

BOOKS ON RURAL SPORTS, &c.

I.

The GREYHOUND. A Treatise on the Art of Breeding, Rearing, and Training Greyhounds for Public Running. By Sir JOHN KILGOUR. With Frontispiece, many Portraits of Greyhounds, and other Illustrations. Square crown 8vo. price One Guinea, half-bound.

II.

HORSEMANSHIP for the SCHOOL, the ROAD, and the FIELD; or, the Art of Riding and Managing a Horse. By Capt. BISHOPHAM, late of the 4th Light Dragoons. Square crown 8vo. with Illustrations, price 14s. half-bound.

III.

PRACTICAL HORSEMANSHIP. By HARRY HARRISON. With Two Plates—One representing *Going like Workmen*; the other *going like Muffs*. Fcp. 8vo. price 5s. half-bound.

IV.

REMINISCENCES of a HUNTSMAN. By the Hon. GRANLEY F. BERRILLY. With 4 Engravings by JOHN LEITCH (1 coloured). 8vo. price 14s.

V.

The RIFLE and the HOUND in CEYLON. By S. W. BAKER, Esq. With numerous Engravings on Wood and Illustrations printed in Colours. 8vo. price 14s.

VI.

RAMBLES in SEARCH of SPORT in GERMANY, FRANCE, ITALY, and RUSSIA. By the Hon. FERDINAND ST. JOHN. With 4 coloured Plates. Post 8vo. price 9s. 6d.

VII.

The CHASE in BRITTANY; with Remarks on the French People and their Affairs. By I. HOPE. 16mo. price One Shilling.

VIII.

ADVENTURES in the WILDS of NORTH AMERICA. By CHARLES LANMAN. Edited by CHARLES RICHARD WALKER. 16mo. price Half-a-Crown; or in Two Parts, One Shilling each.

IX.

The ROD and LINE; or, Practical Hints and Dainty Devices for the sure-taking of Trout, Grayling, &c. By HEWITT WILKINSON, Esq., Senior Angler. With 9 coloured Plates. Fcp. 8vo. price 10s. 6d.

X.

PULMAN'S VADE-MECUM of FLY-FISHING for TROUT. With plain and copious Instructions for Making Artificial Flies. New and enlarged Edition; with several Woodcuts. Fcp. 8vo. price 5s.

XI.

EPHEMERA'S HANDBOOK of ANGLING; teaching Fly-Fishing, Trolling, Bottom-Fishing, Salmon Fishing. Third and cheaper Edition; with many Woodcuts. Fcp. 8vo. price 5s.

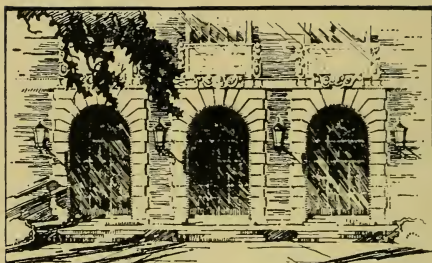
XII.

EPHEMERA'S BOOK of the SALMON; comprising the Theory, Principles, and Practice of Fly-Fishing for Salmon; with copious Lists of Flies, coloured Plates, &c. Fcp. 8vo. price 14s.

London: LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, and LONGMANS

CLEVE HALL.

VOL. I.



LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS

823

Se8c

v.1

LONDON :
A. and G. A. SPOTTISWOODE,
New-street-Square.

C L E V E H A L L .

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“AMY HERBERT,” “THE EXPERIENCE OF LIFE,”
ETC. ETC.

“Tho’ justice be thy plea, consider this,
That in the course of justice none of us
Should see salvation.” — *The Merchant of Venice*.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, AND LONGMANS.
1855.

[The Author of this work reserves the right of authorising a Translation of it.]

MA B G from J C P G

7 June 1855.

823
Se82
v. 1

CLEVE HALL.

CHAPTER I.

It was an old, gable-ended Farm-house, standing back from the road, with a smooth piece of turf in front, neatly kept, and divided down the centre by a broad strip of pavement.

Five or six large elm trees shaded it on the left; on the right, behind some broad meadows, rose a steep bank, forming the further extremity of a rocky ravine, through which ran a by-road from the highway, probably leading to some sequestered hamlet. The whole surface of the country was hilly, almost claiming the appellation of mountainous. A long range of steep downs stretched for a considerable distance beyond the ravine towards the north-east; whilst in front of the farm, at about the distance of a mile, the horizon was bounded by a hill, clothed with thick plantations, amongst which the sighing of the soft evening wind was heard mingling with the heavy swell of the ocean.

The view was very lovely seen in the mellow evening light; the meadows rich with the golden flowers of early summer, and the fresh green on the trees and hedges, sparkling as their trembling leaves

caught the glancing rays of the sinking sun. Yet it was solitary. No building was in sight except the quaint, grey Farm-house, with its ivy-covered chimneys, and broad, open porch; and though there were sounds about the farm,—the carter-boy's whistle,—the clatter of the milk-pails, as the dairymaids crossed the yard,—and occasionally the neighing of a horse, or the lowing of a cow; yet they were all hushed,—softened by that indescribable atmosphere of quietness, which prepares the gentle evening for the deeper solemnity of night.

A woman, who might have been about fifty years old—the mistress of the farm apparently—was leaning over the low garden-wall. She was rather peculiar in appearance; her dress scrupulously neat, but decidedly old-fashioned; the cotton gown scanty and rather short; a checked handkerchief folded over her shoulders, and a cap white as snow, and quilled in perfect order, fitting close around a pale, worn face. Her attitude told that she was listening, and the breeze brought to the ear the distant trampling of a horse, departing however, not approaching. It was followed with fixed attention, till the last echo had died away, and then a sigh was heaved and slowly and thoughtfully the woman walked towards the house.

“Mrs. Robinson! Nurse! Granny, dear! won't you speak to me?” said a quick, merry voice, and a child of about thirteen years of age, though in height and size very much younger, threw open the heavy wicket-gate, and ran up to her. The woman turned suddenly, a smile passed over her face, a mixture of

pleasure and respect, yet her tone had something in it of reproach.

“Out alone, Miss Rachel! what does your papa say to that?”

“Oh! papa is gone in to see John Strong, and I ran on before him. I shall be at home now before he is. He is coming to see you, Granny.”

“He said he would,” was the reply.

“And you think he always keeps his word, don't you? Give me a kiss and let me go; I must be at home and have a talk with Miss Campbell and Ella before papa returns; so keep him as long as you can.” She threw her arm round her friend's neck. “Granny, you aren't happy to-night,” she whispered.

“Happy as I can be, Miss Rachel, when there's so much in the world to make one otherwise. But you don't know any thing of that, so run home and be thankful.”

Rachel stood for a moment in thought. The change in her face was very marked. It was a countenance formed for happiness, brilliant with intelligence, radiant in health, and singularly lovely in its outline. But the small, laughing mouth, and the merry, hazel eyes, and open forehead, shaded by curls of bright, chestnut hair might have been termed infantine till thought came;—then the whole being seemed to alter, and the gay child became in one instant the self-collected, deeply inquiring woman.

“I don't know any thing about it, I suppose, Granny,” she said in reply to Mrs. Robinson's remark, “though I think I do sometimes. Shall I ever know it as you do?”

“That’s for days to come, Miss Rachel. Who can tell?”

“You can,” said Rachel quickly; then, correcting herself she added, reverently, “I don’t mean you can tell what is to happen, but you can say whether I shall be likely to have the same things to bear that you have.”

“God forbid you should ever have to trouble for the same things that trouble me, Miss Rachel. Things must be bad indeed if they are not mended by that time.”

“And the General won’t live for ever,” said Rachel quickly; but a glance at her friend’s face made her retract her words. “I don’t want him to die, you know, Granny; but it is always something about him which makes papa, and you, and every one unhappy; so I can’t like him, and I couldn’t be sorry if he were gone away anywhere.”

“There’s many a worse man than General Vivian goes for a saint in this world, Miss Rachel,” replied Mrs. Robinson, “as you may some day know to your cost. Poor old man! If he makes others sad, he is sad enough himself.”

“He doesn’t look sad,” said Rachel. “He doesn’t seem as if he felt any thing.”

“That’s what folks say of me, sometimes, Miss Rachel;” and a smile, which, however, gave only a wintry brightness to the grave face, accompanied the words. Rachel once more caressed her fondly.

“Granny, Granny, that’s naughty. Papa says if you had a colder heart you would have a merrier face. But it’s merry enough for me. There’s not a face

in all the village, away from home, that I love so well, except ——”

“Except whose? Don’t be afraid, Miss Rachel; you know I am not given to being jealous!”

“Well! one that’s more to you than I am, though I love you dearly. So we can’t be jealous when we both love the same.”

“Miss Mildred!” exclaimed Mrs. Robinson; “but I always put her aside. I thought it might be some of the newer friends that you had taken to.”

“Miss Campbell, and Ella, and Clement,” replied Rachel, gaily. “No; I love them all, you know I must, they are so kind: but they are not like your dear old face, Granny; they are not parts of the very old times.”

“Thirteen years ago! eh, Miss Rachel? What an age to be sure! But you do grow, I will say that for you; you will be a woman after all, if you live long enough.”

“Thank you, Granny, dear! I hope I shall. Now please gather me a whole heap of the climbing roses for Mrs. Campbell. She always likes to have flowers brought her, though she doesn’t keep them long.”

Rachel’s hands were filled with the best roses which grew against the house, and the best lavender from the farm garden, under the promise, however, that she was not to give all away, but to retain some for herself for a remembrance. Her ringing laugh, as the injunction was given, made the old walls echo again.

“Why, Granny, as if I needed it! Don’t I think of you every morning, and don’t I talk to papa about you every night?—what should I need a remem-

brance for? Do you know," and her tone changed, as she placed one finger against her heart, "it's written in here; I can feel it, though I don't see it—your name, I mean; and there are others, too—and I know I shall never want keepsakes like some people, for I can't forget; no, if I wished it, I could'nt."

A kiss was the answer, lingering and fond, like that of a parent, and a murmur, "Heaven's blessing on you, child!" and Rachel tossed the wicket-gate open, and ran quickly up the road which passed through the ravine.

CHAP. II.

It was about an hour later the same evening; lights were glimmering in the cottages dotted by the side of the narrow road, and perched, as it seemed, upon almost inaccessible rocks, which formed the picturesque village of Encombe; and although, here and there, might be seen a labourer returning from some distant work, or a woman wearily toiling up a height after an errand to the nearest town, the cottagers were, for the most part, collecting around their own hearths, and even the voices of the children were gradually being hushed in sleep. At the lower end of a steep strip of garden, reached by a flight of steps from the road, two persons, a man and a boy, were, however, conversing together, as they stood looking up the village, nearly the whole length of which was visible from the point they had chosen. The occupation of the man was evident at the first sight; he was a weather-beaten, hardy fisherman—probably a smuggler—for there was an expression of cunning in his keen, black eyes, and a sneer upon his lip, which accorded little with the free, frank tone and manner natural to an ordinary seafaring life. His glance, moreover, showed the quickness of one accustomed to watch, and be watched; and his tone,

when he spoke, had in it an accent of command. The boy also wore a sailor's hat, and his coat was rough, and his striped, blue, linen shirt made of coarse material. Yet even a cursory inspection would certainly have suggested a doubt whether the two were equals in rank. The age of the lad might have been eighteen; his face was bronzed by exposure to storms, and his manner betrayed a mind impatient of control, and caring little for the refinements of civilised life; but his features were totally free from the look of cunning which was so marked in those of his companion. His blue eye, indeed, was peculiarly clear and open in its expression, though flashing with all the keenness of a passionate spirit; his forehead was thoughtful; his mouth told of pride and great wilfulness, and yet its haughty curl seemed occasionally about to melt into a smile of sad, almost feminine sweetness; and his voice, even when he spoke, shortly and contemptuously, had a refined intonation, belonging to a very different class from that of his companion. He might have been formed for high and noble purposes, yet he lingered now in the society of his rough comrade, apparently with no thought but that of idly passing away time which he had neither inclination nor energy to employ.

Full twenty minutes elapsed, and still he leaned upon the garden-gate, sometimes speaking to the fisherman, but more often gazing with a fixed eye before him. Occasionally, however, he stooped to pick up a stone, and tossed it down the steep bank, and watched it as it tumbled from point to point, till touching a sharp point of rock, it perhaps fell with a

quick impetus into the foaming brook that rushed down the centre of the ravine.

He had just cast another stone; it did not follow its predecessors; the twisted root of a tree stopped it, and it sank quietly into its place upon the bank.

"They don't all go," murmured the boy to himself.

"What don't go?" asked the man, with a surly smile.

"Nothing that you know of," was the reply. "Is he coming yet?"

"Can't say; don't see him. Suppose, now, you were to make the best use of your legs, and be off to the flagstaff to see. It's not much of a stretch."

"More than I choose to take," answered the boy; and he flung himself upon the ground. "I am not made for that at least," he muttered to himself.

The fisherman evinced no surprise at the refusal, but opening the gate, descended the steps, and sauntered a few paces up the road. A merry shout, a few moments afterwards, caught the boy's ear, and he started up.

"Well! he's come; it can't be helped." He flung the gate open, and at one spring bounded into the road.

The fisherman stood on the projecting point of a rock closing in the angle of the road, and beckoned to him. The boy still paused. Once he even turned directly away, and went a few paces in the opposite direction, and waited for an instant, as if undecided whether to return; but another shout of "Ronald!

Ronald!" startled him; and flinging his hat into the air, he gave a wild answering cry, and ran forwards to the rock, where his companion awaited him.

They were not alone together then; a third individual had joined them, a boy probably about two years younger than Ronald, and bearing in every look and feature the stamp of gentle birth and careful education. He was tall and slight; his face very intelligent; his voice sweet and refined; and when he joined in the fisherman's coarse laugh, and addressed him in terms of equality, it was evident there could be no real congeniality.

"Why, Goff, you are a harder master than Mr. Lester!" he exclaimed, as the fisherman, in rather an uncivil manner, held before him a huge old-fashioned watch, and pointed to the hour. "'Tis but five minutes."

"May be you'll learn the value of five minutes to your cost, one of these days, Master Clement!" replied Goff. "Ronald has been here, waiting to see you, the last half hour."

"Ronald is not like me," replied Clement; "he is his own master. See if I won't be mine, before long, Goff, eh?"

"Them that will can always find the way," replied the fisherman. "Are you come to tell us you'll be here to-morrow for the sail, Master Clement?"

Clement looked up hastily, and his eye encountered Ronald's. The boy was standing at a little distance watching him narrowly, a strange mixture of feelings expressed in his handsome face. A bitter pride, per-

haps, was written there most clearly; yet a glance of compassion, blended it might have been with self-reproach, fell upon Clement.

“You’ll be ready, Ronald, as you promised?” said Clement, appealing to him.

“I made no promise,” was his reply.

“But you are going?”

“Aye, going; wind and waves, and heaven and earth forbidding!” exclaimed Ronald, impetuously. Spurning from him a stone against which his foot had been resting, he added, “My doings are no law for your’s.”

Clement regarded him wonderingly, whilst a sarcastic smile curled the fisherman’s lips.

“Don’t mind him, Master Clement,” he said; “it’s his way. Six o’clock, to-morrow evening, at the West Point. We’ll have a short run, with a fair wind, as it’s like to be, and be back in time for the old lady’s tea.”

“What do you say, Ronald? It’s to be done, isn’t it?” inquired Clement.

“Ask Goff!” and the look of pride passed away from Ronald’s face, and seating himself on a stone, he rested his arms upon his knees. At that moment the loud barking of a dog was heard in the distance.

“Ah! the Captain!” exclaimed Goff. “He’s as good as his word, at least. Come, Ronald, my lad, there’s work for you now!”

Ronald did not move, even when Goff touched him roughly with his foot. Clement stooped down, and put his arm round him caressingly.

“Ronald, it was your notion; why won’t you go?”

“I am going ;” but Ronald’s head was not raised.

“Then why shouldn’t I go?”

Ronald started from his bending posture, as a large Newfoundland dog rushed upon him, and tried to place his two fore-paws upon his shoulders. “Down, Rollo! down!”—he patted the dog’s head, and caught it between both his hands, looking at it as if reading a human countenance, then seizing Clement’s arm, he dragged him to the edge of the ravine, and pointing to a broken, tangled path, rushed down it. Clement followed. The dog waited and watched them, irresolute ; but the next moment he was coursing at full speed along the road by which a man, dressed in a shaggy greatcoat, and a low-crowned glazed hat, with a heavy stick in his hand, was seen approaching.

“To-morrow, at West Point, at six,” called out the fisherman, as the boys disappeared from sight.

“To-morrow, at six, yes!” was heard in Clement’s clear, refined tones.

“To-morrow at six—no!” added another voice, deep, rich, and full ; and the fisherman burst into an angry laugh, and shouted after them, “that he would be made a fool by no one.”

“My hopeful boy you are calling after, eh! Master Goff?” was the observation by which the attention of the fisherman was drawn to the person who had now joined him.

“Hopeful, indeed, Captain. Why, he’s taken to turn lately like a weather-cock. If it goes on, I wish you joy of any thing you’ll ever do with him.” A scowl rested on the stranger’s face, which was

not needed to render it unprepossessing, for it was rarely that a countenance could be seen on which so many evil passions were to be traced. There was a strong likeness to Ronald; it might have been told at once that they were father and son; but, whilst the pride of the boy's face was softened by thought, and his reckless bearing was checked by some eager, though it might be transient feelings of the necessity of self-command, the father's countenance showed little but a dogged resolution, the result of habitual selfishness and indulgence in habits which had nearly obliterated every sign of higher education or feeling.

"He is coming with us to-night," he remarked; not replying directly to the fisherman's observation.

"That's as he will, Captain; as you know quite as well as I. He is off now with the young springald, and who's to catch him?"

The stranger uttered a profane ejaculation, and walked to the edge of the ravine, looked down it, and then returned again. "He'll be back; he's not a fellow to miss the fun. How go matters at the Point?"

"All ready, only waiting for Captain Vivian," said Goff, with something of a contemptuous laugh.

"And Captain Vivian's son; the boy has a mind to drive me frantic. But there is no need to wait."

"No need and no power," said Goff. "Time and tide wait for no man; so by your leave, Captain, we'll let the two youngsters be off."

"You wouldn't have taken the other boy," exclaimed Captain Vivian, quickly.

"Not quite such a fool as that; no,— he's a mere

land sawney ; nothing's to be made of him — as dainty as a girl. What a fine fellow will be spoilt if Ronald takes after him !”

The frown on Captain Vivian's face became terrific ; and Goff softened his words. “No fear of that though, Captain. See Ronald in a gale of wind ! that's the time when he's a man. Come, are you ready ?”

He received no answer. A crowd of angry feelings seemed working in Captain Vivian's mind, and throwing his stick backwards and forwards, he strode on silently ; Goff accompanying him, and occasionally stealing aside to the edge of the ravine to discover whether any glimpse could be obtained of Ronald.

CHAP. III.

“EIGHT o'clock! Where is Clement?” The question was asked, in a querulous tone, by a lady seemingly infirm, rather from indolence and illness than from age, as, ordering the door to be shut, and wrapping a shawl around her, she drew near the tea-table, spread in a small, neat, but poorly-furnished drawing room. It was answered in a girlish voice, but the accent was scarcely more amiable.

“Indeed, grandmamma, I can't say; he has been out ever since six.” The speaker was a young girl of about sixteen, tall, graceful, and rather foreign looking, from the darkness of her complexion, and the dreamy, yet very intellectual expression of her splendid dark eyes, the only feature in the face which could lay claim to real beauty. She was stationed by the urn, and her attention was given more to the teacups than to the person who addressed her.

“You might as well learn, Ella, to be civil when you are spoken to. Why can't you look at me?”

“I am pouring out the tea, grandmamma. Oh dear, what a slop! Louisa, do run into the pantry and bring me a cloth.”

“Louisa not gone to bed! how is that? Louisa, why don't you go to bed?”

“Because I am reading, grandmamma.”

“But you ought to be in bed; it’s a great deal too late. Where’s your aunt? why doesn’t she make you go to bed?”

“Aunt Bertha went down the village, and isn’t come in,” replied Louisa, without attempting to rise from the low stool on which she had placed herself to be out of the reach of observation, and able at her leisure to study a volume of fairy tales.

“Very wrong, very forgetful,” was murmured, and Mrs. Campbell sank back again in her chair without repeating the order for Louisa to go.

Ella just glanced at her sister, and, forgetting the slop, handed a cup of tea to her grandmamma; and pouring out one for herself, and helping herself to some toast, gave her whole attention to a book, which she kept by her half hidden by the tea-tray. The room was very silent again for some minutes. Then Mrs. Campbell took up her cup and complained that the tea was cold, and Ella said the water didn’t boil, and the bell was rung; but it was not answered.

“Very wrong of Bertha, indeed,” repeated Mrs. Campbell to herself; “and why don’t they answer the bell? but there’s only Betsey and the girl. Oh, dear!”

Ella sighed, oh dear! too, but she took no other notice.

The door opened. Mrs. Campbell began in a fretful tone: “It is too bad, the water doesn’t boil in the least;” but she stopped on finding that she was not addressing a servant, but a young lady. “Bertha,” and she leaned forward, and spoke with something approaching to energy, “why don’t you tell us when

you are going out? We have been waiting this half-hour, and the tea is quite cold, and no one answers the bell. I can't think what possesses you all. Where have you been?"

"I was called out to see Hannah Dobbs, ma'am, she is worse: and then I had to go up to the rectory, and other things besides." The last words were uttered in an under tone, but they were in no way hasty or confused. "Louisa, you ought to be in bed;" and Louisa in an instant jumped up from her seat, closed her book, said quickly, "Good night, Grandmamma; good night, Ella; good night, Aunt Bertha," and was gone.

Bertha walked up to the tea-table: "The water is not cold, Ella. You must have poured out Grandmamma's tea before she was ready for it. Just put away your book, and attend to what you are doing." Ella's book was taken from her, and placed on a side table. No remonstrance was made, but Ella leaned back in her chair, and allowed her aunt to fetch Mrs. Campbell's cup, pour away the cold tea, and replenish it with something which, if it was not strong, at least had the merit of warmth."

"Clement is not come in, is he?" said Bertha, in a low voice, to Ella, as she bent over the tea-table.

"No, I have not heard him."

Bertha's face became very grave, but it was a gravity which suited her, for it softened and rendered her features expressive. It was that which they wanted to give them the beauty to which they ought to have laid claim from regularity. Bertha Campbell

was a striking-looking person, very tall, and slight, and refined in figure and manner; not exactly graceful—she was too stiff in her movements for that,—and not exactly interesting—she was too rigid and self-controlled—too much like an automaton for interest; but the stamp of a lady was upon her every action. As she moved about the room now, putting a chair in its proper place, brightening the lamp, handing her mother the milk and sugar, and placing a footstool for her, an indescribable spirit of order and repose seemed to follow her. The room assumed quite a different aspect under her auspices, and yet what she did was almost too trifling to be noticed.

Mrs. Campbell spoke again more gently and cheerfully. “Did you see Mr. Lester at the Rectory, Bertha?”

“No, ma’am. Rachel was expecting him; she left him at the farm. I gave my message to her. Can I do any thing more for you, before I take off my bonnet?”

“No, child, nothing; but make haste down; the tea won’t be fit to drink if you don’t.”

Bertha glanced again round the room, told Ella she was sitting in a very awkward attitude, and disappeared; and she was no sooner gone than Ella, having poured out a cup of tea for her aunt, stole quietly to the table on which her book had been placed and returned to her studies.

Bertha came down again, took the tea which Ella had prepared, without making any remark upon it, helped herself to some very cold toast, and completed her repast with a piece of dry bread; and then,

placing the empty cups and plates upon the tray, rang the bell.

The summons was answered by a very young girl.

“Jane, that weak arm of yours won’t do to lift this heavy tray; you had better let me carry it for you.”

“Oh, Aunt Bertha!” escaped from Ella’s lips.

“Why not, Ella? what harm can it do me?” and Bertha lifted the tray and carried it out of the room, whilst the little servant girl wiped away the crumbs from the cloth, and placed a few books on the table.

Bertha did not immediately return; and at the sound of a heavy, opening door Mrs. Campbell, who had seemed inclined to sleep, roused herself and inquired whether that was Clement come in.

“I don’t think so, Grandmamma; I fancy it must be Aunt Bertha gone out.”

“Gone out again, it can’t be; go and see.” Ella obeyed reluctantly.

“It was Aunt Bertha, Grandmamma,” and there was a tone of triumph in Ella’s voice. “She was standing under the verandah; she is there now.”

“Tell her to come in instantly; she will catch her death of cold.” The message was given in audible, authoritative accents, such accents as might well have roused a storm of angry feelings in Bertha’s breast; but she came back into the room with Ella, with her quiet, gliding step, and merely said, “I went out to see what kind of night it was likely to be, ma’am. Shall I read to you?” She took up a book and, seating herself by her mother’s arm-chair, began to read aloud. Ella took no notice of this, but resting both

her elbows on the table, riveted her eyes upon the page before her.

Bertha's voice was rather monotonous; her reading had the same absence of expression as her face; perhaps she was not giving her full attention to the book, for she paused sometimes in wrong places, as if listening, and looked up,—quietly and slowly though—for she was never hurried—at the least sound. “There is Clement,” she said, at last. No one else seemed to have heard any thing, but that was not strange; a very loud clock in the hall had just struck ten, and the sound was likely to drown all others.

“It is very wrong of him,” said Mrs. Campbell, hastily.

“Yes, very wrong,” repeated Bertha, thoughtfully.

“It is a beautiful moonlight evening; I dare say he has been wandering on the shore,” said Ella, not raising her eyes from her book.

Bertha went to meet him. They were heard talking together in the little entrance hall, but the words were indistinct.

“Where have you been, Clement?” asked Mrs. Campbell, as they entered the room. The boy's eye sparkled with a flash of irritation, but he answered gaily,—

“Been! Grandmamma, oh! to a hundred places—along the cliff, down on the shore, watching the stars; it's a wonderful night. Ella, I wish you had been with me.”

“Ella knows better than to wish any thing of the kind,” said Mrs. Campbell. It is a great deal too late for you. Whom had you with you?”

“Part of the time I was alone,” was Clement’s evasive reply, and Mrs. Campbell seemed satisfied; but Ella looked up at her brother and laughed.

Bertha was very cold and stiff. She asked Clement if he was hungry, and when he said, “yes, ravenous,” told him he must wait till after prayers, and then he might have some cold meat, and at the same moment she rang the bell.

Bertha read prayers,—reverently and simply; but the tone might have suited a sermon; and Ella fidgeted, and Clement was once heard to yawn.

“Don’t let Clement be late, Bertha,” said Mrs. Campbell, as she took a night candle in her hand, and going up to her daughter gave her a cold kiss.

“No, ma’am, he will have his supper directly.”

“And don’t be late yourself, Bertha. I hear you moving about in your room, and it disturbs me.”

“No, ma’am!” Bertha opened the door for her mother.

“Good night, Grandmamma,” said Ella; and Clement drew near also, though his step was a little doubtful.

“Good night, loves. Clement, you stamp dreadfully over my head at night.”

“Do I, Grandmamma? I can’t help it; it is my heavy boots.”

“You may wear slippers,” said Bertha, shortly; but Mrs. Campbell did not appear to need the apology. She kissed him affectionately, and went up stairs, Ella following her. Bertha and Clement stood lingering over the fire. Clement raked up the ashes, and tried to make a blaze, and Bertha remarked that it was no

good ; he must make haste and eat his supper, and go to bed.

“I wish supper would come,” said Clement, pettishly. “What is that woman, Betsey, doing with herself?”

“She has more to attend to than she ought to have,” was the reply. “She can’t be expected to have supper ready at all hours of the night.”

“If she is so busy, why doesn’t she have more help?” asked Clement.

“Because we can’t afford it, Clement.” The boy kicked away a stool which was in his way, and started up from the chair into which he had flung himself.

“The answer for every thing, Aunt Bertha ; are we never to be able to afford it?”

“Time will show for us,” replied Bertha ; “for you, Clement, it is in your own power.”

“If I were rich, you would all be rich too,” he exclaimed. “But, Aunt Bertha, who can soften stone walls? Not I.”

“It is no question of softening stone walls, Clement ; that is neither your business nor mine. The work is in your own power.”

“Yes, plod, plod, night and day ; work one’s brain till it hasn’t an idea left in it, and then get a crust of bread to live upon ; and that is the life of a gentleman!”

“The life of a good many gentlemen,” replied Bertha. “But here is your supper, Clement ; make haste and eat it, for we mustn’t really be late.”

Clement sat down to the table. Some slices of cold mutton were put in a plate for him, with a piece of bread. He asked for some pickle.

“You can’t have any to-night,” said Bertha; “it is locked up.”

“And no salad? nothing?”

“It is a very good supper if you are hungry; and if you are not, you don’t want any thing,” answered Bertha.

“Who keeps the keys? Grandmamma?” and before Bertha could stop him he was at the top of the stairs, knocking loudly at Mrs. Campbell’s door. He returned holding up the keys triumphantly.

“Now, Aunt Bertha!” but Bertha took no notice. “Which cupboard is it, Aunt Bertha?” No answer.

He only laughed, and ran away to the kitchen. Betsey, the cook, followed him as he came back, and put down on the table a jar of pickles and the remains of a cold tart. “So, Aunt Bertha, I have not been foraging for nothing; come, you will have some with me.” But he failed to extract a smile from Bertha, who stood looking on whilst he ate his supper, with an appetite, which, as he himself had described it, was ravenous.

Bertha broke the silence. “Clement, what time did Ronald leave you?”

“Oh! about half-past nine, more or less; I had no watch.”

“And you walked on the shore all that time?”

“Yes, there and on the cliffs. He was in one of his moods; I couldn’t leave him.”

“He ought not to have been with you,” said Bertha.

“He said that, and told me to go; but we had made

the engagement to meet. And where was the harm?"

"Where is at any time the harm of disobedience, Clement?"

"Now, Aunt Bertha, I don't understand you," and Clement hastily finished his tumbler of beer, and rose and stood by the fire. "Who tells me not to be with Ronald?"

"I tell you, and that ought to be sufficient." Her tone was very authoritative, and the angry flush rose in Clement's cheek, and he bit his lip.

"You know, Clement, that there is disobedience to the spirit of a law as well as to the letter. What matters it that you have never been absolutely commanded by my mother not to be with Ronald? You are as well aware as I am that both she and Mr. Lester disapprove of it."

"Without a reason!" exclaimed Clement. "I will never listen to any one who doesn't give me a reason."

"Then you will be a slave to yourself, Clement, and a miserable man."

"As you will," he replied, carelessly. "I will run my chance of misery, but I never will leave a noble-hearted fellow, like Ronald, merely because there happens to be a prejudice against him. And you, Aunt Bertha, to try to persuade me not! you, who are always looking after him, and turning and twisting him at your will!"

"Not at my will, Clement," replied Bertha. "He would not be what he is if he were turned at my will," she added in an under-tone.

"He might not be the better for being different,"

exclaimed Clement, "or if he were, I shouldn't like him as well."

"No, and there is the danger, Clement; but we won't argue the point: Mr. Lester wishes you not to be with him; my mother wishes it also. You have no right to require more."

"But I must and I do require more," exclaimed Clement, impatiently, yet without any real ill-humour; "and I ask of you, Aunt Bertha, whether there isn't a prejudice against Ronald which would prevent Grandmamma and Mr. Lester from liking him if he were an angel. And I will ask too," he continued, interrupting Bertha as she was about to reply, "whether the prejudice is not fostered by my grandfather, and whether it is not because of him that every pleasure I have in life is thwarted."

"Clement, that is speaking very disrespectfully. I can't answer such questions. Your grandfather has strong reasons, fearful reasons, for dreading an intimacy with Ronald."

"With a cousin! not very near perhaps, but still my relation, and the only fellow in the neighbourhood who suits me! Am I then to live the life of a hermit, Aunt Bertha?"

"You are required to lead a studious, steady life, to prepare yourself for the University, if you ever wish to have a place in your grandfather's favour."

"Then I will go without the place; I will give it up. The favour of a rich old general! there will be many candidates for it."

"And you will break my mother's heart, grieve Mr. Lester, disappoint all our hopes, merely because

you won't bring yourself to relinquish a companionship which, after all, cannot be congenial."

"I will stand by Ronald at all risks, Aunt Bertha; I will never sacrifice my friendship to the will of a——"

"Take care, Clement," and Bertha held up her finger warningly; "you are speaking of your grandfather."

"Yet he has never shown me kindness," exclaimed Clement; "he never asks me to his house, — he scarcely pays me the common civilities of a stranger. And, Aunt Bertha, let him be my grandfather a hundred times over, yet he is my father's enemy."

"Your father, Clement, was his own enemy."

"And therefore every one turns against him!"

"Yes, every one, even his only son," replied Bertha. Her tone was so sad that Clement was startled.

"I don't understand you, Aunt Bertha," he said.

"And therefore you will not act upon faith," answered Bertha. "Oh, Clement! it is a fatal principle to go upon; it will be your ruin. I have told you before, and I repeat it; disobey and thwart your grandfather, and untold misery will be the consequence."

"What misery? What consequence? Why will you always speak so mysteriously, Aunt Bertha?"

"Because I am not at liberty to speak in any other way," said Bertha. "But, Clement, all this is but idle talking. If I could convince you beyond the possibility of doubt, that your intimacy with Ronald would lead you into mischief, it would not in the most

remote degree add to the duty of obedience to the known will of all the persons whom you are most bound to obey."

Clement was silent. Bertha took up a candlestick and gave it to him. He did not wish her good night, but stood thinking.

"Aunt Bertha," and he suddenly raised his eyes from the floor, "you knew Ronald many years ago."

"Yes, many, Clement; before you can remember."

"And you were always kind to him."

"Yes, I hope so. I wish to be kind to every one."

"But you were specially kind to him, and you are so now; and you have influence over him."

"I don't know as to the influence. If I have, it is not from any power of my own."

"You were his mother's friend," said Clement; "he told me that to-night."

"Yes," was Bertha's cold reply; but she sat down for an instant, and her hand trembled as she laid her candlestick on the table. Clement did not see or comprehend the signs of inward feeling; he went on:

"Ronald says you were very fond of her."

"Yes, I was. Good night, Clement; remember if you sit up late you will disturb Grandmamma." She took his hand,—it was as impassive as her own,—and she let it fall again quietly. Clement moved towards the door, but paused to say impatiently, in answer to the injunction, again repeated, to go to bed at once,—

"I shall go presently. I have an exercise to prepare for Mr. Lester."

Bertha waited till she had heard him enter his room and lock the door, and then she made a tour of inspection of the rooms, saw that every shutter was fastened, and every bolt drawn, and retired to rest herself.

CHAP. IV.

MRS. CAMPBELL'S cottage closely adjoined the Rectory, only a steep, reedy bank, and a little rivulet divided them, and a rough bridge over the stream formed an easy mode of communication. The Rectory stood high, on a smooth, sloping lawn, a little way up the ascent of the range of the Encombe hills, which entirely sheltered it from the north. The library windows fronting the south-east commanded a view over a small bay, shut in by rugged cliffs of red sandstone, rising at the western extremity into a bold headland. Beyond, towards the north-west, the landscape was more bounded; the rough ground at the top of the ravine, in which the village was hidden, and the thick plantation of what appeared to be a gentleman's park, closing in the horizon.

Rachel Lester was sitting in the library with her father; he was writing, she was busy with a slate and a Latin exercise. Rachel was receiving rather a learned education; an only child, with no mother, and a very classically-inclined father, that was natural. Mr. Lester looked very old to be the father of such a child as Rachel. He was nearly sixty in appearance, though not quite so much in reality. His hair was gray, and his countenance worn. It was a very intellectual, studious face, softened by the expression of extreme benevolence; but there was great firmness

in the lines of his mouth; there could be no doubt that he could, when he chose, be severe. His attention was entirely given now to his occupation. He was engaged with a letter, interlined and corrected, often causing him to pause and consider, and sometimes to throw himself back in his chair, and pass his hand across his eyes, as if in painful recollection.

His feelings may be traced in the words which flowed from his pen:—

“I need not say that you are continually in my thoughts, and always with the longing to meet your wishes. I desire heartily to find an opening, and can only entreat you to trust us if we seem to delay. Remember that if we seize the wrong moment, every thing will fail. Mildred lives upon the hope of success, but even she does not yet perceive the way to it. My dear Vivian, you must be patient; you must pray to be so; remembering the offence, and bearing the punishment. In the meantime, your children are well, and doing well—in the way, at least, to do so—though there are many faults to be corrected. Their education is not in all ways what I like; but there is no direct evil in it, and the defect cannot be remedied. Here, again, we must be patient. Clement may be all that we could wish to see him. He is generous-hearted and refined in taste, but easily led into things which at first sight one would be apt to fancy foreign to his nature. I think this arises from vanity. He loves admiration, and does not much care from whom it comes. You will not like to hear this; but you wished to know the truth, and the worst, and I give it you. He has no vicious

habits, but if he were born to luxury I should feel he might become a sentimentalist. His favourite virtues are of the heroic cast; so are his favourite heroes. He has great notions of self-sacrifice, but very little idea of self-restraint.

“There is a singular likeness between him and Ella, in character as well as in countenance. They are twins both in mind and body, except that Clement will never be what Ella is in point of talent. She really has wonderful powers, but with the singular inconsistency of genius, she is as variable as the winds, and as indolent as—I can form no comparison for her indolence—there is nothing in nature like it. I should very much like to remove Clement from her influence. It is all-powerful with him, partly, I suppose, from the twin-feeling which is always so strong, but chiefly from his exceeding admiration of her powers of mind. He will not see her defects, and it is very painful to be obliged to point them out.

“The little ones have great promise of good, if they are properly managed. Louisa is quick, determined, and wilful; but capable of ripening into an extremely sensible, useful woman. Fanny is too pretty for her own advantage, or at least she has heard too much of her beauty for simplicity; but she is exceedingly affectionate, and very true, and the truth gives me great hope of her.

“If the home were but different! You will understand all I mean by that—you, who have known Bertha Campbell so well, and have reaped the benefit of her virtues, and felt the consequences of her defects. But we must take her, my dear

Vivian, as she is; and be grateful that at least the children will never have a low, or insincere example set before them. She is not to be altered; and really I, who know her in her most pleasing form, often think that there is scarcely any thing in her I should wish to alter. But I can see all that you complain of, and, what is more, all the consequences. The evil, I suspect, lies very far back. When I am inclined to be severe, I wish that I could open Mrs. Campbell's eyes to the lasting evils of that system of perpetual check which has absolutely paralysed Bertha's powers. To see what she has done would be a sufficient punishment.

“ You would like me to tell you that your children's home at the Lodge is very cheerful and good for them, and that their prospects at the Park are brightening. Now this, you see, I cannot do quite; but I have given you something to comfort you, only, as I said before, patience must be your motto.

“ Mildred writes to you so often, that I need not say any thing about her. She is looking better than usual. I think that the neighbourhood of the children has done much for her, and you know what she is in natural cheerfulness and wonderful submission. But I am afraid it may be hope deferred, for as yet the General has allowed no advances. I do not mean that he entirely neglects the children; he notices them if they meet, and the other day he sent Clement a fishing-rod, which the boy, stupidly enough, was on the point of returning, thinking it rather an insult than a kindness, because some one — I guess who — had put it into his head, that unless his grandfather would

fully forgive and receive both you and them, it was lowering to accept any favour from him. No one but John Vivian would have suggested the idea, knowing what deadly enmity it might cause. If it were not for the watch we may keep over him, it would be one of the greatest trials of my faith, that such a fellow as your cousin should be here just at this moment. The thorn he is in our path no one can tell: and there is his boy—a fallen angel, if one may say so without profaneness—coming in contact with Clement continually, and exciting in him, what he does in every one, an interest which at last becomes fascination. All actual authority over Clement must lie with Mrs. Campbell, who is jealous of my interference; so I cannot entirely forbid any intercourse with Ronald, and I am not sure that I should do so if I could. The boys must meet; they are near neighbours and cousins, and too strict discipline might lead the way to deceit, when the temptation to be together occasionally is so great. One of the most unfortunate points in the acquaintance is, that it serves to keep up the General's suspicion. Your cousin, Captain Vivian, as he is called now, owing, I suppose, to his connection with a trading vessel commonly said to be used for smuggling purposes, is becoming daily more low in his tastes, and finds congenial society in the place—poachers, smugglers, &c. My heart sickens when I think of his influence for evil; I trace it continually. The people have a kind of traditional respect for him: he is a Vivian, and therefore they never can look upon him quite as a mere mortal. They see what he is, but they regard his offences

very much as we used to regard the crimes of the heathen gods, and, in consequence, are not ashamed to follow him.

“I feel I am giving you a great deal of pain in writing all this, raking up in a way the ashes of the past. But, my dear Vivian, there must be truth between us. Your cousin’s name should be buried from this moment, if it could promote your real welfare ; but I should only deceive you and in the end increase the bitterness of your trial, if I allowed you to think that he is not now, as he has been ever, your evil genius. I still hold the opinions I mentioned in my last letter as to his past deeds, and am anxiously seeking for an opportunity to unravel the mystery. Your sister-in-law and I discuss plans continually, but hitherto we have failed to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion. If we could soften the General, we might reach the truth ; but how is that to be done ?

“One thing you must remember for your comfort as regards the children, that there are counter-influences for good. John Vivian, himself, is to Clement merely an object of wondering disgust. The boy’s natural refinement keeps him out of the reach of the chief temptations which such a man could offer. And Ronald is open to influences which may—God grant it prove so—turn the balance in favour of all we could most desire. He has his mother’s face and in a measure her disposition, so at least I am told by your sister-in-law, who sees him often and talks to him a good deal. I was very much surprised to find when Mrs. Campbell came here, that Bertha

and Ronald were old acquaintances. Bertha is so reserved that I can get nothing from her as to how they first knew each other, except that one day she told me his mother had been a friend of hers. Certainly since she has been at Encombe there has been a marked change in him. It is strange, is it not? that she should have power over a wild, untamed spirit like his, and yet do so little in her own family. But it is her own family—that I suppose is the secret; and when she has to work in it, she cannot be free.

“Your father, I sometimes fancy, keeps a little aloof from me, and I don’t wonder at it. He must know the wish that is nearest to my heart. His walking powers are not quite what they were, but he rides a great deal and looks uncommonly well. Mildred, as I said, hopes, and lives upon hope, that is her nature; and yet with such constant suffering it really is marvellous. My little Rachel is with her often, but not quite as frequently as she used to be, for she is working diligently under Miss Campbell’s superintendence. She began doing lessons with Ella, but soon gave that up. As to keeping pace with Ella I really don’t know who could do so. I sometimes indulge a dream of finding a way to the General’s heart by Ella’s means. He could not help appreciating her wonderful talents; and then he might become proud of her. Mildred would know how to bring her out, but the children are so very little with her! She does not dare show herself too eager for their society; and if ever they do go to the Hall they are kept out of the Generals way as much as possible.

You may imagine how this chafes Clement's proud temper, and he comes back to me, and raves of insult and subjection, and talks about Ronald and a seafaring life which they might lead together; but it will all come to nothing. He has not enough of the spirit of endurance in him to make a sailor; and he is too old for the navy, and would not choose to enter the merchant service. Ronald might do for it very well; in fact, I am at this moment negotiating something of the kind for him at his own request. You will understand that I have a double motive for his good and Clement's; the separation is so very much to be desired.

“One word about myself, and then good-b'ye. You ask me how I am, and what I do, and what my hopes and pleasures are. I am very well, I never was better, and I work contentedly in my parish, and my earthly hopes and pleasures are centred in Rachel.

“That answer will not satisfy you I know. It tells too little of my inner self. My dear Vivian, that must be a sealed book. If I were to attempt to describe the struggles of a heart which has yet to learn submission to the Divine Will, I should make myself a woman in weakness. Suffice it that I have one treasure left to render my home bright. Yet you must not fancy I am miserable or even unhappy; only sobered. Mildred and I sometimes venture to compare notes upon these subjects; but I don't think it is wise in us, except that to see her is the deepest lesson one could receive in humility. An old woman said to me the other day: ‘Miss Mildred seems to be always a smiling and a praying—and sure that was

what the saints used to do.' Certainly the poor have especial reason to think her a saint; for, in spite of her infirmities, she manages, principally through Mrs. Robinson, to make herself at home with all their affairs, and is considered quite their best domestic adviser."

The letter was concluded, sealed, and directed to "E. B. Vivian, Esq., Kingston, Jamaica."

Then Rachel spoke: "Dear Papa, may I take your letter to the post? I am going out."

Mr. Lester did not at first appear to hear her. He was gazing at the words he had just written, probably following them in his mind on their distant mission. He answered, however, after a short pause, "No, dear child, thank you;" but he spoke in an absent tone. Presently, he said, "How old are you, Rachel?"

"Thirteen, Papa! I shall be fourteen, my next birthday."

"A very great age for such a very little woman," said Mr. Lester, smiling; and, as Rachel seated herself on his knee, and put her arm round his neck, he added: "When do you ever mean to be any thing but a baby?"

"Never to you, Papa; but Nurse Robinson told me last evening that I really was grown."

"She sees what she wishes," replied Mr. Lester; "she has set her heart upon your being a fine young lady."

Rachel clapped her hands together, and her merry laugh made Mr. Lester's grave face also relax into something more than a smile.

“Well, Rachel, shouldn’t you like to be a fine young lady?”

“Should you like me to be one, Papa?” said Rachel archly.

“Perhaps not; you wouldn’t be so convenient to nurse. You are such a doll now, that you may very well pass for ten. But, Rachel,” and his voice became very serious, “I should like to think you were old enough to share some of my cares.”

The deep look of thought came over Rachel’s face, as her eye rested for a moment on a picture over the mantel-piece, the likeness of her mother, and of two sisters and a brother, all older than herself, and all now lying side by side in the churchyard of Encombe. She had never known the comfort of their love, but they were the dearest treasures of her young heart; and, whenever tempted to thoughtlessness by her natural gaiety of heart, a glance at the picture was sufficient to remind her that she was to live to be her father’s consolation.

Mr. Lester’s eye followed hers. “You may help me so much, Rachel, if you will,” he continued.

“Papa,” and she leaned her face on his shoulder, and her voice was low and tremulous, “will you pray to God to teach me how?”

He kissed her fondly and repeatedly. “I do pray for you, my child, daily and hourly, and God hears my prayers. He has made you my chief solace hitherto, and he will make you so still more; I do not doubt it.”

“Are you unhappy, Papa, now?”

“I can scarcely say unhappy, Rachel, but very

anxious ; not for myself," he added, hastily, seeing her look alarmed.

"For Clement?" asked Rachel, doubtfully.

Mr. Lester half-smiled, whilst he hesitated to answer. "Yes, for Clement, partly ; what made you think of him?"

"Because you are often grave, Papa, after he has been here ; and because he seems to make every one anxious. Miss Campbell is always troubling about him for one reason or another."

"Miss Campbell never talks to you about him, does she?" inquired Mr. Lester, quickly.

"Not exactly, but she lets out little things ; and Ella talks a great deal, only she thinks Clement perfect."

"And what do you think?"

"Oh ! I think him dreadfully naughty," exclaimed Rachel. "I like Ronald Vivian, though he is so rough, twenty times as well as I do Clement."

"You don't see much of either of them to be able to judge," observed Mr. Lester.

"No ; only we meet them sometimes, when we are out walking, and Miss Campbell always speaks to Ronald, and he attends to her, but Clement never does."

"That is one of his great defects," said Mr. Lester ; "you and Ella should try to cure him of it."

"Ella upholds him," replied Rachael.

"Then you must try and persuade her out of it."

"Ella is not to be persuaded," replied Rachel ; "and she talks of Clement as if he were such a great

person. I tell her sometimes that I think he must be a prince in disguise."

"She thinks he will inherit his grandfather's fortune, and live at the Hall," said Mr. Lester.

"And he will, won't he, Papa?"

"We don't know, my dear; there is no good in dwelling upon such things. Clement must learn to do his duty without thinking of the consequences."

"And Ella must learn to teach him," said Rachel, thoughtfully.

"Yes, that is the great duty for her; and Rachel, my darling, you have had more advantages than she has, and I think you may help to give her strength. This was what I wanted especially to say to you. You have little to do with Clement; but you have a great deal to do with Ella, and you must turn your opportunities to the best account."

"But, Papa, she is so clever, I can't keep up with her; and she is older."

"Very true; but, Rachel, it is not talent which really influences the world, but high, steady principle. You are not very clever, but you may be very good, and if you are, you may help to make Ella good too; and if she is good she will lead Clement right; and if Clement is led right——"

"What, Papa?"

Mr. Lester paused: "It would make me very happy, Rachel." He seemed tempted to say more to her, but after a short consideration he merely added, "You don't wish for any other motive, do you?"

"Oh, no, Papa! only — Clement is no relation."

“He is the son of one whom I once loved, and whom I still love as if he were my younger brother,” said Mr. Lester; “and his father is away, and there is no one else to guide him. Is not that a sufficient reason to be anxious for him?”

“Yes,” replied Rachel, as her father stood up and began to put aside his writing materials. The “yes” was doubtful.

“Are you not satisfied, my child?”

“Not quite, Papa,” was Rachel’s honest answer. “There is always a mystery about Clement.”

‘And you must be contented, my darling, to bear with mystery. It is a very necessary lesson to learn; but so far I will tell you. General Vivian has had cause to be displeased with his son, and therefore he looks with suspicion upon Clement; and every thing which Clement does that is careless and wrong increases his grandfather’s doubts of his character. Now, you can see why I, as his father’s friend, am especially anxious as to his conduct; and so I hope you will see also how important it is for every one who has influence of any kind over either Ella or Clement, to try and lead them in the right way. I can’t answer any more questions, Rachel; and remember you must never talk upon the subject to any one but me.”

Rachel was a little awed by her father’s manner. Her countenance showed it. Yet the feeling vanished in a moment as he stooped to kiss her, and she said, “I am going to see Aunt Mildred to-day; you don’t mind?”

“No, my child; how should I? I shall be going

to the Hall myself, probably, and if you are there we will walk home together."

"Then I may stay a long time, if she asks me?"

"Yes; but who is to go with you?"

"Miss Campbell and Ella to the lodge gate, and if I don't stay they will wait for me, but they are not going in." Rachel could have wondered and asked the reason why, but she checked herself.

"One more kiss, Papa." And she ran gaily out of the room, and her joyous voice was heard as she went singing up the stairs to prepare for her walk.

CHAP. V.

CLEVE HALL was a long, low, irregular, red-brick house, part of which dated as far back as the time of Henry VII. The history of the Vivians was written in its gables, and clustering chimneys, and turrets, and oriel windows of all shapes and sizes, — for by far the greater number of its possessors had thought it necessary to add to or alter it; almost the only thing which had descended unchanged being the huge griffin, the family crest, standing erect above the entrance porch.

A quiet, solemn-looking place it was, resting under the guardianship of the Encombe Hills and shut in by plantations on every side except towards the sea; a place to which childish memories might cling with vivid recollections of long summer days spent under the shade of the old oaks whilst listening to the soft murmurs of the sea, or of winter evenings in the great library, or rainy days in the billiard room, or long twilights passed in recounting the tales belonging to the grim, old family pictures. Many such places there are in England — few perhaps more interesting than Cleve Hall in its stately, sobering quietness.

It was in a handsome though narrow room in the oldest part of the house that Rachel Lester was sitting

on that evening as it drew towards sunset. She had drawn a stool into the depth of the oriel window, and was endeavouring to read by the fading light. Twilight is not, as every one knows, a cheerful hour, and Miss Vivian's morning-room, as the apartment was usually called, was low, and the windows were small and deep. Yet it was not gloomy; there were books, pictures, flowers, cabinets of shells, a piano, and a table with a work-basket and drawing materials, — all giving notions of constant, cheerful employment and of the comfort and elegances of life; and though the shadows were deepening, yet the rich sunset hues were pouring in through the windows, and lighting up the lower end of the apartment with a flood of crimson.

The sun was setting over the sea, which could be seen through an opening in the shrubbery, with the jagged edge of the cliff forming its boundary. It brought indications of a change of weather; the clouds were gathering angrily in the west, some heaped together in huge masses touched at their edges by streaks of gold, others rushing across the sky in long, feathery flakes, becoming brilliantly red when they came within reach of the departing rays, and melting away in hues scarcely perceptible as they stretched themselves far into the greyish blue vault above them.

The wind moaned ominously amongst the Cleve woods, the leaves moved restlessly to and fro, and flights of birds were winging their way rapidly from the cliffs, whilst even from that distance the foam of the white breakers might be seen as they tossed their

chafed waters upon the beach. It was clear that a storm was rising, and that rapidly.

“Oh! Aunt Mildred, can you see that boat? how it goes up and down, and all its sails up! How beautiful it looks!” Rachel had put down her book, and was pointing with one hand to the window whilst the other rested upon the arm of a couch on which lay a lady whose age it would have been difficult to tell. Seen in the twilight she looked still young, but her complexion was worn and sallow, probably from the illness of years. Her face was painfully thin, and her fingers were very long and slender; yet the impression she gave was not that of suffering, and scarcely of resignation, at least when she spoke. Some persons are said to have tears in their voices. Mildred Vivian certainly had a smile in hers. “What boat, darling?” she said, in answer to Rachel’s observation. “Oh! I see it now. Please move a very little. How fast it goes! the wind must be in its favour.”

“Should you like to be in it, Aunt Mildred?”

“Like it? Oh! Rachel, yes; should I not? It is fifteen years since I was in a boat.”

“Where is it going, I wonder,” said Rachel. “Where would you go, Aunt Mildred, if you were in it?”

Mildred paused. Rachel could not see her face clearly, for the shadows were deepening every instant. “I should go far away from England, dear child.” The very lightest sound of a sigh could be heard, following the words.

“You should take me with you wherever you went, dear Aunt Mildred.”

“What, away from Papa?”

“Oh! no, no; but he must go with us. We could not live away from each other, could we?”

“I can't say that, Rachel. We did live some years without knowing each other,” replied Mildred.

“Yes; but I always wanted something.”

“And did not know that it was a mock aunt,” observed Mildred in a tone of amusement.

“I don't like your saying mock, dear Aunt Mildred,” exclaimed Rachel. “You are more real than a great many real aunts, I am sure.”

“More real in love, dear child; that I am quite sure of.”

“But you could do without me,” said Rachel, thoughtfully.

“I shouldn't like to do without you: I mustn't say I could not.”

“Aunt Mildred,” and Rachel spoke anxiously, “I know I couldn't do without Papa.”

“Ah, Rachel! you don't know.”

“But must I try? Am I very wicked to feel that I couldn't?”

“Not at all wicked; only, Rachel, we can do without whatever God may please to take from us.”

“But we should die,” said Rachel.

“No, dear Rachel, we should only be made more fit to die.”

“And He has taken so much from you!” exclaimed Rachel, flinging her arm round Mildred's neck. “Was it all needed to make you fit to die?”

“All, Rachel! every pang, every sorrow; there was not one too many. And He has left such mercies! Perhaps some day He will add the greatest of all—the thankfulness which one ought to have.”

Rachel stood up again, nearer to the window. The boat was fast becoming indistinct in the dull light and the far distance.

“Can you see it still?” said Mildred, sitting more upright.

“Just. How the wind is rising! I shouldn’t like to be in the boat; I should be afraid.”

Mildred did not reply, and Rachel, too, was silent for some time. The last gleams of the sunset were melting away, and the room was becoming very dark. “Mr. Lester will be here soon,” said Mildred; “or will he wait till the moon has risen?”

It was strange that there was no answer. Rachel’s face was pressed against the window-pane. She seemed straining her eyes to obtain the least glimpse of the boat. A sudden gust of wind howled through the trees, and, as it died away, Rachel turned from the window, and kneeling by Mildred’s couch, exclaimed, as she burst into tears, “Perhaps Clement will be out to-night.” There was no exclamation of surprise or terror. Mildred’s hand was placed lovingly on the child’s head, and she said quietly, “Are you sure?”

“Not sure; I think so,—and—Aunt Mildred, it may be my fault.”

“Your’s, my love, how?”

“Because if I would have done all they wished me to do he would not have gone.”

“Whom do you mean by they, Rachel? You must be more clear.” Mildred rather raised herself on her couch, and a tone of anxiety might have been observed in the first words she uttered; but even at the close of the sentence it was checked.

“Ella and Clement are they,” replied Rachel, speaking hurriedly, and not very intelligibly. “I went there before I came away, and Clement was talking to Ella.”

“And did they tell you what they were talking about?”

“I heard a little as I went in, and then they were obliged to tell me more. Clement did not say, though, that he was going in the boat, only that he had an engagement; but I am sure he was, and I saw him with Goff in the village afterwards; and——”

“Go on,” said Mildred.

Rachel drew a long breath. “I could have stopped him, Aunt Mildred, if I had chosen it. He said if I would go to the shore with him and Ella, and read poetry—something of Lord Byron’s which he wanted Ella to hear,—then he would stay at home. But Papa doesn’t like me to read the book, and so I said no; and now perhaps Clement is gone, and the storm will come, and he will be drowned. Oh! Aunt Mildred, was it very wrong? Was it very wrong?” she repeated in a trembling voice, as Mildred delayed answering.

“No, dear Rachel; how could it be? but——”

“Hark! there is some one,” interrupted Rachel, listening. “Papa will be come for me, and what will he say?”

“Not that it was your fault, Rachel, whatever happens. But we must trust.”

“And he may not have gone,” said Rachel, in a calmer tone.

“No, he may not.—That must be Mr. Lester’s voice.”

Rachel ran out to meet him. Mr. Lester entered hurriedly. The storm, he said, was rising like a hurricane, and he was anxious to be at home. He shook hands with Mildred, and sat down by her, and asked after General Vivian; but his manner was reserved and abstracted. Mildred looked at him, as if she would read it; but she was puzzled.

“Rachel, you had better go for your bonnet,” she said; and Rachel drew near and whispered, “Will you tell Papa when I am gone?”

“Yes, dear love; don’t come back till I send for you.” Rachel ran away. “Rachel is anxious for Clement,” said Mildred, as soon as the door was closed.

“She need not be to-night; he is safe; Goff did not take him:” but Mr. Lester’s tone was less calm than his words.

“Thank God for that,” said Mildred, with a sigh of gratitude. “It may be a fearful night.”

Mr. Lester looked out into the dim twilight, and stood as if in a reverie. Presently he said, “It is not from Clement’s obedience that he is safe. It was Ronald who interfered. Mark Wood told me he thought he was going, and I believed he was, till I met Ronald. These are things which make me feel that he must have a father’s hand over him soon, if possible.”

“Have you any plan; anything to propose?” inquired Mildred, anxiously.

“No; but I have been writing. My letter ought to have gone to-day, only I kept it open till I had seen you. Can you give me any hope?”

“Dear Mr. Lester! how can you ask?” and Mildred’s lip quivered. “Should I keep it from you a moment if I had?”

“Yet I could not be contented without asking,” said Mr. Lester. “He will think my letter miserably cold, for I had no comfort to give him but words, and I was obliged to tell him that Clement doesn’t satisfy me.”

“I have not yet sounded the matter,” said Mildred, speaking in a tone which indicated great self-restraint. “Incautiousness would do immense mischief. If I take my father at the wrong moment, he may forbid the subject ever being mentioned again; and I feel as if we should be more certain of our end if we could gain admittance to his heart first in some other way. I have thought of asking him to let Ella stay with me.”

“It is a strong measure,” said Mr. Lester. “I should be afraid Ella would not win him. He will see her faults, and exaggerate them.”

“Perhaps so.” Mildred considered for a moment, and then said, as if speaking to herself, “Is it not unaccountable; so good, and honourable, and kind-hearted as my dear father is to all others,—so clear-sighted too, especially in discovering injustice or prejudice?”

“Not unaccountable; it is human nature. ‘A

brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city.' ”

“And the Campbells to have settled in the neighbourhood!” said Mildred; “it widens the breach infinitely. He cannot endure even their names.”

“No,” replied Mr. Lester; “and the very fact of seeing the children I often think reminds him of the connection.”

“And Edward then must linger in a distant land, away from his children, working without hope.”

“Better that than to return and be rejected. If the experiment were to fail, we should have nothing else to fall back upon. We must wait for time and softening influences. Through God’s mercy they may open a way. Oh! if any words could but teach those children what may depend on their present conduct!” The exclamation came from the very bottom of his heart.

“Does Miss Campbell complain as she did?” inquired Mildred.

“Yes, and for the most part justly.”

“But she is not merciful,” said Mildred.

“That is not to be expected from her education. She is antagonistic to them always.”

“She is the person to be reached,” continued Mildred.

“She is reached continually in a way. I tell her her faults, and she hears them all patiently, for she is very humble-minded; but I see no results.”

“Yet, so good as you say she is, her character must tell.”

“One would think so; yet one infirmity will neu-

tralise a dozen virtues. How one trembles to hear people talk so lightly as they do of what they call failings!"

Mildred sighed. "Yes," she said, after a moment's silence, "it would be a curious and fearful history to write, — the history of failings."

"It will be written one day," said Mr. Lester, solemnly; "and then may God have mercy upon us!"

A pause followed. It was interrupted by a heavy, booming sound, heard distinctly amidst the roar of the rising storm. Mildred started up.

"A ship in distress!" said Mr. Lester.

Mildred sank back, and covered her eyes. Mr. Lester took up his hat.

"You will leave Rachel with me," said Mildred, quietly.

"Yes, indeed, if you will keep her. I wish she could always be as safe. God bless you." He pressed her hand affectionately.

"And you will take every one with you whom you think may be useful," said Mildred; "and remember," — her voice changed, — "there is room at the Hall for all who may need shelter."

"Yes, I am sure of that always. Good b'ye."

Mildred's face was perfectly colourless; and when another boom of the signal gun was heard, she clasped her hands together, and prayed fervently to Him at "Whose command the winds blow and lift up the waves of the sea, and Who stilleth the rage thereof."

CHAP. VI.

PEOPLE were hurrying to the shore, making their way thither by the nearest paths, and guided by the uncertain light of the moon, as it escaped from behind the racking clouds which were rushing over the heavens. Mr. Lester's road was narrow, and tangled by brushwood and briars. It led directly through the woods to an open heath terminated by the cliffs. A rough road, sometimes traversed by carts, crossed the heath, and when Mr. Lester emerged from the copse, he found the road already reached by stragglers from the lone cottages between Encombe and the neighbouring town of Cleve. Women and children, as well as men, were amongst them. There was a strange, fascinating horror in the thought of a scene of danger ; and some, it was to be feared, had in view a prospect of personal advantage, to be gained at the expense of the unfortunate owners of the distressed vessel. Mr. Lester mingled amongst them at first unperceived. The greater number were unknown to him, as not belonging to his own parish, and the light was too indistinct to allow of his being recognised by them.

“ D’ye see her ? ” asked a rough farmer-looking man, of a boy who had been to the edge of the cliff.

“ See her? yes, as well as a body can in such a blinking light. She’s off Dark Head Point, on the rocks, I’m thinking; and sore work ’twill be to get safe in.”

“ Many folks down on the beach?” inquired the farmer.

“ Aye, a crowd. I heard the Captain’s voice amongst the loudest.”

“ No doubt of that,” was the reply. “ Where’s there ever a skirl without him?”

“ Aye, where? He was in Cleve this afternoon, blustering; and I heard it said, if he went on so he’d some day be taken up to the old General. That is a sight I’d give one of my eyes to see. But he’s a brave fellow after all, is the Captain.”

“ Brave, is he? That’s as folks think. Stay!——”

There was a momentary pause, as if with one consent, as a shrill cry of horror was brought to the ear in a sudden lull of the tempest, and then, with an instantaneous impulse, a rush was made to the beach. Mr. Lester was amongst the first to reach it. It was a scene of darkness and confusion. The moonbeams touched the white foam of the curling waves, whilst they rose majestically in the form of lowering arches, and broke against the rocks with a crashing sound, which seemed as if it must shake the firm cliffs to their centre. Beyond, the spray of the troubled sea, and the misty clouds, caused an obscurity every moment increasing, as the last faint light of sunset faded in the far west. The crowds on the shore were, for the most part, crossing and recrossing each other, bringing contradictory reports, arguing, exclaiming,

asseverating; but in one spot a few men had collected, and were discussing in loud and angry tones the possibility of rendering assistance to the distressed vessel, which could be seen lying directly in a line with the angle of the steep cliff usually known by the name of Dark Head Point.

“We must throw a rope from the cliff; no boat will live in such a sea,” said a coarse voice, which would have been known at once as Captain Vivian’s, even without the profaneness that was the constant accompaniment of his words.

“Too far,” replied Goff, who was standing by his side, examining the scene with a cool, practised eye, and not even shrinking when a second cry of agonising distress fell upon the ear. “They must even go, if ’tis Heaven’s will they should.”

Captain Vivian moved away to obtain a view from a higher position, and at the same moment Mr. Lester drew near.

“Too far, Goff? and will no one try the boat?”

Goff touched his hat, but his manner was surly: “Your reverence may try. It’s just tossing away your life, but you can try.”

Mr. Lester considered. It was madness, utter madness, for him at least. He looked round for another opinion.

“A quarter of an hour hence the tide will have turned,” said a fisherman who was standing near.

“And a quarter of an hour hence,” exclaimed Goff, “they will be in ——”

Mr. Lester stopped him. “On earth, we trust, Goff. Fifty pounds reward,” he shouted loudly, “to

any one who will undertake to man the boat and be off to the ship!" but his voice was lost in the roar of the elements, and the deep call of another gun of distress. Once more he looked round, hopeless and despairing. Ronald Vivian was close to him.

"Mr. Lester, one word with you." He drew him aside: "If I never return, say to Miss Campbell that I obeyed her." He caught hold of the boat to push it from the beach.

Mr. Lester held him back. "Ronald! this is actual frenzy! Your father and Goff are the only persons fit to go."

"Their lives are precious," said the boy, scornfully. "Mine!" — he seized Mr. Lester's hand, — "I am but a stumbling-block in the path. Clement will be safe when I am gone." Again he laid hold of the boat.

At that moment a shout arose from the cliff, "They are off! brave fellows! they are off!" followed by a deep muttered prayer, "God help them!" and like one body, the crowd hurried to the spot from whence they could best watch the fate of the little boat, which in desperation had at length been committed to the waves. It was manned by three experienced sailors, and bravely and resolutely it made its way, followed by a breathless silence, as one moment it was borne upon the crest of the waves, and the next sank into the deep abyss of the angry water as if never to rise again.

Ronald had thrown himself upon the beach, and his head was buried in his hands. Mr. Lester spoke to him gently: "It is best Ronald, as it is; we must pray for them."

Ronald made no answer. "They are gone! they are gone!" was the cry heard amidst the tempest, and he started to his feet. But the black speck, though scarcely discernible, was still to be seen breasting the waves; it was nearing the ship. Ronald rushed to the edge of the water, and stood there with his arms folded moodily upon his breast. Mr. Lester followed him near, yet not so near as to be observed. The moonlight fell upon the boy's tall firmly-built figure and noble features. The expression of his countenance was very painful;—cold and proud, and when he heard his father's coarse voice shouting from the cliffs, recklessly desperate. "Ronald," said Mr. Lester, approaching to him, "you would have done a brave deed, and God accepts the will."

"Perhaps so," was the answer; "it is all that is allowed to me;" and he moved away.

The boat was not to be seen; whether sunk, or passed beyond the power of sight, none could say. The moon was hidden by a thick cloud. The howling of the wind, the rush of the waters, silenced every other sound; and only a light raised in the unfortunate vessel showed that human life was at stake. The darkness continued for several minutes,—minutes which seemed hours. A voice from the crowd uttered a loud, shrill call. Some said it was answered, but it might have been only the scream of the stormy blast. "Try again!" and a second time the sharp yell seemed to rush over the wide waste of waters, seeking for a response. It came; yes, it was a human voice; a cheer, a cry of exultation, and the moon for a moment appearing showed the little boat crowded

with people, tossed upon the crest of a mountainous wave. It will be swamped; it must be, a huge mass of waters is about to fall upon it; but no, it has risen again, the awful power conquered by human skill: still it seems to make no progress, and now it is lost to sight; the moon has sunk back again into darkness. Oh! for one minute of peace on the restless ocean to make certain the door of escape.

Ronald never moved nor spoke. His eyes were riveted, as by a basilisk fascination, on the spot where the boat was likely to appear. And it did appear, nearing the shore, guided by a hand which knew well how to break the force of every wave, and direct it amidst the rough breakers. It was all but in; all but within safe reach of the shore. A cheer rose, loud, prolonged; ending—surely it was a scream of terror! A wave had passed over the boat, and it was upset.

Fearful, awful, was the scene that followed; struggles for life,—ineffectual attempts at assistance,—the engulfing of last hopes in the foaming ocean. A man's head was seen rising above the waters, his hand was clasping the shaggy weeds depending from a rock; they seemed firm, but the power of death was in the grasp, and they were giving way; in another moment he would be gone. Ronald flung aside his coat, and cast himself into the sea; few saw him, none cheered him, he was doomed.

They had sunk both together; but they rose again, the stranger clinging to Ronald as he struggled with the water. A mighty wave is near, it must cover them; but no, they have risen upon its crest;

and now, as if in angry disappointment, it has cast them from it ;—they are safe !

Mr. Lester was at some distance. Seven men had with great difficulty been rescued, and he was giving directions for their restoration. Another boat was being manned for the purpose of going back again to the ship ; all was excitement and confusion. None noticed Ronald, or thought of him. He knelt by the side of the man whom he had saved, chafing his hands, covering him with the coat which he had himself thrown aside, and at length with the assistance of another boy of about his own age, though much inferior to himself in power, carried him to the shelter of a boat-house.

The senses, which had been paralysed as much by horror as by the actual risk that had been run, soon returned, and by that time other assistance was at hand, and arrangements were made for conveying the man to the farm. Ronald's manner was indifferent and cold ; he answered the few questions put to him shortly and uncourteously ; and, when he found his charge in safe hands, took advantage of the suggestions made that he should look after himself, to walk away alone towards his own home.

CHAP. VII.

THE morning after the storm rose bright, clear, and comparatively calm, though deep shadows from flying clouds were still crossing the sea, and the white breakers tossed their diminished heads with an anger not yet exhausted.

Bertha Campbell, Ella, and Clement were together on a little hillock from which a wide view of the sea was to be obtained. Dark Head Point was visible, and the wreck of the shattered vessel, stranded amongst the rocks upon which it had drifted during the night.

“Three lives lost!” said Ella; “how terrible!” and she shuddered.

“And seven saved!” said Bertha; “that one ought to be thankful for.”

“Eight,” observed Clement quickly; “Ronald saved one.”

“Yes, I heard it,” said Bertha. There was a glistening in her eye, but it was a strangely imperturbable manner.

“Clement would have done the same if he had been there,” said Ella.

“Yes, he might.”

“Might! oh Aunt Bertha! it is certain.”

“He has not been tried, Ella.”

“And therefore you doubt me, Aunt Bertha,” said Clement haughtily. “Thank you for your opinion of me.”

“I only judge from what I see, Clement. If you are not equal to ordinary duties, I don’t know why I am to expect you to perform extraordinary ones.”

“Ronald does not do ordinary duties that I can ever see,” continued Clement.

“Ronald is no guide for you,” replied Bertha. “At this moment you are neglecting your work.”

“Who can be expected to work such a morning as this?” exclaimed Clement. “Mr. Lester himself is gone down to the village and to the shore.”

“It is his business, Clement; it is not yours.”

“And it is his pleasure,” exclaimed Clement. “He is gone to the farm to see Ronald’s friend.”

Bertha merely repeated her observation, that Mr. Lester attended to his business, and therefore Clement ought to attend to his, and then suggested to Ella that it was time for the children’s lessons to begin. Ella said, “Is it?” but she did not move from the grass upon which she was seated, leaning against the stone that supported the flag-staff, and gazing dreamily upon the sea.

“You will take cold, Ella,” said Bertha; “it is a great deal too damp to sit upon the grass.”

“Oh no, I shan’t, Aunt Bertha. The grass is quite dry.”

Bertha stooped down to feel it, and showed the drops glistening on her hand.

"I never take cold by sitting on the grass," said Ella; "I never take cold at all, indeed, except when I sit in a draught."

"Every one takes cold, Ella, who sits upon wet grass."

"Every one except me," repeated Ella. "Aunt Bertha, if you are going in, will you just tell the little ones to get their lessons ready. I suppose one must move," she added, rising lazily.

Bertha went into the house, and Ella turned to her brother, and said, "She is put out."

"Of course she is," replied Clement; "she is always put out. And isn't it aggravating, Ella, the way in which she never will give me credit for a single thing that is brave or noble? One would think I was a mere automaton."

"I don't mind her," said Ella; "she hasn't a spark of poetry or enthusiasm in her composition. If she had been on the shore, I venture to say she would have stayed to calculate exactly the claims of her own life, before she would have ventured to risk it for another."

"It won't do for me, that sort of thing," said Clement, pursuing the bent of his own thoughts. "If they want me to listen to them they mustn't try to keep me in leading-strings in that fashion. Why there are many boys who have been half over the world and are their own masters at my age."

"It will come to an end," said Ella, reseating herself on a stone; "all things come to an end if one waits long enough."

"Very well for a girl," he exclaimed impetuously;

“but what is to be done with the years that go by whilst one is waiting?”

“Make them a preparation for those which are to come, Clement,” said a grave voice.

Clement started, for it was Mr. Lester's. He was looking very pale, very haggard,—a year might have passed over him since the last evening. His manner too was different from its usual quiet, almost stern rigidity; its restlessness showed how much he must have gone through. Ella was very fond of him, and all her better feelings were called forth when she saw him suffering. She begged him now to go into the house, and let her fetch him a glass of wine. She was sure he was over-tired, and if he didn't take care he would be ill. But he would not go in; “He would rather,” he said, “remain with them where they were; the fresh air would do him good;” and he sat down by Ella at the foot of the flag-staff.

“Those tiresome lessons!” murmured Ella to her brother.

“Oh nonsense, you can't go now,” was his reply, in an under tone.

“A few minutes can't signify,” added Ella, rather speaking to herself than to Clement. “Dear Mr. Lester, do let me go in and bring you something out here.” She spoke now with animation and eagerness: her heart was in her words.

“Thank you, dear child, no. One can't forget last night, Ella.”

“No,” replied Ella, awed by his manner.

“And Clement might have been exposed to danger too,” he continued.

"Goff would never take me, Sir, if there was danger," said Clement, a little moodily.

"He ought not to take you at all, Clement." Mr. Lester's voice trembled.

"You are too tired to talk, Sir," said Ella, looking at him anxiously. "Shall we leave you?"

"Yes; and yet,"—he placed his hand on her head,—“Ella, one thought was in my mind, haunting it all last night,—that Clement might have been where others then were. I wonder whether either of you thought of it too.”

"I believe it was wrong in me to propose going out on the water, Sir, said Clement, candidly; "but when I had made an engagement, I didn't like to break it."

"An after engagement cannot cancel a former one," said Mr. Lester. "Our first engagement in all cases is to God."

"He was never absolutely told not to go," said Ella.

Clement refused to accept the excuse: "He knew," he said, "that it was not quite right, but it seemed such a little thing, he couldn't really believe it signified; certainly he should have gone but for some blunder of Ronald's which made them all late." And then he muttered something about sea-faring life, and that he must prepare if he ever intended to go to sea.

Mr. Lester was silent. Clement knew that he had said what was very painful; and, anxious to turn the conversation, he asked whether Ronald's friend was recovered.

"Yes, tolerably; he has gone to Cleve: his name is Bruce; the vessel was an American."

The answers were given shortly, and Clement was afraid to pursue the subject.

"I had better go in to the lessons now," said Ella. She did not know what else to say or do, and the claim of the forgotten duty reasserted itself.

"I am going home," said Mr. Lester; "tell your aunt I shall not see her probably to-day; I must be alone as much as possible." The last words were spoken in an under tone. He stood up to go. "Clement, are you ready for me?"

"Yes, Sir; that is, I shall be. I will follow you."

"I would rather you should go with me;" and Mr Lester paused, and his eyes wandered over the sea.

"Here is Rachel!" said Ella, as she turned towards the Parsonage garden. Mr. Lester's face brightened in an instant.

"How she runs!" continued Ella: "I never could move so fast."

It seemed but one bound and Rachel was at her father's side. "Nurse Robinson is waiting for you, Papa. She says you expected her. And, Ella dear," and Rachel produced a folded paper, "I have copied the lines, and thank you so much; they are beautiful."

"May I see them?" said Mr. Lester, taking them from her hand.

"Longfellow's *Excelsior*," said Ella, looking over his shoulder. "Rachel, and Clement, and I mean to make a Latin translation of them."

"Papa, you admire them, don't you?" asked Rachel, noticing the peculiar expression of his face.

"Of course I do, my love; who could help it?"

“And you think them very true and right in their meaning?”

“Yes, entirely so.”

“And you like us to like them?”

Mr. Lester paused. Ella looked up at him quickly. Her dark, expressive eyes seemed in a moment to read the meaning of his silence, and as the colour rushed to her cheeks, she said, “Mr. Lester wishes us to follow them, not merely to like them.” She did not wait to hear his answer, but walked slowly into the house without wishing any one good-b’ye.

Bertha was in the little room which opened from the drawing-room, and was used as a school-room. It had no carpet, and its chief furniture consisted of tables, stools, and book-cases. There was only one piano in the house, and that was in the drawing-room. Every thing in the apartment was neat, it could not be otherwise when Bertha Campbell superintended, but the room had the same air of poverty as the rest of the house; a poverty contrasting remarkably with the appearance of the persons who inhabited it.

Bertha was energetic and simple in all she did, and would have dusted a room as willingly as she would have studied a foreign language; but no one, on looking at her, would have supposed that she was born to such work; whilst Ella with her indolent, graceful movements, and little Fanny with her slight figure and delicate features, seemed only fitted for the luxury of an eastern climate. Louisa, indeed, was different, but even she moved and spoke with an air of command which would have needed a dozen ser-

wants to be in attendance instead of the tidy little girl who did duty as both housemaid and parlour-maid.

When Ella returned from the garden, she found Bertha engaged in hearing Louisa's lessons, and superintending Fanny's copy. She did not appear to perceive that her aunt had been taking her duties for her. It was so common a circumstance, as not, in Ella's eyes, to need "thank you," and Bertha on her part made no remark upon Ella's absence; but Louisa was reproved rather sharply for a blunder she had just made, and Fanny was told that if she did not hold her pen better she would be sent up stairs. Ella threw herself into a low seat, and leaning back exclaimed that it was tremendously hot, and she was dying with sleep: she wished it was the fashion in England to take siestas.

"You can have one, if you like it," said Bertha, a little satirically.

"Very well for you to say, Aunt Bertha, who can manage your time as you like. Oh dear! these tiresome lessons! Fanny, are you ready with your French translation?"

"Not quite," said Fanny.

"Then why aren't you?"

"I hadn't time to do it last evening."

"You know you would insist upon going such a distance in your walk, Ella," observed Bertha. "The children came in a great deal too late to finish what they had to do."

"I can't hear it, if it is not ready," said Ella. "What can you do, Fanny?"

"I can say my dates, and vocabulary, and dialogue, I think."

"Well, come then."

"Had you not better go up stairs, and put your shawl away, Ella?" said Bertha, "and then you will come down quite fresh again."

"No, thank you. It is a great deal too hot to move," and Ella tossed her shawl into the farthest corner of the room. Bertha put down the lesson book, took up the shawl, and sent Louisa up stairs with it.

"Now, Fanny," said Ella.

Fanny began, and repeated a tolerably correct lesson, or, at least, such as seemed to be so; for it was one of Ella's theories that it was useless to make children say things exactly as they were in the book.

"It can't have taken Fanny much time to learn that, Ella," observed Bertha; "she can't have read it over more than twice or three times."

"She knows the sense very well," said Ella; "and that is all one wants."

"All one wants for to-day, but not for to-morrow. The sense is the spirit, the words are the body; how can you retain the spirit if you give up the body?"

"It is too hot to argue," said Ella. "But if spirit has to act upon spirit what need is there of a body?"

"Spirit alone never does act upon spirit in this world," said Bertha.

Ella yawned, and closed her eyes. A tingling, irritable bell was just then rung. Bertha gave Louisa her book, told her she had made three mis-

takes, and hurried out of the room, almost before Ella had time to uncloset her eyes, and ask what was the matter.

Ella certainly exerted herself more when left to herself. It seemed as if a perverse feeling made her determined upon showing herself more indolent in proportion as Bertha was energetic. She drew her chair closer to the table, finished hearing Fanny's lesson, then made her go back to her copy, and bade Louisa bring her French History. That lesson was pleasant enough. Ella liked being read to, and she was very fond of history, and had a marvellous memory for dates.

"I have finished the ten pages," said Louisa, as she came to the conclusion of a chapter.

"Never mind, go on; you must hear about Henri Quatre."

Louisa glanced at the clock. "It is a quarter to one, Ella, and it is my music lesson day."

Ella's sigh might have been that of a martyr.

"I shall give you your lesson in the evening, go on now."

"And shall I say the questions in the evening?"

"We will see: go on."

Louisa was not fond of history, and cared but little for Henri Quatre; and she was provoked at having all her time occupied and so much added to her lesson hours. She read very badly, and Ella was impatient, and, striking the table in irritation, shook Fanny's hand, and made her blot an exercise which she had begun; the copy having long since been brought to an end, and put aside with scarcely a glance or an observa-

tion. Fanny burst into tears. She was a very untidy writer, and her exercise books were proverbially slovenly, and Bertha had lately endeavoured to stimulate her to carefulness by the promise of a reward whenever six exercises should be written without a blot.

"You shouldn't cry, Fanny," said Louisa; "you will make your eyes red, and then you won't be fit to be seen."

"And it is so silly, too," said Ella; "crying about nothing! what does it signify? Take it up with your blotting paper, and it will all be right."

She returned again to Henri Quatre, and left Fanny to mourn in lonely sorrow over the loss of her anticipated present; for Aunt Bertha had no mercy upon excuses. The blot was there, that was enough. There would be no question of how it came.

The clock struck one. "I should have just time for my music lesson," said Louisa, imploringly.

"What? yes!" Ella was still dreaming over the history.

"Louisa, hasn't Aunt Bertha got the *Henriade*? Just go and fetch it, there's a good child."

"The what, Ella?"

"The *Henriade*, Voltaire's *Henriade*; don't you know?"

Louisa walked slowly out of the room, and came back with a message that Aunt Bertha was engaged, and couldn't attend to any thing of the kind at present. Ella did not seem quite to hear. Louisa went to the piano, opened it, and put up her music book.

“Louisa, it won’t take you a minute; just run across the garden up to the Rectory. Mr. Lester has the *Henriade*. I am nearly sure I saw it in his study the other day. He will let me have it.”

Louisa looked excessively discomposed, and did not move.

“Go, child, go,” said Ella.

“Shall I go?” asked Fanny. She was very tired of lessons, and much enjoyed the thought of a run across the turf.

“Yes; only you don’t understand. There, give me a piece of paper and a pencil; not that one, that is slate pencil. Where is the one you were drawing with last night?”

“I don’t know; I left it on the table. Louisa, it was your turn to put away the things.”

“Oh, Fanny, indeed, if you remember, I took two days together, because you had a headache.”

“That was a week ago,” said Fanny, fretfully; “it was your turn I am sure.”

“Never mind whose turn it was,” exclaimed Ella: “only fetch me a pencil.”

“I don’t know where to find one,” said Fanny.

“Not know where to find a pencil? Why there are hundreds in the house. Louisa, give me one of your drawing pencils.”

“Aunt Bertha said I was not to lend them,” said Louisa.

Ella’s colour rose. “I can’t trouble myself about that. I must have one.”

Louisa had evidently no intention of obeying. She sat playing with the leaves of the music-book, her

face resolutely directed away. Ella took up a pen, and began to write with it instead.

"There, Fanny," and she tossed the note to the child, who ran off with it. Ella was too much annoyed with Louisa to take any notice of her; and the practising was begun and continued, whilst Ella sat at the table drawing mathematical figures on a sheet of note paper.

"That is the first dinner-bell," said Louisa, and she jumped down from her seat, and shut up the piano.

No answer.

"Fanny will be late," she continued; "she won't hear the bell."

"She has plenty of time," replied Ella, coldly.

"Grandmamma will be angry," persisted Louisa.

"You had better go and get ready yourself, Louisa," said Ella.

"I must put the room tidy first," was the answer; and Louisa, with the most determined spirit of neatness and provokingness, not only moved away every thing which belonged to herself and to Fanny, but also divers little articles of property appertaining to Ella. "Fanny will be late," she repeated, as she hastened out of the room, leaving Ella nothing to distract her eye from the contemplation of the tables and chairs, except the sheet of note paper on which she was scribbling.

The second dinner-bell rang, and Ella was not ready, and Fanny was still at the Rectory. Mrs. Campbell was exceedingly annoyed, for punctuality was her darling virtue, and Louisa triumphantly told

the history of how and why it all happened, and was informed by her grandmamma that she was the only person in the house to be depended upon; whilst Bertha reminded Ella that if she had come in in proper time, the lessons would have been all finished by one o'clock.

Fanny appeared when dinner was half over; and being received by harsh words and severe glances, burst into another fit of crying, and was again warned by Mrs. Campbell, as the most conclusive and natural argument for self-restraint, that she would quite spoil her face, and make herself such a figure she would not be fit to be seen.

That had been a very instructive morning to the children. They had had lessons in unpunctuality, ingratitude, self-indulgence, procrastination, absence of sympathy, impatience, disobedience to orders, ill-nature, self-conceit, and vanity, and all through the medium of French exercises and the life of Henri Quatre.

CHAP. VIII.

ELLA had a fit of the *Henriade* that afternoon, and could not go out; so she said. She wanted to compare the great epic poems of different countries, and she had a notion of writing an essay upon them. She had read Dante often, and knew Milton by heart, Homer was familiar to her, and she had a vague idea of the merits of the *Lusiad*, which, no doubt, was more than half the world could boast of. Not that Ella thought much about the world. With all her wonderful talent, she was free from conceit, and had scarcely any wish for admiration. When she talked of writing an essay upon epic poets, it was solely for her own amusement. She had no grand visions of fame and flattery; and if, now and then, a stray word of astonishment as to her mental powers reached her ears, it was always received with surprise. That which was so easy to her, could not, she supposed, be difficult to other people.

And then Ella never, or very rarely, finished any thing. She always worked from impulse, and her natural temperament was extremely indolent. Clement could sometimes persuade her to conclude what she had begun, but no one else. And he was very like herself, and seldom fancied to-day what he had delighted in yesterday. They were two very interesting, clever, agreeable companions, when they

chose to be; but the clouds on a windy day were not more changeable, and they always required the stimulus of success to make them pursue any subject. Ella's portfolio was filled with notes from history, unfinished poems, imitations of various authors, problems from Euclid, observations on botany, hints upon geology, copies of Hebrew and Arabic letters, interspersed with grotesque caricatures, clever pencil sketches, or grand designs in some new style of water-colours. The marvel was, that in attempting to know so much, she should succeed in knowing any thing. A person with less natural powers would have been utterly crushed by the mountain of mental dust accumulated by these broken ideas; but Ella's memory was so retentive, and her powers of perception were so keen, that, give her any fragments of knowledge, however broken, and she could put them together, when occasion required, so as to present a very fair semblance of real information.

"Ella knows every thing," was Mrs. Campbell's proud remark, when some chance observation brought out from the stores of her granddaughter's memory a forgotten or obsolete fact,

"Ella does nothing," was Bertha's mournful observation to Mr. Lester, when conversing upon the children's future prospects.

There are different powers of mind required for knowing and doing. People often cultivate the former whilst they neglect the latter. They do not see that we may know without doing, but we can scarcely continue long in doing without knowing.

But to give Ella all the excuse possible, she had had

very little teaching or training in either the one or the other. After an infancy passed in the enervating climate of the West Indies, she had been sent to England and placed under the care of persons who did not understand her, and who, if they had understood her, would not have known how to guide her. Mrs. Campbell was, in her younger days, the most rigid of disciplinarians. She had tutored, and checked, and warned, and fretted her own daughters, until one in despair rushed into a hasty and unfortunate marriage, and the other became a pattern of obedience and self-denial, but with all her warm, natural impulses chilled, her powers of enjoyment deadened, and her notions of goodness, either moral or religious, absorbed in the one stern idea of duty, duty both for herself and others, but without mercy and without love.

And Ella had no natural love of duty. Perhaps it may be said that we none of us have. Yet, surely, this is not so. There is an innate taste for duty, which goes with the love of order and regularity, and the spirit of perseverance. Some persons like to continue any habits they have commenced; they like to keep to rules; they are very particular about punctuality and neatness; all these things are the germs of duty. When softened by unselfishness and warm feelings they will form a very superior character. But Ella's mind and Ella's theories—and she very early began to form theories—were all based upon two principles, inclination, and affection. If they happened to correspond with duty, it was so much the better; if they did not—she really could

not do what she felt no interest in doing, she could not work for people who were indifferent to her.

Mrs. Campbell, with the singular weakness which makes the most rigid of parents spoil their grandchildren, had early given way to this argument. Ella did so much when work was her choice, that she was allowed to do little or nothing when it was not; whilst Bertha, following the severe reasoning in which she had herself been trained, looked with nearly equal regret upon Ella's doings or not doings, because she said that work performed merely from choice was as little valuable in a moral point of view as idleness.

Ella's had been a trying, fretting, uncongenial life, and she thought herself a martyr. She was by nature intensely proud, and the moment any accusation was brought against herself, she tried that ready weapon of self-defence retaliation. If Bertha complained of Ella's being indolent and unpractical, Ella complained of Bertha's being cold and harsh. If the one forgot from indolence, the other forgot from over occupation. If the one was unpunctual because she would not make an effort to be the reverse, the other was so because she was at every one's call for some act of self-denying kindness, and therefore could not reckon her time her own.

There is nothing so blinding as this spirit of retaliation, this pride which makes us always take the offensive when called to stand upon the defensive. It was the greatest possible effort for Ella to confess herself in the wrong. If she ever did, it was not at the moment of accusation, when acknowledgment

would have been gracious and humble ; but on some after occasion, when other circumstances had softened her feelings, and made it a matter of certainty that the affair would be passed over lightly.

And so Ella Vivian knew nothing of herself, and very little of others, and lived in a world of self-indulgence and self-reliance, all the more dangerous, because her talents made it easy to her to be agreeable, and her freedom from many of the more open and grave faults of her age made it almost impossible to convince her that she was not as good or even better than others.

Mrs. Campbell had been at Encombe three months : before that time they had lived at a small country town in the north. No exact reason was given for the change, except that the country was beautiful, and the sea air invigorating, and the village in the neighbourhood of Cleve Hall. To be near their grandfather seemed to Ella quite a sufficient cause for the migration, and she had conjured up many visions of grandeur and enjoyment both for herself and Clement, which were all, however, dispersed on their arrival. Cleve Hall was less open to them than any other house in the village. General Vivian was less known to them than any other person. Even Aunt Mildred, the gentle, cheerful, loving Aunt Mildred, whose smile was fascination, and her voice like the echo of the softest music, was as a person *tabooed*. They rarely saw her ; when they did, their visits were short and unsatisfactory. She evidently wished to keep them with her, but she never did. She wished to make them at home with her, but the mystery which enveloped every thing at Cleve mutually repelled

them. They spoke of their father, and the subject was diverted. They expressed a desire to see something in a distant part of the house, and an excuse was at hand. They asked to run in the garden, and the timepiece was consulted to know whether it would be the hour for Grandpapa to be there also. And if, by any chance, they met the General, the first impulse of every grown-up person who accompanied them seemed to be to avoid him.

Of course Ella asked the meaning of all this. At sixteen, with a most determined will, and a keen curiosity, who would not have done so? And very unsatisfactory were the answers which she received. Mrs. Campbell generally began at once to remark upon General Vivian's unbending character; whilst Bertha, dreading to give confidence where she felt none, used generally to stop her by the observation, "You will know all about it, my dear, in time."

But Ella felt that she did not know all about it, and that she was not likely to do so. Her father ought to be the heir of Cleve; and Clement was his only son. She had heard of some disagreement with her grandfather, and she knew that her father had lived for many years in the West Indies in consequence; but it seemed very hard that the punishment should also fall upon the children. Bertha told her that her father was a poor man, and certainly, from some cause or other, Ella saw they were all poor. But General Vivian had houses, and lands, and carriages, and servants, and all the luxuries of life at command. A very small sacrifice on his part would have made them comparatively affluent. Why was it not asked for?

Ella chafed under her privations. She felt there must be injustice some where, and she could not resign herself to it, and when tormented by her own ill-regulated mind, she shared her anger with her twin brother Clement.

And Clement was a willing recipient of all her complaints. Proud and self-indulgent, like Ella, he could not endure to remain in a position which he believed beneath him. But for the influence of his cousin, Ronald Vivian, he might, like her, have spent his time in day-dreams of grandeur; but Ronald was fiery and impetuous, and full of the spirit of adventure; and Clement, feeling the power of his strong will, and admiring the noble points of his character, followed him whenever and wherever he was able, and fancied that in partaking his pursuits he was escaping from boyhood to manhood, and therefore at liberty to be his own master.

Such was the state of affairs at Encombe Lodge; most unfortunate for all, most especially trying to Bertha Campbell.

Ella was only sixteen, whilst Bertha was two and thirty. Respect, therefore, was due from the one to the other, if it were only from difference of age. Yet Bertha had great difficulty in exacting it; partly owing to the fact that when the children first came to live with them, Mrs. Campbell took the sole charge upon herself, and spoilt them by over indulgence, whilst she was always blaming Bertha; and partly owing to Bertha's own defect of manner and Ella's superiority of intellect, which made her at sixteen almost a woman. Now, whenever there was a differ-

ence between them, Mrs. Campbell was appealed to, and invariably took Ella's part; and thus the breach was widened. The ill feeling extended itself to Clement, who always approved Ella's decisions, and never could bear Aunt Bertha's cold way of reminding him of what he had to do. It was better with the little ones. Louisa liked Aunt Bertha because she was always the same. She suffered so much from Ella's moods, that it was a perfect luxury to turn to some one who was certain to give her a patient hearing, and never found fault unless there was really a cause. She did not love her. Aunt Bertha was not attractive to children; she was so slow and methodical, and so little understood how to enter into their amusements; but Louisa respected and obeyed her, and made Fanny do the same. It would have been a great comfort to the children if they had been allowed always to do their lessons with Bertha; but it was one of Ella's few dreams of usefulness, consequent upon rather a long fit of illness, that she would educate her younger sisters; and in the days of convalescence she wrote two chapters of a work on education, and formed a plan for a new grammar, which was to make German as easy to learn as French or Italian; and when pronounced to be quite well, how could she think herself otherwise than competent to undertake any educational task, however important!

Ella had imbibed too many high principles not to have great notions of goodness, and she was too clever not to put them into some tangible form; but she never liked trying virtues upon herself; she pre-

ferred rather seeing how they suited others. Her theories for Louisa and Fanny were perfectly admirable; she talked of nothing but education for a whole month, especially to her grandmamma, who was entirely convinced by her, and believed that she was fully as competent to the work as Bertha, if not more so. The plan had been tried now for three months,—ever since they came to Encombe. Bertha resigned herself to it, for the simple reason that there was nothing else to be done; and when she found that Ella's want of steadiness and perseverance was a stumbling-block in the way of the children's improvement, she quietly undertook all that was left undone, and so, without intending it, increased Ella's self-deception.

Certainly, if there was a martyr in the family it was Bertha. The trials which she had endured in her comparatively short life might have crushed a less brave and enduring spirit to the dust. Little, indeed, did Ella think when she laughed at, and teased, and disobeyed her quiet, cold-mannered, impassive aunt, that thought for her, care for her interests, anxiety for her future prospects, had robbed Bertha's cheek of its bloom, and caused the dark lines of anxiety to shade her forehead. Perhaps it might have been better for her if she had known it; better if the veil which was cast over the history of her family had been thrown aside, and she had seen herself the helpless, poverty-stricken child of a disinherited man, indebted for every comfort which she enjoyed to the self-denying exertions of one whose daily life was rendered miserable by her thoughtless negligence.

CHAP. IX.

“AUNT BERTHA, we may put on our old things and go to the shore, mayn’t we?” Louisa’s voice was heard from the top of the stairs. She had been trying to persuade Fanny that it would be better to wear an old bonnet; and Fanny was not inclined to agree because she looked much prettier in a new one.

“Yes, to the shore; I shall be ready in five minutes:” and Louisa retired triumphant. Louisa was in time herself, and contrived that Fanny should be the same; a circumstance to which she did not fail to draw Bertha’s attention, and received as an answer, that punctuality was a good thing, but humility was a better. They set off across the garden to the Rectory, as they were to call for Rachel on their way.

“I dare say Clement will be on the shore,” said Fanny; “he said he should go there after he had done with Mr. Lester.”

Bertha looked grave.

“Is there any reason why Clement should not go?” asked the quick-eyed Louisa.

“None, if he does what he ought to do,” was the cautious reply.

“Old Mrs. Clarke, the sexton’s mother, says he gets about amongst all kinds of people,” said Fanny, “when he goes to the shore.”

“When did old Mrs. Clarke talk to you upon such subjects?” inquired Bertha.

“Oh! the other day,” replied Louisa, “when we went to see her with Ella. She says,” she added, drawing up her head, “that it is not fit for the heir of such a place as Cleve Hall to be spending his time amongst smugglers and low people.”

“It is not fit for any one who wishes to be a gentleman,” said Bertha, rather sternly; “but remember, children, you are not to talk to Mrs. Clarke or to any one in that way.”

“We can’t help it,” said Fanny; “she talks to us.”

Bertha’s conscience a little reproached her. Perhaps, after all, she was wrong in not giving Ella more confidence. She might learn to be discreet if she were trusted. But Bertha had never received confidence, and it was not easy to learn to give it. She walked on very silently and thoughtfully; and the children, finding she did not enter into what they said, ran along the path together.

They came in front of the Rectory, and passed the library window. Louisa, of course, looked in; her curiosity was insatiable. “Aunt Bertha,”—and she drew near her aunt,—“there was a stranger with Mr. Lester, I am sure.”

“Perhaps so, my dear;” and Bertha only moved on the faster.

“But who could it be?” continued Louisa.

“It must be one of the shipwrecked people,” said Fanny; “perhaps it was the captain of the vessel.”

“He looked rather like a sailor,” observed Louisa; “do you think it was the captain, Aunt Bertha?”

“My love, how can I tell? and what does it signify?”

“But if it was the captain, I should like to hear all he has to say, and how it all happened,” said Fanny; “I dare say he would tell us; and we might make a story out of it. Do you know, Aunt Bertha, we began making out a story yesterday, only Ella said it was nonsense.”

“I’ll tell you who it was,” said Louisa, with the air of one who has deeply considered a subject; “it’s that Mr. Bruce whom Ronald saved.”

“What do you know about Mr. Bruce?” inquired Bertha.

“Oh! the dairy-woman from the Farm told Betsey about him, and she told me. He is not very well, and perhaps he may stay at the Farm, and perhaps he may be at the Inn at Cleve.”

“Then it is not likely he should be here,” said Bertha.

“He may be going to Cleve by-and-by,” said Louisa; “I am sure it is Mr. Bruce.” She nodded her head with an air which admitted no open dissent from her opinion.

“Well; we need not trouble ourselves about it; we are not likely to see him,” said Bertha; “and here is Rachel.”

“And Mrs. Robinson with her,” whispered Fanny; whilst Louisa pronounced decidedly, “I don’t like Mrs. Robinson.”

Rachel ran up to them. Mrs. Robinson came slowly behind. She was a very different person under different circumstances and to different people.

Now she was not so much reserved as very stiff. She made a respectful curtsy to Bertha, and would have passed on, but Rachel would not let her go. "Granny, dear, you must wait, and tell Miss Campbell and the others all about it; they will like to hear so much. Wouldn't you like to hear all about the shipwrecked people who were taken in at the Farm?" she added, addressing Bertha.

"We won't trouble Mrs. Robinson if she is in a hurry," replied Bertha civilly, but rather formally: "you must tell us yourself, Rachel."

"But I can't. Granny tells stories so much better than I do, and I can't remember it all. There were five Americans, and a Frenchman, and a German, weren't there? And they slept—where did they sleep? Oh! Granny, you must tell all about it."

"Not now, Miss Rachel; another time, my dear."

"But tell her just about Ronald. Miss Campbell likes to hear about him always."

"The young gentleman was off to the ship by daylight," said Mrs. Robinson, speaking very slowly, "helping to get the goods on shore; for there are some left on board, though the ship is likely, they say, to go to pieces. But that's like him, Ma'am, as you know."

"And Mr. Bruce wanted to see him and thank him," added Rachel; "but Ronald is so strange he won't go near him."

"And it's Mr. Bruce who is in the library with your Papa, Rachel; isn't it?" inquired Louisa.

Mrs. Robinson answered, for her rather quickly, "Yes, Miss Louisa, it is Mr. Bruce. He is going into

Cleve this afternoon, to look about him. I think, Ma'am, if you are thinking of the shore you had best make haste, if you will excuse my saying so; the tide will be on the turn soon." She moved away.

"There now," and Louisa clapped her hands; "didn't I say it was Mr. Bruce? I am always right. What is he like, Rachel?"

"Oh! I don't know. I only saw him for a moment. He came into the room with Papa, and said how d'ye do; but of course I didn't stare at him."

"I should have stared, though," whispered Louisa. "I think he looks very like a sailor."

"I wish I could have asked him how he felt when he believed he was going to be drowned," said Rachel, very thoughtfully. "Papa told me once, that some people, when they have been nearly drowned, have had all their lives come back to them, — all they have done."

She stopped suddenly, as if trying to realise the idea. Bertha lingered also.

"Do you think it is so? Do you think it is possible?" said Rachel.

"Quite possible, dear Rachel."

"But do you think it is so?"

"Yes, if people say it."

"And do they look like other people, and come back and live amongst them, as they did before?"

"They look like others, — one may hope they don't live quite like them."

"Then, Miss Campbell," and Rachel clung closely to Bertha's side, and her voice was full of awe, "I wish that God would let me be nearly drowned."

Bertha half started.

“It isn’t wicked, is it?” continued Rachel, anxiously, as she watched the expression of Bertha’s countenance. “But I would bear any thing, yes, any thing in all the world, to be very, wonderfully good. Wouldn’t you?” In her enthusiasm she caught Bertha’s hand, and held it as they walked on together.

“Yes indeed, Rachel;” and Bertha’s cold, calm eyes sparkled with a lightning flash of animation.

“Wonderfully good,” continued Rachel; “not a little good, but, oh!” and she drew a long breath, “so very, very,—beyond all thought. Will God make us so, if we wish it?”

Bertha hesitated. “We may hope He will, if we can bear the means.”

There was a pause; and then Bertha heard, almost in a whisper, the words, “I would try.”

Rachel seemed considering something deeply; and after a few seconds, resuming her natural tone, said: “Is there any harm in thinking about it a great deal, and liking it, in a way?”

“What do you mean, Rachel?”

“I can’t exactly explain; but don’t you know how Ella likes to read about knights, and tournaments, and persons being brave and generous,—what one reads in Froissart, and those books?”

“Yes; well:” and Bertha turned to her with an air of mingled wonder and interest.

“Then, when Ella reads about such things, and gets into a way about them, I never feel as she does; but I do feel it when I read about martyrs, and people

who have been so good; and it makes my heart beat fast, and my head seems almost dizzy, as if I could do any thing to be like them. Is it wrong?"

"Of course not, dear Rachel; you can't help it."

"But do you ever feel it?"

The answer was low and doubtful: "I hope I do."

"I don't think all people do," continued Rachel; "and it puzzles me, and sometimes I think that, perhaps, it is being proud and presumptuous to long to be first in any thing."

"We can only be first by being last in those things," said Bertha.

"No; and perhaps I am not willing to be last: and yet it seems ——" she hesitated, and added: "Aunt Mildred says she should not wish for the glory, if she might only have the love."

Bertha's eyes glistened.

"Aunt Mildred would be so glad if she could have you to talk to as I have," continued Rachel, eagerly.

"Aunt Mildred doesn't know any thing about me," replied Bertha; whilst her manner became in a moment constrained.

"I talk to her about you," said Rachel, "and she very often says she should like to see you. Will you go with me to the Hall, some day?"

"Aunt Mildred is very kind, and talks about things which interest you, Rachel," replied Bertha; "but I don't believe she would really like to see me."

"Not if she says it?" exclaimed Rachel. "Oh, Miss Campbell! then she would say what was not true."

"She would like to see me for your sake," replied

Bertha, in the same tone of cold reserve; "she would not wish it for her own."

The conversation dropped. When Bertha assumed this peculiar manner she was impenetrable.

Rachel was chilled, yet she was very fond of Bertha Campbell; she had an intuitive appreciation of her excellence, — a conviction that upon the points nearest her own heart she might obtain sympathy from her. Might! for it was never certain. Bertha was unable to bring out her own feelings; perhaps even she was uncertain that she had them, and often she expressed wonder when Rachel expected sympathy. Yet Rachel's simple, true devotion, and her open-hearted warmth of affection, often touched a chord in Bertha's heart which seemed to unlock a new source of untold pleasure. Love in religion was very new to her. She had been educated with a dread of expressing strong feeling of any kind; and had known fatal results from the indulgence of what she had been taught to call enthusiasm; and so she always suspected that evil must lurk under it.

Yet she could not warn Rachel, still less in any way reprove her. Even when unable to comprehend her, she could see that Rachel possessed something which was wanting in herself, and which would make her life much happier. Perhaps the charm was all the greater because it seemed beyond her reach. She felt as though Rachel belonged to a different race, and as if by being with her a vent was opened for the latent poetry of feeling which, unknown to herself, was unquestionably a part of her own character.

They reached the shore: the wind had gone

down rapidly since the morning, and now the sea was as calm as if the wrathful tempest had never passed over it. The hulk of the dismantled vessel, however, bore witness to its fatal work, and the shore was covered with persons groping about in the hope of picking up something that might be worth carrying away. Bertha had forgotten this possibility, and when she saw the numbers assembled her first impulse was to go back. Louisa strongly opposed the idea, and Fanny nearly cried with disappointment.

“You know, Aunt Bertha,” said Louisa, “that if we go back we shall have had no walk at all to speak of, and Grandmamma wishes ——”

“I am the best judge of Grandmamma’s wishes, Louisa: there are too many people here, a great deal. I can’t possibly let you go amongst them.”

Rachel gazed wistfully on the vessel. “The tide is so far out that we could have gone quite close to it,” she said. “How unfortunate!”

“And it will be all to pieces in a day or two,” observed Louisa. “Goff says there isn’t a chance for it.”

“Goff, my dear Louisa! how do you know any thing of what he thinks?”

“Oh! because a man came to the back door when Fanny and I were in the garden this morning, and we heard him talking to Betsey, and telling what the people in the village said.”

“Always listening,” was Bertha’s comment: to which Louisa replied, with a blush, that she could not help hearing what was said quite close to her;

adding, however, directly afterwards, "That is, I think I might have got out of the way if I had wished it."

"I should like Ronald to be here to tell us where the rock was that Mr. Bruce was clinging to," said Rachel, as they stood upon the summit of the cliff and looked down.

Bertha had appeared uninterested before, but she woke up at the observation. "It was the farthest of those great rocks you see out towards the point," she said.

"Oh! the Lion, and the Bear, and the Fox, we always call them," exclaimed Fanny. "It must have been the Lion, for that has the most sea-weed growing upon it."

"Yes, the Lion's Mane, as Ella calls it," observed Louisa. "She said one day she meant to write some verses about it. I dare say she will, now there has been such an adventure."

"And Ronald will be the hero!" exclaimed Fanny, clapping her hands. "Won't it be fun, Rachel?"

Rachel did not answer directly.

"Shouldn't you like Ella to write something about it?" again inquired Fanny.

"I don't quite know; I don't think I should like Ronald to be written about, at least not in that way."

"Rachel, how absurd!" exclaimed Louisa. "Why not?"

Bertha listened attentively to the reply.

"I can't exactly say; it is something I feel, but Miss Campbell will know;" and Rachel turned to Bertha, feeling at once that she was speaking to some

one who would understand without words. "If Ella could write just what Ronald felt, I shouldn't care," she continued. "But then how could she?"

"She might imagine it," said Louisa.

"But if it were imagination, it wouldn't be true."

"And it must be some one different from Ella to understand Ronald truly," said Bertha, in a low voice.

"Thank you, thank you; that was just what I meant, only I couldn't explain."

Louisa and Fanny moved away, not caring for the explanation. Rachel held Bertha's hand, and drew her nearer to the edge of the cliff. Her eyes were riveted on the rock, and a long time elapsed before she spoke. At last, without any preface, she said, "Miss Campbell, is Ronald good?"

Silence was her answer; and when she looked round, a tear was rolling down Bertha's cheek. Rachel asked no more questions, but followed Louisa and Fanny; and Bertha was left alone.

The children seated themselves on a bench placed on the top of the cliff. Louisa and Fanny were sufficiently amused by watching what was going on below; and even Rachel, though she occasionally glanced at the spot where Bertha was standing, soon entered into their interest, and laughed more merrily than either.

"A beautiful evening, young ladies," said a voice behind them. Rachel started, and involuntarily stood up to move away, when she saw Captain Vivian.

"Come down to see the fun, I suppose?" he continued.

“Yes, thank you, I think,—Louisa, had we not better go to your Aunt?”

“Oh! never mind me; don’t let me interrupt you. How d’ye do, Miss Campbell?” and Captain Vivian held out his hand to Bertha, who at that moment came up. Bertha greeted him formally and a sign to the children told them they were to go on; and with an instinctive terror of Captain Vivian, they ran till they were quite beyond the reach of his voice.

“It’s a long time since we met to talk, Miss Campbell. I’ve been away a good deal till lately. But you are looking as if the sea air agreed with you.”

He evidently meant to be courteous; and though Bertha was so pale as to belie the compliment which had been paid her, she showed no wish to shun the interview.

“I scarcely expected to find you at Encombe, when we came here, Captain Vivian,” she said.

“You thought I should keep farther from the General’s quarters. Well, perhaps it might be just as well if I did; but there’s something in the sight of old ocean after all which tempts a man, when he’s been used to it; and the Grange was empty, and so Ronald and I have e’en taken up our quarters there.”

“Ronald is as fond of the sea as yourself,” remarked Bertha.

“Perhaps he may be, but he’s a strange fellow is Ronald; one never knows what he will be at.”

“His taste for the sea was a taste from infancy,” said Bertha. “I remember——”

He interrupted her quickly : " Yes, yes. You are right; he always had a taste for it; but he's too old."

" For the naval service? yes," replied Bertha, timidly.

" For any service, unless I choose it;" and in an instant an angry flush overspread Captain Vivian's face, whilst he muttered to himself, " Am I never to be left alone? "

Bertha stood her ground. " We have not met for so long, Captain Vivian," she said, " that you must forgive me if I touch upon unwelcome subjects."

" I don't know what long acquaintance it requires to learn that interference must always be unwelcome," he replied. " But you are one of Mr. Lester's apt scholars, Miss Bertha."

" My interference, if you call it such," replied Bertha, " dates long before my acquaintance with Mr. Lester."

" Then it is the old story," he exclaimed. " I should have thought that years might have taught you wisdom."

" I trust they have in some measure," replied Bertha; " but they have not taught me that there is either wisdom or goodness in looking with indifference upon the child of ——"

He interrupted her, and his manner changed into patronising indifference.

" We won't quarrel, Miss Bertha; we have had enough of that in our day. Since we are neighbours, we may as well be friendly when we meet."

“Quite as well,” said Bertha; “if we are to meet at all.”

He seemed a little piqued, and answered hastily, “Oh! then you had thought of cutting me, had you? The way of the world; off with old friends, and on with new.”

“I could not have supposed that you would look upon me as a friend,” replied Bertha. “It was scarcely the light in which I was regarded in former times.”

He bit his lip. “I didn’t mean, — of course, I never supposed you would bear malice.”

“I have nothing to bear malice for, Captain Vivian,” replied Bertha; “I was not the person to suffer.” And there was a stress upon the pronoun which made the coarse, rough man, whom she addressed, shrink as with the touch of some sudden pain.

“I don’t know why you are so fond of going back to those old times,” he said. “Why can’t we meet, and forget them?”

“Because,” replied Bertha, boldly, “they are the only grounds upon which our acquaintance can possibly rest. You must be fully aware, Captain Vivian, that if we were now, for the first time, living in the same village, we could never be any thing to each other but strangers.”

“Too proud!” he exclaimed, in a tone which yet had very little pride in it. “Aiming at the Hall, I suppose?”

“Aiming at nothing, I hope,” replied Bertha, as she fixed her eyes upon him, till his sank beneath

their gaze; "but the man who has brought exile, and disgrace, and poverty into a family, can little expect to be received as a friend."

His face became deadly pale: twice he tried to speak, and twice the words seemed kept back by some violent inward agitation.

"I know more than I once did, you see," continued Bertha.

"Ay! from that meddling, false-hearted" — he was going to add a string of violent epithets to Mr. Lester's name, but Bertha prevented him. Her cold, quiet, womanly dignity seemed to have a strange power over him.

"Mr. Lester is my friend," she said. "If he can be mentioned in terms of respect, well; if not, this is the first and last time, Captain Vivian, that I will hear his name from your lips."

"And what has he been telling you, then?"

The question was put anxiously, and with a certain tone of deference.

"It must be only painful, and quite unnecessary, for me to repeat what you already know so well," replied Bertha. "It is sufficient, that after having assisted to ruin the prospects of the father, you yet have it in your power to show repentance by your conduct to the son. Edward Vivian's fate would have been very different from what it is but for your influence. Clement may be restored to all that his father has lost, if only you will not stand in his way."

"I stand in his way!" and the laugh which accompanied the words made Bertha shrink. "Why, one would think I was the old General's ally, likely to

come over him with smooth words. How can I stand in the boy's way?"

"You are the General's enemy," replied Bertha.

"And if I am, what's that to any one but myself?"

"It may be very much to Clement, if his grandfather thinks that he is your friend," replied Bertha.

"Tut, tut!" he exclaimed, impatiently; "this is all idle talking, Miss Bertha. The boy's a fine fellow enough, and likes free air and sea breezes; and Ronald has taken to him — and where's the harm?"

"Merely," replied Bertha, coldly, "that Ronald's friendship is a sin in General Vivian's eyes."

"But if it is no sin in reality, since you will harp upon the old question of conscience."

"It must be sin to Clement," replied Bertha, "when it is against the wishes of all his friends."

"What is that to me? let his friends take care of him."

"His friends have very little power, as I suspect you know full well by this time, Captain Vivian," replied Bertha. "My mother is too infirm, and has indulged him too much for years. Mr. Lester is most kind, but he has only authority over his lessons. Clement is left, most unhappily, to himself; and his whole success in life depends upon the favour of his grandfather. Is it a very hard thing to ask that you should not interfere to mar his prospects?"

"I have told you before," he exclaimed "that there is no interference on my part. It is Ronald's doing, if there is any thing of the kind; but I don't see it: they are together every now and then."

"And not alone," continued Bertha; "Ronald's

companions become Clement's also — Goff, for instance."

"Pshaw! if you are as squeamish as that, you must needs shut your boy up in a glass case. But I'll say one thing to you, Miss Bertha; you have shown me a bit of your mind, you must needs let me show you a bit of mine. Fair play's a jewel. Don't you interfere with my game, if you want me not to interfere with yours. Remember my boy is not to be preached over into a milksop, and his head filled with fancies of merchant service, and all that nonsense. Ronald will be what I choose to make him; and I give you warning, that if there's any attempt to turn him another way, I'll be your match."

Bertha changed colour, but the determined lines of her mouth became more marked as she said, "Captain Vivian, you may threaten, but you will not frighten me; the promise which I made to Marian on her death-bed will be kept, God helping me, before all others."

A storm of fearful passion was visible in Captain Vivian's dark countenance, but Bertha regarded him with perfect calmness; and as again her searching gaze rested on him, the exclamation which was about to escape his lips was checked, and muttering between his teeth, "Do your will, and take the consequences," he turned from her without another word.

CHAP. X.

THREE days had passed since the storm. The weather had become very warm ; it would have been oppressive but for the soft air, just sufficient to stir the foliage of the trees before the windows of Mildred Vivian's apartment. The flower-beds, disordered by the rush of the tempest, were again restored to their usual appearance of trim neatness ; the lawn was newly mown, and Mildred, lying on her sofa by the open window, appeared to be thoroughly enjoying the luxurious repose of the morning.

Yes, thoroughly enjoying it ; no one could have doubted that, notwithstanding the thin, drawn look of her features, their habitual expression of bodily pain. She was reading, or perhaps, more strictly speaking, intending to read ; for although a book lay open before her, her eyes wandered chiefly amongst the flowers, or pursued the course of the buzzing insects and fluttering birds, following them as they rose in the air, and resting with an expression of longing thankfulness upon the depth of the blue heavens. Such extreme quietness as there was in that secluded garden at Cleve Hall might have been very trying to many, even on a brilliant summer's day ; but it was part of Mildred's home, associated with all that she had ever loved ; and where others would have dwelt

mournfully on past joys, she had taught herself to be happy, and to seize on present blessings.

A little door, leading into the more public part of the grounds, opened, and a tall, grey-haired man, who had certainly reached, and probably passed, the age of seventy, entered the garden. He walked proudly, and with tolerable firmness, and the stick which he carried was no support to him; his head was raised, his chin slightly elevated — perhaps that added to the self-possessed, self-dependent look, which was the first impression conveyed by his handsome features. For he was strikingly handsome — the forehead high, the nose just sufficiently aquiline for dignity, the dark blue eyes quick and piercing, the mouth — the real character was inscribed there; but we will leave it for words to tell.

He sat down by Mildred's sofa, slowly — he had been suffering from rheumatism — and he bit his lips as if in pain; but Mildred did not ask him how he was, but waited for him to break the silence.

“I have been round the park, Mildred; the storm has done a good deal of mischief.”

“Has it indeed, Sir? I thought there were no trees blown down.”

“Who told you that?” he asked quickly.

“I forget, Sir, who; but I understood it.”

“Then they deceived you, Mildred; purposely perhaps,” he added in an under-tone. “The Great Black Oak, of five hundred years' standing, is down, child. But what does it matter?” He tried to laugh. “It only follows the family fortunes.”

“I hoped it was to be the type of their remaining

firm," said Mildred, assuming a lighter tone ; "but it is best not to think about such things."

"Do you never think about them, then?" he continued, regarding her with an expression of tenderness which was at variance with the accent of his voice.

"Sometimes I do, dear Sir ; but I don't think it is wise."

"No, child ; no, it is not at all wise : but I thought I would tell you myself, lest you should fret."

"It was very kind," replied Mildred, in an absent tone ; then breaking suddenly into another subject, she asked, "Did you go beyond the park, Sir?"

"No, I meant to go ; but my back was stiff, so I turned back ;—Prince was troublesome too."

"Prince has not exercise enough, Sir ; I wish you would let Groves take him out regularly."

"And throw him down ; that won't do, Mildred. No, if Prince grows too strong for his master, he must seek another."

"I hope not, Sir ; you wouldn't bear to part with him."

"Would I not?" A smile of resolution almost forbidding crossed his face ; "then, Mildred, you know nothing about me."

"I don't mean that you would not do anything, or part with anything, that you considered right, Sir," began Mildred.

He caught up her words—"Considered right, that is what you always say ; is right—it ought to be."

Mildred was silent.

"Is right," he continued, speaking his own thoughts rather than addressing her ; "I set off in life with

that motto, and I have followed it. Who can have done so more? who can have sacrificed more?—eh! Mildred?”

“Certainly, Sir; no one can doubt your principle,” replied Mildred, keeping her eyes upon the work which she had taken up since her father entered.

“Only it is a principle you don’t agree with. What woman ever did?”

“Women’s feelings carry them away, so it is said,” replied Mildred with a smile. “But, my dear father, why should we go over the old ground?”

“Well! as you say, why should we?” and he sighed deeply.

Mildred laid her thin, white hand upon the scanty grey hairs which covered his head, and as she fondly smoothed them, said, “If I could make you listen to my principle instead of to your own, I should ask such a great favour.” He would not turn to look at her, but he suffered her to kiss his forehead; and she added, in a tone so low that it was almost a whisper, “Would it vex you very much if Ella were to come and see me?”

Very striking it was, the change which passed over his face. Its expression had been gentle and sad the moment before, gentle notwithstanding the unyielding determination which was described by the lines of his mouth, and which broke forth in the tones of his voice; but even as Mildred spoke, it was gone, conquered, as it would have seemed, by some sudden mental suffering which he could not control, yet against which he struggled with all the intensity of an un-governable will.

Mildred must have known the effect her words would have, yet she seemed neither to watch nor wait, nor be anxious for his reply. She took up her work, and tried to thread her needle, but her hand was unsteady; the cotton rolled upon the floor, and she bent over the side of the sofa to pick it up. He saw her movement, and stooped too, but it was an effort; and as he raised himself again, he said bitterly,

“Your father is an old man, Mildred. Wait but a little while, and you may do as you wish without asking.”

“It will be too late to have any wish then, Sir,” said Mildred quietly.

He leaned back in the arm-chair, resting his hand upon the stick which he laid across it. His tone was still constrained as he said, “How long have you had this new fancy?”

“It is a very old one, dear Sir,” replied Mildred: “I can never see the children by going to them.”

“And their grandmother knew that; crafty old woman that she is!”

“But the children, Sir,” said Mildred, humbly; “must they suffer?”

“I’ll tell you what, Mildred”—General Vivian rose from his chair with an energy which for the moment conquered the infirmities of age—“there is no more cunning, designing old fox in England than that woman; but I’ll outwit her.”

“We don’t like her, certainly, Sir, either of us,” said Mildred; “but then so much the more reason, perhaps, for taking the children from her: don’t you think so?”

“And so give her cause to triumph over us! What made her bring them here but the determination to thrust them upon me? No, Mildred, let them alone — Campbells and Vivians — Campbells and Vivians,” he repeated, muttering the words; “it can’t be; it wasn’t meant to be.”

“But the children are Vivians, dear Sir,” said Mildred. She was afraid then, for she looked up at him stealthily. “Yes,” he said, pondering upon the words; and Mildred heard him add, as he turned away from her, “and so are others.”

“Clement is very young,” observed Mildred, replying to his thoughts, rather than his words.

“And therefore the more sure a victim,” he exclaimed, impetuously; the volcano, which had been working secretly, bursting forth. “Am I blind, Mildred? Can I not see the boy’s course as plainly as if it were written in letters of fire before me? And is all to be sacrificed; all for which I have striven in life—the inheritance of my ancestors; the good of my people; the honourable name, to attain which I have practised the self-denial of years? But let it go,” he continued, moodily; “since even you, Mildred, cannot value it.” He moved to the window, and stood there, listening, it might have seemed, to the note of the wood-pigeon, and the plashing of the fountain in the garden.

Mildred’s hands were clasped together, possibly in suffering, but more probably in prayer. Hers was not a face to betray much internal agitation — perhaps she had been too much accustomed to these scenes to be startled or deeply pained by them — but

something of the hopeful expression passed from her face as, after the lapse of a few seconds, she said, very slowly, "I can see the risk, dear Sir; but I can see the duty to the children also."

"I will do my duty by them," he replied, quickly. "I will help the boy. Let him go to college: I will support him there. Let him show that there is yet something left in the Vivian blood which I need not blush to own, and I may even do more. And the girls shall not want, Campbells though they are—Campbells in every look and motion—they shall have aid too, as and when I see fit. But it shall not be extorted from me, Mildred: it shall be at my own time. They shall see that nothing has been gained, rather that every thing has been lost, by thrusting them upon me."

"It was a great mistake of Mrs. Campbell, almost wrong indeed," said Mildred; "but we only give her a just cause for complaint, so at least it seems to me, by neglecting our own share of duty to the children."

"I don't acknowledge the duty," he replied, sternly.

Mildred hesitated. "Then, dear Sir, if not from duty to them, at least from kindness to me. It would be such a great"—satisfaction she was going to say, but the word was changed into "pleasure." She looked at him pleadingly, but his head was turned away; he did not or would not hear.

"There is too much draught for you here," he said, abruptly; "they must move your sofa back." He put his hand out to touch the bell. Mildred

stopped him: "Only one moment, dear Sir; indeed it won't hurt me."

He looked impatient, and his eye wandered to the door, which was open. A light breeze rushed through the room, and partially blew aside a green silk curtain which hung at the lower end. The edge of the curtain was caught by the point of an old oak chair, and the picture which it covered was displayed to view. It represented three figures: one was Mildred, kneeling against a garden seat, her arm thrown around the neck of a young girl, who was seated with a book in her lap, which both seemed to be studying. They were very unlike—Mildred's face so thoughtful even in its youthful happiness; her sister's—for it was evident they were sisters,—so brilliant, intelligent, inquisitive, joyous, and with something in it of her father's commanding spirit, to which Mildred, as she clung to her, seemed only too willing to submit. Behind them stood a boy, apparently some years older, tall, erect, noble-looking; with the open forehead, the slightly aquiline nose, and piercing eye which marked him for the son of General Vivian; but also with the full lip and self-indulgent yielding outline of the small mouth, which showed that in some points, and those perhaps the most essential for success and honour in life, the father and the child could never be one.

It was scarcely a glance which General Vivian cast at the picture; but it made Mildred's cheek almost livid, whilst she watched him, as he walked to the end of the room, and deliberately replaced the

curtain, and removed the oak chair, so that the same thing might not happen a second time, and then returned to seat himself once more by her side, his countenance perhaps a shade more stern than it was before. Mildred did not wait for an observation from him. She spoke hurriedly, apparently saying what she scarcely intended or wished to say.

“Ella should be very little in your way, dear Sir.”

A pause, and silence — this time not wilful: the old man’s eyes were bent upon the ground, his thoughts perhaps wandering back into far distant years. He did not catch her words. A dog’s bark was heard.

“It must be Clement,” said Mildred, in a timid voice.

General Vivian started.

“Do as you will, child;” and he stood up to leave her, just as Clement, rushing through the garden, entered by the window.

“Clement, don’t you see your grandfather?” Mildred spoke reprovingly, for the boy’s first impulse was to rush up to her sofa; and a smile of displeasure curled General Vivian’s lips as he observed the hasty self-recollection, mingled with fear, which made the blood rise in Clement’s cheek, whilst, shyly approaching, he muttered an apology. The excuse was received coldly, and Clement’s colour deepened, and he looked at the window, wishing evidently to make his escape.

“Reverence to elders is not one of the lessons taught in modern education,” said General Vivian, addressing Mildred, “so we must not, I suppose, expect too much.”

Mildred smiled. "Clement is not generally so forgetful, my dear father; but you did not think of finding any one here except me, Clement, did you?"

"I thought Mr. Lester might be here," replied Clement, a little sulkily; "and I was going to ask him to order me some fishing-flies in Cleve."

"He is going over there, is he?" asked Mildred in a tone of interest.

"Yes, so he said, to see Mr. Bruce."

"Is that the gentleman who was saved in the storm?"

"Yes, the man whom Ronald saved," said Clement.

There was a quick flash in General Vivian's eye, and he sat down. Mildred went on:—

"And so you want some fishing-flies, do you, Clement?"

"Yes, like some that Goff got for Ronald: he means to show me how to use them."

"Who! Goff?" inquired Mildred, quickly.

"Oh! no, not he; Ronald. There used to be famous sport at the last place he was at, so he's quite up in it. Goff laughs at that sober kind of work, and says there's no fun like that of catching fish at night, with lights on a river, which is never done here."

"That is poacher's work very often," said Mildred.

"I don't know where the right is of preserving fish for one man more than another," replied Clement.

"Goff says ——"

Mildred interrupted him. "Why, Clement, one would think that Goff was your tutor."

Clement laughed. "Well, he is a kind of tutor in

some things ; he and Captain Vivian are such knowing fellows ; up to so many things."

"They are up to teaching you slang," said Mildred. "I wish they may do nothing worse. What does Mr. Lester say to their instruction?"

"Oh! he hasn't much to do with it so long as I am in for hours."

Mildred looked at her father, who was leaning back in the arm chair, with his eye fixed upon the carpet.

"Hardman, the gamekeeper, fishes too," she said, timidly, addressing General Vivian ; "he might be a better master than Ronald. Don't you think so, Sir?"

"Clement chooses his own friends," was the reply.

"Not quite, I think," replied Mildred ; "he would not wish to have any friends whom you might disapprove."

"I don't want to make friends," said Clement ; "I only want some one to go fishing with, and put me in the way of it."

"And if Hardman could teach you as well as Ronald, you would be as well contented to have him," observed Mildred.

Clement looked annoyed, and muttered something about Hardman being a bore.

"Of course," observed General Vivian, coldly, "it is Ronald's society which is the point. I have told you so before," he added, speaking to Mildred.

"Grandpapa doesn't wish you to make friends with Ronald," said Mildred.

"I have no one else to be friends with," replied Clement quickly. He did not intend to be impertinent, but he was irritated, and his tone was certainly wanting in respect.

Mildred looked very pained. "Oh, Clement!" and Clement in a moment recovered himself.

"I beg your pardon, Sir, I didn't mean any harm; only it's dull going out alone, and not much better with Hardman."

"And so you choose Mr. Ronald Vivian for a companion. I warn you once for all, my boy"—and General Vivian leaned forward, and fixed his eager eye upon his grandson with an expression of authority beneath which Clement actually quailed: "There are two roads before you,—one leads to Heaven, the other—I leave you to guess where;—if you want to travel that way, follow Ronald Vivian."

"It's not true," exclaimed Clement, impetuously; but he was stopped by Mildred.

"Clement, Clement, remember he is your grandfather; remember. Dear Sir! he doesn't mean it."

"Don't be afraid, Mildred, I understand him quite. He has had my warning, let him attend to it."

General Vivian left the room; Clement knelt on one knee by Mildred's sofa.

"Aunt Mildred, why does he speak so? Why does he hurt me so? What makes him say such cruel things of Ronald?"

Mildred put her hand before his mouth: "Clement, you are talking of your grandfather."

He drew back and stood up proudly: "If he were twenty times my grandfather, what he says of Ronald is false."

Mildred did not speak; a pink spot, the flush of mental agitation, burned upon her cheeks.

Clement's tone softened: "Aunt Mildred, you know that it is false."

“No, Clement”—Mildred’s voice was low, and her breath came with difficulty; “it is true,—for you wilfully to follow Ronald Vivian would lead you to destruction, for it would be disobedience.”

“But when grandpapa is unjust, unfair—when he doesn’t know Ronald—when he doesn’t even speak to him! Why Mr. Lester allows that there is the spirit of a hero in Ronald, if it could but be brought out.”

“But you cannot be the person to do it, Clement,” said Mildred, gently.

“I don’t see that; I am more of a gentleman. I can tell him a good many things which he never knew of, and he often asks my opinion;” a gleam of self-gratulation passed over Clement’s face as he spoke.

Mildred laid her hand upon his: “Dear Clement, at your age, you have enough to do to keep yourself straight; it is better not to think of others.”

“But Ronald is not what they say,” exclaimed Clement, shrinking from the implied censure; “if he were ——”

“That is nothing to the point; at your age there is only one course open to you—to obey:” and as Clement’s expressive mouth showed how his spirit rebelled against the word, Mildred added, “I know it seems very hard to do so without comprehending why.”

“Yes, it is very hard, Aunt Mildred; and no one will talk to me about things plainly, and I hate mysteries. Won’t you tell me what it all means?”

Mildred hesitated for a moment, and then said: “I think you must know it all. Captain Vivian and your

father were friends once ; but it would have been better for them if they had not been. Captain Vivian led your father to do things which your grandfather disapproved, and he was very angry, and——”

“Disinherited him,” said Clement.

“Yes.” The word was uttered very abruptly, and Mildred continued : “Your Grandfather is afraid now that Ronald may have the same influence over you.”

“And so he is unjust to him !” exclaimed Clement.

Mildred smiled, and pointed to a seat. “Clement, may I give you a lecture ?”

Clement sat down half moodily.

“That was just as your father used to look in the old days,” she continued, with a mixture of sadness and playfulness. “I used to lecture him sometimes, Clement, though he was much older than I was.”

There was something indescribably winning in her tone, and Clement’s face relaxed. “I hate lectures, Aunt Mildred,” he said, “and I have such a number.”

“From Mr. Lester ?”

“Oh, I don’t mind his ; but Aunt Bertha is at me from morning till night, and I can’t stand it. It makes me say sharp things when I don’t wish it.”

“And then she is vexed, and lectures a little more ?” asked Mildred.

“Yes, and then I reply, and then she won’t speak, and so we are at daggers drawn. Oh, Aunt Mildred, I wish I had men to deal with. I can’t abide women.”

Mildred laughed.

“I can’t bear them in that way,—that lecturing

way," continued Clement; "they do say such a great deal."

"And the young gentlemen do so many things to deserve the great deal," replied Mildred. "But I can really understand, Clement, that it is trying to be kept under a woman's control; only — you see I am not going to acquit you quite — I think it is the old question of obedience, any how."

"I could obey as well as any one, if they would only be rational," observed Clement.

"That is to say, rational according to your notions," replied Mildred. "I don't exactly see how you would be obeying any one but yourself then."

Clement coloured a little, and said quickly, "Well, but that's what every one must do; you wouldn't have one a slave, without any judgment of one's own."

"Sixteen is rather young to have a judgment," said Mildred, quietly. "But," she added, observing that Clement looked blank, "at any rate, having a judgment, and acting upon it, are different things."

"That is slavery completely," exclaimed Clement; "to give up when one knows people are wrong."

"What would the world be like, if it were not done?" inquired Mildred. "How would there be any law or order?"

"Perhaps in public matters it may be necessary," said Clement.

"What is good in public matters, must be good in private," continued Mildred. "If what is ordered is not contrary to the law of God, we are bound to submit to lawful authority."

“And so I am to be kept under grandmamma’s thumb all my life!” exclaimed Clement, impatiently.

“I don’t see why we are to trouble about all your life,” replied Mildred. “It is easy enough, I think, to see what your duty is for the present.”

“And what is it?” he asked, rather sulkily.

“Come when you are called ; do as you are bid ;
Shut the door after you, and you’ll never be chid,”

said Mildred, lightly.

“And be a baby in leading-strings!” exclaimed Clement.

“And be what God wishes and intends you to be,” said Mildred, very gravely ; “that is the real point. If God puts persons in authority over us, He expects us to obey them.”

“But, according to that, no one would be at liberty to go against the wishes of parents, and such kind of people,” said Clement ; “not if they were ever so old.”

“There may be different claims for grown-up people,” replied Mildred ; “and they are competent to judge about them. No law of a parent can take the place of God’s law, in the Bible, or even of the laws of your country.”

“Then if people abuse Ronald, and say false things of him, and tell me to cut him, I may refuse to do it,” exclaimed Clement ; “because they are untrue and unjust, and are going against the Bible.”

Mildred smiled rather sadly. “Oh ! Clement, what a quibble !”

"It's no quibble; it is truth;" he replied, triumphantly, looking up with a most self-satisfied air.

"I can't argue with you, Clement, in that mood," said Mildred; and she took up her work.

"What mood, Aunt Mildred?"

"A mood in which you are trusting to yourself, and thinking how clever you are."

The colour rushed to his face, angrily, and he muttered, "But you can't refute what I said."

"You are not required to cut Ronald, only not to be much with him," said Mildred. "If you were, there is no moral law against it."

"Charity, I should have thought," observed Clement quickly.

"Charity against the fifth commandment," replied Mildred; and changing her manner she added, more lightly, "but you are only arguing for the sake of argument, — you agree with me, I know, really."

Clement's anger was as quickly gone really, as Mildred's vexation was apparently; he laughed in reply to her words, and owned that he did dearly love an argument.

Mildred shook her head. "We shall never agree, there, Clement; I can't endure arguing."

"Then you are just exactly unlike Aunt Bertha. She would argue from morning till night."

"And you try to provoke her into it?"

"There's no occasion to provoke her; she comes into it of her own accord, and Ella stands by and listens."

"And takes your part?"

"Of course, she is bound to do that. In fact, Aunt

Mildred, it is the only thing to be done at the Lodge, to make any fun. It is awfully dull work there sometimes."

Clement yawned audibly.

"You should find your way to the Hall oftener," said Mildred; "only I am afraid it would not be much better than 'awfully dull' here, unless you were to take it into your head to read to me."

His face brightened. "Read to you? Should you like it? I read to Ella a great deal, when we can get alone, but when Aunt Bertha is there I don't, because she lectures so about the books."

"Byron and Moore, I suppose?" said Mildred.

"How do you know that?" he exclaimed.

"Merely because they are just what all boys of your age like. But, Clement, Aunt Bertha is quite right about Ella."

"Perhaps so," he answered, carelessly; "but Aunt Bertha preaches up Hallam's Middle Ages, and that I vow I won't read."

"You might find something between, perhaps," said Mildred, laughing. "Walter Scott, for instance."

"Oh! Ella knows Walter Scott by heart, and Byron, too, for that matter. In fact, she knows every thing, it's my belief. I never saw such a girl. I can't say what she has not learnt by heart; all Childe Harold, and the Corsair, and the Giaour, and Darkness ——"

"She should come and say them to me," said Mildred.

"She would be afraid; she would think you thought them wicked."

"Perhaps I don't think them very good," said Mildred; "but still I should like to hear her say them."

"That is another thing just precisely different from Aunt Bertha," said Clement. "She purses up her mouth just so" — and he made an absurd face — "if Ella only quotes a few lines."

"I shall purse up my mouth," said Mildred, "if Ella won't make me a few promises about her reading. You know, Clement, you wouldn't bear to see her grow up any thing but a nice, refined person, and she won't be refined, if she is not particular about her reading; that is really what makes Aunt Bertha afraid, and what I should be afraid of, too."

"Ella is so clever," said Clement. "Clever people don't want to be preached to like dunces."

"Perhaps I think they want to be preached to more; but, any how, Clement, you wouldn't like Ella not to be quite a lady."

"Oh, no, of course not; but she can't help herself; she is born one."

"Yes, she would look like a lady always; but she need not be so in mind. And one especial mode in which people grow to be unladylike and unrefined is by reading every thing which happens to come before them. Young men, and boys, even, may do a good deal for their sisters in that way, by keeping things from them; there is a little sermon for you, Clement."

"Ella never attends to me," said Clement; "she looks down upon me. She is quite beyond me in Latin and Greek, too, for that matter."

“ I don't think Latin and Greek have much to do with persons looking down upon one,” said Mildred, “ Ella doesn't look down upon Rachel Lester.”

“ Aunt Mildred! how can you tell that?”

“ Merely from little things she has said. It is inconsistency which makes people look down upon one.”

“ And I am very inconsistent,” said Clement. He sighed; yet at the very moment he was glancing at Mildred, to see if she would not contradict his words. “ You think me so, Aunt Mildred?” he continued.

She looked up playfully. “ I don't see that I am called upon to answer. I have only known you a short time.”

“ I am not so changeable as Ella,” said Clement; “ she is never alike for two hours together.”

“ You are twins,” replied Mildred.

“ I always keep to the same likings,” continued Clement; — “ in books, that is; and I have been trying to fish every day for a fortnight; and I have dinned into Mr. Lester's ears ever since we came here that I hate College, and want to go to sea, and a heap more things besides. I am sure I don't change half as much as Ella. Now, do I, Aunt Mildred?”

“ I can't say.”

“ But am I inconsistent? Do you think I am?”

“ You told me just now that you were, very,” said Mildred, quietly.

He blushed a little, and laughed awkwardly. “ Well, yes; but do you think me so?”

There was a little satire in Mildred's tone, as she said, “ Do you really wish to know?”

The hesitation in his manner was scarcely perceptible, yet he did hesitate, and the "Yes," when it passed his lips, was by no means hearty.

"We will wait till another day," said Mildred.

He was piqued. "I would rather hear now, if you please; I don't at all care about knowing what any one thinks of me."

"Because you have such a good opinion of yourself," replied Mildred, in a tone between jest and earnest.

"I don't know that, Aunt Mildred. I don't quite see why you should say it. Mr. Lester never told me I had a good opinion of myself."

His tone was pettish, and Mildred became grave.

"We will talk about the inconsistency and conceit another time, dear Clement. By-and-by, perhaps, you will find out more of yourself than I can tell you; only just now I am afraid I must send you away, because I am a little tired; but you must come again soon and bring Ella, and tell me what success you have had in your fishing."

Still he stood thinking, rather moodily.

"Aunt Mildred, what must I do to give you a good opinion of me?"

"I have a good opinion of you, my dear boy, in many ways."

"Yes, but in all ways. How can I make you respect me?"

"A question requiring a long answer, Clement; but one thing I should respect you for at once, if you would put aside your own will, and follow your Grandpapa's, about Ronald."

“Oh, that! but respect has nothing to do with that.”

“More, perhaps, than you think.”

“But I can’t be kept under, like a baby in long clothes.”

“Good b’ye, dear Clement, you must go;” and Mildred held out her hand to him.

He saw she looked pained. “Well, Aunt Mildred, perhaps, to oblige you, I might.”

“Thank you, dear boy, give me a kiss before you go.” The bright expression was gone from her face, but that was unnoticed by him; his thoughts were given to his fishing-rod.

“You would find Hardman, the keeper, at home, if you were to call for him now, I suspect,” said Mildred.

“Yes, thank you; good b’ye!” and he rushed across the garden, as hastily as he had entered it.

Alas! for Mildred. Was it not the same character again which she had in by-gone years so anxiously watched?—the spirit of self-conceit, self-justification, rebellion against the least shadow of censure, the weak pride which could not obey? And all with so fair an exterior! The look, and tone, and manner of a gentleman; the refined taste, the appreciation of excellence, the poetical heroism of day-dreams!

She unfastened a hair bracelet, and looked at a miniature in the clasp, covered by a gold lid, and tears dimmed her eyes, and fell down her cheeks as she murmured, “Father, teach me how to aid him!”

CHAP. XI.

CLEMENT pursued his way to the keeper's lodge, humming snatches of songs, as he hurried on swinging a stick in his hand, and knocking down nettles and brambles. He was not disconcerted by any thing which Mildred had said; perhaps, it would have been well for him if he had been. Vanity, mingled with self-conceit and self-will, was his strongest characteristic; and now, even when putting aside his own wishes, he soothed himself with the thought that he was yielding rather as a condescension than on a principle of obedience. His grandfather was old and fidgety; and Mildred was a woman, and had a woman's weakness; and so, if they really did fuss about his going out fishing with Ronald, it might be as well to give in. And Clement went on whistling merrily, and looking forward as was his wont to pleasure in one way, if he could not have it in another. There was no strength of resolution, no inward principle in this; it was simply giving in for the moment, because he did not like to be openly rebellious.

Hardman was not at home; he was gone to Cleve, so his wife said: and to Cleve Clement determined to follow him, — or if not able to go quite so far, as he was to return for an evening lesson with

Mr. Lester at a certain hour, he would go part of the way. His mind was bent upon this new fancy of fishing, and he could not bear any obstacle or delay, and fancied he was doing something to attain his object when he was walking in the same direction as Hardman.

“Good day to you, Master Clement!” called out a rough voice from behind a hedge, as Clement strolled on leisurely through the fields.

“Good day to you, old fellow! What are you doing up here?”

“What are you doing, Master Clement? is the question.” And Goff, slowly unfastening a gate which separated them, joined Clement on the other side of the hedge.

“I thought you were never off your post out there,” said Clement, pointing in the direction of the headland near which the shipwreck had happened.

“That’s according to circumstances, young gentleman. I may have my business inland as well as other folks. I say, you can tell where your master’s gone, can’t you?”

“I have not got a master that I know of,” said Clement, haughtily.

“You needn’t flush up like that, young gentleman. Master or no master, he keeps you pretty strict.”

“He keeps me as I choose to be kept;” said Clement. “He hasn’t a grain of power over me.”

“Well! did I ever know such a milksop, then?” And Goff laughed contemptuously.

Clement’s eyes flashed with anger, but Goff only

laughed the more. "Why, what a pity to throw away such a spirit! The boy's got something in him, after all. I say, my young sir, what made you fail me the other night in that fashion? I've had it on my mind ever since to call you to account."

"What other night? I don't know what you are talking about," replied Clement hastily. "You failed me, if that's what you mean, the night of the storm; and a good thing, too, as it turned out."

"Good or not, that's nothing to do with the matter. If a youngster makes a promise to me I expect it's to be kept; and if it isn't, why I know how to trust him another time."

"You told me to be down at the boat-house by six," said Clement, his tone rising with irritation, "and I was there strict to a moment; and there were you, off."

"And you only too glad to find me so," exclaimed Goff. "What a white face we should have seen if you'd been nearing the point, as Ronald and I were, when the squall came on. That young fellow is desperate in a storm: he'd have had us stand out and brave it, if I had'n't been fixed against it. And well enough I was! We shouldn't have been left with two shreds together ten minutes after we got back."

"It's time enough to talk of white faces when you have seen them," exclaimed Clement, proudly. "But that is not what I was thinking of. You were off, you say, yourself; so where's the fault to find with me?"

"That 'twas your message which sent me off," said Goff, coolly.

“Mine! — my message?”

“Whose else could it be? Ronald brought it.”

“Ronald? It was false — it was a lie!” and Clement’s face became crimson, whilst, pacing up and down the rough road before the gate, he went on muttering to himself, “False fellow! A lie! Won’t I make him eat his words? False fellow!”

“Not so false, neither, Master Clement. He only said what he knew was true; that ’twas likely to be a rough evening, and so we’d best be off without you.”

“And he said that I said it!” exclaimed Clement, stopping suddenly.

“Well! there’s no need to take it so much to heart,” replied Goff, evading a direct answer. “’Tis but to show that you’ve got more pluck in you than he gives you credit for; and that’s soon done. There’s more to be done in that way, in this part of the world, than idle folks wot of.”

His familiar wink accompanying the words was very repulsive to Clement’s fastidiousness; and as Goff drew nearer, and even touched him on the shoulder, patronisingly, he drew back.

“Oh! if that’s your line, keep to it,” said Goff; and he took up the small telescope, his constant companion, which he had laid upon the ground during his conversation with Clement. “Of course, I’m not going to thrust fun on them that haven’t spirit for it. There’s enough work for me without that; and for Ronald, too.”

The mention of Ronald’s name again touched Clement’s angry feeling.

“I’ll trouble you not to speak of that youngster again,” he exclaimed, haughtily. “I have an account to settle with him; and I mean to see to it.”

Goff eyed him with a glance of sarcastic superiority. “I wish you joy of getting your match! Why, Ronald—Ronald Vivian!—he’d make three such as you, my boy!”

“If he could make fifty such, he should answer for his words!” exclaimed Clement, in a tone which showed that his vanity was stung to the quick. “So mean!—so cowardly!—to make it appear that I was afraid!—that I would’nt risk what he did!” And again he began to pace up and down the road.

Goff made no comment upon his words, but resting his glass upon the gatepost, looked long and attentively in the direction where the headland, suddenly terminating, gave a long line of the sea to view. A little vessel was making its way rapidly from the shore, the wind being favourable.

“She’s a jolly little craft,” muttered Goff to himself; “how she does cut along!”

The observation attracted Clement, but he tried not to show it.

Goff continued:—“A jolly little craft, if there ever was one! If it had been her, now, the other night, and Ronald in her—instead of that old hulk, with the Frenchman at the helm—she’d have ridden out the gale like a queen!”

“Ronald couldn’t manage a vessel,” exclaimed Clement, quickly.

“Couldn’t he, now? Why just you try—that’s all!”

"I would'nt trust myself with him," said Clement.

"Why no, to be sure; you wouldn't trust yourself in any thing but a Lord Mayor's barge, in a river three feet deep!"

"I'd trust myself in any thing that Ronald trusts himself in," exclaimed Clement, not seeing his own inconsistency. "Let it be a cockle-shell, or a man-of-war."

"Or a neat little trimmer, like her yonder?" said Goff.

"That, or any thing," replied Clement.

"Take you at your word, then," said Goff, quickly. "Will you go, now, for a lark, some day, and try her?"

Clement hesitated; he felt that he should be wrong in agreeing to the proposal; but his vanity—his mortified vanity—how could he resist it?"

"Good b'ye! and joy be with you, for a land-lubber!" exclaimed Goff. "You'll never learn to manage a craft!"

Clement caught at the word. "Manage?—Yes, I would go directly, if I might be taught to manage it. It would help me, if I go to sea," he continued, in an under tone, to his conscience.

"Folks can't manage all at once; they must learn their trade first," was Goff's discouraging reply. "So good b'ye to ye!" He walked away a few paces, but very slowly; and then he turned round, and looked again at Clement, and nodded.

Clement was intensely irritated. "I say, old fellow! I'll be with you, some night, down at the Point, when you don't expect me; and see if I don't find

out as much of your affairs as Ronald knows. He manage a vessel, indeed!" and Clement laughed loudly and contemptuously.

"You'll please to wait to be asked before you give your company where you aren't needed, Master Clement," said Goff, stopping, and looking at him surlily. "Meddle with what doesn't concern you, and I'd as soon cudgel your head as I would—this thistle," and he knocked off the top of one which stood in his way.

Clement's laugh was neither as loud nor as contemptuous as before. He muttered something about finding Ronald, and making him answer for his words; and, looking at his watch, turned sharply round, and walked back to Encombe.

CHAP. XII.

MR. LESTER was not returned when Clement reached home; that was an excuse for idleness, though there was sufficient work prepared for him to attend to by himself. Ella persuaded him that there were difficulties not to be mastered alone, and accordingly he lounged away his time in an arm-chair, threatening Ronald, and making the excuse that his walk had tired him. So the whole afternoon was wasted; for, as it happened, Mr. Lester did not come back from Cleve till very late. He had been detained, he sent word, by business; and Louisa contrived to discover, before the evening was over, that he had been seen in Cleve walking with Mr. Bruce, and had afterwards returned with him to the Farm. This latter piece of information she extracted from Rachel, who appeared at the Lodge in the evening with some flowers for Mrs. Campbell, which had been sent her by Mrs. Robinson. Why Mr. Bruce should have gone to the Farm Rachel did not profess to know, but Louisa settled the question without any difficulty. Cleve was an odious place, and the Farm was very quiet and comfortable, and much nearer the shore; and Louisa had some indistinct idea that Mr. Bruce was detained at Encombe by some secret business connected with the wreck. What—she had not

fully decided; having failed, as yet, in determining to her own satisfaction, whether he was partly the owner of the vessel, and so interested in its fate merely as a matter of business, or some hero of romance, whose story by-and-by was to astonish them all. The former idea suited the report brought by Rachel, who had just left him at the Parsonage, where he was to drink tea. "There was nothing in him very wonderful to look at," she said; "he was as yellow as a bit of parchment; and somebody had said he had come to England for his health. He spoke like a gentleman,—that was one thing; but he seemed to dislike talking, and she had not once seen him smile;" an observation which drew from Ella the remark that, for that reason, he would be so much the better fitted to live with Mrs. Robinson, who was known to have cried so much the day she was born, that she had never got over it.

This information of Rachel's was but the beginning of speculation and curiosity for Louisa; though there was in reality but little to give rise to either. Mr. Bruce certainly settled himself at the Farm, but he was a quiet individual, very much out of health, and suffering especially from the cold and shock he had endured the night of the wreck. Moreover, he was always upon the point of departure for London; so that he could not be looked upon as a resident subject for gossip, and no one probably but Louisa would have thought it worth while to make any remarks upon his comings and goings. She, however, always knew when he drank tea at the Rectory, and when Mr. Lester went to visit him at the Farm; and she

learnt from Rachel a good many details as to the furniture of his apartment, and the curious things he had "put about the room," as she expressed it, in order to make it look comfortable,—strange, foreign, Indian-looking things,—boxes, and figures, and a few books,—not a great many,—for Rachel doubted if he were fond of reading.

Once, however, Louisa came home herself in great triumph, having seen Mr. Bruce at the door of the Farm garden, and even spoken to him,—that is, as she acknowledged afterwards, he only said, "How d'ye do?" and she said, "Very well, I thank you;" but then he looked at her very earnestly, and that was particularly flattering from a person whom no one knew any thing about.

Had Louisa been in Rachel's place, Mr. Bruce's affairs would have had no chance of remaining private, for Rachel was at the Farm constantly. Perhaps Mrs. Robinson urged her coming to cheer her lonely guest,—perhaps Mr. Bruce himself liked the society of the simple, earnest-minded, affectionate child. Rachel seldom told who asked her; and in reply to the questions as to how she amused herself when there, replied, that she read, and talked, and looked at curiosities; a very natural and rational answer, but not particularly informing to Louisa's inquisitiveness. A few attempts were made to induce Aunt Bertha to intrude upon Mrs. Robinson's privacy, but there was an antipathy felt, though not expressed, which kept Bertha and Mrs. Robinson apart. Mrs. Robinson evidently did not "take kindly" to the Lodge. Even though the children were Rachel's

friends, she could not bring herself to ask them to come within the gate; at least, when Bertha was with them. If she met them alone it was different; yet even then there was a restraint: it was as if she always had a double feeling about them, and was inclined to give them a kiss on one cheek, and a slap on the other; and Bertha's chilling manner never helped to surmount the difficulty.

Since Mr. Bruce had been at the Farm the coolness was still more evident. Mrs. Robinson could not well be rude, but she was as nearly so as it was in her nature to be, and almost told them sometimes that she had rather they would walk in any other direction. She said so one evening especially, when Rachel, Fanny, and Louisa, were walking together, and Louisa was rather eager to be allowed to see the garden. Bertha was some little way behind; if she had been near, Louisa would scarcely have ventured to insist as she did upon being allowed to come in just for five minutes.

"It's too late, Miss Louisa; another time, if you please," was Mrs. Robinson's discouraging reply to the proposal.

"But we won't be five minutes; no, not three," persisted Louisa; "we will just run round once, and then be back; we shall have done it before Aunt Bertha comes up."

"May be, your aunt wouldn't like it, Miss Louisa," replied Mrs. Robinson, decidedly.

"May be she would," retorted Louisa, perversely, and rather rudely.

Mrs. Robinson froze into a statue. "Young ladies

should learn to behave themselves, and not take liberties," she answered. "Good evening, Miss Rachel, my dear. It's my advice to you all to get home."

She walked away without any softening word; but Rachel followed her. "Granny, dear, you shouldn't mind Louisa; it's her nature."

"So much the worse, my dear; it's hard to put off nature. But I'm not troubling about that."

"Well, what are you troubling yourself about; it's always something. Isn't Mr. Bruce's room large enough for him?"

Mrs. Robinson smiled. "Why you know, Miss Rachel, he's got the old back room looking out upon the elms, and it would hold a regiment."

"Then, he is fidgety about his tea and bread and butter."

"He doesn't take tea; he always drinks coffee." Mrs. Robinson's face relaxed a little more, as it always did when she was talking to Rachel.

"Then it's something I am not to know, so I won't tease you, Granny; only I wish you would tell me."

They were standing by a low door which opened into the garden. Mrs. Robinson pushed it open.

"He's in there, you may go and speak a word to him if you will."

Rachel seemed doubtful. "Louisa won't like it; and Miss Campbell too;—no, perhaps I had better not;" yet she evidently wished to go.

"He has been teaching the parrot to say your name," said Mrs. Robinson.

That was a very great temptation, and Rachel ran back to her companions. Bertha had joined them

now, and was hurrying them away. She did not like them, she said, to be staring over the wall in that way ; it looked so curious.

“Mrs. Robinson wants me to go in one minute. Mr. Bruce has a parrot for me ; might I go, do you think ?”

“Oh yes, to be sure,” exclaimed Louisa ; “and we will walk up and down the road till you come out.”

“Louisa, you forget yourself. Does Mr. Bruce want to see you, Rachel ?” inquired Bertha.

“I don’t know that he wants to see me, exactly ; but he has a parrot for me.”

“Mr. Lester will be coming by-and-by, Ma’am,” observed Mrs. Robinson, drawing near the gate. “Miss Rachel may go back with him, if you please to leave her.”

Bertha’s sense of duty was touched : Rachel was under her especial charge. “I don’t know,” she replied ; “I can’t say that I have permission to leave her.”

“I see Mr. Bruce very often, Papa lets me,” whispered Rachel, pleadingly.

Bertha still hesitated ; her back was to the garden gate ; she could not see Louisa’s glance at Fanny, and the finger which was pointed in that direction.

“I see him, don’t you ?” whispered Fanny.

Louisa moved a few steps aside. “Yes, close to the door ; I do believe he’s coming.”

Mr. Bruce appeared in the doorway. Mrs. Robinson saw his shadow, she could not have seen himself.

“Never mind, Miss Rachel, then, to-night,” she said. “Good evening, ma’am,” and she dropped a re-

spectful curtesy to Bertha, which yet plainly said, "the sooner you go the better."

Rachel acquiesced, but with an air of disappointment which brightened into sunshine as she glanced at the garden doorway; and, hastily appealing to Bertha for permission, she threw open the wicket gate of the entrance court, and rushing up to her new friend exclaimed, "I mustn't stay, but I may just thank you; it was so kind. I am so very much obliged about the parrot."

"And I am very glad you are glad, my child." Only the tone reached the place where the rest were standing; the words were unintelligible.

"You don't look at all well, ma'am," said Mrs. Robinson to Bertha; "hadn't you better come in and rest."

Bertha was very pale; her eye had a wandering, almost vacant, look. "Thank you, no. I had better go home. Rachel! I wish she would come." She moved, apparently intending to enter within the wicket, but Mrs. Robinson placed herself so as to prevent her. "I will call her, ma'am;" and Bertha drew back.

"Mr. Bruce has taken Rachel to see the parrot," said Fanny. "I wish he would let me go too."

"I can see him, and I can see Rachel, too," said Louisa, stretching her neck, "just round the walk; there they are. Now I think they are going in-doors. Mr. Bruce's room opens into the garden; that is—it doesn't open exactly, it is up-stairs,—the large room. Aunt Bertha, you have been in Mr. Bruce's room, haven't you?"

Bertha did not hear; she was resting against the low wall, not seemingly impatient, only very worn and wearied. They were kept but a few moments; Rachel came running back, Mrs. Robinson slowly following, with the parrot in his cage.

"Miss Rachel would have you see it, ma'am," she said, apologetically, to Bertha.

"It will talk, it will say my name!" exclaimed Rachel, in delight. "Pretty Poll! do speak, Polly!"

Of course the parrot did not speak: what bird ever did when it was told to do so?

"He will if Mr. Bruce tells him," said Rachel. She glanced wistfully at the doorway.

"Miss Campbell wants to go home. You mustn't keep her any more to-night with the bird," observed Mrs. Robinson, hurriedly.

The parrot uttered a loud scream, and a short sharp word; it was not Rachel, though Fanny persisted it was.

"He said it quite plainly just now," said Rachel, in a vexed tone; "but never mind. There, Granny dear, take it away; never mind. I didn't mean to be troublesome and keep you, dear Miss Campbell," she added in her most winning manner.

"I should like to hear it speak again," said Bertha, and she withdrew her hand, which Rachel had taken hold of. She had no intention of being ungracious, but she was not thinking of Rachel at the moment.

Rachel thought she was angry, and went up to Mrs. Robinson, who was standing apart. "I am so sorry, Granny; I know it was naughty of me."

"Never mind, my darling; it is her way." But

even Mrs. Robinson was a little quick in her manner, and poor Rachel's sensitive feelings were touched, and tears stood in her eyes. She did not go near the parrot.

"It said, 'How d'ye do,' Aunt Bertha, that was all," exclaimed Louisa, impatiently. "Parrots always say, 'How d'ye do.'"

"And a good deal besides, sometimes Louisa," replied Bertha, gravely and stiffly.

Fanny tapped the cage,—the scream followed again, and the word, which Louisa now asserted to be a name—Flora, she thought it was like—at which Fanny laughed heartily, declaring, with vehemence, that it was much more like Charlie, or hungry, or fetch me. Bertha said nothing; and as Louisa's proposition of summoning Mr. Bruce to be the interpreter was unseconded, the bird was consigned to Mrs. Robinson's care, and the little party moved homewards.

CHAP. XIII.

THEY were at home early; Bertha had insisted upon it; she had business in the village she said; and so, when the children had set themselves to their evening lessons and Ella was reading to her grand-mamma, Bertha stole quietly out at the back gate, and walked leisurely down the lane. She still looked pale, but it was not so much from the wear of bodily as of mental fatigue. That indeed was the expression of her features generally; probably from the consciousness of having the comfort of others depending upon her, and having so many causes for anxiety; but this evening there was not only gravity in her face, but doubt and perplexity.

She walked with her eyes bent on the ground, thinking, and then occasionally looked up as though expecting to see something which might startle her, but the village was very quiet; the men were still at their work in the fields, the women preparing for their return, and the children, just let out of school, were busy in the play-ground, and only interrupted the quietness of the hour by distant shouts of laughter.

Bertha pursued her way by the lane which led from the Parsonage to the village, and after passing a few of the principal cottages, ascended a steep path, terminating in a long flight of steps, which was the

short way from the village to the church. Encombe church was at some little distance from the village ; it stood by itself, on the summit of a square hill, which on three sides rose abruptly from the plain, and on the other leaned as it were against the range of lofty downs encircling the village. The ground must once have formed part of an open heath, for gorse, and heather, and fern still covered it in luxuriance, and the wild downs rose immediately above it, and rough land, only in part enclosed, stretched away to the east and west. It was a marvel what the little church should do there alone, looking over the wooded plain to the blue horizon of the ocean. Except at the times of service, it seemed to have no lesson to preach to the poor, nor any word of warning to offer to the rich ; for the busy stir of life had deserted it, and the white grave-stones told their tales to the happy birds and the glad insects, but had no daily and hourly voice for the reckless or the thoughtless of mankind.

Yet it was very solemn to worship there : hopeful with the hope of Heaven in the brilliant summer mornings, when dew drops, sparkling with living light, hung upon the grass, and sunshine, flickering and quivering, lay in broad masses of burnished silver upon the sea ; and calming as with the repose of the last, long sleep, in the still evenings, when the rush of the waves came like a requiem for the dead, moaning over the sandy beach ; and awful, subduing, crushing to all human vanity and folly, when the harsh roar of the wintry elements thundered around the strong old walls and told of that Almighty Power which shall

one day "break in pieces the foundations of the earth," and summon the world to judgment.

Bertha reached the summit of the hill, and then paused to rest. A stone bench in the porch was her seat, and for a few moments she remained gazing, apparently without interest, upon the lovely view, set as in a picture frame, in the rough Norman archway. But a shadow, the long shadow of a human figure, fell upon the graves, and she rose up suddenly, and stepped forth into the open air. Ronald Vivian was there to meet her.

"I hoped you would be punctual," she said, and her voice was slightly tremulous.

"It was hard work to be so," said the boy, abruptly. But he held out his hand as he spoke, and grasped Bertha's with a heartiness which seemed as if it must at once break down her chilling shyness. "My father was off with Goff early, and I am to meet him two hours hence," he continued; "if it was not for that, I couldn't have come. But you have been walking, you must be tired." He brushed away the sand and dust which had collected on the bench, and took off a light upper coat, and laid it for Bertha to sit upon.

"Thank you, Ronald; I am glad you came," but Bertha's manner was so nervous as to be almost cold.

He waited, however, for her to begin the conversation, standing at a little distance, and leaning against the archway in an attitude of attention and deference. He looked upon her evidently as a superior being.

"You did what I wished the other night," began

Bertha, "in keeping Clement from going with Goff, and I wanted to thank you."

"I did what I could; but I got into disgrace: never mind that, though."

"Disgrace with your father?"

"No, not with him; he knew nothing about it; but Goff abused Clement, and Clement abuses me. Yet I said nothing but the truth. It was Goff's misrepresentation: I couldn't tell a falsehood."

"Clement does not think you did."

Ronald laughed shortly. "He says he does; and he threatens a good deal; but that won't matter. I shan't notice it."

"No, indeed, I trust not," exclaimed Bertha; "it would be worse than any thing if you were to quarrel."

"He would keep aloof from me in that case," said Ronald, rather proudly; "and so you would be satisfied."

"The old feeling, Ronald," observed Bertha, quietly, but very gravely.

"It would be what you wish, and what Mr. Lester wishes," replied Ronald.

"Perhaps so; but we would have you keep apart, from the knowledge that it is best,—not because you are too proud to be with him."

"I know I am not fit company for him," he replied, moodily; "nor for any one," was added in an under tone.

"We will not talk of that, Ronald; my wishes and Mr. Lester's have nothing to do with the question of fitness."

"But you have said as much," he continued.

“I said it when I thought it,—but opinions change; you have set him a noble example lately.”

The boy bit his lip,—and turned away abruptly.

“When Clement shall risk his life to save that of another, it will be time enough to consider whether you are a fit companion,” continued Bertha. “Mr. Lester thanks you Ronald; so do I.”

“There was no danger; we could both swim,” he said, gruffly, and still without looking at her.

“Perhaps so,” was Bertha’s only answer. She understood him thoroughly, and changed the subject.

“And you will still keep your promise, Ronald?”

“As long as it is required; but Mr. Lester says, I may be gone shortly.”

“Two months, it may be, or three,—and we have to gain your Father’s consent.”

“Yet he will never ask mine for any thing,—he will force me, drag me with him at his will, down, down, down,” and Ronald’s voice sank till it was lost in a whisper of awe.

“Not against your own will,” dear Ronald, replied Bertha, her tone changing from its usual chilling monotony into the tender interest of an elder sister. “No one, not even the Spirit of Evil himself, can harm us against our will.”

“It is easy for those to talk,” he replied, “who are never tempted.”

“I am not tempted, as you are, it is true. Yet I am in a different way, and when I fall, Ronald, it is my own will which makes me do so.”

“You!” he exclaimed, impetuously. “Miss Campbell, you can never will to do wrong.”

“Perhaps not often,—I hope not; but I may not will strongly to do right, and the end is the same.”

Ronald was thoughtful; he repeated the word “strongly,” to himself.

“Yes,” continued Bertha, answering what she believed to be in his mind. “A weak will must, unless strengthened, end like a sinful will. But you have not naturally a weak will, Ronald. You have great faults, but they are strong faults,—and the same strength which has hitherto, so frequently, carried you away into sin, may, through God’s mercy, lead you far on the road to goodness.”

He looked up suddenly, and the gleaming of the sinking sun flashed across his face, and brightened into intensity the glance of his eye. But it was for a moment only, and again his eyes were cast down, and the cloud gathered upon his brow.

“And you may have much to keep you upright, a noble object for which to live,” continued Bertha.

“When I am pointed at as the son of a drunkard, the comrade of smugglers!” he muttered, scornfully.

“Rather,” replied Bertha, “when you shall be known as the child of one who lived the life of a saint upon earth, and left to you the task to retrieve the name she bore from dishonour. Ronald, have you forgotten your mother?”

He made no reply—but throwing himself upon the rough bench, hid his face against the worn stones of the porch; and a sound, as of a sob, escaped him, but it was stifled, and Bertha, without noticing it, continued:—

“It is the anniversary of your mother’s death, Ronald; eight years ago, on this night, she died.”

A shudder passed over his frame, as he murmured, "And left me to ruin."

"And left you a work which, in her woman's weakness, she could probably never have performed. She did not then know its full extent,—but now, if it be permitted to the dead to watch what passes upon earth, she would surely long that you may be able to accomplish it. Ronald, your father did a grievous injury ; you may retrieve it."

"It would take the labour of twenty lives to retrieve his injuries," said Ronald, in the moody tone which was natural to him whenever his father was mentioned.

Bertha was silenced for a moment ; she seemed pained, disheartened. "And you do not wish to know what you may have it in your power to do," she asked, somewhat reproachfully.

He rose up, and there was an accent of haughtiness in his reply. "I do know it ; to keep away from Clement, that his grandfather may not think him disgraced by having me for a companion."

"Something more than that, Ronald," said Bertha, sadly. "Would you listen if I were to tell it you?"

The intonation of her voice strangely touched him. Perhaps it bore him back to other and innocent days, when, seated by his little bed, in the home where his best and happiest hours had been spent, Bertha Campbell had soothed him to sleep with the soft monotony of her voice, whilst repeating the hymns which suited his tender age. He placed himself opposite to her ; but his head was still turned aside. It might have been thought that he was watching the

course of a vessel dimly seen in the far horizon,—but that it passed on, and still his eye remained fixed upon the same point, where the golden clouds were gathering into fantastic masses around the sinking sun.

There was a silence of some seconds. Much that was to be told would be painful both to relate and to hear, and past events seemed crowded together inextricably in Bertha's mind. "I must go back," she said, at length, "to my early days,—the days when I first lived at Encombe. Perhaps you do not know that it is my native place, the home of my family for many generations. We lived in the old farm; it was a Manor House then; but we were poor, my father was extravagant, and we could not keep it up in any thing like a fitting style. General Vivian was our nearest neighbour, but we were not friends: family feuds, dating almost a century back, had been handed down to us, and General Vivian was not a person to let them sleep; neither, perhaps, was my father. General Vivian was a careful, cautious, strict man; he had but one grand object in life,—to redeem the family property, which his father's extravagance had well nigh wasted: he devoted all his energies,—and he has great energies, marvellous ones,—to this purpose. It would be wrong to judge, but it seems that he made it his idol, and, because it was a noble object, could not see that there might be danger in it. But let that be as it may, General Vivian saved his inheritance,—my father forfeited his. You may imagine from this how unlike they were, and how little they could understand each

other. So, too, Mrs. Vivian and my mother, the Miss Vivians and my sister and I, had no mutual interests; and distaste became dislike, and we grew up—I don't know how—it was very wrong—but the feeling became at last utter aversion in all, except ——” Bertha's voice trembled, and the concluding words of the sentence were inaudible.

She went on nervously, — “My sister Flora was very pretty and attractive. She was older than myself, and every one was accustomed to defer to her; perhaps that made her wilful; my father especially would not check her in any thing. General Vivian, as you must know, had one son, a very engaging person, generous and open-hearted, but utterly thoughtless. Notwithstanding the family differences, we met him occasionally in walks and rides; he was in fact almost the only gentleman we ever saw, and perhaps it was natural enough that he and Flora should become attached to each other. But there was nothing understood or acknowledged, except between themselves: the General would have been fearfully angry if the notion had been suggested to him; his wife, the only person who might have influenced him, was just dead; and my father and mother were too much occupied with the pecuniary difficulties, which were daily increasing, to take heed to any lesser matter. I saw what was going on, but I was too young to interfere. Flora was full of hope, and her affections were very strong, whilst Mr. Vivian never allowed his thoughts to dwell upon any thing but the gratification of the moment; and, at length, totally putting aside the possibility of his father's disapprobation, he persuaded

Flora to engage herself to him without asking the consent of her own parents or of his. They kept the fact entirely to themselves, and all that I saw was that they took every opportunity of being together, and that when separated Flora's spirits entirely sank. This made me very anxious, and I was secretly glad, for her sake, when at length it was determined that she should leave the Manor House for a time, and go abroad, in the hope of enabling my father to retrieve his affairs. We left Encombe. I thought I was only going for a time; I fancied that the Manor House was still to be my home. It was a great mercy that I was not able to see the future. Yet I had some presentiment of evil; I could scarcely help it; Flora was so dreadfully miserable at the thought of the long absence. Mr. Vivian saw her the last evening, and I believe the promise between them was renewed; Flora was then, in a degree, comforted, and we set out on our journey in tolerable spirits. Our first rest, for any length of time, was at a German watering-place, small, but just growing into fashion, and filled, most unhappily, not only with hotels and boarding-houses, but gambling-houses. My father's early habits had accustomed him to think lightly of gambling, and it soon became his chief amusement. He would never play high, and so managed to go on without bringing himself into any great difficulties; but our home became the resort of his associates at the gaming-table, and amongst others, of — Captain Vivian."

Ronald started.

"Yes," continued Bertha, "it was there, Ronald,

that my first acquaintance with your father may be said to have begun. He was not then what he is now ;” — her voice sank as she said this, and Ronald turned away his face ; he could not bear its change to be seen. “ He was young, handsome, agreeable, ——” she hesitated, and repeated, “ in a certain way he was agreeable ; he had seen a great deal of the world, and was very clever ; he could tell amusing anecdotes ; gentlemen especially liked him ; they did not care for things which distressed Flora and me. Dear Ronald ! you must forgive me if I speak too freely.”

“ Say what you will,” he replied, with a bitter laugh, “ you cannot tell what I can.”

“ And yet in some way, Ronald, I may be a better, a more charitable judge. I have never suffered as you have ; at least in daily life. In other ways ; — but you must let me go on regularly. I had seen Captain Vivian before, but never to know him ; in fact, I was too much of a child to be brought in contact with him. He claimed acquaintance with us as having a connection with our old home ; his father and General Vivian were first cousins. I did not know then that all social intercourse between the two branches of the family had ceased for some years.”

“ For thirty years the General has been too proud to acknowledge us,” exclaimed Ronald indignantly.

“ Think of him gently and justly, Ronald, if you can. He may have feared the acquaintance for his son. If he did, events have proved that he had cause to do so.”

“My father might not have been what he is, if his relations had not cast him off,” replied Ronald.

“Perhaps not; one cannot say;” and Bertha’s thoughts reverted to Clement, and her anxiety lest he should in like manner be discarded. “At that time, when we met in Germany, I fear his habits were too deeply rooted to be altered. We saw a great deal of him. Like every one else, he admired Flora, and, to my dismay, I perceived that my father was inclined to encourage him. Captain Vivian had the reputation then of being rich, and probably my father thought that, considering the state of our family affairs, it would be a desirable marriage. At all events, he threw them constantly together, and when, on one occasion, I expressed my dislike to the society which the acquaintance involved, I was reproved, and told that I should bring myself into mischief if I interfered with matters which did not concern me. Things went on in this way for some time. Flora said very little. I was sure she disliked Captain Vivian, but she had not courage openly to thwart my father’s wishes. When alone she was very miserable; when in company she exerted herself so as to be the life of the party. No one really knew any thing about her feelings. I was too young to have her confidence, and she was afraid of my mother. Your father was very fond of her; and when I saw that, I pitied him, for I felt that his affection could never be returned. But I did not know then with how fixed and stern a resolution he can pursue an object when once his will is given to it. He was resolved to marry Flora, and if, instead of

common coldness, he had been met with open detestation, I believe it would not have made him swerve a hair's breadth from his determination. It was just at this time, after the separation of a year, that Mr. Vivian arrived in Germany, on his way to Italy, for a summer tour. What communication had been kept up between him and Flora in that interval I do not know. Some there certainly must have been, for he was the last person in the world to bear silence and suspense. I suspect he came prepared for the state of affairs which I have described, and determined to put an end to it. But it was by no means an easy task. My father's feeling against General Vivian was as inveterate as the General's against him, and Mr. Vivian could with difficulty gain admittance to the house. When there, he could in no way compete with his cousin. There were strong prejudices against him, and although he was the heir of Cleve, the property was entirely at the General's disposal; and he could not offer any thing like the fortune at that time possessed by Captain Vivian. Yet I imagine that even from the first moment of their meeting, your father felt that Flora's choice was made. She was, indeed, too much afraid of her parents openly to express her preference; but even when she strove to conceal it, it showed itself in innumerable every-day trifles. A man of less resolute purpose might have drawn back, but Captain Vivian persisted in his attentions, and —" Bertha hesitated, and her words came with difficulty.

Ronald spoke impatiently, — "Go on, I can bear all."

“I don’t wish to give you pain unnecessarily,” she replied.

“No pain is like concealment, Miss Campbell.”

“And perhaps, in some ways, what I have said may be an excuse for Captain Vivian,” continued Bertha. “He had great provocation,—some, at least; but it was hard to take advantage of a character so open and trusting as that of Edward Vivian. Your father gambled, Ronald; he made Edward do the same; he led him on step by step, till his debts became very heavy. I don’t like to think it was done purposely, but it appeared like it. Certainly he made use of Mr. Vivian’s weakness. They were friends all this time outwardly. I think Mr. Vivian was sorry for the disappointment of your father’s affections; and having no fear of him as a rival, he gave him his confidence, and consulted him in his difficulties. Immediately afterwards, by some means, no one knew how, tidings of Mr. Vivian’s gambling debts reached the General. He was fearfully angry. I saw some of the letters which passed; Mr. Vivian showed them to Flora. He was full of repentance; but habit and evil companionship were too strong for him, and after a short interval he returned to his former practices. Every thing was made known to the General through some secret channel, and when still more indignant reproaches and threats of disinheritance reached Mr. Vivian, they were in the same way communicated to my father. Poor Edward found himself without friends, without support; it was very much his own doing; he was sadly, sadly weak, but all turned against him:—even the persons

who had first led him into evil,—who were still encouraging him in it;—for I know that at this very time it was Captain Vivian who enticed him again and again to the gaming table, and laughed at him when he would have drawn back.”

A suppressed groan escaped from Ronald. Bertha went on rapidly:—

“Perhaps you can guess the end of all this. Mr. Vivian did not venture to propose openly for my sister, knowing the feeling that was excited against him, and fearing that if he said any thing, my father would forbid him the house. Flora, too, was very unhappy, from various causes. She had to bear with great absence of sympathy in her own family, and constant fits of temper. All her affectionate feelings were crushed and repelled; and at length, in a moment of desperation, she was persuaded to marry Edward Vivian, without the knowledge or consent of her parents. It was a fatal step, Ronald, and most bitterly punished. I need not repeat all that took place in consequence; it would not be important to you, and it is only miserable for me. My father, in his anger, refused to hold any communication with them, and would not advance them a penny. They were exiled from our house, and left to depend upon such resources as might be obtained from General Vivian. What his feelings would be, it remained to be shown. Mr. Vivian wrote himself, acknowledging his offence, entreating to be forgiven, but he received no answer: he wrote again, and still there was delay. At length, after the lapse of several weeks, the stern decision came, in a few short, cutting sentences

from the General, without even a softening word from Edward's sisters, and only one heart-broken, reproachful line from his old nurse, Mrs. Robinson ;— he was disinherited."

"But my father?" exclaimed Ronald; "he had nothing to do with it?"

"He left Germany instantly," replied Bertha, "when the fact of my sister's marriage was known. He travelled night and day; and it was by him that the intelligence was made known to General Vivian Goff, who had been in Edward's service, but had been dismissed for dishonesty, and had afterwards been engaged by Captain Vivian, accompanied him, and was called to be a witness to the truth of some of his statements. All this I first knew a few weeks since, in conversation with Mr. Lester. At the time every thing was a mystery, and there was no one to clear it up. My own family were too proud and too angry to make any effort for reconciliation; and Edward Vivian had no friend in whom he could confide, except Mr. Lester, who had formerly been his tutor, but who, unfortunately, was at that time travelling in the East. No one was surprised at the General's conduct; it was only in keeping with the severity, and what he called strict justice, which had marked him through life. But what did in a measure astonish both Edward and our own family, when the letters were sent to us, was the style of the accusations brought forward. The General spoke of deadly ingratitude, dishonour, disgrace in the eyes of the world, and a false use of that to which Edward had no claim, except at his father's pleasure. Some one

particular offence seemed alluded to, but what we could in no way discover. Certainly Edward had acted very wrongly, and had shown himself most lamentably weak; but there had been nothing in the least approaching to baseness. Even as regarded his unhappy gambling debts, they were doubtless large for his income, but not large for the General's fortune; and Edward could not be said to be a practised gambler; he had been led into the sin by the instigation of others; but he had no real taste for it, and always refused when he could meet with any one to support him;—a weak will was his stumbling block. But the General admitted no extenuation. He seemed to me, then, to have a false and most exaggerated view of the circumstances of the case, and wrote with a bitterness which was absolutely unchristian. Mr. Lester has talked to me, Ronald; he has told me some things which took place then; I fear there was great wrong done by misrepresentation, if not by any thing worse."

"And by my father?" murmured Ronald.

"Mr. Lester says so. It is certain that all General Vivian's information came through him; and—oh! Ronald, forgive me for saying it—but I know that a large sum of money, very much larger than the amount of the gambling debts, was paid at that time to your father by General Vivian, under the belief that he was for the last time satisfying the claims of his son's creditors. When Mr. Lester told me what the amount was, expressing himself shocked at Edward's recklessness, I knew at once that there must have been some wrong dealing in the matter. The

debts were not a fourth part of the sum, and the money never reached Edward, or at least only a very small portion did. So, again, Mr. Lester believed that Edward had behaved undutifully,—that he refused to offer an apology, or make the least submission to his father;—all utterly false. He wrote again and again, and received no answer, except that which I have mentioned; till latterly, since Mr. Lester came to Encombe, Miss Vivian has been allowed to write to him. Ronald, your father was Edward Vivian's deadly enemy. Can you forgive me for suspecting him?"

The poor boy writhed as if under a serpent's sting. Bertha laid her hand affectionately on his shoulder, but he pushed it aside roughly, and, in a hoarse voice, muttered "go on."

"It is such pain, Ronald, to give you pain," said Bertha.

He did not answer; his forehead was pressed against the wall with a force which must have been almost torture.

Bertha seemed doubtful whether she might venture to proceed, but, after a moment's consideration, slightly changing the subject, she continued:—"You may wonder why, if there was a misunderstanding of the truth, so many years should have passed, and no explanation be offered; but at the time neither Mr. Vivian nor Flora had any one to help or advise them. They were left to poverty, and what would have been utter ruin, but for the interposition of an ordinary acquaintance, who became by accident acquainted with their case, and interested himself to obtain for

Edward a situation in the West Indies. They sailed without a parting word of kindness from us ; indeed we did not know of their intentions till they were gone. My sister and I never met again ; she lies in a foreign grave ;”—Bertha’s voice faltered, and Ronald stealthily and shyly laid his rough hand upon hers, but without speaking.

“ We had some comfort before that sorrow came,” continued Bertha. “ Years had softened the feelings of my father and mother, and when a change of climate became necessary for the children, they consented to take the charge of them. Clement and Ella came to us first ; then the little ones. There were two others, who died. But much of that you know, for your father and mother settled in our village about that time. Your father I hoped had recovered his disappointment. We met as friends ; for I did not then understand all the evil he had occasioned ; and his habits of life were not such as to cause an entire separation between the families. Your mother, too, had been my friend in infancy, and clung to me more and more closely as care and sorrow gathered around her. They were trying days, Ronald, but they brought their blessing with them,—at least to me. It was my joy to comfort her, and I learnt, for her sake, to bear with much which I could not have borne from any man except your father. My father died about that time, and my mother left me much to myself, so that I was able to be with Marian a great deal ; and though your father openly showed his dislike to me, he never actually forbade our intimacy. This went on for about eight years, till your mother died, and your

father left the village. Family circumstances have not changed much with us since. My sister's death was a great trial, but we could scarcely grieve for her; her lot was a very hard one. They were miserably poor, and I am afraid — marriage beginning wrongly can never end well — I fear she was not happy. Edward Vivian has always been restless; longing to return to England; yet feeling that the little prospect he has of providing for his children would be gone if he were to do so. And they have grown up without knowing him; I don't think even Ella and Clement can recollect him; and so there is the want of a father's authority. It is all very sad. But it might be altered; — I think so, at least. Ronald," — and Bertha spoke hurriedly yet earnestly, — "you might do much."

He stood up proudly; the marks of a stern self-control were visible, in the slight frown upon his forehead, and the compression of his lips, which scarcely parted as he said coldly, "What duty does Miss Campbell require of a son against his father?"

"Not against your father! God forbid!" exclaimed Bertha. "But oh! Ronald! if injustice has been done ——"

"It shall be undone," he replied, firmly, "at any sacrifice."

Bertha continued: — "My words must seem harsh, Ronald; yet I would serve your father rather than injure him. The time indeed is so long past that it might be very difficult to prove what we suspect; but if the attempt were made, it must be followed up, and that publicly — in a court of justice. It might be madness in us, but it would be eternal disgrace for

him. Mr. Lester and I have talked over the matter repeatedly. For the General's sake, we dread to bring forward a case which we could not prove. It would recall past griefs, and probably cause some fatal catastrophe. Yet we cannot let the matter rest ; for not to speak is Edward Vivian's ruin. One idea we have had has been that he should himself return to England to sift the matter ; but there are many objections to this. His presence might irritate the General, and I should dread a meeting between him and Captain Vivian ; whilst even to enter upon the subject with the General, in order to obtain information, seems next to impossible, though we have thought of it. The past is a sealed book : not even to his own daughters would he relate the particulars of all that transpired in that one unhappy interview with your father ; although something there was which weighed so heavily upon him that it did the work of years upon his frame. Ronald, your father's own words can alone throw light upon the mystery."

Bertha paused, but Ronald stood silent as though some secret power had paralysed him.

"I do not see the way to obtain them," she added ; "yet the time may come, conscience may one day waken ; and, Ronald, if you should be near him in that hour, I conjure you, by all that you hold most sacred, remember your promise."

He sank upon the bench, and sobbed like a child.

Bertha drew near and spoke anxiously : — "It is not against your father that I would for worlds wish you to act ; but you may lead him, urge him, to acknowledge if he has in any way done Edward Vivian wrong

by false words. His own confession would never be turned against him, except so far as it might restore Edward to General Vivian's favour. And you may stand in the way between your father and Clement. He hates Clement. He is the child of the woman who rejected him. Save the poor boy from his temptations, and God may in mercy bless your work, and withdraw the curse which must now rest upon the man who laboured for another's ruin."

A convulsive shudder passed over Ronald's frame, and then he became motionless.

"Ronald," said Bertha, as she bent over him, "it is all but your Mother's voice which bids you take courage and be comforted."

The words were powerless. She heard him murmur to himself,—“The curse; the curse.” And again he groaned in anguish.

“To be redeemed by you, as it would have been by her,” continued Bertha.

“She was an angel,” he exclaimed, starting up, with a vehemence which might have caused a less firm heart than Bertha's to tremble at the storm of feeling she was awakening; “and I”——

“You may be one, Ronald,—even more”——

His bitter laugh rang sharply, hopelessly, on the ear.

“Go,” he exclaimed; “talk to others, preach, labour; there are hundreds to listen; your words are wasted on me,—the outcast!”

“An outcast? so young, so misled! oh, Ronald! never, never!”

“You know not to whom you speak,” he continued,

his voice assuming a tone of fierce sarcasm, more terrible than the outburst of passion. "Have you lived the life which I have lived? seen what I have seen? known what I have known? Go! Let me be what I am doomed to be."

"Ronald, I do not know, God forbid that I ever should know, the secrets of such scenes as you have been accustomed to; but this I know, that were they the blackest and deadliest which the human heart could conceive, there must be hope and the certain prospect of escape, whilst the feeling of horror at them remains."

He covered his face with his hands.

"It is from God," continued Bertha soothingly, "from His Spirit; it is the call to repentance,—the answer to your mother's prayers."

"And to my father's deeds, in which I have joined," he said, in a tone like the underswell of the sea. Then, uncovering his face, he gazed upon her, calmly and steadily, and added:—"Miss Campbell, you need not fear. Whatever may be my own course, justice shall one day be done." He stood, intending to leave her. Bertha detained him.

"Ronald, you must not and shall not go. I have a claim that you should listen to me, for I was your mother's friend, her only one. It was to me she made her last request,—that, as God should grant me the power, I would watch over her boy. In her name I require you now to hearken to me."

He sat down, not sullenly, but as if in a stupor.

"I know your purpose," continued Bertha, her tone becoming severe in its deep earnestness; "you

will from this night bend all the energies of your mind to discover and counteract the evil which your father has caused; most earnestly, most entirely, I thank and trust you. But there are two ways open before you:—in the one you may accomplish your work and be yourself saved; in the other you may perform it and be lost. And Ronald, intensely though I long for the reconciliation and restoration of Edward Vivian and his family,—though it is the one object for which it seems now that I have to live,—I would rather see them struggle on in poverty and sorrow for years, and suffer myself with them, than I would know that any word of mine, or any efforts for them, had led you even one step on the way which must tend to destruction. Ronald, you may labour in proud despair, or in humble hope. If you are proud, you are lost.”

“Proud!” he repeated, bitterly and doubtfully.

“Yes, little though you may think it, pride is your snare. You will work for others; you will not work for yourself.”

“I may save others, I cannot save myself,” he replied in a softened tone.

“You cannot save others except by saving yourself. You wish to aid Clement: you can have no right influence, you can give nothing but an inconsistent example, unless your actions are grounded upon right motives; the most deceitful of all motives is pride, and its end is despair.”

“Then I have reached the end,” he said, sternly.

“No, Ronald, impossible. Let the past be what it

may, even in old age it is retrievable,—how much more so in youth !”

“I have known no youth,” he replied ; “the sins of my childhood have been the sins of a man, and my punishment must be the punishment of a man.”

“And your strength will be the strength of a man,” answered Bertha ; “the firm resolution, the unshaken will ——”

“Which is pride,” he said quickly.

“Pride, when we rest upon it as our own ; faith, when we seek it from God. Ronald, do you ever pray ?”

He answered abruptly, and yet not angrily,—“In storms, on the ocean, in the face of death, yes, I have prayed then.”

“But in quietness and solitude ? In your own chamber ? calmly, thoughtfully, regularly ?”

He smiled as in scorn at the question.

“Your mother prayed, Ronald ; will not you ?”

“She prayed because she was fit to pray.”

“And you will pray because you would become fit,—because there are dangers surrounding you, only to be conquered by self-restraint, watchfulness, earnestness, purity, faith ; and you are reckless, proud, full of sinful memories, bowed down by a burden of past offences. You will pray because you long for pardon, for the knowledge that the love of a Heavenly Father will be with you, to guard you from the influence of an earthly one. You will pray, because without prayer life must be misery, and death despair. Oh, Ronald ! will you not do as your mother did ?”

He made no reply; he even moved away, and Bertha was left for a few moments alone. She knelt in the old church porch, and a prayer rose up to Heaven in the stillness of that summer evening—a prayer for one amongst the lost sheep, the erring and the straying, who had left undone those things which they ought to have done, and had done those things which they ought not to have done, and in whom there was no health; and even as it was uttered, Ronald stood at a distance, too self-distrustful to own his feelings, too shy to express them in action, yet praying also with uncovered head and closed eyes, humbly and earnestly, for grace that might enable him hereafter to live a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of God's holy Name.

They stood together again in the entrance of the porch. Twilight was gathering around, though the light yet glowed brilliantly in the far west.

Ronald broke the silence:—“Miss Campbell, you must pray for me, and your prayers will be heard.”

“All earnest prayers are heard, Ronald; especially those of the sorrowful and penitent. But you will act too?”

“I don't know how; it is all chaos.”

“But the first steps are plain: no sinful words, restraint over your temper, a refusal to join in intemperance——”

“Yes, plain;”—he seemed pondering the word doubtfully.

“And practicable. What ought to be can be,—only

pray." She smiled, and held out her hand, and he raised it respectfully to his lips.

He did not see the tear which glistened in her eye, as she left him under the old church porch, the faint gleams of the setting sun gilding his tall figure.

CHAP. XIV.

“A NOTE for you, Ella;” and Rachel Lester ran into the school-room at the Lodge, holding a little twisted paper between her fingers. “But I beg pardon; I forgot, I mustn’t interrupt. How busy you all are this morning!”

“Ella has been strict all the week,” said Fanny, looking up from her writing; “and it’s dreadful work, Rachel.”

“Oh, no, Fanny,” exclaimed Rachel; and she went round and stood behind the child’s chair, and offered to mend her pen. “I know you don’t like lessons half as well when they are not regular; I am sure I don’t.”

“But it won’t last,” said Louisa, with a knowing nod, which almost upset the gravity of Rachel’s face.

“I don’t know why you are to say that, Louisa,” said Ella; “you know we are always regular when there are no interruptions.”

“Somehow interruptions come every day,” persisted Louisa.

“I have brought them to-day, I am afraid,” said Rachel. “This note is from your Aunt Mildred, I think, Ella.”

Ella read her note with an air of importance, and

stood gazing upon it afterwards, as if there was some weighty matter to be determined.

Louisa held up her exercise book, and said,—“Just look it over, please, Rachel. Ella won't now, she's busy;” and Rachel went to the other side of the table.

“I will attend to the exercise, thank you, Rachel,” said Ella, looking round quickly. She was very jealous of her own authority, probably because she felt that it rested on an insecure foundation.

Rachel sat down, and began to read; and Louisa and Fanny glanced at each other, and made a sign intended to show that a storm was impending.

“I must go to grandmamma,” said Ella, in a tone of dignified self-consciousness. She moved to the door with her usual languid pace.

“When am I to see you again, Ella?” asked Rachel.

“And what are we to do about our lessons? we have just finished our exercises,” inquired Fanny, fretfully.

“My dear, I can't attend to you;” and Ella walked out of the room, without answering Rachel's question.

Rachel could not help feeling annoyed. She had some special messages to give from her papa, and she was not to go back without having them answered; and this delay would be very inconvenient, for she had several things to prepare for Bertha, who gave her German lessons three times a week.

The children were provoked, too. They liked regularity, even when they complained of it; and although they seized upon the excuse to go on with

some new story books, they were by no means comfortable.

Ella went to her grandmamma's room. Bertha was there, and she drew back.

"Come in, Ella; what do you want?" How chilling the tone of voice was! How utterly unlike the sympathising tenderness which had touched Ronald's better feelings!

"I want to speak to grandmamma," said Ella.

"Do you, my darling? Oh, then, Bertha, these things can wait;" and Mrs. Campbell pointed to a pile of account books.

"Betsey is going to Cleve, and she ought to pay the books," replied Bertha.

"Not to-day; she must wait. There will be another opportunity, I dare say, to-morrow."

"Couldn't you leave what you have to say, Ella, till the children's lessons are finished?" asked Bertha.

"It won't take two minutes," said Ella. "Grandmamma, I have had a note from Aunt Mildred."

"We know all about that, Ella," observed Bertha; "grandmamma heard from your aunt yesterday herself."

"Then, grandmamma, when am I to go?"

"There is no hurry about settling the time now, Ella. The accounts must be finished first."

"But I must know, because of getting my things ready; and Aunt Mildred begs me to write and tell her."

"We will talk about it, Ella, my dear; we will see about it," said Mrs. Campbell, nervously.

"But by-and-by will do just as well," remarked

Bertha. "It is not a matter of consequence whether you go one day or another, Ella."

"If I don't go this week the fine weather may be gone; and Aunt Mildred wouldn't like me to be there when it is wet," said Ella.

"But an hour can't make any difference," continued Bertha; "and Betsey must go to Cleve this morning."

"Mr. Lester's cook will be going to-morrow, Louisa says," replied Ella; "she would pay the books."

Bertha's temper was irritated to the utmost extent of forbearance. She gathered the account books together, without trusting herself with another word.

"You can tell Betsey to wait, and come back to me yourself, presently, Bertha," said Mrs. Campbell, making a compromise with her conscience, as Bertha was going away.

The door closed, not quite gently, and Ella sat down by her grandmamma, and muttered, "Aunt Bertha is so dreadfully soon put out."

Perhaps it was not quite wise in Bertha to do as she did,—go to the school-room—it might have been better for Ella's misdeeds to bear their own fruit,—but regularity was her mania, and she felt that the children were becoming irregular. Rachel ran up to her as she entered the room: "Dear Miss Campbell! I wanted to see you so much; I have a message from papa."

Bertha had felt lonely and dispirited just before, but that bright face, and the musical voice, and loving accent, had an influence which she could not withstand. Yet she was cold still; she would have

appeared so at least to those who did not comprehend her. "Wait one moment, dear Rachel. Children, what are you about?"

"Reading till Ella comes back," said Louisa.

"Put away your books, and tell me what you have to do."

"I have an hour's music to practise," said Fanny, mournfully.

"Well, then, set about it at once. And Louisa?"

"Oh! a great many things," said Louisa, carelessly. "French dictation, and geography, and lessons for to-morrow, and reading history, and sums. I shan't have done till I don't know what o'clock."

"Then begin something directly. Where is your slate? Show me what sum you are doing."

"Ella was explaining to me about decimal fractions, last time," said Louisa.

"Decimal fractions! nonsense! where did you leave off with me? The rule of three;—there, take that sum, No. 19., and work it while I am here. Not a word to be spoken, remember. Now, Rachel;" and Bertha opened the window, and stepped out upon the little lawn, followed by Rachel.

"I won't keep you a minute, at least not many, dear Miss Campbell," began Rachel.

"Never mind, I have time to spare; Ella won't be back again for the next half-hour;" and Bertha sighed.

"I wish I could help you, and I wish—" Rachel hesitated—"I wish Ella didn't trouble you."

"We won't talk about her," said Bertha, shortly.

Rachel was thrown back, and ventured upon no

more expressions of sympathy. "Papa says, dear Miss Campbell, that he wants you to come up and see him this evening; he wanted to know if perhaps you would come and drink tea with me; but he mayn't be at home till late himself. He has several poor people to see, and he may be kept."

"Yes, I will come, certainly." Quite different Bertha's accent was then; there was even a tone of excitement in it.

Rachel's quick ear caught the change.

"Dear Miss Campbell, may I say one thing more to you? Perhaps it is not exactly the right time, but if you could spare me a few moments."

"As many as you like."

"And you won't be offended?"

"I don't think I could be offended at any thing you would say, Rachel."

"Because you are so kind, and make allowances for me; but I am half afraid of this." Her colour went and came very quickly, and she stopped for some seconds, and at last said,—“Oh, Miss Campbell, I do so wish every one was comfortable.”

"A universal wish, at least, Rachel."

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Rachel; "it can't be; at least—I don't mean to be rude—but if every one wished it, every one would be."

"Not quite," replied Bertha; "God sends afflictions."

"But those would not make one uncomfortable, would they? but unhappy. And, do you know, I think it is much worse to be uncomfortable than unhappy."

Bertha could not help laughing. "Well, perhaps it may be,—though it is not the general view of the case. But you have nothing to make you uncomfortable, Rachel?"

"Not at home, and I never used to have any where."

"Till we came here," said Bertha.

Rachel hesitated a little. "I suppose, where there are so many people, things must be more uncomfortable; but I am very sorry about it, and I should like so—it came into my head that perhaps you could tell me something to do to help make them less so. You know I am going to be confirmed in October."

"Are you? I didn't know it; but what has that to do with your being confirmed?"

"Nothing exactly; only thinking about that put the other into my head. Papa says it is a great starting point in life, and that I am to think over all my duties, and see how I can perform them better than I have done. And he told me to think about what I did and said with my companions, and to consider whether I could make things better in any way. That was what reminded me of being uncomfortable,—for I don't think Ella is comfortable, and I don't think I am when I am with her."

"Ella is a very difficult person to live with," said Bertha.

"She is never two days alike," continued Rachel. "That puzzles me; because when I think I know how to get on with her, she turns round and is quite different."

“She is a genius,” said Bertha, rather bitterly; “and so she has been spoilt.”

Rachel was thoughtful. “I used to think,” she said, “that it would be very delightful to be exceedingly clever, but I don’t think I do now.”

“Cleverness is all very well,” said Bertha; “but it is good for nothing if people can’t govern themselves.”

“But clever people always do so much in the world,” said Rachel.

“I am not so sure of that, Rachel. The hard work of the world is done by straightforward goodness, not by talent. Ella will never do any thing.”

“You always say that,” said Rachel; “and it makes me unhappy.”

“I say it, because I think it,” replied Bertha. “Louisa is twice as useful as Ella now.”

“And you don’t know any way in which I could help Ella to be more useful?” asked Rachel, the colour rushing to her temples, as she added,—“It sounds conceited, but papa told me I was to try.”

“You will be cleverer than I am, if you can find out,” replied Bertha.

“Aunt Mildred says,” continued Rachel, “that if we want to lead people any particular way, we must begin by going two steps with them, and then we may be able to persuade them to go one step with us.”

Bertha shook her head; it sounded like a dangerous maxim; at any rate she was not accustomed to it.

“I don’t mean two wrong steps, of course,” pursued Rachel, reading the doubtful expression of Bertha’s countenance; “and Aunt Mildred, when she said it, told me I was not to trouble my head about it now,

because I have enough to do to lead myself ; but that it might be useful to remember when I grew up. I could not help thinking about it, though, a little, when papa talked to me about being useful, and setting a good example ; and at last I made up my mind that I would ask you if you could tell me any thing in which I went against Ella. I am very nearly sure I do sometimes, without meaning it."

"She goes against herself," replied Bertha. "There is nothing to be done with persons who do that."

"And you don't think it is my fault?"

"No, dear Rachel, what could make you think it was?"

"Because, do you know, Miss Campbell, I can't help looking up to Ella ; and so, when things go wrong, I can't help fancying the fault must be mine."

"As to cleverness," said Bertha, "every one must look up to her."

"And she has such grand notions," continued Rachel. "I think sometimes she would have been such a great person if she had been a man ; and that perhaps the misfortune is her being a woman. Would she have been better as a man, do you think?"

"Really, dear Rachel, I never troubled myself to think. I believe we are all best as God has made us."

"But such a great mind seems shut up in a woman's body," said Rachel, laughing.

"It is not a great mind, Rachel. Great minds do great things."

"Ella begins a great many," said Rachel.

"But she does not finish them. A thing is not

done till it is finished." A smile crossed Bertha's face as she said this, and she added :—"That is a truism, at least it sounds like one ; but I am sure half the world forget it. And then people go shares with others in their duties, and so deceive themselves. Ella goes shares with you, Rachel."

"How ? I don't understand?"

"She has grand notions of what is right, and, when the fit is upon her, she forms beautiful plans of duty, and begins them ; but she grows tired of them and leaves you or the children to finish them. Then she has a vague idea that because they are done by some one, it is the same as if they were done by her. All this is terrible self-deception. It will be her ruin if it is allowed to go on."

"And I can't do any thing, then?" said Rachel, sadly.

"I suppose we all do something when we attend to our own duties," replied Bertha. "Ella would be much worse if it were not for you."

"But, about going two steps with her?" said Rachel, thoughtfully. "Can't you tell me what Aunt Mildred means by that?"

"I don't understand how we are to go two steps with any one who is going the wrong way," said Bertha, rather shortly. "I think, Rachel, you had better leave Ella to herself."

Rachel's was a very warm heart, and there was an innate truthfulness in her character, which was her bond of sympathy with Bertha. It kept her now from being utterly repelled ; but it was very trying to give confidence, and seek it, and find nothing in return.

She walked on, silent and disappointed. Bertha's heart smote her; and something whispered to her that she did not care to talk about Ella, or try to improve her, and that she ought to do so.

"Don't go, Rachel dear," she said, as Rachel turned into the path to the rectory. "Have you nothing more to say?"

"Nothing, thank you. But you will come and drink tea this evening?"

"Yes, and shall Ella come too?" It was a great effort for Bertha to propose this. She did not wish it at all, but it was an amends to her conscience. A few moments before Rachel would have said that it would be pleasanter to have a quiet hour alone with Miss Campbell, but she did not feel that now. She only thought herself very stupid in having mentioned Ella's name.

"Yes, if you please," she replied; "you know we drink tea at half-past six, so you will be back in time to read to Mrs. Campbell. Papa has altered the hour, because of having to go across the hills, nearly every day, to see poor little Barney Wood. Do you know, Miss Campbell," — and Rachel became animated in the consciousness that she was going to say something agreeable, — "Ronald Vivian has been so kind to Barney; he has cut him out a little ship, and he goes to read to him sometimes. Isn't it good of him?"

Bertha kissed Rachel; — that was her answer; and Rachel ran away, feeling that she had in some unknown way made her peace.

CHAP. XV.

ELLA deceived herself; but so also did Bertha Campbell. Was that possible?—so strict as Bertha was in her self-examination, so very rigid both in the theory and the practice of duty, and above all so very true both by nature and long habit?

“The heart is deceitful above all things.”

This is, of course, peculiarly true of the affections, especially when the feeling nursed is the one gentle point in a character otherwise unyielding. But the expression must include also the whole bent and disposition of the mind. The one object which we love, or for the success of which we labour, be it ever so pure, ever so disinterested, — human friendship, — a work of benevolence, — the carrying out of some noble principle, — that is our temptation. If we do not watch, and strive, and continually balance it by other claims, it will one day be the cause of our fall.

This seems to be the secret of much of that inconsistency which is a stumbling-block to the young in the characters of those whom they are taught to reverence. Good men devote themselves to the support of a theory, or to the advancement of some definite object, and, unconsciously to themselves, it too often takes the place of God. The range of their sympathies, and consequently of the virtues they practice,

is narrowed, and others see with surprise, and often consternation, that whilst professing the very highest principles, and devoting themselves to the very noblest purposes, they can yet utterly overlook the simplest and most obvious duties.

Thus it was, at least in a degree, with Bertha Campbell. Naturally warm-hearted, yet painfully reserved, she had early in life been brought in contact with a person who had excited her keenest interest, and, by giving confidence, had in time been able to exact it. This was the beginning of her affection for Ronald Vivian's mother. Reserved people are grateful to those who teach them unreserve. Bertha was grateful to Mrs. Vivian. Gratitude, deepened by compassion, became love, — that romantic feeling which is so continually the day-dream of a young girl's life, and which may not be the less dangerous because the world sees in it nothing to condemn.

And so Bertha's dormant sympathies flowed into this one channel which she had dug for herself, and found no vent in those which had been formed for her by God. Mrs. Campbell doubtless had much cause to blame herself for this, but Bertha could not be said to be innocent. Because she liked to be with Mrs. Vivian, and knew that her society was appreciated, and her presence felt as a comfort by one otherwise lonely and desolate, she made excuses to her conscience for the neglect of little home duties, and attributed her mother's reproaches to harshness of temper and want of sympathy with her pleasures. Mrs. Campbell was in consequence estranged from her, and bestowed her affections upon the children. Bertha

was hurt at this. She was not exactly jealous ; it was not in her disposition ; but her pride was wounded, and Ella's talents causing her to be brought forward far beyond her years, they were continually jarring. So the coldness spread. Bertha knew her faults, and kept a strict watch over them ; but she knew them by their effects, not their cause. She was always doctoring herself for symptoms, whilst she had never reached the root of the disease. And now, unknown to herself, under the guise of the most sacred of all feelings, — a desire to save from ruin the child of the friend whom she had dearly loved, — the same seed of evil was again being nurtured in her heart. To Ronald she could give sympathy, tenderness, and the most untiring interest ; he was, in another form, the romance of her early life ; to Ella and Clement she could offer nothing but rules of duty and cold advice. Was this selfishness ?

By the strictest enquiry as to her faults, Bertha could not have discovered it. The friends who knew her most intimately, and watched her most narrowly, could not have accused her of it.

Only in one way could she have perceived it : by examining whether the scales of duty were equally balanced ; — whether in throwing the weight of her energy into one, she had not, from a secret bias, lightened the other.

And this kind of self-examination Bertha had not learnt to practise. She enquired rather into the quality than the extent of her duties, and as long as those which she had set herself were attended to thoroughly and honestly, she saw no need to ask whether there might not be others neglected.

Yet Rachel's conversation left an unpleasant impression on her mind; it touched her conscience, though she was not quite aware of the fact, and, in consequence, made her feel more irritated with Ella than before. And, certainly, there was much to complain of that morning: Ella staid nearly half an hour with her grandmamma, persuading her that it was quite necessary she should go to the Hall the next day; and when, at length, she had obtained the desired consent, ran up stairs to consult Betsey about a box for packing her things, taking up the servant's time, so that the bed-rooms were not finished till twelve o'clock. The children's lessons might have been scattered to the winds, but for Bertha. As it was, they went on most energetically and satisfactorily; but it was at the expense of poor Bertha's time, and, in a certain way, of her health, for she was obliged in consequence to give up a walk before dinner, which had been specially recommended her, in order to write the letters that ought properly to have been finished whilst Ella was with the children.

Very little trouble and labour this would have been to Bertha, if Ella had been at all considerate or grateful; but she was so in the habit of letting her duties fall quietly upon Bertha's shoulders, that she really was not aware at last who was bearing the burden, and therefore scarcely ever thought of saying, "Thank you." What was still more provoking, it never seemed to cross her mind that it was her duty to provide, in some way, for the children's instruction during her absence. She was one of those easy-tempered persons, who never seem to

imagine that they give trouble, because they have never been in the habit of taking it. "Things will go on somehow," was a very favourite saying of hers; the somehow, meaning *anyhow*, so long as her own plans were not interfered with.

It is a grievous pity that we do not all learn to call our faults by their right names. Ella acknowledged herself to be indolent, — that she did not object to; it was rather a refined fault. She would have been deeply mortified if it had been suggested to her that she was selfish, for she was always dreaming of heroism, and heroines are never selfish.

And on that day particularly Ella was a heroine in her own eyes, for she was indulging a long-cherished romance. She thought it was about her Aunt Mildred, but it was really, as is the case with most persons who give themselves to romance, about herself. Ella believed herself to be, as she expressed it, "bewitched with Aunt Mildred." They had not met above five or six times; but Mildred's sweet face, her quiet grace, and earnest thoughtfulness, were most attractive to Ella's excitable imagination. And then the solemn grandeur of the old Hall, the seclusion of Mildred's room, opening into the private garden, her grandfather's dignity, the deference of the servants, and, above all, the mystery which had so long been connected with the home of her father's childhood; — it was not wonderful that these things should work upon Ella with an influence amounting to fascination. It had been her dream for the last two months that she should go and stay at Cleve, and a very innocent dream it seemed; but, unfortu-

nately, though Aunt Mildred appeared in the foreground in Ella's imaginary pictures, she herself was always peeping over her shoulder: and if the dream had been examined when carried on to its termination, it would have been found that, at last, Ella was to reign triumphant at Cleve, her grandfather's idol, Aunt Mildred's pet, — safe from grandmamma's nervous anxieties and Aunt Bertha's lectures, — the centre of interest to the whole family.

With what an instinctive stateliness of manner did Ella leave the house that afternoon, arm-in-arm with Clement, to ramble over the hills! Bertha had taken the children; Mrs. Campbell was inclined to be left alone, probably to sleep. Clement was yawning, and complaining of dulness; and what better could be devised under such trying circumstances than a long walk? Ella was not fond of mounting the hills: she liked much better to go to the sea-shore, and read poetry; but she had been taking a mental stimulant, and for once said "Yes," when Clement proposed that they should try and reach the Beacon, a pile of stones, raised as a kind of landmark, on the top of the highest hill, which rose a little to the north-west of Encombe.

They set off vigorously over the rough stones of a long lane; mounted a high gate, made their way across a field of stubble, and emerged upon the fine turf of the hills. Clement stopped to take breath and rest, for the ascent, even as far as they had gone, was tiring. Ella dragged him on: "For shame! false-hearted! to want rest just at the beginning; how will you hold out to the end?"

“As well as you do, I will answer for that. The hare and the tortoise, remember.”

“I always admired the hare the most, though I respected the tortoise,” exclaimed Ella, hastening on; and then stopping for a moment, quite breathless, and laughing at Clement’s plodding steps: “You see, Clement,” she said, as he drew near, “the good of doing things at a start is, that you gain time by it, to find a little amusement with your neighbours. The world would be a very dull world if every one went through it only minding his own concerns, as you do now.”

“There is something in that,” said Clement, throwing himself upon the grass; “but what are you to do, Ella, when there is no amusement to find?”

“Oh, make it. I should always make it,” replied Ella. “If it was not in life, I would get it from books; and if it was not to be had in books, I would invent it.”

“Very well for you, who have brains; but for a poor fellow who has none!”

“Nonsense, Clement! I won’t have you say that. Now for another start!” And almost before the words were spoken, Ella had made a rush, and was several yards in advance.

Clement followed at a distance. A call from Ella hastened his steps.

“Mr. Lester and Rachel going towards the foot of the Beacon; shall we catch up with them?” She did not wait for an answer, but hurried forward.

Clement stood still for an instant, and perceiving a short cut up a steep bank, which Ella could scarcely

have ascended, was about to hasten after her, when, happening to look round, he perceived Ronald Vivian coming up the hill, with the firm tread and athletic gait of a mountaineer; not hurrying like Ella, not leisurely and indolently moving on with unsteady pace like himself, but at every stride making a marked progress, which promised in a few seconds to bring them to the same level.

The two boys caught sight of each other at the same moment. Clement stopped.

They were only half friends, for Clement had not forgiven Ronald for his interference on the night of the storm, and was all the more irritable because he had found that there was really no ground for offence. Ronald had indeed urged Goff to go without him, but he had never pretended to give a message which he had not received. The attraction which drew them together was like that of the rattlesnake; and it was with an assumption of superiority that Clement exclaimed, "Holloa! what errand are you upon now, Ronald?"

"Nothing of consequence," was the reply, shouted forth in Ronald's loudest tones; and, without pausing, he went on in an opposite direction from that which Clement was taking.

His indifference piqued Clement, and he called again, "I say, Ronald, stop, can't you? What on earth does he go on at that pace for?" he muttered to himself, as Ronald, either naturally or wilfully deaf, strode forward.

Another loud, shrill call, so loud that Ronald could not but hear, and stop in answer to it; and Clement,

irritated and proud, walked up to him leisurely, taking rather a delight in observing one or two impatient gestures.

A scowl was on Ronald's face. His temper was by nature very quickly aroused, and had been, till lately, at times, quite ungovernable.

"I'll tell you what, young sir," he began, as Clement came up to him, "you must learn that I have something else to do than to stand kicking my heels together for you. Why don't you make haste?"

"Why didn't you stop?" inquired Clement.

"Why should I? We have nothing to say to each other."

"We shall have a great deal, if you can't be civil, Master Ronald," said Clement. "But there is no need to fret yourself. I only want a plain answer to a plain question. Where are you going?"

"Where you are not required to follow," replied Ronald. "Your course is up the hills, I take it."

"And yours along them. I am not so ignorant, you see, as you may fancy."

Ronald's colour rose; but some inward thought checked his anger. "I was impatient just now," he said, "and I am sorry." He held out his hand.

The words came out so naturally, that Clement scarcely understood that an apology had been offered. Yet he took the hand extended to him, saying, "You needn't be so close; I don't want to tell upon you."

"There is nothing to be told," replied Ronald; "but our ways don't go together."

"Why not? Ella and I are only taking an afternoon's walk. Why shouldn't we go with you?"

“Because I shall be better without you,” said Ronald, bluntly; “the road is a rough one.”

“Oh, nonsense for that! Ella doesn't care for rough roads; and as for me,” and Clement laughed satirically, “as if I couldn't do what you do!”

“That may be. But, Clement, you are not coming with me,” and tossing his stick into the air, Ronald strode onward.

“I am not, eh?” exclaimed Clement; “we'll see that, young gentleman!” He flung down a few wild-flowers which he had been carrying for Ella, and pressed forward, keeping Ronald in sight, yet not attempting to join him.

He had forgotten Ella; he generally did forget everything but the impulse of the moment; and he had an impression that Ella was going along the foot of the hills in a direction parallel with his own, and would be sure to join Mr. Lester. He did not exactly say it to himself, but it was a kind of vague conviction, enough to satisfy him; so he went on.

The path was winding, occasionally almost dangerous, for it was nothing more than a sheep-track, and the hills were in some parts very nearly precipitous. But Clement had a firm tread, and a steady eye; he kept Ronald in view, except when at intervals a projecting point hid him for a moment from sight, and felt something of the eagerness of a chase, as from time to time he ascended a high mound or a steep bank, to obtain a more general view of the course he was taking.

Then he did once or twice look for Ella, and at first he saw her hurrying on after two figures, whom

he supposed to be Mr. Lester and Rachel, and afterwards he observed her stop to rest, and shouted after her to show her where he was, but he did not wait to listen whether she answered him. When he looked the third time, she was not in sight, but, of course, he supposed, she had heard him, and, seeing him at a distance, had joined Mr. Lester.

CHAP. XVI.

THE direction which Ronald took, and which Clement followed, led at length into another of those deep gorges with which the Encombe Hills abounded, formed, in all probability, by the constant fretting of some mountain stream, wearing away the rocks.

Greystone Gorge, as it was called, was much narrower than the ravine in which the village of Encombe had been built. The stream, to which it must have owed its origin, had long been dried up, and it was now, for the most part, quite barren and stony, except where some few patches of rank grass had sprung up among the rocks. At the upper extremity, however, a solitary ash-tree, the relic probably of the woods which had formerly clothed the hills, had taken root, and, with the cliff behind, formed a shelter for a good-sized cottage, a small cow-shed, and a pig-stye. Under the shade of the tree, a party of children were at play, collected around a little hand-carriage, in which a sickly boy, of about five years of age, was lying; but Ronald's figure was no sooner seen descending the height, than a scream of mingled fear and delight burst forth, and in a moment they were scattered in all directions, hiding themselves in the house, or behind the cow-shed, and one of the more adventurous climbing up the face of the almost perpendicular cliff.

Ronald called to them with a rough but good-natured reproof: "Why, you silly imps! what are you after? Here, Johnnie,—Martha; here, I say. One would think I was the Black Rider." They came up to him, and he unslung a basket which he had been carrying on a pole over his shoulder, and, placing it on the ground, told them to take it between them into the cottage.

"I thought 'twere n't no one but you, Master Ronald," exclaimed Johnnie, seizing the basket by one handle, and nearly upsetting it; "but Martha declared as how there was two of you, and then I said you always come alone, so it couldn't be you."

"What has Martha been doing to see double?" exclaimed Ronald. "I shan't trust her if she does that."

"There was another, and that's he," exclaimed Martha; and, pointing to the top of the rocks, she added: "He's a skulking down, but I can see him."

"He shall skulk to some purpose," exclaimed Ronald, springing up the rocks again with the agility of a wild goat, and in his eagerness not hearing the cries of the sickly boy under the ash-tree, who called after him in a voice of agony, "that he would break his neck, and then he shouldn't see him any more." From point to point he swung himself with a rapidity which it was pain to follow; his feet seeming scarcely to touch the rock, his eye giving quick glances around.

"He's got him; there they be!" exclaimed Johnnie; and drawing his little sister towards him, he showed her where, on an overhanging platform, Ronald and Clement stood confronting each other.

"Spy!" burst from Ronald's lips.

Clement laughed. "I was not to come, wasn't I? I have shown you now that I will come, when and where I choose."

"Not without my consent," replied Ronald, coolly; "You will go back."

"Not at your order, Master Ronald; or we will try which is the strongest."

"Aye, try!" and Ronald shrugged his shoulders contemptuously. "I should be sorry, young sir, to have to pitch you over the rocks." He folded his arms, and nodding his head as he looked up at the cliffs, added: "If you take my advice, you'll be off."

"I take no advice, except from my superiors," exclaimed Clement.

Ronald's eyes flashed, he lifted up his hand, and touched Clement's shoulder.

His grasp was shaken off indignantly, and Clement clenched his fist, and drew nearer to the edge of the rock.

"Ronald! Ronald!" screamed a voice from below. The sick boy was raising himself in his little carriage, and stretching out his hands.

Ronald's hand, which had been raised to ward off the anticipated blow, fell by his side. "As you will," he said, quite calmly; "we are fools to quarrel;" and he turned suddenly round, and sprang down the cliffs. The next moment he was at the side of the child's carriage.

"Barney, what made you call? What frightens you?"

"I don't know. You'd have tumbled over," said the child, "and I wanted you."

“I was coming to you; you mustn't be impatient.”

“He looked as if he would have thrown you down,” continued the boy.

“Perhaps he would, but I should have picked myself up.”

“But you couldn't; God wouldn't have let you; you'd have been killed;” and tears of nervous fright chased themselves down the little fellow's cheeks.

“No matter perhaps for that, if I had been,” muttered Ronald.

Barney caught the words. “It must matter,” he said. “Father says it don't, but the clergyman says it does; he taught me a hymn about it. I can say it;” and without waiting for permission, he began, and went through the first verse till just at the end of the last line, when he stopped, and, looking up at Ronald, said with a keenly intelligent smile, “He's a listening; he's no business to listen.”

Clement was close at hand.

“Go on,” said Ronald; and the second verse of the hymn was begun and finished, and then Barney stretched out his wasted hands to Ronald, and said, “Won't you carry me?” And Ronald lifted him in his strong arms, and bore him a few paces up the rock to a stone seat, and, resting the child in his lap, he bade him look down the gorge, and see if any one was coming up.

“Father's coming, I think; no, 't isn't he, 'tis the black cow. Father won't be home yet. Shan't you have time to stay?”

“I don’t know ; if I can’t, I will come again. But you must wait here a minute, whilst I go and talk with the young gentleman. You’ll be comfortable if I put my coat down for you.”

He took off his coat, and, folding it together, stretched it over the stone, and laid the child upon it. “There, Barney, just for two minutes. You can look at me all the time ; you won’t care, will you ?”

Barney’s face betokened tears ; but Ronald stopped them. “You told me yesterday you meant to try and be good, and not cry any more.”

“I wouldn’t if you didn’t go away.”

“But if I do you mustn’t ; that’s what would be right ; and when I come back we will open the basket.”

“Have you brought them ?” exclaimed the child, his eyes sparkling, and the colour rising to his pale cheeks.

“Yes, two flags, beautiful flags, for the little ship, and some tiny men, and a cake besides, and a picture book. You shall see them presently, but you must let me go now ;” and he gently loosened the tight hold with which Barney grasped his sleeve, and, nodding to him, hurried down the bank.

Clement had not moved from the ash-tree ; he was standing there, moodily, watching Ronald and the child. When Ronald drew near he glanced around, as though he would fain have made his escape.

Ronald went up to him at once. “You have seen all there is to see ; now, Clement, will you go ?”

“I don’t see why you should make such secrets

about nothing," replied Clement, taking up the offensive. "Why couldn't you tell me at once you were coming to see the child? I shouldn't have troubled myself then."

"Because I didn't choose to answer impertinent questions;" and, seeing Clement's colour rise, Ronald added, "I am not going to be angry, Clement, but once for all I tell you that now you must go."

"I don't see that," was Clement's reply.

"Then you must learn to see it. Mr. Lester and Miss Campbell would wish it; you know that as well as I do."

"I am not going to submit to a woman," exclaimed Clement, "and Mr. Lester has no authority."

"Perhaps not. It makes no difference to me."

"And you will be a turn-coat, after all," exclaimed Clement; "tied to a woman's apron-string! Well, then!" and his lips curled into a sneer; "perhaps you are right; we had better part."

Ronald's hand grasped the knotted head of the stick which he held in his hand, till every muscle seemed strained to suffering.

"And when I thought we were to be friends!" pursued Clement, his tone softening. "You told me we should be."

"Yes, when I thought there was no obstacle."

"Obstacle! When persons choose to be friends, what is to prevent it?"

"It can't be," was Ronald's reply.

"But it can, and shall be, if I wish it. We are not always to be kept under lock and key; the world will one day be free to us."

Ronald laid his rough hand upon Clement's arm : " Good-b'ye, old fellow ! It won't do." The faltering of his voice belied the indifference of his words. " You'll thank me for it, some day," he added.

" Thank you for making me know how to trust in a friend," exclaimed Clement, the scornful accent again marking his words.

" Our paths lie apart," continued Ronald. " You don't see it now, Clement, but you will."

" And time enough then to change," replied Clement.

" Too late then," replied Ronald. He moved a few steps aside, perhaps not to betray his inward feelings, and mounting upon a pile of stones, looked down the gorge. In another minute he returned to Clement, and his voice was altered from stern earnestness to eagerness which bordered upon excitement: " I can't have you stay. There is a short way up the cliff, by the brushwood. Come, we must go—both." He sprang forward, and Clement, almost frightened by his wild manner, followed him.

They reached the top of the gorge, and paused.

" There is my father," said Ronald, coldly.

A man was seen coming up the gorge.

" I must go to him ;" yet he lingered.

" Ronald," said Clement, " you are so strange !"

" Am I? Yes, I know I am. Oh Clement!" and he sank upon the ground, and buried his face in his hands.

" Ronald, you won't let me help you, or I would."

" Help me by leaving me. Go, go—it is sin to be together. Sin," he repeated in an under tone, and

then a faint, mocking laugh followed the words: "why should I care for sin?"

"We must all care," said Clement, timidly.

"Ay! all—while there is time—while there is hope." He started up suddenly, and grasped Clement's arm: "There is time and hope for you: keep from me, or there will be none,—none."

A child's cry fell faintly but clearly on the ear.

Ronald leaned back against the rock, and his lip quivered: "Clement, I have been passionate, wicked: forgive me." He hurried down the cliff, Clement not daring to follow him.

CHAP. XVII.

RONALD stood again by the side of the sick boy, and spoke soothingly, and caressed him as before ; but the child noticed the change.

“ You went away and left me,” he said, fretfully ; “ you told me you wouldn’t, and you did.”

“ I couldn’t help it, Barney ; I didn’t mean to go. Shall I carry you in-doors now ? and we will unpack the basket.” His heart was not in his words, for his eye was at every instant glancing down the ravine.

“ I don’t want to see the basket ; I want you to stay, and you are going away.”

“ By-and-by, not yet. You will like to see the new flags.”

“ Yes, out here ; if you’d sit down and take me up. It’s so hard !” and the poor child twisted himself uneasily on his stony couch.

“ In-doors, on the cushion,” said Ronald, “ it might be better than my knee. Won’t you go and try ?”

“ No, I don’t like the cushion ; I want to be taken up. Oh, it hurts !” and the poor little fellow tried to move so as to ease his back, and finding it useless, began to cry.

Ronald put his arm round him and gently raised him : “ Now, Barney ; there’s a good boy, don’t cry. You must learn to be a man. You won’t be, if you cry. Now, isn’t that better ?”

“But you won’t take me ; if you’d let me sit up. I don’t want to go in-doors ; I want to sit up.”

“Oh, Barney, Barney! you’ve been spoiled ; you have had your own way till you are naughty.”

The fretful, wizen face was calmed directly. “I don’t want to be naughty. Mr. Lester says I shan’t go to Heaven if I am.”

Ronald lifted him up fondly, and set him on his knee ; but Barney was not satisfied.

“No, I’ll go in, and I’ll see the flags. That’s not spoiled, is it?” he added, gazing wistfully into Ronald’s face.

Ronald only replied by kissing the little thin cheek ; and lifting the child in his arms, held him with the firmness of a man, whilst his touch was gentle as a woman’s, and carried him towards the cottage.

The building hid from them the length of the ravine, but a sudden angle in the path brought them in front of it. Barney’s head was resting upon Ronald’s arm, and he feebly turned it, for his ear had caught another footstep: “It’s Captain John ; ain’t it Captain John? He won’t be coming to take me : you won’t let him?” and he clung closely and tremblingly to Ronald.

“Foolish child! what’s there to be afraid of?” but Ronald’s own voice was not as indifferent as his words.

“He said he’d carry me off one day,” whispered Barney ; “and grandfather said, if he were father, he’d give me up.”

“Because you were good for nothing, I suppose,” said Ronald, good-naturedly. “But, never mind ; he

won't want to do it now; and grandfather's not with him."

"Are you sure? But Captain John will want to have me."

"He wants me, if he wants any one," said Roland, gravely.

"Tell him he mustn't; I can't bear you to go."

Ronald smiled grimly. "There's no must for him," he muttered to himself.

"I thought every one must sometimes," persisted the child.

"Sometimes, perhaps." Ronald hurried forward so as to reach the door of the cottage before his father, who was walking leisurely up the gorge, could see and stop him.

The little room which he entered was neater than the external appearance of the house would have indicated. Fishing tackle, indeed, hung on the white-washed walls, and the floor was only of stone sanded over, and the ceiling was formed of rafters blackened by smoke from the large open hearth, in which wood was the accustomed fuel; but there was an evident attempt at something even of refinement in the arrangement of a few cottage prints, and the flowers placed in the window-seat; and Barney's little couch was covered with a bright chintz, whilst a curtain of the same material had been put up to shut out the draught from the window. Evidently a woman's hand had been at work; but there was no woman to be seen, and Ronald himself laid his little charge gently on the couch and placed the pillows com-

fortably for him, and said, "Now, Barney, that will do, won't it? and I will take out the flags and the picture-book, and you can show them to Martha and Johnie.

"There's Captain John coming, and he wants you," said the child, in a changed voice. His gaze, as he caught hold of Ronald, was anxious, almost terrified.

Captain Vivian stood in the doorway: "Absent without leave, Ronald! You'll please to answer for yourself."

There was a momentary pause, as it seemed of self-distrust, for Ronald's words came slowly: "No need for that, Father; you see where I have been without asking."

"Fooling away your time; but we must teach you better than that. I say, child, where's your father?"

"Gone out with grandfather," replied the boy, quietly and timidly. "Grandfather came and fetched him."

"Umph! How long ago?"

"A good bit, I think it was;" and the child looked up at Ronald for protection from the rough voice.

"And you, Sir!" Captain Vivian turned to Ronald — "Let me hear what you are after here."

"Keeping my word," replied Ronald. "I promised to come and see the child, and I came."

"Promises! Perchance, since you are in the humour for them, I may remind you of others. Where's the boy Clement Vivian?"

"He is not in my charge," replied Ronald.

“And he has not been here? You have not seen him?”

“He has been here, and I have seen him,” replied Ronald; but he is gone.”

“And you let him go. You dared to disobey my orders.” Captain Vivian’s voice was fiercely threatening.

“You gave me none,” was the reply.

“A quibble! I pointed him out upon the hill, and told you that to meet him and keep him would be doing good service?”

“You said it,” replied Ronald; “but I judged that he would not be profited by the meeting.”

A torrent of fearful words burst from the lips of the enraged father.

“Don’t be afraid, Barney—don’t cry;” and Ronald stooped down and stroked the child’s head, and pressed his little hand, which was trembling with nervousness. “Father,” he continued, hurriedly, “I have not disobeyed you in the letter — in the spirit I have and will. Nay, hear me to the end,” as Captain Vivian would have interrupted him; “I will, because I must. It shall never be said that by my aid Clement Vivian has become what I am.”

“Foolish boy!” Captain Vivian’s tone changed into a soft sneer, more painful even than his violence. “Who says that Clement Vivian is to become what you are? and if he were, what need to be ashamed of being like a brave boy, who can lord it over the boldest at his pleasure.”

“But cannot lord it over himself,” murmured Ronald; and then in a louder tone he continued,

“Father, I will speak to you plainly. Whilst Clement was my friend only, like any other friend, and you encouraged our being together for that purpose only, it was well: when you urge me to seek his society for a different reason, you enter upon a course where I will not follow you.”

“Well learnt from the lips of Miss Campbell and Mr. Lester, — perfectly learnt; but it shan’t last. Listen, Ronald, my boy; it’s time we should begin to understand each other. Obedience! — that’s the word. Mr. Lester himself can’t preach it better than I can. What’s more,” and Captain Vivian struck his stick upon the ground, “he can’t enforce it better. Talk to me of shame and sorrow, and all they call religion! There’ll be more shame and more sorrow for you in one hour of your father’s anger than in all the threats they hold out from yonder pulpit at Encombe.

“I am ready to endure it,” was the calm reply.

“Then try it; take your own will, and ——”

Ronald’s countenance changed to an expression of agony: “Stop! father, in mercy; require of me what you will, do with me as you will, only do not ask me to lead Clement to ruin.”

“Him? and why not him? Why is he to be cared for more than others? I warn you, boy, that he is a serpent in your path, and one day you will wish that you had crushed him.”

Instead of replying, Ronald moved again towards the door.

“Ay, go,” exclaimed Captain Vivian, whilst at the same time he stretched out his arm to stop him;

“wander where you will ; seek your own friends, you will soon have need of them ; for remember, Ronald,” and his voice became sullenly fierce, “refuse to do my bidding, and your father’s doors will be closed against you for ever.”

As he spoke, Ronald pushed aside his arm, hurried from the cottage, and mounted the gorge by the same path which he had ascended with Clement.

He hurried on wildly over rocks and bushes, clambering up heights which, in calmer moments, even he might have thought inaccessible. The self-control he had exerted had strained his mind almost to frenzy, and even his better feelings seemed urging him on to despair. His father ! was such a man worthy of the name of parent ? could he claim his obedience ? Was it really the act of a merciful Providence which could subject him to such a fiend-like power ? and if it were not—a hurricane of thoughts rushed over his mind. Why should he struggle ?—evil was powerful, not good. Evil had been present to him from his childhood, it was his portion, his doom ; and scenes of riot and guilt rose up before him, with their horrible excitement ; and it seemed as if a strong hand were forcing him back, to forget his misery in recklessness ; and yield himself, body and soul, to the tempter whom he had been striving to resist.

Weak Ronald was at the very moment of victory—for he did not know that he had conquered. So fierce had been the struggle of that inward self-restraint to a spirit long unaccustomed to the slightest check, that it seemed as if the effort had only suc-

ceeded in breaking up the strong powers of his mind, and rendering it a chaos of bewildering wretchedness. He sat himself down upon the grass, and hid his face between his knees, feeling, though unconsciously, that the clearness of the unclouded sky, and the brilliancy of the glorious sun, added tenfold to his sense of misery; and faintly from afar came the tinkling of the sheep-bell, and the lowing of the cattle in the valley, mingling with the chirping of the grasshopper, and the whirring of the insects floating in the air; but all hushed to Ronald's ear, which caught nothing but the booming of the ocean, murmuring, in its ceaseless tones: "The wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace saith my God to the wicked."

So he sat for minutes, and thought them hours; and so he might have sat even till night, conscious of nothing but the sense of hopeless weakness and desolation, when a gentle hand touched him, and a childish but most musical voice said in a low and frightened tone, "Ronald, is it you? Are you ill?"

It was Rachel Lester. He started up, and his haggard face confirmed the suspicion she had expressed.

"I thought it was you, but I was afraid. You are ill; I will run and fetch papa: he is just coming."

"No, no;" Ronald stopped her, as she would have hastened away; "not Mr. Lester; I can't see him; and I am not ill, not at all, only tired; I must go."

Rachel looked doubtful: "You are very pale, Ronald; papa would rather see you, I am sure."

“He can do me no good—good b’ye.”

She looked wistfully in his face, and tears gathered in her eyes: “Ronald, you are so very unhappy; I wish I could do any thing for you.”

Most touching and earnest was the tone; and Ronald paused as he was about to leave her, and said: “Thank you, Rachel; that is more than many would say.”

“Papa would do a great deal for you,” she replied, “if you would tell him what is the matter. May I say it to him?”

“Say what?—that I am ill?”

“Yes, if you are ill; but if it is only that things vex you, he would like to help you if you would let him.”

“And if he could,” said Ronald, bitterly.

“But he can help every one; at least, he can’t, but God can through him.”

“Mr. Lester can do a great deal, I know that, Rachel,” said Ronald, his moody tone changing into the gentle accent in which he had spoken to the child at the cottage; but there may be some things beyond his cure. Don’t fret though,” he added, seeing that Rachel’s face expressed her commiseration for feelings which yet she was unable to understand; “my troubles won’t come in your way.”

“They will though,” said Rachel; “I can’t bear to see you so, Ronald.”

“Ronald’s smile passed over his face, as a gleam of sad sunshine at the close of a day of storms.”

“God made us all to be happy,” continued Rachel; “so papa says.”

“He made you to be happy, Rachel,” exclaimed Ronald, earnestly.

“And you too, Ronald.”

He shook his head.

“But we must be happy if we make others happy,” continued Rachel.

“Perhaps so, if we do.”

“But you do. You make little Barney happy.” She paused, expecting his assent; but he did not give it, and she went on. “He was crying for you the other day when papa and I went to see him.”

“He cries for a great many things,” said Ronald, with some impatience of tone.

“Please don’t say so; he loves you very much, and he would not at all know what to do without you.”

“He will be taken soon,” replied Ronald, mournfully, yet not despondingly.

“And then he will be like an angel, and God will give you some one else to take care of. Oh! Ronald, can any one be unhappy who can work for God?”

Silence followed for a few seconds, whilst Ronald gazed intently upon the expanse of the sea, with its high horizon blending with the sky; then a sigh escaped him as if some load had passed from his heart. He turned round abruptly: “Good-b’ye, Rachel; you are good, if no one else is.

“Good-b’ye, Ronald; we are going to see Barney.”

Ronald walked a few steps slowly away, and then returned to say: “Barney wants another little cushion for his head, Rachel, if you could let him have it.”

“Yes, I will be sure and remember.”

He walked on again, his step blither and firmer ; and again he came back : “ I left him in a hurry just now, and could not show him the picture-book I brought. Perhaps you will for me, — and will you say I will try and see him again to-morrow ? ”

“ Thank you ; he will be so glad. Are you going up the hills ? ”

“ I don't know, perhaps so ; ” but the tone, sad and indifferent though it was, had lost its accent of despair. Something had changed the current of Ronald's moody thoughts, and led him out of himself. Perhaps he was treasuring in his heart the words, comforting and hopeful as the sweet little face which had just been gazing upon him—“ Can any one be unhappy who can work for God ? ”

Rachel watched him as he walked away, with that sense of interest and surprise, mingled with awe, which children always feel when brought in contact with the suffering of persons older than themselves ; and at length waking up suddenly to the consciousness that she was alone upon the hills, and that her father ought by this time to have joined her, she was about to run back to the place where she had left him, when a faint yet sharp cry of distress broke upon the stillness, followed by another, and another ; and the next instant Ronald repassed her, though at some little distance, making his way in the direction of the rugged cliff of rock and shingle, which formed the highest point of the Beacon.

CHAP. XVIII.

“ARE you going far, Sir, this afternoon?” Mrs. Robinson stopped Mr. Bruce, as his hand was upon the fastening of the little gate in the court yard.

“To the church; I may go farther, but I have not much heart to go any where.”

Perhaps it was illness which made Mr. Bruce speak so despondingly. He did appear very much out of health; his complexion had the yellow parchment look common to persons who have lived long in a hot climate.

“You haven’t been into the church yet, Sir.”

“Not yet. Mr. Lester forbids the week days, and sent me last Sunday to Cleve.”

“Yes, Sir, yes; I remember. Perhaps it might be as well if I went, too, for the keys. Jacob Clarke is an odd man.”

“There is no reason. I have met Jacob at the Parsonage.”

“He’s very blind,” said Mrs. Robinson, in a meditative tone; “and deaf, too, sometimes.”

“I shall do very well; don’t trouble yourself. I shall go to the Parsonage to drink tea.”

His manner was that of a man whose mind is quite preoccupied; and it might have appeared unkind to persons who only knew him slightly. But Mrs. Ro-

binson did not take it to heart much, certainly not as much as Mr. Bruce himself, when a momentary self-recollection reminded him of his tone, which had been sharper than his words. He looked back at her, and nodded: "Good-b'ye, Granny!"— he must have learnt to call her that from Rachel Lester—"don't expect me till you see me; but don't worry about me."

The sober, melancholy-visaged woman shook her head: "Thoughtless—always the same! But 'tis to be expected!" and with a resigned air she repaired to the farm-kitchen, to superintend some arrangements for her guest's comfort.

Half an hour afterwards she was at the gate again, for she had heard it open, and thought he must be returned. It had been opened, but by Goff, the fisherman, not by Mr. Bruce. He came up to her with a swaggering air.

"Your friend at home, eh?"

"Not at home," was the short answer.

"Gone up the hills, I suppose?"

"Perhaps so."

"But you can't say for certain, if your life depended on it!"

"Mr. Bruce doesn't trouble himself to tell me for certain where he's going."

"And you don't trouble yourself to ask, of course! And you don't know, either, I suppose, how long he means to be staying in these parts?"

"He does'nt tell me."

"Nor where he comes from, nor where he's going to! nor nothing about him! Before I'd trust such a man!——"

"You are'nt asked to trust him," was the quiet reply.

"He'd find it mighty different if I was! I suppose, now, he gives a load of trouble?"

"As much and as little as most people."

"A sort of chap who's made to melt in your fingers, I should say!" continued Goff.

"He's a gentleman who does not trouble himself about other people, at all events!" said Mrs. Robinson, indignantly.

"Ay! a gentleman! I should have said, now, he was that; though 'tisn't all gentlefolks that's to be trusted. But he's true blood, is he? I learnt to know the difference, in the old days, when you and I lived up at the Hall together."

"I don't remember when you and I ever lived at any place together, Mr. Goff," said Mrs. Robinson, haughtily. "I recollect when you were a farm-youth upon the estate; and perhaps it might have been as well for you if you had kept to your calling."

"That's as folks think. Every one to his liking. Your friend, now, I should say, would never have had a sea fancy, like mine?"

"I never asked him."

"Oh! but you can find out fast enough, from what a man talks of and goes after. Why, there's the Captain! you couldn't be with him five minutes, before you'd know he was a sailor."

"If all sailors are like Captain Vivian," replied Mrs. Robinson, "the fewer the better!"

"Then your friend's not a sailor. I thought as

much as that the night of the wreck. He'd never have let himself be capsized, if he'd had an ounce of old ocean in him. He's from foreign parts, though?"

"The vessel came from America, as you know."

"Yes, sure I do know. Who should better? for I've had more to do with her than most folks. But I should say it might have touched at other places—Jamaica, now; I'm downright certain somebody said it had touched at Jamaica."

"Perhaps it might. Have you anything more to say, particular, Mr. Goff? I must go in-doors."

"Only that I've got a nephew living in Jamaica; and I should just like to know whether this gentleman knows anything about him."

"Not likely, I should think."

"I don't know. 'Tisn't such a large place. I've had a good many thoughts about my nephew lately. Possibly you'd do a good deed, and ask about him?"

"I can't trouble Mr. Bruce about any body's nephew," exclaimed Mrs. Robinson. "He has enough to do to take care of himself."

"Umph!—and his children, I suppose. You wouldn't have him not take a care for them?"

"Not if he has any. But I can't stand here any longer. If you want to see Mr. Bruce, you'll please to leave a message."

"No, I can't say I wished particularly to see him; only I thought that, being, as I supposed, fresh from Jamaica, he might be able to give me a word or two about my nephew. Or perchance, when he writes, he'd make an inquiry for me. When will he be in?"

“ I can't say.”

“ Somewhere before eight, I suppose?”

“ I don't know; he is likely to be out all the evening.”

“ Ay! gone up to Parson Lester's; I could have guessed so much.”

“ I did't say he was gone there.”

“ Only if he's to be out all the evening, he's not likely to be gone any where else. There's a way, you see, of putting two and two together. But never mind, I'm not going to trouble him nor you neither; so good afternoon to you.”

He went out at the wicket-gate. Mrs. Robinson's countenance was wonderfully imperturbable; but certainly, after that interview, a shade of restless anxiety might have been traced in it.

And Mr. Bruce pursued his way to the cottage of Jacob Clarke, the sexton. It stood alone, at the end of the lane leading to the church hill; and some might have thought it a desolate home for the sickly man who inhabited it; but Jacob would not have exchanged it for the most spacious dwelling-house in the village. It was a palace to him, for it was in full view of the church; and in the church, since its restoration by General Vivian and Mr. Lester, all the pride of the sexton's heart seemed to have concentrated itself.

He was working in his garden when Mr. Bruce came up; but the moment he saw him, the spade was laid aside, and he was feeling in his pocket for the heavy keys, which were his inseparable companions.

“ You’ll be for going up, I suppose, Sir,” he said, almost before Mr. Bruce came within hearing.

“ I was thinking of it, Jacob ; but I wout trouble you, if you’ll just let me take the keys. You are busy I see. How are your eyes this afternoon ?”

“ Baddish ; this left one, special. They say I shan’t get any better till I get worse, and then I can have something done to them ; but I rub on with hoping.”

“ Happy for you that you can. Just let me have the keys, and I will bring them back quite safely. You can trust me.”

“ I trust your voice more than your look,” replied Jacob, with a grim smile. “ I’ve learnt a good deal to know people of late by their voices ; and there’s a sound in yours that somehow comes home to me natural.”

Mr. Bruce stretched out his hand for the keys.

Jacob hesitated. “ I’m thinking, — I’ll tell ye what, I’ll e’en go up with ye ; the digging will do well enough to-morrow, and I should just like to know what you’ll say to the old place. ’Tis a beautiful one outside now, ain’t it ?”

“ Yes, very beautiful. The old walls, I see ?”

“ Ay ! sure ; we should all have broke our hearts if the old walls had been down. It’s the windows that’s new chiefly — outside, that is ; inside you’ll see it’s wonderful.”

“ And all done by Mr. Lester ?”

“ No, no ; Mr. Lester helped, as a good man would ; but t’was the General, chief. He’d been thinking of it, they say, for a long time, and ’twas the first thing that seemed to cheer him up after all his troubles.”

They were ascending the steps together as Jacob said this. Mr. Bruce stopped.

“ You’re out of breath, Sir.”

“ No, scarcely ; but I am not very strong. How long ago did you say it was since the restoration of the church ?”

“ Some twelve years now, Sir, since it was finished ; but it took a long time about. I declare now I was sorry, in a way, when it came to an end ; and so, I suspect, was the General : he was up here most every day, watching how it went on.”

“ He began it after his troubles : he has had a good many, I suppose ?”

“ You may say that ; a hard life, poor old gentleman ! And now between seventy and eighty, and no one near him but Miss Mildred ; and all the old feuds as bitter as ever ! Somehow it’s strange when a man’s travelling to his grave. But there ! it’s the way of the world.”

“ There have been family disputes, then ?”

“ Not so much disputes ; but the General’s uppish, — bent on his own ways. It’s been the fashion of the Vivians from father to son.”

“ And the General is very determined ?”

“ Firm as an old oak. He’d break, but he’d never bend. I can’t help thinking sometimes, on looking back, that ’twould have been better for him if he could. But now, Sir, just take your seat here, and look round. You won’t get a finer sight than that all over the country.” Jacob pointed to a wooden bench placed at the top of the steps for the accommodation of the old people. “ You’ll not be sorry to rest, I

dare say, after this pull up the steps ; and you'll get a notion of the country which may help you. There's not a bit of the village, as you see, to be seen ; only the hills. But on to the right, there are the woods—the Cleve woods. That is the beginning of General Vivian's property."

"How far does it extend?" inquired Mr. Bruce.

"Extend! Why, he's got the whole of Encombe, not a cottage in the place but belongs to him. Only one farm —The Grange they call it—which is not his ; and sorrow's the day that Captain John ever went to live in it."

"Captain Vivian, I suppose you mean. I have heard some of the poor people speak of him as Captain John."

"They call him that, I can't say exactly why. He's not a regular captain, though he's had a good deal to do with the sea, they say, of late years. He likes sailor fashions, and so he goes by the name ; but he's not fit to be a Vivian." Jacob lowered his voice, as if communicating this fact confidentially,

Mr. Bruce turned away his head—the sexton's face seemed peering into his. Jacob continued, in the same under tone : "The long and the short of the matter is, he's a disgrace to the family, and the ruin and the curse of every one that joins with him. And he's been so for years, and his fathers before him ; and no wonder the General can't abide him, when he's been working against him and his set from a boy."

"From a boy? I thought the great quarrel had been of late years, about — about — General Vivian's son."

“Oh! you’ve heard of all that, have you?” said Jacob with some disappointment in his tone. “Sure enough, there was a great quarrel about Master Edward; but ’twasn’t that was the beginning, as who should know better than I.”

“Because you lived in the family, I suppose,” said Mr. Bruce, rising from his seat.

“You’d best rest a minute or two longer, Sir; your voice is quite shaky now; and there’s no hurry. What were you saying? Oh! about my having lived in the family. Well! I did live there, or, at least, my father did, which was much the same thing. He was the butler, and I work’d in the garden, and about in different ways, making myself useful; and so of course I came to know a good deal of the goings on; and sad enough they were at times.”

“But General Vivian always lived a very steady life,” said Mr. Bruce, quietly.

“Oh! steady as old time, for that; too steady perhaps; at least, somehow it didn’t seem to turn out well. But, you see, his father, and his grandfather before him, had been just acting different;—spending here, and throwing away there, till at last, when the General came into his property, I’ve been told, there wasn’t fifty acres of it strictly his own, ’twas all so hampered with debts; and Captain John’s friends having a pretty large share of the claims. Their’s was the younger branch of the family; and they lived in the neighbourhood, and were always quarrelling, and bringing lawsuits, and these and the extravagance had just ruined the property.

“Well! the General, as I said, was a firm man, not

a bit like those that had gone before him. Where he got his character nobody could think; but 'tis said that his mother was something of the same kind. If she was, she hadn't power to keep her husband from ruin or next to it. Perhaps she may have tried most with the children; for certain it is, that when the General came into his property—and that was when he was very young, only twenty-five, after his elder brother's death—he set his mind to one thought, and only one, how to get matters straight. My father was in his service then, and for old love's sake—for he'd known him from a boy—helped him right and left. But 'twas hard work; and there isn't many that would have borne to live as they did in those days—the General still keeping to be a soldier, and scrimping and pinching; and no servants scarce at the Hall; no company when he was at home; no carriages—scarce, indeed, butter to your bread. But it answered: what, indeed, wouldn't answer which the General set his mind to? First one thing was paid off, and then another; and the rumour got abroad that Cleve Hall was looking up in the world again; and sure enough, 'twas true. No thanks, though, to any of the other Vivians, who did all they could to stop matters, and nearly sent the General frantic; for with all his close ways for himself, he wasn't a bit so with others; and when claims were made, if there was but a shadow of honesty in them, he was ever for paying them; being honourable, he called it. As my father used to say, he was always riding his virtues to death; and 'tis my belief, the other Vivians would have been

much more honourable if they hadn't known that what they set up for they were sure to have."

"And they were living in Encombe then?" inquired Mr. Bruce.

"Near it, Sir. I hope I ayn't tiring you. I thought you seemed to have a care to know about them. They had a house the other side of Cleve, and a good bit of property in the neighbourhood. The General would have given any thing they asked for the land, but they never would part with it. 'Twas their pleasure to be close to him, to spite him. I don't think, though, he took it much to heart then; he didn't see the trouble it was like to bring upon him.

"But he married at last,—'twas after a good many years. His lady was very young, and wonderfully pretty; not a bit like what you'd have thought he'd choose. I don't mean as to being pretty, but as to lightheartedness, and not thinking. As for him, he'd never been young; care had come upon him so early, and his stiff ways and set notions weren't to be broken. And so when they came to live at the Hall—that was directly he married—for 'twas one of his notions never to marry till he could bring his wife to her settled home—things were not so very much changed from what they had been before; I mean as to servants and housekeeping. I know even in my own father 'twas to be seen. He'd been so taught to be particular, that he could'nt for the life of him abide a penny's being spent where there wasn't strict occasion. And very good, of course, it was, only now and then it struck me that he didn't see where there was

occasion. The lady, as I said, was different. She liked to have things handsome about her, and to see her friends, and to be gay; and the General was desperately fond of her, and indulged her in her fancies as much as 'twas in his nature. But 'twasn't done with a hearty goodwill; and specially it used to fret him, so I've heard, to see Master Edward turning after his mother's fashions rather than after his own. Are you in a hurry, Sir?" for Mr. Bruce moved impatiently.

"No, no; go on. Master Edward, you say, turned after his mother?"

"Yes, Sir, in a way; but I don't think he ever had her thought—for Mrs. Vivian, with all her merry ways, had a care for every one about her. But perhaps it wasn't to be expected of Master Edward. He was young, and an only son, and the property was all to be his; and so he looked upon it as his own too early, it's my belief. Any how, from time to time there was black looks at the Hall, and 'twas well seen things weren't going on smoothly. Captain John was at the bottom of a good deal then, as he has been since. He was much about Master Edward's age, and spite of all the General could say, they made friends together. Not so strange that, as you may think," continued Jacob, observing that Mr. Bruce gave a start, as he supposed, of surprise. "I remember Captain John myself in those days; and there was a good deal that a man might like, particularly a young man, not very knowing of the world, like Master Edward. He was very freespoken and hearty; and that took with Master Edward all the

more because his father thwarted him, and his life up at the Hall was too set up and stiff for a young man's mind."

"Mr. Vivian had sisters, though," observed Mr. Bruce, with something of reproach in his tone.

"Well! he had, and a prettier, nicer pair of young ladies there wasn't to be found in all the country round. But, you know, Sir, we see it every day; women can't make up all to men, any more than men can make up all to women. There's a need of their own kind; and so, when Master Edward came from school and from college, he must needs take to Captain John, just because he hadn't any one else to go to. And this made the General desperate. His mother and the young ladies, I believe, tried a good deal to stop it. I know my father said, that many's the time he has come into the room and heard them begging Master Edward, for dear life, just to keep away from what the General didn't approve. But he was strange, Master Edward was;—somehow strong and not strong—strong for his own will, and not strong for any thing else; and so he'd promise for a time, and then, when Captain John came in his way, it was all the same as before. And you see Sir," and Jacob lowered his tone as if knowing that he was approaching a dangerous topic, "he was afraid of his father; so, in fact, they all were. It was at the bottom of a deal of mischief. If a thing was wrong, 'twas always to be kept from the General, because he'd no mercy."

"But I thought the General was gentle to women," said Mr. Bruce; "you said he was so to his wife."

“Gentle in his own way, but ’twas a lion’s gentleness. Cross him in his fancies once, and you’d never do it a second time. Not that he went off in a passion—’twas all cold and stony; but knocking at his heart, when he was offended, was like knocking at a wall. He was wonderfully proud though of his daughters, specially of Miss Edith, the eldest. Folks said that ’twas because she was so like her mother. And certain she was very like her; not quite so pretty perhaps, and yet with a face that did one’s heart good to look upon; and always a pleasant smile, and a merry word—and such a laugh! Ah, Sir, the Hall’s a different place now from what it was when she was living! She lies now ——”

Mr. Bruce rose suddenly. “We will go into the church; give me the keys.” He held out his hand for them, but without staying to receive them, hurried along the little paved path leading to the porch.

Jacob followed him with a wondering gaze. “Poor gentleman! then what they say of him is true, and he’s daft, sure!” With a slow step, he plodded along the strip of worn pavement, murmuring as he went, “He’d have heard to the end, for certain, if he wasn’t daft.”

But Mr. Bruce was standing composedly in the porch now; and conscious probably of his own impatience, he addressed the sexton with something of an apology for his abruptness: “I was feeling the cold; it is cold in the wind. Let me have the keys, and, thank you, I won’t keep you.”

“By your leave, Sir”—Jacob’s self-love was a little wounded, for he had been wasting his words—“the

keys are my chief charge, as you may say, and I'd best look after them; so I'll just open the door and wait, for it seems you'll not be wanting to have much told you."

His tone of annoyance was evident, and Mr. Bruce's manner softened into consideration.

"You shall tell me more, Jacob, only not now—not now," he repeated to himself, and he took the man's hand and wrung it heartily. "Thank you, you loved them all; yes, I know you did."

"Daft!" was again Jacob's comment to himself; but he changed his intention, and instead of resting himself in the porch, followed Mr. Bruce into the church.

It was of moderate size, and consisted of two aisles. The east end of the south aisle was a kind of chapel for the Vivian family, divided from the chancel by an oak screen, but open to the rest of the church. Three large, exquisitely-worked monuments, of the date of the fourteenth century, the carving of which had been cleaned, and in part coloured and gilded according to the original design, filled up the centre. The deeply-cut letters engraven upon them, told that the recumbent figures, so meekly lifting up their hands to heaven, were the effigies of William and Everard Vivian, and of Walter and Eleanor his wife, the first of the name who were the possessors of the manor of Cleve.

The stranger did not pause to examine any part of the church in detail. He stayed not to mark the beauty of the decorated chancel-screen, nor to marvel at the exceeding richness of the stone reredos, nor

the gorgeousness of the east window. He passed without notice the long flickering lines of fairy light streaming across the marble tombs; but his eye wandered over the walls, and the pavement, marked with quaint figures of the honoured of olden time, and more modern yet already half-defaced inscriptions, till it rested upon a small plate, let into the floor of the Vivian chapel, and inscribed with the name of Edith Vivian.

“Yes, that’s where she lies, Sir.”

It was a ghastly face which met the sexton’s gaze, but he could not see its change; and the voice which answered him was unaltered, save perhaps that the tone was lowered, to suit the sacredness of the building.

“I see—I know it is the Vivian chapel.”

“The place where they all rest, Sir, from father to son, from generation to generation. But there’ll be none to follow now.”

The stranger gazed upon that small brass plate with a fixedness which seemed fascination. “Seventeen years ago,” he murmured to himself.

“Just seventeen, come Michaelmas—the year after the troubles: they broke her heart.”

The words were heard, for a tremulous shudder passed over the stranger’s frame; and seizing Jacob’s arm, and holding it by a grasp which it was impossible to resist, he led him again into the porch. There, standing before him, quietly, yet with a sternness, the result of strong self-control rather than of anger, he repeated: “They broke her heart, did you say?”

“Why, yes, yes, Sir,” Jacob looked around him in alarm.

“You were telling me about it before,—let me hear.”

The tone was too decided to be disobeyed; yet Jacob’s voice shook as he began, and his words were uttered unequally, whilst stealthily he raised his dim eyes to catch, if possible, the impression which he was making upon the moody, sullen, withered-looking man, whose excitable feelings he had evidently, but unexpectedly, from some unknown cause, aroused.

“They said it was caused by the troubles,” he began, “and I never heard there was reason to doubt it. Sure enough, before they came, she was blithe as a bird; and the day she heard of them she fell sick,—and the same day twelvemonth they laid her in her grave. Would you wish to hear more, Sir.”

There was neither assent nor dissent. It seemed that the stranger could not trust himself with words.

Jacob went on: “You know about Master Edward, Sir: perhaps there’s no need to go over the story; and who can tell the rights of it?”

“Ay! who?” exclaimed the stranger, impetuously.

“It’s my belief there’s more to be known about that matter than people think for,” continued the sexton, more heartily, feeling encouraged by even a word of sympathy; “my father always said so, and he was like to know the truth, seeing he lived so long in the family; but the General was never one to be dealt with like other folks. You know, Sir, Master Edward went abroad.”

“I have heard so.”

“ That was after he left college, and after his mother’s death. Poor lady! if she had lived, no doubt things would have been different. As it was, he only got into mischief when he was at home; and the General, ’twas said, thought that a new country might give him new notions. To say the truth of him, he had not got any that were what you may say bad, only quite different from his father’s: the General being set upon keeping up dignity, as he called it, and getting back more and more of the estate, and setting off his family upon a new footing; and Master Edward not thinking a whit about it, but only mindful to take things easy himself, and let every one else do the same. I’ve heard tell too, that one of the causes why the General was so bent upon getting his son out of the country just then, was because of the young lady, one of the Campbells, — they lived at the Manor Farm; — you’ll know Mrs. Campbell of the Lodge now, Sir? She’s the mother.”

“ Yes, yes; ” the quick tone was not impatience, but agony.

“ The truth of that, Sir, is what I can’t vouch for. If there was any thing going on, they managed to keep it wonderfully close; but the General might have found it out; and if he did, he was sure to make the most of it, I’ll warrant you. He hated the Campbells like mad. They had always sided with the other Vivians; and there was some old family difference from I can’t tell how many years back; and of late the Campbells had gone down in the world, and there had been some bad marriages, which had brought them still lower. Old Mrs. Campbell — she that’s at

the Lodge now—was the daughter of some man quite nothing compared with the General, and so there were relations and connections whom he didn't choose to have any thing to do with; in fact, I've heard my father say that it was quite a cat-and-dog life the two families lived; and you may well think, Sir, how troubled the General would be when he thought his only son was likely to mix himself up with them. Any how, Master Edward went abroad. And glad enough he was to go, 'tis my belief, except for the thought of parting with his sisters, 'specially Miss Edith. She was, in a way, his favourite. I saw them as they stood together before the door, just as the carriage was coming up to take Master Edward away. She was like an angel, so loving and pretty, and putting her arm round his neck, and kissing him, and telling him that 'twouldn't be home till he came back; and he smiling, and trying to comfort her, and saying how he was going to enjoy himself; and then looking up at Miss Mildred, who was lying on her sofa by the window—for 'twas just then she began to get ill—and nodding to her, and promising to bring her all kinds of fine things from abroad. Ay! they were mainly set upon one another, those two sisters and Master Edward."

"And the General?"

"He looked on upon them, stern-like, with his arms crossed in his fashion, saying the young ladies were silly, and would make any one a fool, with their care; yet pleased too, for he patted Miss Edith on the cheek, and called her Sunbeam, which was the name some of the villagers gave her; and then he shook Master

Edward's hand heartily, and said, 'God bless you, my boy;' and it's my belief there was a tear in his eye. If there was, it's the first tear that ever mortal saw there. Miss Edith had the last word. Master Edward put his head out of the carriage-window and said,—the words stayed in my mind for days after,—'Edith, darling! keep up; you'll soon learn to live without me.' 'Twas a man's mistake, sir. She tried to live without him, and she died."

The sexton paused, for his voice had grown tremulous and husky; and Mr. Bruce, too, passed his hand over his eyes, and sat down, his hands firmly clenching the stick on which he rested.

Jacob continued:—"Soon after Master Edward's departure, the Campbells went, and then Encombe and Cleve were quiet enough, with no gentry about, but the General and the two young ladies. That is the time I can remember best myself. I had work in the garden; and my father having, as I told you, been butler for so many years, I was pretty often in the house, and got a tolerable glimmering of how things went on."

"And Edith?"—the words escaped hurriedly, and were immediately corrected,—“Miss Vivian? was she well then and happy?"

"She took on sadly at first," replied the sexton; "but 'twasn't a heart to live upon trouble; and when news came that Master Edward was well and happy, and likely to return before long, she cheered up mainly, and for the first part of that year she was the life of the house. 'Twould have been rather a dull one but for her. Miss Mildred was very cheerful,

but quiet-like ; and the General never seemed so proud of her as he was of Miss Edith. He would go to her when there was business to be done, for she was more clear headed, and ready to do everything for everybody, and a kind word for all ; but she wasn't blithe, like Miss Edith, who was always singing and dancing about the house. And then Miss Mildred was sickly ; and somehow the General was one who didn't take to sickly folks ; he didn't understand them, and was always thinking they could get up and do just the same as others. The two young ladies, though, were marvellous fond of each other ; 'twas quite a sight to see them together, they were so one-like ; and so, upon the whole, it was a very happy home."

"Till the storm came."—It was a voice like the rising of a storm which spoke. Jacob stopped for an instant, startled by it.

"Aye, sir, as you say, till the storm came ; and that was soon enough. Master Edward had been away some months when it began to brew ; how, I don't quite know, but when the letters came of a morning, I used to hear my father say, he'd rather face a cannon-ball than carry them up to the General ; he was so put out by the news he had. Some rumour was afloat that Master Edward had been spending a deal of money ; and that seemed likely enough, seeing that 'twas always his way ; but no one knew for certain. At last, one morning, I'd been in the garden, weeding the flower beds, and then I was sent into the park to give some help about a fence that was to be moved ; and as I was hard at work, not thinking of any thing, one of the boys working with me looked up, and says

he, 'Jacob, who's that coming across here?' 'Twas a tall, swaggering-looking fellow, walking quite as if he was somebody, and was to be obeyed; and behind, a short, bluff man, a kind of servant. The first I knew directly, for I'd seen Captain Vivian often enough, and had a full remembrance of him, and his doings. The other I've learnt to know better since; you may have seen him yourself, sir, whilst you've been here, — a rough-looking fellow, a fisherman he is now, or a smuggler, as most people say; he's always out upon the Point."

"Goff! yes, I know him well, very well;" and there was a marked emphasis upon the words.

"He had work about the place out of doors, as a boy; and then he was taken into the house, and made a servant for Master Edward, and he had carried him abroad; but it seems somehow they hadn't suited, and he had been turned over to the Captain. So it was they were together that day. I learnt all that, though, afterwards."

"Yes, well! But that day?"

"Aye, that day, sir; you needn't think I'm likely to forget it. I saw the Captain and the other fellow go straight up to the house, and, said I to myself, there's mischief coming with that man, as sure as summer comes with swallows. I didn't exactly think what kind of mischief, for I hadn't heard much about where he'd been lately; else my thoughts would surely have turned to Master Edward. But something led me to go into the house, and wait to hear what was going on. I followed them up to the door,

and the Captain, he gave a tremendous pull at the bell, and such a peal there was sounding through the house! And when the door was opened, it was a kind of king's voice that said he must see General Vivian directly. My father happened to be in the library at the time, where the young ladies were sitting. It was close to the front steps, and you could hear quite plainly what any one said. He told me afterwards that Miss Mildred turned very pale when she heard the Captain's voice, and said she, 'Edith, you go to my father, and tell him who's here.' She couldn't go herself, and she wouldn't trust anybody else with the message, knowing how the General would hate it. Miss Edith went up to her chair and kissed her, and said, 'Never mind, Mildred, we'll hope on,' or some words of that kind; but she was cast down herself, seemingly, for she walked quite slowly out of the room.

"Captain John was shown into the little drawing-room, and a good long time he was kept waiting; and my father heard him storming away because of it with Goff;—for he would make him go with him; he wouldn't have him sent into the servant's hall, as was the custom. At last the General rang his study bell, and my father answered it, as he always did. Miss Edith was behind the General's chair, smoothing his hair and fondling him; and, to look at them, I dare say you might have called them brother and sister instead of father and child; for he was a wonderfully fine-looking man in those days, was the General, and bore his years bravely. 'Captain Vivian's waiting to see me, Clarke, I hear,' said the

General; 'he may come up. Edith, you must go.' His voice was as firm as mine is now, and you wouldn't have known that he thought or cared for the man a straw; only that he had a trick of crossing his legs and moving his left foot up and down when he was sorely pressed, and the less he said the faster his foot went; 'twas his way of venting his passion. The foot went like a see-saw that morning; and Miss Edith said to my father, when she left the room, 'Clarke, don't you let the General be tired out.' That was as much as to say, you be on your watch for what's going on; for my father was a trusty and knowing man, and many a time when the young ladies had been troubled with persons coming to worry the General, they had got him to go in and interrupt them. So my father showed Captain Vivian into the study, and he saw the General stand up and bow, which was all the greeting he gave; and any one but Captain John might have been cowed by his manner. But not a bit he; before my father was out of the room he began, saying that he had come from a long distance, and he thought it hard he should be kept waiting, and all in such a rough way that the General was put askew almost before a word had been spoken.

"My father went back to his work. Not a word did he tell me or any one, then; such a cautious man he was about every thing which concerned the General's interest. But I was mainly curious; and, as I could get nothing out of him, I made friends with the housekeeper, as was my custom sometimes, and got a permission from her that I might come into

the house and dine. I was standing in the servants' hall, waiting about a little, and doing just what few things there was to be done, when my father came in, and says he to the footman, "Here's a stranger come to dine with you, Charles;" and with that he brought in Goff. 'Twasn't a pleasant hearing, exactly, for in former days no one had ever taken much to the man; but he had come from foreign parts, and he'd seen Master Edward lately; and so there was a good deal to say and to hear, and we all got round him and began asking him questions. I've often thought since how queer he was on that day, — not a bit like what he's turned out since, — no blustering and storming, but a sort of creep-mouse look, which somehow turned quite against me; and every now and then stopping to hear if there was a bell, or a sound. But he wasn't likely to hear that with the clatter which was going on in the hall, and after a while he seemed to give up listening, and began to talk very fast, telling heaps of odd stories, and hinting things now and then about Master Edward which nearly made my hair stand on end. Yet he never spoke out; and when my father taxed him once with what he had been saying, and asked him to explain, he caught himself up quite short, and looked for all the world as if he knew he was telling what wasn't true. Certainly, I fancied him less than ever, specially when I saw what a friend he was to the ale flagon. Why he drank it as if 'twas water!

"There was dinner in the housekeeper's room for my father, but not a bit did he seem to trouble himself to eat. I had a notion that he couldn't

make up his mind to let Goff out of his sight, for he was in and out of the hall continually; and, said he once to Goff, 'Your Master's holding a long story up stairs.' 'There's plenty to say, when folks have been so long parted,' said Goff; and with that he gave a kind of inside chuckle, and laid down his knife just as he was cutting a bit of cheese, and set himself again to listen. Sure enough at that moment there was a bell, a quick ringing one from the General's room. I chanced to be looking at the man at the moment. His face—you wouldn't scarce believe it, for he's all over hard and brown now, as if he was made of mahogany—but he hadn't seen such rough times in those days, and, as I sat opposite to him, I noticed that it turned of a sudden, not white, but a sort of greyish colour, just for all the world as if he was going off into a fit. 'Twas only for a moment, though. He seized hold of the ale jug, and such a drink as he took!—it seemed all to go at a gulp; and then down went the cup on the table, and he stood up, and it crossed my mind that he'd had enough to make him unsteady. But not a whit that! It had only brought back the right colour to his cheek; and says he, quickly, 'That's for me.' My father caught him up with, 'How do you know it's for you?' He was taken aback, and his eyes quite flashed out, but he only laughed and said, 'Oh! he supposed it was, and he must be ready;' and, strange enough, when my father went up stairs he brought down word that Goff was to go up directly. I didn't dare ask if any thing was the matter, so many being about; but I was certain that something was wrong,

for my father had a look on him which I'd seen often enough to understand. But dinner went on, and was finished, and every one went to his work; and I was to have gone to mine, only my father had something for me to do in his pantry. It wasn't so far from the hall but that I could hear people go in and out, and up and down stairs; and, after a while—two hours I am sure it was from the time I first saw the Captain come—he and Goff took their departure,—not blustering and noisy, as they had come, but stealing out and walking off to the village, without a word of good b'ye to any one.

“There was no sound in the house for near half an hour afterwards. The young ladies had had their lunch; and where they were, or what they were doing, I couldn't say, only I missed Miss Edith's voice, for she used to go singing about like a bird. It came over me, I remember, as something awful that, with so many near, there shouldn't be one to be heard; but before long a heavy door slammed too, and then came the General's step along the open gallery over the hall. He was going the way to the young ladies' sitting room.

“My father called me then, and I stood talking with him in the hall, about some errand he wished me to do for him in Cleve. It might have been three minutes, or not so much, we were there. I was just asking him where I should find the man he wanted to see; and I remember he bade me attend, and laid his hand on my shoulder, in his kind way, when a scream—sharp and piteous, scarce like a human scream—rang through the old house.

'Twas Miss Edith's voice ; and my father and I glanced at each other in horror, and rushed up stairs."

"She was dead!" escaped from Mr. Bruce's lips ; and he covered his face with his hands, and sank, shuddering, upon the bench.

"No, sir. She had had her death-stroke ; but she was not to die then. She was lying on the floor insensible, Miss Mildred kneeling by her ; quiet—you wouldn't have known there was aught strange, save that her face seemed all of a sudden changed into stone. And the General was there too ; standing up before them, stern as on a battle-field, but his eyes fixed with a horrible stare straight before him. They did not let me stay more than a moment. Mrs. Robinson was called, and I was sent off to Cleve for a doctor. I came back in less than an hour. The General had shut himself up in his room ; Miss Mildred was with her sister. No one could tell any thing that had happened for certain ; only that Captain John and Goff had gone off from Encombe like a shot, and somehow—the news was about, that Master Edward and Miss Campbell were married."

"And that was all?" exclaimed Mr. Bruce, standing up, and grasping the sexton's arm.

"Bad enough 'twould have been, sir, if it had been all," replied the sexton, hastily ; "but worse there must have been, far worse than that. 'Tisn't for me to say, when no one knows for sure ; but a part of the truth was abroad quick enough. Master Edward had done something very dreadful, and was disinherited. What his sins were, it had been left for Captain Vivian and that fellow Goff to tell."

A groan was the only reply.

“My story will soon enough be ended now, sir,” continued the sexton. “The beginning of troubles was the end of the family history. They laid Miss Edith on her bed, and for weeks she never rose up from it. And day after day the word came that she was growing weaker and weaker, and that her brain was wandering; and doctors came from London, and nurses; and they talked, and ordered, and watched, and at last they got her round in a way; and she came down stairs, and moved about, and went into the garden. But it was her ghost only, not herself. She could never be kept still, but was always dragging herself up and down the shrubbery walk by the great road, listening for a carriage, if it might draw up; or, when she was in-doors, standing before a picture of Master Edward, that’s now in Miss Mildred’s room, or pacing the gallery over the hall. But she never mentioned his name; no, not even to Miss Mildred. And at last, all of a sudden, the cloud came over her again, and she gave way, as it were, in a moment; and once more they took her to her bed, and never moved her from it till they carried her to her grave.”

The sexton paused, to dash away a tear. “There was peace for her,” he added, in a tone of deep reverence. “She had lived an angel’s life, and she was ready for death. The sorrow was for him that had killed her.”

He was silent for a moment, and then continued:—

“’Tis a heavy word to say of a father against his child, and he loving her as he did. But ’twas the

General's way; there was no mercy. He'd have given his son to be shot, if it had come in the way of duty, and been the first to pull the trigger; and so, when he thought himself called on to give him up, he cast him off in a moment, and fancied that others could do the same. But they who said the General was a hard man, spoke of things they didn't understand. The day that Captain John brought the ill news, the General was hale and strong as the strongest man of his age in England. When he came out of his room three days afterwards, to go to church, his hair was silvery grey, and he had the look and gait of a man of seventy. There, sir, I've done now; and I've tired you, no doubt; and my digging will be waiting for me. Will it please you to go into the church again?"

No answer came. The question was repeated, and Mr. Bruce spoke as in a dream.

"The church, did you say? But the mystery—has it never been cleared up?"

"The mystery, sir? Oh! Master Edward's; yes, I understand. Cleared up I can't say it has been, for no one can say for certain what passed between the General and Captain Vivian; but, of course, the marriage and the notion of Master Edward's gambling was at the bottom of it; and cause enough for his being disinherited, according to the General's principles. He who'd been all his life striving to redeem the property, and making it the one thing he worked for—it was natural enough, perhaps, that he should take fright at the notion of its falling into hands which would scatter it. But what he really thought

and felt, it isn't for such as I to guess at ; and indeed I don't fancy there's any one that can tell, except, may be, Mr. Lester. He came to live at Encombe just afterwards ; and he'd been Master Edward's tutor, and often staying at the Hall, and had worked hard, I've heard, to make the General and his son understand each other. I believe the General did open his mind to him at first, but when Mr. Lester didn't quite agree, he closed up again, and lived for all the world as if shut up in a shell. That is to say, on that subject he's shut up, not on others. He gave himself much more to the poor people about that time, and set to work at the Church, and grew more thoughtful for Miss Mildred, and took to petting and making much of her. Somehow, it seems to me, when I'm thinking over it all awhile, that he's been for years like a man who knows he's very wrong in one way, but won't for the life of him give up, and so tries to keep his conscience clear by being good in all others. Mayn't it be so, sir ?”

The sexton looked up at his companion inquiringly.

His answer was a half-crown, thrust into his hand ; and, without a word, Mr. Bruce turned away, and in a few seconds was seen striding up the pathway to the hills, with the speed of a maniac.

CHAP. XIX.

ELLA had left Clement behind, without a thought. Mr. Lester and Rachel she imagined were before her, and her inclination was to hasten after them. They were, however, at a considerable distance; and she went on, with her usual impetuosity, when interested, gaining ground upon them, but heeding little the direction she was taking, and without considering how she was to return. Once she heard Clement's call, and answered it; but her voice was weak, and the sound did not reach him. So she must have proceeded half walking, and half running, for more than a mile; but she was drawing nearer and nearer her object, and her efforts would soon end. The two figures sat down for a moment to rest, and a most uncomfortable misgiving crossed Ella's mind. The man was taller than Mr. Lester, he looked unlike a gentleman, now that she could see him more distinctly, and the girl was dressed differently from Rachel. Ella could not recognise them at all; they were not even Encombe people: probably they belonged to Cleve, and were going thither by the short way, over the hills. That was quite out of the direction of the Beacon, and Clement would miss her. She looked round for him, and called. There was no answer; but the man who was sitting down heard her, and approached.

Ella was not frightened, but perplexed. The hills were very lonely, the paths in some parts confusing. One thing, however, was clear,—at least she thought it so,—that Clement would follow her in the direction of the Beacon; and when the stranger came up, Ella answered his question as to what she wanted, by begging to be told the nearest road to it.

“A good way off from the Beacon it is,” replied the man; “a mile at the least. You aren’t thinking of going up there by yourself, Miss?”

“I was going: I want to meet my brother,” was Ella’s reply.

“Oh, your brother! that’s different. Well, you must keep along under the hollow now, till you get to the pile of stones yonder, and then take the path to the right, and that will bring you into Crossdell; and from thence you may scramble up till you get to the foot of the Beacon. But, dear me!”—and he looked at Ella’s slight figure with a kind of patronising compassion; “you’ll never get up, any how; and if you do, you’ll never find your way down again; or you’ll get upon the Croome; and there’ll be a business!”

“The Croome!” repeated Ella; “that is where the cliff falls away so, isn’t it?”

“Yes, the steep side of the Beacon, away to the east,” was the answer. “Folks that don’t know much about it are apt to set foot upon the Croome, taking it all for firm ground; and then, ten to one, if they don’t go down and down, till they’d give half they’re worth to stop. However, I dare say your brother knows all about that, and he won’t take you the dangerous side.”

A little fear there was in Ella's mind, but with it a good deal of excitement, Yet she could not at once decide whether to advance or go back. She asked how far it was from the point she had now reached to Encombe: about a mile and a half. That really seemed nothing; and to have had a tiresome walk all by herself, for nothing—it would be too absurd! And then she should certainly miss Clement, and he would find his way to the Beacon, and she should be out-done. In Ella's chivalrous moments, when she was mistress over her natural indolence, there was nothing she disliked more than being beaten in any thing, even in a walk; and moreover she had an innate love of adventure, nearly allied to her poetical tastes, all of which urged her to the side of boldness. Without acknowledging to her new acquaintance the fact of having lost Clement, lest he should dissuade her from her intention, she thanked him, wished him good-b'ye, and proceeded on her upward way, with a springing step and an eager spirit, and had reached the other extremity of the hollow, before he had disappeared along the downward path which led to the town of Cleve.

Her heart did sink a little when she looked up and saw the height still above her, the summit of the Beacon being even then not visible. But it required only an effort; she was strong, and there was quite sufficient time, and Clement might miss her if she turned back; and Ella, who would have lounged for hours in an easy chair, dreaming over poetry, and thinking the smallest exertion too great, now, once

roused, was willing to risk any amount of fatigue, or even danger, rather than fail in her purpose.

She began the ascent; at first an easy one, for the sheep-track was her guide, and offered a sure footing; but after some distance it ceased, and she was obliged to make her way as she could over the slippery turf. The Beacon point was before her, however, then, and this gave her confidence and energy. Yet she did not trust herself to look round, lest she should turn giddy; for the hill was becoming more and more precipitous, and from not knowing the right direction to take, Ella had chosen the steepest site that was accessible. At last, however, having reached a little hollow, where she could find a firm footing, she turned, and sat down to rest. The view beneath her was most lovely, commanding the slope of the hills, and the Encombe ravine, with the Cleve woods and the town of Cleve in the distance; and beyond a wide expanse of the sea, changing at every instant, now glittering with islands of light, now dark with deep purple shadows, as the sun escaped from, or was hidden beneath, the heavy clouds which were crossing the sky. Perfectly enjoyable it would have been, if only she had been sitting on the summit of the Beacon, with Clement by her side. As it was, the exquisite beauty, added to the comfort of rest, induced her to linger minute after minute; and it was not till a sensation of cold and dampness stole over her, that she thought of proceeding.

A slight mist rested on the summit; that was provoking, it would prevent her seeing the view to perfection. But it might pass away; at any rate, she

felt it would be wise to hasten, lest it should increase. Once more she was ascending, rather more cautiously; for she was no longer stepping upon turf, but upon loose shingles and rough stones, which hurt her feet. It crossed her mind whether she should go back, for the mist was thickening very rapidly. But to be so near the top, and not to reach it! It was out of the question; it would be ignoble; and, after all, what harm could happen to her? She had but to step carefully; and once at the top, her descent would be rapid and easy, and she should soon escape from the mist, which was always thicker on the hills than in the valleys. Enterprising, Ella was, certainly; hers might have been the spirit of a crusader, could it always have felt the same stimulus. A steep, high bank, almost a cliff, was before her; the damp, heavy mist was gathering around her; she was weary and breathless; sharp flints had torn her boots, and one had wounded her foot so as to make it painful for her to walk; but she would not yield. One more great effort: scrambling, slipping back, clinging to a stone which gave way, seizing upon the stem of a juniper-bush, and finding a footing for a moment, and then grasping the edge of the bank, and dragging herself up almost in despair, and Ella had achieved her object, and stood upon the narrow platform of the highest hill, and touched the pile of stones which formed the Beacon.

She was very triumphant—very excited. The toil was a hundred-fold repaid by success; so she felt, for the first minute. The second, a chill came over her, mental as well as physical; but the latter was pre-

dominant. A cold blast was sweeping over the hills ; and sadly and ominously it moaned through the hollows below her. View there was none ; the mist covered the country like a garment, and, gathering around Ella, crept, as it seemed, into her frame, numbing her fingers, and bringing that indescribable sense of blind dreariness which makes one fancy, for the moment, that warmth and light have disappeared from the earth for ever.

Of course there was but one thought in Ella's mind—descent as quick as possible. She again called Clement, though with little expectation of being heard ; and, receiving no answer, set herself to her task. The cliff was her first difficulty ; she could not trust it in going down, as she had in ascending, so she felt her way cautiously along the edge of the platform, till she reached a less precipitous bank, and, sliding down without difficulty, found herself standing on what seemed a beaten track. This must, of course, she thought, be the right path, which she had missed through ignorance ; and she went on boldly and cheerfully, congratulating herself on her success. Yet it was rather bewildering, to be wandering on in this way, without being able to see more than a few yards before her ; and once, it crossed Ella's mind, that the track was leading her rather away from the direction she had taken in ascending. Very far away, however, it could not be, for she was quite sure that she was going towards Encombe ; and every now and then she stopped and called Clement, again hoping that he might be near, and join her.

The path which Ella had entered upon was broad

at first, sloping along the side of the hill; then it grew narrower and steeper, and occasionally it ceased altogether for a few paces; but a path there certainly was, so that she did not feel any misgivings. At length, however, it became very perplexing; there seemed to be two tracks, one to the right, broad, but exceedingly precipitous, almost indeed perpendicular, leading, as she supposed, towards Cleve; the other very narrow, but more easy, carried round the hill, and therefore leading away from Encombe. Either seemed an evil, and Ella paused to consider, and for the first time felt sufficiently uncomfortable heartily to repent her expedition. To descend by any means was still the only thing to be done, for there was no time to be lost. It was growing late, and the mist was thickening into rain; and after a moment's consideration she chose the narrow path, as leading, she believed, more directly to Encombe.

It was tolerably level, and therefore easy at first; and Ella congratulated herself upon this, and went on hopefully, yet not very quickly. It was not quite as firm as that which she had left; the soil was loose, and the stones rolled away under her feet. This did not signify, as long as the slope was gradual; but it became steeper,—the path was scarcely to be called one. Ella was obliged to throw herself, in a manner, from one projection to another: yet it was still descent, and descent was her object. She was forced to move on; the stones gave way as she touched them; and there were no large ones to grasp. It became not walking, or jumping from point to point, but one perpetual slide, slide; above, below, around her—

all was sliding ; and when she tried to stop, the very effort to sustain herself gave an impetus to the stones on which she rested ; and down they went, rolling on and on, and making all they touched roll with them, till the rush was as the crash of pebbles on a beach ; and at length — was it the splash of water which reached Ella's ear ?

The black tarn was beneath her. She was clinging to the side of the Croome.

The cry which echoed through the hills reached the ears of Mr. Bruce as he wandered beneath the Beacon, and was heard by Rachel Lester as she stood at the head of Greystone Gorge, and startled Ronald in his lonely wretchedness ;—it was the cry of extremity of peril. To go back was impossible ; the very effort to grasp the cliff would but precipitate Ella into the lake. To go forward was equally impossible ; the end might approach more slowly, but it would not be the less certain. To stand motionless upon the spot where for the moment she had found her footing, was the only safety ; and this security was but the verge of despair ; for even the sound of Ella's voice, as in her agony she called Clement, Clement, seemed to precipitate the rush of the restless, shivering cliff, and increase the perpetual quick plash, the knell of the dark waters, as they closed over the stones which sank into their depth.

Years were gathered into those moments,—the years of Ella's life ; the tale of her wilfulness, her folly, her pride, her indolence — not passing before her in detail, but all concentrated into one feeling of despair.

Again, one last effort ! But Ella's voice was feeble with horror, and it was but the wailing wind which

took up the lingering notes, and prolonged the ineffectual cry. Yet a change came. A gleam of sunshine was struggling amidst the vapour that floated over the tarn. A few moments more, and the mist rolled away; whilst heavy wreaths gathered together upon the summit of the hill, leaving clear below a narrow sheet of water, unruffled save by the falling stones, dark with almost unfathomable depth, and coldly throwing back the lines of light which crossed its bosom, as if too conscious of the dread secrets which it hid to permit them to penetrate its surface.

It was but a little distance across from the spot where Ella stood. She could see a small hovel on the opposite bank, sometimes used for shelter by shepherds, and distinguish the rocks scattered along the margin of the tarn, and the sheep grazing upon the scanty foliage. She could even look beyond, and trace the path which would lead her to the village; and very far away she fancied that she could perceive the tower of Encombe church, though it was very indistinct. Life, safety, happiness, were within her sight, almost within her grasp; but so also were the crumbling rocks, and the waters of the dark tarn, and the valley of the shadow of death.

There was a sound on the lake; not the falling of stones; it was a steadier, softer, more even plash. It was behind her, and she dared not look round; the pressure of her foot might be death. She called again, and a voice sounded from below, and a little boat with a man in it glided into sight. Ella stretched out one hand; her impulse was to throw herself into the water. A hasty gesture warned her to pause.

“Be still : if you value your life, neither move nor speak. There is a rope in the boat ; I will throw it to you,” shouted Mr. Bruce from below ; and the boat glided away again out of sight, and she was left to loneliness, and the ceaseless splash of the falling stones.

Minutes passed away ; her strength was failing ; the position in which she stood was becoming unbearable ; and there were no signs of the promised help. She could not have been left ; it was madness to think so ; yet Ella’s mind was in that state in which reason has lost its power ; and the dreams of a maniac are not more wild than the suggestions and misgivings which flashed across her, checked only by the strong instinct of self-preservation.

But a voice came at last from above, a man’s voice. “Are you there ?” was shouted ; and Ella’s answering scream was sharper than the cry of a dying animal. A pause followed ; two persons seemed to be holding a consultation. Ella could hear their murmurs. The delay was agony ; in another minute her power of endurance would be gone. They called again, for they could not see her, and could only be directed by the voice to the spot which she had reached. Then she heard, in louder tones, a debate which seemed almost angry in its eagerness. “Throw the rope.” “No ; it will not reach her, and she will go down.” “If we could but see her !” Another shout and another answer. “Fasten the rope round me first.” It was Mr. Bruce who spoke. The suggestion seemed to be approved, for there was a momentary silence. Then came the noise of the stones disturbed from their resting-place, and rushing faster, faster, falling behind and around Ella. But Mr. Bruce was

drawing near; she could see him; he was moving very cautiously, and, as it appeared, with some instinct or foreknowledge, which taught him where to place his foot on the firmest spot. The rope also held by his companion secured him; but even with that aid he dared not approach very close. The movement of the stones might loosen those on which Ella was standing. "Now, catch it." He flung the end of the rope towards her. She moved,—caught it for an instant,—lost it again,—felt herself sliding,—once more caught it, and clung to it, and was dragged upwards.

"Fasten it round your waist," shouted Ronald from above.

Impossible! Ella's strength was giving way. The rope was large; she could not twist it. She felt her hold lessening, yet despair was life. One instant more, and she was within reach of Mr. Bruce's arm, supported by him with one hand, whilst he threw the rope around her with the other; and at that moment she fainted away.

It must have been almost a superhuman strength which upheld her; but Ronald Vivian stood above, with his giant power, his indomitable resolution; and another—weak indeed, comparatively, in body, but urged by the overwhelming impulse of a father's love—was straining every nerve for her preservation; and when at length she was laid on the firm ground, Edward Vivian bent over his daughter, and forgetting every necessity for concealment, exclaimed, "My Ella, my precious child! Thank God she is safe!"

CHAP. XX.

THAT night Mr. Vivian sat in a large, low, old-fashioned room at the Manor Farm, his chair drawn in front of the fire, which Mrs. Robinson had insisted upon lighting when he returned, cold, damp, and far from well, after an expedition over the hills, which had been longer, he said, than he had intended. With him sat Mr. Lester, his grave countenance wearing a look of disquieting thought, as, leaning his elbow upon the table, he gazed fixedly before him. Tea was just over; it had been but a scanty meal; though Mrs. Robinson, in her hospitality and affection, had provided largely for the weary wanderer, and urged upon Mr. Lester the duty of making him take care of himself. Mr. Vivian was not to be persuaded; his cup of tea had been swallowed hastily, and scarcely any thing else on the table was touched: a question was pending, which was food sufficient for the mind, and, for the moment, for the body also—What is to be done next?

“I can trust Ronald implicitly,” was Mr. Lester’s observation.

“Yet you were vexed when I told you I had betrayed myself.”

“Vexed for your own want of caution. Are you never to learn prudence, Vivian?”

“When my child had just been saved from death!” he exclaimed. “Lester, you will one day drive me to hate you.”

“A man who puts himself in a position where self-restraint is necessary, ought first to be certain that he can practise it,” replied Mr. Lester. “But it is useless to waste time in lectures which will not be listened to.”

“Spare me at least till you have had experience,” was the answer. “Live for eighteen years in a foreign land, separated from your children, bound to work which you hate, your constitution worn by a horrible climate, and then talk to me of prudence, if you can.”

“Most true, my dear Vivian; none can feel it more strongly than myself. But a few months more delay;—and the claims of the children, your sister’s influence, my own inquiries as to the past, might have opened a door for your return, honourably and openly.”

“Never, never; in that opinion at least we cannot be agreed; and remember that my knowledge of my father is more intimate than yours.”

“I am not saying there would be hope if you took him by surprise. All I contend for is, that, with patience and prudence, we might at least have worked upon him.”

Mr. Vivian shook his head doubtfully, and his tone was irritable, as he said:—“It is no good to discuss what might have been. I am here;—I am known to be here. Now for the next step.”

“To leave the neighbourhood before your secret

has spread further, would be my advice," replied Mr. Lester.

"And live the same life that I have been living for so many years,—lonely, hopeless, and with the aggravation of being within reach of my children, and yet unable to approach them."

"So it must be till we have discovered the full extent of your cousin's villainy."

"Pshaw! Forgive me, Lester; you rest upon that point as if it would at once change the whole tone of my father's mind. Let John Vivian be what he may, let him have injured and calumniated me as he may, I tell you there are sins enough at my own door, for which I alone am answerable, which, in my reasonable moments, must, I feel, shut up every avenue to reconciliation."

Mr. Lester looked very pained.

"I know what you would say," continued Mr. Vivian. "Why, if I had no hope, should I have returned to England? That is the question of a man reasoning upon feelings which he is too fortunate to understand. Say, I had no hope,—it is true; yet can you not imagine it possible to act without it, when the object is restoration to a father's affection? Let him do with my inheritance as he will; if he will see and bless me, I shall die happy." Mr. Vivian's voice faltered, but he recovered himself, and added:—"Besides, if I have no hope for myself, I have for my children."

"And so had I," replied Mr. Lester.

"Yes; and your hope was fed by every-day events, by intercourse with Mildred; and it was not the hope

of one whose all lay trembling in the balance ; whilst mine — Lester, death would have been preferable to the life I was leading ; and if the step I have taken should bring me to it, I could scarcely repent that I had yielded.”

“ Who is to say that it will not bring you to it ? ” replied Mr. Lester, earnestly. “ You have to deal with a desperate man.”

“ We have been pitted against each other before this,” was the reply. “ Let him do his worst ; I don’t fear him.”

“ There would be comparatively little cause to fear, if every thing were open,” replied Mr. Lester. “ If you had appeared at Encombe in your own character, John Vivian would have been powerless, for all eyes would have been upon him. Now, on the contrary, no one notices either him or you, and he can carry on his machinations unperceived.”

“ You speak as if it was my own choice which brought me to Encombe,” replied Mr. Vivian. “ But for the wreck, I should never have ventured to visit the place without your sanction.”

“ We will waive the point of your returning to England at all,” replied Mr. Lester ; “ it is only a vexatious one. But when you were here, you must acknowledge that you insisted upon remaining. You disbelieved me when I said that it was impossible to keep your secret.”

“ Yet you declare I am safe, and that Ronald Vivian is to be trusted.”

“ As surely as I am to be trusted myself ; but you forget, my dear Vivian, the possibility of excit-

ing suspicion in your cousin or his wretched ally, Goff."

"I trust to Mrs. Robinson for that; she knows every thing that goes on, and has ears and eyes in all parts of the village. And as to being known, remember that even she did not recognise me. Eighteen years in a West Indian climate, with two attacks of yellow fever to boot—there can be no safer disguise than such a change; even if I had not been most careful as to concealment in other ways."

"Still, look at the possibility; it must always be wise to fear the worst."

"Well, then; my hopeful cousin knows me, and publishes the news, and what is to follow?"

"That is the point; he will not publish it."

"But, for the sake of argument, suppose he does? My father will hear of it; and how will he take it?"

"So as to ruin every prospect, both for you and for the children," exclaimed Mr. Lester. "Eighteen years have done their work upon him, as they must upon all, in sharpening and hardening the edges of character. The principle upon which he first acted was what he believed to be a right one; but he carried it out without check or balance from other principles, and now it has become prejudice. If at this moment you were to appear before him, he would turn from you as from a stranger."

Mr. Vivian shuddered, and his voice sounded faint and hollow, as he said: "My father! is it possible?"

"Quite possible. There is nothing in this world so stern as a petrified affection."

“ Yet you would have given me hope if I had remained in Jamaica ? ”

“ Yes, hope in your father’s justice ; he is still open to that, and if we weaken him upon one point, we weaken him upon all. If we could place before him the proofs of your cousin’s treachery, for treacherous I have not the smallest doubt he was ; if we could show him that you were not guilty to the extent which he believes, his strong sense of honour would be touched, and he would feel himself bound to redeem the injury he has done you. But there has, as yet, been no time for this. The letter which you wrote in answer to my first communication of our suspicions, has only just reached us ; and we must deal with your father cautiously, even for the sake of his age. Once, however, as I said, touch his sense of justice, and I should have hope. Mildred and I would place your character in its true light. We would make him feel how nobly you have borne your exile ; how devotedly you have laboured for your children.”

Mr. Vivian interrupted him impatiently : — “ I tell you, Lester, as I have told you before, you are mistaken. The amount of my offence is not the question. When I lost five pounds at the gaming table, I sinned in my father’s eyes as if I had lost five thousand. When I married without his consent, I grieved him as if I had chosen my wife from the very dregs of the people.”

“ True, in a certain sense ; but there is one thing which you forget. When a man sins against the virtue which he holds most dear, his repentance is keen in proportion to the estimation with which he

regards it. Justice has been your father's idol. If we can show him that he has been unjust, I can scarcely doubt that, in his eagerness to atone for the wrong he has done, he may be induced to overlook what, under other circumstances, he would have considered unpardonable."

Mr. Vivian considered for a few moment—then he said:—"Perhaps you are right. I have known him so influenced in former days. But how to obtain the proofs of injustice?"

"There, of course, lies the difficulty. The lapse of time is one very great obstacle. If I had known, years ago, what I know now, I should have had every hope of bringing the matter to a speedy conclusion; but, as you are aware, it was not till I became acquainted with your sister-in-law, and learnt from her the particulars of what took place at the time of your marriage, that I had any idea of the falsity of your cousin's statements. Unquestionably he swindled your father out of a large sum on that occasion. General Vivian once told me that he paid him more than five thousand pounds, on a solemn condition that he was never to be applied to for a similar sacrifice again. That was the result of his feelings of honour, added to his hasty pride. If he had but condescended to make inquiry of you, instead of receiving John Vivian's statements, he would have known that the utmost extent of your debts was not——"

"One thousand;—a much larger sum, I confess, than I had any right to risk; or, as you will say, and as I say now, I had no right to risk a penny. But on

what pretence John Vivian could have extracted five thousand from my father, is utterly beyond my comprehension."

"Then, as to the letters," continued Mr. Lester, "none reached Cleve, though you say you wrote constantly. He must have stopped them for his own foul purposes. There is no want of charity, I trust, in thinking so."

"Whatever may have been my offence against him, he has had his revenge," said Mr. Vivian; and a heavy sigh escaped him.

"No, Vivian, he has not had his revenge, whilst a chance remains of seeing either you or your boy restored to the inheritance you have lost. The injury he has already done has quickened and goaded his revenge, because it has placed himself in danger. The man is twice your enemy whose hatred has led him to degradation."

"Twice my enemy, indeed!" repeated Mr. Vivian; "first to myself; but, oh! Lester, far more terribly, it may be, to my boy."

Mr. Lester's face showed some painful thought; perhaps it crossed his mind that the sins of parents are punished in the faults of their children. But he shook off the feeling, whatever it was, and answered, "Our trust for Clement must be in a Higher Power than our own."

"And you don't think it would influence him for good to know that I was at hand?"

"It might do so, if the secret could be made known without risk. But we come back always to the same point; not so much what we are to do, as when. It

is the Gordian knot of many difficulties in life besides ours."

"Then cut it!" exclaimed Mr. Vivian, impetuously.

"That is the principle upon which you have acted through life, my dear Vivian; and what has been the result?"

The look of self-reproaching anguish which followed the question, almost made Mr. Lester repent that he had put it. Yet it had done its work.

"Yes, you are right; impatience has been my ruin!" and Edward Vivian's head was bowed upon his hands, as if even, to his truest friend, he dared not show the extent of his remorse.

Mr. Lester spoke more gently. "There is no ruin, Vivian, while there is hope; and no one but yourself need destroy your hope. You have made, I fear, a false step; but it is not irretrievable. Leave this place; hide yourself in London, and suffer your sister, Bertha Campbell, and myself, to work out our own plans. You may safely trust us to use our utmost efforts; and from time to time you will hear of our proceedings, whilst you will have the comfort of feeling yourself within reach of your children. Content yourself with this life for a while. You say that you can remain in England for a year. We will not look forward beyond; before it is over, I trust—nay more, I sincerely believe—that we shall once more see you restored to Cleve."

"And go from Encombe without seeing Mildred?" exclaimed Mr. Vivian.

"It may be necessary. I will not, at this moment, absolutely say that it is. But if John Vivian's sus-

picious are aroused, you have not a day to lose: either he will quit the place himself, and so we shall lose all chance of substantiating our charges against him; or — you will laugh at my fears; but a desperate man will do desperate deeds.”

Mr. Vivian considered for a few seconds: “I cannot see the necessity. Let me be brave, Lester; let me go at once to my father: severe, prejudiced though he is, I am still his son. Let me say to him that John Vivian deceived him: you yourself own that there would be hope then in his justice.”

“But the proofs of the deceit, where are they?”

“My own word!” exclaimed Mr. Vivian, haughtily.

“The word of one man against another,” was Mr. Lester’s quiet reply.

“John Vivian’s word against mine!—Lester, you dare not say that my father would take it.”

“I say that he would pride himself upon weighing both equally in the balance; and the stronger was the leaning towards you, the more hope there would be for your enemy. Yet I own it may come to this—it may be our last and only resource; and if it were so, I would run the risk, and trust to God for the issue. But before I attempted it, I would use every effort to put the matter in so clear a light that the strongest prejudice—even General Vivian’s—must own itself conquered. Remember, you will come before your father, not as the son whom he has always loved, but as the spendthrift gambler—I am using harsh words, but I know full well your father’s feel-

ing — who wounded him in the tenderest point, and brought sorrow, and what he considers disgrace, upon his house.”

A silence of some moments followed. The words had indeed been severe, and Mr. Vivian's proud spirit could little brook them.

Mr. Lester spoke again: “My dear Vivian, if I did not know the exaggeration of your father's mind, and if I were not certain that years of true repentance had followed upon the offences of youth, I could not speak as I do; but it is the very consciousness of the prejudice against which you have to struggle which makes me fearful lest you should begin the combat at a disadvantage. If you were what your father thinks you, I could not raise a finger to help you. Being what I know you are, I would sacrifice fortune and happiness, and even life, for your sake.”

“Yes, I know it, my truest, kindest friend. I was wrong;” and Mr. Vivian stretched out one hand in reconciliation, while the other vainly strove to hide the tears which gathered in his eyes.

“But,” continued Mr. Lester, more lightly, “I must not have to deal with wilfulness and impatience. So far, Vivian, you are unaltered: endurance is the lesson which you have yet to learn.”

“Eighteen years!—latterly years of utter loneliness. It was not possible to endure longer.”

“All things which God gives us to endure are possible,” replied Mr. Lester; “that is, of course, if we look at them in the right way.”

“And to bear the same life still,” continued Mr.

Vivian, "with no fixed hope or limit. Can it be necessary?"

"I think it so; but the decision must be left to yourself."

"And if it should be right! if it should be necessary! Oh, Lester, my heart grows sick with the prospect."

"My principle of endurance might sound too stern for you," said Mr. Lester. "You would rather hear me speak of hope."

"I would hear you speak of that which would be your own comfort."

"My comfort would be in punishment," replied Mr. Lester, "with love and hope to soften it, yet still unmistakably and undeniably punishment. I have found it so myself," he continued, earnestly. "There are sufferings which come upon us immediately from the Hand of God, without, as far as we can discover, any fault of our own. Such, we may believe, are trials of our faith, sent in mercy, to give us the opportunity of victory. But there are others, the consequences of our sins, and which we cannot fail to trace directly to that source. These we too often look upon as the natural effects of our own folly, and so weary ourselves with fruitless regrets, vain longings to undo the past; till at length we grow despairing, and the feelings of God's love, which can alone uphold us in our suffering, is lost in the consciousness of our own wretchedness. From your letters, Vivian, I am sure you understand that state of mind too well."

"Understand it, yes; it was the spirit of my existence for years."

“So once for a time was it mine, and I thought it was repentance, and dreaded to discourage it; but repentance is love, and in this feeling there is no love.”

“Not when we think of the love which has borne with us through all our wanderings?”

“That thought will not come when we are writhing under the consequences of our transgressions. We are then thinking only of ourselves. In such a state of mind there is but one thing which I find will calm me—to accept the suffering, whatever it may be, as coming at once from God as a punishment, or perhaps, more truly speaking, a correction; not to try to escape from it, nor even to allow myself to wish that I had not incurred it, but humbly and thankfully to submit to it. There is a sense of dignity and energy in this willing acceptance of our lot, which I believe to be absolutely essential to save us from the loss of self-respect, that must otherwise accompany sufferings resulting from past sin. Our will becomes one with God’s Will, and love must follow necessarily. My dear Vivian, am I wrong in speaking to you as I have often written?”

“Right, and most kind; but I must think of what you say another time. If I follow your advice, I shall have full leisure.”

“I trust not for long. Miss Campbell has already enlisted a champion in your cause.”

Mr. Vivian heaved a deep sigh: “Poor Bertha, I longed to see and talk to her also. There are some things in which she alone can sympathise. Yet she was little more than a child when we parted.”

“She is a woman now, and a noble one ; with faults indeed—who is without them?—but with a spirit of devoted unselfishness, which fits her for any work that may be given her. If it had not been for this afternoon’s adventure, I was going to suggest, what perhaps would have startled you, that you should meet her at the Rectory, and make yourself known to her.”

“Before I see Mildred : is that fair ?”

“We must take circumstances as they come before us. You could not possibly go to the Hall without the greatest risk, and Mildred cannot come to you. Besides, I have an idea that Miss Campbell already suspects the truth. It is one thing which has made me especially uneasy.”

“How ? I have most carefully avoided her.”

“Rachel gave me the hint, though unintentionally. Your present to her excited Miss Campbell’s interest and curiosity strangely.”

“My poor bird ! It belonged to the child of a friend in Jamaica, who was named after my dear wife. I thought no one but myself would recognise the name in its uncouth notes.”

“Bertha did ; and she has asked many questions about you which Rachel repeated to me. We should do wisely to trust her.”

Mr. Vivian’s countenance changed : “You will think me a coward, Lester. One moment I long for the meeting—the next I dread it. The remembrances which the expression of her face, the sound of her voice, will recall, are so intensely painful, I should but make a fool of myself.”

“Nevertheless it is due to her, when she is working for you in every way, with all her heart.”

“And my precious Mildred to be left,” continued Mr. Vivian, musingly.

“We will not say that absolutely. I desire almost more than you do to put Mildred in possession of the truth; but it would be agony to know you were here, and not to see you. And indeed, Vivian, you must not remain even for another day, if you wish to make your secret safe.”

“My own folly again!” exclaimed Mr. Vivian. “Yet how, at such a moment, could I remember the boy was near?”

“That is your least danger. Honourable as he is, he would die rather than betray you. But Mrs. Robinson tells me that Goff has been here asking curious and impertinent questions. If his suspicions are in the most remote degree excited, it would be madness to delay your departure.”

“To-morrow, then,—must it be?”

“To-morrow I would advise; but I would not go too suddenly or secretly. Come to me early at the Rectory. Let Mrs. Robinson give out publicly that you have business in London for a few days. In the middle of the day you can set off, and all will seem to follow in the natural course. It will be supposed you are to return, and we may hope to escape observation.”

Mr. Vivian was thoughtful. “That boy Ronald,” he said, “to have saved my own life, and the life of my child, and yet to be my deadly foe!”

“Ronald is no one’s foe,” replied Mr. Lester. “He

has that in him which would make him every one's friend, could the check once be securely placed upon his ungoverned feelings. Throw yourself upon his honour, and you are safe."

"I was afraid to do so at the time. The words escaped me at a moment when he was not, I hoped, near enough to catch them. Nothing in his manner showed that he had done so; and when my presence of mind returned, I felt it might be better to leave them without comment."

Mr. Lester looked a little anxious.

"You don't thoroughly trust him," continued Mr. Vivian.

I could do so entirely if I cared less. He already knows, I believe, something of the position of affairs, so far as his father is concerned. Miss Campbell is his friend — she was his mother's friend — and she has great influence with him. Last evening she had a long interview with him, and to-night she was to tell me what had passed. It might be wise to return with me to the Rectory. We shall find her there probably; and we could see our way more clearly, if we knew exactly how far Ronald would go with us or against us."

Mr. Vivian hesitated

"Have you any other plan?"

"A mad one! To go to Mildred, and then throw myself upon my father's mercy. The impulse is almost uncontrollable."

"So have been all your impulses through life. A false step at this moment, and farewell to hope for ever."

Mr. Vivian paced the room in extreme agitation.

"Your hat! Vivian. You will come?" That firm yet gentle voice had controlled him before, in his most excited moments, and now he obeyed it as by an instinct. They went downstairs together. Mrs. Robinson met them.

"Only to the Rectory," said Mr. Lester, smiling as he saw her disturbed face.

"And you won't return home late by yourself. Oh! Master Edward, you will be careful. Sir, you won't let him."

Mr. Vivian took her hand affectionately: "Dear Granny, you mustn't be afraid for me. These are not days for robbery and murder in the highways."

"But that fellow Goff, Master Edward,—I beg your pardon,—Mr. Bruce," and she drew back respectfully, as one of the farm servants crossed the passage.

"Don't fear, I won't keep you up late;" and Mr. Vivian nodded a kindly good-b'ye. But Mr. Lester lingered behind.

"I have hope," he whispered. "He will consent to go for the present; and for the future we must trust all to God."

"Thank you, Sir. Yes, we must all do that, indeed," and Mrs. Robinson dropped a formal yet reverent curtsey, and retired.

CHAP. XXI.

It was about nine o'clock, and Bertha and Rachel were together in Mr. Lester's study. Bertha was only just come, and she still wore the shawl which she had thrown over her shoulders as she crossed the garden : she looked fagged but excited.

"And you are quite sure Ella will be pretty well to-morrow?" said Rachel.

"Yes, I hope,—I think so. But, oh! Rachel, such a fearful situation! If Mr. Bruce had not tried to cross the tarn in the tiny boat, when he heard her scream, he would never have discovered her as quickly as he did."

Bertha sank down trembling in the arm chair.

Rachel drew a footstool towards her, and sat down at her feet. "I was afraid to ask to see her," she said.

"She was better alone," replied Bertha; Mr. Hargrave told me that perfect quietness was indispensable. I think the fainting was good for her in some ways. I dread what it will be when she can recall it all more distinctly. Yet one ought to be so thankful!" and Bertha heaved a sigh, which ended in a shudder.

"I don't think Ella can forget it," said Rachel, thoughtfully.

"It is not meant she should; but she is very slow in learning her lessons."

Rachel's face expressed a little wonder.

"Every thing that happens gives us some lesson, if we choose," said Bertha; "but you don't understand that yet, Rachel."

"Don't I? dear Miss Campbell. Isn't it like what papa says, 'That crosses cease to be crosses when we take them up instead of looking at them.'"

"Yes, something like it; but, Rachel, it is so odd, I can't think to-night." Bertha put her hand to her head, and rising walked up and down the room, and then sat down again. "Would you fetch me a little sal volatile, Rachel?" and Rachel, rather frightened, left the room. Bertha leant her head back in the chair. That swimming, faint, weak feeling which made her so ashamed of herself must surely be hysterical, and she must struggle against it. She seized a book, —the page was all in motion before her. She saw no letters, — only a phantom scene of a steep cliff, and rolling, shivering pebbles; and Ella sliding — sliding, —and the dark gulf below. She was upon the verge of giving way, when Rachel held out to her the glass of sal volatile. Bertha drank it off: "Thank you, dear: now I am better. Oh, that horrible cliff!" and she shook again from head to foot.

Rachel held her hand, "Dear Miss Campbell! she is safe."

"Yes, I know it; it might not have been: we must thank God. Rachel dear, would you mind—— I think, if you would read to me, I could try and listen."

"The Bible?" said Rachel, timidly.

"Yes — St. John; the seventeenth chapter, if you don't mind."

Rachel brought a Bible ; but she felt shy. She had never had to comfort or help any one older than herself before, at least in that way. And Bertha was so above her — so shut up from her ! She turned over the leaves slowly.

Bertha's eyes were shut : she looked quite ill. Rachel felt as if she could not begin. If it had been little Barney Wood who had asked her, she would have had no hesitation. Her voice was quite low from nervousness when she spoke the first sentence ; but as she went on, her own feelings were carried away by the words, and the rich, musical tones grew deeply earnest, and acting with a soothing charm upon Bertha's over-worked temperament, gradually lulled her into tranquillity.

Rachel's hand was resting on Bertha's lap : Bertha stroked it fondly as the chapter was ended, and the book closed.

“ Thank you, dear Rachel, you have done me good : you do me good always.”

“ Because you are so kind, you say that, dear Miss Campbell. It is very easy to read.”

“ Yes, only I could not bear some people's reading. Oh ! Rachel, I wonder who made you what you are ? ”

“ God made me,” said Rachel, quietly.

Bertha smiled. “ God makes us, and we unmake ourselves,” she said. “ But you have had a safe childhood, Rachel.”

“ I know persons think so,” said Rachel, thoughtfully.

“ And don't you ? ”

“ I can't tell ; if I was good, I dare say I should

feel it so. But sometimes—is it very wrong, Miss Campbell?—I think it is like Paradise with the serpent in it.”

“Yes, the safest home on earth must be that,” said Bertha. “But, Rachel, you must be thankful still that yours is not what other homes are.” She spoke with an earnestness which showed that the difference had lately been peculiarly brought before her.

“I try to be thankful,” replied Rachel; “but you know”—and she smiled shyly—“when the serpent comes I am not; and that makes me unhappy—very unhappy sometimes.”

“Ah, Rachel! so you fancy; but you can’t really know what unhappiness, or, at least, sorrow, means.”

“I did know it once”—Rachel’s colour went and came quickly—“when dear mamma died, and my little sister: I thought then I was never to be happy again.”

“Only papa taught you how,” said Bertha, kindly.

“Yes, he teaches me always; and he lets me tell him my difficulties. Do you know, Miss Campbell”—and she moved her stool so as to look up in Bertha’s face—“I have some great ones.”

Bertha’s hand rested affectionately upon Rachel’s head, as she replied: “Yes, dear child, great ones to you, no doubt.”

“Such wonderful, puzzling questions come into my head,” continued Rachel; “and it seems as if I could do nothing till they were settled. But I must not stop for them, must I? Papa tells me,” she added, her voice sinking, “that they are the serpent’s questions, and if I stay to answer them, they will

keep me back; and what I want is to go on and on, never to grow tired, or to fall back; because——” she hid her face in Bertha’s lap. “Oh! Miss Campbell, Papa says, those who strive the most, will stand near, and have a bright, bright crown; and I could not bear to be far off.”

Bertha’s eyes were full of tears; she could but kiss Rachel and say: “Ah! Rachel, if it were possible to make Ella think as you do!”

“Ella will be sure to try more after to-day,” said Rachel.

Bertha was very grave: “I hope so. She ought to remember the warning. But she has had many. One moment more, and it would have been all over.” The shuddering feeling seemed about to return.

“Don’t talk about it, dear Miss Campbell,” said Rachel anxiously. “It makes you ill again.”

“I try not, but I feel as if I must. It haunts me so; and when I close my eyes, it all comes before me again.”

“It was very dreadful,” said Rachel, “when papa came and told me of it; and it must have been much worse for you.”

“I longed so very much for your papa,” continued Bertha. “I thought at first, when I saw Ronald and Mr. Bruce at a distance with Ella, that Mr. Bruce was Mr. Lester, and my heart sank terribly when I found he was not.”

“Papa says, Mr. Bruce did more for her than even Ronald,” observed Rachel: did Ella thank him very much?”

“He would not stay to be thanked,” replied Bertha.

“ You know they brought her home in Farmer Corbin’s little chaise, and Mrs. Corbin came with her. She was so dizzy, she scarcely knew what was going on ; and when they came to the shrubbery gate, Mr. Bruce said, that now she would be in such good hands, he would leave her. He was gone before Ella could know it, and without even waiting to see me. Very strange !” Bertha fell into a reverie.

Rachel also was thoughtful, and once she seemed about to make an observation, but she checked herself. There was a silence of some moments. When they spoke again, the subject was changed.

“ How little papa and I thought what was going to happen when we set off for our walk this afternoon !” said Rachel. “ I was so happy. It was such a delicious afternoon ; and we went above the hollow, instead of under it, which is just what I like. And then I had to look forward to coming back and drinking tea with Ella and you. And now it is all so different ! It seems as if I never could trust to any thing again.”

Bertha smiled : “ You will though, Rachel ; in a day or two, — a week at the utmost — you will feel just as you did before, or, at least, very nearly so.”

“ But that will be wicked,” said Rachel.

“ Not exactly. We are so formed by God that we can’t help it ; and the world would stand still if it were not so.”

“ I don’t understand that ; it does seem wrong.”

“ Just think,” replied Bertha, “ what the state of the world would be if we did not believe that things were to be to-morrow as they are to-day. No one

would form plans, or make engagements, or provide in any way for the future; all business would be at an end, and universal confusion would follow. It always seems to me one of the most astonishing things in human nature that, with our great experience of change, we yet should have such untiring faith in continuance. Sometimes," — Bertha paused, and glanced at Rachel, doubting whether she might venture to carry out her own thought; then, as the eager, inquiring eye was bent upon her with evident interest, she added — "sometimes I think that it must be a relic of the higher nature in which we were first created, and in which there would have been, we may believe, no sudden change, but only a gradual transition from one state of existence to another. If one may say it without irreverence, it seems like all our deep instincts—such as the craving for perfection, and the inextinguishable love of life — to belong properly to Him, who, as the Bible says, 'is the same yesterday, to-day, and to-morrow.' But, Rachel, I don't know why I should talk in that way to you."

"I like it," said Rachel, quickly — "it is the way papa talks — and it makes me feel as I do sometimes when I am left all alone, and I stand still and think how wonderful it is to live."

"Yes," replied Bertha, "so wonderful, that if we believe in our own existence, there is nothing else which need surprise us."

Rachel put her hand to her forehead. "It makes one dizzy," she said; "and, do you know, Miss Campbell, all the thoughts and the feelings come upon me, now and then, in such a strange way, just as if they

were the only things worth caring for, and as if I could do nothing but sit in the middle of the world and think."

"The feeling must be good and useful occasionally," said Bertha; "but, dear Rachel, you must not let yourself become a dreamer."

"No"—Rachel's face grew sad. "Papa says it is my temptation, and that I shall never conquer it, except by learning to live out of myself, — living, as he calls it, in the life of others."

"Being unselfish. I am sure I think you are that;" and Bertha bent down and kissed the lovely little face, which was gazing up at her with its marvellous expression of inward thought.

Rachel blushed deeply, whilst a watery mist for the moment dimmed the brightness of her deep blue eyes: "Dear Miss Campbell, I like you to say that; but I ought not to like it, because I am not unselfish; but I do long to be so, more than I can tell. Something which papa said, has helped me though when I have been inclined to despair because the dreamy fits have come upon me, and I have felt as if I must give way to them."

"Papa has helped you then, as he has me," observed Bertha; "he has given me a number of useful hints."

"He seems to understand so well," replied Rachel. "One day when I was talking about persons' natural dispositions, and how strange it was they were so different, he said to me, that if we look into our own characters, we shall find that God has given us all some quality to counterbalance our natural faults. A passionate person generally has energy, and an

indolent person kind-heartedness, and a selfish person perseverance. There is always something, which, if we use it properly, will be a great assistance to us. Of course he meant with God's help. And then he said to me that my disposition led me to dream away my time, and to think of puzzling questions, instead of being really good; and that if I gave way to it too much I should grow up to be selfish; but he said that I had something in me which would counteract it, if I tried very hard and prayed very earnestly; he called it benevolence." Rachel stopped, and a smile passed over her face as she added—"That seems a grown up virtue. I never can fancy a benevolent child; it seems so very droll."

Bertha smiled too, as she exclaimed, "Go on; tell me what else papa said."

"He explained what he meant afterwards," continued Rachel. "He said that when people are benevolent they dislike to see others suffer, and can't bear to give pain. It is not any good in them exactly, they can't help it. And, Miss Campbell"—Rachel's colour rose, and she rather hesitated—"I think perhaps he may be right; for it does make me so exceedingly uncomfortable to see other persons so. He told me then that I was to act upon the feeling whenever I possibly could, and that it would help me to keep myself what he called practical. And so I have tried to do it; but sometimes it is very difficult; only I think it is easier than it was. You know it is a good thing to be told what one ought to encourage most in oneself."

"And did not papa tell you that benevolent people

are very often in danger of becoming weak?" said Bertha, following out her own ideas, without considering what effect they might have upon her little companion.

Rachel looked distressed. "He did not tell me so; but is it true? must I be weak?"

"I don't say you must, but I know that a great many persons who set up for being benevolent are very weak."

"Perhaps they are nothing else except benevolent," observed Rachel, after a moment's thought. "Papa declares that virtues, when they stand alone, become vices."

"Yes." Bertha considered a little. "That may be."

"It was rather difficult to understand it all, that day he talked," continued Rachel; "but I think he said, that perfection—God's perfection"—and her voice changed into awe—"is because all His great attributes (that is what I ought to say, isn't it?) are equal,—equally balanced, papa called it; that He is not more just than He is merciful, and not more merciful than He is just; and therefore we ought to try to be the same: and when we pride ourselves upon any one virtue above others we may be quite sure we are likely to go wrong. It made me rather unhappy to hear him say so, because he spoke as if the very best people must be so imperfect."

"Yes, indeed, they are," said Bertha.

"I suppose they must be. But, dear Miss Campbell, it does not seem so to me."

"You are so young, Rachel. But certainly you must take care not to pride yourself upon benevolence."

“Else I shall become weak ; but you know there is my love of standing still and thinking to check it. Oh ! Miss Campbell, doesn’t it seem very hard sometimes, to think that we must go on always in that way, first at one thing and then at the other ?”

“Trying to make the scale equal,” said Bertha.

“Yes. Do you know, papa says that when we have learnt to keep our faults under, our next work is to keep our virtues even. And he told me that he had known some good persons do such wrong things because they did not attend to this. One very generous person would give away sums of money, and never cared in the least for his own comfort ; but he did not check himself properly, and at last he had nothing left to pay his debts, and so was dreadfully unjust : and another very just, particular person, was so careful not to owe any thing, and so determined to provide for every thing which might be a claim upon him, that at last he would not give away at all. That was the difference, papa told me, also, between large and narrow minds. I didn’t know what was meant by them before. He said that if persons try to keep their virtues evenly balanced, they have large minds ; but if they allow one to weigh down the rest, then they have narrow minds.”

A large subject, and one which opened a wide field of thought to Bertha Campbell. Rachel was unable to read her friend’s countenance ; she even doubted whether she had listened ; she could not feel that she was interested. Reserve was creeping over them. But the hall bell rang, and Mr. Lester and Edward Vivian entered the room.

Rachel's greeting hid Bertha's start of surprise. She ran up to Mr. Vivian with the simple affection natural to her, and exclaimed: "Oh! is it you, Sir? and are you hurt?"

"Not hurt, my child; how should I be? I was in no danger; but—" and he turned to Bertha, and his manner became very stiff and awkward—"I hope Ella—Miss Vivian"—he did not seem to know what inquiry to make, and sat down in the nearest chair, turning his head away from Bertha.

"Rachel, my love, your bed is waiting for you," said Mr. Lester.

Rachel knew quite well what that meant. Business was going on which she was not to hear. But curiosity had been checked in her from infancy; and the instinct of refined feelings made her at once ready to go without asking, as she might have done at another time, to be allowed to learn more of the accident.

"Good night, dear Miss Campbell."

Bertha's kiss was icy, so also was the touch of her fingers; it did not appear that she was quite conscious of Rachel's presence.

"Good night, little one," said Mr. Vivian. He laid his hands upon her shoulders, and gazed at her intently.

"I am so glad you were not hurt," whispered Rachel; and she went up to her father, always under all circumstances the claimant of her last words and thoughts.

"God bless you, my precious child!"

"Good night, darling papa! You will come and

see me the last thing ;” and Rachel ran away, happy in the consciousness that even if she should be asleep, a fond kiss and an earnest prayer were in store for her again before the night should pass.

The door closed. Mr. Lester placed himself between Bertha and Mr. Vivian. There was a painful, awkward silence. Then Mr. Lester asked a few questions about Ella. Bertha answered in a tone of nervous confusion. After a few moments she said that she must go.

“Not just yet.” Mr. Lester touched the arm of the chair to prevent her from rising. “Mrs. Campbell will spare you a little longer. There is, — we have ——” he broke off suddenly, and glanced appealingly at Mr. Vivian.

Bertha turned very pale ; her eyes moved uneasily from one to the other. Mr. Lester seemed about to speak again ; his lips even framed the words ; yet he hesitated.

Bertha broke the spell ; and, gently pushing aside Mr. Lester’s hand, rose, and approaching Mr. Vivian, said, in a firm, calm voice, “Edward, you cannot deceive me.” The struggle was over, and she sat down and burst into tears.

“Leave her to me, Lester.” Mr. Vivian knelt on one knee by Bertha’s chair, and holding her hand in his, said, “Bertha, you are not grieved to see me ? My Flora’s sister ; the adopted mother of my children ! you don’t think it wrong in me to be here ?”

Bertha’s voice was choked, but she returned the kindly pressure of his hand. He went on : — “You must not say I have deceived you, Bertha. I have

deceived no one. I acted upon an impulse: the opportunity offered,—I was unable to resist it. I will be true; I did not try to do so; I was so wretched. Lester did not know it; no one knew it. I meant to have gone to London. I could have hid myself there; but it was accident—Providence—which brought me here; and I am going;—don't be frightened at what may seem my recklessness; I am not reckless now, I have learnt prudence; and I am going;—but I could not leave you in ignorance."

"Going, again!" repeated Bertha, in a tone of bewilderment, whilst her eyes were still fixed upon him, as if she scarcely believed in the reality of his appearance.

"He is going, because it is best and wisest that he should, for a time at least," observed Mr. Lester. "But, dear Miss Campbell, you must hear him tell his own tale. I will leave you, unless you think it might be better to delay what must be said until to-morrow."

"If you would tell me what it all means," said Bertha, her manner recovering itself and returning to something of its former composed self-restraint. "Edward, have you really done wisely?" Her tone was a little severe.

He answered quickly,—“Not wisely in Lester's eyes, nor perhaps in yours; but wisely in my own. Bertha, you were a child when we parted, yet I should have thought that events had taught you to feel for me.”

Her lip quivered. “Our love lies buried in the

same grave. Your children are as my children ; your interests as my interests."

"Then your feelings must be my feelings," he exclaimed with impetuosity ; "and from you at least I shall meet with sympathy. Ten mournful years of solitude, Bertha, may and must be my excuse."

"Yes ; but if all is marred in consequence?"

"It shall not be. I put myself into your hands. I trust you as —" his voice faltered—"as my Flora's sister deserves to be trusted. You and Lester shall decide for me. To-morrow I leave this place ; I will hide myself in London, and appear again only when I am summoned. Let me but have the blessing of feeling that I am within reach of my children ; that I may, though at a distance, watch over my boy. Oh, Bertha ! is he also to bring care upon us?"

Bertha hesitated.

"Tell me truly. I would know the worst. Are my children to bear the curse of their father's sins?"

"It is early to judge," replied Bertha. "Clement requires a father's authority."

"And he cannot have it ; he might have had it if his father had not been the fool—the madman—he was. To be deceived, entrapped, by that man !" He paced the room angrily.

"You could not have been prepared for treachery," replied Bertha.

"I ought never to have given him power over me," was the reply. "Yes ; I can trace it all now ; I have gone over the steps again and again. It has been the occupation of my leisure for years," he

added, with a bitter smile. "When first I went abroad, Bertha, I was innocent, innocent as the child who has just left us—at least of every grave offence; my heart, my thoughts, were all given to one object, — an earthly object, — and God took it from me;" and his voice trembled: "but I shrank from gambling; I abhorred low company; my impulses were noble. I might have been — oh, weakness! weakness! surely it is more fatal than sin."

"The weakness which is conquered may become doubly strength," observed Mr. Lester, gently.

"Yes, when it is; but is it ever conquered? I feel it still in myself. I struggle with it; but too often I yield. I tremble to think that it may be so with my boy."

"Vivian, you must deal with yourself justly," replied Mr. Lester. "You have laboured and suffered patiently; you have risen from ruin which might have been the death of every better feeling. Eighteen years of probation have made you, if not a good and wise man, in your own eyes, at least one whom the world may respect, and friends love, and whom — from my heart I believe it — God will approve. It is vain therefore to look back upon the past with self-reproach, which is unavailing. Rather, rouse your spirit for the future; hope, and if you cannot hope, trust. The God who has not deserted you will not forsake your children."

"But to have brought evil upon them! to have injured them! Oh, Lester! the long, lingering train of sorrow which the fiery comet of sin drags after it!"

“Even so, for us all,” replied Mr. Lester. “Yet there can be no cause for despair, especially as regards Clement.”

“But is there the power in him to improve? that is what I doubt, and dread.”

“Power lies with God, not with us,” replied Mr. Lester.

“Clement has great faults,” began Bertha.

“But he has very noble qualities,” interrupted Mr. Lester.

Bertha looked annoyed. “It is quite true,” she said, “that Clement has many points which would, in themselves, form a fine character; but he has one great foible,—I think his father was always free from it,—he is vain.”

Mr. Vivian showed by his face that he shrank from the suggestion. “Vanity!” he muttered, “in a man!—it must lower him.”

“It must, and does lower every one; does it not?” inquired Bertha.

“But Clement has sense and conscientiousness,” observed Mr. Lester. “He is a gentleman, too, with the refined feelings of a gentleman, and a keen sense of the ridiculous. All these things will be, humanly speaking, aids.”

“And I suppose we may believe,” continued Bertha, “that his position, as comparatively poor and unknown, may have been better for him than if he had been brought up as the heir of Cleve. He at least has not been petted and spoiled by the flattery of servants.”

“Thank you; you are very good, very kind. And

Ella, too, is she vain?" The question was asked with some bitterness.

"Not exactly. Not at all, I think; at least——" Bertha looked at Mr. Lester for assistance.

"We will talk over the children's faults to-morrow," he said. "Miss Campbell will come to us in the morning."

Bertha rose; she seemed conscious that something of uncomfortable restraint had crept over them; and remarked that it was growing late, and they had talked of nothing definite.

"Because there is little to be said as yet," replied Mr. Lester. "Vivian leaves us to-morrow for London. That, at least, you will consider a safe step."

"Safe, if it is always so to act against inclination, as moralists contend," observed Mr. Vivian, with an attempt at ease. "Lester has fears for me, Bertha, which I can't share."

"Miss Campbell will understand them, I am sure," observed Mr. Lester. "She has as little faith in John Vivian as I have."

"Less," replied Bertha; "for I have known him longer and better; but, Edward, you won't content yourself with remaining in London."

"He will content himself with doing whatever we think best for him, at the present," said Mr. Lester. "In the meantime, Miss Campbell, we must trust to you to find out, as soon as possible, whether Ronald suspects our secret; and if he does, to caution him as to keeping it."

"Ronald! impossible!"

"Scarcely impossible, when a man betrays his own

counsel. Perhaps it was not to be expected that Vivian should be master of himself at the moment he saved Ella."

Bertha looked at her brother-in-law for explanation.

"It is very true," he said; "I was thrown off my guard, and forgot the young fellow was near. Whether he heard or not, I can't say. He looked unconscious; but I would not trust him."

"Not trust Ronald!" exclaimed Bertha, quickly. "Noble, true-hearted, unselfish, he would sacrifice his life before he would betray you."

Mr. Vivian glanced at her in astonishment. Her manner was singularly unlike what it had been when she spoke of his own children.

Mr. Lester read what was passing in his mind. "Miss Campbell has reason to trust Ronald," he said; "she has known him from infancy."

"Oh!" But the explanation did not seem thoroughly satisfactory; and Mr. Vivian's manner was cold, as he added,—"Bertha must forgive me for distrusting the son of my greatest enemy."

"I know that every one must distrust him," said Bertha.

"Every one but myself," observed Mr. Lester. "I had used almost the same words as yourself, when speaking of him to Vivian, a short time since. All that we have to fear is, that he may incautiously reveal the truth before he knows that it may do mischief. That is, always supposing he heard Vivian's exclamation. You, perhaps, will find that out more easily than any one."

"We are safe either way," replied Bertha, still

with the same cold reserve of manner. "Ronald knows enough of his father's proceedings to be on his guard. If you have nothing else to fear, Edward, I congratulate you."

Mr. Vivian's countenance was moody, and he made no reply.

Bertha gathered her shawl around her. "My mother will be surprised at my being out so late. What time shall I see you, to-morrow, Edward?"

Mr. Lester answered,—“He will be here to breakfast. My study will be at his service, and at yours, all the morning. In the afternoon I will myself drive him into Cleve, and see him fairly on his journey. Starting so late, he will not reach London till the next day; but that will be better than any very rapid movement, which might excite observation.”

“Thank you. Then to-morrow, Edward”—she offered him her hand, and he took it mechanically, but turned to Mr. Lester:—

“Must I be denied the sight of my children? May I not say one word to Clement?”

“You can answer your own question, my dear Vivian. Do you think it safe?”

“Clement could not possibly be trusted to keep your counsel,” observed Bertha.

Mr. Vivian dropped her hand coldly, but something seemed to reproach him for it, and he spoke kindly: “Good night, Bertha, and a father's blessing for your care of his children.”

Bertha was touched and softened. “Good night, Edward. If I don't think your children perfect, it is not from any want of love for them.”

She hurried from the room. Mr. Lester followed her. "I must walk with you across the garden, Miss Campbell;" and he offered his arm, which she took silently. Mr. Lester felt that she trembled. "This has been a most trying, exciting day," he said. "I would, if I could, have spared you the discovery of to-night; but I doubted what to-morrow might bring, and feared that Vivian might be obliged to go without seeing you."

"It was no discovery," replied Bertha. "I was certain before,—that is, nearly. Oh! Mr. Lester, it seems such a dream!"

"Yes." He seemed considering what to add.

"He is not altered," continued Bertha; then, in a lower tone, she added: "I had hoped he might be."

"He is altered, I trust," observed Mr. Lester. "He looks at things very differently from what he did."

"He cannot bear truth," said Bertha.

"Not under some forms."

"Not under any form, I fear," continued Bertha; "at least when it is unpleasant. In that, Clement is so like him."

They had reached the gate between the two gardens; Bertha was going to cross the little bridge, but Mr. Lester stopped her. "May I give you one warning?"

"As many as you will; I am always grateful for them from you."

"It can never be right to say what we don't think; but is it always necessary to say what we do?"

"You mean about the children?"

“ Yes, I fear you have pained him, and he is already suffering greatly.”

“ I am very sorry ; I meant no harm. But he must know it in time.”

“ In time, yes ; but not at this time ; or at least not without some softening words.”

The change in Bertha's voice showed her vexation. “ I am always doing wrong,” she said ; “ how can I help it ? ”

“ Perhaps, if you had put yourself in his place, you might have understood.”

Silence followed till they reached the door of the Lodge. Then as Bertha rang the bell, and wished Mr. Lester good night, she said : “ You may be right, but I cannot speak in a way which I don't feel.”

CHAP. XXII.

MR. LESTER returned to find his study empty. Mr. Vivian was gone. That impulsive, irritable nature which had led him into so much evil in earlier years, was, as Bertha had said, in some measure, unchanged. Still, if thwarted, he was, for a season, moody ; if forced to listen to unpleasing truths, he was disheartened. The child was father of the man and the faults which had grown up unchecked till he was four-and-twenty, would yet too often be his tyrant at two-and-forty. He wandered forth now, desolate and dispirited to a degree greater than even his situation might occasion. He had gone to the Parsonage, excited, sanguine, longing and hoping for sympathy ; but he had been disappointed. He felt as if he had been repelled, and by one to whom he ought to have been especially dear. The sister of her for whose sake he had sacrificed home, fortune, all that could render life precious. If Bertha had educated his children to be what she was herself, there could be but little union between them ; and he might now be wearing away his life in a distant land with as much prospect of happiness as he could hope for in a restoration to his own country.

Very unreasonable, perhaps, such thoughts might seem at such a time ; but whatever may be the ro-

mance, or poetry, or even danger of our position, we are still, except at the very moment of excitement, subject to the every day impressions, which, for the most part, make up our existence.

The prejudiced, unbalanced tone of Bertha's mind, which stopped the current of her natural sympathies, had thrown her brother-in-law from her at the very moment when it was most necessary that he should be drawn towards her.

And Edward Vivian could not be what Mr. Lester was — impartial. He knew little of Bertha's character, except from letters; and those had been generally kind, but formal. He did not doubt her right principle, but he did her spirit of self-devotion; and with the impatience natural to him, which made him chafe against every impediment to his wishes, he fancied that he was about to place himself in the power of one who looked coldly upon his interests, cared little for his children, and would allow him to linger week after week in exile, whilst waiting for the opportunities which a hearty determination would at once have found.

It was a grievous injustice to Bertha, whose chief thought was to see him restored to his inheritance, and her one object that his children should be educated to be an honour and comfort to him. But the thought and the object were the results of duty rather than affection, and with this Mr. Vivian's susceptible feelings could not be satisfied.

He lingered on his way, for motion was soothing to his chafed spirit; and a thousand busy thoughts were passing through his brain. Why should he have re-

turned to England? Why strive for that which, ever as he drew near, receded from his grasp? The hope of restoration, how bright and dazzling had it seemed when viewed across the distance of the far ocean! Now, in his native village, within sight of his father's Hall, within reach of his sister's voice, and the influence of his friend's counsel, it was dwindling, fading, till nothing seemed left but solitude, comfortless and dreary; with coldness where he had expected warmth, prudence where he had looked for energy.

It might have been an unreasonable, an unthankful feeling, that rose up in the heart of the weary exile, for, alas! sorrow tends to exaggerate our faults, as well as to strengthen our virtues; but it was Bertha's work—Bertha, the unselfish, the pure-minded, the devoted—her work, because she had never yet learnt to heal the wounds of truth by the oil of sympathy.

It was a beautiful starlight evening, and the moon, though not full, gleamed clear in the cloudless heavens, and brought out every near object distinctly. The path through the village was the nearest to the Farm, and Mr. Vivian pursued it without thought, or rather with that engrossing thought which blinds us to the external world. He did not see the figure of a man standing below the porch of the first cottage which he passed; neither did he hear the footsteps which slowly and cautiously followed his. He went on, with his usual rapid, irregular pace, every now and then pausing, as some fresh idea struck him, and occasionally raising his arm high in the air, following

out in action the feelings either of hope or despair which were at the moment paramount in his breast. The figure which followed him kept at a certain distance, stopped when he stopped, advanced when he advanced, still keeping in the shade, or, when obliged to emerge into the light, hurrying on, and then delaying, evidently with the wish not to approach too near.

The upper and open part of the village was passed, and they entered the ravine. The shadows there were deeper, the light glanced through the foliage of the trees more stealthily. Occasionally the barking of a dog broke the stillness, but, for the most part, all was silent save the quick, dashing murmur of the brook, tossing its way, over rocks and pebbles, to the ocean.

Mr. Vivian quickened his pace ; he seemed to feel the chilliness of the evening air, and presently he stopped to button his coat more closely round him. He was opposite to a cottage, standing high upon the bank, the only one in which a light still gleamed below. The door was open, and a man was standing on the threshold, his form clearly defined by the brightness of the light behind him. As Mr. Vivian passed, a sharp, shrill, and very peculiar whistle was heard. It must have been an instinct, certainly it was not fear, which induced Mr. Vivian to quicken his step, keeping close against the garden-wall, so that he might not be perceived. The figure behind also crept back further into the shade. Mr. Vivian was out of sight ; the whistle was heard again, and answered, and Goff, the fisherman, stealing out of his

cottage, met Ronald Vivian at the foot of the rough flight of steps which gave admittance to the garden from the road.

“I saw you, youngster. Why didn’t you answer? I thought you had given me the slip!” was the insolent greeting; to which Ronald replied by striding over the little stile, and leading the way up to the cottage door, where he placed himself so as to intercept the view of the road.

Goff followed impatiently. “Twenty steps, where one would do!” he muttered to himself, and then added aloud, “You’ve no need to go so far to learn your duty.”

“My father bade me come to hear the result of your inquiry,” said Ronald haughtily. “He spoke mysteries, so do you, but I am used to them. Only let me hear what you would say quickly.”

“The Captain’s been out all day, I suppose?”

“Yes, at Cleve. He has only just returned. If the inquiry was not satisfactory, I was to say that he expected you to-night at the Grange.”

“High and mighty! but he’ll learn differently some day. You passed no one on the road, eh, Ronald?”

“I came by the back lane till I was in the village, and there I saw a pedlar man at the door of a public house. Is that part of your mystery?”

“The parson went home an hour since,” said Goff, carelessly, “and the man at the Farm, Bruce they call him, with him. He’d be back about this time. I’ve a notion he’s friends with the Preventives; so we’d best not meet him.”

“Perhaps so; what message am I to take to my father?”

Instead of answering, Goff went again down the flight of steps, and looked up and down the road. “I thought I heard a tramp; and it’s time to be on our watch for those Preventive fellows.”

“My father is gone to the Point, and he bade me follow him; what message am I to take him?” repeated Ronald.

“Tell him I’ve an inkling I was right as to the cargo, but the craft was too far off to be searched. I may know more before to-morrow. Your father is at the Point, you say?”

“He expects his vessel in,” replied Ronald.

“I doubt whether they’ll try the landing to-night; the tide doesn’t serve.”

“He will be back at the Grange soon, then,” said Ronald, “and is he to see you there?”

“Umph! that’s as may be. Say I’ve business at home, both for him and for me. If he doesn’t hear to-night, he will in the morning. And now my young scamp, you may depart.”

He went down some of the steps, beckoning to Ronald to follow. But one bound, as it seemed, had brought Ronald to the stile. He vaulted across it, halloed a hasty “Good night” to Goff, and ran with his full speed, taking short cuts and by-paths, in the direction which Mr. Vivian had pursued, whilst Goff seated himself on the garden-wall, and occupied himself with a pipe.

The end of the ravine was reached; Mr. Vivian was about to emerge from it into the open space in

front of the Farm. The night was so calm, the effect of his walk so soothing, that he was doubtful whether to stop or proceed further, and his step lingered as he gazed upon the old building, standing grey and ghost-like in the moonshine, and revolved in his mind the changes and sorrows associated with it.

“If Mr. Vivian is wise, he will rest when others rest,” was uttered in a low, deep voice, by some one at his side. He started, scarcely conscious at the first moment that he had been addressed by his true name; yet his hand grasped his stick with the quick perception of possible danger, and he turned sharply round with an indignant ejaculation.

“Those who betray their own secrets have no right to be angry when they are reminded of it,” continued Ronald.

“Ronald Vivian! Speak plainly, young fellow. Let me hear your object.”

“That you should know I know you,” said Ronald, boldly. “We meet then upon equal ground.”

“John Vivian’s son can never stand upon equal ground with me,” was the reply. “You have aided me in danger, and I thank you for it, heartily. Name your recompense; you shall have it. For my secret—do with it as you will; I am indifferent to it.” Yet as he spoke, Mr. Vivian’s eye glanced quickly round, fearing, apparently, that the boy’s approach was to be followed by that of others, whom he might have more cause to dread.

“Thanks! Recompense! Mr. Vivian, let me tell you ——” and Ronald drew nearer, and his voice was harsh and hesitating. But suddenly it changed, as

he muttered, "Fool that I am! to think he would understand!"

"Say to your father, if he has sent you," began Mr. Vivian ——

Ronald interrupted him. "I do not come from my father. I have that to say which may be for your good; but first, we must understand each other. Your thanks, I do not desire them; your reward, I would not accept it, if it were the wealth of the Indies you could offer me. Now, then, will you hear me?"

"Yes, say what you will, but shortly."

"And not here," said Ronald. He threw back the wicket-gate, entered the Farm Court, and tried the door into the garden, which was bolted.

Mr. Vivian touched his arm. "If we are to speak upon private matters, there is no place so secure as my own apartment."

"I am used to the free air," replied Ronald. "I can speak better in it." He drew back the bolt. "Now, then, we are safe," and carefully refastening the door again, on the inside, he turned into the broad turf walk which divided the garden into two equal parts.

"Your father has doubtless learnt that I am here," said Mr. Vivian.

"I came on my own account; my father ——" Ronald paused, and then went on impetuously. "You don't trust me. I am used to that. God help me to bear it. Mr. Vivian, you are my father's enemy."

"Rather, your father is mine," was the answer, uttered more gently.

"An enemy makes an enemy. You hate him;

justly, perhaps ; yes, justly it must be. You think, too, that you have cause to hate me also."

"Hate you, Ronald ! I owe my own life to you, and to-day you have aided in saving my child."

"The new favour will not wipe out the old grudge," replied Ronald. "Young though I am, I have seen too much of the world to believe that. Safety, both for yourself and your daughter, would have been more precious if purchased by any other means. Nay, let me speak," he added, seeing that Mr. Vivian was about to interrupt him. "I have nothing to say upon that subject. It is gone — forgotten. It is of yourself, Mr. Vivian, that I would have you think. You are my father's enemy, and your secret is in my hands. Upon what terms think you it is to be kept ?"

"Upstart ! insolent !" exclaimed Mr. Vivian. "Do you think I fear your father ?"

"You have cause to do so," was Ronald's calm reply.

"Cause ! Yes, cause indeed !" And the tone was bitter in its remorse. "I do fear him, but not as you think ; not for the injury he may have done me in former years, not for the evil he may yet bring upon me in this world. I fear him as I fear the spirit of evil ; the demon that tempts man to his eternal destruction. There is no bargain to be made with such fear."

A look of agony passed over Ronald's face at the last words. He pressed his hands tightly together, and when he spoke, his tone was hollow, in the effort to repress his feelings : "Yet the question is un-

answered. Upon what terms is the secret to be kept?"

"Upon no terms, Sir; let the whole world know it, and, come what may, I will abide it."

"That may be a hasty word long to be repented," replied Ronald.

"Never to be repented. There must be war; aye, for ever, between John Vivian and myself; between his children and my children. Young fellow, you have your answer."

"I have not my answer," replied Ronald. "Mr. Vivian, you think you are speaking to a boy, and you are right. A boy I am in years, but they have been years in which a man's experience has been condensed. You cannot and shall not turn from me in this way. You shall listen as to a man, your equal, and you shall grant me my demands as to one who holds your fate in his hands, and will never be tempted to swerve from his resolve either by threat of punishment or hope of reward. Once more, upon what terms shall your secret be kept?"

He folded his arms, and leant his back against a tree, and the pale gleaming of the moon showed a face, anxious, haggard, yet immovable. Mr. Vivian was touched by its expression, whilst his spirit revolted from the proud words which he had just heard. "You are a strange fellow, Ronald," he said more lightly. "Do you think that a man who has reached my age, and has the happiness of so many depending upon him, would have placed himself in a situation which a hasty word of his own, and the wilfulness of a boy like yourself, might render really perilous? You

delude yourself. It has been my will for purposes of my own to remain for a time concealed ; but the truth must, before long, come forth. Your betrayal of it, or that of your father, can have but little effect upon my fortunes."

"Trust to that hope if you will," replied Ronald : "believe that the man whom you injured in the point nearest to his heart will suffer his revenge to die ; trust that he will allow you to return, and rake up the ashes of past deeds, and search out the offences which, it may be, are hidden amongst them ; but, remember, it is at your own peril, against the warning of one who knows that life and death are at this moment trembling in the balance of your decision."

Mr. Vivian started. "Ha ! Are you come to threaten me ? I might have known the spirit of John Vivian hidden under the form of his son." And he laughed scornfully.

"I bear with your injustice — with your suspicions, Mr. Vivian. God knows, I feel too truly how they have been deserved. Doubt me if you will, yet still listen to me. One word from me, and the thought which is now but a slumbering ember, will be kindled into a flame, and the most hidden recesses of English ground will not ensure your safety."

"You want money, young man ; you shall have it, so far as my poverty will admit ; but not to purchase secrecy and safety. There is a God above, and He will protect me."

"Money !" Ronald's deep voice sounded as the burst of thunder on the clear air. But the check followed in a moment, and the tones of a child could

not have been more gentle than his as he added : “ Mr. Vivian, I want not money, but pardon.” He covered his face with his hands, and a bitter groan burst from him. Then resuming, his former attitude, and speaking almost coldly, he continued : “ But for my aid you might have perished in the storm, your child might have been dashed from the heights of the Croome. But for my secrecy now, danger, near and pressing, little though you may believe it, must haunt your steps. Is it too much to ask forgiveness in return for life ? ”

“ Forgiveness, Ronald ! you speak riddles ; you have never offended me.”

“ My father has. He has injured you. His injuries may, they must, some day come to light : yes, and by my instrumentality ; ” and again he hid his face and shuddered. “ Mr. Vivian, when that day shall come, will you not remember that Ronald was your friend in the hour of peril ? — that for your sake he risked the hastening of that fearful account which we are told we are all to give before God ? ”

“ Remember ! ” Mr. Vivian grasped his hand. “ Ronald, so surely will I remember your good deeds, as I pray that God in His mercy may forget my evil ones. But even yet I cannot see your purpose.”

“ It may be a sad history, yet I will beg you to listen to it, ” replied Ronald. “ Mr. Vivian, I have not now for the first time learnt that I was the son of a man whom the world terms reprobate. I discovered it in my childhood, when I said my prayers at my mother’s knee, stealthily, because my father would interrupt them ; I saw it in my mo-

ther's tears, when he left her to join in riot and intemperance. I heard it from her own lips as she lay on her death bed, and charged me never to follow his evil courses, and yet, if possible, never to forsake him. It was the one burning thought which made me what I have been,—reckless and desperate. I was too young then to profit by counsel; perhaps even if I had been older, I should have been too weak, and I did follow my father into scenes and society which I have since learnt to shrink from with horror. There I might have been at this moment;—God only knows why I am not there: but through it all, even in my worst moments, the warnings of one friend have recalled me to better things, reminding me of days of innocence, carrying me back to my mother's death bed. If the past can ever be redeemed, it will be through the teaching of my mother's only friend, Miss Campbell. I owe everything to her, and I will repay the debt, cost what it may."

"And Miss Campbell, then, has told you our family history?"

"In part. She has put the possibility of benefiting you within my reach, at the expense of my father's honour, and perhaps safety." He spoke with an accent of bitterness, and Mr. Vivian said, hastily, "Bertha Campbell has been inconsiderate; she never could expect such a sacrifice."

"Miss Campbell did not know what she exacted," replied Ronald. "I did not know what I promised, until I thought over my promise; but if I had known, I could not have drawn back. Gratitude and honour must make me labour to discover the truth; justice

would require me to make it known. I do not, for a moment, blame Miss Campbell; neither do I repent for myself. I ask only that the good deed which I may be enabled to do for you, may not be turned into the agony of remorse, by bringing destruction upon my father."

"It could never be," exclaimed Mr. Vivian. "I would rather die myself, and see my children beggars, than I would urge you to act against your father."

"When I was told the history, the deed was done," replied Ronald, mournfully. "I needed no urging then. I can never rest till restitution has been made."

"Leave it, leave it," replied Mr. Vivian, hastily; "forget that you have been asked. A son to turn against his father!—impossible!"

"And a family to be sacrificed, when one word might restore to them a lost inheritance!—equally impossible!" replied Ronald.

"Bertha Campbell has unintentionally deceived you, Ronald," said Mr. Vivian. "She has an idea that something which your father said or did was the cause of my exile; but she is mistaken. The offences were my own; they may have been exaggerated; my father's anger may have been increased by misrepresentation; but the main facts must have been true, and for them I only am answerable. Are you not satisfied by my assurance?" he added, as Ronald continued silent.

Still there was a pause. Mr. Vivian repeated the question.

Ronald seized his hand. "Mr. Vivian, you are a

man of honour; ask me no more questions. Only, if you value the life which through my means was restored to you, promise me here, as in the presence of God, that whatever may hereafter be discovered and revealed by me, shall only so far be used as I shall permit, and never be made known by you to any other person, except by my permission."

"I promise; solemnly, faithfully."

Ronald shook his hand eagerly. "Honour for life! Mr. Vivian, there is now no obligation; I thank you from my heart." His tone was quite changed, it was almost hopeful.

Mr. Vivian turned to go into the house. "If you are satisfied, we must part now," he said.

"I am satisfied about myself, not about you. Mr. Vivian, this place is not safe for you?"

"I am going to leave it."

"When? Another day's delay may be of infinite importance."

"I go to-morrow to ——"

"Do not tell me where. Let me know nothing of you that I can avoid. Whatever must be known, Miss Campbell will tell me."

"I do not see the need of so much mystery," exclaimed Mr. Vivian, rather haughtily. "I fear no man."

"Yet there may not be, therefore, the less cause for fear. You would be safe from my father; you are not safe from the fellow, Goff."

"Rascal!—he is too contemptible to dread."

"Mr. Lester will give you his opinion upon that point," replied Ronald. "I cannot expect you to take mine. But you are going, and that is all I ask."

They walked a few paces together, without speaking; but when they reached the garden-door, Mr. Vivian grasped Ronald's hand, and said, in a voice hoarse with suppressed feeling, "Ronald, you are a noble fellow. Let my own boy be but like you, and I shall be contented."

He was detained.

"Never! never! Oh God! save him from it! Innocence! Mr. Vivian, the riches of the universe would I give for innocence!"

CHAP. XXIII.

A BRIGHT fire was blazing on the hearth in Mildred Vivian's apartment, an old-fashioned Christmas fire, though it was only the beginning of December,—logs of wood kindling and inspiring the coals; and Mildred's sofa was drawn near it, and her little work-table was placed by her side; and, reclining in a low and very luxurious chair on the other side, Ella was reading to her aloud. They looked very comfortable, all the more so because snow was falling, and the sky heavy with grey masses of clouds, which threatened to prevent any thing like going out all day.

“Grandpapa has not been in this morning,” said Ella, as she laid down the first volume of the book, and looked round the room for the second.

“He is busy with the bailiff, I think,” said Mildred. “There are parish matters and magistrate's business to attend to. He never leads an idle life.”

“No,” replied Ella; “it is strange, Aunt Mildred, isn't it, what people find to interest them in life?”

“Parish matters and magistrate's business being very uninteresting to you, I suppose,” said Mildred, laughing.

“They are so low,” replied Ella.

“I don't know what the world would do without

them, though," said Mildred. "And I really don't see why they are to be called low."

"Oh, because they don't serve any purpose; they don't exalt one's mind. You know, Aunt Mildred, parish matters are always about gruel and blankets; and magistrate's matters about poaching."

"All very necessary, Ella."

"Oh, yes, necessary, but I hate necessities; now don't you?"

"I can't say exactly that I do. I am afraid such a good-for-nothing person as I am in the way of health, must always think a good deal of them. But I do know what you mean, Ella, and I feel with you in a certain way. One wouldn't like to live upon necessities."

"No;" Ella's face brightened at being understood, — "and that is what some people do; and what I dread doing, and, Aunt Mildred, it is what I am sure I shall do, if I live at Encombe much longer."

"Six months' trial is a very short one."

"Enough for me," said Ella, yawning. "If it weren't for coming here sometimes, I shouldn't have an idea left. But you do let one rhapsodise a little."

Mildred's face was rather grave.

"Now, Aunt Mildred, that is an expression I don't like," continued Ella; "it always seems as if there was something hidden behind it, and I choose to know all. Now, confess what were you thinking of?" she added, playfully.

"Merely whether rhapsodising, as you call it, was a good or a bad thing."

"Oh, good; infinitely good! It encourages en-

thusiasm, and enthusiasm leads to heroism, and heroism to—why, all the noble things which have been done in the world are owing to heroism.”

“Most true; you had better write a book upon it some day.”

“You are laughing at me; but I don’t see why you should,” and Ella, rather petulantly, took up some work.

“Not at all laughing, dear Ella; quite the reverse.”

“Then crying; I would rather you should do that than laugh. I hate ridicule; it chills me.”

“Dear Ella, you know I never ridicule any one—intentionally, that is. My words may certainly be twisted to a wrong meaning.”

“Then why did you say I had better write a book upon heroism? Of course that means, I had better not.”

“Of course it does. Perhaps I said it because I thought persons never write well upon subjects which they don’t understand, and that no one can understand heroism who doesn’t practise it.”

“There is little enough opportunity for practising it at Encombe,” observed Ella.

“One might think so at first sight, but you have had occasions more frequently than most people.”

“I don’t quite see when. There have been no adventures, only the wreck, which I had nothing to do with, and the Croome; yes, that was terrible!” and Ella became much graver in manner; “but the heroism belonged to Ronald and Mr. Bruce.”

“I think you were something of a heroine, Ella,

If you had lost your presence of mind there would have been no hope."

"One is inspired, I suppose, at such times," said Ella. "I could never have supposed it possible to bear up as I did. But to be a heroine for one day is nothing. What I wish is to be one all my life, and in these times there is nothing to give one the opportunity. Oh for the days of chivalry and the Crusaders!"

"When ladies lived shut up within walls, and occupied themselves in working tapestry with their maids, every now and then relieving their tediousness by taking a stroll upon the battlements, to see if their lords were coming."

"You are so absurd, Aunt Mildred. Who ever thinks of beautiful ladies in the olden times taking a stroll?"

"But they did stroll, Ella, unless, as I suppose sometimes happened, they felt it good for their health to have a good, quick, constitutional walk."

"I can't talk to you," said Ella; "you always laugh about knights and chivalry."

"Quite the reverse, dear Ella; I have the greatest possible admiration for them. All I ever regret is that people should spend their time in grasping at the shadow, and so lose the substance."

"I don't know what you mean by that," said Ella. "I never could discover any knightly substance, as you call it, in these days."

"I should scarcely imagine you could," replied Mildred quietly.

Ella looked up, a little piqued, and answered,

"But if there is any, I don't see why I am to be more blind than the rest of the world."

"You are not more blind than most people," replied Mildred. "Half the persons you meet would tell you that they can discover nothing but matter-of-factness in the nineteenth century."

"Please, Aunt Mildred, don't talk mysteries; you can't think how they tease me."

"The meaning of my mysteries may not suit you, Ella," said Mildred gravely.

"Perhaps so, but I should like to know it."

"I think that what we are accustomed to call chivalry was an earthly adaptation of the Christian spirit, suited to rude times and men of half-cultivation," said Mildred; "that, in fact, it was a type of real chivalry."

"Then, what do you call real chivalry?" asked Ella.

"The spirit of self-devotion, self-denial, courage, endurance, perseverance, not for the praise of men but the praise of God."

Ella was silent.

"That does not quite approve itself to your ideas, does it?" said Mildred.

"It is all very good," replied Ella, "but I don't see any chivalry in it."

"No; and you never will in your present state of mind. You are a knight going unwillingly to the wars, and always sighing for the repose of his own halls and the gentle glance of his ladye love."

"That would never have been my case," exclaimed Ella. "I could have fought, I know I could, like a lion."

“Oh, Ella! I wish you could do so now.” Mildred’s voice was sad.

“Dear Aunt Mildred, don’t speak so; I would think as you do if I could.”

“You can, Ella, if you will; all of us can. The thoughts would come if you would only act.”

“Action; that is the difficulty;” and Ella sighed.

“A knight to sigh and say action is the difficulty!”

Ella blushed. “Aunt Mildred, I am not a knight.”

“No, Ella! A Christian knight you can’t be, because — is it very hard to say it? — you live only for yourself.”

Ella’s countenance betrayed a momentary annoyance, but she recovered herself quickly, though her tone was still a little constrained, as she replied, “You are rather severe in your condemnation, Aunt Mildred.”

“More severe than is merited, am I? But will you set me right then, and tell me whom you do live for, — Grandmamma? Aunt Bertha? Clement?”

“Oh! for no one in particular; who does? I am very fond of every body, but I don’t know what you mean by living for them.”

“But Ella, that will not do for chivalry. The knights of old could never have fought as they did if they had not had some special object.”

“But you say I am not a knight.”

“We come round to the point from which we sat off. I don’t think you have the spirit of a knight in you. I am sure, indeed, you have not. No one who is self-indulgent can have.”

“You don’t like my sitting in easy chairs,” said Ella, half-raising herself.

“I don’t like it, because it puts your mind into an easy chair too,” replied Mildred.

“No; indeed I assure you I can think twenty times as well when I am comfortable.”

“There is a difference between being comfortable and not being uncomfortable,” said Mildred. “People can’t think when they have the toothache, but there is a wide neutral ground between that and positive luxury.”

“One’s imagination works so much better in the pleasant, dreamy state, which sofas and arm-chairs put one into,” said Ella, throwing herself back and laughing. “I do so wonder, Aunt Mildred, that you who are so fond of poetry can’t understand that.”

“Perhaps I can and do understand it too well,” answered Mildred thoughtfully. “But one thing, Ella, I am quite certain of, that imagination and every other faculty will infallibly degenerate if it is not kept alive by practice. If you can write good poetry when you sit and dream all day in your arm-chair, you will write much better if you rouse yourself and do a kind act for a person in need. I believe, myself, that one chief reason why we so often see persons of great powers of imagination, degenerating and writing things quite unworthy of their first efforts, is that they think mental work every thing, and so neglect to recruit their poor minds by bracing practical duties. Even in an intellectual point of view, Ella, you see, I object to the arm-chair.”

"Oh, dear! so comfortable;" and Ella sighed, and drew her chair nearer to the fire.

"It seems very unfitting for me to say it, I am afraid," continued Mildred, "when I lie on a sofa all day. But then, Ella, against that perhaps I may put the pain which God has sent me. I am never quite free from it. And in other ways I do try to practise what I preach; at least I hope so."

"Yes, Aunt Mildred, who could think you self-indulgent?"

"I was inclined to be so once," she replied. "When my dear sister was living, she took so much from me in the way of duty, that I often felt there was no occasion for exertion, and then I gave way. But it has been different of late years, and I have taught myself to open the windows of my mind, and let in the fresh breezes from without, even though now and then they are a little chilling."

Ella considered a little, still reclining at her ease. "Then, Aunt Mildred, what would you have me do?"

"What would I not have you do? You like plain speaking, you say. Nothing that you have done since you came here, at least not in the same spirit."

"I can't alter the spirit,—it is that which I am in always," said Ella, rather moodily.

"Yet it was to have been different after your fright upon the Croome."

"I thought so, for a time, but it went off; that is always the case with me, — I can't help changing."

"Simply because you think and don't act," replied Mildred. "The notes which you sent me the week after your adventure were full of good resolutions."

“Oh, yes; good resolutions: but what are they worth? I am tired of them.”

“So am I,” was Mildred’s grave remark.

Ella rose from her seat, and as she knelt by Mildred’s side, said: “Please not, Aunt Mildred: any tone but that.”

“Do you deserve any other, Ella?”

“No. I deserve nothing, I am very unhappy,” and Ella burst into tears.

“You were to have taught the children regularly,” continued Mildred, “and you have neglected them just as you did before. You were to have been thoughtful for your grandmamma, and obedient to your Aunt Bertha, and there have been nothing but complaints. I asked you to come here, and told you what I wished you to do, and you promised what you have not in the smallest degree attempted properly to perform. You are late at breakfast always, though your grandpapa particularly wishes you to be in time; when he asks you to walk with him, you move reluctantly; when he desires you to play, you make excuses; when he recommends you books to read, you waste your time over poetry and novels. And all the while sighing for heroism, and the days of chivalry. Oh, Ella, you would have made but a poor knight.”

“Aunt Mildred, yes; if those days had been like these. But they were different.”

“No, Ella, they were the same,—formed for and by human beings like ourselves, with the same foibles, the same passions and temptations; and what we are now, that we should have been then.”

"Then I am a poor knight," said Ella, faintly attempting to smile, "doomed to be always defeated."

"And yet entrusted with the highest possible gifts; talents far above the average, a quiet home, leisure, friends ——"

"No, Aunt Mildred; begging your pardon, that is just what I have not; a quiet home, and leisure, and friends. I am continually interrupted, and there is no one that I can talk to as I like."

"Ella, Ella; if you have the smallest value for goodness or happiness, be honest with yourself. You allow the interruptions, and shut yourself up from your friends, and then turn your own faults into excuses."

"Indeed; it is true. I never can talk to Aunt Bertha. She is very good, I know; but—I must say it, if it is ever so wrong,—she is intensely disagreeable."

"So I suppose am I," observed Mildred gently.

"Oh, no; you know I love you dearly, and I would do any thing in the world for you."

"Except the trifles I ask. You disobey me just as you do Aunt Bertha."

"If you would ask me great things, I could do them. I would cut off my hand to serve you."

"But you would not use it to copy a piece of music yesterday."

"Oh, Aunt Mildred, I forgot."

"Dear Ella, if I could only once hear you say,—not I forgot,—but I was wrong."

"I do say it very often," replied Ella.

"Yes, when the accusations are general, but never

when they are particular. That is the test of humility and sincerity, not to say merely I have a bad temper, or I am indolent; but I was very passionate on such an occasion, and sat still when I ought to have exerted myself on another. I fear, Ella, your repentance is as vague as your resolution; and we can only cure our faults by knowing their details and having rules by which to correct them."

"Then mine will never be cured," replied Ella; "for I hate rules, they are so narrow-minded. Aunt Mildred, you must allow that."

"They may be narrow-minded. I don't see that they are so necessarily," replied Mildred.

"Well! but — don't be angry with me, — Aunt Bertha is full of rules. I am sure she never allows herself to eat, or drink, or sleep, except by rule."

"Dearest Ella; always alluding to Aunt Bertha, never thinking of yourself!"

"I am a heathen compared with her, I know that, but I can't help believing, — I really don't mean to be conceited, and I would not say it to any one but you, — I can't help fancying that I am more agreeable."

"And you think the rules are the cause."

"I am sure of it. If one tries to throw oneself into her ways, it is like being in a prison and one is always running up against the bars. You know you have scarcely seen her, so you can't at all tell what she is like."

"She is coming to see me soon," replied Mildred thoughtfully.

"I hope you will understand her better than I

do; but I don't think you will; you are so unlike her. How she makes me hate duty!"

"Well, then," — Mildred's voice became graver, — "what do you say to love?"

"Love of you? It would make me work for ever."

"Only you can't copy music for me. Ah, Ella, you see you have been tried and failed. No, it is not *my* love which will help you."

"I am not fit for any higher love," said Ella gravely.

"Only that you cannot escape it," said Mildred earnestly; "the love which upheld you when you stood on the brink of death, which inspired you with presence of mind, which sent you succour at the very moment of need. Oh, Ella! for the sake of *that* dear love, will you not try to be really good?"

"Aunt Mildred, it is so terrible to say it; but I don't feel it."

"But, Ella, dearest, it is not a question of feeling; you are the child of God's love even when you turn away and forget Him. And now He has recalled you to Himself; and has bestowed upon you a great mercy, and only requires you to show your thankfulness by attention to little duties. Can you have the spirit of a Christian knight if you refuse?"

Ella looked distressed.

"Please don't remind me of that," she said. "I know I never could be a knight or any thing else that is good for much."

"But indeed, I must remind you of it, because, though you think I laugh at you, I do really and truly feel that the longings which you have so often,

those poetical dreams of bygone days, are really the indications of what you ought to be, and may be if you will."

"Not if I will."

"Yes, most certainly if you will. It is only the will which you want."

"But I can't make myself will."

"But you can pray; that is the beginning of willing, and without it will is nothing."

"I have no perseverance; I do every thing by fits and starts," said Ella; "and when the mood is upon me I can't resist."

"All which shows that you have certainly, as regards goodness, a weak will. But against this you must put enthusiasm, taste, quick perception of all that is beautiful and noble; the advantages ought to balance the defects."

"I must be what I was made," replied Ella.

"No, dear Ella, never, never!" exclaimed Mildred eagerly. "God gives us all the materials for the formation of character. He leaves it to ourselves to decide into what form it shall be moulded; only He tells us that if we come to Him and ask His aid, He will teach us how to form it to the greatest perfection."

"I am sure I don't know what my materials are," said Ella.

"Then, my dear child, it is high time you should know. It is the root of all education, whether of ourselves or others. Look at yourself closely; it will do you no harm. Search out all your good points; bring out all your natural advantages; inquire at the

same time into your faults. When you have done this, you will be able to understand what ought to be your course of self-education."

"It is a fearful task," said Ella wearily. "Aunt Mildred, I think you had much better do it for me."

"No one can do it thoroughly but yourself, Ella. It is very well to be educated by others when we are children; and it is very necessary for those who wish to educate properly, to study the characters which they have to form; but when we have passed the age of early childhood, no persons but ourselves can really do much for us."

"I am sure no one ever studied me or understood me," said Ella.

"So much the more reason that you should understand yourself. Only one caution I would give you. It is not wise to attempt or wish to be any thing but what God has marked out for us. It is useless for a very imaginative person to endeavour to become matter-of-fact; and useless in the same way for a very matter-of-fact person to try and be imaginative."

"Then you will leave me my imagination, and not call it a sin, like Aunt Bertha?" said Ella.

"Leave it, and encourage it to the very utmost," replied Mildred; "only I would make it what it was intended to be,—a help and not a hindrance. Our strongest characteristic, whatever it may be, (I am speaking of course only of that which is good,) is the grappling-iron by which we are first to seize on Heaven. Oh, Ella, if you long for beauty and perfection, and sigh because there is no one to love with

all your heart, why do you not turn to the Source of all beauty, — the love which can never change?"

"Because I can't," replied Ella candidly. "Aunt Mildred, I have had the same thing said to me again and again. Mr. Lester has talked to me. I have read it in sermons. I know it is all true and good, but I can't feel it. I can't make myself love."

"Dearest Ella, no. Love is a gift,—the highest gift of all. But action will, through God's mercy, bring you to it."

"And tiresome, troublesome rules, make me feel as if I never could love," said Ella. "They make me dread religion."

"I should be sorry to deceive you, Ella. Religion, to a person of your self-indulgent, imaginative temperament, must always, at the beginning, be irksome. But the very excitability of your disposition may be your help. You say you cannot feel love, but that is not true, at all times. You did feel it the other day when you were saved from that horrible danger."

"Yes, I couldn't help it;" and Ella's face showed a quick, inward, self-recollection, and self-reproach.

"And you feel it when you read beautiful poetry, or hear of noble deeds, — of heroism, chivalry, for instance."

"Yes, but that is only feeling."

"Yet clench the feeling at once, whenever it comes, by some action, however slight, and you will, unknown to yourself, have made a step in advance towards rendering love permanent."

"Rules," murmured Ella, "I hate rules."

"And don't fetter yourself with rules," replied Mildred. "They are not religion, only aids to it."

They clog some minds, whilst they strengthen others."

"But Aunt Bertha says people are worth nothing unless they live according to rule," said Ella.

"She is right, no doubt, to a certain extent. You know I did not say, don't attend to rules, but only don't fetter yourself with them. A few rules, simple, easy, and capable of being stretched if necessary, are quite sufficient, especially for you. For, Ella, you will never be happy yourself, or assist in making others so, until your rules are the result of your feeling of love, and not merely of your sense of duty."

"But, Aunt Mildred,"—and Ella started up in astonishment,—“at home they are always preaching to me about duty.”

“So would I preach too, Ella, if I thought it would make you do your duty. But, as I said before, we have certain materials given us by God out of which our religious character is to be formed. With many minds, when the temperament is calm, and there is an instinctive love of order and method, the idea of duty is infinitely powerful. It will never, indeed, by itself, produce a very earnest religious feeling; but it will put us in the way which leads to it. But it is not so with all. There are those to whom the very name of duty sounds cold and repulsive. Those are the minds which take the highest flight and sink to the lowest depth. Ella, will yours be amongst them?”

Tears glistened in Ella's eyes. “Aunt Mildred, if you would only tell me what to do? Even now I don't see.”

“ Pray, dear Ella, first; without that, nothing can succeed.”

“ Yes, I know; but in other ways.”

“ You would not be obliged to inquire, if you could remember that your life has a second time been given you; and that He who restored it, asks for your love in return.”

“ Aunt Mildred, I do wish to please Him.” Ella’s tone was humble, and more gentle.

“ And the wish is not lost, dear Ella. Every wish, the very least, is remembered by Him. If it is followed by an action, it is accepted.”

Ella stood up, and pushed the easy chair aside. “ Aunt Mildred, I will copy the music for you at once.”

Mildred smiled. “ And, Ella, may I suggest one little rule?—that the easy chair should never be used till evening, and not then unless you are really tired.”

It was a very trifling ending to a long conversation; yet Ella was neither moody nor indolent for the remainder of that day.

CHAP. XXIV.

MR. VIVIAN had taken up his abode in an obscure lodging, in one of the tall, decayed, mournful streets of departed grandeur, to be found in the north-west region of London. His shabbily furnished apartment was large, and had once been handsome, and still retained indications of ornament in the outline of a heavy cornice, and the stuccoed richness of an old-fashioned ceiling. A few books were on the table, with a writing-desk and papers; and a fire blazed in the huge grate, shadowed by a high mantel-piece, which was supported by Medusa heads. There was an attempt at comfort in the room—but only an attempt; it wanted a lady's hand to arrange the furniture, and the niceties of a lady's taste to give it in the least an air of home; and Mr. Vivian, used though he had been to years of solitude, sighed, perhaps, with the recollection of the days when even a humble dwelling had been rendered cheerful and inviting, by the affectionate care which had adorned it.

Neither was the scene without more cheering; a yellow London fog, streets covered with mud, black chimneys, smoke-stained brick walls; no wonder that Mr. Vivian turned with disgust from the window, and sitting down to his desk, endeavoured to while away the weary hours by writing.

His letter was the outpouring of a burdened and not entirely chastened mind. He was an altered man, humble-minded, heartily religious, but he was himself still; and often, as his pen was moving rapidly, he paused to consider, whether the impulse which urged him was one to which it was safe to yield, or whether it was but the indulgence of that craving for sympathy which had often in other days led to weakness.

“My dear Lester,

“I wrote to you three days ago, and why, you will say, should I write again? Because I am lonely and dispirited, and have nothing else to do. A sufficient answer for my conscience, though not perhaps for your patience. London is very dreary, my life here most wearisome. I try to bear it, as you say I ought, and I fail. Moreover, I cannot see the reason for delay. Hope grows less. The children, you tell me, are scarcely ever with their grandfather; nothing, then, can be done through their means. You and Bertha may want to open my way more clearly, but you have undertaken a task beyond your powers. John Vivian is far too experienced a rogue to betray himself. Let me go to my father, cast all upon the die, and, if rejection is my answer, I will submit; leave England, take my children with me, if not to Jamaica, to some other home, and forget that I ever indulged the vain hope which has already brought me so much sorrow.

“Any certainty is better than this killing suspense. I am not strong enough to bear it—morally strong—I feel it does me injury. I am becoming captious

and impatient. Your letters are the only things I can bear. Bertha's try me beyond endurance. She is always telling me of my children's faults,—that Ella is wilful, and Clement desultory,—and dinning it into my ears, that it is the uncertainty of their present life which is so bad for them.

“I know it as she knows it; and better, ten thousand times better. It has been the remorseful lesson of my life, that I have injured them. Why does she add bitterness to a saddened spirit?

“But I am unjust to her, I feel. She has done for my children more than I could have asked; she loves them, I fully believe, sincerely, if not tenderly. I have no right to require more; and yet when her letters come they dishearten me, to such a degree, that again the impulse seizes me, to throw off disgrace, once more appear at Encombe, and take the decision of my cause into my own hands.

“Preach to me, my dear Lester, I need it sadly; my mind is terribly undisciplined, and I can so little bear with myself. You told me to accept my life as my punishment. It is the only way in which I could endure it. But there are times—they come more frequently now in solitude and leisure—when the spirit of submission seems to forsake me, and when the thought of having brought the suffering upon myself, by my own wilfulness, my own folly—worse than folly—my sin, is almost maddening.

“Men talk of repentance as if the past might be wiped out by tears, and no scar left to mark where the evil has been. Lester, I have shed tears of agony. My first thought in the morning has been

sorrow, my last consciousness at night has been of penitence, and in the silence of midnight I have risen to pray that God would think upon me in His Mercy, and “remember not the sins and offences of my youth.” And I believe that I am forgiven. I can look forward to death with a humble hope of acceptance, through undeserved Goodness, and the Atonement once made for all; and yet the stain is there—indelible to my own eyes—though it may be unseen by man, and in mercy forgotten by God.

“Repentance does not place us, in this world, in the position in which we should have been if we had never sinned. The mark once set upon us, it is ineffaceable. The wound once given, and it must and will at times re-open. Oh! if I could make Clement feel it!—now, whilst he is comparatively innocent, whilst his offences are the opening faults of a boy, not the full-grown wickedness of a man. And yet many would scoff at me for saying this; they would tell me that my mind is morbid; that whatever my youth may have been, I have redeemed it by the years which followed. Alas! my early life lingered far longer under the dominion of evil than those who have only watched its outward course would imagine. When I left England to work in a foreign land, I was not penitent, but exasperated. Irritation and repining darkened not only my own existence, but that of her who had sacrificed all for me. The thought is as a dagger to me. Not till she was taken from me, and the past, as regarded her, had become irremediable, did I fully see what my course had been. And then—I have heard it said that the knowledge

of evil is necessary, that it is experience, and consequently power—Oh! Lester, how little can such persons imagine the agony of those moments when first the heart is awakened to the knowledge of its guilt; the sickening glance cast upon the past, the despairing darkness of the future, and the longing, the intense longing, to hide oneself deep from all eyes, even, were it possible, from the Eye of God. Those feelings are not strength, but weakness; they make the eye dim, and the hand weak. Even when the offer of mercy comes to soothe us, their remembrance still haunts us; and when we should be pressing forward to the brightness of Heaven, they bid us turn back to gaze again upon the blackness of our own hearts, and once more seek to wipe out our offences with our tears.

“I need not say this to you. You know it all; not by your own experience. God be thanked, your career has been very different from mine; but by the griefs of others. Yet it is a relief to me. There is comfort in working out in my own mind why, though I have attained to peace, I have never yet reached forward to joy. It may come — you will perhaps tell me that it must come — with the increasing sense of God’s infinite love; but I doubt it. The more deeply we love, the more keen must be the grief for having offended. Joy is for those who have from the beginning held on their course unwaveringly. Peace and hope are, I believe, the highest boon granted in this world to those who have sinned grievously and repented truly. But no more of this—it is but another form of self-indulgence. I must

learn to live to myself and by myself, not disturbing the happiness of those who have never wandered by the cloud which it seems, now, must for ever rest upon my own spirit. For my children's sake I would especially strive to do so ; — the open brow, and the glad smile, must be for them and for the world ; the sackcloth, and ashes, and the tears of humiliation for the Eye of God. Yet to you I would say that even when I am most apparently repining at the punishment which I have brought upon myself, — I could accept my grief, aye, were it a hundred times greater, and from the bottom of my heart thank God for it, if by it I were enabled successfully to warn Clement against the fatal yielding to small temptations, which ruined my own character as a boy, and then sent me, stamped with the disheartening brand of weakness, to encounter the temptation of a man. Victory at fourteen would have been victory at four and twenty. Victory at four and twenty would, through God's Mercy, have been safety for life and for eternity. Tell it him, Lester, as you love me, as you would save yourself, in the Great Day of account, from the reproach of having failed to warn when the opportunity was placed within your reach.

“ And now, farewell ! I began my letter with impatient complaints, I end it with the confessions of repentance. A true epitome of my whole life ; yet so far what I said at first was not mere impatience, that I do not see we are progressing, and time is passing on, and if I cannot remain in England, I must prepare for establishing a home elsewhere. Bertha's complaints of Ella make me uneasy, and

Clement too cannot be left to his present course of life. Something must be done for both. I feel repugnant to allowing Clement to accept as a favour from my father, what even now I cannot help feeling ought to be his as a right. Even if I am cut off for my offences, there would seem to be but little justice in punishing my child.

“ I sometimes think that a situation in a merchant’s office — and I have interest enough to procure him that — might be more honourable for him, and, in a worldly point of view, more advantageous than the University. At any rate I must have him under my own eye. The little I saw and heard at Encombe made me feel that direct authority is imperatively necessary for him.

“ Some things about him I can so well understand ; they are so sadly like what I was at his age ! Write to me soon, and give me some definite views, or I shall relapse into despair.

“ Always most affectionately

“ and gratefully yours,

“ G. B. V.

“ Don’t think I am expecting to hear of success as regards John Vivian and his plots. I scarcely think about them. They are so vague, and so far in the past. I feel that whatever they were they have done me all the harm they could, and that the discovery of them could not profit me.”

Mr. Lester’s answer was received in the course of the same week.

“ My dear Vivian,

“ You write me volumes. I hope you don't expect volumes in answer. Yet I shall have a good deal to say before I have done. First to business. You can do nothing better than preach patience to yourself, and by the time the lesson is learnt we may look forward to a little hope. I think I see some already. Ella is at the Hall, — the first opening that is for awakening interest ; and whatever may be the end of our researches into John Vivian's doings, we shall have good cause for bright anticipations if we can once induce the General to look favourably upon the children. Mrs. Campbell's step in bringing them to Encombe was dangerous, but she has plenty of worldly wisdom. I don't think Clement as yet likely to win his way to his grandfather's heart. With a great deal of good about him, he is too careless and self-sufficient, but I have some hope of Ella under Mildred's influence. So still patience, my dear Vivian, — patience with me if you can, and patience with your sister-in-law, even if you cannot. I assure you she deserves it much more than you would think. A peep into the home at the Lodge would convince you of this ; and you must remember that she has been trained up in a school which gives her a quick eye for defects, and a slow one for virtues.

“ There are two theories of education, one which checks faults, the other which encourages virtues. I lean to the latter ; but then I am a man, and don't pretend to know much about the education of any of woman-kind, except my little Rachel.

“ All my hopes rest upon Mildred. When I speak

of her I am raising up the old question, why may you not tell her where you are? The answer is soon given — she knows it. Don't quarrel with me for acting upon my own responsibility. Your last letter made me unhappy. I felt that she could comfort you much better than I could, and, moreover, I was certain that you would not bear the concealment much longer. Miss Campbell and I took counsel together, and yesterday evening I told her.

“Perhaps I ought to say, too, that I found myself getting into a difficulty. Mildred had been complaining of your only writing short notes through me. As a proof that I am not given to plots and deceptions, it never struck me till the other day that we could not go on very long keeping up this kind of mock correspondence.

“Of course she was considerably startled, and for a few moments I was rather frightened at the effect the news had upon her, but she soon recovered herself. I think too that, at first, she was much annoyed at not having been told before. But she is always most good and reasonable, and I made her see how impossible it was for you to meet, and, therefore, that it was much better she should know nothing about it. She feels with me that we must not hurry matters; but she will write and give you her own ideas. The fact of your being in England is an immense relief to her in one way, — it makes it possible to see you; but, as is natural enough, she is full of anxieties. The necessity of keeping up before the General will be very trying to her; but Ella may be a great help by diverting her attention.

“I am inclined to be vexed that we did not tell her before, now I see how well she bears it; but I was afraid of the surprise for her, and certainly we have spared her a good deal in that way.

“This, I trust, will be one great load off your mind. For the rest I would say—remember that you came unsummoned, and have, therefore, no right to complain that we are not ready for you. By your own acknowledgment you have still, humanly speaking, some months before you. Give us time, and if at last we can do nothing for you, you can but come forward yourself, and, whatever may be the result, at least you will not have to say that you have again marred your own fortunes by impatience.

“John Vivian is going on much as usual. He looks askance at me, knowing I am your friend and have an interest in Ronald; so we seldom exchange more than a few words. It makes me often unhappy; but I feel that a day must, in all probability, come when he will be forced to hear me. Ronald is at home still. Miss Campbell and I had planned getting him into the merchant service, but it made the father so outrageous that we did not dare press the point. All I can do now is to urge him to educate himself as well as he can, in preparation for whatever may open. He has taken my suggestion, and works at Latin and mathematics as heartily, though perhaps not as willingly, as he shoots, fishes, climbs the hills, or manages a boat in a storm. A most noble fellow he is! but there is a cloud over him, and sometimes I am afraid of its effect. I can't help feeling sorry that Bertha ever told him his father's history: he

feels now, I can see, that he is the born enemy of all your family, and shrinks from receiving kindness. That is part of his mother's sensitive nature, which he inherits strongly. He is scarcely at all with Clement now. When he once knew that we disapproved of the intimacy, he was the first to break it off. I suspect he has suffered a good deal in consequence: Miss Campbell, who manages to know more of him than any one else, tells me that he often hints at a state of affairs with his father which must be terrific. John Vivian is a madman when aroused.

“As regards Clement (I believe I am a moral coward, for I have kept the most difficult subject to the last), I confess I am not thoroughly comfortable. Encombe is not the right place for him, but where else to send him is a problem I can't quite solve. I don't at all like the notion of a merchant's office; his fastidious pride would revolt from it, and I suspect it would render him very bitter. The University would do well, if we could make him work, and turn him into a barrister; but I don't see, at present, any inclination for exertion of that kind. He makes me at times very anxious. I hoped, when withdrawn from the temptation of Ronald's companionship, that he would make himself happy at home; but this is not the case. In some way or other, there has sprung up a kind of rivalry with Ronald, whose energy and independence, and even recklessness, are just now the objects of Clement's envy and imitation. He hears them exaggerated and admired by the villagers and fishermen, and so he must needs endeavour to

copy them; not seeing that his advantages are of a totally different character. I keep as strict a watch over him as possible, but I can't neglect my parish, and I must leave him some degree of freedom, or I should drive him into deceit. In a certain way he gives me his confidence, but it is principally confined to generalities, and I see vanity creeping out even in his fits of good intention. Then his disobediences, which are the chief topics of complaint on my side, are but small; and to be always harping upon what seems to him trifling faults frets his temper, and sometimes, I fancy, make him worse, instead of better. I should care less, but that I feel there may be some hidden mischief at work. John Vivian and Goff are continually putting themselves in his way, and tempting him to be with them. I have, of course, strictly forbidden the intercourse; but the law I have laid down is perpetually broken upon slight pretences, and, in some instances, the fault can scarcely be said to lie with Clement. They haunt and persecute him till it would require a firmness much beyond what we can expect in him to resist; and then, as I said before, comes the spirit of rivalry and envy of Ronald, to aid the temptation,—and so he falls.

“ This must not continue, or it will be his ruin, and the destruction of all our hopes. The General already believes that Clement has a taste for low company, because he has seen him talking to Captain Vivian and Goff, and heard him use slang expressions. Nothing can be more false than such an impression. Place Clement in his right position at Cleve, and

give him companions of his own age who would raise his tone, instead of lowering it, and his natural cultivation of mind and honourable feeling would, at least, prevent him from sinking, till he had attained that higher principle which alone will give him stability.

“Certainly, the analogy of life teaches one more and more the infinite wisdom of God’s Providence in giving us our position as Christians, and bidding us keep it, instead of leaving us in our natural state of degradation, and then telling us to work, even with His aid, to raise ourselves. Clement’s mind is just one of those which can retain, but cannot reach forward; and the uncertainty of his position is his stumbling-block. An additional reason, my dear Vivian, for hastening the moment of decision. Trust me, it shall not be delayed a moment longer than is absolutely necessary. I have dark suspicions sometimes of John Vivian’s falsity; but the more dark the less to be brought forward without substantial proof.

“I have talked to your friend the sexton lately, and led him to repeat to me again all which passed on that eventful day of your cousin’s visit to the Hall. He dwelt more than ever upon the strangeness of Goff’s manner, and his certainty that some villany was pending. Could it have been forgery? I believe either, or both of them, capable of any amount of iniquity. John Vivian left England immediately afterwards. He has only returned to Encombe within the last five years, and that not till Goff had pioneered the way for him. I could

never understand what became of them both in the interim.

“I have pondered much, lately, upon the consequences of opening the inquiry with the General. A year ago I should have hesitated less, but he has broken very much latterly, and I tremble to think what excitement would do. Then there must be a trial,—public exposure,—all the old griefs brought up. No one can say how I dread it.

“If you can think of any thing which will remove Clement from Encombe, please let me know. A private tutor at a distance might be the right thing, but then—the money! You must not let your pride stand in the way of your boy’s good. I should not myself at all mind sounding the General on the subject.

“Good b’ye, my dear Vivian! from my heart I feel for you. You must require this assurance when I write so calmly upon questions in which all the happiness of your life is at stake; still more when I take so little notice of the burden of your letter. But I have said before all that can be said, at least by me, on that point. Repentance, as you say, cannot place a man in this world in the position in which he would have been, if he had never erred; but it may deepen his love, and quicken his gratitude; and I don’t think that feeling can ever be sound which would make us so mourn over the past, as to render us insensible to the blessings of the present and the hopes of the future.

“This, I think, is the tendency of your mind. May there not also be something of repining in the spirit

which, instead of being thankful for peace, is inclined to despair because it cannot attain to joy? I am lecturing myself at the same time that I seem to be warning you. He is indeed happy, who has not some sin upon his conscience, which, though it may not have brought disgrace upon him in the sight of men, has lowered him in his own eyes, and still haunts his memory, — as the one black spot which, in moments of weak faith, it would seem could never be effaced.

“God give us strength to bear the sight of our own hearts, and still to trust in His mercy.

“You shall hear from me again soon.

“Always most affectionately yours,

“ROBERT LESTER.”

CHAP. XXV.

MR. LESTER was at the Hall the day after the preceding letter had been sent. The day was bright, for snow had fallen in the night, and Clement, taking advantage of an exhilarating frost, had called to take Ella for a long walk. Mr. Lester, therefore, found Mildred alone, busy as usual, and very cheerful; yet with the worn lines of thought particularly marked. She received him nervously, as if expecting he must bring fresh tidings to startle her, but she tried to be calm, and her first remark was a slight reproach that he had not seen her father the previous day. "He heard you were here the evening before," she said, "and he declares that you will never come to him, but that all your visits are to me."

"I hoped General Vivian was getting better," was Mr. Lester's reply; "they told me he was down stairs again, and had been out in the garden."

"He is better; yes, I think so," said Mildred, with an air of consideration, "but he is more feeble than he was, and his spirits are not good."

"Is it illness, only, do you think?"

"I don't know; it is very difficult to tell any thing about him. Oh, Mr. Lester, why are some natures so unapproachable?"

"To teach others patience and submission, we

may suppose. But, Mildred, this state of things can't go on much longer."

"No," exclaimed Mildred, "for every one's sake. I have written as you said I might. I have told Edward he must be patient, but my heart grows sick with fear. The intense, at times agonising, longing to see him, seems even worse, now he is so near. And my father, too, makes me unhappy. He will never confess it, but his spirit is broken. I am sure he feels very desolate.

"His own act, an act which one word might revoke."

"Yes, if he could think it right to revoke it; but the weaker his physical powers, the stronger becomes his will. Yet I try not to despair."

"Despair is for those who have said in their hearts 'there is no God,'" replied Mr. Lester.

"Thank you; I remind myself of that very often; and I feel that things are better now, and have more hope for the future, than at one time I could have expected. I am thankful to have Ella here."

"Does the General take much notice of her?"

"A good deal, in a curious way; never by praise, but as though he were always weighing what she said or did."

"That must be anxious work with such a person as Ella."

"Yes, and she is so incautious, so entirely wanting in self-restraint. There must have been something sadly wanting in her education."

"Not something, but many things. Chiefly though

the spirit of love. But I trust to you to do wonders for her."

"Please not to do that," said Mildred, eagerly. "I have seen so little of girls of her age, I don't feel as if I at all knew what to do with her."

"You have educated yourself, which is the chief and best guide in our education of others."

"God has educated me," said Mildred, reverently. "Many times when I have been inclined to murmur at the trials of my life, I have subdued and comforted myself by the thought. But what I feel about Ella is that she has not an eye to see the meaning of her troubles. Self-indulgence blinds her. Oh! Mr. Lester, there are times when she is so sadly like my poor brother."

"You must not call him poor now. He at least has learnt the meaning of his trials."

"They have come to him in the form of punishment," said Mildred. "I would strive to save Ella from that. Punishment and discipline are very different."

"I trust that Vivian's future life may be only discipline," replied Mr. Lester. "I shall have great hope if we can once open the way with the General. Does he never allude to the past?"

"Never, except in that stern fashion of self-congratulation, which is so terrible to me."

"He wraps his heart in his principle of justice, as a man does his body in a water-proof cloak," said Mr. Lester, "and it shuts out all other claims, and makes him feel so warm and comfortable, that he does not know they exist."

“Yet it is dreadfully oppressive to him,” said Mildred. “He feels he has had such a disappointed life.”

“Perhaps, because he has been trying to fit the world to himself, instead of fitting himself to the world. But a man with only one moral principle of action must be disappointed. It absorbs all others into itself, and becomes darkness. Whereas the love of God, the only perfect motive, is formed of the many rainbow hues of heavenly perfection, melting into one, and producing light.”

Mildred smiled, rather sadly. “We must not hope to make him understand that,” she said.

“No. I have learnt at last, to think that, after a certain period of life, true, and I hope not wrong, worldly wisdom, consists less in trying perpetually to alter the persons we have to deal with, than in taking their characters as they are, and framing our own actions accordingly. When the outline of the character has once become rigid, nothing but the special interposition of God’s grace can soften it. But we will hope for that, Mildred, and pray for it.”

“That is my father’s footstep,” said Mildred, listening. She turned very pale.

“He walks firmly,” observed Mr. Lester.

The door opened, and General Vivian entered the apartment.

It was strange the power which his presence exercised. Mildred’s cheek was still colourless, but in one instant she was composed and seemingly indifferent in manner; and Mr. Lester, too, turned to address the stern old man in the quiet tone of affectionate

respect, which seemed to have no thought except for the usual civilities of life.

“You are a stranger, Mr. Lester,” and General Vivian held out his hand with an air of stately cordiality.

“Not willingly, Sir. I have had more to do than usual in the parish. There is a good deal of sickness about. I heard better reports of you though, and I hope they are true; you are looking tolerably well.”

“As well as an old man of seventy-five can expect to look. Mildred, Hardman says that the poachers were about in the woods again last night.”

General Vivian sat down, and clenched his stick with both hands in thoughtful deliberation. “I wish, Mr. Lester, you could preach a better spirit into your people.”

“I wish I could, Sir, most heartily. But Hardman doesn't suspect any in particular, does he?”

“He tells me the leaders are from Cleve. It seems that Encombe and Cleve divide the honours of villany between them. Encombe patronises smuggling, and Cleve poaching.”

“An evil choice,” observed Mr. Lester.

“Evil, indeed; but at any rate we can claim pre-eminence in example. The Cleve poachers are not likely to have so distinguished a leader as the Encombe smugglers. We may expect the name of Captain Vivian to head the list of indictments at the next sessions.”

“He has not been taken? There is nothing found against him, is there?” inquired Mr. Lester, hastily,

and Mildred also raised her pale face to her father's, with a look of quick interest.

"If he has not been taken, the more shame to the coast-guard," exclaimed the General. "It is the talk of the neighbourhood that the trader lying off the shore belongs to John Vivian, and is a smuggler, and yet they are for ever laying hands upon some poor wretch, whose only fault is that he is too weak to stand out against those whom he knows he ought to respect. But it will come at last. The name will figure bravely in the annals of the county gaol. Aye, and I would be the first to put it there."

"Are they on the look-out for him, then?" inquired Mildred.

"Why child!" he turned to her suddenly, with a scrutinising gaze: "You are ill this morning, Mildred."

"Only a little tired, dear Sir. Did you say they were on the look-out for Captain Vivian?"

"Pshaw! wretch! leave him. Mildred, my darling, you musn't look so." He went up to her couch and stood beside it, and his manner became as tender as before it had been severe.

"My dearest father," and she took his hand affectionately, "there is nothing really the matter."

"You talk too much:" he looked at Mr. Lester distrustfully.

"Mr. Lester has only been here a few minutes," said Mildred, smiling.

"One minute is quite enough for mischief," Mildred. "I give Mr. Lester credit though for not doing intentional harm."

“Not any harm at all, I hope,” said Mildred; “his visits always do me good.”

“Yet I must take him from you, my child. Mr. Lester, have you a few minutes to spare for my study?”

“As many, Sir, as you may desire;” and the General’s impatient glance caused Mr. Lester to rise at the same instant.

They passed through the hall, and went up stairs. General Vivian’s private room was on the same floor as his bed-room. Mr. Lester remarked that the steps were a difficulty to him, otherwise he might have been a man of fifty-five rather than seventy-five. Some ordinary parish business, no doubt, was to be discussed, yet the General’s manner when he closed the door, and sat down in his great arm-chair, motioning to Mr. Lester to place himself opposite, betokened something more than ordinary. For a few seconds he said nothing, but, opening the drawer of his library table, searched in it for some paper which it seemed he wanted. It was soon found. General Vivian’s papers were in such order that he used often to boast that he could place his hand upon any one in the dark. His old military precision, indeed, was to be seen in all his arrangements, and joined with it there might possibly have been discovered traces of the carefulness which some had even ventured to term, though most unjustly, penuriousness. The furniture of this, his private room, was homely. A dark, common carpet, in parts completely faded, covered the floor; a large square, library table, old-fashioned, with innumerable drawers and long projecting legs, filled the centre of the apartment; around it were

shelves, not filled merely with books, but with small boxes, packets of parchments, and papers; whilst a few good prints hung on the wall, and near the mantle-piece, close to the chair which the General usually occupied, was a small, graceful miniature of a very lovely woman.

Mr. Lester took up a book to while away the spare minutes. The General glanced at him keenly. "In a hurry I am afraid, Mr. Lester? Pardon me, I won't keep you long."

"No hurry, Sir, for myself; only for others."

"Still I may ask for a few minutes. An old man's claims will not be many or long."

"Yours will be first always with me, Sir, if possible. Pray don't hurry yourself."

"I could not if I would, Mr. Lester; the time for haste is past." He placed a packet of papers before him, and slowly drew the arm-chair nearer to the table. Mr. Lester saw that the exertion was too much for him, and yet he could not help him. The offer would have been considered an insult.

"I have been looking over my papers, Mr. Lester; a work for all to do at stated times, especially a man of my age."

"Certainly, Sir. I wish your example were more generally followed. It would save a great deal of trouble."

"And worse than trouble; evil of all kinds. If my father and my grandfather—but never mind that,—you are in a hurry—only I will take the opportunity of saying one thing. You are likely to be on the spot when I die, and Mildred will look to you. Poor

child! she has no one else." A pause, and a clearing of the throat, but the voice which continued was unchanged. "I should be sorry to have any confusion. I have tried to prevent it. All that will be necessary for — whoever comes after me, will find all papers relating to the estate in the escritoire," and he pointed to an ebony cabinet which stood by the side of the fire-place; "all personal papers in the desk above it; all parish and public papers in the large drawers of this table. I did not mean to take up your time with these details, only lest I should forget, I mention them. Now to business. Time goes on, Mr. Lester; what do you intend to do with Clement?"

Mr. Lester might have been startled by the abruptness of the question, but he did not show it. "Mrs. Campbell wishes him to go to College, Sir."

"And she has the means of providing for him there. That settles the point. I trust the boy will do well."

"I trust so too," replied Mr. Lester, "but Mrs. Campbell has not the means of fully providing for him; and that is our difficulty."

"Then what do you intend to do with him? I understood from what you said that it was settled."

"Settled, if wishes could settle any thing," replied Mr. Lester. "But we thought that you would not be angry, Sir, if we were to ask you for assistance; and I meant, when the fitting time arrived, to make application to you."

The General bit his lip. "Mrs. Campbell has taken every step hitherto without consulting me, and I don't see why she should look for help now. But I am not going to dispute the matter, Mr. Lester;

the boy shall go to college. It shall never be said that I neglected my grandson. He shall have an allowance from me. His debts I leave to others."

"We may hope, Sir, that they may not be incurred."

No reply for some seconds. The General looked carefully over the paper of memoranda which he held in his hand. Then he continued:—"He will have a hundred and fifty pounds a-year paid to him by me, from the time he enters College, till he is one-and-twenty. If I die before, he will receive it—out of the estate." His keen eye glanced at Mr. Lester; apparently what he read there was not perfectly satisfactory. "I wish to put him in the way of providing for himself, Mr. Lester; I wish to give him a chance. Am I not right?"

"He deserves more than a chance, Sir," was the bold reply.

The General's eyes flashed. "His deserts must be left to my judgment. It is my intention, besides, to leave in your hands, as trustee, the sum of five thousand pounds, to be applied by you as shall seem most likely to further his prospects."

Mr. Lester sat immovable; it might almost have seemed that he had not heard.

"I look to you as Clement's guardian," continued the General. "I believe that you have done, and will do, all that can be done to serve him. His ruin will never be attributed by me to you."

"I suppose I ought to thank you, General Vivian," replied Mr. Lester, somewhat proudly. "You have shown a confidence in me which I hope I sufficiently

value. I should be glad to be able to carry out your wishes; but I can scarcely think they will long continue to be yours."

"And why not?"

"Because I trust,—forgive me for the liberty I am taking,—that consideration may show you sufficient cause to alter them," replied Mr. Lester.

The General bent forward in his chair and frowned. "Mr. Lester, I asked assistance in furthering my views; not advice as to how they should be formed."

"I am aware of it, Sir. I have no right to intrude advice; but when I am called upon to be a party in any act, I am bound to consider whether it be equitable."

"Equitable! Mr. Lester"—and the General's foot moved up and down rapidly—"You are a clergyman, and the friend of years. You had not dared else to insinuate such a reproof."

"I would not insinuate, Sir. I hate insinuations. I would say openly,—your grandson deserves more at your hands." The words were free, yet Mr. Lester's manner betokened deep respect; and the self-controlled spirit of General Vivian received the check which was intended.

"We won't discuss that point. I ask again, are you willing to accept the office of trustee for Clement, and for his sisters? I propose to leave them that which will secure for each a hundred a-year."

Mr. Lester was silent.

"Then I will turn to some other friend. Good morning, Mr. Lester; I regret that I have intruded upon your time;" and the General rose, though with difficulty, and stood with his tall figure drawn up

haughtily, though, at the same moment, he supported himself by resting one hand upon the table.

Mr. Lester rose also, but not proudly. His eyes were bent upon the ground in deep thought. When he spoke, his words came with some degree of hesitation:—"General Vivian," he said, "you have always been a most kind friend to me,—more than a friend. In hours of sorrow I have looked to you as to an elder brother, and I could, yes, from my heart, I could, obey you reverently; but I have another office, which compels me to speak freely; in consideration of it I am sure you will hear me. May I entreat you not to decide on this matter hastily? It involves many interests, and great principles of right and justice."

"It does; right and justice to my people; my tenants, and the poor."

"Can an unjust act at the beginning, work justice in the end?" inquired Mr. Lester.

The General's eye sparkled with indignation. "Who ventures to say that it is unjust?" he exclaimed; his tone deepening with the effort at self-restraint. "My property is my own; I may do with it as I will."

"We are stewards," replied Mr. Lester; "not owners."

"Let it be so; as steward, I do that which is for the good of those intrusted to me."

"When we devise means and instruments of our own, and put aside those which God has marked out for us, we cannot be sure that we are working for good," was the reply:

“ I don't understand your philosophy, Mr. Lester ; neither do I wish to hear more of it. Justice, not philosophy, is my object.”

“ Justice without mercy will cease to be justice,” replied Mr. Lester ; “ for it is not the justice of God.”

“ Again I say, Sir, I don't understand you. I seek the good of my people. I will not undo the work of a life at its last moment.”

“ I should be the last person to wish you to do so,” replied Mr. Lester ; “ but I fear we err when we take the ordering of the future into our own hands. You are afraid to trust your grandson, — you think it right to choose another heir. Who is to guarantee that he shall be irreproachable? Or, if he should be, who can answer for his children?”

The General took out his watch. “ Excuse me, Mr. Lester, I have gone over the ground often : my resolution is unalterable. Time presses. I have an engagement at three o'clock. If you decline accepting the office I propose, I will make other arrangements.”

Again Mr. Lester deliberated. “ I hope,” he said, at length, “ to send a written answer, if not to-morrow, yet in the course of a few days. I trust that may satisfy you.”

The General bent his head coldly. Mr. Lester continued : “ And I will ask now to be allowed a few more words upon another point. Clement would be safer removed from Encombe.”

“ Unquestionably :” there was an accent of scorn in the word.

“ If he is to go to the University he should first have a private tutor.”

“I should suppose so.”

“Then may we look to you for assistance in that case, as well as for supporting him at College?”

The General's countenance changed. He slowly walked up to the ebony cabinet, removed the desk which stood upon it, and placed it upon the table. “Mr. Lester, pray sit down for a few moments longer; I won't detain you more.” He unlocked the desk. “My private accounts,” he murmured in a tone of apology.

“I am sorry to give you so much trouble, Sir. I did not in the least mean to press the question as to details—merely to know generally whether we might look to you for help.”

“A certain sum has been set aside. I don't know how much of it remains.” The General took out several packets of paper and laid them on the table.

“I am giving you a great deal of trouble, Sir, and there is really no hurry.”

“No time like the present.” The desk was drawn nearer the edge of the table, and the General sat down.

Some one knocked at the door; he turned round quickly, accidentally pushed the desk, and it fell: the papers were scattered on the ground.

Mr. Lester stooped to pick them up. “Come in,” said the General, and a servant entered. “Farmer Brown wishes to speak to you, Sir.”

“Let him wait.”

“I told him you were engaged, Sir, and he has waited a quarter of an hour. He says he must go now.”

General Vivian never sent business away; it was one of his most rigid principles.

“Well! show him into the ante-room. Mr. Lester, I will return immediately. I am afraid you have a tiresome task.”

“The papers are all disarranged, Sir. Can't I help you in replacing them?”

“No, thank you, no;” and the General's manner was almost nervous. “Pray, only lay them on the table; nothing more.” He stopped as he was leaving the room, and looked back, apparently about to give some other direction; but he altered his mind, and left the room, saying that he should return directly.

Mr. Lester gathered up the papers. They were for the most part letters, all carefully placed together in separate packets and endorsed. Mr. Lester's eye unintentionally caught the superscription of two. One was Edith Vivian, with the date of her birth and death. The other only bore the initials E. B. V., and consisted apparently not of letters only, but of loose papers and bills. It was larger than any of the rest and arranged with less attention to order. It seemed as if it had been put together in some moment of confusion, and fastened hastily, for the string round it was loose, and when Mr. Lester put it down a few of the papers slipped out. He had only just gathered them together, and taken up the string to secure it more firmly, when the General returned. Mr. Lester laid the letters down again. The General cast a hasty glance upon the table. “Never mind, Mr. Lester, that will do, thank you,” and he laid his hand

nervously upon the packet. "Old letters, as you see. It mayn't be worth while to keep them, but one never knows of what use such things may be." There was an attempt at unconcern in his tone and manner, but it did not deceive Mr. Lester; and his hand trembled so much that he was unable to collect the papers, and instead of placing them in order, scattered them again. He tried to stoop. Mr. Lester picked them up for him, and as he restored them the General seized and looked at them carefully.

"That will do, Mr. Lester, thank you. There are no more; only your handkerchief which you have just dropped."

Mr. Lester took up his handkerchief, and with it, unknown to himself, a paper which was lying under it. Both were put into his pocket.

The General allowed the rest of the papers to remain on the table. His manner was confused. "I don't know what we were talking of," he began. "Oh, yes! I remember, my private accounts." He opened a book which had been taken from the desk. "I look upon Clement, Mr. Lester, as the son,"—he hesitated:—"the inheritance of the child of a younger son is all he has any right—absurd! there is no right—it is all that, on any principle, could be demanded of me. Let me see," and he unclasped the book. "A private tutor you say. He will not have that under two hundred a year."

"No, Sir, certainly not. Travelling, dress, pocket-money, we may reckon as fifty more."

"And well if he keep within it!" The General sat down, and began to calculate with a pencil and

paper. "Seventy pounds per annum, Mr. Lester, is the sum I can afford."

Mr. Lester tried not to look disappointed.

"You expected more?"

"I had hoped that half the expense of the tutor might have been taken by you, Sir. The additional thirty pounds is a large item ——" He did not seem to know how to finish the sentence.

"It is a large item in the affairs of any person who wishes to be exact. My income is appropriated; I can't alter it."

The tone admitted of no further reply. Mr. Lester only said, "I must thank you, Sir, in Clement's name."

"No thanks are required. I desire to do justice — justice,"—the word was repeated emphatically— "by every one."

Silence followed. The General occupied himself in restoring the papers to their place in the desk. Mr. Lester looked round for his hat, yet in a way which showed that he was unwilling to go. The General closed the desk and took out his watch.

"May I put the desk back for you, Sir?" asked Mr. Lester.

"Thank you, no." General Vivian carried it himself, and then returned to the fire-place.

"If I have said any thing to offend you, Sir," said Mr. Lester, "I trust you will forgive me; it was very far from my intention."

"There is no offence, Mr. Lester. You act upon a principle of duty: I try to do the same myself."

"And I should have hoped, therefore, Sir, we might have been likely to agree."

“I have not found that a natural consequence in life. Few persons have agreed with me in my notions of duty.” The shadow of a smile crossed Mr. Lester’s face, but General Vivian, without perceiving it, went on, rather in an exculpatory tone. “I find the moral code of many men lax, Mr. Lester. They, on the contrary, think mine strict. I have no wish to quarrel with them; but when a principle has been adopted from conviction of its truth I can never think it right to sacrifice it to expediency.”

“To expediency! No, Sir, never!” exclaimed Mr. Lester.

“The reasons which I have heard brought forward in opposition to my own views have always been those of expediency,” continued the General.

“Expediency is a word bearing many interpretations,” observed Mr. Lester.

“Only one in my ideas. It is the sacrifice of duty to individual feelings or individual interests.”

“It would be my own definition,” continued Mr. Lester; “but duty must always be compounded of two virtues balancing each other. It can scarcely be considered expediency to endeavour to keep the balance equal.”

“You are metaphysical, Mr. Lester. My idea of duty is of a law. I don’t understand the principle of two laws.”

“Yet both the moral and the natural world are governed by opposing laws,” said Mr. Lester. “Love and fear, justice and mercy, cause the beings of the spiritual creation to move harmoniously round the

one Centre of their worship, as the two counter-acting forces cause the planets to move round the sun." He was almost sorry when he had said it, the General looked so impatient. They parted rather coldly, but when Mr. Lester was gone General Vivian leaned back in his chair, and thought.

CHAP. XXVI.

ENCOMBE GRANGE was a large, lonely, white house, standing beyond the village, and fronting the open common terminated by the cliffs. It was a very dreary-looking place. Originally it might have been picturesque, for the building was low and irregular, with a singular high turret at one corner, which had been added as a kind of observatory by one of its former possessors; but now all beauty was lost in the appearance of decay. Nearly all the trees which once surrounded it had been cut down. Two or three indeed remained near the turret, but these shut out the view over the sea which at one time had been an attraction, whilst others more exposed to the south-west winds were not only stunted in their growth, but had that feeble, oppressed look which always belongs to trees bent in one direction. There was some attempt at a flower-garden and plantation near the house, but all was in a neglected state; the branches of the shrubs spreading at their will, and covering the narrow gravel walks, which were dark and green with grass and weeds; the flower-beds completely overrun, and poultry, dogs, cats, and occasionally a horse or a cow, straying at their pleasure over the unmown lawn. Within, the scene was equally desolate. A great portion of the house

was shut up, and in the rooms which were used the walls were hidden by the scraps of papers of different generations; the paint was worn from the wainscoting; and near the kitchen and the servants' apartments even the floors were unsafe. One parlour there was comparatively comfortable, with a carpet, and a horsehair sofa, and a great arm-chair, and some convenient corner cupboards; and this was Captain Vivian's dwelling room, and here he lived contentedly; for as long as he could sit by a blazing fire if he was cold, and eat when he was hungry, and rest when he was weary, and form his plans of adventure or speculation without interruption, he cared nothing for the elegancies of life, and little for what many would have considered ordinary comfort. He was a man sunk below any thing approaching to refinement of taste; and amongst the many secondary supports which keep us from utter ruin in this world, perhaps none are more powerful, or more deeply to be lamented when lost, than taste. Yet it was not because he cared for money in itself, that he strove to gain it by evil means, and lived without the advantages which he had the means of obtaining. He had run through a large fortune, and still was carelessly extravagant as regarded personal self-indulgence; but a consciousness of degradation from guilt had led him to seek forgetfulness in low company and low habits, till the claims of his position as a gentleman by birth, and in some degree by education, had been totally put aside.

It would be long, and perhaps tedious, to tell how it was that he reached this point. There was the traditional tone of his branch of the family to begin

with ; and reputation has more to do with the first formation of character than we may be inclined at the first glance to imagine. Then there was evil example, bringing opportunity for evil, and followed by the loss of personal self-respect ; and when this is gone, moral descent is very rapid. Yet there had been occasions when the past might have been redeemed. Even the most hardened villain can probably look back to some period of his life when, like the angel arresting the steps of the prophet, repentance has met him in the way ; and perhaps had the secrets of Captain Vivian's heart been made known, it would have been found that, even with him, there was one period from the recollection of which he turned in hasty anguish, with the feeling that the example of his wife had opened to him the gates of Heaven, but that he had wilfully refused to enter in.

Possibly the influence of a different mind might have had more power over him. Mrs. Vivian was extremely gentle, implicitly obedient, except where religious duty was concerned ; but she had been made religious by the means of sorrow,—disappointment in him ; and this had given a mournful tone to her character, and at times irritated him. It was the excuse which he made to himself, when at the time of her death remorse had for a few weeks been busy with him. Now he made no excuses ; he showed his feelings about her only by refusing to hear her name mentioned. It was the one especially painful barrier, amongst the many which existed, between him and Ronald.

For Ronald lived upon his mother's memory ; not

to the knowledge of the world, scarcely even to that of Mr. Lester and Bertha Campbell; the rare occasions when he did give a momentary vent to his feelings were as the sudden rush of the tempest, which passes, and all is calm as before. But in a remote part of the dreary old house there was a small chamber which he had fitted up with the few articles belonging to his mother that had escaped the wreck caused by his father's extravagance; and there, with her picture before him, her few books arranged in a small Indian cabinet, her work-box, and writing-case, and a few special ornaments placed on the little table which had stood beside her dying bed, Ronald had formed for himself a sanctuary which her spirit seemed still to inhabit, and from which a softening, chastening influence had been permitted to reach him, even in his most reckless moments.

It might have been sentimentalism with many; but Ronald, in his loneliness, and the heaviness of his self-reproach, had no room for sentimentality, even if the feeling had not been totally foreign to his nature. He never showed his little room to any one; he never even spoke of it; he scarcely ever realised to himself why he revered it. The feeling had grown up unconsciously from the time when, on their first arrival at the Grange, and when the grief for her loss was still fresh, the few things which belonged to her had been placed in it. Captain Vivian avoided it; the servants did not trouble themselves to enter it; and Ronald himself never thought of inhabiting it. Only at times, when his heart was most oppressed, he would pause before the door, and it would seem as

if he still could hear her voice within; and occasionally,—very rarely, for Ronald's fits of devotion had, till lately, been as uncertain and varying as the winds,—he would venture in gently, reverently, as if intruding upon the presence of the dead, and kneeling down, confess, in the simple words which she herself had taught him, the guilt which burdened his conscience, and the fears which lay heavy upon his heart.

These were his calmest and best moments. In his hours of desperate remorse — and they were far more frequent—he would no more have intruded himself into that quiet chamber than he would have thrust himself unbidden and unprepared as a partaker in the holiest rites of the Church. But even then, the remembrance was not without its influence. It was as if there was still a resting place within his reach—a haven which he might hope to attain when the storm was past; and when Ronald spoke of, or thought of home, in the sense which renders it so dear to all, his imagination recurred not to the empty chambers of the almost deserted house, nor to the parlour where his father was wearing away life in coarse self-indulgence,—not even to the little room in the turret, with its rude uncurtained bed and rough furniture, where he had piled in heaps the heterogeneous articles which served him for use or for amusement,—but to the small closet, it could scarcely be called more, in which his mother's spirit seemed yet lingering.

Yes, that thought had saved him in many an hour of temptation. For Ronald's life had been far less

guilty than in his despairing self-accusation he represented it.

He had seen evil often, in its worst and most debasing forms, and to a certain extent he had himself mingled with it ; but Captain Vivian, hardened though he might be, would not force his son to become what he himself was ; and Ronald had many times escaped the actual contamination of wickedness, which yet had been so present with him that he could not realise to himself that he had been saved from it. To separate himself from his father seemed impossible ; and when Captain Vivian sank, Ronald felt that he himself had sunk likewise. Perhaps, but for the recollection of his mother he would have done so.

His life had in a degree been happier during the last few weeks. Before that time his refusal to tempt Clement to disobedience had caused bursts of passion which were often terrific ; but now he was left more to himself and his own pursuits. A change had taken place apparently in Captain Vivian's schemes. He confided them more to Goff ; perhaps he felt that he had to deal with a will as unbending as his own, and therefore did not endeavour to alter it ; perhaps—there is some redeeming point even in the very worst—the one humanising feeling yet left, his affection for his boy, made him shrink from implicating him in the guilty plans which yet he would not relinquish. Be that as it may, since the abandonment of the idea of the merchant service Ronald had been suffered to carry out his own wishes for the employment of his time for the most part undisturbed. He

was studying now not for pleasure; it was a great effort to him, and the escape from his books into the free air, with a gun or a fishing-rod in his hand, was eager delight. But the energetic spirit, once turned in the direction of self-discipline, could not be checked. Bertha had given him the impulse for good, Mr. Lester had suggested a few rules for its direction, and with the same intensity of purpose with which, if commanded, he would have endeavoured to expiate his faults by bodily penances, did he now attempt to follow up that far more difficult penance, the subjugation of the mind.

He was happier, — yet not for that reason at rest. Mr. Lester had said truly that there was a cloud over him. How indeed should it be otherwise? the farther he advanced on the right path himself, the more sensible he must necessarily become that his father was moving on the wrong one. This alone would have been enough to sadden him, but Ronald could never forget that worse might be behind; — that fallen as his father was now, there might be darker evil hidden in the past, and that to him the task of discovering and revealing it had in a certain way been entrusted. Therefore it was that he would sit alone in his own chamber, or pursue his solitary wanderings over the wild hills and by the lonely shore, — shrinking from companionship, dreading conversation, — and though forced to live with his father, and at times to mingle with his associates, yet keeping watch over his hidden grief, whilst anxiously guarding every avenue to the temptations which might lead him back into the vices of which he had repented.

The idea which thus oppressed him had first been suggested by Bertha, but it was in no way followed up by her. After that one conversation which had made him acquainted with his father's history, the subject had never again been mentioned between them. Probably Bertha repented what in her eagerness she had done, perceiving the effect of the disclosure upon a spirit sensitive as a woman's, and impetuous as a man's. At any rate whenever they met, which was but seldom, it was only to exchange the confessions of sorrow and penitence on the one side, and of affectionate interest on the other; whilst Mr. Lester never by word or look allowed it to be supposed that he considered Ronald in the slightest degree involved in the cause which he had so much at heart.

It was late in the same day on which Mr. Lester had been with General Vivian. Ronald had been out upon the hills shooting; Captain Vivian on the shore and at the Point, for purposes best known to himself. They had returned about the same time, and Ronald, wearied and yet excited by his day's sport, was dreading less than usual the dinner with his father; for on such occasions they had common subjects of interest without touching upon those on which they would have been likely to jar.

Captain Vivian's countenance also wore a satisfied expression, and he greeted his son without the uncomfortable reproaches which were generally his vent for any disappointment. Ronald asked no questions. The success or defeat of his father's projects brought him almost equal pain. He was only thankful to be allowed to eat his dinner in peace, and to narrate the

progress of the day's sport without interruption. When dinner was over, he was preparing, as usual, to go to his own room, when Captain Vivian stopped him. "Off! my boy? Where to?"

"To read or to rest," replied Ronald; "I've had desperately hard work."

"Read? Pshaw! What are you talking of? I thought you never troubled yourself about reading. Why can't you stay here?"

"I can if you wish it," was Ronald's cold reply.

"Oh! if you're tired, it's another matter. Be off."

"I am not so tired,—at least I shouldn't be going to bed for the next three hours," said Ronald.

"Only brooding over books. Why, Ronald, you're worth something more than that."

"I don't know what I am worth, Father," replied Ronald; "I have never been tried yet."

"At the old story? Wanting to do something? Perchance I may put you in the way of it before long."

"Thank you," replied Ronald, in the same unmoved tone; and he walked a few paces towards the door.

"A game at backgammon would be better for you than books after a day's work," said Captain Vivian.

"I had rather read, thank you, Father, unless we play without betting."

A cloud of displeasure crossed Captain Vivian's face; but he only said, "Well, bring out the board. If Goff comes in we may have a turn."

Ronald placed the backgammon-board by his fa-

ther's side, and went to fetch his books. He brought them back with his writing desk, but he looked very little inclined for study. His father laughed at him as he threw the books upon the table, whilst a tired sigh escaped him.

"Why, you foolish fellow, one would think you were going to turn clergyman. What d'ye think now is the good of all that rubbish?"

"I suppose it may turn to good some day," replied Ronald. "At any rate it's better to do that than nothing."

"Books don't make a man's fortune, trust me for that, Ronald. Why, there are secrets—and to be had for the purchase too—which give a man, in one hour, what books wouldn't give him in a whole life."

"And to be lost as quickly as gained," replied Ronald; "that's not in my way, Father."

"But it used to be. Time was when you were as daring a fellow as any in Christendom, and would have got at any thing that could be had at a leap. That's the good of consorting with women and clergymen,—they would eat the spirit out of a lion." Captain Vivian's colour rose, and he muttered to himself, "But it won't last though." Then, speaking aloud, he added: "I say, Ronald, it's time you should be off."

"Where, Father?"

"Any where; if you mean to seek your fortune for yourself."

"It is what I wish," was the answer.

"Ay! wish in your own way, but never in mine."

"I wish to obey you, Father, in all things in which

I may," replied Ronald, speaking very quietly, though his clenched hands showed the effort which it cost him.

"Well, then; I take you at your word. Our little vessel at the Point goes off again next week; try your hand at command. The fellows will be glad enough to have you on board."

Ronald's flashing eye showed how much his own inclination accorded with the suggestion, yet he hesitated.

"It's an offer that I should have jumped to clutch at your age," continued Captain Vivian. "But boys now aren't what boys were, nor men neither."

"Regular service is more to my taste." — Ronald began the sentence boldly, but the change in his father's countenance made even his spirit quail.

Captain Vivian burst forth in a storm of passion. "It was his will," he said. "He had waited long enough, keeping Ronald tied at home to be a burden to him; and now the time was come for action, and act he must and should." And Ronald acquiesced in the determination; but again, and with less hesitation, insisted upon the desirableness of the merchant service.

Just then there was a loud knock at the outer door; but the fierce words still raged, whilst Ronald, bending down, with his head averted, looked steadfastly into the fire. As the knock was repeated the second time, however, he rose, and was about to close the parlour door, when he was stopped by the entrance of Goff, and, to his consternation, Clement Vivian.

Captain Vivian's wrath subsided in a moment;

perhaps that was the reason why Ronald felt his to be rising. He advanced before his father to meet Clement, and they shook hands; but Clement's manner was coldly nervous, and he glanced reproachfully at Goff, as if he had been betrayed into society which he had not expected.

Goff came into the room with the manner of a person quite at his ease, and sat himself down by the fire, motioning to Clement to seat himself also. "You didn't expect company to-night, eh Captain?"

"Not quite so many. But, Clement, my boy," — and Captain Vivian put his hand across the table, and shook Clement's heartily, — "you're welcome anyhow. What's the business, Goff?"

"No hurry; it's a cold night, and the fire's comfortable;" and he drew his chair in.

"What brings you out to-night, Clement?" asked Ronald, in a careless tone.

Goff answered for him, — "A bold spirit, to be sure, Ronald, that's ashamed to sit over the fire like a girl."

Ronald turned round upon him rather roughly, — "You'll be careful what you say, if you please; let us hear your own tale, Clement?"

"Ask him how he escaped from his master?" said Goff, sneeringly.

"I will ask him if Mr. Lester knows he is here?" replied Ronald.

Captain Vivian broke in upon the conversation, — "What signifies? He's here, and he's going to stay. Here's a health to you, my lad! and we won't ask what brings you here, only we are glad to see you."

All this time Clement had been sitting, shyly, at

a little distance from the table, casting furtive glances round the room. Now, as Ronald fixed his keen eye upon him, he answered with apparent indifference,—
“I was at the Hall with a message, and Goff and I met coming back, so we bore each other company.”

“It’s not the nearest way from the Hall to the village,” said Ronald, quickly.

The colour rose in Clement’s cheek, but Goff helped him. “If it isn’t quite as near it’s twice as good; and it’s better going two than one on a winter’s evening, and so Master Clement and I must needs trudge it together.”

“And take a resting place on your way,” observed Captain Vivian; “and a very good notion too. It’s the first time, but we hope it won’t be the last.”

Ronald stood moodily by the fire, and there was a momentary silence. Goff took up the dice from the backgammon table, and tossed them. Captain Vivian called out the numbers, and laughed as they came down right. “Now, Clement, try your luck;” and Clement did the same, watching with some eagerness to see the result.

“Bravo! you’ll do, I see. Now, once more; ten to one you are right.”

Clement was again partly successful.

“Luck’s with him,” said Goff. “It’s born with some people.”

“Just opposite to what it is with him,” said Captain Vivian, pointing to Ronald; “he never made more than one good hit in his life.”

“Try, Ronald,” said Clement, rather eagerly.

“Thank you, no.”

"He's afraid," said Goff: "he hates losing."

"Oh! nonsense, Ronald," exclaimed Clement.
"There's no betting; what does it signify?"

"Some folks are too proud to be beaten in any thing, betting or no betting," said Goff.

"I see no fun in it," said Ronald; "and if I did, I wouldn't do it now."

"Wouldn't! why not?" Captain Vivian turned to him angrily.

Ronald hesitated for a second, then he said, "Because I wouldn't be the one to lead Clement to that which may be his ruin. There's a warning for you Clement;" and he walked out of the room.

Captain Vivian's anger evaporated, so at least it might have seemed, in a laugh, whilst Goff threw up the dice again, and made Captain Vivian guess, without any reference to Clement, who sat by uneasily.

The clock struck eight, and he started up. "I ought to be at home; they expected me back at seven."

"And you keep your word, do you?" said Goff.
"That's more than you do with me."

"Clement will be out of leading-strings before long, I'll venture to say," observed Captain Vivian, lightly.
"I wish I could hope as much of my boy. He's turned quite tame, and won't even take a cruise for a few days."

"Won't Ronald take a cruise?" inquired Clement, with some eagerness.

"Not he; though I offered to put him in command of a vessel. But the very life's gone out of him; he'll do nothing but sit at home over his books. Old ocean was but a fancy with him after all."

“As it is with a good many youngsters,” continued Goff. “Well enough on a fine day, with a sea which a baby might sleep on; but come a storm, and they’re nothing but pale-faced cowards. I’ll bet you any thing you like, though, that I bring Ronald round.”

“Volunteers, not pressed men, for my money,” was the reply.

“Aye; volunteers if they are to be had.” Goff glanced at Clement. “I say, Master Clement, if I don’t go with you, can you find your way home?”

“I should hope so. I have been over the fields often enough,” said Clement, proudly.

“And been in time for roll call,” said Captain Vivian, laughing. “Why, Clement, what will you say for yourself?”

“The truth, if I am asked,” replied Clement.

“The truth, to be sure. Who ever heard of a Vivian not speaking the truth?”

“Only it’s a bit awkward, sometimes,” muttered Goff. “We shan’t see you here again, I suppose, Master Clement, when the truth’s out?”

“I don’t see that. I go where I choose, and return when I please.”

“They’d think you had been at some dire mischief, here,” said Captain Vivian, carelessly, as he threw the dice into the air.

“That was a curious calculation you were making with those things the other night, Captain,” said Goff. “I’m not up to figures. What did Ronald say to it?”

“Ronald has no head for figures neither; he always hated them.”

“Very curious, it was,” repeated Goff, in a musing tone.

“What was curious? A calculation? I can calculate pretty well,” said Clement, eagerly.

Goff looked at him with pretended amusement. “Of course, you can do every thing.”

“I have calculated very difficult questions,” continued Clement. “I believe”—and he touched his forehead—“I have a mathematical head.”

“Possibly! But you mightn’t be able to do this. Besides, there isn’t time, and you are wanted at home.”

“Nonsense, to send him away!” observed Captain Vivian. “Why should’nt he stay, if he likes it?”

“I’ll try the calculation for you at home, if you choose to give it me,” said Clement. He spoke eagerly, longing to show his superiority to Ronald.

“Thank you; but I can’t give it you just in a minute. You will be coming by this way another time, I dare say, and then I’ll show it you. But your master would be after you, if you were to take it home.”

The word master always touched Clement on a tender point. He instantly began a lengthened explanation of his true position with Mr. Lester; that he was his father’s friend, and was kind enough to teach him some things; but that he had no authority over him beyond the hours of study; whilst Captain Vivian and Goff listened with an incredulous air, which only irritated him the more to assert his independence. When he had ended, Goff’s exclamation was, “Deeds, not words, Master Clement. Show us you are your own master, and we’ll believe you; but don’t waste such a quantity of breath about it. Why,

you are afraid now to go home for fear of the rod!" And he laughed heartily.

Captain Vivian took Clement's part, and found fault with Goff for ridiculing him, saying, "that it was very natural that such a young fellow should be kept under. It wasn't every boy that could be what Ronald was at sixteen — though he had gone back sadly of late."

This told more keenly upon Clement than all Goff's coarser ridicule, especially when it was followed by some characteristic anecdotes of Ronald's dauntless bravery, which goaded his envy, whilst they excited to the utmost his admiration. A pause came at last, and Clement summoned resolution to go, without any more last words of boasting. Captain Vivian went with him to the door. His tone was much softened, and there even appeared to be some interest in it. "We shall see you again," he said; "and if you could look in and help Ronald and me about that calculation, we should both thank you. I've no head for it; neither has he. But don't come, if you think you will get into disgrace. Good night!" They shook hands cordially, and Clement, though shrinking from the word disgrace, walked away, saying to himself, that Captain Vivian had certainly been condemned unfairly. He had still the spirit of a gentleman in him, when he chose to exert it.

CHAP. XXVII.

CAPTAIN VIVIAN returned to the parlour, carefully locked the door, tried another which led through some passages to a distant wing of the house, and then going up to Goff, who was bending down over the fire, with his hands spread out to warm them, exclaimed, "He's caught!"

"Aye! thanks to me!" was Goff's rather surly reply; and, without looking up, he added, abruptly, "and high time; the game will be up soon!"

Captain Vivian moved so as to confront him. "Up? What d'ye mean?" His tone was hollow, though the words were uttered calmly.

"We were fools," continued Goff, "mad fools! He has escaped us!"

"Edward Vivian! Ha!" And a strong hand clutched the shoulder of the rough fisherman, till it must have been actual pain. "No need for fierceness, Captain," continued Goff, disengaging himself. "It was luck that might have befallen any one. When you put me upon the track, I followed it; and if I'd met him that night, we should soon enough have come to an issue. But who was to make me guess his sneaking ways? You, yourself, said that we might rest content, for that if it was he, he would be back again at Encombe before a week had passed

over our heads. He's in London now: never mind how I found it out, but 'tis true."

A long pause followed. Captain Vivian's face was pale with fear and anger.

"It may go hard with us, if the old General and he make one again," he said at length in a low, deep voice.

Goff took up his words. "Hard with us? Put them once together, and the sooner old ocean roars between us and this part of the world the better."

"He must be kept at bay."

"Easier said than done. It's one thing keeping a man at bay, when of his own accord he takes to the Indies; and another, when he thinks fit to show his face in England. I warn you, Captain, the time's at hand when Encombe Grange may be too hot to hold you."

"You are in for it yourself, too," was the sharp rejoinder.

"Not as principal; that makes all the difference."

"You swore to the handwriting," said Captain Vivian.

"And got five hundred pounds for my pains, and little enough for the jeopardy. But it's you, Captain, that's to be troubled for. There's none of them will have an eye to me.

Captain Vivian leant his head upon his hand in deep thought, whilst Goff threw himself back in the arm-chair, with the attitude of a man who feels that he has the upper hand in the affair under discussion.

"It's best always to look matters full in the face," he continued composedly. "The game is one of

chances. First of all, the paper may have been destroyed."

Captain Vivian started up. "May? A hundred to one that it is. The old General was too mad with anger to keep it. It told against his honour."

"Then the forgery's safe."

"If I hadn't thought so, do you think I would have set foot in Encombe again?"

"Yes," replied Goff. "When more than a dozen years had gone by, and Edward Vivian was in Jamaica, and at daggers drawn with his father; why shouldn't you? If there was danger, why there was safety too. You were at hand to watch, and might start at a moment's notice. You'd have lost a capital opening for trade, if you had let fear come in the way of settling here. No, no; all that's been done is well enough; but things are altered now; and since we are reckoning chances, we mustn't forget there's a risk on the other side. The paper may be forthcoming."

Captain Vivian's knees trembled, and he sat down.

"Let Edward Vivian and his father meet," continued Goff, "and it's an even chance that you are done for."

"If the paper's gone, there's no legal proof," said Captain Vivian.

"And so no mischief!" exclaimed Goff. "Why, man, you're an idiot. Think of Edward Vivian at the Hall, lord and master, with the grudge rankling in his breast. If he can't have revenge in one way, trust him to have it in another. The story will be blazoned over the country; even your own people will take it up; there'll be a hun-

dred eyes spying at you, and Edward Vivian himself set to ruin you, to say nothing of the General. How's the trade to go on then? and what kind of life, think you, we shall lead? Do as you will, Captain, yourself, you'll not find me sitting down quietly with a foe at my very door. Let him set one foot in the Hall, and I'm off."

"It might be the best plan, any how," said Captain Vivian, thoughtfully. His assent was evidently unacceptable to Goff, who answered with a look of cool contempt. "And will you please to tell me, then, why you ever came here, since you're to be off at the first fright?"

"I came because it would be a good speculation, and we might make the thing answer. I didn't reckon that Edward Vivian would be back like a ghost from the grave."

"Well! and hasn't it answered? Aren't we carrying on as pretty a business as a man might wish for; plenty of hands to help us; and the place just fitted for it? I tell you, Captain, if you cut the cable you'll be swamped."

"Possibly."

"Certainly; as sure as I stand here. There's no hope but to stick by Encombe to the last."

"With a view of Botany Bay beyond."

"Shame on you, Captain. There isn't a fellow belonging to us who wouldn't cry craven if he heard you."

"I am only doing what you yourself advised," was the reply, "looking the matter fully in the face."

"And what's the end of that? You look your

enemy in the face one minute, to knock him down the next."

Captain Vivian started. "I've enough on my hands already," he said, quickly. "I'll have no more."

Goff's laugh was one of cold, fierce, sarcasm. "Chicken-hearted! are ye, Captain? Yet, I've known you calculate even to a penny the chance of a man's ruin. But don't be afraid. I'll keep your neck safe enough from a halter, though may be it will be a more difficult matter to keep your hands from fetters. Then, as he saw Captain Vivian wince at the suggestion, he added in an under tone, "A pistol shot would settle it quick enough between me and my enemy any day; but if you aren't up to that, you'll surely be thinking of something else. — The boy might help us, but for your marplot Ronald."

"We must be rid of him." Captain Vivian spoke coldly and sternly.

"I told you that long ago. When the Lodge folks came to Encombe, said I, it isn't a fit place for Ronald. Have you warned him, that if you fall he falls too?"

"Warned him! Ronald?" Captain Vivian's eyes flashed with indignation, and then a sudden paleness overspread his face, and rising, he paced the room in great agitation.

Goff went on without noticing him. "It's not so much the ill will against the son as against the grandson, which will work our way. There's prejudice enough against Edward Vivian already, and if Clement is thought to be running the same course, why, the thing's done; and the Hall door shut against

them both, let who will say, open. It's what you and I have said hundreds of times, and acted upon too.

"And what's to be done now, then?" inquired Captain Vivian moodily; "we can't do more than we have to keep up the old prejudice."

"It must be more than a prejudice for our purpose," replied Goff.

"You are too deep for me, man;" but Captain Vivian sat down again as if prepared to listen.

"Why, look ye. Suppose we get Clement into the net," and Goff laughed mockingly;—"not a difficult task with the boasting young sparrow, he's close upon it now;—suppose, I say, we make him one of us, set him on a sail to the coast yonder, and to return with our men. A hint to the preventives will put them on the look-out, and not much harm done to us—only the loss of a keg or two if we manage properly. But the skirmish will do our work with the General. He'll take a vow as deep as when he thought that his son had paid away his money before ever he got into possession of it, and never a step will Clement Vivian, or his father, set in Cleve Hall from that hour."

Captain Vivian was thoughtful. "The plan may do," he said, "to cut short Clement's prospects, but not to stop Edward Vivian's return, and the possibility of our discovery."

"Why, the one goes with the other," exclaimed Goff; or if it doesn't, still we have the game in our own hands. Trust me, and I'll bring the youngster into such a plight, that his father would buy his safety with five times the sum you took from him; and he should too, if I had to deal with him."

“ You mean the boy no harm ? ”

“ Harm ! I’ll make him worth twenty-fold what he is now ! I’ll show him what work is ; put a little spirit into him ! Why, his father might thank me, if t’were only for making a man of him. But let there be harm ; you might just think to yourself that you’re only squaring matters. If you get Clement on your side, its clear as a pike-staff to me, that they are getting Ronald on theirs.”

The insinuation stung Captain Vivian to the quick, and he burst out in a torrent of vehement indignation. Goff allowed his anger to have free scope, every now and then adding fuel to the flame, by recalling circumstances connected with the old enmity between him and Mr. Vivian.

He had his own purposes to gain in stirring up the rankling spirit of revenge. Years before, he had left Mr. Vivian’s service on a charge of dishonesty, which, being proved, though not brought forward in a court of justice, had entirely destroyed his character. The feeling of enmity was the first tie between him and Captain Vivian. They had carried out their schemes together, and hitherto successfully. For some years Goff had remained with Captain Vivian as his confidential servant, or rather adviser ; afterwards, circumstances had led him again to Encombe, where he entered upon his smuggling life, and at last persuaded Captain Vivian to join him. The speculation was more profitable to him than to Captain Vivian ; it suited his daring temperament ; and putting aside any personal feeling of ill will, he would have hazarded very much rather than relinquish it. As

it was, with the possibility of being discovered as an accomplice in an act of forgery, and the certainty that, if Mr. Vivian were once restored to his father's favour, there would be an enemy at his door, keeping a constant spy upon his proceedings, it was no wonder that Goff's fierce nature should be roused to projects from which the more calculating spirit of Captain Vivian would have naturally turned, as involving risk that might only end in greater ruin. Yet the feeling of revenge for the wrongs of former years was excited without difficulty; and though Goff, if left to himself, would doubtless have provided, if necessary, for his own safety by shorter and more desperate means; he was apparently contented now, when he found Captain Vivian willing to take part in the project he had proposed, and to discuss the steps by which it was to be accomplished.

On one point, however, there was no discussion. Ronald was, as soon as possible, to be removed from the scene of action; and it was determined again to tempt him by the expedition in which he had already refused to join, and which might be so arranged as to give him occupation for some time on the opposite coast. In his absence, Clement would, as it was supposed, be led without difficulty into the snares laid for him. By careful arrangement, the means of making terms with Mr. Vivian, if he should reappear at Encombe, would then be in their own power; and, at the worst, if every plan should fail, and a reconciliation with the General lead to an inquiry into the past, the possibility of escape was always within their reach.

CHAP. XXVIII.

CLEMENT VIVIAN did not hurry on his way home, although quite conscious that he was late, and that if questions were asked, the answers required might be awkward. He delayed for that very reason; once in a difficulty, and he seldom had moral courage sufficient to meet it face to face. He had been sent to the Hall, as he had stated, on a message to Ella, and had been met by Goff on his return, and induced, partly by ridicule, partly by the love of adventure, which the smuggler's conversation always aroused, to go considerably out of his way, through by-paths and copses, till coming suddenly upon the Grange, he was taken unawares, and lured into the house, under pretence of waiting only for a moment with Ronald, whilst Goff said a few words in private to Captain Vivian.

There was not very much to shock a conscience like Clement's in all this. He had done nothing—so he said to himself—which could lead him into mischief; and he had accustomed himself too much, of late, to slight disobediences of a similar kind to be very scrupulous on that point. And yet he was uneasy. There was no exact claim upon him to confess, for no strict law had been laid down, only general advice given; and if there was harm in Goff's com-

panionship, he could say, honestly, that he had not sought it. Yet something within whispered, that Mr. Lester's displeasure would be greater than it had ever been before, if it was known that he had actually gone into the Grange. Hitherto the intercourse between him and Captain Vivian had been confined to occasional chance meetings, for it had been a matter of policy not to tempt him to any glaring act of disobedience. Even at the time when he had been most friendly with Ronald, they had always parted company at the shrubbery-gate. Now, the deed was done. He had entered within the charmed walls, and what had he seen? Nothing, indeed, to tempt him to repeat his visit; yet nothing which, to his ideas, would be a reason for not doing so.

Captain Vivian amused himself with dice; but he did not bet, or ask Clement to bet; on the contrary, from the little that had passed, it seemed as if he rather occupied himself in questions of calculation than of profit: certainly he had upheld Clement in obedience, instead of tempting him to the contrary. A reaction began to spring up in Clement's mind; a sense of injustice, such as before had made him cling to Ronald. Captain Vivian, he fancied, had been unfairly dealt with; Mr. Lester knew little about him; his Aunt Bertha was prejudiced. They could not see, as he saw, that Captain Vivian, being Ronald's father, was certain to have some of Ronald's redeeming qualities. All this, and much more, passed through Clement's mind, with some show of reason. Only one thing might have suggested itself as a reason for doubting the correctness of his con-

clusions, he could not resolve to mention his visit at home, still less to Mr. Lester. Many were the excuses he made; that it would be causing a fuss about nothing; exciting groundless suspicion; that it was no fault, being only the result of accidental circumstances; these, and other equally sophistical arguments, such as are always at hand to tempt us to follow the course we like: yet, ever as Clement repeated them to himself, his own natural honesty of heart reproached him for untruth, and caused him to linger on his way, repeating again the reasoning which the moment before he had imagined was quite conclusive.

His thoughts were engaged in this manner as he slowly wended his way over the fields, which lay between the Grange and the village, when he perceived in the twilight a figure which he had little difficulty in recognising as that of Ronald Vivian, advancing to meet him from a cross path. He stopped, and Ronald came up with him quite out of breath.

“Well, Ronald, what’s the matter now? what do you want?” was Clement’s first inquiry, spoken rather impatiently, for his spirit was still rebelling against the warning which had, unasked, been given him.

“You are going home, aren’t you?” replied Ronald, recovering himself. “I suppose if I am travelling the same road, we may as well go together.”

“To night? What is your business? Is there any thing going on?”

“Nothing that you’d care to hear about. I’m not

going far. But you had the start of me, Clement ; I had no notion you were off."

"I stayed longer than I intended as it was," replied Clement, "but you are wonderfully anxious for my company to take the trouble to lose your breath at such a rate. Just now I thought you had made up your mind not to remain in the same room with me ; you were out of it as soon as I came in."

"I should have made mischief if I had stayed," replied Ronald.

"Mischief? how? what?"

"I've a tongue in my head, and nine times out of ten it runs away with me ; so I decamped."

"I don't see what there was to make it run away then," replied Clement. "No one was going to quarrel that I saw ; I am sure I wasn't."

"I wish you had been. Clement, you'd best stand at arm's length with my father. There, — I say it, that would sooner die than have cause to say it, but I must."

"There is never any other way of standing with him," replied Clement. "It's little enough that I see of him, and as you know, this is the first time I ever set my foot within the Grange."

"Then let it be the last time."

"It may be and it may not be ; I don't choose to tie myself down : but I am obliged to you, Ronald, for your hospitality, at least."

"I care nothing for your obligation, one way or the other," exclaimed Ronald, impetuously ; "but once for all, Clement, if you would'nt rue the day that ever you came to Encombe, you'll keep as far from the

Grange as you would from—and his voice sank—the pit of destruction.”

The eager tone of his deep voice struck forcibly, and even awfully, upon Clement's ear, and grasping Ronald by the arm, he said, earnestly: “Ronald, you didn't talk in that way when first I came here.”

“I did not know then that there was any cause. But don't trouble me, Clement; don't ask questions. You are to be off soon, aren't you?”

He tried to speak lightly, but the effort was unsuccessful, and Clement passing by the question, returned to the former topic.

“It is the way they all talk to me,” he said. “They are full of mysteries, and I don't choose to put up with them. I am old enough surely to have some judgment of my own. I can tell right from wrong, as well as they can; and if I don't see that things are wrong, why am I to be forced to give them up? As for your father, he might as well be at Nova Scotia for any thing I get from him, whether good or bad; and if a man doesn't do me any harm, I don't think I have any reason to think he means to do it.”

“You'll argue differently one of these days,” was the reply.

“Preaching are you?” and Clement laughed. “I didn't know that was one of your gifts. I suppose Aunt Bertha has put you up to it; come, tell me now,” and he laid his hand playfully on Ronald's shoulder, “hasn't she been setting you to jaw me in this fashion?”

Ronald drew back. “When you want to know

what Miss Campbell says to me, you had better go and ask her. I have said my say."

. Clement stopped him as he was turning away. "Answer me one question, Ronald. If you were in my place shouldn't you do as I do?"

Ronald considered for a moment, and answered firmly, "No."

"Then what should you do?" Clement's tone betrayed considerable pique.

"I hope I should act the part of a brave man, not of a coward."

"Coward!"

"Coward," repeated Ronald, quietly. "I would have my head cut off before I would be trusted and betray my trust."

"I am not trusted. It is the very thing I complain of; they do not trust me."

"If you weren't trusted you would be locked up."

"You are mocking. Lock me up? As if any one had power to do that!"

"Mr. Lester has power at any time."

"Physical power. Folly! who thinks of that in these days?"

"Honour is instead of power, then," said Ronald; "and honour would keep me from deceiving him."

"Ronald, you would madden a saint," exclaimed Clement. "I tell you I don't deceive him."

"Then he knows every thing you do. He will hear of your having been at the Grange to-night?"

"Hear! if he asks. I wouldn't tell a lie."

"And I wouldn't act one."

"I don't understand; you make me angry; I

won't stand it!" exclaimed Clement, in a fretful tone of wounded pride and irritation. "I vow, if it weren't for old days, I should think you had come just to insult me and give me the opportunity of knocking you down."

"Try, if you will," replied Ronald, quietly, and perhaps a little contemptuously; "I shall not return it." But he added more quietly, "Don't let us make fools of ourselves, Clement, by sparring for nothing. You know I don't mean to insult you, as you call it."

"Then what do you mean?"

"Simply to make you get up pluck enough to be honest; and when you are out upon *parole*, not to break it; and when you do break it, to own it."

The question seemed to strike Clement in a new light. "I never thought about that sort of thing," he said. "I was at school before I came here, and the boys there thought that pluck was to risk getting your own way without being caught."

"I suppose they did: I don't know about school-boys; I never was at school."

"Then who told you what pluck, and honour, and such things meant?"

"My own heart, and —" Ronald added, in an under tone — "things I was taught when I was a child."

"It's all very fine, Ronald," exclaimed Clement, after a moment's thought; but twenty to one you've done more wild things in one day than I have done in all my life."

Perhaps it was well for Clement that the dim light hid from him the change which passed over

Ronald's countenance as the words were said: he might have reproached himself too bitterly. Yet even without seeing, there was something deeply touching in the changed, humbled, faltering tone of the reply. "Yes; oh, yes. Clement, you must never be like me."

Clement seized his hand kindly. "Cheer up, old fellow! I'm sure I didn't mean reproach. If you did twenty bad things, I dare say I should have done a hundred. I wasn't thinking a bit of boasting; I'm far enough off from that really."

"And I was not told; I never betrayed trust," continued Ronald, with something of his former energy.

"No, of course you didn't. You are true to the backbone. But I shouldn't like you to think I could do so either."

"You mightn't mean it, but you might do it; and you will if——"

"If what? out with it."

"If you don't tell Mr. Lester that you have been at the Grange to-night."

"I don't see that. I shall tell if I'm asked."

"Honour is in telling without being asked."

"Going to confession," said Clement, with something of a sarcastic laugh.

"If it's necessary."

"Yes, if it is; that's the point; but I'll think about it."

They stopped, as if by mutual consent. Ronald made one more effort. "Clement, you told me once

that you wished we had been brothers ; is the feeling all gone ?”

“Gone! no;” and Clement shook his hand affectionately. “I would wish nothing better than to have you for my brother ; if only you wouldn’t be on one day and off another in the way you are. I can’t understand that.”

“Then if we are as brothers, give me a brother’s confidence, and promise, even if you don’t see the necessity, that you will tell Mr. Lester where you have been to-night.”

Clement hesitated, — began to speak, — was silent again, — and at length, after grasping Ronald’s hand violently, ran off, exclaiming, “I hate promises ; but I’ll see about it.”

CHAP. XXIX.

CLEMENT reached home just as tea was being made, after a delay of three quarters of an hour, which had been very trying to the whole party; and particularly so, as the two children had, for once, been allowed to sit up for the late tea. His excuse was hasty and incoherent, — that he was kept longer than he had expected at the Hall, and had walked back rather slowly; both statements being true in the letter, though false in the spirit. Fanny, who was the make-peace of the party, found a place for him at the table, and provided him with a plate, but every one else treated him as if he was in disgrace; and Bertha, especially, not quite understanding how to show her annoyance with one individual, except by making all suffer, sat perfectly silent, except when every now and then she asked, in a tone which had a peculiarly melancholy intonation, whether any one wished for more tea.

Louisa occasionally attempted a little conversation. Quick observation was teaching her tact; and, besides, there was a love of power innate in her, which made her feel pleasure in the consciousness of taking the lead in any matter however small.

“How was Ella, Clement?”

“Oh! pretty well;” and Clement cut for himself a large slice of bread.

“ Had she been out to-day ? ”

“ I don't know ; I didn't ask her. ”

“ When is she coming home ? ” asked Mrs. Campbell. “ I can't let her stay away much longer. ”

“ She doesn't want to come home yet, she says, Grandmamma. ”

“ It must be very pleasant to sit by the fire all day, and read, ” observed Fanny, who partook largely of her sister's indolence.

“ Aunt Mildred won't let her do that, I'm sure, ” said Louisa. “ It's very bad for Ella not to go out ; she always gets ill if she doesn't take exercise. ”

“ Louisa, my dear, you had better not trouble yourself about what is good, or bad, for Ella, ” said Bertha. “ Give me Grandmamma's cup for some more tea ? ”

“ Just half a cup, my dear ; not so much sugar, and a little more milk, ” said Mrs. Campbell.

That was the first attempt at conversation. Bertha poured out the tea ; then put too much sugar, and too little milk ; then too much milk, and too little water ; then too much water, and too little tea ; and was rewarded by hearing the beverage she had provided pronounced totally undrinkable. A martyr could not have been more touching in her resignation. Louisa was aware of the fact ; and, when Aunt Bertha began the concoction a second time, she attempted once more to arouse the dormant energies of the party by a fresh observation.

“ What a heap of letters went to the post to-day ! Do you know, Betsy said there were as many as Anne, at the Rectory, could carry. ”

“ I don't know who could have written them, ”

observed Mrs. Campbell, with rather a sharp glance at Bertha. "Writing letters is a great waste of time, unless people have real business to write about."

"There were three of Aunt Bertha's," said Fanny, who had a remarkable talent for *mal-à-propos* observations.

Bertha coloured, and looked annoyed. Louisa came to her rescue:—"They weren't all ours, though. You know there were Mr. Lester's letters, too. I don't know how many there weren't of his; and Rachel had been writing besides."

"Rachel is a great deal too young to write so many letters," said Mrs. Campbell. "It is a very bad thing for children; it teaches them to scribble. I wonder Mr. Lester allows it."

"My hand is not spoilt, at any rate, by the number of letters I write," observed Clement. "I'm sure I don't get through half-a-dozen in a twelvemonth."

"And when you do write, you don't waste many words, or much paper," said Louisa.

"No; why should I? It's an awful bore, anyhow."

"Mr. Lester's hand must quite ache," said Louisa. "He writes so small, and crowds in such a quantity. I am sure one of the letters to-day looked quite like a book."

"Louisa, how could you know?" and Bertha turned to her hurriedly; whilst even Mrs. Campbell gave a glance of surprise.

But Louisa was unabashed. "I couldn't help knowing," she said; "Anne came with us down the lane, when we were running after you, Aunt Bertha,

and she let them fall, and Fanny and I helped to pick them up."

"I think it was seeing Goff coming round the corner suddenly, that frightened her," said Fanny. "She can't bear him."

"He was very civil, though," observed Louisa. "He made us such a funny bow, and asked if he should carry the letters for us, because he was going into Encombe, and he thought we wanted to go to the shore."

"And Anne was very glad he should," continued Fanny; "because she had so much to do, and it saved her the walk."

"But it wasn't quite right, Aunt Bertha, was it?" inquired Louisa. "When she was told to go, she ought to have gone. I said so, and I made her quite angry."

"And we said that we would ask you to let us go through the village, and put the letters in the post," continued Fanny, perceiving by the change in her aunt's countenance, that some one had done wrong.

"It was very wrong. Anne ought to have known better," began Bertha; when Mrs. Campbell interrupted her in a fretful tone:

"What is it all about? I don't understand. What did you do about the letters, my dears?"

"Nothing at all, Grandmamma."

"Then, Bertha, why do you find fault with them? You are always hard upon them. You ought to inquire before you blame."

"I am not aware that I did blame them," replied

Bertha. "Louisa, did Goff take the letters?" She spoke rather anxiously.

"I think he did, Aunt Bertha, but I am not sure. Fanny and I ran on before it was settled."

"No great harm if he did, that I can see," observed Clement, moodily: "Goff's not likely to lose the letters."

"And I shouldn't think he could read them," said Fanny. "Such a rough, odd man he is."

"For that matter, Fanny," answered Clement, "he can read as well as you or I. He told me all about the loss of that ship, off the Irish coast, word for word, nearly as it was in the newspaper. He had read it all."

"That was in to-day's paper," said Louisa: "Aunt Bertha read it to us. How did he hear about it before?"

A curious look of confused discomfiture crossed Clement's face; he answered abruptly: "I didn't say that he had read it before to-day."

Bertha appeared to be engaged in putting away the sugar, and locking up the tea-caddy; but she heard all that passed.

"You have seen Goff to-day, then, Clement?" her sharp, inquiring look abashed, whilst it made him angry.

"Yes; I have seen him." And he played with his tea-spoon, whilst his features assumed an air of impenetrable determination, which Bertha had no difficulty in interpreting.

"You saw him this evening, I suppose?"

"Yes."

“And I imagine that was the reason you were at home so late.”

Whatever might have been Bertha's object in her questions, it was manifestly unwise to put them before Mrs. Campbell and the children. Clement's countenance became only the more dark, whilst Mrs. Campbell, as usual, taking her grandson's part, and forgetting that she had been kept waiting, insisted that it was folly to teaze him about where he had been, when he came in in time; and breaking in upon the subject, told Fanny to ring the bell and have the tea-things taken away.

Bertha went out of the room, and Clement took a book, and sat by the fire; but his reading was merely a pretence. He was in reality thinking of the difficulty into which he had been brought, and wondering how much of his proceedings he should be obliged to tell. Not more than he could avoid, that was undoubtedly his conclusion, in spite of Ronald's warning. Something he supposed he must say, but he would be guided by circumstances; a most convenient salve to the conscience, when there is not sufficient moral strength in the character to act upon principle. What he really intended to do might have been clear to him by the manner in which he reverted, in his own mind, to the folly of having mentioned Goff.

“Louisa, where is your aunt?” inquired Mrs. Campbell, as Bertha failed to return at the usual reading time.

“I don't know, Grandmamma; I will go and see.”

Louisa left the room, not so much from obedience as to satisfy her curiosity. She came back almost

immediately. "Betsy says, Grandmamma, that Aunt Bertha put on her bonnet and cloth cloak, and she thinks she has gone up to the Rectory."

"Very strange!" was Mrs Campbell's observation. "I suppose, then, there will be no reading to night!"

"I will read, Grandmamma," said Clement. He was too uncomfortable to do anything else; and even when he began to read, betrayed the wandering of his mind by the mistakes which he made.

Mrs. Campbell was accustomed to Bertha's independent modes of action, and was not likely to disturb herself as to her absence, so long, at least, as she was amused; and Clement's voice, after a short time, lulled her into her usual quiet evening doze; and then Louisa and Fanny went to bed, and Clement prepared some lessons for Mr. Lester.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

WORKS FOR YOUNG PERSONS.

I.

AMY HERBERT. By a Lady. Edited by the Rev. WILLIAM SEWELL, B.D., Fellow and Tutor at Exeter College, Oxford. New Edition. Fcp. 8vo. price 6s.

II.

THE EARL'S DAUGHTER. By the Author of *Amy Herbert*. Edited by the Rev. W. SEWELL, B.D. 2 vols. fcp. 8vo. price 9s.

III.

GERTRUDE: A Tale. By the Author of *Amy Herbert*. Edited by the Rev. W. SEWELL, B.D. New Edition. Fcp. 8vo. price 6s.

IV.

LANETON PARSONAGE: A Tale for Children, on the Practical Use of a portion of the Church Catechism. By the Author of *Amy Herbert*. Edited by the Rev. W. SEWELL, B.D. New Edition. 3 vols. fcp. 8vo. price 16s.

V.

MARGARET PERCIVAL. By the Author of *Amy Herbert*. Edited by the Rev. W. SEWELL, B.D. New Edition. 2 vols. fcp. 8vo. price 12s.

VI.

THE EXPERIENCE OF LIFE. By the Author of *Amy Herbert*. New Edition. Fcp. 8vo. price 7s. 6d.

“Those who read for instruction as well as amusement will find in these experiences much moral and pious sentiment gracefully interpreted and practically illustrated.”
MORNING CHRONICLE.

VII.

KATHARINE ASHTON. By the Author of *Amy Herbert*. New Edition. 2 vols. fcp. 8vo. price 12s.

London: LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN and LONGMANS.

WORKS FOR YOUNG PERSONS.

VIII.

READINGS FOR A MONTH PREPARATORY TO CONFIRMATION: Compiled from the Works of Writers of the Early and of the English Church. By the Author of *Amy Herbert*. Fcp. 8vo. price 5s. 6d.

“A volume full of devout meditations and holy counsels, which, while it will prove profitable in the hands of candidates for confirmation during the period of preparation for that sacred rite, will be found no less valuable by clergymen as a guide in the instruction of their catechumens.”

JOHN BULL.

IX.

READINGS FOR EVERY DAY IN LENT: Compiled from the Writings of Bishop JEREMY TAYLOR. By the Author of *Amy Herbert*. Fcp. 8vo. price 5s.

X.

JOURNAL KEPT DURING A SUMMER TOUR, for the Children of a Village School: From Ostend to the Lake of Constance; thence to the Simplon and through part of the Tyrol to Genoa. By the Author of *Amy Herbert*. With Route Maps. Fcp. 8vo. price 5s.

XI.

THE CHILD'S FIRST HISTORY OF ROME. By the Author of *Amy Herbert*. New and cheaper Edition. Fcp. 8vo. price Half-a-Crown.

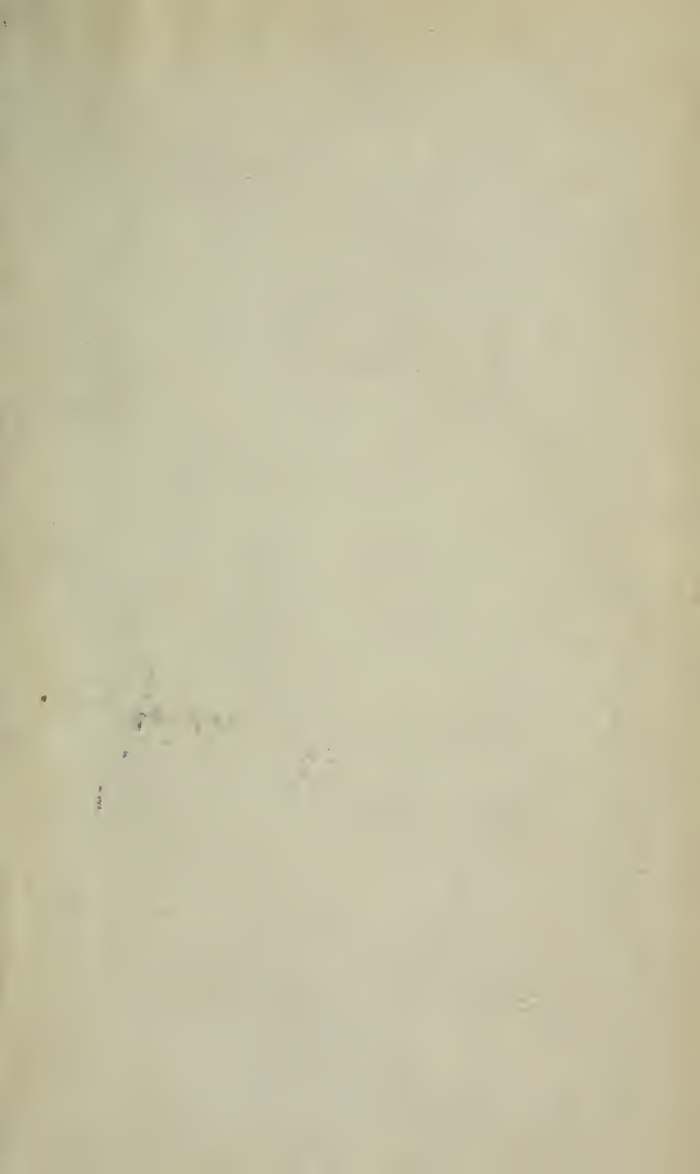
XII.

A FIRST HISTORY OF GREECE. Uniform with *The Child's First History of Rome*. By the same Author. New and cheaper Edition. Fcp. 8vo. price 3s. 6d.

XIII.

CATECHISM OF THE HISTORY OF THE EARLY CHURCH in ENGLAND and WALES, from its Foundation to the Norman Conquest. By MRS. ROBERT SEWELL. Fcp. 8vo. price 2s.

London: LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, and LONGMANS.



BOOKS ON RURAL SPORTS, &c.

I.
The ANGLER and his FRIEND, or, Piscatory Colloquies and Fishing Excursions. By JOHN DAVY, M. D. F. R. S. Fcp. 8vo. price 6s.

II.
HINTS on SHOOTING, FISHING, &c. both on SEA and LAND, and in the FRESH-WATER LOCHS of SCOTLAND: Being the Experiences of CHRISTOPHER IDLE, Esq. Fcp. 8vo. price 5s.

III.
Colonel HAWKER'S INSTRUCTIONS to YOUNG SPORTSMEN, in all that relates to GUNS and SHOOTING. The Tenth Edition, revised, corrected, and improved by the Author's Son; with numerous Plates and Woodcuts. 8vo. price 5s.

IV.
BLAINE'S ENCYCLOPEDIA of RURAL SPORTS. *New Edition*, revised by HARRY HILOVER, EPHEMERA, and Mr. A. GRAHAM. With above 600 Woodcuts. 8vo. price 50s. half-bound.

V.
STABLE PRACTICE; or, Hints on Training for the Turf, the Chase, and the Road. By CECIL. Fcp. 8vo. with Plate, price 5s. half-bound.

VI.
STABLE TALK and TABLE TALK; or, Spectacles for Young Sportsmen. By HARRY HILOVER. *New Edition*, with Portrait. 2 vols. 8vo. 24s.

VII.
RECORDS of the CHASE, and MEMOIRS of CELEBRATED SPORTSMEN. By CECIL. With 2 Plates by B. HARRING. Fcp. 8vo. price 7s. 6c. half-bound.

VIII.
The STUD for PRACTICAL PURPOSES and PRACTICAL MEN. A Guide to the Choice of a Horse for Use, more than for SHOW. By HARRY HILOVER. Fcp. 8vo. with 2 Plates, price 5s. half-bound.

IX.
The STUD FARM; or, Hints on Breeding Horses for the Turf, the Chase, and the Road. By CECIL. Fcp. 8vo. with Plate, price 5s. half-bound.

X.
The POCKET and the STUD; or, Practical Hints on the Management of the Stable. By HARRY HILOVER. *New Edition*, with Plate. Fcp. 8vo. price 6s. half-bound.

XI.
The HUNTING-FIELD. By HARRY HILOVER. With Two Plates. *One representing The Right Sort: the other, The Wrong Sort.* Fcp. 8vo. price 5s. half-bound.

XII.
The CRICKET FIELD; or, the Science and History of the Game of CRICKET. *Second Edition*, greatly improved; with Plates and Diagrams. Fcp. 8vo. price 5s. half-bound.



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA



3 0112 042029204