful new dress.

Mrs. Donnelly was as benign as she could be, and hoped "the babe would be a credit to the family.

As for Gertrude, she clasped the child to her breast, and shuddered when she thought that perhaps one day it might behave to her as she had behaved to her own mother. For the first time, she realised to herself what it was that she had done, and it seemed to her that the punishment of Heaven on disobedient children must find her out and overtake her.

When they returned from the church after the christening, she hastened to the nursery, and kneeling by the child's cradle, she prayed with frantic earnestness that it might never live to behave to her as she had behaved to her own parents.

CHAPTER XX.

DURING the next twelve months a great change came over Gertrude. She had now for the first time in her life a higher object of interest than her immediate self—her child engrossed all her time and thoughts; and provided she might be left undisturbed in the nursery, Mrs. Donnelly might have the absolute government of the rest of the house, and Miss Sophia might engross all the visiting, the theatre-going, and the attentions of all the young men who came about the house. She abstracted herself more than ever from the concerns of the family, and allowed them to take in peace the course that seemed best to the Fates and her mother-in-law.

It was not, however, without a severe struggle that Gertrude obtained the management of her own child. At first Mrs. Donnelly wished to be as oracular in the nursery as she already was in the “parlour, kitchen, and hall.” She declared that “the innocent babe would be sacrificed to the obstinacy and presumption of its mother.” She insisted upon dictating the number of times it ought to be fed during the day, and was learned in her dissertations on the invaluable properties of stale bread crusts made into “pobbis,” which, in the Eleusinian mysteries of the nursery, means infant’s food. Gertrude did not know much about babies, it is true; but party from the good

fortune of having a sensible man for her doctor, and partly from the marvellous instinct that comes to mothers, and which generally inspired her to reject all Mrs. Donnelly's preparations, the poor baby escaped wonderfully well.

Gertrude watched like a lynx, that no one except herself should administer either food or medicine. Mrs. Donnelly did not care one straw whether the child was fed on bran or on arrowroot, but she was indignant at the presumption of her daughter-in-law in setting up her judgment against that "of the mother of a family," and she magnanimously resolved that she would not be put down, but persevere for the sake of the dear infant.

One day, the baby had been restless; the miseries of "teething" were beginning; Mrs. Donnelly watched her opportunity, and ascending to the nursery took possession of the child, and proceeded to administer a dose of Lady Killaloe's "teething powder," which her ladyship always used in her own family, and with such signal effect, that out of the thirteen little Killaloes who had been born into that noble family, only three survived; which was a good thing both for those who died and those who lived, for there would have been but a scanty provision for all. Gertrude, alarmed by the poor baby's screams for assistance, luckily returned just as the Killaloe elixir was being poured down its throat at the risk of choking it. She snatched it up so abruptly that the cup and its contents were upset over Mrs. Donnelly's gown, and sitting down in the rocking-chair which that lady had vacated in disdainful surprise, she proceeded to soothe and caress the poor little thing, without taking the smallest notice of her.

"Really, Gertrude," said Mrs. Donnelly, in a tone of reproachful dignity, "your rudeness and abruptness are extraordinary—

did you suppose I was poisoning the baby that you snatched it up in that offensive manner?"

"I don't know, ma'am, at all," replied Gertrude, without looking up from her baby, "but the doctor desired it might have no medicine but what he ordered."

"I presume I have the welfare of the child as much at heart as you can have, but you are too ignorant and prejudiced to be reasoned with—the child is suffering, and I was about to administer the medicine invented by a noble and accomplished matron for the use of her own family; but after the studied insolence I have met with from you, I shall neither advise you nor enter this room again—my conscience tells me that I have done enough—too much indeed for my own dignity."

With this, Mrs. Donnelly having metaphorically shaken the dust from her feet, swept out of the nursery with an air of majestic indignation. She attempted a complaint to her son, whom she allowed to surprise her in tears, but he declared he had enough upon his mind without being plagued with women's squabbles.

Gertrude was left mistress of the nursery, which she now rarely quitted, as Augustus was rarely at home. He had gradually resumed all his bachelor habits, and when he was at home he had become so moody and uncertain in his temper that everybody felt it a relief when he was away. Gertrude was so engrossed with her baby that she paid little attention to her husband's humour, and was in no degree disturbed by many "signs of the times," which were appearing in the domestic horizon. If people will walk about with their eyes shut—they are, sooner or later, awoke by a pretty smart shock.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE affairs of Mr. Augustus were by this time coming rapidly to a crisis. In novels and tales, people who are rolling in wealth get "ruined" in the stroke of a pen; those who rise millionaires in a morning find themselves beggars at night, without any previous suspicion of their danger. But in real life, ruin follows the natural laws of gravitation, and people do not touch the bottom of the hill without some scrambling efforts to save themselves. The "road to ruin," like other roads, takes time to traverse; some persons take longer than others in accomplishing the journey after setting their faces thitherward—but time is a necessary element, even if they stride through their resources in seven-leagued boots.

Mr. Augustus Donnelly had now been near upon two years in London. He had for nearly the whole time been in possession of a Government situation, and in the receipt of six hundred pounds a year, besides perquisites, which were worth another fifty pounds. It would have been difficult to persuade him that he had actually received so much, for he suffered under a chronic want of money, and never knew what it was to be free from pecuniary embarrassment. He had drawn the first instalment of his salary before it became due, and hence he was constantly a-head of his resources. He had stopped the gaps as they

arose, by borrowing of his friends ; but as, to use his own words, " he always liked to have a little ready money in his pocket," and as the debts he owed were out of sight, they were also out of mind—and his salary had been all frittered away without anything to show for it.

He still retained, however, a vague idea, that with such an income " he had no need to stint himself for a few pounds, especially as his money was quite sure." The old lady, who (excellent manager that she was!) never paid a debt until she was actually compelled, had refrained from paying her quota of the household expenses until Augustus should be at leisure to examine into his affairs.

It is wonderful how long things will go on when they are once set going ; it is equally wonderful the little thing that breaks them up at last, when they are in a fine-spun state of decay, and have held together, and kept their shape, long after they ought to have gone to pieces, according to logic. Human affairs don't go according to logic, however ; but they are bound by laws equally inexorable, one of which is, that though long credit is given, yet pay-day comes at last. In this world there is no obtaining anything gratuitously. The second Christmas of his sojourn in town had come round, and bills were pouring in on all sides ; they were most of them " to accounts rendered," it was indeed quite wonderful and appalling to see the small progress Mr. Augustus Donnelly had made towards " paying his way"—the bills were of that most provoking and unsatisfactory kind, for things eaten, drank, and forgotten, so that there remained nothing to show for the money.

The exemplary Augustus was threatened with an arrest. The house being Lord Southend's, and **the furniture his mother's**, there could be no **execution**.

Meanwhile the household wheels had grown stiffer and stiffer, and were come to a stand still.

The old lady had her pension as the widow of an Admiral—also the rent of her house in Springfield. Her late husband's brother, the baronet of the family, had allowed her an annuity of fifty pounds a-year, but with the fatality which attends strokes of fortune, he chose this present crisis to discontinue it, on the plea that he had other relations who needed assistance, and as Augustus was now in the receipt of a settled income he had it in his power to increase her income.

The letter containing this intelligence arrived at breakfast time on the second Christmas-day of his residence in town. It was accompanied by a fresh influx of tailors' bills; a bill for some articles Gertrude had ordered for the baby; and other bills of trifling amount, that had been called "just nothing" at the time they were ordered, and which, if they had been paid for at the time, would not have been much, but which now, falling along with the accumulated weight of other demands, became the last straw to the breaking back of the camel.

Mrs. Donnelly's plausibility failed to conciliate the phenomenon of her good management with these long-standing bills. She looked dismally at the heap of papers, and began to cry into her tea-cup.

Mr. Augustus swore emphatically that it was all up with him, and that he did not know where to turn for a ten-pound note. He called himself a fool for declining Lord Southend's invitation to go with him to Paris. Miss Sophia bitterly censured Gertrude's extravagant mode of dressing the baby—"trimming its cap with lace fit for a Crown Prince."

Gertrude replied that it was lace she had by her; but Miss Sophia sharply entreated that she would not begin a dispute:

and Augustus wondered how such a little mite of a child could run away with so much money for clothes, taking up, as he spoke, the one bill which Gertrude had incurred. All parties seemed resolved to make her the scape-goat for all the blame. Gertrude did not attempt to defend herself, but took advantage of the first pause to steal away into the nursery.

As the door closed behind her, Mrs. Donnelly indulged in some severe remarks upon her indifference to the welfare of the family, and her selfish engrossment in her own affairs. Mr. Augustus being in a very bad temper, felt a species of complacency when his mother declared that an ignorant, thoughtless wife had brought ruin upon many princely fortunes. "You see now, my son, that I was right when I wished you to marry well. I have never reproached you for your mistake; but you feel now that your wife cannot support you with either money or connexions, and is only a mill-stone round your neck in the day of trouble."

Mr. Augustus did not contradict his mother; he felt rather soothed by hearing the blame of his embarrassed affairs laid upon another. Perhaps he really believed that Gertrude was the cause of them.

"Well, mother, it is too late going over that now—only don't cry; I can't bear to see you cry. Things will right themselves somehow. I am not the only gentleman in the Metropolis who has not made both ends meet in the course of the year. I dare say there are scores of people who owe more than we do."

"Well, my dear," said Mrs. Donnelly, wiping her eyes, and resuming her ordinary dignity and superiority, "it is weak to go into the past; though when I think of what we have been accustomed to, and the prospect we might hope for if you had married as became your family, I confess I feel chafed. But the

thing is now, to consider how we are to meet the most pressing of these demands, and keep our embarrassment from the ears of the world. If you can suggest anything, I shall feel no sacrifice on my part too great for the credit of my family. My own wants are moderate—I could be content with a crust; and now that I have lost part of my income, I should be sorry to become a burden to you.”

“Don’t talk in that way, mother,” said Mr. Augustus, pathetically; “so long as I have a shilling, you and Sophia shall have sixpence of it. I know how you have slaved yourself to keep things decent since you came here; and Gertrude knows what she owes you for taking her by the hand and receiving her as you did.”

“I am sure she shows very little sense of it,” interposed Miss Sophia, spitefully.

“Hush, my dear. You are so full of feeling that you allow yourself to be carried away. I only did my duty as a gentlewoman and a Christian.”

“But Gertrude has no feeling, except for herself,” reiterated Miss Sophia.

“I don’t think she has much,” acquiesced Augustus; “she is always in such good spirits.”

“She piques herself upon her civility and good temper—the two qualities by which people of her rank gain their bread,” said Miss Sophia, scornfully. “Nothing but activity and civility would be tolerated in the people of an inn.”

Augustus winced a little at this, but said nothing. He leaned back in his chair, and began to pare his nails.

After a little more abuse of Gertrude and a little more mutual flattery, they began to feel their spirits revive under the blow they had sustained. Miss Sophia got out her “tatting,” and

Mrs. Donnelly rang to have the breakfast things cleared away. Mr. Augustus yawned, and looked out of the window; he did not think it prudent to venture forth, for he more than suspected there was a writ out against him. Mrs. Donnelly was busily engaged writing and making calculations. For some time no one spoke.

“You have a quarter’s salary to draw, Augustus,” said his mother, looking up.

“Well, ma’am, what of that?—it is every farthing forestalled. I owe Barrow, and Clive, and Sir John Cornwall more than the total will cover; and I can tell you that I am not going to pay a parcel of rascally, greedy tradesmen, whilst I owe money to their betters.”

“Certainly not,” said Miss Sophia.

“Well, they are all persons from whom you can hope to borrow again,” said his mother; “and it would be very short-sighted policy to cut yourself out of good society. I think I have hit upon a plan, however, that will help us out of our difficulties.”

“Pray let us hear it,” said Augustus, sitting down before the fire, and putting a foot on each side of the grate, whilst he balanced his chair backwards.

“My idea is this,” said Mrs. Donnelly: “our dear friend, Lord Southend, has been so generous, that it would be encroaching to ask him for further assistance; and besides, it goes against the spirit of the Donnellys to ask a favour. The furniture of this house, which belongs to me, is not modern, certainly; but it is such as befits an old family like ours. It is good and substantial,” continued she, looking round with complacency at the chairs that stood against the wall. Lord Southend would not refuse to lend you a few hundred pounds

on this security; or we might make it over to him entirely, and pay a small per centage for the use of it, reserving to ourselves, of course, the right to redeem it. Some of the plate might be deposited at his bankers', as an additional security, if he required it; though I confess it would chafe my spirit to see our family plate in the hands of others."

"Well, that is not a bad notion," said Mr. Augustus; "only Lord Southend is not here."

"But Lady Southend is in town; and if you were to send Gertrude to her with a letter that I will write myself, she would scarcely refuse to advance the few hundreds we require."

Miss Sophia passionately objected to a course which would degrade them before the Southends, and prevent Lord Southend from looking on them as equals.

"If you expect Lord Southend will ever make you an offer, Sophy, the sooner you put the idea out of your head the better. He has his hands, and his heart too, quite full, I can tell you; and I have often thought you put yourself a great deal too forward to him."

Miss Sophia began vehemently to exculpate herself. When she paused, Augustus continued as if she had not spoken. "So you see, Sophy, it would be a pity to miss the good he may really do us for the sake of a fancied advantage—it would be the fable of the dog and the shadow."

Miss Sophia declared herself "scandalously insulted."

"Come, come, Sophy, dry up your tears; we are in trouble enough, without making more of it. I don't say but what Southend might go further and fare worse; but it is not Gertrude's calling on the old lady about our difficulties that will make any difference one way or other."

Miss Sophy suffered herself to be mollified. Mrs. Donnelly

exerted all her powers of diction to compose a letter becoming the occasion. The old lady was very proud of her rhetoric, and in the excitement of inditing her epistle, she quite forgot the reality of her difficulties.

After a long exordium about the "combination of disastrous fatalities" which had overtaken them, the loss of a portion of her income, and the struggle of her pride, which she laid aside for the sake of those depending upon her,—and an allusion to "the young mother and infant child," which she intended to be very pathetic,—she concluded as follows:—

"It is not a gift which I entreat, nor even a loan. Overtaken by misfortune, I still retain the furniture which in happier times garnished our ancestral hall, and some articles of massive silver which have been handed down with our family traditions; and it is upon the security of these that I venture to entreat your ladyship to permit your steward to advance us a few hundred pounds, according to the value of the property, until I am enabled to redeem all but my eternal gratitude, which I shall transfer as a precious and sacred debt to my descendants.

"Madam,

"A grey-headed and anxious-hearted mother,

"I subscribe myself,

"Your ladyship's humble servant,

"HONORIA MARCIA SOPHIA DONNELLY."

("By birth a Kavaneagh.")

"Well, mother, if *that* does not touch up the old lady, nothing will. I call that fine writing. It is yourself who is a pride to the family of the Donnellys."

"And what does my Sophia say to her mother?"

"I can only say, ma'am, that it is a letter which a captive

princess might have written, and that you deserve to be allowed to quarter a pelican upon your arms."

"You are too flattering, dear children, and I fear you are only laughing at your poor old mother. But, however, if it only answers its purpose, I shall rejoice to have written the letter,—but I can tell you that I have the spirit of a chained lioness, and it goes against a Donnelly to ask a favour."

Mrs. Donnelly then went over every line of her letter, stroking under the words that were most emphatic, beautifying the penmanship, and bringing out every letter with distinctness, and pointing every sentence according to the strictest rule of punctuation.

This done, she folded it, and sealed it with an armorial seal large enough to have been affixed to Magna Charta, and then superscribed it with her ladyship's style and titles at full length.

"And now, where is Gertrude? Let her put on her bonnet, and take this letter; the sooner it is delivered the better." -

"I will go and fetch a coach for her," said Augustus.

"What nonsense, my dear son, are you thinking of? Gertrude must walk, even if we had money to spend in coach-hire; it would spoil all the effect of the letter if she arrived in a coach."

"But it is a good distance to Southend House, and the weather is cold. I think there will be snow before long."

"So much the more needful she should start at once. Perhaps you had better tell her what she is to do."

"Poor Ger.! I would walk with her if I were not afraid to be seen."

Scarcely informed of the nature of her errand, Gertrude was hurried away on her mission to Lady Southend.

CHAPTER XXII.

FOR some time after Gertrude's departure, Augustus stood at the window to watch the sky, and to wonder whether Gertrude would reach Lady Southend's before the snow came, for, to do him justice, he felt that he would not have liked to turn out himself on such an errand on such a day. Mrs. Donnelly lingered over the copy of her letter, reading it again, and wondering what effect upon Lady Southend certain of the favourite and most florid passages would have.

"I hope," said she, "Gertrude will not mar all by her stupidity. She has no tact; she will allow herself to go into details, and although there is nothing disgraceful in elegant thrift and economy, yet one would not desire Lady Southend to be cognisant of our domestic management. Herself the wife and mother of peers of the realm, what should she know of the difficulties of appearances, which nothing but an heroic sense of social duty has nerved me to maintain."

"Lady Southend is a great gossip," said Miss Sophia, "she talks to Gertrude as though she were an equal; and Gertrude has no sense of the delicacy due to our feelings, she will allow herself to be led away by an appearance of sympathy, and Lord Southend will look upon us as no better than other people

who ask him for money. Beautiful as is your letter, ma'am, I regret the step we have taken."

"Ah, my dear child, you are so sensitive. You ought to have been born in the old days of the Donnellys. Money is all in all with the world now. But I still hope to see the day when the fortunes of the family will be restored, and when we may go back to the old house and live amongst our own people. You are fitted for any position, and I still expect to see you with your coronet: you have the carriage and the presence of a peeress, even in that morning dress. Let the consciousness of your own merits sustain you; it ill becomes a Donnelly to lose heart—rich or poor, it makes no difference to them."

"I am sure, ma'am, it is pleasant to hear you talk; you would inspire hope into any one. As you remark so justly, a consciousness of what we are ought to support us under our present difficulties. I shall wear my black velvet at Mrs. Carnegie's to-day. I dare say there will be that Colonel Donaldson from India—he and I had quite a flirtation at Mrs. Ap Price's; he is a dear, delightful old man, and with such a fund of sarcastic humour!"

"Yes, I am sure he was struck with my Sophia," said Mrs. Donnelly.

Miss Sophia took out her work-box, and began to make some bugle trimming with which to adorn her charms later in the day. Mrs. Donnelly continued her inspection of papers. Mr. Augustus yawned, stretched himself, and went through all the evolutions of a man who is tired to death with doing nothing. Of all the things detrimental to domestic comfort, it is when the master stays at home at unlawful hours without any particular reason; stopping out late at night is nothing to it for disorganising a household.

“How cursedly cold it is!” said he at last, seizing the poker and making a smash at the fire, which covered the hearth with cinders and raised a cloud of ashes.

“My dear Augustus,” said Mrs. Donnelly in dismay, “you have no respect for the price of coals; that fire, if left untouched, would have lasted until afternoon.”

“Hang it, ma’am, what is the good of having a fire at all if we are not to see a cheerful blaze. I hate the economy that upsets all one’s comfort; if we are to be ruined, a scuttle-full of coals will make little odds one way or other in the amount.”

Mr. Augustus rang the bell. It was answered by an untidy-looking youth, who in the canonical hours of visiting bloomed out into a chocolate-coloured coat and light blue plush breeches, with an ample complement of buttons, all adorned with the Donnelly “Wild Cat,” but who during the antecedent period wore an old shooting-coat that had once belonged to Mr. Augustus, with face and hands that testified either to his own abstinence, or to Mrs. Donnelly’s economy in soap and water.

“Here, John, fetch a scuttle-full of coals, and, do you hear, let them be large lumps—not dust, like so much sand; and whilst you are about it, bring a few sticks to make a blaze.”

The servant looked at Mrs. Donnelly, but did not offer to stir.

“What are you looking at? Why don’t you stir those lazy legs of yours?”

“If missis will give me the key. I can’t get coals without.”

Mrs. Donnelly quelled her annoyance by a great effort, and handed a large rusty key, saying—

“You will get the coals your master desires, and be sure you fasten the door securely afterwards; a lady in the next street

was robbed of all her winter stock through the carelessness of the servant."

The youth took the key with a malicious twinkle of satisfaction in his eye, and departed. Mrs. Donnelly sat silent, but evidently ill at ease; at length she said—

"The lock of the coal-house door is peculiar, and I fear John will either break it or leave it unlocked; besides, I like to superintend the giving out of all household stores myself—it is one of my principles."

Saying this, she put on her calash, and wrapping her old black shawl about her, she descended into the lower regions to see that John did not abuse his power of the key to carry any of the round coals to comfort the kitchen, where, as there was no dinner to cook they were "entirely unnecessary." John carried up the coals, Mrs. Donnelly repossessed herself of her key, and returned to the parlour just in time to see Mr. Augustus building up what he called "a regular Christmas fire."

"But, my dear Augustus, economy is needful to us just now, —that fire might have done for the baronial hall in the days of the prosperity of our family, but, now that we are compelled to consider these things, the quantity you are now consuming would have lasted us three days, with management."

"Hang management," said Mr. Augustus, with impatience; "I can but go to prison, and I would rather go for having been comfortable than miserable. There! I call that an elegant fire."

Mrs. Donnelly was really suffering, and the effort to control her temper was almost heroic;—she only said, in a suppressed voice,—

"You had better ring for John to sweep up the hearth—a

blazing fire that would roast an ox does not compensate for an untidy hearth ;—we may have visitors.”

“What a long time it takes Ger. to go and come back ! When shall we have dinner to-day ?”

“My dear Augustus, your sister and I dine at the Honourable Mrs. Carnegie’s, and I confess that I did not calculate upon your being at home,—it is so seldom you dine with your family.”

Mr. Augustus whistled, and with the tongs improved the architecture of his fire ; at last, by an accidental kick, he upset the fender (which lacked a foot) and all the fireirons fell down with a crash.

“My dear Augustus, do have mercy upon my poor head—the heat and this noise together quite overcome me. I must leave the room.”

“Oh dear, Augustus,” said Miss Sophia, “you have filled the room with smoke and dust—my trimmings are ruined ; how can you have so little consideration ?”

“Confound the fender ! who was to know that it was so crazy ? Why don’t you have it mended ?”

He picked up the fireirons with a sulky air of injured innocence, and began to walk the room with his hands in his pockets.

“What horrid work it is stopping in the house in this way,—it would make a fellow hang himself in a week. I wish somebody would come.”

Almost at his wish there was heard a blustering knock, accompanied with a furious ring at the bell. Augustus went to the window—a handsome drag with a spirited horse stood at the door. A high-coloured young man, with fair hair and a rough coat, came hastily into the room, bringing with him a

stream of cold air. He bowed hastily to Miss Sophia without looking at her, and said to Augustus,—

“I have not one moment to lose; my mare will not stand I want you to come along with me to ——’s, where we are going to try Bob Clive’s new terrier—he has taken heavy bets upon him. I will tell you about it as we go along. Get your hat—you will dine with us afterwards of course—but be quick. I will give you two minutes, and if you are not to time I must be off. No thank you, ma’am, I cannot sit down—that rascal does not know how to hold her head—I must go myself. I wish you good morning.”

He left the room as hastily as he had entered it, leaving Miss Sophia in a flutter that caused her to upset her bugles upon the floor, for that unmannerly young man was Sir John Cornwall, and he was very rich and unmarried; if report said true, he also drank hard, kept low sporting company, and was in no respect a reputable character, yet had the severely virtuous Miss Sophia felt an ardent desire to detain him at her work-table. Augustus put his head in at the door—his spirits quite renovated—and said, “Give my love to Ger. when she comes back, and tell her there is no saying when I may be home, so she need not expect me,” and then, casting care to the wind, he sprang into the drag after his friend, who gathered up the reins and the mare set off in a style that seemed likely to break their necks.

Mrs. Donnelly did not return to the parlour until Augustus had left the house, and then her first act was to take off all the coals, and reduce the fire below the second bar, after which she proceeded up stairs to attire herself for the due reception of callers, and then she and Miss Sophia took their station in the drawing-room. A hackney coach drove up to

the door. Miss Sophia's ears caught the jingle of the vehicle—

“Who can this be? Surely Gertrude has not committed the extravagance of taking a coach.”

She looked through the curtains and saw a middle-aged woman, in a black bonnet and a great profusion of cap-border and white satin ribbons round her face, sitting in the coach, and looking anxiously up at the house. On the top of the coach was a large hamper.

“What can that strange-looking woman be wanting here?” said Miss Sophia.

A parleying was heard below, and shortly afterwards the servant, now in his full-blown splendour of plush and buttons, opened the drawing-room door, looking perplexed.

“If you please, ma'am, here is a decent body asking for Mrs. Augustus—am I to ask her in, or shall I tell her to come again. She is from the country, and seems all in a flutter, and quite put out at not finding her.”

“Good gracious! I hope none of Gertrude's relatives are come to find her out. What is she like?”

“Countrified, but quite respectable-looking—I somehow think she is Mrs. Augustus Donnelly's mother.”

“I will go and speak to her,” said Mrs. Donnelly.

“It is quite unnecessary,” said Miss Sophia. “How extremely provoking that she should come just now, in the midst of our troubles; a vulgar person like her cannot of course understand the difference between our embarrassments and those of common people. Is she come up to stop, I wonder?”

“We must make the best of it, my dear. I will go and speak to her.”

Mrs. Donnelly proceeded to the hall, where poor Mrs. Morley

had been left standing on the mat, beside her large hamper. Mrs. Donnelly prepared to address her with elaborate affability—but at that instant a thundering footman's rap at the door startled her out of her intention, and hastily desiring the general maid-servant to “show that person up stairs into the nursery,” she had barely time to make good her own escape into the drawing-room, to be there discovered by the Dowager Lady Thomas Ap Price, in the apparent enjoyment of ease with dignity.

CHAPTER XXIII.

BELIEVING from her husband's manner, and from the few words that Mrs. Donnelly had condescended to drop, that some dreadful crisis had occurred in their affairs, Gertrude did not need much urging to despatch; she was, moreover, anxious to get back to her nursery, which she sadly feared would be invaded by Mrs. Donnelly in her absence.

The weather was very cold and thick, she did not know well the road, and she went out of her way more than once, but at length she stood before Southend House—frightened and out of breath.

At first the porter hesitated to admit her, but a footman passing through the hall recognised her, and she was shown into a small room until she had been announced. She was at length ushered into her ladyship's dressing-room, where the old lady was sitting beside the fire cleaning her diamonds. She looked up as Gertrude entered—

“Well, child, and what brings you out this day? To wish me a happy Christmas? How is the baby? and how are you? You look perished—there, sit down in that large chair by the fire.”

Gertrude—fatigued by her long walk, and frightened, though she could scarcely have defined of what—began to cry.

The old lady looked keenly at her, and then dropping some lavender on a lump of sugar she made Gertrude take it, and when she was a little composed she said—"Come now, wipe your eyes, I don't like crying people, and tell me what is the matter. Is the baby dead?"

"O, no!" said Gertrude, feeling relieved to think how much worse things might have been; "the baby is quite well—but I am sent with this letter to your ladyship. I fear something is very much amiss."

"Hum," said the old lady, stretching out her hand; "give it to me."

She took it, and after examining the ostentatious coat of arms, proceeded to read the letter. When Gertrude saw how scornful she looked, she was more frightened than ever.

"Pray do you know what this precious epistle is about?" said she, sternly.

"No, ma'am."

"And you know nothing about it?"

"No, ma'am; I believe there is some trouble at home, but Mrs. Donnelly never tells me anything, and Augustus always goes by what his mother says. If there is any offence in that letter, I am sure it does not come from Augustus."

"If there is any offence!—it is just the most insolent, cringing, impertinent picce of presumption I ever heard of in all my life. To ask ME to turn pawnbroker for Mrs. Donnelly!"

Gertrude did not reply, and the old lady gradually grew calmer.

"Now," said she, "tell me all that has happened—all you know of it at least. I feel sorry for you. You look simple and innocent, and as if you could tell the truth."

Gertrude obeyed, and narrated the scene of the morning

and thence, scarcely knowing how it happened, she went on to tell the old lady all her history, both before her marriage and since—always, however, screening her husband. She did not wish to complain of her mother-in-law, but naturally enough the account of her was not very flattering. When she ceased, there was a pause of a few minutes, the old lady continuing to look at her with her keen black eyes.

“Well,” said she at length, “you have been a very foolish child; but as you will have that brought home to you by experience, you do not need to hear it said by me. You will have to sup sorrow by spoonfuls, and what you have suffered is only the beginning of plagues. You have paid dearly for wishing to get out of your station. Write again to your mother, and beg her to take you home for a while till these money matters have found their level. She will not refuse, I will answer for it, and that is the best advice I can give you. You are young and healthy, and ought to begin to think of working for yourself and your child. Let me hear what you can do to earn money.

“I can do filagree work, and paint screens, and paint in japan and on velvet; and I can play a little,” said poor Gertrude, humbly.

“Hum!” said the old lady; “and is that all the education they gave you to face the world with?—did they teach you nothing else?”

“Miss Le French taught us history and geography, and those things.”

“A pity she did not teach you the necessity of doing your duty above all things. But we must make the best of what you have. You can work tapestry, I suppose?—Now I have begun a carpet, and if you choose to help me, I will pay you.

If you wish to support yourself and child without being a tax on your mother-in-law's generosity, I will supply you with work. It may not be to-day or to-morrow you will choose to do this; but the day will come, and then apply to me. Go back home, and tell Mrs. Donnelly that I do not choose to deal in second-hand goods, nor to purchase old silver, and that she had better apply to the pawnbroker. I desire you will repeat my message exactly. Remember that I am quite ready to help you when you desire to help yourself. Come to me or write to me without fear. I shall not forget you. And now you had better go home: you have been long enough away; but I shall send you home in a coach. You are not clothed for a day like this."

Gertrude would have declined, but Lady Southend was accustomed to be despotic. She bade Gertrude hold her tongue, and gave orders to fetch a coach: in the meantime, she made Gertrude drink a glass of wine, and continued her own occupation. "Ah, I dare say you think it would be a fine thing to go to court and wear diamonds, and many a silly girl marries and makes herself miserable for no better reason. If her husband died, the diamonds would go away from her the next minute—(these belong to my son)—and it is paying a heavy price for the hire of them. Nobody would care for wearing them if they went by the satisfaction they felt in it; but they think of the value other people attach to them, and so live in a reflected vanity."

The coach was announced. As Gertrude rose to take leave, Lady Southend put five guineas into her hand, saying,—

"This is a Christmas-box for your little girl."

Gertrude gratefully thanked the good-natured, whimsical old lady, and withdrew, very puzzled what those who had sent her would say to the result of her mission.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE dowager had departed, and Mrs. Donnelly was answering a note that had been brought by Mrs. Cadogan's servant, when Gertrude's hackney coach came to the door.

"Here is Gertrude at last!" said Miss Sophia. "I am glad that hackney coach, with its two crocodile horses, did not drive up whilst Lady Ap Price's carriage was standing; at this time of day Gertrude should have had the delicacy to alight before she came to the door. I suppose Lady Southend has sent her home; she would scarcely be so extravagant as to take one for herself."

"Well, my dear Gertrude, and what said the Lady Southend?" said Mrs. Donnelly, blandly, looking up from her note as Gertrude entered. Gertrude was surprised at the amiable tone and the general aspect of affairs, so different from the querulous, comfortless state of things she had left in the morning.

"You look fatigued, my dear; sit down before you give the account of your visit; doubtless Lady Southend offered you refectation."

Mrs. Donnelly herself could scarcely have accounted for her good-humour, but the idea of being on the verge of deliverance from her economical troubles put her into a pleasant frame of

mind, and she assumed a graceful attitude in which to receive the blessings of Providence.

Gertrude, thankful to delay her message until the last moment, sat down at the end of the sofa, and waited to be questioned.

“Well?” said Mrs. Donnelly, interrogatively.

“Lady Southend read the letter, ma’am, and said I was to tell you that she could not agree to your request.”

“Tell me exactly what she said,” enjoined Mrs. Donnelly, severely.

“She seemed angry, and said that I was to tell you it did not suit her to deal in second-hand goods, nor to purchase old silver, and that you had better apply to a pawnbroker.”

If Gertrude had feared the result of this message she was not disappointed; it was like sending a bombshell into a sitting-room in the midst of a family circle, or of dropping a spark into a barrel of gunpowder, or any other experiment of a startling and explosive nature. Mrs. Donnelly’s eyes sparkled, and her lips turned white with rage.

“It is well, it is very well; and you sit there rejoicing in your cool malignity. You are delighted to bring home a message to your husband’s mother which you think will humiliate her; but you little know the character of the woman you have joined that heartless woman to insult!”

“To think that we should have exposed ourselves to her aristocratic insolence for nothing! But it was always against my judgment. Of course she judged of us by our messenger, or she never could have sent such an ungentlewomanlike message,” said Miss Sophia.

“You have strangely failed in the duty and respect you owe to my position,” resumed Mrs. Donnelly, with a catch of her

breath, "in venturing to repeat such gratuitous impertinence; but you, who despised your own parents, cannot be expected to show more consideration to me. Much as I may regret the events of this morning, which must for ever put an end to the acquaintance between ourselves and Lady Southend, both she and you are mistaken if you imagine that the refusal of a temporary loan will either abate the pride or quell the spirit of Honoria Donnelly. I feel myself superior to the paltry spitefulness of Lady Southend."

"I hope, ma'am, you will not be angry with me; indeed I could not help it," said poor Gertrude, in a tone of deprecation.

"To be angry with you would imply an equality, which can never exist," said Mrs. Donnelly, loftily; you can retire. I forgot to tell you that there is a person in the nursery—your mother, I fancy—who is waiting to see you; she has been here some time. Under present circumstances I do not wish to see her; but you will offer her whatever refreshment the house affords. If she wishes for a glass of wine, you can come to me for the keys."

Gertrude thought she could not have heard aright. She turned sick, and clung to the back of the sofa for support. She had barely strength to go up stairs. She tried to make haste; but her feet were as though they had been loaded with a hundredweight of lead, and she stumbled at every step.

As she approached the nursery door, she heard a voice speaking to the child. It seemed as though she could never get in, for her hand trembled so convulsively that she could only make an ineffectual effort to turn the handle. Some one opened it from within—and Gertrude fell into her mother's arms.

CHAPTER XXV.

GERTRUDE wept long and passionately upon her mother's bosom; the conflicting feelings of joy and sorrow and remorse, all the pent up speech of years, were resumed into one chaotic emotion of which tears were the only utterance.

Mrs. Morley, who herself was much affected by this first sight of her daughter after so long a separation, began at length to be alarmed. "Come, my dear child, don't take on in this way; What is it that's ailing you? See, you are frightening baby, who cannot tell what to make of it all."

"O mother!" sobbed poor Gertrude; "how ungrateful you must have thought me. The sight of you makes me feel how ill I have behaved to you; I shall never forgive myself. I was beginning to think you had turned me off, as you never took any notice of my letter; and now I almost wish you had—the sight of you hurts me so."

"I would like to see the person who dared to say you had behaved ill," said Mrs. Morley, indignantly. "You were always the best, and kindest, and most industrious creature in the world; and if you did run away to be married, it is only what many a girl has done before, and will do after you—God help them!—so don't let that lie on your mind. I would have come

to you long since, only your father was contrary and would not let me; and you have found out by this time that a husband is a master when he once takes a thing into his head. As to your letter, I only got it a fortnight ago, on account that Mrs. Slocum forgot it in her trouble. I read it to your father, and Mrs. Slocum talked to him, and the minister called, and I got him to speak. But at first your father would hear no reason, and he swore at Mrs. Slocum for a meddling old fool, and he even spoke rough to the minister, and they had to give it up. Your father is a hard man, but he does not want for goodness; and after a bit, it came out that you had not mentioned him in your letter, except just once at the end, and he felt hurt you did not think him worth speaking of. So then I talked to him and coaxed him, and when he saw how I took on, and was fretting after you, he softened, and told me I might come up to London to see you, and that I might bring you back with me if I liked; and when he did come round, nothing could be more condescending than he was. He knew that I had never travelled alone, so he spoke to 'Fat Sam,' who drives the 'Dart,' to take care of me, and see me safe here. This is his off day, and he would have brought me to the house himself; but I thought he might not just be the person to introduce amongst your grand people, for though he has a kind heart, he is a rough one to look at——”

Gertrude interrupted the torrent of her mother's discourse, to ask how long she had been there, and whether any refreshment had been offered to her.

“Oh, I never once thought of refreshment! I thought I should have dropped when they told me you were out; but I asked to see the baby, and told who I was. The footman who opened the door seemed afraid to let me in; but however he did,

and I waited on the mat whilst he went into the parlour, and he came back followed by an old lady, as high as a duchess in her manners. I told her I was your mother, and said I had come to see you. She looked at me as if I were the dirt under her feet, and at last said that you were gone out, but that if I chose to go into the nursery I might wait there till you came back, though she could not say how long that might be. As I said I would wait, she bid the housemaid show me the way, and walked off, leaving me standing there. I might have been come to see one of the servants by the way she spoke. But I was too thankful to be so near seeing you to feel offended. Who is she? Does she live here? The man called her his 'mistress.' "

"It was old Mrs. Donnelly, my husband's mother. She is very haughty in her manners. I wish I had been at home."

"Oh, I don't care for her, not I; though she is the first, calling herself a lady, who ever showed any pride to me, and I have had to speak to some of the best ladies in the land."

"But," said Gertrude, anxious to turn the conversation, "it is a long time since breakfast; let me get you something to eat."

"Ah, well, I don't care if you do get me a glass of wine and a mouthful of sandwich; but don't let me give any trouble. I brought up a basket of 'Christmasing' with me, just a turkey of my own rearing, and a pork pie, and one or two little things. I left it down in the hall. Some carriage company came to the door, and the old lady walked away so sharply that I had no time to tel her what it was. But," continued she, as Gertrude was leaving the room, "why should you go? Can you not ring the bell? I thought that was one of the comforts of living in a private house. I don't like to see you run up and down to wait on me. I can do without anything quite well till dinner-time."

Her mother's patience and self-forgiveness struck Gertrude with more remorse than any reproaches could have done.

"Oh, mother! Don't speak so kindly to me; I cannot bear it."

"Bless thee, child! How wouldst thou have me speak? I never felt so happy in all my life."

Gertrude went in search of some refreshment for her mother. It was a more than usually barren search; for, on the strength of an evening party at the Honourable Mrs. Carnegie's, Mrs. Donnelly had refrained from ordering a regular dinner, and there was little in the larder. However, by the aid of some of the good things in the hamper, she succeeded in making up a tolerable luncheon, though it was a very meagre substitute for the "Christmas dinner" which Mrs. Morley was in the habit of considering as much a test of orthodox Christianity as salt fish and eggs on Good Friday.

In the meanwhile Mrs. Donnelly had propitiated her own wounded susceptibilities by uttering her opinion very emphatically of Lady Southend's behaviour, and lamenting her own mistake in entrusting so delicate an embassy to Gertrude, to which, on reflection, she was inclined to attribute the failure of her scheme. Somewhat soothed by this idea, and the filial unction of Miss Sophia's sympathy, she gradually subsided into a tolerably comfortable frame of mind. When the hour of dressing arrived she was sufficiently recovered to array herself and her anxieties in her black velvet gown (her robe of state); she also put on a turban with a splendid Bird of Paradise, and postponed all further consideration of ways and means until the next day; so that when Lady Elrington's carriage called to take them to Mrs. Carnegie's, a stranger would have been much more likely to think she was a Queen Dowager than a lady

deep in difficulties. Of course she did not deem it necessary to see Mrs. Morley before her departure. She would just as soon have paid a visit to one who had come to see her servant; and indeed, as she had no hopes that Mrs. Morley would lend her money, she considered her coming at all as a troublesome liberty.

CHAPTER XXVI.

WHILST these events were going on at home, Mr. Augustus was rapidly drawing towards the close of his good luck abroad.

He had managed to bet heavily on the wrong dog, and the conclusion of the match found him a loser to a good amount.

As the party were going off to dinner, a dirty scrap of paper was thrust into his hand, bidding him look to himself, as the bailiffs were on the watch to arrest him outside the door. Mr. Augustus made his escape through a window, and going through back streets and by-ways, reached his own door in safety.

A loud peal at the door-bell startled Mrs. Morley and Gertrude, as they sat by the glimmering light of the nursery fire, and immediately afterwards the voice of Augustus was heard calling impatiently from below.

“What *can* have happened?” said Gertrude. “Something must be very wrong to bring Augustus home at this time.”

“Bless the man! he will awaken the baby,” said Mrs. Morley.

“Go, go, and see what is the matter. Your father can never bear to be kept waiting; he will call the house down if nobody goes.”

Gertrude went down stairs as quickly as she could, with trembling limbs. There was no light in the hall; but she found her way in the dark to the dining-room, the door of which was open.

There she found her husband thrown back in a large chair beside the fire-place, with his head sunk upon his bosom. The fire was extinct, and the cinders were strewn about the hearth.

A single dip-candle stood on the table, with a long unsnuffed wick, and a thief on one side was guttering it away. He looked up as she entered.

“You have been a long while coming. What were you doing?—and where’s my mother and Sophy?”

“Oh, Augustus!” said Gertrude, quite frightened at his sombre looks and disordered dress. “What is the matter? are you ill? What has brought you home?”

“Oh, nothing; don’t bother,” said he, roughly shaking off her hand. “Why do you look at me in that way?”

“Because I am frightened; you look so strange.”

“It is no wonder. I am not drunk, as you seem to think; but it is all up with me. I owe more money than I can ever pay; and I shall go off to France to-night, or else I shall be inside a prison to-morrow. I wish my mother were here. Why did she go out when she knew how things were?”

Gertrude shut the door, and then returning to her husband, she said, “Augustus, if you are ruined, tell me. I have as much right to hear about it as your mother. I am your wife, at any rate; and perhaps I can do more to help you than you fancy.”

“What can you do?” he replied. “I suppose you did not bring a pocketful of bank-notes from the old lady this morning; and if you did, it is not a few that would help me.”

Gertrude shook her head.

“Ah, I never expected you would get anything,” said he. “I’ll forgive her not doing anything if only she does not set her son against me.”

“If you could only persuade these people to wait a little, I could work and earn money to keep myself and the baby; and then, perhaps, Lord Southend would be back, and he would advise you what to do.”

“My poor Ger.! What good would your work do? But you are a good girl; and it is thinking what will become of you that makes me so low. I can rough it for myself; but what will you do?—for I must off away from this.”

“Oh, don’t think about me,” said Gertrude. “I shall do very well. My mother came to see me to-day; my father is quite reconciled. Won’t you come upstairs and see her. I am sure she will advise us for the best. My father always goes by what she says.”

Poor Gertrude knew nothing of affairs; but she felt a pride in putting her mother into the seat of Mrs. Donnelly.

Reckless and thoughtless as Augustus was, he felt a twinge of shame at being introduced to his wife’s mother under such circumstances.

Gertrude did not perceive his hesitation, she was trimming the candle.

“Remember, you must tread very softly, for baby is asleep. What a long time it is since you saw her in her little cot. She looks a perfect angel!”

The introduction between Augustus and his mother produced a mutually favourable impression, for he was extremely good-looking, and had a gentlemanly address. When he embraced Mrs. Morley and called her “Mother,” all her latent prejudices against him were dispersed at once,

and Gertrude stood completely absolved for running away with him.

After a few moments, Gertrude reminded her husband that he had come to consult her mother. Gertrude's notions of "being ruined" were extremely vague and picturesque; moreover, she felt a glow of pride in the idea that she and her mother were going to advise Augustus all to themselves, and without Mrs. Donnelly; so she may be pardoned if she did not feel nearly so miserable as circumstances seemed to require.

As to Mr. Augustus, he would rather have been excused entering into details; but there was no help for it. He therefore gave Mrs. Morley and his wife a rhetorical account of his affairs, making them look not like vulgar debts, but gentlemanly embarrassments, which would disappear, and even become eventually sources of prosperity. He succeeded in talking himself into good spirits; and as Mrs. Morley promised that Gertrude and the baby should never want a comfortable home, his most legitimate source of anxiety was removed.

With all her prepossession in favour of her son-in-law, Mrs. Morley was glad that he purposed borrowing from somebody else, and not from her; and she now used her influence to get him safely off.

Mr. Augustus again embraced his mother-in-law, and declared she had given him new life in promising to take care of his adored Gertrude; that so long as she was sheltered he did not for himself heed the "frowns of fortune."

He declared to Gertrude, as she was packing a carpet-bag, that her mother "was the most sensible woman he had ever known." Gertrude, who had of late been kept on a very short allowance of kind words, felt happy in spite of herself, and the excitement of packing up kept her from realising that Augustus

was going to leave her. But when the carpet-bag was closed, and Augustus equipped in a rough pilot coat stood ready to depart, her tears began to fall apace.

“O take me with you, dear Augustus! I don't care what becomes of me if I may be with you.”

“Impossible, my dear girl,” said he, disengaging her arms from his neck. “You shall come to me the first moment I can receive you. But you must not send me away crying; for if you cry I must keep you company. Come, give me one more kiss; I have not a moment to lose.”

Gertrude tried to slide Lady Southend's present into his waistcoat pocket; but he put it back, and would only take two guineas, as he said, for “good luck.”

Mrs. Morley, who had been fumbling in her pocket-book, now brought out a five-pound note, which she stuffed into his hand, disguising her feelings at the same time by saying sharply:

“Now, Gertrude, do not hinder him one minute longer, I desire; there is no time to lose.”

Mr. Augustus, glad to end the scene, which had become uncomfortably tender, hastily kissed his wife, and pulling his hat over his eyes, shouldered his carpet-bag, and made his exit the back way. Thanks to the dense fog, he escaped the men who were watching for him at the corner of the house, and reached the packet in safety, which landed him at Boulogne, where he had leisure to await any new stroke of fortune which might be in store for him.

Mrs. Morley allowed Gertrude to have her “cry” out after the door had closed upon her husband, and then she undressed her and put her to bed, as she used to do in years long past; and many may think this exchange of a husband for a mother was in Gertrude's favour. However that may be, Gertrude,

exhausted with all the fatigues and emotions of this eventful Christmas-day, soon fell into a deep sleep, which even the return of Mrs. Donnelly and Sophia did not disturb.

Great was the astonishment of those two ladies when they heard what had occurred during their absence. Mrs. Morley waited upon Mrs. Donnelly and gave her the history of her son's flight. If anything could have added to that lady's dismay at the step Augustus had taken, it would have been to find that a stranger had been made aware of the family difficulties; and that a stranger, a common plebeian woman like Mrs. Morley, should actually have assisted at the crisis; whilst she, his lawful mother, was absent and unconsulted! It was indeed a touch of Nemesis that amply avenged Gertrude for all the insults which had been poured out upon herself and her connexions. Mrs. Donnelly attempted to carry matters off in her usual lofty style, but Mrs. Morley did not care for her, nor was she in the least impressed by her magnificent pretensions. She had been nettled by Mrs. Donnelly's manner to her in the morning, and she was not sorry to have an opportunity of "speaking her mind candidly," which always means abusing one's neighbour by telling those truths which, for the sake of peace, Truth generally keeps at the bottom of her well, far out of the reach of politeness to fish up, however well inclined. The end of it was, that Mrs. Morley declared her intention of taking away her daughter the very next morning, "and never to darken Mrs. Donnelly's doors again."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE next morning Mrs. Morley was up betimes. Gertrude still slept: she was exhausted by all the emotions of the previous day, but even in her sleep she felt the blessed sense of relief and repose that her mother's presence had brought.

Mrs. Morley was meanwhile on the alert, busily employed in looking out Gertrude's effects and packing them up, for they were to go by the "Dart" at ten o'clock, under the auspices of "Fat Sam."

When Mrs. Morley left home she had some floating ideas of being on a visit for a day or two, and of being taken to see some of the London sights by Gertrude and her husband, for this was her first time of coming to London. All these ideas had, however, been speedily dissipated by the first aspect of the reality of things; now her one great desire was to take Gertrude and the baby back with her as soon as possible, and never to let either of them go away from her as long as she lived. She sighed bitterly at the sight presented by Gertrude's wardrobe; all her under-garments had been worn and mended and darned till they were very curiosities of thrift and penury; there were expensive articles of finery—fine head-dresses, fine bonnets, one or two expensive shawls, several silk dresses, some evening dresses, and much that the worthy woman considered

as trash and trumpery, but not one single warm, comfortable winter cloak or dress.

The fact was, that Gertrude had always felt an invincible dislike to ask her husband for money, whilst Mr. Augustus had an insuperable dislike to parting with it for any legitimate and regular expenses; he was not stingy, for he could not keep a guinea in his pocket, but he nevertheless always liked "to have ready money about him," and what between the occasional repayment of the sums he borrowed and the sums he messed away in idle expenses, it was difficult for Gertrude to obtain enough to meet her household expenditure. A regular allowance for herself was of course not to be thought of, and when she was forced to abdicate in favour of Mrs. Donnelly, her control over money ceased altogether.

Augustus from time to time bought her extravagant and useless presents, but of all personal comforts she was left more destitute than the wife of a working man. In the solitude of her nursery she was free to darn and to mend in peace; but there was no one to give her the means of buying the commonest necessaries for herself.

Mrs. Morley sighed as she regarded these evidences of her daughter's thrift, and resolved she should never have occasion to see them more.

When the packing was all done, Mrs. Morley proceeded to see after breakfast. The insight she obtained into the house-keeping arrangements of Mrs. Donnelly shocked her comfortable soul, and the idea of the privations to which Gertrude had been subjected hurt her much. But she should never come back "to be trampled under the feet of their poverty-stricken, poor, mean, pitiful Irish pride! Oh, if I had only guessed how things were going on, I would have gone down on my knees to

have persuaded her father to have her away from them before now! Simon is a hard man, but he would not starve a dog; and he will feel badly enough when he hears that a child of his has been put upon by beggarly Irish quality, as they call themselves; but quality is quality everywhere, and I know it when I see it, which is not here!”

Mrs. Morley was blowing the kitchen fire vigorously during this soliloquy; the “coals for the day” had not been given out, and it was a difficult task to coax the remnants of the half-burned cinders to a blaze. The kettle at length boiled, and Mrs. Morley—finding no tea, and the tea-caddy of course hermetically closed—sent out the footman to buy a quarter of a pound of the best hyson and some loaf sugar, stimulating him with the promise of “something” for himself when he came back.

Mrs. Morley looked like an impersonation of the Goddess of Plenty in the realms of Famine, and the maid-servant who was called the “cook”—which seemed a piece of practical irony—looked on with admiring eyes, saying from time to time, by way of averting from herself all the evil that might result—

“I don’t know what the old lady will say to all this!”

“Never mind the old lady just now, my good girl, she will lay no blame on you; see if that fire will toast a round of bread—I think it will. Where is that hamper I brought yesterday? Has it been unpacked?”

“It is just, for a wonder, where Mrs. Augustus left it. The old lady does not know of it yet, or it would not be much you could find.”

This was not precisely true—the cook and the footman had ventured to take tithe of some of the good things that came readily to hand; but Mrs. Morley did not disturb herself about

that, she took out the home-cured ham, and fried several slices—boiled a few of the new laid eggs—and, in short, prepared a breakfast on a scale of sumptuousness that had never been seen in that kitchen, at least not during the present dynasty. She made the tea, and then told the cook she was welcome to the rest and to the remaining white sugar; desiring her to carry the breakfast upstairs to the nursery, she proceeded to restore order to the rifled hamper, and desired that Mrs. Donnelly might be told, with her compliments, that it was a basket of Christmasing she had brought with her out of the country.

Mrs. Morley felt an emotion of pride at the thought that Mrs. Donnelly would see one of her turkeys and one of her pork pies, and learn that such things were not luxuries where Gertrude came from; yet she would have disclaimed with scorn the idea of attaching the least importance as to what Mrs. Donnelly might think. But, if it were possible to keep a record of our fugitive emotions of vanity, we should be more heartily ashamed than we have the grace to be of our deadly sins—none of us *could* plead guilty to them, we should indict the recording angel himself for making false entries!

Mrs. Morley stood beside her daughter's bed with the breakfast she had prepared. Gertrude opened her eyes, and felt like one still dreaming;—

“Is that really you, mother? How long have you been there?”

“Yes, it is really myself—bless thee, child! it seems so natural to have you again, I cannot believe I have lost you for so long! But come, rouse up, and eat some breakfast, we have little time enough to turn ourselves in—you must dress as sharp as you can. There! is it good? that is *home* fare once more!”

“But, mother, what have you had? It is a shame for me to

lie here, and you to wait upon me after all your long journey, and no rest for you yesterday."

"Never fear for me, I will take care of myself, I warrant you—do not hurry over your breakfast, but when you have done, dress yourself, and by that time we shall be all ready to start. That nurse of yours seems a good willing girl enough, but, gracious me! she takes as long to dress and set herself out as if she was going to court—she cannot leave loose of a thing when she has once taken it up—it seems to stick to her fingers. I must go and hurry her: I shall come back to see if you want anything."

Mrs. Morley bustled out of the room, and partly by dint of example and partly by doing nearly everything herself, the breakfast was despatched, the baby was dressed, and the nurse was ready in a wonderfully short space of time.

"Now, Gertrude, whilst that footman runs for a coach, you had best go in and say 'Good bye' to the old lady. I hope it will be many a long day before you say 'How do you do' to her. I shall not see her again; she does not want to see me, and I am sure I don't want to see her—there's little love lost between us. If I were to be proud, I would wait until I had some money to keep it up on if I were in her place—poor pride is worse than poor spite. She calls herself a lady, and looks down on you, but she has nothing of a lady about her except the fancy."

Mrs. Donnelly had not yet rung her bell, but Gertrude considered that she could not well depart without taking leave of her husband's mother, and determined to run the risk of disturbing her slumbers. She wished to part from Mrs. Donnelly on friendly terms, and the scene with Mrs. Morley on the preceding night had sorely ruffled Mrs. Donnelly's susceptibility.

She softly opened the bed-room door; the dim light of a December morning very faintly lighted the room, which was in great disorder with the evening's finery and the morning shabbiness littered about in all directions.

"Who is there?" asked Mrs. Donnelly, querulously.

"It is I," said Gertrude, gently; "I am come to say good bye before we start."

"To start? Why, where are you going now?"

"Home," replied Gertrude; "father gave my mother leave to bring me back with her, and Augustus said he was glad for me to go there."

"Oh, very well—then of course I can say nothing; it was settled without reference to me, and it is natural you should wish to be out of our family adversity. I do not blame you. I am glad there is a refuge for you and the baby—it will be one anxiety off my mind. Good bye, Gertrude, and I wish you well; your behaviour to me has ever been what it ought to be. I hope I have always done my duty by you as my son's wife, when your own people cast you off. Never forget you are a Donnelly, and you may always feel assured that you have a friend in me, and when I have a home to offer you shall be welcome."

The old lady's voice came tremulous and quavering through the folds of her ample night-cap, and when Gertrude stooped to kiss her she felt quite softened towards her, she looked so ill and miserable, with her eyes swelled up with weeping. For one moment Gertrude had the passing idea to offer and stay with her, if she could be of any comfort; but at that juncture Miss Sophia roused herself to appear conscious of what was passing, and said in a sharp tone—

"Oh dear, if you are going, do set off; you have left the door open, and there is a draught to freeze one coming in."

“God bless you, Gertrude,” said the old lady. “I will let you know what becometh of us; you can write and tell me how you get home. My arrangements to leave this house will not be completed for some days to come. Good bye; kiss your baby for me.”

“Good bye, Sophia.”

“Good bye, Gertrude. I wish you a good journey.”

And so Gertrude parted from her husband’s family.

She found her mother waiting impatiently for her—the coach was at the door, and all the luggage on the roof. Her mother astonished both the cook and the footman with a Christmas-box so liberal, that the cook put the corner of her apron to her eyes in token of sorrow for the departure of her young mistress, whilst the man showed his gratitude by banging the coach door with enthusiasm, and desiring the man to drive as if he had the Queen and her mother inside!

They reached the coach-office in good time.

“Fat Sam,” the coachman, had become extremely uneasy at Mrs. Morley’s absence. She had been committed to his care, and he was responsible for her safety. He was just about to dispatch a messenger to know if anything had gone wrong.

“Fat Sam” was a specimen of the prize stage-coachman of former times. He was certainly very vulgar and very burly; but he was a rough honest-hearted man, full of kindness and good feeling. In his younger days he had been an ardent admirer of Mrs. Morley, and no second object had ever effaced his early love. He took to the road to get over his disappointment, and he still revered Mrs. Morley with a loyalty and devotion that any woman might have been proud to inspire.

As the clever and prosperous mistress of the “Mettingham Arms,” she had won his respect, and he looked up to her with

little less reverence than he would have felt for the Queen herself. "Fat Sam" came to the door himself to let them out of the hackney coach.

"Here we are, Sam!" said Mrs. Morley, shaking hands with him, which pleased Sam mightily, because it was in sight of the whole coach-office, and of the guard and coachman of the Bristol mail, just then on the point of starting.

"You remember Sam, do you not?" said Mrs. Morley, turning to Gertrude, with a certain timidity, for she feared Gertrude would be shocked at his familiarity, whilst she was anxious that Sam's feelings should not be hurt.

"To be sure I do," replied Gertrude, recollecting with compunction the airs of impertinence in which she had indulged herself towards Sam in former times, when she was home for the holidays; "I am very glad to see you again," and she shook hands with him with a frank friendliness that enchanted him. He had always thought her a very fine young lady, but now she seemed to him like her mother.

There was no time, however, for conversation; he hurried them into his coach—saw to their luggage—heaped upon them all the coats and rugs he could find, till there was some danger of their being stifled, and then he mounted the box—touched his horses—and at the cry of "all right;" they dashed forward on the road HOME.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE coach drove merrily along; it was a fine, clear, frosty day, the very ideal of Christmas weather, when they had once got clear out of the fog and smoke of London.

Gertrude's spirits rose with every mile. Whenever the coach changed horses, or "pulled up" for a moment, the red good-humoured face of "Fat Sam," shining from the midst of surrounding capes and shawls, appeared at the windows, to see if "Mrs. Morley, or young Madam," wanted anything. Those were the good old times of stage-coach travelling, when the pleasure and convenience of the passengers were more regarded than the "time" at which the coach professed to be due; and when an hour more or less was nothing, provided the passengers made it agreeable to themselves. As Mrs. Morley and her party were the only "insides," they, of course, had it all their own way.

The baby bore the journey beautifully, and delighted its grandmother by crowing and clapping its hands at the horses, and laughing in "Fat Sam's" beaming face when he laughed and chuckled to it.

Towards five o'clock this happy glow of spirits subsided. Mrs. Morley began seriously to speculate upon the probable reception she should meet with from her husband, who might, very likely, be angry at the liberal interpretation she had given

to his gruff consent to see Gertrude again. It was quite certain he did not contemplate taking her back for that indefinite period "until her husband should be in a position to receive her." Gertrude, on her part, was naturally very anxious and uneasy; she was in low spirits about Augustus; and as the journey drew to a close she felt a great sinking of heart at the prospect of meeting her father. She would thankfully have protracted the journey, if not for ever, at least for a long time. The baby and the nurse both slept in happy indifference; it was not their business to know whither they were going.

At length the coach stopped at the end of a lane that branched off from the main road. A covered cart drawn up by the road side could be distinctly discerned by the coach-lamps, and the dull gleam of a large horn lantern suspended to the shafts.

"Have you Mrs. Morley inside?" shouted a rough voice, in a strong country accent.

Mrs. Morley let down the coach window, and looked out through the darkness. "Well, I had no notion we were so near home. Is that you, Bill Stringer? How is your master?"

A stout countrified man, in a smock-frock and a wagoner's hat, came forward on hearing her voice.

"Yes, ma'am, I'm here. Master is quite well, thanks to you; he said he did not know whether so be you would come for sure to-night, but that leastwise I was to come to meet the coach."

"Fat Sam" did not disdain to lend his own imperial assistance to get the luggage transferred into the cart, and he reverentially assisted Mrs. Morley to alight.

The keen air woke up the baby, which began to cry, and they all felt that bewildered uncomfortable chill sensation which coming off a night journey always brings with it.

At length they were all safely deposited inside the cart, which

was furnished with a bench on each side, covered with well-stuffed feather cushions, and the boxes were piled as they might, either amongst the clean straw at the bottom, or on the seat, till Bill Stringer could scarcely recover his place.

“We are all right now, Sam,” said Mrs. Morley. “Good night, and thank you kindly.”

“Good night, ma’am; you’ll remember me to Mr. Morley, and tell him I should be proud to see him again; the old place does not look right without you both.”

The horses obeyed Sam’s well-known signal, and set off at full gallop; the sound of the wheels ringing upon the smooth frost-bound road was heard for some distance. At length, the driver having scrambled to his seat, the cart plunged with a jerk down the dark rough lane, which had never known any other repairs than from the frost in winter and the sun in summer. There were a few stars visible, but no moon; and the lantern that dangled in front of the cart cast grotesque goblin-like shadows upon the black bare hedges and embankment.

“Where are we going, mother?” said Gertrude; “this had not used to be the way to the ‘Mettingham Arms.’”

“And it is not now, child. I did not tell you before, because I wanted to surprise you a bit. We have left the old place, and live now quite at our ease; you will have nothing to put you about now. Ah! if you had only stopped at home all would have come right, you would not have had to stop long in the bar; but, as I always told your father, we had no business ever to have put you there. Your brother and his wife have the old place now.”

The cart jolted along over the rough iron-bound ground for some time longer, and then entered a gate which seemed to

open into an avenue, for it was planted on both sides, and the ground was very smooth and in good repair.

“This is the foredrift that leads to our cottage,” said Mrs. Morley; “it is very pretty in the summer, and keeps us quite private.”

At the end of about a quarter of a mile the cart stopped before the porch of a house standing in a farm-yard. A dog came out barking with delight, and jumping up round the horse; a buxom comely woman appeared at the door shielding a candle with her apron; over her shoulder was seen the portly figure of Simon Morley. Gertrude turned sick with agitation as she heard her father’s voice calling to the dog.

“Be quiet, ‘Vick;’ down, miss—kennel!” And directly afterwards he stood at the side of the cart to help her mother down, who was the nearest. “Well, missis, and so you are come back! Who else have you there?”

“Hush!” whispered she, “it is Gertrude; speak kindly to her, Simon, for my sake.”

Scarcely able to stand, Gertrude was lifted down by her father—he kissed her, and bid her go into the house and warm herself.

“How many more have you got?” said he, as the nurse and baby next emerged into sight. “Who does this belong to?”

“It is your own lawful grandchild, Simon Morley; you could not expect I should leave it behind.”

“I never said you could, did I? You women are so sharp always. Walk forwards, young woman; mind the step. There, Stringer, never mind the boxes, I will see to them. Get the horse out and rub it well down; it will catch its death of cold whilst you stand bungling here. Come, look sharp, will you?”

Simon Morley hated everything like a manifestation of feel-

ing. He was glad to see his daughter again, but he was ashamed to show it, and he felt awkward at not knowing what to say to her ; so he made a great noise, and spoke roughly to everybody that came in his way, and pretended to be very busy bringing in the luggage.

Gertrude in the meantime had gone into the large red-tiled kitchen, where a fire was blazing, before which a turkey was roasting. The chimney-place, like those in most farm-houses, was as large as a small room ; her father's arm-chair stood on one side with a round table before it, with his tobacco-box, a sporting newspaper, and a large tankard of ale ; a long oak settle occupied the opposite side, and the walls of the recess were hung with an array of shining kitchen utensils and brilliant copper pans.

At the end of the kitchen two farm-servants were eating their supper at a large dresser that went along the whole side of the wall. They looked very stupid, and did not seem to know whether they ought to go on eating or to rise to give their assistance. After a moment's awkward wondering look towards the door, they finished their bowls of bread and milk, and then proceeded to attack an enormous cheese which stood before them, flanked by an equally large brown loaf.

Gertrude gazed round as in a dream ; she did not know where she was, nor how she had come there. She was at home, but she saw nothing she had ever known before ; with the exception of the arm-chair, there was not a single object she recognised. Mrs. Morley was upstairs, getting the best room ready for Gertrude. The ploughmen, having finished their supper, pulled off their shoes, and went up a staircase that was at that end of the kitchen. As if he had waited for their absence, Simon Morley came in as soon as they were gone.

“Come, miss, don’t hang down your head in that way; let us see what London manners are—give me a kiss—I am glad to see you and the baby too. I’ll look at it to-morrow when it is not so tired. Here, wife, where are you. You had best go and see what your mother is about, and take the baby with you; there, that will do, don’t cry, that does no good; I am glad to see you, and there is an end of it.”

Mrs. Morley came back at this juncture, and carried them all off.

“You must not mind your father; he is rough, but he means well; it is only his way; don’t seem frightened or distant, it hurts him, and makes him think you don’t care for him, and he has a deal of feeling, though nobody would think it.”

The good-looking servant-maid, bearing a flaming pan of coals to light the fire, put an end to all conversation, and the baby beginning to cry violently, occupied all their attention to get it fed and quieted, and put to bed.

When they returned to the kitchen, Simon Morley had resumed his place in the chimney-corner, and was pursuing the details of the grand coursing-match in which he had been interrupted, whilst the servant laid the table for supper. He looked up from his paper when they entered, and made room for his wife beside him.

“You see,” said he, “I did not know for sure whether you would come to-night, so I did not let them make a fire in the parlour; when you are away, I always feel more warm and comfortable-like in the chimney-corner here. I suppose you have not been much used to sitting in the kitchen since you have been away. We are but countrified folks here, and you must take us as you find us; I would rather be easy than genteel any day.”

Gertrude, to whom the latter part of this speech was addressed, replied,—

“I have not seen any place, either kitchen or parlour, so comfortable as this;—any one might be glad to sit here.”

Mrs. Morley watched eagerly every word that passed between her husband and daughter. She felt so anxious for her husband to be pleased with Gertrude, and equally anxious that Gertrude should not be hurt by anything that fell from her father. She had an instinct that they did not suit well together, and that she was the combining element between them. Gertrude and her mother being both fatigued by their journey, there was a good excuse for not sitting longer after supper than to allow Simon Morley to take his “nightcap,” as he called the glass of steaming rum-and-water with a slice of lemon in it, which he swallowed every night in the year, after supper, except when it happened to consist of three glasses instead of one. Mrs. Morley generally mixed it for him, and took a portion for herself in a small old-fashioned glass goblet, engraved with her initials on one side, and sundry masonic tokens on the other. She pressed Gertrude to drink with her; but Gertrude, who disliked the taste of all beverages except pure water, declined. Simon Morley gave a contemptuous grunt, and said,—

“I suppose genteel people don’t drink such things.”

It was not that he liked to see women “fond of their glass,” as he phrased it, but in this case he set down Gertrude’s abstinence as a piece of fastidiousness, learned amongst the fine folks she had been with so long, and in those days, drinking water only was not so common even in delicate women as it is now. Gertrude coloured painfully.

“I never thought whether it were genteel or not, I only refused because I do not like it.”

"Come, Simon, this is 'Liberty-Hall;' let people please themselves," said Mrs. Morley, coming to the rescue.

"With all my heart, replied her husband, sulkily, as he knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and reared it against a corner of the fire-place. "I want to force nobody's inclinations, but I don't like to see affectation."

The secret of Simon Morley's dissatisfaction was that he vaguely fancied Gertrude drank water in order that no one might suspect her of coming out of an inn. He was not exactly mistaken, for though it had long become a habit with her, yet in the first instance it was a school-girl resolution, taken when the ignominy of being an "innkeeper's daughter" was first impressed upon her mind. It was hard upon Gertrude to have the penalty of a false motive exacted so many years after date, but nature never omits or forgets, or makes a mistake in settling the accounts of causes and effects; and every thought, every action, however trifling, does in reality produce an effect, though we may not be able to trace it nor to measure it. "The finest hair casts a shadow."

Gertrude looked wretchedly fatigued, and Mrs. Morley rose to see her to her own room.

"Oh, mother! father has not forgiven me yet," said poor Gertrude, mournfully, as soon as they were alone.

"You must not be cast down when your father speaks rough," said she; "it is only his way, and he means no harm by it. He was only sorry just now to see you so pale and poorly-looking; he cannot bear to see folks looking weakly, he always thinks it comes of not eating and drinking enough; you see he has lived amongst rough and ready people all his life, and is not just as considerate in his words as he might be, but he is a good man, and has a kind heart too when you come to know him. So do

“speak up to him a little, for when you are so dashed and so silent, it makes him think you don't like him, and then that hurts him.”

Mrs. Morley kissed her daughter, and having given one more look to the sleeping baby, she left her to her first night's restoration to her father's house. But Gertrude felt she was a stranger there, and that it was not the HOME where she might have that great charm of home—the feeling of liberty, and the repose of being perfectly natural.

CHAPTER XXIX.

IN spite of Mrs. Morley's exhortations, Gertrude *was* afraid of her father, and could not feel at her ease with him. When she met him the next morning, she was stiff and constrained, though she tried to be natural, and did her best to think of things to talk to him about. As might be expected, she was unsuccessful, and he not unnaturally set down her embarrassment to conceit and "fantastic pride." Luckily breakfast was not long about; for Simon Morley had to go to a distant part of the farm, and Mrs. Morley had plenty of business before her, to make preparations to receive her son and his wife, who were coming over from Dunnington to spend Sunday with them, not having been able to come on Christmas-day. Simon Morley had just got into his heavy great-coat, and was on the point of starting, when the baby was brought in by the nurse. Gertrude took it from her, and bringing it up to her father said:—"Won't you look at her? She was asleep last night, and you could not see what she was like."

This would not have been a bad move, but the smart London look of the nurse struck him with displeasure; however, he took the child in his arms and kissed it; the poor baby, unused to such rough kissing and such a strange figure, began to cry, which was unfortunate. The grandfather gave it impatiently

back to the nurse with the observation that "It was very marred," and then, without saying more, mounted his rough-looking pony, and set off to inspect his farm.

Mrs. Morley was called off to the kitchen, where the sound of the chopping-knife, and the beating up of eggs, mingled with the dying screams of the murdered poultry; for Sunday was to be a very grand festival, not only celebrating the visit of her son and his wife, but also the restoration of her daughter to her father's house.

Gertrude was very anxious to be allowed to assist her mother; but Mrs. Morley, who fancied that having forced her daughter to assist her in the bar had been the one great fault and mistake in her bringing up, and the cause of all the unhappiness and estrangement that followed, was determined to profit by experience, and now refused to allow her daughter to lay a finger to anything, or to assist her in the smallest employment, not even in paring apples or stoning raisins. She was either to sit in the parlour and amuse herself, or else be upstairs with baby in the "best room," which Mrs. Morely had given up for a nursery.

Mrs. Morley considered that it was only by treating Gertrude "quite as a lady," that she could make her happy and contented, and prevent her thinking of running away again. She had also the fond idolatrous feeling that many mothers have for their daughters, which leads them to work like slaves to save the daughter from the necessity of stirring hand or foot; they would make a dozen journeys from the garret to the cellar sooner than see their daughter obliged to walk across the room.

It is a very false and ill-judged mode of showing affection; it reverses the order of nature, and it induces an habitual indolent self-indulgence, which, though it may have its rise in a

thoughtless acquiescence, does not fail to be as evil in its influence on the character, as indolence and self-indulgence, by their own nature, must be.

It was no fault of Gertrude's that she was found by her father, on his return, sitting nicely dressed in the parlour, and making up a lace cap, whilst her mother was looking red and hot from standing over the fire in the kitchen. The cap was intended for her mother, as a surprise to her on Sunday; but Simon Morley did not know this, and he thought "it was only of a piece with the rest of her conceit to keep a nurse to look after her child, whilst she sat quite grand in the parlour sewing fal-lals of satin and make-believe flowers."

In the afternoon things went a little better: Simon Morley always took a nap after dinner, and as there was of necessity a cessation of industry in the kitchen whilst the servants dined, Mrs. Morley took Gertrude over the cottage, which was literally as well as figuratively her household god.

She had never been above keeping an inn; and whilst she administered the affairs of the "Mettingham Arms" she had felt a pride in it, and considered it a house that might stand comparison with the best; still to retire from business, and live in a private house on their own land, was decidedly a rise in the world.

"It is not a grand place," said she, "but it is warm and comfortable. I could not bear the old place after you left, all looked so changed; your father bought this to please me, but I should have been quite lost in it for want of something to do if it had not been for the thoughts of making it comfortable and as you would like it if you came back to us. I never had a nail knocked up but I thought of thee, and that some day may-be, I should go round with thee and show it thee."

“You are a deal too good to me, mother, and I don’t deserve to be treated so kindly. I would not go over the house by myself this morning, I waited for you.”

Mrs. Morley thought that no mother had ever been blessed with so kind and good a daughter in this world before.

The cottage was really as pretty a place as could be seen on a summer’s day, and even in the depth of winter it looked peculiarly cosy and comfortable. It was a low, white building—the approach to which was by the “foredrift,” down which they had driven the previous evening, which terminated in a farm-yard, with the usual out-buildings. A porch entrance, covered in the summer with honeysuckle and jessamine, led into a hall with red-tiled floor, on one side of which was the kitchen before-mentioned.

The hall was the place where Simon Morley stored his fowling-pieces and powder-flasks, and whips of every description; whilst his great-coats were hung on pegs against the walls—which were also ornamented with sundry pictures and some pieces of embroidery done by Gertrude when at school; they had been the admiration of all beholders, and universally deemed worthy of being framed and glazed. A bureau of oak clamped with brass, a large dining-table of walnut wood, with innumerable legs, and sundry heavy chairs, of the same material, with black leather seats, stood against the walls, and seemed to defy any undertaking to remove them. A looking-glass, in a carved black frame, surmounted with peacock’s feathers, slanted from the wall over to the fire-place, which was filled with holly; and a large corner cupboard, with glass doors, was filled with Mrs. Morley’s best glass and china.

Beyond the hall was the parlour, raised above it by a single step—a small, comfortable, but somewhat stuffy room, furnished

in an old-fashioned homely style. Two large arm-chairs stood on each side of the fire-place ; beside Mrs. Morley's chair stood a spider-legged table, on which her knitting lay, whilst a slab fastened to the tall wooden chimney-piece, on her father's side, held his tobacco-box and spectacles. Here the worthy couple used to sit opposite to each other when they were not otherwise engaged, and every night they smoked their pipe together ; for Mrs. Morley smoked as well as her husband ; and whoever had seen them sitting there would have thought that they looked very comfortable. Portraits of Mr. and Mrs. Morley hung against the wall, and the likeness of his striped waistcoat and of her best cap was very striking indeed.

A glass door in the hall opened upon a large coach-wheel grass-plot, which was just under the parlour window. The garden was a large one, and laid out in the old English fashion of long gravel walks, edged with box, and leading to an alcove summer-house which stood on a mount opposite to the house. Gertrude was earnest in her expressions of admiration.

“It is a very pretty place in summer, though you cannot judge of it now. We have plenty of flowers and roses growing all over the front of the house, and climbing into the windows. It is too cold for you to see the dairy and those places ; but come upstairs and let us see the baby. A little darling ! it is the best and sweetest child I ever saw—just reminds me of what you used to be at that age.”

CHAPTER XXX.

At length Sunday morning came. It was a fine, clear, frosty morning, and the window-panes were covered with fairy landscapes in hoar frost. Gertrude presented the cap she had made to surprise her mother, who was delighted with it; but still more pleased that Gertrude had worked a watch-paper in coloured silks for her father, who received the offering graciously enough; it explained, in some degree, Gertrude's occupation, of which he had judged so hardly.

By eleven o'clock, Simon Morley, junior, and his wife and child drove up in one of the Mettingham chaises; he had grown very stout and florid, and wore drab small-clothes, and white stockings; an immense gold chain and a bunch of seals dangled at his fob.

He was very much surprised to see Gertrude, of whose arrival he had not heard; he greeted her affectionately, and with more gentleness than formerly, and introduced his wife to her, bidding them become acquainted as sisters ought to be. The babies were then introduced to each other, which was not very successful, for they both began to cry.

Simon Morley speedily took possession of his son, to get his opinion of a new cart-horse and some stock he had recently bought.

The ladies retired to the nursery. Mrs. Morley, indeed, could give them but a very divided attention; for she had continually to look after things down-stairs.

The two sisters-in-law did not get on very well together: of the two, Gertrude almost preferred Miss Sophia. Mrs. Simon Morley, junior, was rather good-looking, but with an expression which was somewhat repelling; she was very silent and composed in her manners, though she gave the idea of being constantly on the watch to pass judgment upon everything; added to this, a peculiar mode of holding her head gave her the air of being constantly offended and displeased. She was extremely silent, and it was next to impossible to draw her into conversation. She was very handsomely dressed in a black satin cloak and a crimson silk dress, very much trimmed.

The baby, which was a stout, chubby boy, looked like the knave of clubs, in a seal-skin cap and gold band, with an enormous cockade of the finest lace on the side of his cap. Still Mrs. Simon had not that comfortable sense of superiority over Gertrude to which she felt she had a right after what she had heard of her run-away match, to a man not worth a farthing. Simon Morley had told his son about Mr. Augustus Donnelly's early application to him for money, and the son had naturally told his wife.

Gertrude was dressed much more plainly than Mrs. Simon; but then her dress, made by herself, had a very superior style about it;—to be sure, something might be owing to Gertrude's graceful figure, but her sister-in-law was not likely to own that to be a reason. Then, too, she felt envious and annoyed to see the splendid worked frock and the silver set of coral-bells possessed by Gertrude's child,—the gift of its noble god-father. Altogether, she felt uncomfortable and out of conceit with her-

self beside Gertrude—which is not the frame of mind to develope amiability.

Gertrude made many inquiries about Dunnington and the old place; whether old Joe, the ostler, was living there still; and whether Ralph, the raven, still hopped about the yard; and whether the old grey parrot were alive. Her heart yearned to her old home, and she would have been glad to hear tidings of the very stones in the street. Mrs. Simon Morley, junior, with her sullen self-complacency and severe manners, chose to think that Gertrude was intending to insult her by asking so much about the old inn, when she had considered it beneath her to live there, never taking into her charitable thoughts how bitterly poor Gertrude had expiated, and was likely to expiate, that mistake.

Gertrude then endeavoured to extract some information about several old friends—the Miss Slocums in particular; but she had touched upon a very sore subject. There was a deadly feud between Mrs. Simon Morley and the whole tribe of Slocums. The eldest had married the young Squire to whom, as we have said, she was engaged, and the match had been very fortunate; she was now a squire's lady, and took precedence of her at church. The second had married a very interesting young clergyman, the bishop's chaplain—and had omitted to send her cards and cake. The youngest was not yet married to any one; but, on the strength of her connexions, considered herself extremely superior to Mrs. Simon. Consequently there was nothing too severe or ill-natured for Mrs. Simon to say of them. There might certainly have been some sins of conceit to lay to their charge, but the chief fault lay in Mrs. Simon's cold, touchy, supercilious disposition.

At length dinner-time came—it was a great relief to every-

body. It was a dinner fit for a lord mayor's feast,—the table being laid in the hall, as the parlour was too small to accommodate it. Gertrude could not forbear smiling at the contrast between the plenty spread before her, and the cheer to which, of late she had been accustomed. But however substantial and sumptuous a dinner may be, the capacity of human nature to do justice to it is very limited; and it is only a small fraction of a feast that falls to the lot of each guest!

When dinner was over, the two gentlemen set to work with their pipes, whilst the ladies felt that all occupation was over, and experienced the need of something to do, as they soon became tired of sitting by and looking on. The conversation that passes at a purely family party is generally very dull; but Gertrude could not help being struck with the difference in Mrs. Simon Morley's manners, when she addressed her father,—she fawned upon him and flattered him in the most unreserved manner, till Gertrude felt quite pained for her; but her manners to Mrs. Morley were not of the same elaborate nature, being, in fact, barely respectful and not at all agreeable.

Gertrude grew dreadfully tired before the evening was over; there was tea, and after that a supper, before it was fairly concluded; and it was not until past eleven o'clock that Mr. and Mrs. Simon Morley stepped into their chaise to return home; and when old Simon wished his daughter-in-law good night, he put a large, handsomely-chased silver tankard, which he had won in a coursing-match, into her hands as a Christmas-box.

If she could have been always amiable and always so well rewarded, she would soon have made a fortune out of her prize temper.

When Simon Morley went to bed that night, he was not

tipsy; but he was in a peculiarly perverse and provoking temper. Drinking always developed a spice of maliciousness in him.

“I’ll tell you what, wife,” said he, “I don’t see why Gertrude is not young enough and strong enough to take care of her child herself, without having a fine madman of a nurse to help her. If she cannot it is time she is learned;—anyway, I will keep no such fizgigs about here. It is enough that you and I have to begin to rock the cradle again at our time of life, without being plagued with nurses. You did not see Mrs. Simon come trailing with a nurse at her heels; she is a solid-minded, sensible woman, and will help Simon both to get a fortune and to keep one. I wish Ger. would take pattern by her.”

“You surely do not mean to compare Simon’s wife to our Gertrude?” said Mrs. Morley, indignantly; for though she seldom argued with her husband, and never contradicted him when he was the worse for liquor, still this was more than she could bear.

She had been annoyed, too, to see her husband give a handsome cup, one of her silver idols, to “a mean, cold-hearted creature,” who, as she said, “only tried to creep up his sleeve for what she could get from him.”

It would have been a great comfort for her to have spoken her mind pretty sharply, though she knew it would do no good. Luckily, Simon Morley gave sonorous evidence that he had fallen fast asleep; so Mrs. Morley was saved from committing an imprudence, and, to make amends, she had the comfort of crying to herself in peace.

CHAPTER XXXI.

NIGHT is *not* the season for meditation : Nature never intended it for anything but SLEEP. The proverb says, that "Night brings counsel," but that is only by adjourning all perplexing points and declining to attend to them till the next day ; to lie awake in the hope of solving difficulties is about as sensible as to look for the beauties of Nature with a magic lantern.

During the night every subject looks black, fantastic, and exaggerated, presenting as many different aspects as there are points in the compass. Nobody need ever expect to get counsel from their pillow except in the shape of sleep.

Poor Mrs. Morley lay awake meditating on the last words of her husband ; she thought of many different schemes for assisting herself, and bringing him to reason, or else "of making him to repent of it ;" but they partook more of "the natural vehemence of the female character" than of any prospect of success. One moment she thought of going away and leaving her husband, taking Gertrude and the baby with her to live where nobody knew them, and take in washing—which, of course, she proposed to do entirely herself, as Gertrude was not to turn her hand to anything. Then again she thought she would speak to her husband, and work upon his feelings to be

kind to Gertrude; but she always felt herself constrained to invent some disagreeable speech for him which worried her quite as much as any actual unkindness of his could have done.

At length morning came, and with the night Mrs. Morley's troubles disappeared, or at least they became more manageable.

Simon Morley had a vague sullen recollection of some dispute with his wife the previous night; he did not well recollect the cause of it, still he did not choose to commit himself by any spontaneous act of amiability; indeed, he felt rather inclined to indulge himself with an ill-humour, which, as everybody knows, is a great luxury sometimes. He preserved a dogged silence, and went out to look over his labourers as usual; but he went off in a dignified cloud, without speaking to his wife or saying when he would be in to breakfast.

Hunger, and the force of habit, brought him back within half an hour of the usual time. Gertrude had gone up to the nursery when he returned, and Mrs. Morley was alone in the parlour. She had got ready for him a basin of fine strong green tea, with delicious cream, which Simon always enjoyed when he had been drinking over night, and Mrs. Morley was famous for making good tea.

He came round after breakfast into rather a better temper; he spoke once or twice of his own accord, and made no allusion either to Gertrude or the nurse, and Mrs. Morley took care not to remind him.

It was market-day at a neighbouring town and he had to attend it, which would keep him from home until night, and this was so much breathing time for his wife.

After she had seen him off, she betook herself to the dairy, where she made a cheese, and then she put away every article that had been brought out during the day, putting off till the

last minute the task of breaking her husband's commands to Gertrude; not that she thought it such a great hardship to dispense with a nursery-maid, but she did not know how to disguise it, so as not to hurt Gertrude's feelings, or make her think she was not a welcome guest.

She found Gertrude sitting alone in the nursery, rocking the baby. "Where's the nurse?" she asked.

"She is packing up her things," said Gertrude. "She told me the day after we came that she should not like to live in such a quiet place, so this morning I told her she might go. I have been thinking that I ought to manage the baby by myself, I have nothing else to do; Mrs. Simon brought no nurse with her yesterday, and her baby is younger than mine."

"Well!" said Mrs. Morley, inexpressibly relieved to find all her difficulties so naturally solved. "Well! I must say that you are the best, and thoughtfullest, and patientest creature that ever lived; but I don't like the notion of your slaving yourself with that heavy baby."

"Oh, it is not in the least too heavy," said Gertrude eagerly; "besides, I don't think my father likes to see the nurse, and he did not seem pleased with me, I fancy so at least."

"Why, you see," said Mrs. Morley, "that your father is rather short in his temper, and he does not like nurse-maids; he thinks them all poor sleeveless creatures; so perhaps it is as well to let yours go; our girl has very little to do, and she will be delighted to help to take care of the baby."

"I wonder how Mrs. Simon manages," said Gertrude, "for she must have her hands full with the house."

"Oh, she takes care of herself, and will never be killed by any work *she* will do, I warrant. As to not bringing a nurse yesterday, it was all her falseness, to curry favour with your

father ; I have no patience with her—a fawning, deceitful thing. And to think of your father being so taken in by her as to give her that silver coursing-cup ; I would not have cared for its going, if she had been a different sort of person.”

Women cannot bear to see presents made to other women before their face, even though it may not be an object they personally covet. There is a natural jealousy in the sex, even amongst the best and most generous of them, and it must be owned that in this instance it was a very aggravating piece of generosity of which Simon Morley had been guilty.

The next day the nurse returned to London. She had a home to go to, and Mrs. Morley made her a present over and above her wages, for her kindness to Gertrude, with whom she had lived since the birth of the child.

Although delivered from this cause of offence, Simon Morley and his daughter did not get on much better together ; he had, in fact, taken a prejudice against her. He might, in time, have forgiven her running away (though a father offended is more difficult to win back than a mother), and he might have grown accustomed to her superior refinement of manners, if it had been atoned for by any substantial basis of prosperity and station ; but, unhappily, Gertrude had made the worst of all possible matches ; she had not only married a man without a shilling, but she had come back with her child to be a burden to him, and there was a very indefinite prospect that she would ever be anything else. He had a mortal antipathy to poor people ; he felt uncomfortable when they were near him, possibly from an ill-defined idea that he ought to assist them, which, however, he never did. He paid his poor rates with an emphatic protest against their injustice, and he never gave away a farthing in charity. So that when his own daughter brought

poverty into the bosom of his family, he felt that he had a right to be indignant, and he hated the sight both of her and the child. If he had been a lawgiver it is to be feared that he would have exposed all the babies who were likely to be chargeable to the parish. His rooted aversion to poverty, as something contrary to nature, had its rise in a better feeling; his own shrewd industry and horror of becoming dependent upon others had, by the lapse of years, all devoted to money-getting, become hardened and withered into his present sordid and unamiable spirit.

Gertrude kept herself as much as possible out of her father's way, and confined herself, with the baby, to the nursery; still they were obliged to be together sometimes, and on those occasions he either did not speak to her at all, or else he would ask her how it happened that, with six hundred a-year and no incumbrances, she and her husband had not kept their chins above water? inquiring with a false jocularly, "how much she thought they could do it for?" There was some justice in his remarks, but he took a cruel advantage of having both all the right, and all the power, on his own side; he showed no mercy to Gertrude, and never spared her a single remark or sarcasm that occurred to him.

Poor Gertrude suffered cruelly; her spirits drooped, as well they might, under this constant worry. She would willingly have delivered herself from it, and gone to live in a garret, and worked for herself, but it was not the least of her troubles that she was powerless to do anything; her child took up all her time. She *must* remain where she was, or starve; her father's hospitality, however grudgingly bestowed, was the only person's she had the shadow of a right to claim.

Gertrude found, by bitter experience, that when people have

once thrown themselves out of the current, they cannot return to it at will. She had left her father's roof and thrown heedlessly away her lawful right to its shelter and protection; she had come back, as he said, to be a burden; she had nothing to do there, her place was with her husband, and she was an incumbrance to him also. She had suffered ignominy and reproaches from her husband's relations on whom she had been intruded; but for those she had cared little—she had a right to be with her husband; but here, in her father's house, she filled no place, she was not wanted, she could do nothing to requite the obligation she received, and no one knows how bitter that is until they have tried it.

Poor girl! she had bitterly suffered for her first false step; all her progress since had been like an attempt to wind a skein of silk by the wrong end. Mrs. Morley did her best to shield her daughter from annoyance, to avert all occasions of collision with her husband. But the strain that was needed to do this was very painful, and the embarrassment and restraint that had been introduced into their domestic intercourse made home unpleasant to all parties.

This state of things was constantly liable to be aggravated by accidental circumstances. One day the servant, who had been rebuked for flirting with one of the plough-boys, chose to revenge herself by grumbling before her master, because Mrs. Donnelly always "would want the new milk for baby," when she had set it aside for cream; and muttering, that if she had known there was "a baby in the family she would never have agreed to come, for that she did not like children, and had not been engaged to help to nurse them."

Another time it chanced that dinner was a little behind, and the excuse was that she had been "nursing baby."

These seem trifling incidents, but they were like the grains of sand that go to pile up a mountain. How much longer things could have gone on as they were is doubtful, but matters were brought to a crisis by a letter received by Gertrude from her husband, when she had been at the cottage about two months.

It was dated from an obscure village near Boulogne. In it he drew a most gloomy picture of his position, and seemed in a very desponding way; in fact, the fine spirits of Mr. Augustus were completely damped. Lord Southend had gone on to Italy, so he had no hopes from that quarter until his return. Gertrude might have borne all this,—feeling a good deal of sympathy certainly, but still without being made much more miserable than she was,—but Mr. Augustus concluded by desiring that she would beg or borrow for him sufficient money to enable him to come back to England, and expressing his intention to come and see “whether her friends would keep him snug from his creditors, until he should have made some arrangement with them.” He then drew a vivid picture of the miserably unhappy condition to which he was reduced;—“exiled in a small village, without a Christian soul to speak to, and nothing to pass on the time, except thinking of his dearest Gertrude and his confounded debts!”

Gertrude, who had hoped that things were mending with her husband, was thrown into great shame and trouble by the receipt of this letter. To be a burden herself upon her father was bad enough, but to bring her husband upon him too—to beg money from him—was something far worse than she had ever contemplated.

Within the last two months she had learned practically what it was to be dependent, and she felt bitterly humiliated that

Augustus should seem so indifferent about it. Her mother found her crying, with the letter in her lap.

“Dear me, it is a bad job,” said she, after she had read it. “I don’t know how we must break it to your father; he is as queer tempered as he can be; all owing,” added she hastily, “to that stupid Bill Stringer laming the new cart-horse, when he took it to be shod last week; and Betsy has just told me that one of the cows is ill, and would not give her milk this morning; so when he comes home and hears it, there will be no containing him in the house. If men did but know how their violent ways break poor women’s hearts, they would be more considerate.”

“I can never tell him about Augustus,” said Gertrude, “and I never will. If I could only get up to London, Lady Southend has promised to give me work, and I might earn enough to keep us all.”

“Bless thee, child! what nonsense thou dost talk. I declare it quite vexes me to hear you. What couldst thou do, I should like to know, with that blessed baby cutting its teeth, and as fractious, the little darling, as it can be, keeping you on the stretch night and day to attend to it? Gaining a living takes you all day long hard work, and sometimes part of the night too; and besides I have no opinion of women working for their husbands; it is taking things the wrong way about, and if your husband is a right-minded man he will not desire it, but work himself to the bone before you should think of it. Leave me to manage your father, I know his humours better than you do, and it stands to reason he can do no good by stopping in those foreign parts; he had best come back, and put his shoulder to the wheel here.”

Gertrude sighed; she had an instinct that her husband had very little notion of putting his own shoulder to it.

Poor Mrs. Morley did not too well know how she was to make her husband "hear reason," as she called it; but she did not tell Gertrude so. That night brought Simon Morley home in a better temper than had graced him for a long time, owing to a good bargain he had made; the horse too was better, so that Mrs. Morley considered she should never have a more favourable opportunity.

According to Mrs. Ellis, there is a certain diplomacy by which all wives may rule their husbands, and guide them in the way they are desired to go. It is a great pity that Mrs. Morley lived before that lady's valuable works were written, otherwise she might have been more successful than she was. Simon Morley, so soon as he understood that his son-in-law had written to beg assistance, desired to see the letter, which Mrs. Morley was obliged to give him, though she would have preferred telling his story her own way. Simon Morley put on his spectacles and deliberately read every word of the letter, and then he said—

"This is the second letter of that young chap's writing that I have seen, and it just confirms the first notion I formed of him; he is a wastrel—an idle, good-for-nothing, whiffing fellow. He is better there than here, but he never will do a pennyworth of good anywhere; and I am not going to put my money into a sack with holes, and I am not going to have him standing about here. Gertrude is welcome to stop here, and the baby too, as long as she pleases, but I'll have nought to do with her husband, and you had best not mention his name to me again, or you and Gertrude may pack out of the house together. A young jackanapes, to talk in that free and easy way of being 'kept snug from his creditors;' may be, I would give them a hint where to look for him, if he puts his nose in here."

After uttering this speech with much emphasis, Simon Morley filled his pipe, and sat majestically enveloped in the clouds that rose from it. His wife had not even the comfort of thinking that he was in a passion, and had said more than he meant, for he was in a provokingly good humour all the rest of the evening. The fact is, he had long expected the appeal in question, and the idea of the vain, idle, thriftless husband in the back-ground, ready to come down and quarter himself on his "wife's vulgar relations," had marred the cordiality of his welcome to Gertrude; he had been lying in wait he had spoken his mind, he felt quite relieved and happy, and as for an opportunity to express his determination, and now that well pleased with himself as if his conscience had applauded him for a good deed. It must be owned that there was some sense in what he had said.

CHAPTER XXXII.

POOR Mrs. Morley retired quite crest-fallen. She was mortified on account of Gertrude, but she was also specially provoked at the grim triumphant look of her husband, who seemed quite to enjoy her discomfiture; but she was not at the end of her resources, and fortune befriended her.

Her son chanced to ride over the next day to speak to his father about some land he thought of buying, and into his ears she poured out her perplexities. We have seen that he met his sister with more kindness and gentleness than of old. Since he had been married he had changed his views on several subjects, and his conscience smote him for not having been very kind to his sister; possibly the matrimonial discipline of his wife's temper had developed his brotherly affection. At any rate he said:

“Well, mother, don't fret about it, and say no more to my father, he is like a rock when he has once taken a thing into his head. Let Ger. and her husband come to us for a while—as long as they like—and the baby can be in our little lad's nursery; it is quite big enough, and they will play together nicely. I dare say amongst us we can raise enough, to fetch Donnelly over,—it is of no use his stopping there—and who

knows what may turn up? His friends exerted themselves for him once before, and may do again if he can only hold on for a while. We must just help him to get up his head a bit,—only I am afraid Ger. won't make herself happy along with us."

"No fear of that, my lad; she is as humble and as meek as an angel; it makes me fairly cry sometimes to see her pride so come down,—so grateful she is for the least thing, and so afraid of giving trouble. But, I say, your wife has an overbearing way with her sometimes; don't let her put upon Gertrude, nor trample upon her."

"I would like to see her attempt it," replied the younger Simon, imperiously. "My wife knows that my will is law, and she dare not set up herself against what I choose,—and I choose that she shall treat Gertrude as my sister."

"Ah, well," said Mrs. Morley, "don't go and say that to her. You had best leave Gertrude to make her own way, for she is so sweet-tempered and so pleasant-spoken, nobody can resist her. No doubt she will know how to please Mrs. Simon."

But the idea of "her Gertrude" having to study the whims and caprices of Mrs. Simon, was almost too much for Mrs. Morley's patience, and she turned away to hide the tears that nearly choked her. Her son, whom the absence of his wife rendered bold did not perceive her agitation, but added in an off-handed manner: "Give my love to Ger. and tell her we shall expect her. Mrs. Simon is no great hand at writing out anything but the bills, so she must excuse a polite invitation, and take the will for the deed—and I will send a chaise over for her some day next week."

"But you will see your sister, and tell her yourself?" said Mrs. Morley.

"No, no, you can explain things better than I can; it would

look as if I were casting up my promises to make her thank me. I am fond of Ger. but I don't know how to talk to her."

When Simon Morley junior returned home he found that the plan, which had looked so easy and delightful when he was at the cottage, grew much more difficult of execution. His wife was in a very bad humour, and the whole house was in a bustle; he therefore made an excuse to himself to delay the communication "till a more convenient season," but in proportion as he delayed, his courage ebbed. He said to himself that he "was not afraid," that he was "master in his own house," and sundry other truisms, which, however, he found untenable, and sat at night in the bar beating his brains for the best method of breaking the matter to his wife. At length he made a bold plunge, at precisely the *wrong* moment. Mrs. Simon was settling her book, and endeavouring to balance a refractory column which showed a deficiency of sevenpence halfpenny. She was in the midst of her third attempt at addition when the thread of her attention was snapped by her husband's saying in an authoritative voice, to disguise his trepidation,—

"I have invited my sister Gertrude and her husband to come and stop with us."

Mrs. Simon went on with her addition, and did not appear to hear him; her husband continued in a louder key,—

"I tell you that I have invited my sister and her husband to come and stop with us. What do you mean by your insolence in sitting there like a post, and never answering when I speak to you? I tell you they shall come here, and stay as long as I please; you may look, but I am not to be put down. I desire you to give orders to send a chaise on Saturday for Mrs. Donnelly."

Mrs. Simon Morley looked at her husband with great contempt, and then said with provoking calmness, but with the supremest disdain,—

“Of course, Mr. Simon Morley, it shall be as you please; nobody ever doubted your right to invite anybody you choose,—send a chaise for your sister by all means; perhaps it will please you to make her the mistress of this house instead of me—pray do. Of course, it will be quite right; I slave myself for you, and save for you, and stint myself of every thing, in order that you may come home and fly out upon me, as if I were the dirt under your feet. I stay at home, and wear my poor soul out of my boby, to keep things going, whilst you go riding about to fairs and markets, and guzzling with everybody who will drink with you.—I am a miserable woman, that I am.”

This tirade, of course, ended in a violent gush of tears. Her husband sat feeling half angry and half foolish; he had not expected such a storm, and he did not know how to retreat with dignity. He knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and said naively.

“I wish you would not talk so much! I am fairly moithered with so many words; do make an end and come to bed.”

But Mrs. Simon Morley would not “make an end;” long and bitterly she scolded on, for though in general silent, when once launched in a grievance, she sustained it with more than ordinary female vehemence, and took care to embrace a wide range of complaint. A stranger would have thought that a separation to all eternity must have ensued, but it was only a matrimonial storm; neither party meant the other any particular ill beyond the annoyance of the moment, and it calmed down, leaving, as was generally the case, Mrs. Simon rather

more confirmed in her influence, and her husband rather more afraid of provoking her than before.

The result was, that the incipient dislike which Mrs. Simon felt to Gertrude was confirmed into a positive detestation. She did not think it prudent to refuse to receive Gertrude altogether, but she had succeeded in receiving her sister-in-law upon the footing it best pleased her, and leaving herself free to wreak any small feminine spite she chose; whilst her husband, content with having carried his point, was afraid to interfere further,—and she took care to give him no pretext. He was delighted to see her despatch a chaise to the cottage on the appointed day, and as if she were bent on showing how amiable she could be, she went so far as to write a note to Gertrude, with a moderately cordial invitation from herself.

Gertrude, though grateful to her brother, did not at all like the idea of trying the hospitality of her sister-in-law for an unlimited period; but she was come to that unhappy pass when she was obliged to feel grateful for “small mercies” of the most unpalatable kind. She was *dependent* upon her friends, and obliged to receive house and shelter upon any terms. Simon Morley, when told of his son’s offer, had declared, “that she could not do better than go;” after this there was no appeal, and Mrs. Morley, with a sorrowful heart, prepared to let her depart. She would herself have accompanied her, but Simon Morley was attacked by a fit of the gout, which not only detained her, but made him so irritable that she was almost thankful to get her daughter out of the house.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE chaise drove the back way into the yard of the "Mettingham Arms," and so avoided going through the town. Everything brought back to her remembrance the day when she came home from school; there was a curious coincidence even in the accidental circumstances. A travelling-carriage was changing horses, and a large party were stopping to dine; the house was in the bustle she so well remembered. Mrs. Simon Morley was busy receiving her guests, and there was no one to welcome her except old Joe, the lame ostler; she could almost have embraced him, he was the only one who remained of the old set of servants.

Gertrude bitterly felt the difference between *then* and now. She stood with the baby in her arms waiting for some one to show her where to go, and feeling more miserable than she had ever yet been,—choked, and suffocated, and wretched,—far too miserable to cry.

In a few moments Mrs. Simon Morley came up to her, and told her, with a dash of patronage in her manner, that she was glad to see her, and begged she would consider herself at home. Her brother came as they were speaking, booted and spurred, and followed by his dogs,—he had been out coursing, and he

had not expected her so soon. He was very pleased to see her, and received her as cordially as he durst for fear of vexing his wife.

“Well, wife, where are you going to put Ger.? Somebody had better carry these things up-stairs. Have you put her into the room next to ours?”

“I have prepared Mrs. Donnelly’s room,” said Mrs. Simon, with an air of putting down all questions; “and if she will follow me I will show her to it myself.”

Instead of turning down the passage leading to Gertrude’s old room, which had, indeed, been once more transformed into a nursery, they mounted a steep flight of stairs that led to the “servant’s story.” Mrs. Simon opened the door of a light roomy attic, with sloping roof and full of beams and rafters, but brilliantly white and clean; two easements stuck into small gables commanded a view of the church, and the country lying beyond. It was furnished sufficiently well for an attic, but without any attempt at extra comfort. There was nothing to complain of in it, and it was decidedly more comfortable than her bed-room at Mrs. Donnelly’s; still it marked painfully the difference between her former and her present position in that house,—between the home she had recklessly cast off and the home to which she was returning, to eat the bread of charity.

“I have put you here,” said Mrs. Simon, “in order that you might feel quite settled; the house is often so full that in any other room I might have been obliged to disturb you. Simon and I are sometimes obliged to give up our room; it is quite wonderful how travelling has increased of late years. I hope you will be comfortable,—pray ask for all you want. There is a nursery down stairs where you can sit with the baby; I dare say you——”

A voice loudly calling at the bottom of the stairs obliging her to leave her speech unfinished, but she had nearly got to the end of all she had to say. Gertrude looked round the room when she was alone; there was no bell, and no fire lighted. It was too cold to indulge long in meditation, and she went down stairs in search of the nursery; glad, at least, to be sure of a comfortable refuge for the baby. Gertrude's brother had been as good as his word. He had received some money for the sale of some wheat, and, without his wife's knowledge, he had written to his brother-in-law and sent him the wherewithal to pay his journey; Mrs. Simon Morley received the remainder of the money, without in the least suspecting what her husband had done with the rest. He had planned to surprise his sister, and had fixed her arrival as near as he could guess for the day when her husband would reach Dunnington. He was rewarded for his pains; for that very evening, as they were sitting down to supper in the little lantern-like bar-parlour, Mr. Augustus Donnelly, somewhat soiled and unshaved, but perfectly at his ease, and on the best possible terms with himself, walked into the room.

CHAPTER XXXIV

Mrs. SIMON MORLEY was a very virtuous woman indeed, but she was not insensible to the soothing voice of flattery, especially when distilled from the lips of a good-looking young man. When Mr. Augustus Donnelly entered in the unexpected manner mentioned in the last chapter, to the great surprise of everybody, except that of Simon Morley, Mrs. Simon was disposed to look extremely displeased and disagreeable; but Mr. Augustus was not an Irishman for nothing,—he had lived by his wits the greater part of his life, and knew the importance of mollifying the mistress of any house where he proposed taking up his quarters. He was an adept in the strategy of that peculiar species of courtship called “cupboard-love,” and he piqued himself upon his skill to draw the teeth, and pare the claws, of the most determined shrew in Christendom. A glance at the face of Mrs. Simon revealed to him the genus of the woman he had to deal with, as a short postscript in his brother-in-law’s letter had enlightened him upon the domestic politics of the “Mettingham Arms.”

The postscript was:—“Do not tell any one that I sent you this money; I have particuilar reasons for not wishing my wife to know.”

“*Les sages entendent à demi mot,*”—and Mr. Augustus proved

himself deserving of the epithet. Before he had been five minutes in the room, Mrs. Simon Morley was under his charm.

After saluting Gertrude, and shaking hands with his brother-in-law, he seated himself by Mrs. Simon, and began to pay her a thousand little attentions, such as the good woman had never received in her life, not even from her husband when he courted her, nor from all the young men whom she had driven to the verge of distraction by refusing "to keep company with them." Mr. Augustus contrived to make her feel that he was decidedly struck with her appearance, and impressed by the fascination of her manners. This was not conveyed in a way calculated to alarm her sensitive modesty, but was combined with a respectful deference to her as a most superior woman. It was wonderful how, in so short a space of time, he had become enlightened upon her choice qualities.

He took his seat by her at table, as if he had lived in the house all his life; and whilst he relieved her from the task of carving the roast ducks, he made some jokes just suited to her capacity, and which made her laugh heartily. But he did not venture to praise anything at table, lest she should think everything only too good for him, but he improvised some compliments, which he declared Lord Southend and the Marquis of Dulcamnara had paid to the "Mettingham Arms" one day, at a white-bait dinner, declaring in the presence of the head waiter, "that there was no inn like it for comfort, either in or out of London;" and he took care to clinch the compliment by dating it quite recently, and within the period of her administration.

Her husband was enchanted to see his wife in so genial a humour, and thought he should have, in his brother-in-law an ally in all his domestic difficulties.

Gertrude did not admire this display of flattery and devotion

to Mrs. Simon. She thought it was only encouraging her self-complacency and general disagreeableness, and could not help thinking how much better women are rewarded for their exacting ill-humour than when they make a practice of trying to be forbearing and habitually amiable. She interrupted the current of compliments, by saying,—

“You have never told us, dear Augustus, how you managed to find your way here so opportunely; I fancied you were still in France.”

Simon Morley junior felt rather uneasy at this question; he underrated the tact of Mr. Augustus.

“Your worthy brother generously told me that his house was open to me whenever I came to England, but for the means of coming here I am indebted to the unexpected generosity of a friend; and do you find it unnatural that I should use my first funds to rejoin you?”

Wives are sometimes hard to be persuaded, even by sweet speeches, and Gertrude would much have preferred that her husband should have remained absent, rather than come to join her as a hanger-on upon her brother. She fancied, too, there was a tone of servility, a vulgar obsequiousness, which she had never observed in him before.

Mr. Augustus was, in truth, much the same as usual. He had the gift of suiting himself to his company, and as he was never over-burdened with delicate perceptions, he could make himself comfortable everywhere. But the curse of being dependent changes the very nature of virtues, and makes what under other circumstances would have been courteous forbearance seem nothing but self-interested endurance; it is a reversed alchemy, for it transforms golden qualities into brazen counterfeits.

Dependence in modern times is what slavery was of old, and

it is equally true of both that it takes all manliness and quality of character out of whoever voluntarily submits to it.

When the party separated for the night, Gertrude retired with the determination of straining every nerve to find employment that should enable her to do something towards supporting herself and the child; whilst Mr. Augustus thought that, as he had fallen into comfortable quarters, he would improve the friendly disposition of his hosts, and enjoy them as long as possible. As to the obligation, he considered that he was a *gentleman*, and, as such, they might feel honoured by entertaining him. He had no conception of gratitude towards persons in their class.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE next day being Sunday, Gertrude went to church with her husband. Mrs. Simon Morley was too busy ever to go to church, except in the afternoon, and Simon himself had no great taste for going at all; still he went sometimes, and slept peacefully through the service. He was what used to be called a "good Church and King man," and would have knocked anyone down who was either an infidel or a jacobin; though his own loyalty was mainly confined to getting very particularly drunk upon the King's birthday, and his Christianity, besides the occasional going to church above mentioned, was shown by giving the boys of the town five shillings, for a Guy Fawkes, every fifth of November.

The church looked as Gertrude had always remembered it, except that the square family-pew, lined with green baize, was rather more moth-eaten; but the prayer-books and hymn-books were those that she had used when she first went to church. The one she took up had her name written in it, in her father's handwriting,—a birthday gift, when she had completed her sixth year.

The asthmatic organ was uttering the old dismal psalm tunes which had taxed the ears and the patience of the congregation for a century past.

Gertrude felt that all the congregation was curiously regarding her; she did not look round, but kept her veil down, and concealed herself as much as possible behind one of the stone pillars. Everything seemed the same as it had been the last Sunday she was there; by a curious coincidence, the clergyman had come round, in the clerical cycle of his sermons, to one she had last heard him preach, and she felt as if the change in her own fortunes were mocked by this unchanged continuance of all that surrounded her.

But when service was over, and the congregation dismissed, and Gertrude, who had loitered till the last, was following the rest, she was stopped at the church-door by several persons who had been waiting for her. Old Mr. and Mrs. Slocum were the first who greeted her. Mr. Slocum had not recovered the severe illness he had had some months before—it had pulled him down sadly; but Mrs. Slocum looked just the same—rather younger if anything.

“My dear Gertrude, welcome back amongst us,” said the old lady, in a quavering voice. “I declare this is quite a surprise. When did you come? Is your mother here?”

But before Gertrude could reply, her hand was snatched and heartily shaken by a tall full-blown young woman, in a magnificent hat and feathers, and a brilliant scarlet mantle, lined with white satin.

“Why, Gertrude, you have forgotten me, I declare!” cried she, in a loud, but cheery voice. “I am Martha Slocum that was,—now Mrs. Greenway; and this is my husband,” continued she, jerking forwards a florid, good-tempered looking man, in yellow buckskins and top-boots, on whose arm she was leaning. “I said it must be you, though I could not see your face, and you were hidden by the pillar, and nobody would believe me.

But, my gracious! how ill you look,—quite pale and thin; not like me. Sam says I am growing so fat, that he shall be indicted for bigamy, for having twice as much of a wife as he married;” and she laughed in her husband’s face, with enviable admiration of his wit.

Gertrude answered as best she could, and introduced Mr. Augustus to them, who acquitted himself extremely well; and Mrs. Greenway, looking at him with curiosity, admitted to herself that any woman might be excused for running away with him.

Poor Gertrude enjoyed a small triumph, in the midst of her sorrows, to see that her husband looked, beside Mr. Slocum and Mr. Greenway, as if he belonged to another race of men, so infinitely superior he appeared; and she was proud of seeing that they all acknowledged it.

It was for this shadowy gratification that she had thrown away the inheritance of her life before she had well entered upon it.

“Well, I am sure we shall be delighted to see you both at Lane End,” said Mrs. Greenway. “Mrs. Simon and I have never visited; but that is no reason why you and I should not be friends again as we used to be. Will you come to-morrow and take a friendly dinner with us, and have a talk about old times?”

Gertrude objected, that she could not leave the baby.

“Oh, the little darling! I will come and fetch you in the phaeton, and you can bring it with you, and it can make friends with our twins, so that is settled. I wonder,” continued she, addressing her husband, “where Joe can be with the phaeton all this time; he ought to have been waiting for us.”

As she spoke, a large roomy vehicle, of no strict denomina-

tion, was driven up by a boy in pepper-and-salt livery and a silver band round his hat. Into this Mrs. Greenway was handed by her husband, who took the reins and seated himself by her side, whilst the servant mounted behind.

“Remember, I shall come for you to-morrow, at eleven o’clock,” cried the lady, in a voice that might have been heard to the other end of the town, and kissing her hand to the old people, the worthy and prosperous pair drove off at a brisk pace.

“There goes a happy woman, if ever there was one!” said Mr. Slocum, looking after the phaeton with glistening eyes—“she has one of the best of husbands, and everything this world can give; and she enjoys it, she is happy, and makes others happy too. Bless you, her husband worships the very ground she treads on! You should see her follow the hounds along with him—it *is* a sight; he has had a scarlet habit made for her, and she looks grand in it!”

“If she were in London, in the park, she would be looked at,” said Mr. Augustus, when there was a pause; “she is a monstrous fine woman, and her husband seems a very nice young fellow; they are a fine couple.

“Aye, that they are, and they are respected by high and low. They have a very nice place of their own; land that has been in the family for generations; and whenever you go you will be sure of a hearty welcome.”

Sunday was always the old man’s grand gala day—every Sunday he had the proud satisfaction of walking out of church with his daughter before all the congregation, and seeing her drive off in “her own carriage;” and he enjoyed this far more than any dignity that could have happened to himself.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

MRS. GREENWAY drove up in her phaeton the next day to fetch Gertrude, according to promise; she entered the bar with a good-tempered jovial consciousness that she was a very fine woman indeed, and that her beaver hat and feathers became her immensely.

Mrs. Simon was sitting at her little table writing out a ticket for a post-boy who was in waiting.

The vicar sat upon the little hard horse-hair sofa beneath the window, reading the London paper—his custom always every morning, and Mrs. Simon liked to have it so, as she thought it gave him the appearance of being a friend of the family; occasionally the vicar's wife and daughter called upon her, and this always gratified her, for they were the sun and stars of her social system.

After shaking hands with Mrs. Simon, who received her very stiffly, and tried to look as though she did not consider her visit any concern of hers, Mrs. Greenway turned to the vicar, and inquired after his family in a friendly, familiar manner, that spoke of intimacy.

She turned again to Mrs. Simon and said,—

“I came to invite you to come to us this evening; we are

expecting a few friends in a sociable way to tea and supper, and Sam bid me say he should see Mr. Simon at market, and would ask him to come. It is so seldom you give yourself a holiday that I hope you will be sociable and come."

Mrs. Simon replied stiffly, that she was too busy to visit—and that, if her husband went out, there was so much the more reason why she must stay at home.

Mrs. Greenway was rather glad to hear it, but hesitated, as she thought it right to declare she would take no refusal.

Gertrude entered in her bonnet and shawl, with the baby in her arms—looking very pretty and lady-like.

Mrs. Greenway rushed up and embraced her, with a boisterous good-will that nearly upset Mrs. Simon's little table, and whisked down her account-book and the bill she had just written out.

"I hope I have not kept you long waiting," said Gertrude.

"Oh, no; I am only just come—and so that is your baby! what a real little darling! I have twins to show you when we go home! Is it not fun to think we should both of us have babies? I declare it seems only yesterday since Matilda, Emma, and I came over to see you, the day you left school for good. Your mother sat just where Mrs. Simon does; the place is not the least changed—only you and I. But I am sure we are filling the bar, and taking up Mrs. Simon's time; she must wish us out of her road. As Sam says, 'One word hinders two blows.' Good morning, Mrs. Simon, and recollect I shall not excuse you—I shall quite expect you."

There was a certain dash of patronage in Mrs. Greenway's manner. Mrs. Simon drew herself up, and said, freezingly,—

"That she had no time for dressing and visiting, and that

Mrs. Greenway could do quite well without her"—which was quite true, but Mrs. Greenway nevertheless persisted,—

"I am sure you are always nicely dressed. We are plain homely people—you can come just as you are. We like our friends to take us as they find us—without ceremony."

Mrs. Simon looked as though she was absorbed in adding up her cash-book, and made no answer. The vicar gallantly rose to escort them to the phaeton, and Mrs. Simon heard him asked to come in the evening with his wife and daughter, for a friendly rubber, whilst the young people might enjoy a round game.

The phaeton clattered out of the yard, and Mrs. Simon, with her temper sharper than ordinary, was left to pursue her domestic cares in peace. She pounced first upon a delinquent housemaid, and gave her summary warning for having neglected to take up the carpet in No. 8 bed-room; she next gave orders that any visitors coming to call for Mrs. Donnelly should be shown upstairs into the nursery. Her husband and Mr. Augustus came in to dinner before the effervescence of her soul had subsided to the level of its banks.

"I met Greenway's phaeton," said Simon, "with Ger. and the baby, and Mrs. Greenway inside; she said she had been to call on you, and she asked me and Donnelly to drop in to supper, and to see Ger. home."

"Very well, Mr. Simon Morley, you can go if you choose; but what with visitors in a morning, and goings out at night, don't blame *me* if the house comes to ruin. I stop at home and deny myself every amusement; I don't even go to church, and I know the vicar thinks me worse than a heathen—just to see myself made of no account, and to be treated like dirt by everybody who comes to the house. I have thought too little of

myself, and slaved myself to death to take care of your money, and this is all the thanks I get! If I had been a wasteful extravagant woman, and flaunted about in a hat and feathers, you would have been in the *Gazette*, but you would have thought more of me; but if I were to lie down and die at your feet, you would not even thank me!"

Dinner being by this time on the table, Mrs. Simon took her place with an indignant bounce, and began to carve a large round of beef with the air of one to whom all the virtue left in the world had fled for refuge, whilst she felt herself scarcely able to protect it. Her husband did not exactly understand what all this talk was about; but as he was pretty well accustomed to these tirades, he shook his ears, made no reply, and ate his dinner like a domestic philosopher.

Mr. Augustus followed his example for a while, but towards the end of dinner he remarked carelessly to his brother-in-law that Mrs. Greenway was a full-blown, high-coloured young woman—that her voice was coarse, her pronunciation vulgar; that she appeared to him to be quite commonplace in her ideas, and to have very little conversation—that her scarlet mantle made her look for all the world like a farmer's wife bringing her eggs and butter to market. He said that in a year or two her figure would have no more shape than a feather-bed, and appealed to Mrs. Simon as to the strong personal likeness betwixt old Mrs. Slocum and her daughter. These observations were all made quite pleasantly, and with the manner of a man accustomed to pass his opinion, and to have it listened to. He spoke in a lofty man-of-fashion tone that was quite imposing.

Mr. Simon Morley had lighted his pipe meanwhile, and sat puffing forth volumes of smoke, without thinking it necessary to make any reply. Mrs. Simon recovered her temper and

smoothed her ruffled plumes wonderfully. She held a light for Mr. Augustus, and mixed him a glass of gin-and-water with her own fair hands; and, taking up her sewing, she began to ask him questions about the parks, the theatres, high society and life in London generally, to all which Mr. Augustus answered as he thought best, and gave her a description of what the queen and all the princesses wore at the last drawing-room, and told her many interesting anecdotes of members of the aristocracy, "personal friends of his own," as he informed her. Mrs. Simon was called out, and whilst she was gone her husband remarked,—

"That his wife was as queer as Dick's hatband; there was no knowing what would vex her or what would please her; but, for all that, she was generally right in her notions, and was a clever woman." To which Mr. Augustus warmly assented.

It is remarkable that, when men have a singularly bad-tempered wife, they console themselves with the belief that is a sign she is "a superior woman."

Meanwhile Gertrude and Mrs. Greenway arrived without accident at "Lane End," as Mrs. Greenway's house was called. It was a large rambling place, built of deep red brick—it was in its pretensions something between a farm-house and a gentleman's mansion. A white five-barred gate admitted the phaeton into a large field, through which there was a broad gravel drive—it was not an avenue, although a luxuriant hedge-row, planted at intervals with stately trees, gave it partially the appearance of one; that field led by another with a white gate, like the former; after which they entered another field, in which, at the head of a gentle rise, the house was situated. A large garden, an orchard, and various farm-buildings lay in the rear.

"We will drive round to the back yard, if you don't mind,

Gertrude; it is so much handier for the horse, and Sam does not like to see the gravel cut up with wheels; it is the one thing he is particular about. I tell him he is like an old maid about it.”

They drove into a large stable-yard, paved with stones. An immense mastiff came out of his kennel to the utmost stretch of his chain, and barked furiously at their advent, and several dogs of various breeds and sizes joined the chorus. A farm-servant came running to take the horse; Mrs. Greenway alighted without any help, and took the baby from Gertrude. They entered the house through a glass door, and went up a wide tiled passage, past the kitchen, a large comfortable place, with fitches of bacon, hams, and dried tongues hanging from the ceiling. Two buxom servant women in print dresses, with tight short sleeves, were busily engaged at the dresser beneath the window—an air of well-to-do plenty reigned in every direction.

Mrs. Greenway took Gertrude at once to the nursery, where with great pride she showed her *twins*, both fast asleep in the same cradle—little, fat, rosy things, hopelessly undistinguishable from each other. Gertrude duly admired them; and then her own baby was taken possession of by the good-tempered-looking nurse, to be fed and put to sleep, whilst its mother was dragged off to see the remaining household gods of Mrs. Greenway’s “hearth and home.” First, they went to Mrs. Greenway’s bedroom, there to take off their things, and to take the opportunity of looking at the grand wardrobe, and all Mrs. Greenway’s best dresses and last new bonnet; her wedding dress was exhibited—stone-coloured satin, with elaborate trimmings of blue gimp.

“Sam declares that this dress shall never be worn out or altered, for it brought him the happiest day of his life. Do you

know we have never had a wrong word together since we were married. I am sure I think he grows better every day. Don't you call him very handsome?"

Gertrude said she thought Mr. Greenway very good-looking; it was no great stretch of candour.

"Here is his wedding waistcoat, which I say shall keep my gown company; it is many a day since he could make it meet round him. But now come and see the parlours."

The dining-room was a large, low room, with a raftered ceiling and bow window; a dark, heavy mahogany dining-table with many legs stood in the centre of the room; a Turkey carpet, with the pattern somewhat worn out, covered the floor; a large pointer was basking before the fire, whilst a tortoiseshell cat dozed and purred in one of the large easy chairs which stood on each side of the hearth-rug. Portraits of Mr. and Mrs. Greenway hung against the wall.

Mr. Greenway was reading a letter, with his name and address legibly written on the back. Mrs. Greenway, seated under a tree, in a hat and feathers, was reading a book bound in red and lettered in gold,—“Fordyce's Sermons to Young Women.”

But the “best parlour” was the pride of her heart; it was on the other side of the tile-paved hall—a low bow-windowed room with a raftered ceiling, like its companion.

It had been new furnished on the occasion of their marriage, and there was a certain air of modern finery about it. The curtains were bright blue, trimmed with red and yellow ball fringe; a pair of pole-screens stood at either end of the chimney-piece—one represented a young lady in a tight muslin frock and blue sash, playing the tambourine, and the other the same young lady feeding a pet lamb. The hearth-rug was the combined work of the three Miss Slocums—a tiger's head sur-

rounded by sprigs of roses. The carpet was covered with red, blue, and yellow flowers, as like nature as could be expected, when every flower was blazoned in its wrong colours. A scrap-screen—a piano—a stuffed fox—a small bookcase with glass doors—a hard grecian-shaped couch, covered with blue moreen, and trimmed with yellow cord—whilst the chairs, cushions, and footstools were to match.

Mrs. Greenway was quite satisfied that her “best parlour” was equal, if not superior, to any other in England; but she chose to be modest, and said,—

“I suppose in London, among the quality there, this room would be thought quite shabby?—would it not now?”

Gertrude tried to conciliate the truth with the household pride of her companion.

“Do people sit every day in their best parlours?” asked Mrs. Greenway again.

“Mrs. Donnelly only used ours on the days when she received visitors.”

“Do tell me about your house—what was it like? and how was your best parlour furnished?” said Mrs. Greenway cagerly.

Gertrude began to comply, but Mrs. Greenway was far too full of herself and her own concerns to care much for listening. Moreover, Mr. Greenway came in from his fields, and it was dinner time.

Mr. Greenway greeted Gertrude with hearty cordiality; he seemed to be very proud of his wife, and asked Gertrude if she thought her changed from what she was as Martha Slocum.

Mrs. Greenway appeared to take great interest in what her husband had been about during the morning, and to know almost as much of farming matters as he did himself. Mr. Greenway appeared to have a high opinion of his wife’s judg-

ment. They were very happy, so thoroughly contented with themselves and each other.

Gertrude had never been in such a warm, genial, domestic atmosphere in her life: they were a well-matched pair.

After dinner the babies were all brought down, and Mr. Greenway left the two ladies to compare nursery notes, whilst he went back to the field to superintend his men, his wife calling after him to bid him come back early, as the people were coming at four o'clock.

After he was gone, Mrs. Greenway gave Gertrude all the details about her marriage, and indulged in a few natural reflections and observations upon her husband's relations, displaying a little human and feminine jealousy of his sisters, who at first had been inclined to think that she had made a better match than their brother; but the bickerings were very slight, and they did not hate each other very much—for sisters-in-law.

Two of the Miss Greenways arrived shortly after. They were older than Mrs. Greenway—stout, good-looking young women, with a decided way of expressing their opinions; they evidently were accustomed to be considered the sensible women of the neighbourhood. They were disposed to be very civil to Gertrude, but were much more disposed to talk of their own subjects than to hear about fresh ones; and as Gertrude had been trained to be a good listener, they got on together extremely well.

Mrs. Slocum and her youngest daughter arrived the next. She was kind and motherly, and nursed Gertrude's baby.

The vicar, with his wife and daughter, came in. The doctor and his maiden sister followed, a lady with light hair and blue eyes, who had been both pretty and accomplished, though never very sensible; she still had an air of juvenility, like a well-

preserved winter apple. She was certainly past fifty, but still was a pretender to matrimony, and it was said was extremely well-disposed to smile on Mr. Conran, the solicitor, of Dunnington. There was also Miss Blackmore, an elderly maiden lady of strong masculine habits and tastes, who had convicted three men, and caused them to be transported, by her evidence on a trial for poaching. She had once shot a robber, and she rode about the country on horseback alone. She was a lady of ancient family, of which she was very proud. She farmed her own land, knew as much law as any J. P. on the bench, and was looked upon as one of the *gentlemen* of the neighbourhood.

She despised female conversation about servants and children; so that, after cross-questioning Gertrude by way of commencing acquaintance, she relapsed into silence, and reserved her social talents until some other gentleman should arrive.

Amongst the guests was a man who had formerly been very much in love with Gertrude; but he had been an awkward, shy, silent youth, and Gertrude had maltreated him in proportion to the power he gave her. His father was a tanner, and Gertrude would have nothing to say to a man in her own sphere of life; but it had been with him another version of "Cymon and Iphigenia." Gertrude's elegance and beauty had awakened in the youth a perception of grace and refinement. He had cultivated his mind, and had expended a legacy of two hundred pounds in procuring for himself some classical learning under an Oxford graduate, and in gathering a small library. He had now succeeded to his father's business, and was a thriving man—the best *parti roulant* in the neighbourhood; but he showed no disposition to marry. He had a kind, quiet voice, and a singularly unobtrusive manner. He met Gertrude like an old

friend, without either consciousness or embarrassment. He sat beside her, and talked of old times.

Gertrude had been proud, discontented, and miserable in those days, but now it was great comfort to speak about them, and to recal a portion of the life that she had thrown away before she knew its value. One great source of her suffering, though she was scarcely aware of it, had in reality arisen from being separated from all who had belonged to her early life—that despised life to which she now looked back with such regretful yearning.

Mrs. Greenway came up to her with vivacity, and took hold of her arm, saying, with what she intended to be playful raillery :

“ Well, upon my honour ! If that is the London fashion in which you married women talk to young men, we must look about us all. We are going into the other room to tea now,—you are not going to keep our best bachelor all to yourself. Mr. George, off with you, and attend to those girls. I shall not let you come near Gertrude again all the evening. I shall warn her husband against you ! ”

A scene of much giggling and some confusion now took place before everybody was seated at the tea-table,—which was covered with piles of muffins and crumpets, buns, maccaroons, and queen cakes.

Mr. Augustus and Simon Morley made their appearance. Mrs. Greenway, who was on remarkably good terms with herself that evening, and who considered she had great powers of “ quizzing,” told Mr. Augustus of his wife’s “ goings on,” as she called them. Mr. Augustus showed his charming versatility ; he suited himself to his company, and made himself so fascinating that all the ladies considered Gertrude rather unworthy of having such a husband.

The gentlemen, too, thought him a pleasant fellow. After playing one rubber in superior style, he deserted the whist table for the noisy and laughing round game that was going on in another corner,—where his jokes and witticisms and compliments were beyond anything ever heard before. The vicar's daughter asked him if he were a military officer, to which he replied, "No, but his father had been in the navy, which might account for her question!" The laughing caused by this repartee was enough to have rewarded all the wit for six months at a club.

A hot supper followed, which differed in nothing from a dinner; it was done justice to. "Something warm before they went out into the air" followed this; and at ten o'clock cloaks and wrappings were sought up.

Simon Morley had ordered a chaise to come for Gertrude, and into it were crammed all the ladies whose homes lay towards Dunnington. Simon Morley and the men preferred walking. Mr. Greenway attended his guests to the outer gate, and, with reiterated "good nights," the party at last separated.

Simon Morley and Mr. Augustus reached home as soon as Gertrude, who had to set everybody down at their doors. The coach gates were closed, and only a sleepy stable-boy remained up to receive the horses. Mrs. Simon had retired for the night, at which her husband greatly rejoiced; but he found her wide awake when he got up-stairs. He was thankful to put out his candle, and pull the bed-clothes over his ears, to shut out the sound of her observations.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

“WELL,” said Simon Morley at breakfast the next morning, helping himself to a large piece of pigeon-pie, “I must say I think Mrs. Greenway is as nice a woman as ever stepped! I wonder, wife, you and she have not been better friends—so kind and friendly, and so pleasant-spoken as she is. I don’t know when I have enjoyed myself better than I did last night. I say, we must invite the Greenways here—we might make up a nice party of old friends now Ger. is come to help you entertain them.”

“Very well, Mr. Simon Morley; if you wish to begin keeping company and giving suppers, of course you can do so—perhaps you would like to have a ball too?”

“That is not a bad notion,” rejoined her husband. “We have more room than they have at Lane End. What is that great assembly-room for that we should not have some good out of it?”

“Certainly,” said Mrs. Simon, sarcastically, “and maybe you will ask all the people in the town to fill it; pray do so, if you feel inclined.” Then turning to Gertrude, she said, “I know your objections to sitting in the bar, pray do you think it necessary to stop to keep *me* company. You are used to seeing none but quality, and I cannot do with idlers here; so you had better

sit at your embroidery upstairs, in the nursery, and if any visitors come they may be shown in to you."

Gertrude coloured painfully. "I will sit in whatever room you choose; but, if you are busy, is there nothing I can do to help you?"

"Oh dear no, thank you," said Mrs. Simon, with a little sharp laugh. "You would be quite out of your element here *now*, and your mother would never forgive such a thing—she thinks you ought to be put under a glass case, and kept to look at."

"Say no more, Ger.," said Mr. Augustus, rather crossly, but go and sit wherever Mrs. Simon wishes; it is not for you to be making objections."

"Ger. does not like to be moped," added Mr. Simon; "she shall come out and have a ride with me. We will go and see the hounds throw off."

Mrs. Simon's thin lips were drawn into a fixed smile; her cold grey eyes looked out into the perspective of the china-closet that opened out of the bar.

"Thank you, Simon," said Gertrude; "but you forget the baby. Mrs. Simon's nurse could scarcely manage the two of them. I think I cannot go with you this morning."

"Besides, Gertrude is quite out of practice; she would only break her neck or lame the horse," interposed Mr. Augustus, with an air of matrimonial authority. "You cannot do better, Gertrude, than put yourself under Mrs. Simon's guidance whilst you remain here, and follow her advice in all things, as I intend to do," he added, with a supplementary glance that made the virtuous Mrs. Simon feel convinced that she was a very superior woman, and that Mr. Augustus did justice to her excellences.

Gertrude obeyed and left the room. The nurse, either

prompted by Mrs. Simon or instigated by a sense of her own convenience, asked Gertrude to hold her baby, to which, of course, Gertrude consented.

This day was the beginning of months to Gertrude; it fixed her position as *dependent* upon Mrs. Simon. Of course the nurse could not be expected to wash another baby's things in addition, so Gertrude washed and ironed for her own baby. She was awkward at first, but she soon learned. It was no great hardship in itself, but the nurse was systematically disobliging, and seemed to consider her as much an intruder in her nursery as Mrs. Simon did when she went down stairs.

All Gertrude's old acquaintance made a point of calling upon her — but they made remarks at being shown into the nursery, and as Mrs. Simon had conceived she had some cause of feud with most of the families in the town, she contrived to make Gertrude feel that it was very disagreeable to have so many people coming about the house who had no business there.

The party that had been projected by her husband was after a short time adopted by Mrs. Simon, who did not see “why she might not hold her head as high as Mrs. Greenway if she chose,” and she did choose to do so on this occasion.

Everybody accepted their invitation. Mrs. Simon, in an unusually good humour and the consciousness of a new satin gown, made herself extremely pleasant—as most ill-tempered people can, when they have a mind. Mr. Augustus was indefatigable in his attentions, and she was proud to show off her handsome brother-in-law, “whose father had been an admiral, whose uncle was a baronet, and who himself was expecting an office under government;” he stood in quite a different position to his wife. Gertrude played country dances for them, and

exerted herself to amuse the company—but all she did was received as a matter of course, and everybody felt quite free to criticise all she said and did, and to find that she was “proud,” “conceited,” “insincere,” and “very affected;” whilst Mrs. Matley, the rich draper’s wife, declared to her nearest neighbour, “that Mrs. Donnelly’s dress was shamefully extravagant, that it must have cost at least ten guineas without the making—and that she wore a lace shawl fit for a duchess.” This was quite true.

Gertrude wore the silk dress which her husband had given her at the christening, and the shawl was the lace-veil he had given her at the same time;—she had made up the dress herself—which the worthy Mrs. Matley never dreamed of suspecting, and when she inveighed against the folly and wickedness of “people in Mrs. Donnelly’s circumstances” spending so much money on dress, she never reflected that it *might* possibly have been brought *before* the “circumstanees” began.

The party, however, was none the less pleasant because Mrs. Donnelly was there to find food for scandal and gossip;—it raised Mrs. Simon’s popularity. Nobody had ever imagined she could be “so pleasant.”

To date from this party, everybody in Dunnington was fully alive to the fact “that poor Mr. Donnelly had been brought to ruin by the extravagance of his wife.”

Reports of her wastfulness, her extravagance, her love of dress and company, were abroad, until everybody felt themselves immeasurably better, and wiser, and more prudent than poor Gertrude, to say nothing of being much “better off;”—which is a cardinal virtue everywhere.

It is always pleasant to find that people’s misfortunes have been brought upon themselves, and that Providence in its dis-

pensations has only "served them right;" because when they are objects of compassion it is the imperative duty of their friends to assist them, which is often inconvenient and generally disagreeable; indeed, it is always expensive to maintain a virtue at one's own cost—there is a natural instinct to set it up at the expense of others—and it is a moral duty not to interfere in a case that is to serve the sufferers "for a lesson as long as they live!"

Gertrude's old acquaintance became patronising when they were not cool; but their patronage brought no results beyond inviting her to dine or to drink tea with them, that they might see her dresses, and obtain patterns of her sleeves and collars, and hear what was the fashion in London, for which she was rewarded by being abused for her "shameful love of dress," and her husband was proportionately pitied for being tied to such an extravagant, helpless woman."

Mrs. Greenway was the best friend Gertrude had; she really liked her old playfellow, and she stood up stoutly for her when she heard her abused, and she was constantly coming to fetch Gertrude and the baby to spend the day with her. But Mrs. Greenway was a coarse, prosperous woman, and far too full of herself and her own concerns to be able to feel any sympathy with Gertrude's trials; she patronised her extremely and ostentatiously, until even her good nature was scarcely sufficient to redeem the coarseness—she spoke of her as "poor Mrs. Donnelly," and wondered to see "Gertrude Morley's high spirit so come down." Women certainly have the gift of tormenting each other beyond what any dispensation of Providence can effect.

As to Mr. Augustus, he found himself as comfortable as ever he had been in his life. There was plenty of the best to eat

and drink; there was plenty of coursing and shooting, and as he was a good shot, and fond of field sports, he was very popular amongst the men, he had the use of any horse in his brother-in-law's stables; he often rode to cover, and having a dexterous impudence and a rambling acquaintance with a variety of persons, he contrived, on the strength of "mutual intimate friends," to pick up an acquaintance with several members of the hunt,—who not only invited him to dinner, but occasionally to stop at their country houses, if they had a party that wanted enlivening. His good jokes, songs, and stories, all made somewhat broader to suit his meridian, made him a valuable guest at a dinner-table, when country neighbours and country squires were to be entertained, and golden opinions laid by against the great day of a future election.

When at home there was as much smoking and drinking to be had as he chose, and plenty of company, for he was voted to be "the life and soul of every party." He drew plenty of loungers into the bar, or, when Mrs. Simon was in one of her sharp-edged tempers, he sat in the little market parlour, No. 2; where Simon Morley junior sat with them much oftener and longer than was consistent with the prosecution of his business.

Mrs. Simon continued to be very proud of her brother-in-law, and he could manage her better than any one else, though she often tried to make him feel her temper; but as he was profoundly indifferent, and not at all troubled with delicate feelings, it was quite out of her power to annoy him; indeed, her attempts to do so always recoiled upon herself.

He was so useful to her on all great emergencies, such as rent-days, clubs, and public dinners, that she grew at last to be afraid of displeasing him, and listened to his opinion with a

deference that delighted her husband, who enjoyed seeing her "brought to reason," as he called it.

Mr. Augustus was, moreover, a capital judge of horses and dogs—he was also a first-rate horse doctor; he was consequently an authority in the stable-yard, and much looked up to by the grooms, ostlers, and postboys who congregated there.

Simon Morley was thankful to have so pleasant a companion and so useful an ally; he would have made Augustus welcome to live with him all the rest of his life; and even Mrs. Simon, stingy as she was by nature, and little addicted to giving away anything, made him frequent presents—indeed, he had the secret of coaxing her out of anything he wished.

His social talents were once on the point of bringing him a substantial return. Sir Willoughby Bethel, a rich baronet, whom he had frequently met out hunting, and at various dinner-parties, offered him the situation of his land steward at a handsome salary; but the blood of all the Donnellys rose at the idea of being any man's servant and taking wages. Moreover, the situation would have required no inconsiderable exercise of industry, exactness, activity, and various other somewhat fatiguing virtues, with which the incomparable Augustus scarcely felt himself endowed; he therefore declined the situation with the air of a prince, and declared that he had been requested "to hold himself in readiness to receive a government appointment."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

POOR Gertrude had to pay the penalty of her husband's immunity. There is nothing gratuitous in the world—payment is rigorously exacted some time or other—and it was from Gertrude that Mrs. Simon repaid herself for the complacency she showed to Mr. Augustus. Mr. Augustus told his wife, with great indignation, of the offer he had received to become Sir Willoughby's land agent; and he calmed his offended dignity by a few expletives at the insolence of any man asking the like of him to become his out-door servant to collect his rents.

“But, dear Augustus, the salary would have been very handsome, and you might still have accepted a government situation, if one should have offered; do you think you were quite wise to refuse a certainty? It is so miserable living dependent here.”

“I wish, Gertrude, you would talk about what you understand. Do you think it is fit or right for the like of me to demean myself by taking a bailiff's place? But it is because you have no good blood in you, or you would not think of such a thing for me.”

“It would be far more honourable than to live here dependent on my brother,” said Gertrude, firmly. “Have you any plans at all, or do you expect to go on living here for ever? I do

not see how we can do that; we have no right to be a burden to the family.”

“You are mighty delicate,” said her husband, scornfully. “Why should you not go to your own side of the house? Your people are rich enough, and what have they ever done for you, or for me either, beyond giving us these few months’ board? I am not going to turn out till it suits my arrangements. If you could only humour Mrs. Simon, and give in to her a little, you might be as comfortable as the day is long; but you have such a bad temper that you can live with nobody.”

“How have I ever shown my temper, Augustus?” asked Gertrude, her eyes filling with tears.

“Yes, you may look; but you *have* a bad temper. You could not agree with my mother and Sophy, and now you quarrel with Mrs. Simon because she does not flatter you, and is just a little sharp in her ways.”

“But, Augustus, what right have we to expect my brother to support us in idleness? Will you at least write to your uncle about that place you said he would ask for you? I should feel then as if we were trying to do something to help ourselves.”

“I would thank you to mind your own business, and not to be bothering me. I suppose I know my own concerns, and can manage them without your help. I should never have been here at all if it had not been for you.”

Mr. Augustus took up his hat and went up the street, extremely ruffled at his wife’s pertinacity and want of consideration for his feelings. Gertrude, left alone, leaned her head upon her arms and wept bitterly; they were tears of humiliation and hopelessness. Her husband had never so spoken to her before. She had hitherto cherished a faint hope that Augustus would take some steps to extricate himself from his difficulties;

she had believed him to be only thoughtless and idle—now she recognised him as worthless. His entire want of all energy and independence—his entire indifference to her comfort—his unkindness—all combined to make this the very bitterest moment she had yet known. The last relic of matrimonial superstition was swept away, and she felt an unmitigated contempt for Mr. Augustus Donnelly, which, however, her own conscience turned into a still more bitter self-contempt and self-condemnation.

“I should never have been here if it had not been for you.” It was quite true this—she had no one but herself to blame; if she had done her duty to her parents, she would not have been left thus helpless and miserable; she had despised her home, and now she was justly despised and destitute of any home to call her own. Her tears gradually ceased to flow; her own disobedience and ingratitude, the vanity and discontent of her conduct, were presented to her mind with the strong, stern emphasis of conscience; she was “filled with the fruit of her own ways,” and her punishment was no more than she deserved.

No sooner was this conviction forced upon her, than she became conscious of a great calm. She ceased to pity herself; she accepted her punishment, and a strong patience filled her heart. She felt that, to be all that was left for her, the only expiation she could make for the sin that had lain at the root of her life. Light had arisen upon her darkness. She knelt down; she was not conscious of using any words, but with her whole heart she surrendered herself, desiring only that thenceforth she might not desire to do her own will, but to do whatever duty might be laid upon her.

It was the beginning of a new life for Gertrude. All outward things remained as they had been, but the spirit with

which she regarded them was changed, and from that moment she had taken her first step in a better life.

She looked round to see what there was that she could do. At first it struck her as a bright thought that she might set up as a milliner and dressmaker, for she had great taste, and was not without skill, having for some time past made up all her own dresses; but when she spoke of it to her husband, he flew into a passion, and declared that "no wife of his should mantymake for a parcel of farmers' wives," and bade her not attempt such a thing at her peril.

Gertrude acquiesced, and contented herself for the moment with making up a handsome purple satin for Mrs. Simon, which her husband had given her as a fairing; he gave Gertrude a dress at the same time, of much commoner materials, which had greatly raised his wife's jealousy, and she grumbled at his extravagance for a month.

Gertrude waited patiently for some opening. Little Clarissa progressed from a baby into an engaging and lovely child.

Mrs. Morley had kept Gertrude supplied with money, but she did it under difficulties, inasmuch as her husband was very suspicious, and constantly declared that "until that lazy, worthless hound, turned his hand to work, he should not see one sixpence of his money."

"But, Simon, what can he do? He has never been brought up to work."

"More's the pity, then. He might turn a wheel, if he could do nothing better; but he is born lazy, and would any day rather beg than work. I wonder he is not ashamed to live on Simon and his wife. I desire you give neither him nor Gertrude money. She is every bit as bad as he is."

Poor Mrs. Morley made no reply; but she helped her daughter secretly.

The opportunity Gertrude was looking for came at last.

The young woman who assisted Mrs. Simon left somewhat suddenly, in consequence of a violent altercation with Mrs. Simon, in which both parties had indulged themselves in the luxury of "speaking their minds," which is generally a hazardous process, something like meddling with fireworks. It happened, inconveniently enough, that Mrs. Simon was looking forwards to her confinement in a short time. She was in a dilemma where to turn for another assistant, but she scorned the idea of attempting to propitiate the offended Hebe. Gertrude offered to fill her place, at least until Mrs. Simon should have leisure to suit herself better.

The spirit in which a thing is done always makes itself felt. Gertrude made her offer with genuine good feeling, and the hearty desire that it should be accepted. Mrs. Simon felt the spell, though she tossed back her head with a little scornful laugh, and said—

"Well, to be sure! Who would ever have thought of your doing such a thing? I am sure I don't ask you to demean yourself. Of course you cannot expect to understand the business, and I would much prefer a regular servant."

But Gertrude pleaded that she recollected her mother's method, and that Mrs. Simon might soon train her. She besides expressed her wish to do something to requite the hospitality that had been shown to them all. Gertrude asked it as a favour—Mrs. Simon granted it as such.

Gertrude resumed with thankfulness the position which four years previously she had thrown off so impatiently, but she

“wore her rue with a difference;” it was Mrs. Simon, and not her mother, whom she now served.

The great difference was, however, in Gertrude herself, and the altered spirit in which she accepted the situation which had formerly cost her such an agony of pride and false shame. Gertrude exerted herself heartily to become an efficient assistant to Mrs. Simon, and she succeeded.

During that worthy lady’s confinement Gertrude managed the business in a manner that highly delighted her brother, and which filled poor Mrs. Morley, who came over for a few days, with admiration and regret. To see her Gertrude a servant in what had been her father’s house pained her bitterly; but although she wept over the matter with Mrs. Slocum, she had the strength of mind to say nothing to Gertrude, except to give her all the practical advice and help she could with her own experience in the business.

Gertrude exerted herself to seem happy and comfortable before her mother, and indeed she felt much happier than she had been for many months.

Mr. Augustus made no objection to this state of things. He fondly hoped that people would not understand the arrangement, and it removed any scruple he might entertain about settling himself in peace until the “government” situation should restore him from his state of social eclipse.

By degrees Gertrude reaped the natural result of her conduct. She had ceased to look at her position through the eyes of other people, and she was surprised to find how completely that took the sting out of her mortifications; for we could all bear what actually befalls us, if it were not for the idea of what other people would think of it.

When Mrs. Simon got about again, she could not resist the

malicious pleasure of trying to humiliate Gertrude as much as possible; especially she insisted upon her attending to all the carriage visitors, in the hope that she might chance to meet with some of her old acquaintance amongst them; but Gertrude had once for all accepted her position, and she had lost all desire to be thought different from what she really was. She lost nothing in real refinement, it was only vanity and the love of appearances which had been burnt out of her nature.

When everybody in Dunnington had thoroughly informed themselves about her circumstances, and when everyone had made all the remarks, wise and foolish, that occurred to them, and had sat in judgment until they were somewhat weary of pronouncing "their decided opinion," they ceased to talk about her, or at least much moderated "the rancour of their tongues;" and Gertrude felt herself much happier than when she was "the beautiful Miss Morley," the toast of the neighbourhood, and the expected heiress of a handsome fortune; but when, at the same time, she was ashamed of her parents, disgusted with her home, and only anxious to get away at all hazards.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

A GOOD clergyman once said, "that when persons have once set themselves to learn the lesson their trials are intended to teach, they are delivered from them; but not until they have become perfectly patient and willing to endure."

Gertrude had pretty well reached this point; she and her husband had been somewhere about a year and a half inmates of the "Mettingham Arms," when one day a letter came to Augustus from old Mrs. Donnelly. After the break up of affairs, the old lady had cleverly avoided paying any of the debts (all the bills being made out to Augustus); she had even, by dint of romantic misrepresentations, softened the hearts of the creditors, who believed her to be a victim as well as themselves. She had removed her furniture to a warehouse, and taken refuge with her daughter at a distant country-house, in the county of Tipperary, belonging to her husband's brother, the baronet of the family.

Here she learned the degraded and deplorable situation of her son—living with an inn-keeper, his wife's brother, and liable to be seen by all the nobility and gentry of his acquaintance travelling that road!

When she had regained her self-possession, after the distressing events which caused her departure from London, she ceased

not to entreat and torment Sir Lueius Donnelly to exert himself to obtain some foreign appointment for his nephew.

People in this world obtain more by perseverance than by any other quality; "the unjust steward," in the parable, is a type of human nature—we will all do more for those who, by their continual entreaty, "weary us," than for those who simply *deserve* service at our hands; and Mrs. Donnelly so effectually wearied her brother-in-law, that, on one of his friends being appointed governor of some settlement on the coast of Africa, he asked him to take Augustus Donnelly as secretary, and to make himself generally useful.

The governor, who was going into honourable exile on account of his debts, made no difficulty in assenting to the proposal; in fact, he was very glad at the prospect of having such a "jolly dog" to share in such a dismal expedition.

Mrs. Donnelly was a proud and happy woman the day she could write to her son that he was appointed private secretary to his Excellency Sir Simon Bulrush, Governor of Fort-Fever Point, on the coast of Calabar. It did not distress this Roman mother that her son, the peerless Augustus, would in all probability die the first thing after reaching his ominously-named station, and be buried, by way of taking possession of his post. It was, in her opinion, infinitely better that he should die an "honourable secretary," than live in obscure disgrace at a country inn.

"Hang it, Ger.!" said Mr. Augustus, tossing the letter to his wife, "the old lady seems to take it very coolly; but I don't see the fun of leaving comfortable quarters to go and die of yellow fever, and be food for land crabs at a place I never heard of when I learned geography. I shall make free to decline my uncle's valuable appointment."

“Have you the hope of anything better?” said Gertrude, sadly. “Lord Southend seems to have forgotten you, and we cannot live here always. I would inquire about it at least before refusing it.”

“I shall do whatever I please, without reference to your sage opinion, so you need not trouble yourself to advise me,” said Mr. Augustus with ineffable dignity, and, putting on his hat, whistled to a pointer, and sauntered across the yard. He found himself, as we have said, very comfortable indeed, and he had no notion of perilling his valuable life by going to the coast of Africa. He swore at his uncle for not obtaining him something better, and had determined to stand out for some other “stroke of fortune;” but something occurred in the course of the day to alter his determination.

Resigned as Gertrude had become to her lot, this sudden prospect of independence for her husband, and the probability of its being refused by his fatuity, was too much for her equanimity; and she went up to her room and cried heartily, the first comfort of the kind she had indulged in for some months.

She was aroused by the voice of Mr. Simon calling upon her name with great asperity of tone. She hastily started up, and, descending to the bar, found there had been an influx of carriages all requiring post horses for the next stage; some of the inmates stopping to lunch, and others impatient to proceed. The family in No. 4 wanted their bill, and the gentleman in No. 6 was complaining of an overcharge. Mrs. Simon was in the worst of all possible humours; and, as she did not venture to scold the servants, she vented it on Gertrude.

Gertrude set to work to reduce the confusion that reigned into something like order; she pacified the indignant gentleman, and expedited the post-boys, and had forgotten her own

immediate affairs, when she was startled to see Augustus, flushed and hurried, stride into the house and proceed upstairs. There he took refuge in the nursery, the door of which he locked after him.

The nurse and children were preparing for a walk, and were terrified out of their senses when Mr. Augustus entered so abruptly; and their alarm was not diminished by seeing him proceed to conceal himself in the closet.

“ Goodness gracious, sir ! what *is* the matter ? ”

“ Go and tell Gertrude, Mrs. Donnelly, that I must speak to her immediately ; do not let any one hear you ; lock the door, and take the key with you ; never mind the children, you can fetch them afterwards. ”

But the nurse was not going to abandon her precious charge. She unlocked the door, and took them with her, getting out of the room as expeditiously as possible.

Gertrude was in the bar, speaking to the gentleman who had complained of being overcharged.

“ Please, ma’am, Mr. Donnelly is upstairs in the nursery, and would be glad to see you. I think you had best go directly, or he may do himself a mischief. I declare he quite frightened me by the way he came in.

“ I also should be glad to see Mr. Donnelly, ” said the gentleman ; “ so you had best tell him to come down, as I shall not leave the house until I have had some conversation with him. ”

But poor Gertrude looked so alarmed and distressed that the gentleman said, “ I am very sorry to cause you any distress, madam ; your husband has no doubt already recognised me as a—creditor ; my coming was purely accidental, but I shall not leave without seeing him. His best plan will be to come imme-

diately; no doubt there is a private room where we may settle our business."

"Indeed we have had no money since we left London," said Gertrude, earnestly.

"Possibly not," said the other, drily. "Mr. Donnelly is a gentleman who seldom has money when it comes to paying; but you had best go to him, or he will fancy some mischief is preparing; you may tell him that I mean him no harm."

CHAPTER XL.

SCARCELY able to support herself, Gertrude hastened upstairs to the nursery. The room was empty! "Augustus, where are you?" she called; but there was no answer. "Augustus!" called she in a louder tone, whilst a sickening apprehension, of she knew not what, made her scarcely able to articulate. After a moment the closet-door opened and showed the pale face of Augustus.

"What an infernal time you have been," said he, "and what a noise you make. Is he gone?"

"No; he says he knows you, and must see you; but that he means you no harm, and did not come on purpose."

"Confound the fellow," muttered Augustus, "he will set the whole pack on me now, and so snug as I have been from them all! Was there ever such a piece of ill-luck?"

In a short time, however, he allowed himself to be soothed and persuaded into descending to meet his creditor.

"You stay with me, Ger.; he will be afraid of threatening too much before you: and mind you stand up to all I say."

The "creditor" in question was a wine and spirit merchant to whom Augustus owed 120*l.*, and for which he had given his note of hand, which had already been renewed more than once. He was walking up and down the room, with his hands in his

pockets, and looked very gloomy; but creditors, with so slender a chance of being paid, cannot be expected to have pleasant countenances.

Augustus met him with a bravado of frankness which was awkward enough.

“Now perhaps the lady will retire, as I in no wise wish to hurt the feelings of any female; and you are aware you have not behaved as a gentleman ought.”

Gertrude petitioned to stay, and Augustus declared he had no secrets from his wife.

A long and stormy interview followed. At first the wine merchant, who had learned the relationship, and knowing the Morleys, father and son, to be people of substance, thought they would be responsible for him; he refused to listen to any terms except the money down.

At length, however, Gertrude in great despair brought in her brother, entreating him to “save Augustus.” In answer to that appeal, he first put her quietly out of the room, and then convinced the man that neither he nor his father would pay one farthing of Mr. Augustus Donnelly’s debts. The creditor became more tractable, and, in consideration of being promised ten shillings in the pound, to be paid out of Mr. Augustus Donnelly’s first salary, which was guaranteed by Simon Morley, he consented to compound the debt, and to keep the secret of his whereabouts from every one. He thought it highly problematical whether there would be ever a second quarter to receive.

This incident of course dispelled any doubts that Mr. Augustus might have entertained about accepting the situation. He wrote a grateful letter to his uncle, entreating assistance for his outfit. As there was now every prospect of finally getting

rid of him, his uncle sent him twenty-five pounds and a prescription for the yellow fever.

Old Mrs. Donnelly, who, with all her sins, really loved her son, sent him ten pounds more; and Miss Sophia sent him half-a-dozen pair of Limerick gloves towards his outfit, and begged he would not fail to collect some gold dust, ostrich feathers, and elephants' teeth, "as curiosities for her cabinet."

CHAPTER XLI.

WHEN the news that Mr. Augustus was appointed to go with a real governor out to Africa spread through Dunnington, there were diversities of opinion on the subject, but it made Mr. Augustus himself into a hero, and he had to go through quite a course of farewell hospitalities.

Mrs. Simon was perplexed in her mind. She was very sorry to lose Augustus—it was gall and wormwood to think that Gertrude would be raised to a position so far above her own; but then, it was some consolation to reflect that she would lose her beautiful complexion in such a climate, and would look quite an old woman when she returned.

“Of course Gertrude will go along with her husband,” was the remark of everybody in Dunnington.

“I suppose your mother will take charge of your child?” said old Mrs. Slocum to her.

“I have not the least intention of leaving my child,” replied Gertrude, quietly. “Augustus is quite willing that I should remain behind; indeed I do not suppose it is a place where females could well go.”

“But, my dear, do you think you are right to send your husband where you would not go yourself? A wife’s duty is always to be with her husband and share his fortune. In my

young days, if Matthew Slocum had been going to the desert where the children of Israel wandered for forty years and more, I should have gone with him. I think it would be breaking your marriage vow if you let him go out alone—your child ought to come after your husband.”

“But, Mrs. Slocum, Augustus does not want me; I should die out there. There is no accommodation for me. I should be dreadfully in the way.”

“No matter, my dear, it is your duty to follow your husband. If you leave him, there is no saying what sin and mischief he may not fall into; and if he were to die, how you would reflect upon yourself! Such a fine young man too,—and the father of your child! Nothing can excuse a woman from her duty to her husband—it is like nothing else in the world.”

Gertrude looked hot and annoyed, and said,—

“Well, Mrs. Slocum, whether it is my duty or not, I shall not go to Africa. I shall stop at home, and do my duty by my child.”

“Ah!” sighed the curate’s wife—*ci-devant* Miss Matilda Slocum; “but you know, Gertrude, that we are not to choose our duties,—and a wife’s duty is so plain and easy”

Gertrude made no reply, and it was soon spread throughout Dunnington that Gertrude was quite without feeling and was going to desert her husband; the charitable feeling of the neighbourhood ran so high in consequence, that many declared that if her child were to die it would only be a punishment she had deserved.

If the truth must be told, poor Mrs. Morley believed in this code of conjugal devotion. A husband, in her eyes, was something sacred and peculiar; he had ceased to be a man, and was invested with mystical rights and attributes. She had

no doubt but that Gertrude would go, and she burst into such a transport of grief when the news of the appointment reached her, that her husband was moved from his usual surly composure—he laid down his pipe, and said compassionately,—

“Don’t cry, missis, don’t cry; there is nothing to take on about in that way that I can see.”

“Oh Simon! it is losing her twice over. I shall never live to see her come back.”

“But what should she go away for? I don’t see why she should not come back to us, when that husband of hers is fairly gone, and a good riddance she will have of him. It does not signify where he goes to—it is chaps like him who ought to be sent to such places, and leave better folks at home; if he dies he will be no loss to anybody.”

“Oh, Simon, how can you talk so hard-hearted; he is her own husband!”

“Aye, more’s the pity! But I’ll tell you what—I will drive over to Dunnington to-day, and see what Ger. says. If she will stop behind, she shall have a home here, and the child too—and I will never cast the past into her teeth again. Maybe I have been too hard upon her sometimes. When I have gone over there lately I have seen her very handy in the bar, helping Simon’s wife; she has lost that confounded pride that has been her ruin.”

Simon Morley was as good as his word, and that very afternoon Gertrude saw her father drive into the yard in his old yellow gig, drawn by his favourite horse Sharper.

He came straight into the bar, where Gertrude was busily engaged in transferring some figures from a slate into her book. Mrs. Simon received him with many demonstrations of welcome,

but Gertrude, after shaking hands with him, resumed her occupation.

Mrs. Simon ensconced him in her own corner, and supplied him with a pipe and a glass of hot rum and water; but he did not seem so amenable to her civilities as usual.

“Well, Ger.,” said he, after he had smoked some time, during which he had been watching her in silence; “so your husband’s grand friends have made a gentleman of him again?”

“Yes—he has received an appointment, such as it is.”

“Well, your mother has sent me over to fetch you and the child—to stop with us whilst he is away. When do you reckon you can come?—when does he go?”

“The time is not fixed yet, and perhaps Mrs. Simon may not like to spare me till she meets with somebody else.”

“Oh pray do not think of me,” said Mrs. Simon, with a toss of her head; you are not so precious as all that comes to—do not let *me* stand in your way, I beg.”

“You are quite right, missis; Ger. must come back to us, and let us have some comfort of her. She has been a good wench since she came here. I hate pride; but work never shamed a-body yet—nought but idleness does that—and now thou hast shown that thou art not above work thou art welcome to home.”

This speech rewarded Gertrude for all her troubles. Mr. Augustus entered shortly after, and Simon Morley, with more civility than might have been expected, repeated his proposal to take Gertrude home.

Mr. Augustus, who had grown considerably grander since his appointment, expressed himself like the fine gentleman he was, and gave his gracious permission for Gertrude to remain at

The Cottage with her parents until he could send for her to join him.

Stimulated with the prospect of getting rid of him for good, Simon Morley presented his son-in-law with ten pounds towards his outfit—so that the preparations of Mr. Augustus were on a very comfortable scale. Gertrude had enough wifely feeling to take pride in sending him away handsomely provided, and she had even a sense of complacency in seeing how well he looked in his new clothes.

She would have gone with him to Bristol, to see him on board the ship, but Mr. Augustus preferred parting from her at Dunnington, observing “that they must begin to be saving now they had the opportunity, and that they might as well save the money, and part at the beginning of the journey instead of the end.”

Few women become really hardened to indifference on the part of their husbands; there is a nerve in their heart that quivers long after all love seems to have died out.

Gertrude sighed, and felt a pang of bitterness at this unconscious evidence of the entire absence of all affection for her, but she hid it under a quiet face.

“As you please, Augustus; you will write the last thing, and tell me how you get on board.”

“Of course I will. Keep your spirits up, and do get out of this confounded place as soon as you can. I am endorsed “on her Majesty’s service” now, and this is not the sort of thing for you any longer. I wonder how you have been able to make a companion of Mrs. Simon so long; you have no proper pride in you.”

Gertrude did not reply to this rational speech; she had no energy to waste in trying to reduce things to their logical consistency.

The morning dawned upon which Mr. Augustus was to depart from Dunnington. Gertrude got up to give him an early breakfast. The chaise was to be at the door at five o'clock, to take him to meet the Bristol mail.

Mr. Augustus was in charming spirits at the prospect of getting away.

“Good bye, Ger. ; take care of yourself and the child. I will send for you whenever there comes a stroke of fortune. Write to me sometimes to say how you go on ; enclose your letters to Sir Simon. And now good bye. I hope all my trunks are on the chaise, and that you have forgotten nothing—good bye, good bye.”

And Mr. Augustus sprang into the chaise. Early as it was, many heads were at the windows as he passed through the town. He looked back, and saw Gertrude still standing looking after him ; a turn in the street hid her from his sight. Mr. Augustus went on his way too much rejoiced in being set free from Dunnington to feel any tender regrets. Gertrude turned to re-enter the house, with a mixed feeling of relief and bitterness.

The overstrain of fatigue and excitement had ceased. She sat down and wept bitterly ; she was left belonging to nobody, and she felt very lonely. In the afternoon, however, her father came to fetch her, and in the rejoicing her mother made over her return she grew comforted, and forgot the past in the quiet rest of being once more by her mother's side.

CHAPTER XLII.

MR. AUGUSTUS wrote from Bristol in the most charming spirits ; he had joined Sir Simon Bulrush, with whom he was enchanted. He spoke of "the good people at Dunnington" with an air of elegant superciliousness which would have been amusing to a stranger, but which gave Gertrude a bitter feeling of contempt as she recollected the contented servility with which he had flattered Mrs. Simon and lived upon her brother.

The fact was, that Mr. Augustus had thrown off the chrysalis of obscurity, and had once more emerged into the "ampler ether and diviner air" of polite society, towards which he filled precisely the same position which he had done in Dunnington.

A few hasty lines, written subsequently, told her that he had embarked, and Gertrude was ashamed of the deep breath of relief she drew when she was sure that he was fairly gone, and that there would be no misgiving of any of the arrangements.

Mrs. Morley, who took it for granted that she *must* fret after her husband, tried to cheer her up with homely comfort. Gertrude did not dare to tell how it was with her ; it would have pained her mother, who loved the hard, harsh, griping Simon Morley with all her heart, because he was her husband. It is painful to find how little our dearest friends know about us,

even though we may have lived, as we imagine, transparently before them.

“So near, and yet so far!”

“Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me?” is a question that rises frequently and mournfully upon us all.

Mrs. Morley hoped that she was now at last going to live happily and comfortably with Gertrude; but, poor woman, the early mistake she had made in Gertrude's training had done its irrevocable work, making them totally unsuitable as companions. Gertrude had never been knitted in the bonds of home, and there was a certain constraint and strangeness she could never overcome. This was increased by the constant sense of the sin she had committed against her parents; the very anxiety to atone for it gave her a sense of consciousness and effort; whilst poor Mrs. Morley was so afraid Gertrude would be annoyed at different things, or, as she phrased it, “lest she should not be content,” that the poor woman was nearly worn to a nervous fever.

As to Simon Morley, his ebullition of paternal hospitality subsided soon to low-water mark. He felt the injustice of having to support another man's family, and though he could not call it a hardship, yet he gave grudgingly.

He never showed any affection for his little grandchild, but as she went trotting about the room, he would take his pipe from his lips and remark cynically, “that she would soon be old enough to go out to service.”

One day when she was sitting on her stool absorbed in the pictures of “Dr. Watts's Hymns,” which Mrs. Morley had bought for sixpence from a pedlar, he reached across, and taking

it out of her hand, flung it into the fire, saying, "she should not be brought up to be bookish and fantastical; one of that sort in a family was enough."

Miss Clarissa set up a fit of crying, and went into a violent passion on the loss of her book, whereupon Simon Morley's temper and patience both gave way; he laid the child across his knee and whipped her severely, saying, as he set her down, "that if she did not leave off crying, he would fling her out of the window."

Mrs. Morley and Gertrude were both present during this exercise of arbitrary power.

"I wonder you are not ashamed of yourself to treat a baby like that so cruelly," said Mrs. Morley, indignantly.

"You want to make a fool of the child as you did of the mother, but I will see better than that"—and he knocked the ashes out of his pipe with a violence that broke it—then, rising, he put on a broad-brimmed hat, and went out into the yard to see the horses stabled after they came in from the fields.

Gertrude had not said one word, only she turned very pale and sick—not for the bodily pain which she saw inflicted, but for the bitter lesson of harshness and injustice, which was enough to poison the whole childhood at its well-spring. She did not speak one word. When her father left the room her mother took up the child, and tried to comfort her with candy and kisses.

When Simon Morley returned the child was in bed.

That very night Gertrude took her resolution. She wrote a letter to Lady Southend, reminding her of her promise to give her work, and claiming it. She briefly related what had befallen her, and what she had been doing, and expressed her willingness to do anything—so that she might be able to sup-

port herself and her child. After writing this letter, she felt more calm—the result did not remain with her.

The next day Simon Morley's savage temper was in some measure accounted for; he was laid up with a violent fit of the gout, which at one time threatened to fly to his stomach; poor Mrs. Morley and all the household were kept in great trouble and anxiety.

Gertrude proved herself a most efficient nurse, and was not only a great comfort to her mother—saving her much fatigue, and cheering her up—but was so gentle and patient, or as her father expressed it, “so handy,” that even old Simon Morley's heart softened towards his daughter as it had never done before; so that when he got about again her position was much more pleasant—she took her place as the daughter of the house, and she ceased to feel herself an intruder. Still, the consciousness that she had determined to earn her own living, without depending on any one, was the great ingredient that made her life more comfortable.

During the month that Simon Morley was confined to the house, Gertrude had no leisure to think or wonder about the result of her application to Lady Southend; but when it came to six weeks she grew anxious, and feared either that the old lady was dead, or had gone abroad, or that her letter had miscarried.

However, just as she had made up her mind to write once more, her father one morning came in with a handsome-looking letter which he had taken himself from the postman; it was sealed with a coronet, and franked by Lord Mettingham himself. Simon Morley was not insensible to a certain pleasure in seeing the letter addressed—

“To the care of Mr. Simon Morley,
“The Cottage, Saltfield.”

It showed, he thought, that his old landlord had not forgotten him, and must have spoken about him—a microscopic point of gratified vanity: to Simon Morley Lord Metringham was not an ordinary mortal, but had an emphasis appertaining to no other member of the peerage.

“Well, lass,” said he, loitering near her; “what great folks have been writing to thee now, to upset thee just as we were beginning to be comfortable? It is not from his lordship himself, is it?”

“No,” said Gertrude, glancing over the paper; “it comes from old Lady Southend, who used to be very kind to me in London.”

“Well, let us hear what she says. I want to hear how grand folks write.”

This was a somewhat embarrassing request, as Gertrude had not told even her mother of her application for work. Luckily at that instant Bill Stringer, Simon Morley’s factotum, appeared in the distance; he had come to receive orders touching the killing of a pig. Simon Morley, on seeing him, hobbled out of the room—he was still somewhat lame from his gout—saying,

“Well, thou canst tell me about it at dinner-time.”

Left alone, Gertrude began to read her letter. It was very short, but full of real practical kindness. Lady Southend explained her delay by telling Gertrude that she was abroad when she received the letter, and had only just returned. She desired Gertrude would come up to town at once. She had taken lodgings for her, of which she had paid the first quarter in advance; and promised to find her as much employment as she could undertake. A bank-note of a sufficient amount to cover her expenses was enclosed in the letter.

Gertrude’s first emotion was one of intense gratitude for the

door of escape now opened to her; she knelt down and thanked God, and prayed to be kept from all evil.

She feared opposition from her parents, and she could not regard with composure the possibility of failure.

With her mother she had to combat long and painfully.

“It was unnatural,” the good woman said, “to go out to earn money, when her husband ought to send her half his salary.”

Gertrude ceased to argue, and only said:

“Mother, let me go; it will be better for me.”

Simon Morley took a far more practical view of the matter; but, if the truth must be told, a line and a half in the letter about Lord Metringham, and the respect he had for her parents, was the touch that sent him entirely over to Lady Southend’s opinion.

Notwithstanding Gertrude’s improvement in his eyes, he was glad that he had not the prospect of keeping her with him for an unlimited time. He graciously told her, however, that if the scheme did not answer, she was at liberty to come back—and that she had better leave the child with them until she was settled.

But to this Gertrude would by no means consent. A portion of the elasticity of her youth had returned to her, and the first easing of the millstone of dependence which her own actions had tied round her neck was far too delightful to leave a knot untied. She thanked her father gratefully, comforted her mother as well as she could, and was ready in three days to take her departure.

The day of departure came. Gertrude was nervously afraid that something would occur to prevent it. Poor Mrs. Morley did not cry, but she felt bitterly that she could not make Gertrude happy at home—that she always wanted to leave her;

and though, mother-like, she took all the blame to herself, still she had a confused feeling that Gertrude did not love her. She always thought of Gertrude as her daughter, and forgot that when she married this relationship was changed for ever. Whilst Augustus was away, she had hoped she should have her daughter all to herself. And now that she and her father were reconciled, she could not or would not understand why Gertrude should want to leave her again, to go and live among strangers and work for her bread. She knew her husband was rich, for she had helped him to make his money, and it seemed so unjust that he should allow one of his own children to want. All her sorrows settled into an aching dull pain of heart, which she took with dumb patience, without trying to understand.

As to Simon Morley, he became fonder of Gertrude in proportion to the nearness of her departure; he saw to the cording of the trunks, despatched them in a cart under Bill Stringer to meet the stage-coach, and actually gave her twenty guineas to begin the world with! This generosity was Simon's equivalent to the paternal blessing; he did not understand it in any other form."

Mrs. Morley had packed a large hamper with provisions, enough to last for a month.

The yellow gig was at the door.

"Come, Gertrude; now, then, are you ready?—you women have always so many last words. Come, missis, don't hinder her, or we shall miss the coach."

"There, Gertrude, you must go now; your father won't wait. I am sure I don't know why you are going, when we might have been so comfortable; but it is too late to talk of that now. Be sure you write and tell me when you want anything, and

write often ; it costs you no trouble, and your father will not grudge the postage."

Gertrude's heart swelled with remorse ; it seemed to her as though she had been born only to make her mother unhappy.

Clarissa was already in the gig, engrossed with a small covered basket, from which issued the plaintive mewings of a young kitten which had been kidnapped from all the joys of kitten life and the purrings of its mother, and was not yet reconciled to its lot.

They were in ample time for the coach, and had to wait some minutes before it came up.

"This is as it should be—I like always to be before the time. Now, Gertrude, be frugal and be industrious, and there is no fear but what you will do well. Above all, do not be giddy ; and keep all young fellows at a distance. Recollect a woman whose husband is away is easily talked about—so don't lay yourself open to observation ; young females cannot be too guarded in their manners. Above all, don't let any young sprigs of quality come about thee—they are a good-for-nothing set."

Simon Morley's admonitions were brought to a close by the arrival of the " Dart," and the need to see after the luggage.

It was a lovely summer morning, and Gertrude asked Fat Sam if he would let her and the little girl ride beside him for a stage. Of course Sam was only too glad and too proud to comply ; so, first the kitten in its basket was hoisted up, then Miss Clarissa, and lastly Gertrude climbed up with very little assistance. Simon Morley was pleased—he thought it looked like thrift ; but Gertrude had only thought it much pleasanter than being stifled up inside.

"Well, good bye, Ger. ; write a line to tell us how you get

there. Sam can bring it, and it will save postage. Take care of yourself, and hold fast; the child will fall foremost if you don't hold her."

With these parting words Simon Morley turned his gig on one side. Fat Sam cracked his whip, and the horses darted off with a bound; they were all very fresh, and did not like to be kept so long standing.

No mode of travelling will ever again be half so pleasant as the "box-scat" beside a first-class coachman of the old times.

Sam proved himself worthy of the honour which, as he conceived, had been paid him. During the two stages she rode beside him, Gertrude heard the history of every gentleman's family whose seat they passed, and traditions of their fathers and grandfathers besides, interspersed with the original observations of Sam himself, which served to show the curious social perspective in which great folks are seen by those so much below them that they scarcely recognise their existence. To them, the "Dart" was a stage-coach, and the coachman driving it had no separate identity. Here was that "coachman" amusing Gertrude with narratives of their debts, their doings, their domestic life, their bettings on the turf, and speaking quite freely of family circumstances which they fondly believed buried in the bosom of the family; and Gertrude, whom they never had seen and never were likely to see, was aware of secrets they would not have trusted to their best friends.

It is quite startling to reflect how many social secrets come to our knowledge about persons who do not know us in the least, and we sometimes chance to see those individuals walking about quite unconscious of the bombshell we could explode in their ears by the shortest whisper! There is an immense quantity of gossip in the world, and much ill-nature; nevertheless, a great

deal of "perilous stuff" is kept safely buried in the bosoms that received it.

"You see, Mrs. Donnelly," said Sam, "going this road up and down every day, I see a power of people, and hear a deal one way or other; they may none of them tell much, but they all talk some, and I have to listen to a deal of stuff. I don't talk free to everybody as I do to you, for it would do a deal of mischief; but to you I don't mind, for you are a real lady in all your ways. I am only sorry you could not make yourself happy at home. Madam Morley will be sadly off without you. Ah! there are few women like her! I recollect her long before you were born; afore Simon Morley came a-courting to her. I was a slim young man in those days; she was the first trouble I ever had. I never felt so bad as I did when I seed she began to take up with your father; of course she had a right to please herself. And what a wife she made him! Bless you, she made that house! I have seen her many's the time sitting at that little table smoothing out the bank-notes and rolling them round her wrist. If she had taken me instead of Simon, maybe she would not have been so rich; but she should have had her own way, I would never have said she did wrong, and then I should not have been driving you here to-day maybe!"

"Well, Sam," said Gertrude, "seeing that I am here, you have made my journey very pleasant—you must come to see me as often as you can in London, it will be a comfort to my mother to hear about me—but at the end of this stage we had better get inside, Clarissa is growing sleepy. At what time do you think we shall get in to-night?"

"Well, I mostly reach there about six o'clock; it may be half an hour sooner or later—but they look for me about six."

It was, as Sam said, about six o'clock when the "Dart"

drove in to the old-fashioned yard of the "Swan with Two Necks," with its quaint galleries rambling round the house, and the wooden carved balustrades — picturesque, clumsy, and taking up more room than can be spared in these days.

A respectable servant out of livery was waiting with a hackney coach. He touched his hat to Gertrude, and handed her a little note from Lady Southend. It was very short, merely to say that she had sent her own servant, who was to see her safe to the lodgings she had engaged.

Sam, who had set his heart upon doing this very thing, felt aggrieved; he assisted the civil servant with a very surly air, and pretended to be engaged with the ostler when Gertrude was ready to get into the coach. But Gertrude ran up to him, and asked him as a great favour to step down to see her that evening,—and she gave him Lady Southend's note, that he might have the address.

Of course Sam allowed himself to promise, and then by a natural change of feeling began to be proud that her ladyship had sent her own servant to wait upon Mrs. Donnelly.

The hackney coach drove to a quiet out-of-the-way street in the neighbourhood of Gray's Inn.

The houses were large, and had once been of some pretensions, though they now looked dingy enough. It was not a thoroughfare, but seemed to be the heart of a labyrinth of outer streets, so still and quiet; the grass grew amid the stones that paved it, and several fine trees, in the bright luxuriance of green leaves, seemed to be quite unconscious that they were thriving in the midst of a crowded quarter of a great city. The hackney coach stopped before a house where evidently some pains had been bestowed to brighten it up. Plants in flower stood in some of

the windows, and a canary in a fine gilt cage was hanging outside singing to the full extent of its little throat. The steps though somewhat broken, were dazzlingly white, and the brass knocker was bright and shining.

A respectable elderly woman came to the door; she received Gertrude with an air of quiet propriety which spoke her to be a person who had been trained in good service.

Gertrude was taken at once to the second story, graced by the flower-pots and canary.

"These are your rooms, ma'am," said the woman; "my lady sent furniture herself to make them more complete than was in my power I hope they will please you."

There was a spacious landing-place. The shallow uncarpeted stairs were of oak, and the balusters, black with age, were quaintly carved and twisted. A large old-fashioned sitting-room, with a bedroom opening from it, and a smaller room beyond, were Gertrude's rooms.

A large stuffed arm-chair, covered with old Indian chintz, was placed beside the window; a table, set with tea things and all the requisites for a substantial tea, was before it; the grate was filled with a pot of common, but sweet smelling flowers. The first aspect of the room was singularly pleasant and homely—something like an old Dutch interior.

The civil man servant and the hackney coachman brought up the luggage between them, and when Gertrude took out her purse to pay the fare, the man said that "my lady had settled everything."

"Now, ma'am," said the landlady, "if you will be led by me, you will have your tea and let me help you to put little missey to bed, for she looks dead tired, poor lamb! Your tea is made; I took the liberty of making it down stairs. I shall

only be in the next room, if you will call me when you want me."

Good Mrs. Hutchins bustled out of the room, and Gertrude, with her heart full of thankfulness, sat down to her first meal, which was not provided with the "bitter bread" she had eaten for so long.

CHAPTER XLIII.

GERTRUDE rose early the next morning, whilst Clarissa still slept. Sam had been prevented coming the evening before, but he had sent word by a special stable-boy that he would be with her by eight o'clock in the morning, if that would not be too early. She had much business on her hands.

She first unpacked her effects and arranged her rooms, for she wished Sam to take a good report to her mother. When she had finished, they wore an air of quiet homeliness, and were more to her taste than any rooms she had ever lived in.

Over the carved wooden mantel-piece was a picture of Mrs. George Anne Bellamy, in the "Grecian Daughter"—and on the walls hung sundry prints, illustrating scenes from Clarissa Harlowe and Sir Charles Grandison. There was on one side of the room a large square comfortable sofa, stuffed with feathers, and amply supplied with pillows; but Gertrude belonged to the old-fashioned school, which held that young women ought to sit straight upright upon hard chairs with their feet firmly planted upon the ground in the first position, and allowed of no undignified rest or lounging attitudes, however graceful. A large table, and four heavy high-backed mahogany chairs with broad horse-hair seats, completed the furniture.

In her letter to her mother she said all she could think of to re-assure and comfort her as to her prospects.

She then dressed Clarissa, and had scarcely concluded when the steps of Sam were heard upon the stairs.

He came in mopping his shining head, and somewhat out of breath.

“You live pretty high up, Miss; but you are a lighter weight than I am. I hope you did not take it ill in regard that I did not come last night. You see there was a meeting of the coach proprietors, and they would have me to attend—it was not over till latish, and we did a deal of talking, so I did not feel rightly in a state to come to see you.”

“No, Sam, I did not take it at all amiss, and you see us to much more advantage this morning. But has not all your talking last night made you feel inclined for some tea and toast this morning?” said Gertrude, smiling.

“Well, yes, I can’t say but what it has,” replied Sam, with some consciousness; “you see there was a deal of smoke too, so many pipes going at once—till we could not see each other; but I would rather be with you, and little miss here, any day.”

“Well, Sam, the oftener you come to see us the kinder I shall take it. You must be sure and tell my mother how comfortable you have left us.”

“Well, yes—I can’t say but what you *are* comfortable enough to look at; but I don’t like the thought of your living by yourself—but it won’t be for always, I hope; your husband will be coming back again.

“That is the picture of a pretty woman up there—but hard to hold in hand I should think. Who may she be?”

“That is Mrs. Bellamy, who was a celebrated actress, and a very beautiful woman.”

“Ah, well! I have no great opinion of play-acting, and I think no woman ought to be let to do it. But now, if your letter is ready, I must be going; I will run down and see your mother on Sunday, it will be a satisfaction to her like.”

Sam looked round the room, to take stock of what there was to be seen.

“I suppose I may tell the old cat that her kitten is quite well, and takes kindly to the change. You will have to look sharp after your bird when she grows a little bigger.”

“Good bye Sam—come again soon.”

“Good bye, miss, and thank you kindly.”

Sam departed, and Gertrude felt that she now stood in the world alone.

In the afternoon she took Clarissa and went to see Lady Southend.

She was shown into the room she well remembered that Christmas morning years before. The old lady sat in the same chair, and might have been sitting there ever since for any change that appeared in her.

She received Gertrude very kindly, and gave her a kiss, saying—

“Well, here you are at last! I have been looking for you all day. I suppose you were tired after your journey. Now, see, I have been as good as my word, and looked out some work for you. But how do you like your rooms in the first place?”

“They are charming,” replied Gertrude; “I feel quite settled in them already.”

“Mrs. Hutchins, your landlady, was once my maid, but she would insist upon getting married, and has done no good for herself ever since; however, her husband is dead now, and she will be more comfortable. It is very seldom that troublesome

people die out of the way, so I consider her very lucky; he may perhaps do more good in the next world than he did in this, but I doubt it. I once knew a curious accident happen very conveniently. A man I knew, a thoroughly worthless fellow, who had been the plague and scandal of all his friends, was despatched to travel. He went to Spain, and arrived at Madrid whilst one of their revolutions was going on. Instead of stopping in the hotel, he went out to see what was the matter; a cannon was fired just as he turned the corner of a street, and he was killed. He was the only individual killed in the affair, and he was precisely the man the world could best spare, for nobody wanted him here."

Gertrude made no reply to this anecdote, and Lady Southend, thinking it might perhaps come too closely home to her, changed the subject.

"You see that pile of black satin? I want to cover a screen with it for a present to Southend and his wife when they return to England. You did not know he was married?"

"No," replied Gertrude; "I never heard of it. I hope you will have comfort in the marriage."

"Oh, as for that, I expect nothing. I dare say we shall get on very well. It is a highly suitable match as regards family; for the rest, she is like other young women—and very glad to be a countess. But, see, you are to embroider that satin with flowers in natural colours. I have bought some patterns, but they are very stiff and ugly—still, the best I could find."

Gertrude looked at them in silence for a few moments, and then said,—

"I think I could improve upon them. I used to draw and group flower-pieces when I was at school with Miss Le French; I am greatly out of practice—but I think it would come back

to me. These are very iuspid. I should like to try if I cannot make out something better if I may."

"To be sure, child. I am glad you have the notion. If you can design your own patterns, your work will be worth a great deal more than it would otherwise; try to-night, and come again to-morrow, that I may see what you can do. You must have a glass of wine after your walk, and if it should rain to-morrow, remember you are not to come. You must take care of your health, for the sake of your child."

When Gertrude rose to go away, the old lady gave Clarissa a little white satin needle-book, embroidered with beads, and told her she must learn to sew betimes to help her mother.

Gertrude sat up till late, trying to draw designs for the six leaves of the folding screen. It was not easy, and she went to bed without having succeeded to her satisfaction.

The next day was wet. She worked hard, and by evening had produced three designs—one centre piece of a Dresden china sort of haymaker resting under a tree, and two beautiful groups of flowers. The colours were of course roughly laid in; but there was quite enough to show the intention and to guide her work.

When Lady Southend saw them, she was delighted.

"Come, my dear, that will do famously! I see you can work well; and good work, of whatever kind, will always fetch its price. When people have to pay money for anything, they require to have it well done. Oh dear! if you knew all the trouble I have had with young women who have professed to want work—some in the teaching line, and some in the sewing line, and most of them so miserably inefficient—you would pity me! The fact was, they all needed money, but they did *not*

want to work; and being ladies—daughters of officers, orphans of clergymen, or perhaps widows of poor gentlemen—they all considered that the element of charity ought to come largely into the business. They brought their susceptibilities, their recollections of the times ‘when they never expected to have to work for their living;’ or the thought of what some dear departed relative, who in this life used to ride in a coach and six, would have said or thought, ‘if he could have seen them.’ Some would be so provokingly meek-spirited and tearful, that I could have found in my heart to beat them; others would be haughty, and show their spirit on all occasions; whilst the work of one and all was generally so ill done that the money was anything but earned. My dear! my dear! so many virtues are required even to sew up a seam well. Take my advice, and teach Clarissa to use her fingers, and bring her up to work for her living. Do not let her have the notion of trying to climb above her present station. If promotion is in store for her, it will come without seeking.”

“Indeed that is what I mean to do,” said Gertrude. “I have suffered too much—not more, however, than I deserved—but I would wish that the consequences of my own error may end with me, and not be continued through the life of my child; that is all I pray for now. I cannot tell you the peace of mind I have had since I came to London. You would feel that your kindness had not been thrown away if you only knew the deliverance it has been to me, and the hope you have given me of being able to bring up Clarissa as I feel she ought to be brought up. If to be glad of a blessing is to be grateful, I am sure I am grateful.”

“Yes, I really think you are,” said the old lady, smiling, whilst the tears coursed each other down the cheeks of Gertrude;

“but come, do not cry, it will make your eyes weak, and you will need them.

“Do you know,” she continued, to give Gertrude time to recover her composure, “I often wish some good angels would take the guise of servants-of-all-work, just to set an example, and show how the thing ought to be done. If I were the Pope, I would canonize some good servant, for an encouragement to the rest; and she should be canonized for her good service—not for nonsensical austerities and fantastic superfluities, but for faithfully and humbly doing the duties of a lowly calling. My ideal of a maid-of-all-work would be really something noble and attractive. Some one who had known her was telling me, the other day, that Joanna Southcote was a first-rate maid-of-all-work before she took to seeing visions and dreaming dreams. It was quite a new view of her character to me—I only wish it had been the end instead of the beginning.”

“Well, dear Lady Southcote,” said Gertrude, rising, “I hope I shall succeed so as to satisfy you; good intentions are not of much value unless they succeed.”

“True, child; the success of bringing our work to a good end is the most satisfactory of all mortal things—it is about the only one that does not ‘perish in the using.’ But I shall send for a coach; you cannot carry all that satin through the streets, to such a distance. I wish you lived nearer on some accounts, but I wished you to be with that good woman, both for her sake and your own; she is as true as steel.”

“The coach, my lady,” said the polite servant who had met Gertrude on her arrival.

“Well, I am sorry for it; I would like to have kept you longer. We must have a talk together again soon. I will send

for you. But get on with the work; I am impatient to see how it will look."

At first, Gertrude's progress was not rapid; she was out of practice, and she was nervously anxious about satisfying Lady Southend, who was by no means remarkable for her patience or her suavity. To Gertrude, at any rate, she did not show herself a hard task-mistress, but was extremely kind and considerate in all ways. She really liked Gertrude, and she unconsciously flattered herself that Gertrude's efficiency, diligence, and good sense were the practical results of the many long conversations in which she indulged herself with her. Everything in the world may be used up with advantage in some conjuncture or other. Mrs. Donnelly's domestic discipline had pounded everything like conceit or self-assertion out of Gertrude—which was partly the cause why the old lady found that she was not the bore that all her other *protégées* had been, more or less.

Gertrude's life now flowed on pleasantly; she had to work hard, but that she did cheerfully.

Little Clarissa improved every day; if she did not make any wonderful progress in book learning, she gained what was far more valuable, the training that only a mother can give. She was a child of quick sensibility and a violent temper—generous and affectionate, but wilful and wayward to a degree that needed constant care and great judgment; happy for her that she met with it,—so many need it who are left to be broken in or broken to pieces, as the case may be, by the rough teaching of the consequences of their sins of ignorance!

Sam frequently came to see them. He never came without bringing some child's treasure for Clarissa; he must have spent a little fortune upon her. It was a new object in his life. One day he brought a doll's kitchen, that queen of playthings!

What child does not recollect the intense delight of possessing a doll's house for the first time, with its kettles and frying-pans, and chairs and tables? In Clarissa's days, dolls did not reside in the magnificent Belgravian mansions that are manufactured for them now; they had seldom anything more than a Dutch kitchen—but the delight of possessing it!

Gertrude always had a clean pipe and a paper of tobacco ready for Sam when he came, who at first expressed many scruples, but in the end took to smoking his pipe beside the fire as naturally as if he had lived there all his life.

Through the introduction of Lady Southend, Gertrude obtained as much work as she could execute. It became a point of fashion for ladies to have their Court trains embroidered by Mrs. Donnolly—or after Mrs. Donnelly's design. She might have employed workwomen under her, but it would have changed the whole aspect of her life; she could earn enough to live very comfortably in her original rooms, and to lay by a little besides.

Her designs for embroidery, both in satin, lace, and muslin, were in great request, and gradually it became her chief employment. She would have been quite happy, but, like other people, she had a skeleton in her cupboard—the dread of her husband's return.

She sometimes dreamed that he had come back a shipwrecked mariner, and that he was extremely angry when he found her working, and that he flung a fine Court train into the fire, where it was entirely consumed! She awoke with the fright. All the speeches and actions she attributed to him were extremely like things that had really happened; but with the fantastic, exaggerated resemblance that the objects on the slides of a magic-lantern bear to the realities. Mr. Augustus, worthless as he was, had never been so bad as her fancy painted him.

Her imagination had grown quite morbid as regarded him, and she was haunted by the fear that he would come back suddenly.

This was bad, and not at all like a model wife; but what was worse, it indicated cowardice, a failing in the plain duty of her position. When people live in dread that some coming duty will break up a pleasant course of things, they may be quite sure that trouble is in store for them.

One day Gertrude received a ship-letter from Africa, which had been re-directed and forwarded by her father. It had gone first to The Cottage, was greasy and dirty, and smelt villanously of the strange places it had passed through before it had reached her.

Communication in those days was not either frequent or regular; it depended on chance ships, and a still more uncertain delivery.

This letter had been sent by a slave-vessel, and had made a considerable circuit; it had been nearly twelve months in coming.

She opened it with a sickening dread and disgust; the contents did not re-assure her. Mr. Augustus did not like his quarters or his duties, though, to do him justice, he discharged as few of those as possible, and he expressed his intention of coming home by the first ship, "as he felt convinced that his health would never stand the climate."

That very night—Clarissa was in bed—Gertrude was sitting up rather late to finish some work she had in hand—a hackney-coach stopped at the door, a loud voice was heard asking if Mrs. Donnelly lived there, a stamping of feet followed, and the noise of a heavy chest dragged painfully up-stairs; the door of the sitting-room was opened, and Mr. Augustus, bronzed and coarse-

looking, with a beard that had not grown beyond the stage of ugliness, with his clothes dirty and untidy, took his wife into his arms with a violence that seemed intended to break her bones, and giving her a hug, said,—

“Well, my girl, you see I am come back! But pay the coach, for I have not a farthing.”

He flung himself into the chair she had been occupying, shoved her work on one side to make room for his elbow, and the cheerful little room was filled with an uncomfortable presence.

Her dream of the shipwrecked mariner had come to pass!

CHAPTER XLIV.

POOR Gertrude! She cleared away her work, laid the table for supper, went to prepare a bed-room for him, and, by busying herself about his material comforts, she evaded the necessity of appearing much rejoiced at his unexpected arrival.

When she returned he asked for Clarissa. Gertrude went and fetched her. The child, awakened from a profound sleep, did not evince any other emotion than extreme repugnance to being taken out of her comfortable bed, to be dazzled with the lights, and roughly kissed by a rough-looking man with a painfully sharp beard. She began to cry.

“Is that all you have taught her?” said Mr. Augustus, as he gave her back to Gertrude.

“What would you have? The poor child is only half awake; she will be a different creature when you see her to-morrow.”

“I hope so, or we shall be apt to quarrel. You are as queer as you can be yourself. A pretty reception for a man to come home to, all the way from Africa!”

Gertrude did not reply; and luckily, just then, Mrs. Hutchins herself came in with the savoury steak she had cooked for his supper. She looked so pleasant and smiling, and the steak looked so tempting, that the discontent of Mr. Augustus was

mollified, and by the time he had finished his supper he was almost amiable.

“How did you discover where I was living?” asked Gertrude.

“Oh! I arrived a week ago at Bristol, and wrote down to The Cottage where I left you. I got this bit of a note in answer.”

He handed Gertrude a crumpled letter in her father's crabbed handwriting:

“Sir,—Mrs. Donnelly, your wife, does not reside here. You will find her at 14 ——— Place, near Gray's-inn Lane.

“Your obedient,

“S. MORLEY.”

“I only received a letter from you this morning,” said Gertrude.

“Aye, indeed! let me see it.”

Gertrude gave it to him. He turned it over, and said—

“How curious! I wrote that letter, and changed my mind about sending it. I suppose they must have found it amongst my papers after I had left, and sent it to you. I have had a precious deal of knocking about in the world since I wrote that.”

The fact was that there hung a cloud of impenetrable obscurity over the fortunes of Mr. Augustus since he left England. He told his wife a rambling story about a Portuguese Jew—about some trading speculations in which he had engaged, and which turned out ill; what they actually were he avoided stating. He talked wildly and vaguely about his great expectations and his enemies, who had endeavoured to ruin him—but about Sir Simon and his secretary-ship he never spoke. There was a tone of coarse reckless boasting and bravado in his manner of speaking

that struck Gertrude painfully ; it was something she had never remarked in him before : he had, moreover, a look of dissipation and general disreputableness.

He continued his rambling talk far on into the night. He asked Gertrude very few questions about herself ; indeed, he did not seem to care much about what she had been doing. He had decidedly fallen to a lower moral level than he had been at before he left England.

At last Gertrude said,—

“I am sure you must be tired, Augustus ; will you not go to bed?”

“Well, I don’t mind. I shall not get up very early in the morning. On shipboard we were not tied to times ; we went to bed when we liked, night or day, and we got up when we liked. I scarcely knew the difference between night and day. Well, good night ; it seems a long time since I said that to you before.”

Gertrude was once more alone, but how completely had the last few hours changed the aspect of her life. She felt disgust and annoyance and impatience—not the least inclination to take up the duty that had fallen before her. She was angry ; it seemed to her more than she could bear. With something like a shudder she began to reduce the disordered room into an approach towards its ordinary neatness. She opened the window ; the cool night breeze, the quiet moonlight and twinkling stars, seemed to purify the room from the atmosphere of her husband.

She then undressed, and after combing and arranging the bright tresses of her long hair, she bathed her face and hands with rose water. She felt as if she had contracted an involuntary stain by coming into contact with the kind of man that

Augustus had become. A sense of outrage and degradation pursued her even in sleep. She awoke the next morning with a heavy weight of oppression at her heart, of which she was sensible before she could recollect what had befallen her.

Clarissa said,—

“I hope papa is gone away; he will make us so uncomfortable. I cannot bear to see that great trunk; it takes up all the room.”

Gertrude was startled to hear her own feelings expressed by the child, and the extreme impropriety of allowing her to speak without restraint on such a delicate matter struck her; still her own heart was in such a state of rebellion against the Providence that had brought back her husband, that she could not at once set herself to bring Clarissa into a more filial state of mind.

As she continued for some little time unchecked, Miss Clarissa's tongue went faster, and her expressions of displeasure became stronger in proportion as she fancied herself listened to. At length Gertrude said, gravely,—

“My little girl must not speak in that way of her papa. He has been travelling great distances in dangerous countries to earn some money to bring home to us, but, instead of that, he is come home very poor; so Clarissa must be good and kind to him, and be very obedient, and try to find out what she should do to please him.”

“Well, mamma,” replied the young lady, in a somewhat more subdued key, and with a confidential air such as precocious little misses of tender years sometimes assume, “but you must own that it is very disagreeable to have all our pleasant days interrupted.”

“Does Clarissa recollect of Whom it was said, ‘that He

pleased not Himself?' and you know that we are commanded to follow His example."

But Gertrude's words seemed to mock her own ears, she was so far from feeling their import.

She and Clarissa had their breakfast together as usual, and after breakfast Gertrude opened the sea-chest that, as Clarissa had said, filled up the whole landing-place. She found it nearly empty, and what clothes it contained were mostly soiled.

Her first act was to make up all the clothes into a bundle for the washerwoman, and then to prevail on Mrs. Hutchins to help her to carry the chest itself bodily into the cellar.

After this, she put on her bonnet and went to a ready-made linen warehouse, and purchased a dozen new shirts and two complete sets of under-clothing. This first instalment towards reducing things to something like order and comfort soothed her feelings.

Augustus had given no signs of awaking, although it was now eleven o'clock. She made some coffee, and determined to take it to him in his room. Her heart sank at the prospect of having her days cut up by irregular meals and having to prepare extra ones at all hours. What was to become of her work she thought, and what was to become of her!

Mr. Augustus looked, if possible, rather more ugly in the morning light than he had done the evening before. It was not so much the ugliness of feature as the ugliness of the man's own nature beneath.

"I hope you are rested this morning,—I have brought you some breakfast," said Gertrude.

"It is a pity you troubled yourself; I could have had it when I got up. What o'clock is it?"

"It is past eleven. I will bring you some hot water directly."

Gertrude's coffee was first-rate, and Mr. Augustus felt himself the better for it. He graciously expressed his intention "to get up," and when his wife had brought him the plentiful means for a thorough ablution—had laid out his razors and his fresh clothes—the air of comfort and orderliness, to which he had been so long unaccustomed, began to exercise a pleasant influence.

"I see you intend me to cast my travelling skin, and to come out a dandy," said he, in a tone of content. "I dare say I shall feel all the better for a fresh rigging out; but in Old Calabar, where I was so long, such articles as these belonged to another world altogether. Now, if you will leave me, I will get myself washed and dressed."

The improvement in his appearance was great. When he entered the sitting-room, it would have been difficult to recognise him for the same man who had sat over the fire the previous evening. He had shaved his beard, trimmed his whiskers, and altogether looked more like the Augustus Donnelly of former times.

Clarissa no longer shrank from him; they soon became friends. She brought him her doll's kitchen, and showed him all her treasures. He played with her and told her stories, and felt highly complacent at his own success. Clarissa was a very pretty child, and her father was proud of her.

At length he said he would take her out for a walk. Gertrude hesitated—she did not like to trust him; and that of course made him more set upon it.

"She is not strong, Augustus; do not let her walk far."

"Never fear; she and I will take excellent care of ourselves. We will go into the Park to see the fine folks."

It was a lovely day at the latter end of May. Gertrude

could not find in her heart to refuse, and prepared Clarissa for her walk. Augustus did not invite his wife; it never occurred to him to do so.

“You may as well give me some money, Ger.; it is awkward to be with empty pockets.”

Gertrude gave him a pretty netted purse, tolerably well-filled with silver.

“I shall call at a tailor’s and order myself some fresh clothes I cannot go amongst people until I am a little better dressed.”

Gertrude repeated her caution against allowing Clarissa to walk too far, and they departed. Clarissa looked up and smiled as they passed the window.

“I wish poor mamma had been going with us, instead of stopping at home to work.”

“She seems to like it,” replied Mr. Augustus; “she would have told us if she had wished to come.”

As soon as they were fairly off, Gertrude started to go to Lady Southend, to tell her what had happened.

She found the old lady alone, but she was not nearly so sympathising as Gertrude had expected.

“Well, my dear, it is a great bore, no doubt; but you must just make the best of it. Your husband had an undoubted right to come home, and I advise you not to let him see how much you would have preferred his continued absence. It is only by exercising your influence over him that you will be able to keep things in any sort of order.”

“Oh, Lady Southend, I am very wicked!” said poor Gertrude; “but you do not know how dreadful it is to have only one room to eat and sit and work in, and to have it all disorganized, and everything thrown out of its course. Besides, as he has come back without any money, I do not see how I can supply all his

wants, if I have no place to work in. It will never do for me to send home my work smelling of tobacco. If he only would go away again and get something to do."

"My dear Gertrude, you are behaving like a weak and foolish young woman. Your husband is worthless and idle (of course you are indignant to hear him called so, even though it be your own valuation), but he is a long way yet from being a 'bad husband.' I can tell you, from my own experience, what it is to have a 'King Stork.' Ah, my dear! it pleased God to take my husband many years ago, and I hope I have forgiven him as a Christian should. He was what you would have called a 'fine gentleman,' but I tell you that I have worn my diamond bracelets to hide black flesh where he had pinched me. I had a Brussels lace tippet which was the envy of all the women who saw it. I wore it as a fanciful costume, and made it the fashion; everybody copied it, and it was called 'la fichu à la Southend.' As I was never seen without it, people good-naturedly said I wore it morning, noon, and night for the sake of displaying it; they never guessed it was to hide the marks of his brutality upon my shoulders. One day, whilst my maid was dressing my hair, he came in like a madman, and, seizing the hot irons, scored them across both shoulders; the scars were ineffaceable. I had that morning refused to sign away an estate to pay a gambling debt. Another time he seized me unawares, and cut all the nails on one hand to the quick!—ugh! it makes me shudder to recollect it. He brought his mistresses into the house, and compelled me to receive a woman of quality who audaciously made her appearance wearing ornaments of mine that he had stolen from me to give to her.

"He kept another of his mistresses in a fine house exactly

opposite to my back drawing-room windows. I was a great beauty, and had brought him an immense fortune, and I had been desperately in love with him; but I never complained—I never took the world into my confidence. I appeared in public with him, and kept a serene and smiling face whilst he was uttering the most insulting language in a whisper—looking all the time as polite as if he had been my Lord Chesterfield or Sir Charles Grandison. *You* come and talk to *me* about your husband, after that! Perhaps you will ask me what I gained by putting so good a countenance on the matter. The world could not gossip about me or pity me, and my husband *feared* me when I looked at him and held my tongue. I believe he thought it was a spell by which I could work him evil—his conscience told him what he deserved. I did not gain that strength at once. I began by being eloquent, which only ended in my own discomfiture—and you may be sure that I nearly broke my woman's heart before I could cease to hope that, amid all the wealth of fine qualities with which I had endowed him out of my own beautiful imagination, *some* would at least hold good; but they were all charming illusions, for which I learned to despise myself; and when I once was able to lay hold upon the truth, I was calm—and at least ceased to wear myself out with vain hopes.

“Go home, child. Lay hold of the fact of things, even though it should be sharper than a sword. Accept your lot as it actually is—do not weakly try to make a compromise if it is miserable; say to yourself, it *is* miserable—and bear it. You will have strength enough to bear whatever trials may come, and to do whatever duty is laid upon you—but your strength will fail if you waste it in struggling to be *happy* into the bargain. Let the comfort you have had in your life since you

came to London go, and take up your life as it stands *now*--you will find your account in so doing.

“And now good-bye, and go home. I have told you more of my life than I ever told to any one before—so keep it to yourself, and profit by it.”

Gertrude felt stronger and braver for the old lady's words and she went home determined to go and do likewise.

Mr. Augustus and Clarissa had not returned, although the dusk had long been thickening. She kept the tea-table ready, and a bright fire burning, but it was ten o'clock before they came back. Clarissa looked very tired—she was sick, and very cross; Mr. Augustus was in a charmingly pleasant humour, though there was a slight doubleness in his tongue, and a bland confusion in his attempt to give an account of where they had been and what they had done. They had been to Greenwich, and he had seen some of his old friends; and, apparently, it was a case of “*troppo grazzia*” for their hospitality.

CHAPTER XLV̄.

CLARISSA continued ill and feverish all night. She told her mamma that her papa had taken her in a little boat down to Greenwich, where they walked under the beautiful trees in the park, and then he took her to an inn to dine. Some gentlemen came in who knew papa, and they invited them to their table; they were very good-natured to her, and gave her dessert and wine, and talked to her a great deal; and one of the gentlemen took her to a shop, and told her to choose what she would like best, and she chose that beautiful crystal scent-bottle with a silver top, to give it to her mamma. She thought they would never come home, she grew so tired and sleepy; at last, after coffee, they came away, and the good-natured gentleman drove her and papa home in his barouche.

Clarissa was several days before she recovered from the ill effects of this journey to Greenwich, which filled Gertrude with much anxiety as to how she should be able to avoid for the future allowing Clarissa to go out with her papa, who was clearly not a person to be trusted with the care of her. But for the present her anxiety was needless.

Mr. Augustus, having received a suit of new clothes from the tailor, was scarcely ever at home. He did not tell his wife whither he went, nor how he passed his time; but he never

failed to ask her for money before he went out. He had quite overcome his objection to seeing her "manty-make," or do anything else she pleased to earn money. He seemed now to accept it as a matter of course that she was to work, and that he was always to obtain money from her for the asking.

This was neither a right nor a wise mode of proceeding; but Gertrude disliked the sight of him so much, and was so exceedingly thankful to have him out of the house on any terms, that she gave him money from her hoarded store, lest if she should refuse he should sit and lounge over the fire all day.

She accustomed him to have breakfast in his own room—she always prepared it carefully, and took it to him herself. The only time when he decided to breakfast in the sitting-room, where she and Clarissa were at work, either from accident or design the difference in the comfort was so great that he never attempted it again.

We are sorry to confess that she had contracted such an intense disgust and contempt for him, that her sole study was to isolate him, and to have as little of his society as possible. She never showed any irritation of temper—she never complained or found fault with him; she attended to his comfort—studied his convenience—always spoke gently to him; but there was with all this a smooth marble coldness of manner, an intangible something, that repelled all companionship. She was there as regarded her bodily presence, coldly irreproachable—but she herself was all the while separated and concealed as behind a wall of ice. If Mr. Augustus had retained a spark of affection for his wife, he would have suffered much; but as he was quite indifferent, it did not hurt his feelings in the least. Still he was aggravated by the cold, dignified aversion she manifested, which he had sense enough to perceive, although she gave him

no excuse for finding fault. His wounded *amour propre* soon converted indifference into a dull smouldering dislike, which grew stronger every day.

The genuine feeling, whatever it may be, from which our actions spring always makes itself felt, and all that Gertrude gained by her impeccable behaviour was, that her husband never felt the slightest gratitude for anything she did, but had a fixed idea that she was very sorry he had not been devoured or murdered by savages, or come to some fatal end amongst his many adventures, and that she would be very glad if he would once more go away and never come back again; in fact, that she wished him dead on any terms. Mr. Augustus, with all his faults, was not a malicious man—on the contrary, he was good-natured. This was fortunate for Gertrude, as he did not give himself the trouble to torment her by the only means in his power—viz., stopping at home. To be sure, it would have been a bore to himself to have done so: he therefore took the less obnoxious course of “scorning to stop where he was not wanted,” took his liberty and all the money she could give him, and considered that he was to be pitied for having a wife with such a confoundedly bad temper.

Fencing with our duties is like delaying to pay a just debt; we may succeed in evading it for a time, but it will inevitably be exacted in some shape or other, and it will fall all the heavier and at a more inconvenient season than if we had girded up ourselves to meet it bravely at once.

Gertrude felt and knew that, in spite of her unimpeachable virtues, she was not doing her duty honestly and heartily towards her husband.

To make amends, she worked harder than ever—stinted herself of food and rest, practised the most rigid self-denying

economy—to earn money that her husband squandered, and she hated him more every day he lived. When he left the house she was conscious of a relief that enabled her to breathe, and when she heard his footsteps at night her heart contracted with a sick despair. There is no hatred like that which comes between a man and wife.

Clarissa meanwhile had grown very fond of her father, and was delighted when he would take her out with him or play with her. But that soon became troublesome to him, and he preferred being independent, for which Gertrude was devoutly thankful. The little Clarissa was the one good element in that home of estrangement and restraint, but she too was a sufferer. Pressed by the necessity of earning money, Gertrude had less time to devote to the training of her child. No one can take anger and uncharitableness to the root of their tree of life with impunity. She had not the same good influence upon Clarissa as formerly.

Undoubtedly Mr. Augustus was not the sort of husband to rejoice in; but the greatest source of her unhappiness lay within herself.

One day Mr. Augustus came home in high spirits. Lord Elvington had invited him down to Elvington Park to assist him in his electioneering, and he had told him to bring his little friend Clarissa with him.

Gertrude remonstrated, and said, sensibly enough, that Clarissa was too young to visit anywhere without her mother; and pointed out the indelicacy of intruding a child into Lady Elvington's nursery without her invitation, or at least her sanction.

Mr. Augustus was proud of Clarissa. He liked the notion of showing her off amongst all the company he expected to meet.

He had set his heart upon taking her with him; that it would thwart his wife, was an additional motive why he should insist.

Gertrude ventured to write a note to Lord Elvington, who, although somewhat surprised to find his careless and half-jesting speech taken in earnest, wrote a courteous note in reply, expressing the pleasure it would give himself and Lady Elvington to have such a charming playfellow for their nursery. There was nothing more to be done except reluctantly to prepare Clarissa's wardrobe for the visit.

Clarissa was half wild at the prospect, which was scarcely shadowed by the necessity of going away from her mother for the first time in her life.

Gertrude had always taken a pride in keeping Clarissa nicely dressed. Her clothes were exquisitely fine and beautifully made, and she thought at least Lady Elvington's nurse would see that the child had been well cared for.

It gave her a pang to see how little Clarissa felt the approaching separation; but she crushed it down into her heart as she had done many other emotions.

A chaise came on the day fixed for their departure, sent by Lord Elvington; they departed, and Gertrude was left alone with the bitter thoughts that rankled in her heart.

Of course Mr. Augustus had ordered himself a supply of new clothes; they had come, accompanied by the tailor's bill, which Mr. Augustus entirely ignored. Gertrude found it after his departure, lying on the floor of his bedroom torn in two.

The amount was heavy as compared with Gertrude's means of payment, but she took a sullen pleasure in hanging this additional millstone round her neck. She sat in doors all that fine summer weather; morning, noon, and night, she sat to her

task, and resolutely refused to stir abroad. She worked early and late, but it was with a bitter sense of hardship and injustice that injured and wore her strength far more than either the close application or the confinement.

Her health began to suffer, and she fancied that she was sacrificing herself to meet her own difficulties and her husband's debts.

Mrs. Hutchins, her kind landlady, grew unhappy about her. She thought she did not eat enough, and often of her own accord brought her little delicacies and nourishing things to tempt her appetite; but Gertrude was in no mood to feel grateful.

"Dear heart, ma'am!" said Mrs. Hutchins, seating herself one day, after depositing a delicate sweetbread before Gertrude; "I do wish you would give yourself a holiday—you work too hard—your face is getting a look I don't like to see. I have had trouble myself, and I know the look of it when I see it in another. If it is only money, I really would not sacrifice my health to obtain it; when health is gone, all is gone."

"Mrs. Hutchins, I must earn money for Mr. Donnelly and my child; there is nothing but what I earn."

Mrs. Hutchins looked at Gertrude compassionately, and sighed. After a pause, during which anyone who had watched her would have observed a hesitation in her manner, as though debating whether she should speak, she said, timidly,—

"A clergyman once said to me, that the burdens we bind upon ourselves are heavier than any that are laid upon us by Providence. He meant that we make them heavy by our manner of taking them."

"How do you mean?" said Gertrude, languidly.

"Why, ma'am, he meant that we harden our hearts instead of

softening them, and take our troubles perverse'y and athwart instead of meekly."

"I don't know; we can but bear them: they come but to be borne."

"Nay, ma'am, it makes all the difference to us what way we take our trials. God's blessing never rested yet on a proud heart, and it makes Him angry when He sends us lessons that we will not learn. It is being stubborn and setting ourselves against Him—and, I take it, that is the one sin which comprehends all others. When I lived with my Lady Southend, she had a great deal of trouble, and she had a brave spirit of her own. I used to wonder where she found all her strength; but I have thought since that she did not take her trouble just in the right way. She set her face like a flint, and hardened herself like iron, and nobody ever saw her give way; but I have often found her beautiful cambrie handkerchiefs gnawed into holes,—she always covered her mouth when my Lord angered her."

"What would you have had her do?" said Gertrude.

"Well, ma'am, I am not just clever at saying things, and you will, maybe, make no sense of me; but when my own troubles came, I did not find that being proud helped me one bit; it only drove the hurt deeper. I was obliged to bear. But one day the thought came into my mind how much worse I had all my life behaved towards Him who made me than anybody had ever behaved to me, and how little I deserved that anybody should behave well to me. I began to see myself, and then I left off feeling angry at others; and as soon as the anger was taken away, I felt for all the world, as one might do who had a bad burn dressed with healing ointment. My husband was not a good man,—he was a very bad one in every way. We had one

child, and God forgive me if I wrong him, but I surely believe he made away with it for the sake of the club-money. That was a sore grief, and it drove me out of my mind for some months. When I came to myself, I prayed very hard that I might not be let to hate him, and I was not; thank God, I was kept quiet. He fell very ill soon after my judgment had come back to me, and I was able to nurse him and have a good heart towards him. It was not against me he had sinned, though he had made me suffer."

"And what became of him?" asked Gertrude.

"He got well again that time, but he went on in bad ways. He left me to go and live with another woman, and I went to service under my maiden name; my husband joined a gang of burglars, and got shot one night in attempting to enter a gentleman's house. I went to him in the prison."

"Well?" said Gertrude.

"Well, ma'am, he was quite sensible and knew me, and thanked me for coming to see him. He died before his trial came on."

"And were you not very glad?" asked Gertrude, bitterly.

"No, ma'am; I let it be as it best pleased God. I knew His way would be best."

"But you must have lived in constant dread of him, and of what he might do."

"No, ma'am; I was kept quiet—I was not afraid."

Gertrude looked at the composed, steadfast face of her landlady, and owned in her heart that a more excellent spirit was in her than within herself.

"But what did you do when you found him going so wrong, and when he injured you so deeply?"

"I prayed to God for him, ma'am—that was all I could

do; and I was kept to feel quiet myself—through every thing.”

“But you could not love such a husband, surely?”

“No, ma’am, perhaps not; he had wore that out. But I did not hate him; I wished him well.”

“What sort of a man was he in his ways?”

“Well, ma’am, he was very trying. I used to like to have things nice and orderly; and when he was in one of his passions, he thought nothing of smashing everything; he upset my places sadly.”

“Mrs. Hutchins,” said Gertrude, after a pause, “If you will come and take a walk with me, I will go out.”

“To be sure ma’am, I will be glad to do so; and don’t sit again so close to your pattern-drawing and embroidery; you take things harder than they are laid upon you.”

“I have some work to take home, and if I am paid I shall have money to pay that tailor’s bill, and I shall feel happier when that is off my mind.”

When Gertrude came home again, she felt like a sick person who has been sent to breathe a purer atmosphere. When she knelt down that night, the petition that came from the depth of her heart was—“Renew a right spirit within me!”

Before she dropped asleep a verse that she had never much heeded came into her mind—“Above all things, have fervent charity amongst yourselves,”—and for the first time it seemed to have a meaning.

CHAPTER XLVI.

It was not immediately that Gertrude came to a feeling of charity towards her husband; but the impulse in the right direction had been given—she had at last been awakened to the consciousness of wherein she had been wrong. The “grain of mustard seed” had been sown, and there needed only time to quicken and mature the growth.

She had not, however, any immediate opportunity to test her improvement. The next morning brought her a letter from Mr. Augustus, saying that an opportunity had offered for him to go to Ireland, where he expected to meet with something to his advantage, and that he purposed taking Clarissa along with him “for company, and also to show her to his relations.”

This was all the information the letter contained; not one word about Clarissa, no message of love, not even an address to which she might write!

When Mrs. Hutchins came in shortly afterwards, she found Gertrude lying upon the floor in a dead faint.

“Dear heart! dear heart! what can have happened to her,” and the good woman tried long and unsuccessfully to restore Gertrude to consciousness.

At last she opened her eyes—the letter, lying where it had fallen, was the first thing she saw; a violent shudder passed

through her frame, and she became again insensible. Poor Mrs. Hutchins was alarmed at this second and prolonged swoon, but at length Gertrude seemed to awaken from the dead,—she sat upright,—all her faculties and recollections had come back to her.

“Tell me what must I do? what can I do? Read that letter, and tell me.”

“It is a bad job; you can do nothing,—the law gives him the right to take the child anywhere he pleases. It is a pity but what you and he had been more friendly together. I fear he won't mind for vexing you.”

“No! I have not deserved that he should; but it is too dreadful. He is the last person Clarissa ought to be with,—he is not a fit companion for her. You do not know the people she will be thrown amongst even if the best happens, and he takes her to her grandmother; but I fear he will keep her with him, and she will see and hear nothing but evil continually.”

“It is a hard blow, but you must recollect she is in the hands of God, and He can guard her from all evil there as well as if she were here.”

“If she had only died I could have borne it, but this is worse.”

“We must think who sends the trouble—it would be harder still to bear else. But is there nothing to be done?—Maybe, if you were to go down to the place where she has been staying, you might hear something. How do you go there?”

Gertrude eagerly caught at the suggestion. “I will take a chaise and go to-night—at once.”

Alas! Gertrude had not the money, and Mrs. Hutchins had it not to lend her. Gertrude's thoughts turned to Lady Southend, but her ladyship was out of town. A day's delay

might make her too late. The money with which she had bought her husband's absence from home would in this emergency have enabled her to reach her child;—her conscience was not slow to suggest this.

“Suppose I go to make inquiries at a coach-office,” said Mrs. Hutchins.

“No, no, you shall not. I will go; it may be that the coach is on the point of starting when I get there—if you went I should miss it.”

“Well, well, I will not hinder you, but I will go with you; and you shall go if you will only eat something first.”

“It will choke me,” said Gertrude, hastily beginning to collect a few necessary articles and put them into a bag. “Now come, I'm ready.”

Mrs. Hutchins hailed a coach, for Gertrude was unable to walk.

When they arrived at the coach-office, they found that a coach passing the gates of Elvington Park left the office at nine o'clock in the morning and reached there about seven in the evening; it was a long day's journey. Flying would have been all too slow for Gertrude, she wished to set off on foot and to walk all night.

“You would arrive there no sooner, dear; for you would have to wait till the coach overtook you. You must take it as part of the trial appointed to you, and accept the delay with patience. You will be stronger to-morrow, and better able to travel, and you may make some arrangement to follow them if they should be gone forward. This very delay may enable you perhaps to come up with them earlier than if you had your will and set off in this hurried manner.”

Gertrude yielded to the necessity, and returned home.

The whole of that night she watched for the morning. Mrs. Hutchins tried to say words of comfort, but Gertrude heeded them not.

“I shall not come back till I have found her, Mrs. Hutchins. I will follow them all over the world. If you like to let these rooms, do—do not let me stand in your way.”

“Dear heart, don’t think of me. Have you put up everything you will want? Have you any work to send home, or any message for the shops you work for?”

This removed Gertrude’s thoughts forcibly in another direction. If, indeed, she should be forced to prolong her absence, some arrangement was absolutely necessary. This seemed too to advance her on her journey; it was at any rate doing something towards setting out.

Completely worn out, she slept for an hour towards morning.

Long before it was time to start, her nervous eagerness brought her to the coach-office. Mrs. Hutchins came with her.

“You will write me a line, ma’am, just to tell me of your success.”

Gertrude grasped the hand of her companion.

“Yes, yes,” she said in a harsh discordant tone, that sounded strangely unlike her natural voice.

The coach set off at last, and Gertrude was in pursuit of her child, at the rate of eight miles an hour.

How slow and weary seemed the day!

At last the coach reached the lodge-gates. Gertrude descended from the jingling stage-coach, the guard flung out her portmanteau, and the stage drove on.

The blood beat tumultuously in her heart, and the next moment seemed to congeal to ice. In answer to her inquiry, the woman at the lodge, a hard-looking woman with a sour

placidity of face, told her that the party at the Hall had broken up the day before, and that no one remained except my lord and lady, who were returning to town the next morning.

“Do you know?—did you see—whether a little girl who has been here on a visit with her father has gone away, or is she still at the Hall?”

“Indeed, ma’am, I cannot say,” replied the woman. “I believe all the young nobility who have been visiting in the nursery went away directly after the ball.”

The woman spoke stolidly, and with the most unimpressible indifference—the manner not insolent only because it was devoid of all expression.

“Perhaps you will allow me to leave my travelling bag here, whilst I go to the hall to enquire.” Gertrude spoke gently and courteously.

“Yes, I suppose you may leave it,” said the woman reluctantly; “you will hear no more than I have told you; her ladyship doesn’t like seeing strangers at this time of day. It is not easy to see her at any time. Had you not better come again?”

But Gertrude was already out of hearing. She did not go to the grand entrance, but up a narrow path that led round the house to the offices.

Her dress was dusty and crumpled with a long day’s travel, her face was harassed and weary, but Gertrude looked still an undeniable gentlewoman in her carriage and bearing. One of the men servants crossing the court saw her and approached; his manner was far more respectful than that of the woman of the lodge.

“Is Miss Donnelly still here?” Gertrude’s parched throat could scarcely articulate the question.

“ I do not know, ma’am, but I will enquire, if you will come into the housekeeper’s parlour. The party broke up yesterday, and I heard the nursery footman saying that Miss Donnelly was to leave with her father, but she may be here still.”

Gertrude followed, thankful for the doubt so charitably thrown out.

The housekeeper—a stately middle-aged woman in stiff black silk, with her face drawn into an expression of repulsive dignity, though the features, being small, were somewhat overtaxed to produce it—looked up in surprised displeasure at the invasion of her parlour.

“ A lady, ma’am, who has come to enquire for Miss Donnelly,” said the footman.

“ I am her mother,” gasped Gertrude “and I only heard yesterday that she was likely to be taken away to Ireland.”

“ Indeed,” said the housekeeper coldly, “ I do not know ; the nursery is an entirely different branch of the establishment. Is her ladyship aware of your visit ? ”

“ Oh, if I could see her ladyship, I should be most thankful.”

“ I really do not know,” said the housekeeper, “ her ladyship is not in the habit of being disturbed. You say that she knows you ? ”

“ No,” said Gertrude, “ I never saw her. My husband and little girl have been here during the election. He is a friend of Lord Elvington’s.”

“ Oh,” rejoined the housekeeper, looking at her with her cold sullen face, “ many sort of folks come at election times that my lady would neither see nor speak to at others ; but you say your little girl has been on a visit to her ladyship’s children ? ”

Gertrude bowed her head, she could not trust herself to speak—her eyes were fixed on the door. The good natured footman

returned at last with "Mrs. Blisset's compliments (the head nurse, ma'am) and Miss Donnelly went away with her father yesterday morning in the carriage of Mr. Fitz-Vashipot;—she believes they were to sail from Holyhead for Dublin, but she is not certain. The young lady was quite well, ma'am, she bid me say."

Gertrude's look of despair touched the humane footman;—the housekeeper looked as if she saw and felt nothing but the inconvenience of having Gertrude standing there in the parlour, without any immediate prospect of getting rid of her.

"Is there anything I can do, ma'am? or any other enquiry you would like to make?"

"If I might see her ladyship for one minute I should be grateful;—she, at least, could tell me where they are gone."

"I will ask Mr. Williams, the groom of the chambers, whether her ladyship has left the dining-room. I will go and see what can be done."

"You had better take a seat until Mr. James returns," said the housekeeper, discontentedly, seating herself as she spoke in her large easy chair, and resuming the perusal of her newspaper.

Gertrude thankfully availed herself of the permission.

"Mr. James," as the housekeeper called him, at length returned with the intelligence that her ladyship would have the pleasure of speaking to Mrs. Donnelly in the library directly.

Gertrude rose, and courteously wishing the housekeeper good evening, followed her conductor along the matted passage, wide enough to be called a corridor, and across a magnificent hall, paved with different kinds of marble arranged in mosaic, into a room filled with antique oak carvings and stained-glass windows;

the boards of the floor were of polished oak, as smooth as glass, except where they were covered in the centre with a rich Turkey carpet.

A handsome, haughty-looking woman stood on the hearth-rug, before the small wood fire that was burning in the chimney, summer-time as it was. A younger and less remarkable-looking woman was beside her.

“These election times bring one acquainted with strange people,” said the elder lady, with a look of disgust. “One’s household gods are desecrated, and the odour of bad society lingers over the house for months after all is over.”

“Mrs. Donnelly, my lady,” said the footman, throwing open the door.

The stately lady advanced a step, and said,—

“I was told that you wished to see me.”

“I came to fetch my little girl, who has been staying here with her papa, on Lord Elvington’s invitation. I find she has been taken away—can your ladyship tell me where?”

Lady Elvington’s brow slightly clouded. She said, coldly,—

“Mr. Donnelly brought his little girl for the election time; he left yesterday, taking the child with him. I do not know anything further about him.”

A good-natured looking middle-aged man entered the room and sauntered towards the fire-place.

“My lord,” said the lady, turning round, “do you chance to know anything of Mr. Donnelly’s movements? This lady is his wife, come to claim her little girl from us.”

“Eh—what? No,” said his lordship, coming forwards and looking at Gertrude. “I don’t know anything about his movements. It strikes me I heard him say something about going to see his mother and his uncle, Sir Lucius O’Connor; and I think

he agreed to cross over with Fitz-Vashipot. It was unpardonably thoughtless in him to take away the child without informing you; but you need not be agitated, my dear madam. Miss Clarissa will be in no danger. You would scarcely be in time to catch them at Holyhead, even if you were to take post-horses; but a letter addressed to the care of Fitz-Vashipot would be sure to find your husband, who, no doubt, will take the earliest opportunity of repairing his omission. Do not be agitated, I beg; depend upon it, all is quite right, only a little irregularity in the form; he should have asked leave at headquarters. A charming child Miss Clarissa—full of *espérglerie*; she will be a dangerous beauty some of these days!”

“Will your lordship be so kind as to give me the address that will find my husband, and I will not trespass further on your time, except to thank her ladyship and yourself for the kindness you have shown my child.”

Her ladyship bowed coldly. His lordship said, in the hasty manner in which he always spoke,—

“Oh, not at all—not at all! She is a delightful child. This is the address. But you cannot return to the village alone; one of the men shall go with you.”

“Matilda, my dear, ring the bell, will you. Mrs. Donnelly must need refreshment after her journey,” said her ladyship, languidly

Gertrude strenuously refused everything except the footman’s guidance across the park, for it was now becoming dusk.

Her ladyship bowed coldly; his lordship shook hands cordially, and desired the groom of the chambers to direct James to see Mrs. Donnelly safe to the inn in the village.

“I was told that my friend Donnelly had made a *mésalliance*; but if looks go for anything, she might pass muster amongst

half the women in the red-book," was the observation of his lordship after Gertrude had retired.

"She is a good woman enough, no doubt; but it is not pleasant to have her come asking one for her child, as though one had any concern in the matter. I wish, my lord, you would be more careful whom you invite; if anything unfortunate should occur, it will be very unpleasant to have it dated from our house. Who *is* that Mr. Donnelly?"

"He used to belong to Southend's set. I have known him, on and off, a long time. The Whig government gave him some appointment, I forget what, which he lost; and then he was sent out to Africa, and returned lately. He is of a good Irish family; but his ways and means are a mystery. I suppose he had money with his wife. She is a pretty creature, though she looked horribly anxious and jaded. I wonder who she was?"

"Oh, nobody, of course, that we ever heard of or are likely to hear of;" and her ladyship settled herself luxuriously into her own particular chair. The servants entered with lights. His lordship took up the "Edinburgh;" her ladyship began to cut the leaves of a new novel; whilst the lady called "Matilda" made tea at another table.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE landlady of the "Wheatsheaf," seeing Gertrude accompanied by one of the footmen from the Hall, received her with a degree of zealous politeness which would scarcely have greeted her otherwise.

Seeing her extreme exhaustion, she suggested "a nice cup of tea and a new-laid egg." Gertrude sank wearily on the settee covered with check gingham, which did duty for a sofa, and feebly wondered whether she were going to die. Physical weariness swallowed up all distinction of suffering; she was as wretched as a human creature could be, and—live. But when misery is stretched beyond a certain point, confusion follows.

"The nice cup of tea" promised by the landlady scarcely justified its epithet—it was more like an infusion of chopped hay; the bread was sour, and the butter was salt; the room in which she sat smelled horribly of stale tobacco, and accused the lingering memory of strong beer and British brandy which had been consumed in unlimited quantities during the last election week.

A "village hostel," however picturesque, is not the place for any great comfort. The "Wheatsheaf" stood on the village green. It was built with numerous gables and overhanging eaves; the chimneys were quaint; the thatch was dotted with

houseleek and moss; the walls were dazzling with whitewash. An old patriarchal elm tree, beneath which was a bench, where all the toppers of the village congregated to enjoy the beauties of nature and virtues of strong ale, stood upon the green in front of the porch.

Nothing by daylight, or twilight, or moonlight could look more attractive than this real country inn, the "Wheatsheaf;" nevertheless, the accommodations were scanty, and far from comfortable. The bed-room to which Gertrude was ushered was a bare uncarpeted room, with the boards wide apart; a flock bed, which felt as if it had been stuffed with the bodies and bones of a whole generation of geese and ducks, with the feathers omitted; coarse blue check window curtains; a single chair; and a looking-glass that made all it reflected crooked;—but Gertrude was too weary to notice externals. The good motherly landlady, seeing that she sat down listlessly in the chair, seemingly too stupified to be conscious of what she was doing, took upon herself to undress her, and "to see her comfortable," as she expressed it, and Gertrude fell into a heavy slumber that lasted late into the following day,—although even in her sleep she was conscious of being wretched.

Her landlady allowed her to sleep as long as she would, and it was near eleven o'clock when Gertrude came down into the parlour.

A basket of fruit had been sent down from the Park by one of the under-gardeners, with "my lady's compliments to Mrs. Donnelly." The family had all left the Hall that morning.

It made no difference to Gertrude; and yet, at the news, she felt like one stranded and shipwrecked on a desert island—the last link connecting her with Clarissa was snapped by their departure.

Gertrude had no place of action, but her instinct was to get

back to London as soon as possible. It might be that there had been a letter sent to her containing some explanation, some clue to direct her course. The stage only passed through to London three days a week, and the present was not one of them. Gertrude was therefore constrained to remain in her present quarters until the morrow, and this was the best thing that could have befallen. After breakfast, she attempted to write a letter of appeal to her husband; but her powers both of body and mind had been overwrought, and she was incapable of writing a line.

She remained the whole day in a state of half stupor that was neither sleeping nor waking. The next morning she arose feeling somewhat more alive to things; the stage coach was expected at ten o'clock in the forenoon, and she had at least the prospect of getting away—of doing something.

The greatest blow that could be dreaded had actually fallen, and she was still too much stunned to be conscious of the whole extent of her misery. Mrs. Hutchins had everything prepared for her, as though she had been fully expected. She asked no questions, but behaved as much as possible as though nothing extraordinary had taken place. One pleasant piece of intelligence she had to communicate. Lady Southend had returned to town, and had sent a message desiring to see her. Lord Southend and his bride had also arrived—all the friends who could help her were within her reach. Gertrude was too weary to feel any desire to talk; the time of words and tears had not yet come.

The next day Mrs. Hutchins, who did not think it safe to lose sight of Gertrude, accompanied her to Lady Southend. The old lady had been informed of everything, so Gertrude was spared the trouble of entering upon details.

The old lady kissed her, and made her sit down beside her on the sofa.

“Now tell me about your journey. What have you heard?”

“It was a sudden arrangement. I think Augustus only agreed to go to Ireland because Mr. Fitz-Somebody offered him a place in his carriage, and I think taking away Clarissa was a sudden thought almost an accident. I do not think there was any premeditation. He was always rash, and thoughtless, and headlong, from the first I ever knew of him.”

“I think so too; and we must be careful how we take him, or else this whim may become a fixed idea. It will hamper his movements, and be attended with some inconvenience, to have a child like Clarissa attached to him. He hates inconvenience, and if we deal with him rightly he will be glad to be handsomely rid of her; but if we vex him, there is no saying what rash thing he may do out of spite. But I do not think—at least your husband did not look to me as if he were a malicious man.”

“Oh do not trust to that,” cried Gertrude, with a shiver. “You do not know him since he returned this time. He hates me, and if he takes it into his head that he can make me suffer through this act, he will never give up my child. He is so inconsequent that he may not have seen its effect yet; but if it strikes him, he will be glad to make me suffer to the utmost. I *feel* that he will. Can I not complain to a magistrate, and force him to give me back my own child? What right has he to take her from me?”

“My poor child! my poor child! Clarissa belongs lawfully to your husband, and not to you. He *can* do what he likes with her, so long as neither life nor limb, nor property, are endangered. We must hope for the best; he may be *induced* to do

what we cannot obtain by any appeal to motives of law or justice.”

Gertrude gave a wild gesture of dumb despair.

“Southend has much influence, and if anyone can persuade him it will be Southend, and I know he will do his utmost.”

Gertrude groaned and writhed as though in agony; the hope was so vague and slender, and the despair so deep.

“I will see Southend to-nigh. Give me your husband’s address. Do you write too. I do not advise you to follow him, at least not till we hear further, and know a little what he intends to do. In the meanwhile take care of your health and strength, you will need both; and, above all, do not give way to despair—that alone will be fatal to our success.”

Gertrude heard as though she heard not—she did not realise the meaning of the words that Lady Southend uttered; she looked at her blank and helpless when she ceased to speak.

“Take her home, Mrs. Hutchins, she will be better to-morrow. Do not worry her with talking to her. I will see Southend, and consult him what is the best to be done.”

Gertrude went away quite passively, like one walking in sleep.

When they arrived at home there was a letter for Gertrude, desiring her to go down to The Cottage directly if she wished to see her mother alive.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

WHILST his wife was in this sorrow and despair at home, Mr. Augustus was

“Lolling at ease behind four handsome bays,”

which whirled him along at a first-rate pace towards Holyhead. He found himself comfortable in body and happy in his mind. He was so constitutionally and incurably thoughtless, so entirely *inconsequent* in all he said and did, that he never saw beyond the impulse of the present moment, nor had the least notion of the shape his actions would take, nor to what result they would go; there was no *parti pris* or malice prepense in what he had done with regard to Clarissa.

The evening before the party at Elvington Park was to break up, Mr. Fitz-Vashipot proposed to Mr. Augustus that he should cross over to Ireland with him, and do a few electioneering jobs for him there.

Mr. Fitz-Vashipot was an English commoner, possessing a large landed estate in Ireland. His influence was great, but the government at home had refused him a peerage. He had set his mind on becoming Lord Fitz-Vashipot, and, disappointed in this innocent aspiration, he purposed to get up a little wholesome opposition at the ensuing election. He only intended,

however, to show what he *could* do, that the ministers might re-consider their ways; not by any means to drive them to despair—because despair never pays!

Mr. Augustus was in his abnormal state of fund—viz., without any; for there had been high play at the Park, and though Mr. Augustus had won considerably, an unlucky bet a couple of days ago had completely cleaned him out; even the latitude of “necessary expenses” did not furnish him with a decent excuse for applying to Lord Elvington. He did not relish the prospect of going back to his wife, after the charming society at the Park. But there was nothing else for him. He did not see his way clearly as to what was to become of him when he drifted from his present anchorage.

When, therefore, Mr. Fitz-Vashipot proposed to frank him to Ireland, where “he might make himself devilish useful, and perhaps pick up something for himself worth having,” it is not wonderful that Mr. Augustus should consider it as a most opportune “stroke of fortune;” and as to making himself useful by doing the business of somebody else, that came quite natural to him. The most innately idle people are often the most indefatigable in that respect.

The taking Clarissa with him, that was the accident of a moment. By way of making a show of modest reluctance, and to enhance his value, Mr. Augustus objected that he had his little daughter, who was too young to travel alone home to her mother.

“Bring her along with you, my boy; she will be charming company for us, and she shall give the colours! What do you say to that, Miss Beauty? Will you come and help us to return a Member of Parliament?”

“If you will let me go back soon to mamma I have no objec-

tion, but I cannot be spared long," replied Miss Clarissa with a demure dignity that made Mr. Fitz-Vashipot clap his hands and laugh, and cry "Excellent!—by Jove! she shall make them a speech."

It was less trouble at the moment for Mr. Augustus to take Clarissa along with him than to make arrangements for sending her home, and even to be spared from paying her coach fare was a consideration. He did not realise the terrible blow to Gertrude, to be told that he had taken her child away with him; indeed, that she received any announcement at all was the merest accident. Lord Elvington asked him if he wanted a frank? and it just struck him that he might as well write a line and tell Gertrude he was going to Ireland. If it had been necessary to go to the next room for a sheet of paper, it would not have been done; but the writing materials chanced to lie on the table before him.

At first Clarissa was enchanted; she laughed and chattered, and had so many pretty ways, and both the gentlemen were kept highly amused. But at night the young lady's spirits subsided. She flung herself down on the floor, and cried for her mamma with so much vehemence, that the chambermaid into whose charge she had been consigned sent for her papa in dismay.

Mr. Augustus, who had never seen her except in smiles, heartily regretted he had been such a fool as to encumber himself with her; if Gertrude had appeared at that moment, he would have welcomed her arrival as "a stroke of fortune." But she did *not* appear, and it was no longer a simple matter to send Clarissa home. There was nothing for it now but to take her forwards. She was at length exhausted by crying, and pacified by the promise that she should see her mamma the next day, the poor child sobbed herself to sleep.

The next day they sailed, and poor Clarissa,

“By expectation every day beguiled,”

learned her first lesson in sorrow. She grew apparently more reconciled, and her spirits revived with the lightness of childhood; but she generally cried herself to sleep at night, and often in the midst of being quite lively and merry she would burst out into passionate crying for her mamma. The poor child was home-sick and heart-sick, and there was no one to comfort her.

They at last arrived—after what appeared to Clarissa a journey that would never end—at the Castle of Bally-shally-na-Sloe, county Sligo, the seat of Mr. Fitz-Vashipot, and one of the boroughs at stake in the approaching election. Clarissa was consigned to the care of the housekeeper, and the two gentlemen commenced their elctioneering operations. It was in the good old times, when an election lasted many days, and many things were done in public that in these reformed days hide their flagrancancy under a decent bushel. In the riot and confusion and excitement which ensued, Clarissa was almost forgotten. Sometimes, when there was any “grand company,” she was sent into the drawing room before dinner; otherwise she was left entirely to the servants of an ill-conducted, disorganised bachelor’s household. It was altogether the last place in which a mother would have placed her child; and even Mr. Augustus, careless as he was, went himself to the housekeeper—an elderly woman, whose soul was vexed with the doings she saw on all hands—and entreated her to keep Clarissa in her room, and not to let her run wild, until such time as he could send her to her grandmother.

“Indeed, sir! and I think it is her own mother who will be after having a sore heart for the loss of her. The poor child.

for all she looks so lively just now, is fretting after her mother till it grieves me to see her; if I gather rightly from what she tells me the lady does not know where she is; and this morning Miss Clary says in her pretty way, 'Oh, Norah! mamma is sitting by the window now at her work, and expecting me home, and how am I ever to get out of this big house?'"

"Well, well, try to put all that out of her head. I do not choose her to go back to her mamma: not yet, at any rate—but keep her with you until I have time to attend to her."

Mr. Augustus put a golden guinea into Mrs. Norah's hand, and walked off whistling, and switching his boots with a riding-whip.

He had that morning received a letter from Lord Southend—written with the best intentions, and the worst possible tact.

Lord Southend had in his day been a gay and somewhat unscrupulous bachelor—but he had married recently, and cast off the slough of his bachelor days, and come out bright and shining in the garments of praise and respectability. Having worn out all the amusement there was to be found in the free and easy life of old, he had become weary of his "unchartered freedom," and now found the straight-laces of decorum a comfortable support. He looked with all the more sternness on the course which Augustus was pursuing, as nobody knew better than himself how extremely worthless it was. Besides all this, he had not forgiven Augustus for bringing discredit on his recommendation by running away from his situation and his creditors. But though all these considerations might account to those aware of them, for the *grand seigneur* tone of his letter, they did not render it the least pleasanter to receive.

He called Augustus roundly to account for "the great trouble

and distress into which he had plunged his industrious and excellent wife;" he exhorted him, much in the style of the reformed King Henry, to amend his life; and concluded by expressing a hope that Miss Clarissa might at once be restored to her mother before other measures were resorted to.

The letter contained no money, nor any intimation of favours to come.

Mr. Augustus thought he discerned clearly that he had nothing more to hope from Lord Southend; and, as he imagined he had supplied himself with another, and an equally efficient, patron in Mr. Fitz-Vashipot, he had no motive for endeavouring to propitiate Lord Southend; he, therefore, indulged himself in the luxury of resentment.

Gertrude had written also by the same post—but *her* letter, through some of the wild contradictions and perversities that prevail in this world, never reached him; if it had, his conduct would perhaps have been different, for she had written a gentle and touching letter, calculated to soothe all the self-love she might have ruffled. She entreated him to come home, and she spoke of Clarissa as *their* child; with wonderful instinct she had divined what to say and what to avoid—it was a masterpiece of maternal sagacity and tenderness;—*and that letter was lost*. The good angel of Augustus Donnelly slumbered when that occurred, for it might have saved him from committing an act of devilish cruelty; at first it had only been an act of culpable thoughtlessness, but, persisted in, its name became a word with a deadly meaning.

Lord Southend's well-meant commendations of Gertrude converted the smouldering dislike and sullen wounded self-love of Mr. Augustus into active malice. He ceased to care for the trouble Clarissa gave him, in the consciousness of the power it

gave him to torment his wife. He sat down and wrote the two following letters. The first was in reply to Lord Southend:—

“MY LORD,—I should *scorn* myself were I to allow the sense of *past* favours to interfere with the expression of my *sincere* and *candid* opinion of your lordship’s letter just received. I consider it an intrusion into the *privacy* of my affairs, and I treat the assertions it contains with the *contempt* they merit. Your lordship has shown me *some* kindness in *days gone by*, and I called you *friend*; but I cast you from me *like a withered leaf*, and we are *henceforth* strangers! For your information, I tell you that it is *not* my intention to allow my daughter to return to her mother, however ‘*industrious*’ or ‘*excellent*’ it may please your lordship to consider her.

“Your lordship’s obedient servant,

“AUGUSTUS DONNELLY.”

To Gertrude he wrote more laconically:—

“GERTRUDE,—As it is my *decided* intention not to allow you to have any further charge of your daughter, I beg that you will acquiesce, and not persecute me with your *ill humour*, nor instigate *strangers* to insult me with their remarks upon my *private concerns*. I am *perfectly aware* of your sentiments towards me, and if you send me any further letters I shall *not* read them.

“Your husband,

“A. DONNELLY.”

When Mr. Augustus read over these letters he was highly satisfied both with the matter and the diction. He got them franked and posted, and felt a self-complacency to which his bosom had long been a stranger. He would have been highly affronted had any one told him that it was a mere flash in the

pan, that he was incapable of holding to any purpose which involved the slightest inconvenience, and that, notwithstanding all his marital bluster, he would send Miss Clarissa back to her mother the moment it suited him to do so.

If Gertrude had known this, it would have saved her from mortal pain ; but we none of us make allowance for the inconsistency of human nature in our judgment of things and people ; we persist in believing that they will act according to programme—it is our own superstition that invests them with their power.

CHAPTER XLIX.

WHEN Gertrude reached The Cottage she found that her mother was better—she was still trembling on the brink of the grave; but the crisis was past—she was in no immediate danger unless she had a relapse.

This was some consolation to Gertrude—the last drop had not been added to the “waters of the full cup” that had been “wrung out to her.”

Gertrude took her station beside her mother's bed, and as all agitation and emotion would, the doctor declared, be fatal to the patient, Gertrude was enabled to control all the evidence of her own suffering, and to be as quiet and calm as though she had come in from an ordinary walk. Mrs. Morley was in a condition in which more depended upon the nurse than the doctor; Gertrude watched day and night, and felt glad that her mother was at least spared a grief that was almost heavier than she could bear. But, even whilst this thought passed in her mind, “the sin of her youth” rose up to her memory like an accusing spirit—*she* had inflicted upon the mother lying there before her a sorrow far more bitter than even the loss of Clarissa, for she had added to it the sting of ingratitude, her own “sin had found her out,” and it was only her own measure that had been meted out to her. She had received no sorrow but what she had

hitherto deserved. She saw her own past life in a different light to what she had hitherto regarded it. She had known great sorrow and remorse for her conduct to her parents; but now it seemed to her so black that nothing could equal its baseness, that no other human being was so bad and wicked as she had been; her repentance began strong and fresh, as though she had never before seen the enormity of her sin. It was true that sorrow had come upon her; but what was she that she should complain? It seemed to her that she ought rather to receive and entertain her great sorrow in quietness and reverence, as though it were an angel sent from God to commune with her heart.

The hours thus spent in silent watching beside her mother's bed were laden with the seed of a new and hidden life.

If we would only take sorrow to our heart when it comes upon us, and treat it nobly, we should find that we had entertained an angel unawares.

At length, thanks in great measure, humanly speaking, to Gertrude's care and skill in nursing, Mrs. Morley was pronounced convalescent, and allowed to come down stairs.

Then Gertrude told her story, and expressed her desire to go to Ireland in search of her daughter.

Mrs. Morley's sympathy was strong and warm, as a mother's only can be. Simon Morley was inclined in his heart to take a very prosaic view of the matter; he considered that Gertrude was now without encumbrances, and might come and live with them, and be re-instated in all her privileges as their daughter. He thought it only right that Mr. Augustus should support his own child; and as for Gertrude's feelings, he did not understand them. He could only feel and judge like a man and a parish overseer, as he was!

He had the grace, however, to abstain from giving any decided utterance to these opinions. He only grunted and puffed clouds of smoke, and asked Gertrude if she thought there was any chance of getting back the child without getting hold of the husband at the same time, and intimated she had better keep quiet and not run the risk of *that*.

At length the letter came from Mr. Augustus, which was *not* in answer to hers. Gertrude handed it to her father in silence. He put on his spectacles, and read it through.

“A pitiful jackanapes! He deserves to be flogged at a cart-tail! Why, rough as I am, and queer-tempered as I am, I would sooner have cut off my right hand than have written such a letter! Read it, missis, and tell us what *you* think about it. Nay, lass, never cry; he is not worth it. Thou shalt go to Ireland, if it took the last penny I had! and thou shalt get thy little lass back again. Never fear! A pitiful scoundrel! A pretty fellow *he* is, to write himself ‘your husband.’ It was a bad day when you first clapped your eyes on him. But I am not going into that again. I have forgiven thee, and there is an end of it. Thou shalt go, and I will go with thee. Hang it! I should enjoy circumventing the rascal. I will consult lawyer Sadler on the best way of going to work. He is a clever fellow! none more so. He got a chap off from being hanged who deserved it as sure as he was born.”

This declaration of his intentions had the effect of putting Simon Morley into high spirits; either the prospect of circumventing his son-in-law, or the testimony of his conscience that he was acting the part of an affectionate parent, made him feel quite happy.

The next day there came a letter from Lord Southend, enclosing the one he had received from Mr. Augustus. He

expressed in a few formal lines his regret at the ill-result of his interference, and begged that if he could do anything more to serve her she would let him know. The letter was perfectly courteous, but it spoke plainly of the difference between the Lord Southend of yesterday and to-day. The fact was, that Lord Southend had grown dreadfully discreet. It had been suggested to him "that he had better not mix himself up in the affairs of a pretty woman like Mrs. Donnelly, whose husband might after all *have reasons* for what he had done," &c., &c., and other suggestions of a like nature, which he caressed as prudent; but an impartial recording angel would have set them down to a great disinclination to be bothered with any further applications about Mr. Augustus and his concerns. He fancied that he "owed it to his wife" not to keep up any further intercourse with such people. Lord Southend was growing indolent and middle-aged, and Matrimony bore the blame of it.

Lady Southend continued a staunch friend. She wrote Gertrude encouraging letters; advised her to set off to Ireland without delay to search for Clarissa; and volunteered, if it came to the necessity of an appeal to the Chancellor, to furnish the funds. The old spirit which had animated her ladyship in her own conjugal difficulties blazed out afresh; the old lady was sorry to her heart for Gertrude, but, nevertheless, she rather enjoyed entering the lists against any husband whatever.

She sent Gertrude letters of introduction to friends of hers in different parts of Ireland; they were all desired to receive Gertrude as her ladyship's friend, and to forward her views in any way they possibly could.

Gertrude smiled bitterly when she received a sheaf of letters, directed to Viscountesses, Marchionesses, and Honourable Ladyships, not a few—in all of which she was described as the dear

and especial friend of Lady Southend. It was her own old early dream of worldly consideration come true, but endorsed with the bitter mockery of her own deep grief.

As soon as Mrs. Morley was well enough to be left, Gertrude prepared for her journey to Ireland to endeavour to reclaim her child from her husband.

Simon Morley accompanied her as far as Holyhead, and saw her on board the packet. He grasped Gertrude's hand at parting, and whispered,—

“Don't spare the brass, lass! don't spare the brass! Thee art welcome to all thou wants. There is nought like brass for going through the world and getting thy ends. God bless thee, and I wish thee well!”

This was the most paternal benediction which had ever passed Simon Morley's lips. The state of opposition in which she stood towards her husband seemed to restore her in his eyes to all the virtue of filial allegiance.

The vessel weighed anchor, and all Gertrude's sorrows and anxieties were for the time merged into the one miserable fact of being sea-sick. This was her first experience on the sea, and it came upon her with a force and originality not to be gainsaid or set aside by any other consideration whatever.

She was dreadfully ill; and even the stewardess, *blasée* as she was to this branch of human suffering, became somewhat alarmed.

The passage was long and stormy, and when the vessel reached Kingstown Gertrude had to be carried on shore to the hotel.

CHAPTER L.

GERTRUDE was not able to travel the next day; her enforced repose was made more tolerable by the fact that the stage-coach which would take her the first twenty miles of her journey only ran two days in the week, and would not start until the morrow.

Her own sorrow had become merged in the idea of what Clarissa would be suffering away from her. Thrown amongst strangers—home-sick and heart-sick, and no one to comfort her. This was no alleviation of her own pain—it was only a form it took, which made it harder to endure. All day long, and all night through her sleep, she heard the little voice of Clarissa calling, “Mamma, mamma, come and take me away!”

Her intention was to proceed first to the residence of Mr. Fitz-Vashipot at Bally-shally-na-Sloe, county Sligo; but it was a long way off, four days’ journey, as journeys were then transacted.

No one at the inn could give her any definite information how she was to get there, and she walked to the post-office to inquire; but the process of conveying letters across the country was intricate, and left it little less than miraculous how letters ever found their way to those intended to read them. No public conveyance went within thirty miles of the place; and when Mr. Fitz-Vashipot was at his castle, which was not often, he sent

his own rider to Dublin for them, who had relays of post-horses all the way. Less considerable people residing in the neighbourhood always sent a man or boy to the point where the letter-bags were left under a stone by the coach as it passed, to be called for; and the letters that were to go were deposited in the same place, and taken up by the coach on its return.

Any definite directions were clearly out of the question, so Gertrude resigned herself to doing the best she could when the coach should put her down. The landlady tried to comfort her, by saying,—

“That she would find ground to walk upon, and God’s sky to cover her, go where she would.”

To set off—to be doing something, was the one desire that consumed Gertrude. The walls crushed her—the air stifled her—repose was impossible.

The coach was to start at five o’clock in the morning. Gertrude did not undress, in order that she might be ready in a moment; the landlady had unconsciously driven her nearly mad, by saying,—

“It is to be hoped there will be room.”

Gertrude lay awake all night, torturing herself by this possibility, and thinking of what she should do *in case* all the places were taken.

However, at five o’clock, just as she had fallen into a cold, troubled sleep, the guard’s horn sounded, and the clattering of the horses was heard in the court-yard.

Gertrude started up, fearing she was left behind, and that it was the *departure*, and not the arrival, of the coach she had heard.

She was ready in a moment, although her trembling fingers could scarcely tie her bonnet.

The chambermaid came in with some breakfast, saying,—

“Make haste, ma’am; but there is no hurry, and missis begs you to drink a dish of hot tea before you start. She left it out for you last night, and I got up myself to make it; you see the misses is a lady and she does not get up for the coach. There is no hurry in life—the coachman has been told you are coming.”

“Is there room?” asked Gertrude, faintly.

“To be sure ma’am, no fear of that—you will have the inside all to yourself; so drink your tea in peace, and may the Blessed Virgin have you in her own keeping, Amen.”

“Now then, is the lady coming?” cried the voice of the “boots.”

“Don’t tremble so, ma’am, you are all right, it is only his way to hurry people; the coach won’t go for a matter of ten minutes yet.”

Until she was seated and the coach-door shut upon her, Gertrude did not lose the sickening nightmare feeling that the coach would drive off before her eyes, and leave her vainly trying to reach it. When once seated, the sense of relief and safety overcame her, and she burst into tears.

Every one of the rough men standing round the coach knew that Gertrude was going in search of her child, who had been spirited away from her by her husband; and many expressions of good wishes and encouragement met her ear.

At length the horses were harnessed: the coachman, after coming to the window to hope that her ladyship felt comfortable, mounted his box, and after more noise and bustle than would have sufficed to set a whole solar system in motion, the coach was got under weigh.

Human kindness and human sympathy Gertrude found

abundantly throughout her journey, but the material means of continuing her progress were not so easily attainable.

The stage coach left her at the door of a dirty ill-kept inn, in a ruinous-looking town, which might have been situated in the moon for anything she knew about its name or nature.

The coachman had, however, spoken to the landlady about her, and whispered her story; the landlady, a compassionate woman, was willing to do anything under heaven for the poor lady—except furnish her with post-horses—for these, indeed, it was not the *will* that was wanting, “but she kept none—they were so seldom called for.”

She brought Gertrude into the kitchen, and made her sit by the fire, and told her a dozen times over that if she had come only a month before she would have found running and racing enough on account of the elections.

“I must go on foot then,” said Gertrude.

A decent farmer, who was sitting with some refreshment before him on the other side of the fire-place, offered to take her as far as Ballynuggery, if she did not mind riding behind him on his dame’s pillion, as soon as he had given his horse a feed of hay.”

Gertrude gratefully accepted the offer.

“Bring the creature here,” said the good-natured landlady, “and let it have a good feed of corn, to put some spirit into it; and whilst the beast is getting ready, your ladyship must have a taste of something to eat. It would be a sin to go out fasting and it is what neither man nor beast ever does from this house.”

Little as she felt inclined for food, Gertrude felt the need there was to keep up her strength; accordingly, she compelled

herself to swallow some of the boiled chicken and bacon which the good-natured landlady set before her.

The man who had been out to see after his horse came in whilst she was eating, and sat down beside the fire, and began to smoke in silence. As soon as he perceived that Gertrude had finished he knocked the ashes out of his pipe and rose, and nodding to her, said—

“Now, if you are ready, ma'am, I am ready too; you shall not be delayed by me. A sore heart makes one impatient.”

The horse was brought to the door. Gertrude mounted on the pillion. The landlady wrapped her own blue cloak round her knees, and begging God and the Holy Virgin to have her in their keeping, she watched Gertrude and her companion depart.

The man was silent, for he saw that Gertrude was in no disposition for conversation.

Their road lay through a wild flat country, very thinly peopled, and only partially cultivated—a wild expanse of bog was the chief feature, the silence was intense, and made the sound of the horse's hoofs loud and ominous. The dead loneliness affected Gertrude painfully. She felt frightened when she saw with her eyes, and realised the distance that had been placed betwixt herself and her child.

It was near sunset when they reached Ballynuggery. Gertrude did not know that her companion had sacrificed a day's harvesting to bring her on her journey. He refused all remuneration, and Gertrude had difficulty in prevailing upon him to take some refreshment with her; when at last he complied, it was evidently from the fear that she would be disobliged by a refusal. When Gertrude tried to utter her sense of the kindness he had shown her, he replied quietly—

“Sure, then, I have only done as I would wish another to do by me and mine, if we were in the like trouble.”

He did more than this; he procured her a horse and guide for the next day, and so wrought on the man's good feelings that he promised to be ready to start by sunrise, that the poor lady might make a long day's journey.

When her companion went to wish her “Good-bye”—for he had to return after a few hours' rest—Gertrude detached a small cornelian cross from her watch, and putting it into his hands, begged him to keep it in remembrance of his Christian deed towards her.

“I'll keep it ma'am; and I will pray to the Holy Mother, to comfort your heart, since it is Herself that can pity you.”

The man departed, and Gertrude never saw or heard of him again in this world.

Her road, the next day, lay across a wild mountain pass. Gertrude's heart was too pre-occupied to leave her room for fear; she seemed to be borne up with wings, or rather to move through difficulties like a sleep walker. She was conscious of but one wish—to get on.

Towards evening they reached a village within twenty miles of the place she was bound to, and, although her present guide had been more stolid and less sympathetic than her last, yet he was sufficiently moved to volunteer that if the lady found herself sufficiently rested after an hour or two he would find another horse, and go on with her to the end of her journey—for the moon would then be risen, and it would be as light as day.

Gertrude was only too thankful for the offer,—in which they both overlooked the fact of the untimely hour at which they would reach the residence of Mr. Fitz-Vashipot.

The roads were so bad that their progress was heavy; they travelled the whole night, and dawn was breaking as they halted at the entrance of what should have been the park of Bally-shally-na-Sloe. A great deal of the timber had been cut down and the place had a desecrated desolate air, that gave the beholder, if he loved trees, a sensation as of physical pain.

Avoiding as well as they could the felled trees that lay across the paths, they made their way to the mansion, which was an immense rambling house, built of dark red brick, with re-turned wings: the offices were behind. It would have been a handsome place had it not looked so dirty and neglected.

“In regard that we are so early,” said her conductor, “we had best go round through a small wicket I know of, which will take us to the housekeeper’s premises, maybe some of the servants are astir.”

Gertrude acquiesced; she felt so sick, and her heart beat so wildly, that she could not articulate a word.

The first word she heard confirmed her worst fears—Mr. Fitz-Vashipot and all the gentlemen were gone away, and the little girl had gone with them too—none of the servants knew where, but, perhaps, when the housekeeper got up she might know something. In the meantime, Gertrude and her guide were urged to come in and sit by the fire until the housekeeper could see them.

It was something to be on the spot where the spot where her child had been so recently; to poor Gertrude time had long lost its distinctions—it seemed a year since Clarissa had gone from her.

Whilst waiting in the kitchen, the only place where she could be introduced, Gertrude heard much of Clarissa, of her

health, of her "pretty ways," as the dairymaid called them, of what she used to do, and how she fretted after her mamma.

"Gertrude's heart felt bursting with impatience and despair—she was broken, too, with fatigue and anxiety—she was in fact on the brink of a brain fever.

"If you would only call the housekeeper, perhaps, when she knows who it is that is here, she will not object to rising before her usual time; tell her I am Clarissa's mother."

Mrs. Brian did not make herself waited for, almost before Gertrude hoped she came.

"Come into my room, ma'am, and I will tell you all I can; the little girl is in good health, at least when she left here three weeks ago."

Gertrude followed the housekeeper to her room, where traces of Clarissa's presence were still visible—an old broken slate scrawled over with childish drawings—an old child's chair and table—and a defaced doll.

Gertrude burst into tears, that seemed to break her whole frame to pieces by their violence. She cried in piercing tones, "Oh! Clarissa! Clarissa! where are you?"

The housekeeper wept for sympathy, and the servants who had followed all joined in the "voice of weeping."

At length the housekeeper recovered her composure sufficiently to clear the room of every one except Gertrude and herself. Gertrude became gradually calmer. Though her tears continued to flow, it was more gently.

"Tell where they have taken her."

"I do not know," replied the woman. She cried bitterly to leave here, for she felt safe-like with me, and she hoped you would come and fetch her. She did not know where she was going. Once Mr. Donnelly mentioned her grandmamma, but

he told her nothing. The poor lamb was home-sick; she talked of you greatly; every night when she said her prayers she added one to beg God to send you to take her away; and see, ma'am, she left this. Her father came in while she was writing it, and made her leave off. He flung it into the fire, but it fell out, and I picked it up."

Mrs. Brian went to a drawer, and took out a sheet of scorch'd, dirty, writing-paper, on which a letter had been begun in childish characters, that had scarcely shape in them. Gertrude seized on it with ravenous eagerness.

Mrs. Brian continued talking to her about Clarissa, and telling her everything that she could remember, however trivial, that she had said or done.

Her words dropped like water in the desert. Gertrude listened with helpless eagerness. She could scarcely comprehend what she heard, and she made Mrs. Brian repeat her story again and again.

One of the domestics put his head in at the door, saying,—

"Please, Mrs. Brian, ma'am, Father O'Toole is in the kitchen; he was passing by, and came in just promiseous to give us his blessing, and maybe it would be a comfort to the poor lady there."

"Yes; ask his reverence to step forwards," said Mrs. Brian.

The nervous strength that had supported Gertrude had now given way, and she sat crouched together taking heed of nothing.

Father O'Toole came in; he did not at the first glance look like a visitor to the house of mourning. He was short and rather fat, with a good-humoured face, red, and weather-beaten; but he had lived in the midst of scenes of suffering and poverty all his life. He could speak to misery "in its own tongue."

His voice took a tender, sympathising tone, and his little round figure became instinct with the dignity of his high calling when he approached a sufferer needing his consolation.

He looked pitifully on Gertrude, who did not look up on his entrance.

“God be merciful to you, my daughter,” said he, making the sign of a cross reverently. “What is the trouble that has been laid upon her, Mrs. Brian?”

Mrs. Brian told him in as few words as could be reasonably expected, and expatiated upon Clarissa’s beauty and winning ways.

“I remember her, I have seen her,” said he.

Gertrude looked up quickly—“Do you know where she is now?”

“No, I do not. But one day, when I dined here, I heard the child’s father speak of going to visit his uncle, Sir Lucius Donnelly. He may be there now.

“You are only a day’s journey from Glenmore, where he lives. You might be there by this time to-morrow if you are able to travel.”

Gertrude’s faculties seemed to be entirely worn out. She could no longer take in what she heard.

“Say it again. I do not understand.”

The priest repeated his words of encouragement, and added—“I know Sir Lucias, and I will go along with you.”

“She travelled all night and all yesterday. She has not rested since she left Dublin,” said Mrs. Brian.

“Well, then, put her to bed. She shall not stir a foot to-day, and as soon as she can move and is come a little to herself, I will go wherever she wishes. I will not leave her until, by the blessing of Providence, she has found her daughter, or I see

her safe amongst friends, though to be sure when she came to you she fell in with a Christian. So now, Mrs. Brian, ma'am, you do your part, and then I will be ready to do mine. Meanwhile I will be after getting some breakfast."

"It is the best of everything your reverence deserves," said Mrs. Brian, who was beginning to busy herself about Gertrude.

A comfortable bed was made up in the housekeeper's room, and Gertrude passively allowed herself to be undressed and laid upon it. The room was darkened, and Mrs. Brian herself kept watch beside her.

CHAPTER LI.

WHEN Gertrude awoke after a sleep that had lasted some hours, she was much refreshed, and appeared to have recovered all her strength both of body and mind. She would gladly have started at once, but the priest represented the advantage of remaining where she was for the remainder of that day, and setting off at an early hour next morning.

If Clarissa was not at Glenmore, then Gertrude might proceed to the village where old Mrs. Donnelly had retired. The priest, who knew well that part of the country, assured her, that she might reach Glen-pass (the name of Mrs. Donnelly's place of residence) the same evening. If no Clarissa or tidings of her were to be obtained there, the priest advised that Gertrude should return to Dublin, and there communicate with Mr. Fitz-Vashipot himself, who would by that time have returned from Paris, whither, Mrs. Brian said, he purposed going when he left Bally-na-Sloe.

A great change passed over Gertrude during that day. The feverish eagerness which had consumed her was gone, she appeared to have risen superior to all emotions of tenderness, or anxiety, all other feelings were merged in the stern determination to recover her child. She was guided and strengthened

by a steady purpose, and no weak or tender recollection was allowed to absorb the strength needed for action. Very quiet and very grave she was, calm and self-collected.

The next morning very early, Gertrude and Father O'Toole set off on their journey, each mounted on a stout shaggy pony, accustomed to the roads. Their route lay over a mountain pass, and across a country where travellers were obliged to go through bye places in default of a high road.

Towards three o'clock in the afternoon, Gertrude and her companion reached Glenmore, a rambling village, headed by a somewhat dilapidated specimen of Elizabethan building, grey stone, with many gables and twisted chimneys, standing in the midst of grounds that had gone to a wilderness, and a moat which was covered with duckweed.

This was the seat of Sir Lucius Donnelly, and the very heart of the family grandeur. They rode up the broad but rough and unrolled walk that led to the deep entrance porch, which was thickly covered with a luxuriant growth of ivy. No inhabitants were to be seen except a couple of large grey shaggy hounds, which were sleeping in the sun with their heads between their stretched-out paws. They roused themselves at the sound of the horses' feet, and rushed towards them uttering a deep-mouthed bay, calculated to shake the nerves and check the advance of strangers.

"What, Juno! Ranger!—bad manners to ye! Don't you know me? Quiet, you brutes!" said Father O'Toole, cracking his whip. The dogs appeared to recognise his voice, for they began to fawn upon him, though they continued to eye Gertrude with suspicion.

A large, athletic, patriarchal-looking man, with milk-white hair, which fell upon his shoulders—jet-black eyebrows over-

shading a pair of large, bright, fierce-looking eyes—advanced from the house to meet them.

This was no other than Sir Lucius Donnelly, Bart., the fountain of all the Donnelly family grandeur—the flesh and blood embodiment of Mrs. Donnelly's mythic traditions of the dignity of the family!

He shaded his eyes from the sun as he approached them, and then recognising the priest, said, with a certain dignified cordiality,—

“You are welcome, Father O'Toole—and you also, fair madam, a thousand times welcome.”

“This lady is the wife of your nephew, Augustus Donnelly,” said Father O'Toole.

“Ah, I have heard of her,” replied the old gentleman, with a shade of reserve in his manner. “You are welcome, madam, to the family.”

He assisted her to alight with punctilious courtesy, but there was a want of the cheeriness with which he had first spoken.

“All the men are afield,—I believe I am the only one at home.”

Indeed the house was as silent as the Palace of the Sleeping Beauty.

The old chief of the family handed Gertrude with old-fashioner courtesy across the great hall into a small octagonal room, furnished in the fashion of a century before; the furniture, of course, much the worse for the lapse of time, and wofully in need of a housemaid's ministry.

He made Gertrude seat herself in his own large leathern chair, and then left her alone with Father O'Toole, whilst he went to see if there were anyone to take the ponies.

“Clarissa is not here,” said Gertrude, “or he would have

told us; we may continue our journey as soon as you are rested."

"I am ready at any moment. But we must stay a little while—he may know something about your husband; at any rate he will tell us where to find Mrs. Donnelly."

Gertrude said no more. In a few minutes Sir Lucius returned, followed by a rosy, smiling servant girl, who proceeded to lay the cloth and cover the table with a substantial meal.

"Have you come far to-day?"

"Well, we left Bally-na-Sloe this morning, and you do not ask what has brought us—we might for all the world have fallen down, like the image of Lady Diana, from Jupiter! Are you not surprised now?"

"You shall talk after you have eaten and drank, and not before."

There was a reserve and stiffness through all his hospitality—a silence quite at variance with his usual manners; but Gertrude was scarcely conscious of his presence, and was quite insensible to the fact that she was in the presence of the great man of the Donnellys.

Father O'Toole felt more awkward than Gertrude. He knew that Sir Lucius was expecting an explanation, and he knew that, with all his politeness, he considered Gertrude an intruder into the family. He hastened to explain what had brought them, and their hope of hearing tidings of Mr. Augustus.

The old gentleman had heard nothing of his nephew since his departure for Africa with his friend Sir Simon. He expressed great concern at what he heard—told Gertrude he would be proud of her company as long as she liked to stay—and thought that, if his nephew were in the neighbourhood, he would be sure to come; but as to throwing any light on his proceedings, or

suggesting any plan, that was quite out of his line—he could do nothing, and he did not even seem to feel the need of doing anything.

“Oh! surely, surely he will never keep the child from her mother!” were the words he reiterated in a bland, soothing tone at every pause.

“Can you tell us where we shall find Madam Donnelly, your respected sister-in-law?”

“Surely she is at Glcn-pass, twelve miles away. My niece is at Dublin, going to the Castle balls, and treated with every respect by his Excellency, who is my particular friend. I dined with him when I was last there.”

“Well, then, Sir Lucius, we must push on, or it will be dark before we get to Glcn-pass, for the moon is not to be counted for daylight, harvest moon though she be. I will fetch the beasts, with your leave.”

Gertrude looked gratefully at Father O’Toole when he said this. Sir Lucius looked offended, for want of knowing exactly what to do; he threw himself up, and said, stiffly,—

“Of course, if you please to go, you must; but I think it strange that you are in such haste.”

The priest went round for the ponies, and Gertrude sat watching through the window for his return, quite unconscious of the presence of Sir Lucius. When he returned, leading them by their bridle, she rose. She heard the voice of Sir Lucius dimly sounding, but what he said she did not know. She looked at him with her large dilated eyes, bright and glittering, and gave him a strange, absent smile when he put the reins in her hand. She appeared to say something, for her lips moved, but no sound came from them. The priest remained a moment behind, to bid his host farewell.

“Is she mad, do you think?” asked the old man.

“No; only sorely stricken and afflicted. I will not leave her till I see her safe with friends.”

Gertrude had reached the gate before the priest overtook her. A few moments more, and a turning in the road hid Glenmore from the view—and it was like a dream that Gertrude had been there.

It was eight o'clock before they reached Glen-pass, where old Mrs. Donnelly had enshrined herself. It was a naked grey-stone house, without any shelter except the black mountain behind it.

Mrs. Donnelly was little changed from what she had been when Gertrude left her in London, except that the country air had renovated her health. The miniature of the departed Admiral still reposed upon her faithful and ample bosom; and her dress of purple satin was evidently hastening to the end of its term of service; but her turban was as dignified as if it had been a diadem. She kept up her dignity, and was Mrs. Donnelly still!

She might be astonished to see Gertrude, but Gertrude was scarcely conscious of seeing her. She cut short the stately periods of her mother-in-law's reception-speech by impatiently motioning the priest to speak—she could not find voice to utter a word herself.

“No, she is not here. I have not seen my son; I did not know that he was in England. My poor Gertrude, I am sorry for you!”

“Are you?” said Gertrude, looking at her, and touched by the tone in which she spoke.

“Oh, Mrs. Donnelly, tell me what I must do! How am I to get back Clarissa? My last hope was that he had brought her here to you!”

“Alas, Gertrude,—I know nothing, I see nothing, I hear nothing in this place. Tell me all that has happened?”

But Gertrude was in no condition to talk. Father O'Toole told the whole story from the beginning, only making very little of his own share in it. Gertrude had relapsed into her abstraction, and heeded nothing.

They were now completely off the track, and had no indication to guide them further. Letters and newspapers rarely penetrated to Glen-pass. To remain there would help them nothing.

The old lady was a good deal softened since her retirement into obscurity. Her expenses were lessened, whilst her income remained much as it ever had been; there was less strain upon her, and she shone amidst the few county families within reach with the reflected splendour of “her house in London, where she had entertained the noblest of the land!”

Gertrude had looked better in retrospect than in the time when she had been present, and her mild, conciliating conduct had taken its effect when she was away. Gradually Mrs. Donnelly had persuaded herself that she loved her daughter-in-law, and had always treated her with maternal kindness.

Miss Sophia, being absent, could not interpose spiteful speeches. There was nothing to mar Mrs. Donnelly's reception, and she really felt quite pleasantly excited at seeing Gertrude again. Her story, too, was very interesting, and it gave her the glimpse of a possibility of seeing her son. She would have overwhelmed Gertrude with caresses, but Gertrude did not care to receive them. She wanted to hear how they had got on with Sir Lucius; but Gertrude sat quite silent, and could tell her nothing.

“We will start on our journey early to-morrow,” said the

priest. "We must go back to Dublin; we shall hear nothing until we are there."

Mrs. Donnelly was anxious to keep them; but Gertrude did not seem to hear her.

The next morning, old Mrs. Donnelly took an excellent farewell of Gertrude. She reminded her, with tears, that she would in all likelihood never see her again in this world, as her health would not allow her to travel. She took a retrospect of her own life, and of Gertrude's life since she entered the family. The Donnelly rhetoric was never before so forcible or so flowery. There was, however, a touch of real feeling when she spoke of Gertrude's present condition. She assured her of her protection and benediction, and promised that, if the opportunity offered, she would do her best to restore Clarissa to her; in conclusion, she expressed the approbation and esteem in which she held Gertrude!

When she had ended, she presented her with one of "her ancestral rings" and an old-fashioned miniature of some female Donnelly, mounted as a brooch, and set in garnets.

"You promise not to keep Clarissa from me?" said Gertrude, answering the only part of the harangue she had heard.

"I promise," replied Mrs. Donnelly, solemnly. Gertrude turned aside, like a wearied child, to mount the pony that had stood some minutes at the door.

"Farewell, Gertrude," said Mrs. Donnelly, bestowing upon her a majestic embrace.

"Good bye, Mrs. Donnelly," and Gertrude rode away without once looking back.

"I think we had better not return the way we came," said Father O'Toole. There is another road, and we may as well take it; there is the shadow of a chance they may have gone

on the other side of the mountain to that we came by. We may hear something—let us try.”

“Very well,” said Gertrude.

Father O'Toole's benevolent intention in this was to divert Gertrude's attention, and to give her a hope that he did not in the least entertain himself; he was completely baffled, and had not an idea what to advise Gertrude to do when they reached Dublin.

The road by which they returned was, if possible, more lonely and thinly peopled than the road by which they went. The first night they slept at a small hamlet; the priest performed mass in the little chapel, and visited some sick people before he started the next morning.

A bad fever was going about; many in that village were down with it, and the sight of the good priest was a great comfort to them. The next day at evening they reached a lonely farm-house, standing a little off the road-side. To judge from the stacks of corn, and ricks, and out-houses, it belonged to a farmer well to do in the world.

The priest entered the door to ask for a lodging. The farmer's wife, a comely middled-aged woman, came to meet him.

“Your reverence and the lady are welcome if the lady is not afraid of the fever. We have it in the house.”

There was no alternative; no other house was in sight, and the night was closing in. He determined not to mention the fact to Gertrude, and to start as early as possible.

The woman led the way into the kitchen, where her husband and the farm-servants were sitting round the hearth, grave and silent; two maid-servants were spinning, and an aged woman knelt in a distant corner, telling her beads with great emphasis.

All rose when the strangers entered, and the best places on the

hearth were given to them. One of the men went out to see after the ponies; the servants put away their spinning, and assisted their mistress in getting supper. Suddenly Gertrude, who had as usual been sitting abstracted from all that was going on, started violently.

“Hush!—Do you hear nothing?”

“I hear nothing. Calm yourself my daughter.”

Gertrude listened again—then, rising from her seat, went direct to a door hidden in the heavy shadow of the chimney corner.

She opened it, and saw by a dim rush-light a small room with a bed in one corner, and some one lying upon it. A young child stood beside the bed, trying to smooth the tumbled bed-clothes; her back was to the door—she did not hear it open.

With a single bound Gertrude sprang upon the child, and clasped it in her arms!

Neither of them spoke—they clung together, holding each other tight as though they were turned to stone in that embrace.

The priest stood in the doorway behind. He laid his hand gently upon her shoulder.

“Give God thanks, my daughter. This your child was dead, and is alive again—was lost, and is found!”

CHAPTER LII.

WHEN Gertrude could think of anything beside Clarissa, she approached the bed where her husband lay. She placed her hand upon his forehead, and spoke very kindly to him,—but he did not seem in the least glad to see her! He moved his head away from her hand, and desired she would go away, as he wished to be left quiet. Calling Clarissa to him, he desired her to sit down and stop with him.

“But, Augustus,” said Gertrude, “I am sorry to find you ill, and I hope to nurse you, and make you well again. I would have come sooner had I known where to find you.”

“I dare say—you are *very* kind,” replied Mr. Augustus, in a sarcastic tone; “but I don’t want you, and you may go away again. I did not send for you. Clarissa is as much of a nurse as I want, and she won’t leave me—will you, Clarissa?”

“I shall not go away until you are quite well again. Clarissa may help me to nurse you, but she cannot do it alone—it would kill her. You forget how young she is.”

“Go away yourself—I don’t want to see you or to hear you. Go away, I say!”

Father O’Toole made Gertrude a sign to retire, and to take Clarissa with her, and then approaching the sick man, said, with an air of authority,—

“Come, Mr. Donnelly—I am a doctor as well as a priest; let me see what is the matter with you. I think the devil has entered into you at any rate, by the unchristian way you talk. But the devil comes in the way of my lawful calling—I see I shall have to deal with you both.”

“I am very ill,” said Mr. Augustus, in a tone half pathetic and half ashamed.

“I dare say you are—and I dare say it is not your good deeds that have brought you to this pass. Just answer me a few questions, and let me see what is the matter with you; but if you are not a little better fashioned, I shall not let either your wife or your daughter come back to you.”

The history of the mystery of what had become of Mr. Augustus and Clarissa was simple enough when it came to be known.

On leaving Bally-na-Sloe, Mr. Augustus had accepted the invitation of one of Mr. Fitz-Vashipot's guests to stop a few days at his country house, which “few days,” Mr. Augustus finding his quarters pleasant, had extended to many.

When he again continued his journey towards Glenmore he was beginning to feel ill, the electioneering hospitalities of Mr. Fitz-Vashipot and his friends having been on a scale of riotous living under which the constitution of the Prodigal Son himself must have broken down.

When Mr. Augustus reached the farmhouse where he was discovered, he was too ill to go any further, and although the Irish are horribly afraid of infection, nothing could have been more generous than the conduct of the farmer and his wife, although their treatment of his case was enough to have killed him of itself. The farmer's wife insisted upon keeping the room at a stifling heat; she refused to have the window open

for a second, lest "the disease," as she called it, should spread abroad.

For all medicine, she gave him a mixture of potheen and hot buttermilk; the effect of which was to keep Mr. Augustus both sick and sorry. Luckily, he had only been under this regimen since the previous day. The delays under which Gertrude had so much fretted were actually the means of enabling her to find him at last.

The farmer and his wife, and all the household, exhibited the most lively sympathy with the meeting between Gertrude and her child. The strange accident that had brought all the parties to their lonely out-of-the-way house, seemed little short of a miracle; though, as Gertrude, and her husband and child, were all "heretics," a miracle did not seem exactly an orthodox solution.

Clarissa was looking thin and pale, and much older, although scarcely two months had elapsed since she quitted her mother to go upon her visit to Elvington Park.

"She has been like an angel," said the farmer's wife, "and the sense she has shown would have done credit to a councillor. She has nursed her father as if she had been a blessed Sister of Charity, and she little more than a babe herself. Oh, but it is to babes that wisdom is promised!"

Clarissa was very quiet, and only kept close to her mamma, holding fast by her hand as she sat on a little stool beside her knee.

Father O'Toole came at last out of the sick man's room, and taking Gertrude aside, said,—“Your husband has not the fever that is going about, though what it may turn to I cannot say. He is very ill and far beyond any little skill of mine in the science of medicine. You must get him to Dublin for advice,

whilst he is in a state to be removed. The good man here will lend you a cart with plenty of clean straw."

"I wish," said Gertrude, "you could pacify his mind towards me, so far as to allow me to nurse him; he has taken offence at me, as you may perceive, though my own conscience is clear towards him, except that I did not feel, I could not feel, so glad to see him on his return from abroad as perhaps he expected; but I would try to forget the past. If he should get well, and take Clarissa from me again, what good will my life do me?"

The priest looked at her kindly and keenly, with a shrewd half-smile on his good-tempered face, and, shaking his head, said,—

"I'll see if I cannot bring him to reason. He may have been not altogether right, but I have seen the best of women plague a man's life out—they *can* do it when they lay their minds to it!"

What the priest said to Mr. Augustus was in private, with closed doors. The result appeared the next time Gertrude entered the room. Mr. Augustus sat up in bed, propped up with pillows, and reaching out his hand to her with the air of a King Ahasuerus, he said,—

“Ah!” rejoined Mr. Augustus, plaintively, “I am very ill—very. I think I shall soon be under the sod—I shall not trouble you long.”

“Oh, you must not be desponding; I hope we shall soon have you well again. We are going to take you to Dublin early to-morrow morning.”

Whilst she spoke Gertrude had already begun to reduce the room into something like order, and to allow a little ventilation to enter it. Augustus found himself more comfortable, and the idea of the magnanimity he had exercised had a soothing effect upon his complacency. Gertrude put Clarissa to bed. She seemed but now to realise in its full extent all the horror of having lost her; all the sins and shortcomings of her husband had become mere dust in the balance, compared with the dreadful power he possessed to take Clarissa away from her again—and so long as he did not exert *that* he was most merciful. Securely had he rivetted his yoke upon her now; and yet at that moment she put forth a strength and power that she had never yet felt within her, to gain influence over him, and to endeavour to turn the inevitable necessity that was laid upon her—to good.

Now that he lay sick and helpless, she did not hate him. She felt within herself a consciousness that she had never yet taken her proper stand beside him. Now she assumed it, and accepted her lot as his wife; she made that act of voluntary adoption which is needed with all duties before we can discharge them so as to touch the spring of life that lies within them; but, that spring once reached, the most bitter and distasteful of our duties become to us “a well of life springing up to everlasting life.”

Mr. Augustus was not a metaphysician, but he felt the difference between the wife he had found and the wife he had left.

As far as outward acts of ministration went, the Gertrude of to-day was no better than the Gertrude of three months ago, but the difference of spirit was subtle and all-pervading.

Gertrude had fairly conquered, to its last ramification, the mistake she had committed, and which had so long and so cruelly pursued her in its consequences.

The next morning Gertrude, Father O'Toole, and Clarissa accompanied Mr. Augustus to Dublin. He had had a good night's rest, and was somewhat better able to bear the journey in the cart the good farmer had placed at his disposal, filled with clean straw and the best feather-bed. Well wrapped and well propped with pillows, Mr. Augustus was as comfortable as circumstances permitted.

The farmer himself drove the cart, professing that he "had business of his own in Dublin city;" but that was a good-natured pretence, and the act itself went to swell the sum of the "unrecorded acts" of human kindness, which are more numerous than might be imagined from the general character of the world for wickedness.

CHAPTER LIII.

ARRIVED in Dublin, Gertrude lost no time in procuring the best medical attendance; but the fine constitution of Mr. Augustus appeared entirely shattered; he suffered from a complication of ailments that might have made him the hero of the well-known epitaph—

“Afflictions sore,
Long time I bore,
Physicians were in vain.”

As soon, however, as he was able once more to travel, Gertrude persuaded him to return to London, instead of trying the hospitality of his uncle Sir Lucius.

In London, Gertrude resumed her old business, although the attendance upon her husband was a great drain upon her time and strength. After rallying for a few months, Mr. Augustus relapsed into a confirmed invalid; he lost the use of his limbs, which of course rendered him a complete prisoner at home.

The constant presence of her husband, which had once been Gertrude's bugbear, was not nearly so bad when it really came to pass.

The constant call upon her for kindness and tenderness produced, not love, but a very good substitute for it. Although the temper of Mr. Augustus did not mend under his sufferings, his disposition did, and he regarded his wife with very edifying reverence and a real affection, As to Clarissa, she was a great comfort to both her parents.

Gertrude's trial had been fitted to her strength, as everybody will find their trials when they once honestly take them in hand.

Lady Southend continued to be Gertrude's staunch friend and patroness.

Old Simon Morley was won to the unheard-of generosity of—making his daughter a fixed allowance in money! Fortune he reckoned that she had entirely forfeited; but her industry won upon him to allow her a small sum “to set her mind at liberty,” as he phrased it.

Mrs. Morley came several times to see her daughter, and was once more won over to forgive her son-in-law all his misdeeds, by his pleasant tongue and polite manners towards herself; but especially by the respect with which he now treated her daughter.

In this manner two years passed away. In the spring of the third year, which was very cold and the east winds constant, Mr. Augustus took the opportunity of dying.

He “made a good end,” expressed himself penitently and gratefully to his wife, and expressed a hope that she would have a happier life after he was gone than she had led with him. Singular to say, Gertrude felt dreadfully sorry at losing him; her life had become suddenly a blank—her occupation was gone. He had certainly been a great trouble to her; but we always love those most who call out our best qualities. Lady Southend lost all patience at what she called “Gertrude's unreasonable regret for a worthless husband.” She declared that “why Providence had left him alive so long was both a mystery and an inconvenience to all concerned in him;” but Gertrude persisted in her sorrow in spite of her ladyship's logic.

After her husband's death, Gertrude and Clarissa went to reside at *The Cottage*, and in her last days poor Mrs. Morley

realised the dream of her life, "to have some comfort with her daughter."

Simon Morley, junior, and his wife went on in the even tenor of their way, paving the way with gold. It had not, however, the faculty of soothing Mrs. Simon's temper at the same time.

L'ENVOI.

We imagined that we had finished the history of Gertrude ; but a report was spread in Dunnington (to be sure it was traceable to Mrs. Simon) that the young tanner of whom mention has been made—whom Gertrude had scorned when a girl, and who had, out of admiration for her elegance, cultivated his taste and spent his money upon giving himself an education, but who never married—had shown a disposition to "come forward" and try his fortune once more with the fair cause of all his woe.

Gossips prophesied over their tea-tables that Mrs. Donnelly would not remain a widow two years. Reports are often like the twilight that precedes the dawn, and come true in the end, although in the beginning they were only probable.

The young tanner *did* "come forward," and Gertrude, touched by his good qualities, and still more by his constancy, consented to marry him.

Simon Morley gave her his blessing and five thousand pounds, now that she was marrying a rich husband and did not need it.

Gertrude lived long and happily with her second husband. She had several children, but she avoided the error that had worked her so much suffering, and impressed upon them from their early years what are the SORROWS OF GENTILITY.

THE END.

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