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CROSS PURPOSES.

A NOVEL:

BY

CATHERINE SINCLAIR,

AUTHOR OF "MODERN ACCOMPLISHMENTS," "BEATRICE,"
ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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CROSS PURPOSES.

CHAPTER I.

LORD BRENTFORD and Captain Clifford, leaving their host a rather wearied and very unwilling prisoner, strolled out in the sunshine, and after looking at their horses, had little left to do, till their hopes of enjoyment became suddenly animated by observing O'Hara in a far-off field, accompanied by Theresa and Fanny, whose light step and graceful movements they admired at a distance, and resolved to overtake. By a masterly manœuvre, Captain Clifford led his companion so as to intercept O'Hara, whom he politely addressed with some inquiries as to his own plans and Lord Brentford's for shooting and fishing next day. The two young ladies were so muffled up in shawls and dark-blue veils, that neither face nor figure were recognisable, and, except a slight bow, no intercourse took place.

If the gentlemen could have found a wishing-cap, they would have begged for a breeze of wind to blow aside the veils; but no such friendly gale appeared, and they unwillingly strolled on.

The two parties had passed on their several ways, and separated for some distance, when a loud shout from behind caused O'Hara to look hurriedly round, and he saw the two gentlemen, with vehement gestures, directing his attention towards a neighbouring field. There the two girls with terror perceived a large English bull-dog, which had been for some time past an object of extreme alarm throughout the neighbourhood, tearing along the road with a degree of rapidity and fury attributable only to madness. He was bespattered with foam and mud, while champng the froth that streamed from his open jaw, and snapping furiously at his broken chain, which dragged along the ground, and at whatever came in his way. O'Hara shouted and made every imaginable noise, to intimidate this formidable animal as he sprung onward, but the frantic creature seemed utterly unconscious of sight or sound. He made straight towards the place where Theresa and Fanny, in an almost fainting state of terror, stood cowering behind a tree. They were now helplessly clinging to O'Hara, who carried not even a stick with which to protect them, but courageously prepared to meet the worst by placing himself in front of his

trembling young wards. He maintained his ground there, however, firm as a rock, pale and resolute, his lips firmly set, and his eye sternly composed, but without a hope of eluding the attack of his approaching enemy, while one only desire was paramount in that brave, honest heart, to save the children of his benefactress.

The rabid creature, lashing himself into a state of fury, plunged forward with the strength and rapidity of a cannon-ball, so that the almost fatal injury of one or all the party seemed inevitable. Fanny now grasped O'Hara's arm convulsively, while he struggled to say one word of encouragement to the trembling girls; but his tongue refused its office, as no word of hope could come in a scene of danger so imminent. He led the girls to a neighbouring oak, and gently placing them beside the trunk, he walked steadily forward to meet the dangerous animal. O'Hara's limbs continued firm, but he became pallid as death; yet still, with generous self-devotion, he slowly advanced, fixing his eye on the gigantic dog, who came almost blindly rushing onwards, with a speed that seemed every instant to increase.

O'Hara had at this moment the spirit of a martyr. His gratitude to the memory of Lady Brownlow was stronger than death; it was the one green leaf that had lingered after every summer blossom had fallen, and he stood firmly prepared to meet

the raging foe, when suddenly a shot was fired, which threw the animal prostrate on his knees. He rolled forward, foaming in convulsive agony; and a second shot followed, which at once laid the creature dead at O'Hara's feet, covered with blood and dust.

The brave man, a moment before so firm, sprung back now in bewildered amazement. For some moments he scarcely understood what had happened; and as he gazed at the brutal monster rolling in the mud, he became almost unnerved by the greatness of his deliverance, while the two girls shed tears of thankfulness for their own escape and that of their very kind guardian. When the two sportsmen emerged from the thicket whence Lord Brentford had taken so sure an aim, O'Hara advanced to meet them, saying, in a tone of most gentleman-like good-breeding, that his young wards, being evidently much agitated, seemed unable to speak, therefore he begged in their names to say how gratefully Theresa and Fanny felt that they owed a most wonderful deliverance to such timely aid.

The two young men would gladly have made personal inquiries for those they had so fortunately rescued; but O'Hara perseveringly interposed himself, to prevent any conversation, and with very respectful politeness made it evident that the absence of Lord Brentford and Captain Clifford

would be more acceptable, at least to him, than their prolonged presence ; and so both gentlemen unwillingly withdrew, very much surprised, and very much unaccustomed to find themselves so little cared for.

It seemed to O'Hara no safe acquaintance for his beautiful young wards, situated as they then were, to become intimate with gentlemen of rank and fashion, who had such agreeable manners to recommend them, and who might find it an amusing relaxation to make their conversation acceptable in the society of those like Theresa and Fanny, of whom, from their apparent circumstances as his unknown wards, neither Lord Brentford nor Captain Clifford were likely to entertain any permanent thought.

O'Hara had heard from Lady Dora formerly that Lord Brentford, while scarcely yet out of his boyhood, was exceedingly ambitious to obtain the character of a fast man, rather profligate than otherwise in his habits, and that after leaving Oxford, when he might have been studying under a private tutor, the young peer affected usages that older men would have been ashamed to own ; so that he began life with being as ostentatious of his vices as if they had been virtues of which to be proud ; therefore, to a careful guardian of young girls such an intimacy was well worth discouraging.

Lord Tipperary and his pleasure-seeking guests resolved to bring up a bubble to the surface of life's wine-cup while they could, and to forget the unburied dead, whose remains yet lingered in the old home; therefore they assembled that evening round the billiard-table, cue in hand, for a match, while Captain Clifford, who was a good player, and Lord Brentford, who was a very moderately good one, but fancied himself first-rate, concluded their game with several very brilliant strokes, though with loud lamentations at the table being so unworthy of their excellent play.

"Tell me, Tipperary," said Captain Clifford, preparing for a very scientific hit, and brandishing his cue, "have you any fairies or houris renting a cottage on the neighbouring little island? We saw two sylphs or hamadryades crossing to Pine-forest Isle to-day, escorted by your jovial old factor. They vanished like a dissolving view on the beach."

"The apparitions were mere mortals, very much afraid of our guns," added Lord Brentford, in a more matter-of-fact tone; "and I am never surprised at ladies being terrified, because it is a remarkable fact in natural history, that every gun which goes off by accident kills its man, woman, or child. A sportsman who misses every shot for a whole season, no sooner carries his gun care-

lessly than he is sure to shoot himself or his friends."

"Or his dog, which is worst of all," interposed Captain Clifford. "I wished myself cupid with a quiver to-day, to have aimed a few arrows at these beautiful incognitas. If love at first sight be a monomania, get me a strait-waistcoat, for I am desperately smitten with both."

"So am I with the prettiest. I used to say that if you told me the Venus de Medici herself stood alive behind me, I should not take the trouble to look round; but that wild Irish girl has a degree of spirit and vivacity which is very attractive. I once thought a sort of Romeo and Juliet first love quite absurdly impossible, but really now it seems both pleasant and quite natural. Clifford, your favourite is, as Tennyson says of Maude, 'faultily faultless, icily regular, dead perfection, and no more;' but the little merry brunette is dazzling and fascinating beyond any girl I ever saw.

"Petulant she spoke, and at herself she laugh'd :
A rosebud set with little wilful thorns,
And sweet as English air could make her."

I do like people to have some leaven in them, though all the brains I ever possessed myself were burned out at school, and I have lived ever since on the embers. Our old tutor used to think my life and whole time usefully spent in investi-

gating the guilt or innocence of Queen Mary, the crimes of Richard the Third, the identity of the man in the iron mask, and who was the author of Junius. He would have died happy to be certain on any one of these points."

"Of course!" replied Captain Clifford. "Do you remember his telling us that Sir Nathaniel Wraxall had discovered an important historical secret, that the name of the executioner who beheaded Charles the First was Gregory Brandon. Nothing stupifies a young boy more than being unceasingly crammed in early life with information. Exercise his observation, his judgment, his imagination, so that he shall have energy of mind afterwards to seek information for himself. Do not dig the mine for him."

"*A propos* of mines! I am in a scrape now!" exclaimed Lord Tipperary, yawning. "I never was in such a predicament before! I really am done for at last."

"What has happened?"

"Happened! I am in a tremendous fix! The fact is, I have got so much money now that I do not know what to do with it all!"

"Indeed!" exclaimed Lord Brentford, laughingly holding out his hand; "then lend me a ten-pound note!"

"No; I want to teach myself to be a miser. It is contrary to my nature; but money is the only

visible good, and people never seem to tire of amassing it."

"For my part," answered Captain Clifford, "I prefer being romantically poor, and feel as sentimental this evening as if it were moonlight! Give me my own cottage home and perfect happiness! that is all I ask. Since we met those merry young Irish girls, I have meditated more than I ever did in my life before on the loneliness of old bachelorhood, on the delight of talking nonsense with a kindred mind, on the gratification it would be to have my thoughts read, my very looks watched, to be appreciated, felt for, and understood. That seems to me now the only unbounded felicity of which life is capable."

"Clifford! I thought you were in love to-day, for you have never heard half what I said, which is an infallible symptom," exclaimed Lord Tipperary. "I am glad we are never likely to be rivals either in friendship or in love, for few men can resist your fascinations, and no woman could."

Nothing in nature was ever seen more beautiful than the shores of Loch Elan, on which, next day, Lord Brentford and Captain Clifford embarked in a pleasure-boat to try the rod or the gun, as might be most eligible for trout and water-fowl. Creswick might have delighted to paint that landscape, or Longfellow to celebrate it in verse. A ridge of gigantic mountains, like a coarse outer

crust, hemmed in the distant landscape, mingling their lofty peaks with the overhanging clouds, which rested in long ragged peaks on their summit. The nearer hills were feathered over with drooping birch-trees and ancient oaks of many centuries growth, and the lower ground, stretching in many a long rocky point into the transparent water, was a perfect rainbow of glorious colouring, varied by rhododendrons, azalias, kalmias, hawthorns, and yellow broom. The daisied grass appeared as if spangled over with an extravagant profusion of primroses, harebells, lychnis, and daffodils, contrasted by occasional patches of wild heather; and the whole neighbourhood was enlivened by a numerous population of birds singing in concert, echoing and reechoing each other's notes, as if all delirious with happiness, as if all inspired with "one mighty heart of joy." The entire lake was like a vast burning-glass, in which the whole landscape was repeated and *Da Capo'd*, with a distinctness of reflection that caused the islands to look as if suspended in mid-air.

Even Lord Brentford, self-contained as he generally was, opened the eyes of astonishment at beholding so gorgeous a picture, and Captain Clifford's enthusiasm became too big for utterance. He silently suspended his oar, and looked in speechless admiration at the little peninsula which they had neared. A sunny gamboge-

coloured grass walk wound its way through this brilliant wilderness, at the end of which, facing close into the water, stood a pretty little tent, surrounded by a small flower-garden, evidently under very skilful cultivation, for the roses that bloomed there were no ordinary roses, and the azalias appeared such as a Chiswick gardener might have envied. The complete landscape was, indeed, a gem of beauty.

The two friends had indolently pulled across that narrow bay, languidly enjoying the melody and beauty of nature, and were about to emerge from the shore which they had skirted along into a wider part of the lake, when they heard a clear, ringing, and very musical laugh on the unseen side of a sloping bank. That voice had a tone of innocent hilarity very attractive, and the two young men paused to listen. The gleeful laugh, possessed apparently by the very spirit of joy, was repeated, sounding like the essence of merriment and of girlish vivacity. To persons so *blazé* and wearied as these two strangers, such gay sounds appeared quite like an unknown tongue, to hear again the *riante* tones to which they listened with animated curiosity as well as with pleasure. A moment afterwards, while the little wherry drifted noiselessly onwards, Lord Brentford and Captain Clifford came in sight of a group that filled them with delight. Accompanied by a respectable-

looking, grave, elderly maid-servant, Theresa and Fanny, evidently in a state of perfect felicity, were perched upon a natural pier of rough slippery rocks, playing with an enormous Newfoundland dog, in a state of vehement excitement, roughly gambolling at their side. He stood evidently in eager expectation, while the two merry girls, in agonies of laughter and with a prodigious effort, tossed far into the water an immense dressed-up figure, the worn-out lathe of some forgotten artist, nearly the size of life, and equipped to resemble themselves.

The helpless figure looked like a drowning person, as it sunk and rose in the most natural manner imaginable, while the laughing girls called out to Neptune that he must do his duty, on which that active obedient animal sprung into the water. He swam boldly to the rescue, while Theresa and Fanny, almost shrieking with ecstasy at the success of their little practical joke on poor Neptune, applauded him with gestures full of natural grace and heedless merriment. They urged on Neptune to greater energy, while the equally delighted animal struggled on with frantic efforts, resolutely endeavouring to follow the figure, now rapidly floating far out into the tide, while it sunk and rose with every wave.

Neptune swam resolutely on, almost out of sight; first pausing to take breath, then whirling

round in an eddy, resolved evidently to do his duty, or perish in the attempt; while the laughing girls, becoming suddenly alarmed for the poor animal's safety, vainly endeavoured, by cries of endearment, to entice him back. He plunged on, reckless of consequences—a model-hero, preferring death to defeat. What could be done? Theresa and Fanny had both become exhausted with the effort to make themselves heard, till at length, now seeing Neptune in apparent danger, they sat despairingly down, and Fanny burst into tears.

No sooner did poor Neptune's position appear hazardous than the two young men pulled out with vigorous strokes into the depths of Loch Elan, and not only enticed the drowning animal into their boat, but also grasped hold of the suppositious young lady, whom they gallantly fastened to the stern of the little pinnace, and drew all dripping through the water, and floating disconsolately behind them to the shore.

It was with an irresistible burst of laughter, which made them all feel at once intimately acquainted, that the four young people stood together on the small rugged pier, contemplating the joyful demonstrations of poor Neptune on bringing safely to land the helpless object he had been ready to die for. It was, indeed, an object! Dressed up merely to deceive Neptune, the figure lay dragged and disfigured on the beach, looking most desolate

and forlorn, like "the maiden all tattered and torn." The whole aspect was altogether ludicrously hideous.

"I declare it is your very image!" exclaimed Lord Brentford, glancing his dark, mirthful eyes from the prostrate lathe figure to Theresa, whose face, almost convulsed with suppressed merriment and recent agitation, looked beautiful as an April morning. A scarlet flush had overspread her face and neck when first Lord Brentford spoke to her, but now both girls became ten times more occupied with "dear old Nep" than with the two unexpected intruders, whom, however, they cordially thanked, and then evidently supposed the strangers would re-embark and depart. Nothing was further from the thoughts of Lord Brentford and his companion, however, than to withdraw. They were both interested and excited beyond measure by this lively adventure; and with a frank, free, good-humoured determination, resolved as long as possible to follow it up. What could be more enticing than to linger on this romantic little island, in company with two graceful, shy, but merry young ladies, each of whom looked fit to be a queen of fairy-land? Lord Brentford and Captain Clifford had met with a few adventures in their lives before, but with none so agreeably romantic.

Theresa, like the brightest and freshest of

tropical flowers, had all the gorgeous colouring of oriental beauty; her long, dark, glossy ringlets, shading a round clear cheek of the richest crimson, and her lips, like rose-buds, contrasting with the dazzling whiteness of her teeth. Even when the bright and sunny brunette endeavoured to look gravest, there flickered in her dark hazel eyes, and around her mouth, many an undeveloped smile of the archest humour. The dimples in her cheek quivered with vain efforts to restrain her animation now, when she felt herself so unexpectedly before strangers, and she was evidently impatient for them to go, that she and Fanny might have Neptune entirely to themselves. Then how they would caress and pet him, and compliment him on his achievements! But still the two intruders obstinately remained, looking on at all the gigantic gambols of the delighted Neptune, and very successfully ingratiating themselves with him.

Fanny was as classical in her style of beauty as any Greek statue, and almost as delicately formed. Her eyes had often a shy, startled, fawn-like expression, and her cheek a tinge of beautiful bloom. Her style of looks and manner were more timid and retiring than Theresa's, who had a good-humoured pertness, a fitful caprice, a sort of half-childish dignity, exceedingly piquant and pretty. Theresa's tone of voice displayed an arch, petulant, whimsical drollery, quite irresistible. She seemed

a bright little Hebe, made to be petted, teased, doated on, and loved ; while by her whims, fancies, flippancies, and arrant nonsense, it always happened that where she once appeared, every other person became instantly forgotten. There shone out a fascination, not to be described, in the way she smiled, jested, or scolded, as was her habit with those she loved the best ; keeping up a word war with humorous, roguish pertinacity, not to be discomfited. The retort courteous, or even uncourteous, Theresa had been jestingly exercised in by O'Hara, who delighted to encourage all her pretty wilfulnesses and her saucy humorousness, particularly as nothing ever put the pretty little termagant really out of humour, and there appeared a deprecating shyness mingled with all her courage in repartee, which gave it an exquisite zest.

Never were there more expressive eyes than Theresa's ; and when Lord Brentford stood by her side resolute, uninvited to remain planted there, she looked up, half-laughing and half-frightened, with an air of remonstrating perplexity, while the blush of a summer rose flooded her cheek, and her eyes said as plainly as eyes could speak, "Why do you stay here?"

"We are waiting to receive medals from the Humane Society for saving your friend," said Lord Brentford, gravely, fixing his observation on the prostrate figure. "She must have been the

beauty of your family, and I should like to possess her picture. Till my companion there, who particularly distinguished himself on this occasion, be properly rewarded, I shall take the liberty of keeping him here."

"I think the liberty is in staying yourself," replied Theresa, with an arch, pretty, wilful smile, her eyes brimming over with laughter, and her voice trembling with suppressed merriment. "When are you going away?"

"As soon as I tire of my company! I have an odd rule of my own—never, on any pretext, to do anything but what pleases me at the moment; and it certainly does not please me to move off half a step now, unless, like our old nursery rhyme, 'you take me by the left leg, and toss me down stairs,'" answered Lord Brentford, with animated gravity. "I might say, in answer to all your cruel rudeness now, as the Duchess de Montpensier said to the Queen, 'I ask your Majesty's permission to blush for you, on account of your incivility!' Now, observe! I mean to 'improve this shining hour;' therefore, let us instantly begin to be friends. I am born to be happy, and some unexpected good luck is continually befalling me; such as this of to-day, in preserving that member of your family from a fate which one shudders to contemplate."

"So, then," observed Theresa, trying not to

laugh, "You think us laid under an obligation, which a life-time is too short to repay."

"Precisely so! therefore I wish that so good and beautiful a fairy as you should endow me with some talisman against all the snares and evils of this uncomfortable world. I require a guardian fairy to protect me, so you shall be promoted to the office, with a salary of thanks; ten thousand a-day."

"You would soon tire of bestowing them on two wild Irish girls like us; and now it is time for you both to pack up your effects and depart. No vagrants are allowed in this parish, so go and get work elsewhere. We have no employment for you here; 'Go, or we must send for the police,'" said the merry vixen, imitating the tone of one who is dismissing an importunate beggar, and jestingly stamping her pretty foot with an air of authority, when she saw Lord Brentford give a look of smiling obstinacy, but still immovable, while he laughingly answered,—

"Do you not remember the old proverb, 'A beggar is always at home;' so allow me to feel at home here!"

Lord Brentford stole an admiring glance at Theresa, and assumed an expression of good-humoured defiance, while watching the crimson brightness of her cheek, and the sparkling mischief in her glittering eyes; and then he laughingly

added, "What a termagant you are! Perhaps in a couple of hours I may choose to go, but not sooner."

"I shall set the dog at you, and he is very dangerous," replied Theresa, threateningly, while she fondled the good-natured old animal, and hid her laughing face in his shaggy coat. "Our guardian will be here in ten minutes, and desired us to wait for him on this pier; so we cannot go, but you can and you must. Good morning."

"Think better of it, for you will regret me when I am gone,—and what good reason have you for pronouncing sentence of banishment?" said Lord Brentford, laughing. "Still I know that to expect reason from the unreasonable, is being myself very unreasonable. This is what I call a touch-and-go conversation with you; but I shall not go till we have touched upon all the topics of the day, and then, if we both grow tiresome, I shall depart."

"Do you make that promise in jest or in earnest?"

"Upon the honour of a gentleman—in jest! I am one of those odd people who like to have my own way, and never allow myself to be dictated to, not even by a beautiful young lady!"

"Indeed!" said Theresa, archly, looking down and shaking the long curls over her face. "I shall make a memorandum of that in case we should ever meet again. Pray have you any particular name?"

“Yes! Count Krakemsides, at your service, and my friend here is Count Curaco Cask-o’-whisky, a sunburned foreigner, with a magnificent old palace in ruins abroad,” answered Lord Brentford, laughingly playing with his gloves. “I am always excessively sorry for people like you who do not instantly like me at first, as that shows such a miserable want of taste; at the same time it would be a diverting novelty to conquer an antipathy, as that is the only difficulty in life I never yet had to encounter. I hope you are a good hater, and I am really anxious that you should thoroughly detest me!”

“Certainly, on that point make your mind easy. I have several very reasonable reasons to dislike you, and also your friend, for invading our island without permission. You or I must leave this pier immediately, and it shall not be me! Let the invaders now make an orderly retreat. Go peaceably, or the inhabitants must fire upon you directly.”

“What savages! with poisoned arrows, I suppose; but we shall borrow some from Cupid’s wings, and be revenged. If this desert island is peopled, I come to civilize the natives, as well as to write a book describing your habits, manners, and customs.”

“Then put this down as one of our barbarous customs, that we never speak to strangers—especially when they are anonymous,” replied

Theresa, with a smile half-arch and half-timid, but, as Lord Brentford thought, full of fascination, while he answered, in a tone of comic vexation,—

“You should not be so very forbidding, for we come as friends.”

“But another of our uncivilized customs is, never to make sudden friendships.”

“Very barbarous and savage indeed! The inhabitants must be a sad sort of inhospitable barbarians, but this island itself looks like an abode of the fairies, as if no evil of human life had ever reached its beautiful shores, as if nothing were ever known here but innocence and happiness. I have some thoughts of settling for life in this Arcadia, if a charming Phyllis would only condescend to appear.”

“Look for her anywhere but here,” answered Theresa, turning away. “You have stormed our stronghold and taken possession, but we mean very soon to get you dismissed the service, when our guardian comes.”

“On the contrary, are you not dying for us to stay, and greatly obliged to me for coming to relieve the monotony of this lonely place? As I have arrived and seen you, why should we who have known each other nearly ten long minutes be so cruelly separated at last? Some one is really required to tame your wildness, for I never saw such a droll, merry elf of mischief,” continued Lord

Brentford, stealing a glance at the sunny, almost child-like, face of Theresa, which seemed literally to cast light all around. "I have not a doubt you get occasionally into more diverting exploits than any ten ordinary young ladies! How often have you climbed that cherry-tree, waded across the stream, swung in the branches of the oak-tree, and——"

"Been the greatest hoyden on earth? Well! once no one could distance me in a frolic, but now I am quite sorry to find myself growing really wiser every day."

"Then you will not be the happier, for as the poet says, 'Ignorance is bliss,' at least I find it so! Now, suppose we make a treaty of peace. You shall sing me a song, and I shall sing you one. The only song, I know was composed, the air and words, by my bullfinch. I never heard a better. We shall then try a duet; and to-morrow, on the top of that wooded knoll, have a pic-nic."

"Fanny and I neither pic nor nic with strangers. I am happy to meet them once, happy to part, and happy to meet again. Strangers, you know, can only be considered and treated as strangers."

"That is a tremendous threat, but only on the first minute of our acquaintance, so I shall let it pass. My presence is in general as welcome as sunshine in winter, and I am accustomed to stand on a pinnacle of golden opinions with everybody,

but you give me by no means the rapturous welcome I deserve; what is the matter?"

"Everything is the matter," replied Theresa, with a light, girlish laugh. "See, your boat has slipped its anchor and is floating away. What a pity you are not in it!"

Nothing ever chimed in better with Lord Brentford's own lively spirits than the merry, good-humoured, pert, capricious manner natural to Theresa. Beside her beautiful face all others looked plain, and she wore a large flapping straw-hat of the mushroom species, which was extremely becoming, though at times it entirely hid her face, in a moment concealing it to the very tip of her chin when she chose. A mild westerly breeze, which gave the freshness of a rose to her cheek, played about her animated face, tossing her long ringlets aside, sometimes in long streamers, while her eyes shone out like stars amidst the cloud of black shining tresses.

Fanny, meanwhile, a perfect contrast to her sister, appeared to Captain Clifford the most captivating little personage he had ever in his most romantic dreams imagined, though at first, whenever he turned to ask her a question, down went the large hat flapping over her entire face, while a shy monosyllable in her sweet young voice was all her reply. That voice, however, sounded marvellously beautiful, and the smile that lurked

in her deep-set eyes was exquisite. Fanny looked like a lovely flower, as it sprung fresh from its native soil. The girlish countenance, gentle, soft, and pensive as that of a Madonna, expressed the most peaceful serenity, and seemed totally unconscious of admiration, yet by no means deficient in sensibility, testified by the crimson blush that flew into her cheek whenever she felt obliged to speak.

In all Captain Clifford's bright but delusive castles in the air of love and adventure, he had never even imagined for himself a heroine whose features and expression had so much intellectual gentleness, or who was altogether so attractive, for Fanny's whole aspect seemed to him in the best and rarest style of feminine loveliness. Captain Clifford's heart was filled with emotions never felt before, when he saw Fanny's smile so full of singular sweetness, so different from anything he had ever admired before, amidst the dull details of his own dull and common-place world, and he who had only lived hitherto by rushing from spot to spot, from one campaign to another, was in a moment ready to surrender at discretion his whole heart, his deepest affections, convinced that all he had ever believed or fancied of perfection, was about to be delightfully realized in this lovely young fairy of Loch Elan.

In their subsequent conversation, Captain Clifford discerned that under the apparent heedlessness

of happy childhood lurked the clearest understanding, and a heart full of honest good feeling, prepossessing to the highest degree, for it appeared to be so mingled with deep and intense sensibility, at least so thought Captain Clifford, when in his own very secret mind he resolved not to lose a single opportunity that occurred to improve this interesting acquaintance, and to know much more of one whose face, lovely in every feature, was likewise all mind, heart, and sensibility.

Sportsmen seem now to study whether it be possible by their dress to conceal that they are gentlemen, and to make themselves look peculiarly ugly, but certainly no man's appearance was ever less indebted to the tailor than Lord Brentford's. Though carrying his head on his shoulders with an air of proud, unmistakeable distinction, and on his whole aspect there was the stamp of a gentleman, he had certainly achieved the most hideous cap that the art of man could suggest, which successfully hid his fine dark hair, and a large waterproof blouse of oiled skin, as well as long clumsy mud-boots above the knee, did all that art could do to disguise his finely-formed figure. Lord Brentford indulged also in very eccentric notions on the subject of whiskers, and had joined the moustache movement on a great scale; so that Theresa, if she had thought upon the subject deliberately, would have been much at

a loss what rank she should assign to the free and easy stranger who stood his ground so obstinately and so laughingly at her side, while she and Fanny waited for Mr. O'Hara, their guardian, to join them on the pier.

Captain Clifford had not dealt much more leniently with his own appearance than Lord Brentford, his costume being somewhat between a coal-heaver's and a gamekeeper's, or as if he might some day be promoted into becoming one. Both gentlemen possessed, however, so thoroughly aristocratic an air, that no disguise could have entirely concealed their look of high birth and distinction. There is something unmistakeable in the aspect of any man accustomed to command, which no mere pretender can assume; therefore, Lord Brentford's easy *dégagé* air of self-consequence was not to be imitated, and could not be misunderstood. He appeared evidently "somebody," and so did his companion, whose handsome, engaging countenance seemed made for laughter, and was quivering with suppressed smiles as he listened to the little mock fight carried on with unflagging spirit between Theresa and her mirthful antagonist, Lord Brentford, who said, in a tone of lamentable reproach,—

"You really make me feel here like a superfluous bale of goods cast ashore! I have a great mind to punish you by going away in earnest!"

“ Pray do ! try the plan, by all means ! Exit in haste.”

“ You know I cannot ! I have sunk down into my very boots with humiliation at not being more welcome to this happy valley, but go I cannot without seeing all the lions. May we not call on your guardian, after meeting him in ‘ the mail ’ yesterday ? ”

“ Possibly you might, but the distance is considerable. Our home here is, as auctioneers always say, ‘ agreeably removed from the turnpike-road.’ No mortal ever sees it ; but, certainly, the inside is a perfect Vatican, being adorned with all the pictures we painted at school. Only artists are allowed to see them.”

“ I dare say Landseer himself would be struck dumb with admiration and envy ! What is the price of admission ? I am afraid you would be ashamed to introduce me to your guardian, or to the aristocracy of this island as an acquaintance.”

“ Perhaps not,” answered Theresa, smilingly glancing at his eccentric costume. “ I remember reading once in some very sensible book, that ‘ a well-dressed friend is never a discreditable companion ; ’ therefore you and your associate really have cause to be proud of each other ! ”

“ My equipment is entirely an invention of my own, being, as you justly observe, both tasteful and expensive,” replied Lord Brentford, looking

admiringly at his sleeve, of the very coarsest texture, and at the large horn buttons, like backgammon-men, with which it was adorned. "Not a caprice in dress ever enters my head that I do not indulge in, 'regardless of expense.' This old coat has enjoyed so many pleasant excursions with me for months past, as to have almost forgotten the tailor who made it. As for my friend there, I wonder he can really pretend to call himself dressed! Now we are on the subject of dress, do you not find it dull to live in the solitude of that immense bonnet? It looks like an umbrella with the stick taken out."

"I am fond of retirement, and ladies now must either wear bonnets too small to be visible on the head, or hats so enormous that they become utterly lost in them. I shall withdraw into mine now, like a snail in its shell."

"Wait till I am gone! I wonder if we shall ever meet again after I leave this inhospitable shore. Pray tell me, in sober earnest, where your guardian lives, that we may call on him, and endeavour to see you often. I must do so very soon, for you are evidently two captive princesses, come out for a moment from a cruel magician's tower, and will be recaptured unless we two knights of chivalry release you by returning to-morrow."

"Fanny!" said Theresa, turning round her

laughter-loving face, which was rippling all over with smiles and dimples, while the long ringlets fluttered over her glowing cheek, "here is an arbitrary gentleman, who insists upon visiting Mr. O'Hara, and seeing us again. There is no possibility of being introduced to our guardian, who is never at home. Stranger! it is quite impracticable, or at least for some years to come, that we should meet again; therefore you must feed on hope."

"But hope is a mere mouthful of moonshine that never yet satisfied me. I can thrive upon nothing but certainties, and from this time forth, a day without seeing you will be a day of my existence lost. *La douleur compte les momens, l bonheur les oublie!* Do not imagine that a lifetime could wear out my interest in trying to meet you. May I expect to do so at church tomorrow?"

"I might answer both yes and no. We shall be invisibly present in a dark remote pew, to hear the funeral sermon on good old Lord Tipperary, our very kind friend; but that is too tearful and solemn an occasion on which to meet strangers. Here comes Mr. O'Hara at last; therefore put your curiosity for the present into your pocket as to who, what, and where we are, except such particulars as he may choose to disclose."

"Perhaps I may die of curiosity, or of that very poetical death only known in fiction, a broken

heart, unless you become more propitious about my returning here," replied Lord Brentford, smiling; "you are so cruelly cruel that I shall have to imitate St. Patrick's Irish reptiles, which all committed suicide to escape from being slaughtered. In taking leave now, my only thought must be how to meet again. I shall be haunted night and day with plans and projects to that end, therefore let hope spring up in the dreary desert of my suspense; and, meanwhile,

"May prosperous gales and winds propitious blow,
May smoothest tides for thee still ebb and flow!"

Say that we shall meet again soon, for you must know I am quite of opinion that '*un plaisir différé est un plaisir perdu.*' But here comes your guardian, and I must enlist his good offices on my behalf."

When Lord Brentford advanced, taking off his very ugly and unbecoming cap to O'Hara, his rich dark hair blown by the wind, and his happy, animated expression, made him look, O'Hara thought, considerably handsomer than Apollo; so that the trusty guardian felt he had not arrived too soon, when he interrupted a lively laughter-loving interview between the quartette of young people so mutually attractive, and yet an intimacy among whom could lead, he thought, to no permanent good. O'Hara, therefore, received the

strangers with distant civility, and astonished as well as mortified the animated group by immediately breaking up their merry conference, with polite but very obvious decision.

After the two wandering strangers had unwillingly departed, Fanny and Theresa avoided mentioning them, more than they could avoid, to O'Hara, as it seemed to them evident that he was resolved they should meet no more. Yet why? Theresa could see nothing but harmless amusement in their recent interview, and was far from imagining that any danger could be apprehended of her becoming more interested than was good for her happiness, in a mere promiscuous stranger dropped in from the clouds for an hour. Hitherto her chief pleasures had consisted in taming robins, cutting a bouquet of fresh roses, catching a splendid peacock-butterfly, or playing some droll, harmless hoax on her adopted mother, who had been occasionally beguiled into engaging Theresa's services, when she came to offer them in disguise as a dairy-maid or as a housemaid; but now a perfectly new source of interest and feeling had dawned on her young mind, for hers was an age at which life itself seems to consist chiefly of its affections and sensibilities. Theresa felt and knew that the stranger, whoever he might be, had certainly seemed very anxious to please her, and she must have been blind indeed not to be conscious that

he had admired her with his whole heart, and wished her to know it. A new and dazzling lustre glittered in her eye as Theresa smilingly looked into the crystal mirror at her feet. She saw there a face, the rare and picturesque beauty of which had never before been an object of so much interest, while O'Hara thought, as he slyly watched his young favourite, that she seemed now like some pretty bird, shaking out its plumage beside the glassy stream.

Theresa fancied her hair on this critical occasion sadly out of curl, her bonnet hideously unbecoming, and her face unpardonably flushed, so that she complainingly called herself a perfect fright, declaring to Fanny, who laughingly left her uncontradicted, that she had never before felt herself look so like a 50*l.* a-year governess. All the pleasant things that Lord Brentford had said or looked, returned like an agreeable echo to her mind, and Theresa that night wondered with immense curiosity who he was, and wondered also if she would ever see him again, till, at length, she wondered herself to sleep. Meanwhile, the heart of Lord Brentford—for though hitherto an undiscovered treasure, he really possessed one—had long felt empty, idle, and *ennuyé*, therefore he was delighted now to meet at last with a sensation and an actual adventure. Who dare deny that there is among very young people such a

thing as love at first sight, not always a mere transient whim, but sometimes an affection at once deep and indelible? Lord Brentford's thoughts turned incessantly now, like the needle towards a newly-discovered pole, to the image of Theresa, engraved on his memory in characters of light. His imagination had never, in its most inventive hours, painted any countenance as brilliant and fascinating, as full of *naïveté*, innocence and exuberant felicity; yet, amidst the thoughtless glee of Theresa's unsophisticated girlhood, it was evident that there might be traced all the finer sensibilities of life, if awakened into existence. Lord Brentford's head now became filled with well-devised plans for meeting those beautiful incognitas again, for finding out their whole history, and for entrapping O'Hara, mysterious as he was reported to be on the subject, into revealing who they were; while the young peer ingeniously connected into a regular history any little scraps of information he could gather, which, with a great deal of fanciful ingenuity, he also modelled into a systematic romance.

Captain Clifford, too, had thoughts of his own about Fanny; but, strange to say, some time elapsed before either gentleman spoke a syllable, being, in truth, both rather shy of acknowledging how deeply their feelings were thus instantaneously interested in this little adventure of Loch Elan.

Lord Tipperary being as ignorant as themselves about the domestic circumstances of his factor, and caring nothing whatever on the subject, his two friends, as if by common consent, refrained for some time from mentioning the two beautiful inhabitants of Pine-forest Isle; but Captain Clifford did not the less constantly think of his interview with that unsophisticated Fanny, whose natural gaiety, warmed by generous feelings and a sensible understanding, had brought out in their recent conversation so much freshness and originality of thought, that he had become deeply interested already in her society. It was evident that no idea of exciting his admiration had yet entered her mind. With shy and pretty embarrassment, she evidently felt at a loss always what to say, or how to say it. She glanced with evident surprise towards her sister, wondering at the negligent, graceful ease with which Theresa spoke; while the alabaster of Fanny's cheek became scarlet, when appealed to in turn for a reply. Fanny's existence had been solitary and unloved hitherto, like that of Miranda; but it would have been difficult to find another such amusing and agreeable Ferdinand; so that long after Captain Clifford had departed she stood musing, as if suddenly converted into stone, or like one speaking and walking in her sleep. After a time, Fanny now mechanically resumed her old occupations of

tying up carnations and picking roses, while recalling every word that had passed, and firmly resolved not to remember the pleasant stranger who now occupied her thoughts beyond to-morrow,—or, at least, to forget him next week at furthest. Still, Captain Clifford had made for himself a niche in Fanny's memory, from which he could not be dislodged. She began to think it must be mesmerism or magic, for the more Fanny tried to drive the agreeable stranger from her meditations—the more peremptorily this acquaintance of only yesterday was dismissed from her recollection—the more he presented himself to her thoughts again; while it rather pleasingly occurred to her memory with what lingering regret he had vanished, and perhaps, also, with what ill-concealed admiration his parting bow had been filled.

Captain Clifford was himself astonished at the impression made upon him by Fanny; but his emotions on every occasion were intense, and now he could not even wish to efface the image of that young recluse at Loch Elan, so bewitching in voice, and so fascinating in expression. A bright but unsubstantial vision of earthly felicity flickered before his imagination; to love, and to be entirely, exclusively, unchangeably loved by one so young, so amiable, so fascinating! The romantic hope of every young mind, which had hitherto slumbered in that of Frederick Clifford, was now awakened

with all the vividness of his enthusiastic nature, and while mentally adorning Fanny with every imaginable or unimaginable perfection, he now put himself on the happiest terms with this world and with all his prospects in it. Frederick Clifford privately thought that Fanny's presence might make a paradise of the darkest dungeon, and obliterate from his mind every subject of thought less agreeable than herself.

“As the Americans say, ‘She beats creation!’” exclaimed Lord Brentford, breaking the long silence, while he watched Theresa's retreating figure, now at a great distance. “You might cut out a Venus or two from the fair Theresa, and still have some beauty to spare. The laugh of that laughing girl is so musical that I could dance to it! Still there is something teasing and baffling about her manner, that makes it impossible to understand her, or yet to care for anyone else! My thoughts will turn to her in future as constantly as the weather-cock to the wind.”

“Something of the weathercock there has always been about you, Brentford, so that is nothing new! I did not think there shone such beauty on the earth!” exclaimed Captain Clifford, following Fanny with his eyes. “Hitherto my heart has been an icicle, but she, that lovely Fanny, is the most beautiful thing I ever saw in this world.”

“Except her sister,” interposed Lord Brentford.

“ That brilliant Theresa is a gay, sparkling little elf, all fun, wilfulness, and frolic, whose dancing eye and dancing step belong more to a sprite than to a mere every-day mortal. I never beheld such a rejoicing, animated smile ; and it is a most agreeable novelty to meet with a heart so perfectly new, enlivened with all the freshness of smiling, innocent girlhood. Not a care or sorrow, or so much as a sigh, seems ever yet to have dimmed the bright sunshine of their juvenile felicity. The flowers in their path can have had no thorns, these girls are so fresh, so gay, and so untamed in their vivacity. Every pleasure of earth and sky seems sparkling around Theresa ; and it is a perfect holiday of the soul to look round this island on such a landscape of beauty, enlivened by that sparkling, dazzling, bewildering young hoyden. Certainly, nothing on earth can ever interest me again so pleasantly, as the hope of another such merry *rencontre* soon. Charming as they both seemed when we were all together, the sisters appear, if possible, more charming still to the memory now.”

When Lord Brentford next glanced over the sketch-book of Captain Clifford, who was a perfect Cruikshank in design, he smiled to discover a numerous constellation of portraits, all most successfully representing Fanny. In one page she sat very gracefully with a book, in another she stood coquetting before a mirror ; here she stooped to

pick up a violet, and there again she was placing a rose in her magnificent hair ; but all these pictures were unmistakeably like, being radiant with youth, beauty, and vivacity, the features, figure, attitude, and expression displaying a rare union of intellectual as well as of personal beauty. Underneath he had inscribed these words :

“ On n'est que plus près du danger,
Quand on croit n'avoir rien à craindre.”

CHAPTER II.

“Life is war—

Eternal war with woe. Who bears it best
Deserves it least.”

YOUNG.

LORD BRENTFORD, with Captain Clifford, strolled next day almost insensibly towards Pine-forest Isle, through the tangled thickets and closely-woven brushwood, trying to persuade themselves and each other that their only object now was to take an early inspection of the best covers for game, and of the best pools in the river for troutling. They carried fishing-rods as a pretence; and, somehow or other, their steps led them onwards to the boat-house, till they found, most unaccountably, that they were fairly embarked and in full vigour paddling across the bay towards that small rough pier, where so much had occurred on the previous afternoon to interest and amuse them.

The weather was delicious; and Captain Clifford looked with delighted admiration into the cool depths of Loch Elan, where the many-

coloured pebbles beneath glittered in the sunshine like precious stones, and where a perfect garden of gaudy marine plants formed a beautiful kaleidoscope, changing and fluttering beneath the tide, as the summer breeze rippled in light and shade over the crystal surface.

There was a pleasant spirit of adventure in Captain Clifford's mind and Lord Brentford's, when they sprung on the shore, and wandered dreamingly onward among over-hanging thickets, where it was apparent that human foot had seldom trod; for the scenery grew wilder and more wild, and the sparkling river, in its solitary course, danced and sparkled like a torrent of light.

Captain Clifford's eyes, always beaming with intelligence, became animated with delight while gazing at such scenery, and while thinking his pleasant thoughts over miscellaneously as they came uppermost. First, he took the world in a regimental point of view, when recalling his recent campaign in Kaffirland; then glorious visions presented themselves to his mind of military distinction, as war was declared against Russia. But when he afterwards took the world in a romantic point of view, every interest of life, every imaginable pleasure of existence, seemed comprised now within the narrow compass of Isle Elan. There he wandered musingly on beside

Lord Brentford, lightly, buoyantly, as if he trod on air, and half-whistling, though not for want of thought. The two sportsmen silently proceeded from one wooded point to another, from one bold promontory to a still bolder one, admiring the wild untutored scenery, which seemed as if it were a strict preserve from all human intrusion, and they talked as they scrambled onwards on any subject except that which occupied both their thoughts,—the hope of accidentally catching a glimpse of Theresa and Fanny. One flutter of their muslin frocks in the distance would have been more to their gratification than all the scenery of beautiful Loch Elan.

At length a wreath of blue smoke, curling upwards on the hill-side, appeared to intimate that a human habitation grew beneath the dark shadow of a distant pine-forest, the trees looking gloomy in their solemn verdure; and the gentlemen, with eager curiosity, penetrated towards the dark exterior of waving firs, till they found an open space, that might have been mistaken for an American clearing. A garden of three or four acres lay before them, in the very highest cultivation, part consisting of a most exquisite rosary, in which every separate rose looked fit to gain a prize in any horticultural show, and the whole together seemed like a magnified bouquet, which it was delightful to behold, while breath-

ing the fragrant air, and feeling that on some such occasions mere existence is in itself an ecstasy.

O'Hara's house stood in the centre, a long, low cottage, covered with a rich tapestry of roses, which seemed rushing in at all the doors and windows, dangling from the roof, climbing up the rails, festooning over the chimneys, and creeping on the very ground. Captain Clifford exclaimed that he had never before seen such an elysium of beauty and fragrance; while Lord Brentford, more accustomed to art than to nature, compared it to the closing scene in the ballet of "*Flore e Zephyre*." The only living person in sight, however, though graceful as any sylph, was dressed in a style very unlike that of a ballet-dancer; Theresa looked, in her own little garden, like Flora, the goddess herself, surrounded by all her choicest treasures. The lively girl was never so completely in her element, and so felicitously happy as when dressing her garden. The bloom on the sunniest of all her roses was not so lovely as that on her own blooming cheek, while now, with a large business-like pair of scissors, Theresa industriously snipped off the dead flowers, tied up those that were drooping, and shook the dew from any too heavily laden. Theresa's weighty basket grew weightier, and the dimensions were almost equal to those of her enormous hat, over the

crown of which she had tastefully twisted a wreath of natural flowers.

Every plant was Theresa's intimate acquaintance, reared by her own skill, and seemed to open its very heart to her, as she fluttered about from one to another, tying up her bouquet with a degree of taste that might have been envied in Covent Garden Market itself. She sung, meanwhile, in a clear, young, happy voice, one of Moore's Melodies, till suddenly a gust of wind blew a shower of leaves over the garden, extending even as far as the forest-path, where Lord Brentford and his companion had retreated into concealment.

"Help me, Fanny!" exclaimed Theresa, in a voice of merry vexation; "here is quite a simoom of rose-leaves! I am almost buried alive in them, and all our pot-pourri will be lost!"

"Whoever dreamed of my becoming sentimental?" muttered Lord Brentford to himself, as he hastily snatched up one of the stray rose-leaves, and consigned it to the inside of a letter; "this is too ridiculous! I shall be writing poetry next! An ode to the moon, or to despair, or to a snow-drop. I wonder if it would be possible instantly to sprain my ankle, and get myself carried into the cottage."

"Her father, he has lock'd the door,
Her mother keeps the key;
But neither door nor bolt shall part
My own true love from me?"

At a little distance from Theresa, Fanny now appeared almost similarly dressed, and the sun, gleaming through a dark, lowering horizon, cast a rich Rembrandt-like hue over the entire background of the scene. Fanny's bonnet and basket seemed, if possible, larger than Theresa's, and she stood surrounded by an actual nation of birds. Pigeons of every kind, Cochin-China fowls, bantams, and Poles, followed by their large families, were all fighting and noisily squabbling for the very plentiful supply of food, which Fanny most impartially distributed, while joyously watching with what eagerness her feathered favourites greedily devoured their rations.

It was a delightful novelty for those Hyde-park and Grosvenor-square loungers, to see the unsophisticated happiness of these two fresh-hearted, merry, graceful girls, when enjoying this morning recreation; yet they felt it unjustifiable to intrude above a moment on such entire privacy, unless by paying a visit of ceremony, for which the hour was as yet much too early.

“It certainly is not fair,” observed Lord Brentford, “for wandering knights in search of an adventure to remain in ambuscade, overhearing, as we do, what is not intended to reach a stranger; but the temptation seems almost irresistible, where there is so much to admire. These girls resemble flowers blown round a garden in the

wind. The eldest, singing and flitting about, is like some gorgeous humming-bird of the tropics; and really Cleopatra might have envied her those eyes and those long, dark curls, streaming in every breeze. I wonder the fair Theresa does not sit up all night to admire herself!"

"The elder is too much of a piquant flibbertigibbet for me," replied Captain Clifford, meditatively; "the other is pure, soft, and beautiful as a rainbow, without becoming too dazzling. No one can help admiring both, but I greatly fear we can never be more to them, nor they to us, than strangers; for Lord Tipperary has heard that these two fascinating girls are mere nameless foundlings, of no family or connexion, adopted from charity by his factor; therefore, the less we see of them the better for all parties. I am half in love already, but much too poor to marry on less than nothing, and only wish they or I had 10,000*l.* a year!"

"How very disinterested! But, Clifford, you are right. We must go, while you have any peace of mind remaining, though, for my own part, being less bound by prudential considerations, I doubt whether they will weigh for one minute with me against my very decided inclination to make an offer of myself to one who is only too good for me."

"I should say and feel like you, Brentford,

were I as independent of the world; but with mothers, sisters, and younger brothers to provide for, I dare not be selfish in pursuing my own inclinations; yet how hard it is, at such a time, to think for others!" answered Captain Clifford, in a tone of sorrowful reflection. "I could sacrifice every prospect in life of my own for Fanny,—perhaps I may,—but the impediment is, where am I to find her a home, without depriving my mother and sisters of that which I provide for them."

Very unwillingly, then, and with the heaviest of heavy hearts, Captain Clifford conscientiously turned away, and the two sportsmen wandered again towards the shore, wishing themselves invisible that they might have longer observed with impunity the unconscious sisters carrying on a jesting dialogue in the garden, enlivened by snatches of song, merry repartees, and ringing outbreaks of juvenile laughter. Lord Brentford had often formerly seen young ladies assume the shepherdess style, wearing cut-fingered gloves, large aprons, and immense scissors, in order to look picturesquely rural, but in these cases there had always been a sort of exclamatory affectation, a sort of artificial self-consciousness about their manner, that spoiled all. Here, however, in Theresa he recognised the genuine article, a single-hearted delight in rural enjoyments, an unaffected love of flowers, and a

peculiar degree of graceful skill in arranging them.

Before they had quite lost sight of the house, Lord Brentford observed two little Shetland ponies led round to the cottage-door, in the keeping of an equally rough and shaggy-looking boy. The sisters instantly hurried forward to pet and feed their little charges, and immediately afterwards, without any assistance, sprung into their saddles, and cantered joyously away. Theresa and Fanny continued laughingly chattering to each other afterwards, until, at a division of several roads, they trotted off in opposite directions, looking back at each other after they had parted several times, to exchange a smiling good-humoured nod, until at length, in the distant turnings and windings of a gloomy forest path, both finally disappeared.

The gentlemen also parted soon, as Captain Clifford thought he had discovered some fine trout lurking in a shady pool, beside which he extended himself prostrate on the grass in a state of indefinite reverie, resolved, however, to test his skill as an angler on the spot. Lord Brentford, meanwhile, strolled along the shore, throwing pebbles, with admirable skill, which skipped along the surface of the water, and he switched down an avalanche of leaves from the overhanging forest, while humming to himself the tune of

“Bendemere Stream,” and thinking of Theresa buried among her roses.

The careless act of a moment decides often the whole fate of a life-time. Lord Brentford, in strolling onwards to the best cover for game, turned his heedless footsteps accidentally in a wrong direction through the forest path, soon after which, in a remote part of the wilderness, he unexpectedly perceived Theresa, accompanied by the old nurse, or duenna, who had been with her on the previous day. She was seated on a grassy knoll, occupied in painting a water-colour sketch of the surrounding landscape, while she sung several wild snatches of airs, with exquisite taste and with a distinctness of articulation seldom equalled, for it seemed as if not a comma were left out. The scene was one in which Titania and her fairies should have danced and revelled. The wild, natural forest was enlivened with furze and broom, in full yellow blossom. The high banks of rough rock formed a beautiful amphitheatre around, and their dark-red hue was beautifully varied by sunny green mosses, ferns, and wild flowers. A picturesque old oak threw up its scathed and time-worn branches to the sky overhead, beneath which, on a grassy slope, enlivened by a brilliant flood of sunshine, sat Theresa, her large hat thrown over the turf, while she was intensely occupied with her pencil and brushes.

Theresa rose up in evident astonishment and in some confusion, the instant she saw Lord Brentford; and at that moment a mischievous gust of wind carried away her round, straw hat, which rolled along the turf, while she, rather glad to conceal her agitation, sprang lightly along in pursuit of the truant. Each time that Theresa stooped to capture her prize, away it flew again, as if endowed with wings; but the quicker it fled, the quicker she ran laughingly after it. Lord Brentford eagerly joined in the chase, and having been fortunate enough to seize the fugitive, he gracefully presented it to Theresa, whose young face, glowing with health and vivacity, was averted now with a shy look of diffidence. Then he smilingly said, in a voice the more interesting from its betraying a certain degree of embarrassment,—“That must be an ill wind indeed that could make anything run away from you; but this hat seems a light-headed article. It would not be easy to blow me away now, if I may be permitted to remain.”

Theresa's expression of countenance, when she smilingly received back her adventurous hat, was calculated somewhat to keep the stranger at a distance, as well as to thank him nevertheless for his attention. Perhaps Theresa was not very sorry so unexpectedly to see again the agreeable stranger of the previous day, though endeavouring with all

her might to appear indifferent, while he, with gentleman-like politeness, apologised for the fortunate mistake in his latitudes and longitudes which had brought him accidentally into this beautiful but rather savage solitude.

Lord Brentford then respectfully, but with irrepressible curiosity, asked permission to see Theresa's sketch of the rocks, and she, with a shy blush accompanied by a very pretty smile, frankly extended to him a drawing, in which he became astonished to perceive a degree of taste and finish quite unusual in the work of any amateur. The young peer was himself a skilful artist, but he looked with surprise at the dashing, bold, masterly touch with which the brilliant tints of that glorious landscape had been transferred to paper. A few verses hastily written underneath, evidently the dictate of a young and very enthusiastic muse, completed his delight; for there were in these lines touches of humour and flashes of genius which both amused and astonished him, while, after running over them to the end, he stole a glance of admiration at the poetess herself, who was looking on and smiling with the innocent archness of a child. Her countenance changed, however, to an expression of perfectly frantic alarm, when Lord Brentford suddenly turned over some pages of the sketch-book backwards. Theresa instantly made a hurried attempt to

snatch it away, but not before Lord Brentford had opened on a very perfect representation of himself and Captain Clifford, as they had stood during their previous meeting on the pier. These likenesses were unmistakably good ; but the utter hideousness of their costumes, as well as the frightful distortion of their hats, had been, if possible, exaggerated. Underneath was written, in a beautiful feminine hand,—

“ *London Fashions for 1855 !* ”

Lord Brentford gave way now to an irresistible burst of laughter, which was by no means decreased when he saw the shy, demure, frightened look with which Theresa held out her hand for the sketch-book, saying, in a voice that quivered with suppressed humour,—

“ Give me back my property ! You are very wrong to turn over the pages without leave. I shall have you put in the corner to-morrow for doing so ! These are portraits of two Ourang-Outangs which are to be exhibited soon in London, and they are thought to look almost like human beings.”

“ They really are ! I nearly guessed that they were,” answered Lord Brentford, humorously. “ One of these pictures is very like a gentleman I know, only that as he is reckoned the handsomest man of the age, it scarcely quite does him

justice. That likeness of my cousin is perfect! He need never sit again."

"But I must try to improve the resemblances by making them uglier," replied Theresa, endeavouring once more, but in vain, to get back her sketch-book. Lord Brentford had now seated himself on the grass, seized a brush, and was, before ten minutes had elapsed, far advanced in doing a sketch of Theresa. He soon became so interested in his own performance, that between talking, laughing, and painting, hours fled away, till Theresa suddenly called old Nanny, who was knitting not far off, and threw down her pencil, declaring that they had lost the whole day.

Lord Brentford felt much inclined to add, that he had also lost his whole heart, but he contented himself with exclaiming, in tones of heartfelt regret, "This has seemed to me the shortest day of the whole year, though it is in midsummer! Now, acknowledge that you have enjoyed it also, or I shall acknowledge it for you."

"It is a very important day to Fanny and me, and we have had a holiday to wander from home this morning further than usual, for this is our birth-day."

"Then come out again to-morrow, for that shall be my birth-day, and next day is somebody else's. I wish it were the fashion of this country to become a troubadour, and I should bring my

guitar under your windows to-night in honour of this anniversary. Then a long summer's longest twilight would scarcely suffice for all I could sing or say in your praise."

"Si vous aimez ce que j'aime,
Vous vous aimerez vous même."

"You seem very expert at coining compliments," said Theresa, colouring and smiling. "They come in crowds from a mint of your own, so the materials cost nothing."

"Then I see they are mere farthings in your estimation, and will scarcely pass current even for so much as that unpretending sum. It is a heavy blow and great discouragement to a diffident man when one is not believed, especially when he is as much in earnest as I am now; but, since you desire me to deliver you from the annoyance of my presence, I am ready to go anywhere you please this minute—to Tartary or Nova Zembla, if you bid me! Ask impossibilities, for I delight in continually performing them, but do not condemn me to the worst of all occupations, which is wishing in vain to please."

"The world was sad, the garden was a wild,
And man, a hermit, sigh'd till woman smil'd."

Meanwhile Captain Clifford stood, rod in hand, on a rustic bridge which spanned the darkest and deepest pool in the turbid stream, where he had successfully hooked several very fine trout. A

gentle breeze did but crimp the surface of the river. There myriads of flies darted from side to side, while he, fortunate man, played a noble salmon on the line, with a degree of skill and delight scarcely excelled by old Isaac Walton himself, till it was at length safely landed on the shore.

Nothing could be more musical than the murmur of the stream, rippling in sunny brightness over the red and blue pebbles which glittered below; but Captain Clifford's attention became suddenly attracted by hearing also the sound of a girlish voice not far off, talking in terms of fantastic endearment, such as is commonly used to lap-dogs and babies. Amused and surprised, he noiselessly laid down his rod, clandestinely stole towards a neighbouring thicket, cautiously parted some overhanging branches, and smilingly watched, with really infamous curiosity, a living picture, such as any artist might have longed to paint. In a moment it became daguereotyped on his memory for ever.

Fanny, attended by a small gardener's boy, who looked as rough and shaggy as the Shetland pony he held, was herself seated on a mossy bank in the sunshine, anxiously occupied, with a look of almost childish earnestness, in teaching her favourite air, "Bendemere Stream," to a little obstinate bullfinch, who would not be taught, and

who invariably degenerated into his own original air of "Partant pour la Syrie." The duet never could be made to "go" well during more than a bar or two, and Captain Clifford, in his ambushcade behind a fine old thorn, fell into a state of subdued laughter at the wilfulness of both singers. Fanny coaxed her feathered pupil, scolded him, and even bribed him with atoms of sugar to obey her; but in vain, for still the winged scholar fluttered his plumage in defiance of all instruction, spreading out his chest to its very largest dimensions, till he seemed to have the figure of a fully developed alderman, and, like other public performers, becoming more whimsical the more indulgently he was attended to, till at length, in an instant, the rebellious pet most unaccountably and very cleverly made his escape into the overhanging branches of an oak-tree. With an exclamation of most acute distress, Fanny tried to recal her truant favourite, but without success, while from the highest bough of the highest tree the now invisible little songster, with independent and most triumphant glee, performed some of his most difficult passages in "Partant pour la Syrie."

Captain Clifford could have laughed outright when the pert little scholar gained this unexpected victory, and became liberated, quivering his wings in triumphant glee while preparing to

sing its way probably in distant lands; but the look of tearful sorrow with which Fanny glanced upwards, while trying vainly by a thousand pretty devices to entice back her small favourite, gained his immediate sympathy, especially as she looked very lovely in her almost child-like grief.

The sorrowful girl had dropped into her seat, and—must it be told?—burst into tears, when she was suddenly startled by the unexpected apparition of Captain Clifford approaching, and she now sat perfectly still with petrifying surprise. Fanny became on the spot like a statue of consternation, her eyes glittering as if they were sunbeams, when they suddenly looked up at this most unexpected visitor. How eloquent are looks! They are at times far beyond words, and so were Fanny's now. Never had she appeared so beautiful as then in her bright astonishment and confusion; but she neither looked up a second time, nor spoke more than one short exclamation of rather pleasant surprise.

“Trust me to capture your favourite,” exclaimed Captain Clifford, moved at Fanny's real distress. “I once learned a trick of ventriloquism, that brings around me all the cattle, horses, dogs, sheep, cats, mice, and birds within hearing.”

“What a valuable mortal you are!—or, perhaps, I may call you a magician! Prove that all you say is quite scrupulously true, then, by

bringing back my poor Mario, you shall be handsomely rewarded, and he shall enjoy a holiday for life. I must never tease the poor thing with lessons again!"

"Your saying so reminds me of those advertisements to be seen every day in the newspapers, inviting runaways to return home. Whenever any dissatisfied member of any family, in a fit of ill humour, has left his home, then, cunning rascal, he is followed by the most enticing advertisements to lure him back. He is always assured that 'everything shall be adjusted entirely to his satisfaction,' that no offence was intended, that no questions shall be asked, that his father will comply with every wish, that his mother is dangerously ill of a broken heart, that his sisters shall never more be allowed to contradict him, and that he shall sugar his own tea as he pleases. At last the sulky fellow comes home, and probably makes the house more miserable by his presence than ever. I wonder people never advertise to beg he will remain away. Now, what terms shall I offer to little Mario?"

"Anything! everything!" exclaimed Fanny, perfectly gasping with eagerness. The rebel shall be forgiven, and asked no questions. Do!—pray do bring him to me now!"

"Shall I shoot him with an air-gun, as I did last week Mrs. Brownlow's noisy old parrot? The little

wretch disturbed our whole neighbourhood with his clamour, till at last I took aim at him from the opposite window, and when the vociferous creature fell back screeching with rage and agony, the alarmed servants merely thought the wounded animal had fallen into a fit."

Captain Clifford smilingly observed the half-dismayed and very bashful anxiety of Fanny, while her eyes, blue as the summer sky and tearfully bright, were gazing upwards after the truant favourite. Her parted lips quivered with anxiety, till she closed them firmly to conceal how they trembled, while she turned round, with a blush that passed over her cheek like a summer breeze, eager to watch his effort on her behalf with Mario.

Captain Clifford, with his fine deep-toned voice, being an accomplished ventriloquist, now began the bird-call, and to Fanny's extreme delight the little deserter evidently listened intently. No creature on earth listens with such evident anxiety, in its whole head, neck, and bended body, as a bird. Mario now descended to a lower branch, then listened again, and still hopped from bough to bough, till at length, with his accustomed familiarity, the little wanderer alighted on Fanny's extended finger.

What a glorious smile of joy glittered over the young girl's happy face as she rapturously wel-

comed the truant back, and fondly scolded the merry little songster, while she patted him with every expression of girlish fondness for the fright he had given her! Mario became vociferously entertaining, venting all his best songs and imitations now; and the dimples that played about Fanny's mouth, when she saw her little rebel safely ensconced within his cage, were flickering over her whole face like sunshine itself. At last she remembered to thank Captain Clifford, in her own timid, gentle, downcast manner, for his timely aid. "But you have a very dangerous gift in being able to attract everybody round you so irresistibly," added she. "Mario and I must escape immediately, to convince ourselves that we are still at liberty."

"You ought first, in common gratitude, to sing me a song."

"Mario may do so, if you can persuade him."

"But you are a still better singing-bird. You are evidently a nightingale, just out of the shell, full-fledged, and endowed with the gift of music; therefore, pray warble a few notes as charmingly as you were doing some minutes ago, and let me afterwards conduct you safely home, that we may talk, walk, laugh, and sing together by the way," replied Captain Clifford, with a smile that was generally irresistible. "Who can foresee what

dangers may arise, in this very savage island, to render an escort desirable."

"Dangers here! In my own little quiet retreat! Such a thing is not to be thought of! Many gentlemen have, as mamma says, a sort of Kensington-garden idea, that ladies must not venture out alone," answered Fanny, laughingly. "But if we stayed in the house or in walled gardens, till our guardian could protect us for some longer rambles among the wild solitudes here, our excursions would not be more extensive than if we were Chinese cripples, who have purposely dwarfed their feet. Theresa and I cannot order a chariot, or a riding-horse, or even a humble brougham to take us out, as ours are all at present in the moon."

"No wonder the moon shines so brightly of late, if there be anything in it belonging to you," replied Captain Clifford, resuming his most nonsensical tone. "Seriously, however, that rustic bridge which you seem about to cross, though extremely picturesque, is anything but safe. To pass along it seems to me like walking on a tight-rope, or on the handle of a work-basket."

"That is the very reason why, from childhood, I have enjoyed running along the one simple quivering plank; it is like walking on a yard of tape, so narrow, white, and elastic. Theresa and I sometimes go along hand in hand, to assist each

other, screaming all the way with laughter and fright."

"Your guardian is no guardian to allow such a risk," answered Captain Clifford, in a tone of serious remonstrance. "Pray, for this one hour fancy me your sister, and let me hand you safely over."

"Thank you," replied Fanny, looking painfully shy and perplexed. "We savage islanders are not accustomed to strangers landing; and when I told our guardian yesterday of my having met you, he thought—— he——; in short," added Fanny, looking frankly up, but colouring deeply, "he did not approve of—— of—— anonymous acquaintances. Nothing but my terror about little Mario could have made me forget Mr. O'Hara's injunction to—— to—— run away from you, or to be as disagreeable, next time we met, as possible."

"In which you have most completely and conscientiously succeeded," replied Captain Clifford, smilingly observing Fanny's double-dyed blushes. "You cruelly put a frozen ocean of distance between us. Is our intimacy always to resemble the progress of the snail, which advanced five inches a-day, and retrograded four inches every night. I shall complain to your guardian of never having been treated so rudely before; and Lord Tipperary must present me to him in due form

to-morrow; after that, I intend to ask your guardian if he will perform the same ceremony between us, and then we can begin to be acquainted. Now, of course, you and I are perfect strangers, therefore all we have said counts for nothing."

"Or less than nothing," said Fanny, smilingly turning away. "But why are you not gone! It is, at least, ten minutes since I said you should depart, and five entire moments since you promised to obey."

"I am like that well-known culprit on the gallows, who often took leave, but was loath to depart. When your guardian has once properly planted our acquaintance by a formal introduction, you must promise that it shall grow rapidly into friendship, and perhaps, at last, into something still better. I shall live and breathe only for the hope of meeting you again. How, when, and where, shall that be?"

"As half in shade, and half in sun,
This world along its path advances,
May that side that the sun's upon
Be all that e'er shall meet thy glances!"

Fanny's next appearance took place much sooner than Captain Clifford could have hoped, and in circumstances which he had very little foreseen. How truly has Rochefoucauld said, that "Our wishes are never granted at the time and in the

way we desire?" Fanny had walked towards the rustic bridge, leisurely picking wild flowers, and tying them tastefully up into a brilliant bouquet for Theresa, when she suddenly overheard a heavy footstep, which was rapidly tracking her steps.

Thinking that this person so quickly following behind must be Captain Clifford, she felt rather indignantly surprised at his pertinacity, and quickened her pace; but as the sound came nearer and more near on the gravel, she turned at length hurriedly round, intending to be very peremptory in dismissing Captain Clifford, when, to Fanny's utter astonishment, her eyes met those of a total stranger. He looked like what is called in Ireland, "a half-quarter gentleman;" and Fanny was considerably startled at his evident intention, in this solitary place, to overtake her. Seeing something in the man's excited aspect that alarmed her, the terrified girl, with sudden resolution, turned round and stood, as it were, at bay. A minute before, no one would have believed she could become so haughty in expression, so dignified in her whole aspect; but while assuming a determined front, her countenance grew perfectly pallid with terror. Advancing a few steps she said, in a voice that quivered in spite of her utmost efforts,—

"Why do you follow me? I shall this instant

call back the gentleman who left me a moment since. He is, probably, still within hearing."

"Of course! and I daresay the most moderate shriek would bring a policeman, or a whole posse of them," answered the odd-looking stranger, drily. "You need not even take the trouble of a fainting-fit; I am merely an old friend of your father's, a favourite friend once, and anxious now to see you, as well as to do you a great service."

"Then speak to my guardian about that," replied Fanny, with a vivid glance at the stranger of scrutinizing suspicion. "I am obliged for any kindness intended, but ——"

"But you may, at least, hear what I wish to say!" interrupted the gentleman, with a dark and even haughty frown, advancing nearer, while Fanny almost imperceptibly retreated. "The man you call a guardian is the worst of enemies, I wish to release your sister and you from his custody."

"We do not wish to be rescued! We are perfectly happy here. I guess now who you are. I have been warned against Mr. O'Grady by our kindest friend of friends, Mrs. O'Hara, and we would not for worlds that you took us from our pleasant home. Go now, and say anything you have to say another time."

"There is no time like the present—there may, perhaps, never be another time. Young ladies

are sometimes a little capricious in their dislikings as well as in their likings, but you must and shall hear now all I have to tell!" answered the stranger, in a tone of concentrated excitement. There was a strange menacing expression in his eye, and a pale contraction round his mouth, which terrified Fanny, in spite of his assuming a particularly bland, almost subservient tone, as he added, "Do not mistake me for the cruel giant of some fairy tale, coming by force to carry off an unwilling captive; but you may learn now voluntarily to choose a better home. Your sister and you shall be taught to distinguish friends from foes. Come, then, with me to the much kinder guardians appointed for both, by your own father."

Fanny felt the blood curdle round her heart with agitation, and the ground seemed to rock beneath her when the idea now presented itself to her, that those Popish enemies, against whom she had been from earliest childhood warned, and who had been from her very infancy a perfect night-mare of terror, had discovered and were about to claim herself and Theresa. The stranger, in his eagerness to make Fanny listen, now extended his hand as if about to grasp hold of her arm. She then started back, and perceiving he still advanced, the terrified girl at length, in an agony of alarm, whirled rapidly round, and with the fleetness of a wild Indian fled.

The stranger instantly followed, but more heavily, for Fanny's light step seemed like the spring of an antelope, so that nothing but the wind could have overtaken her, and in a moment she flew out of sight. The rustic bridge stood invitingly near, and she hastily rushed upon it. Many a time, from her very childhood, had Fanny raced along that slight and fragile bridge, which hung waving like a spider's web across the chasm, and vibrating under the lightest footstep; but now, less careful than usual to balance herself, she suddenly became giddy, staggered forward a step or two, and with a heavy plunge fell headlong into the dark foaming pool beneath. One loud shrill cry for help, and she was swept by a resistless current rapidly through the tumultuous floods, which roared, rebounded, and howled, over a bed of ragged rocks, towards the broad deep expanse of Loch Elan.

Captain Clifford, meanwhile, having resolved to try a last throw with his line, stood musing, rod in hand, beside the river's bed, gazing into its mysterious depths, while admiring its wild, furious, pell-mell career, as the turbulent waters hissed over the massy rocks in a foaming frenzy of useless rage. He thought over the last few days, and remembered with a smile of delight all that had passed between himself and Fanny, with whom he was now more than fascinated. He

thought of her countenance on the previous day, full of laughter and tears, when the rough old dog was restored, in spite of the practical joke which had so nearly cost him his life, and of the pretty quivering smile with which she had an hour since welcomed back her favourite bird. At this very moment, amidst the rush of waters, glancing and glittering under his eye, Captain Clifford suddenly observed a white object floating along on the surface, but of what nature he could not make out. A rather diverting idea crossed his mind, that this might be the same figure floating away, unheeded, which had caused the laughing girls so much amusement on the previous day, and he looked with listless attention at its rapid progress. Suddenly, however, to his unspeakable horror, a shriek arose from beneath, an arm was wildly raised for help, and a gurgling cry sounded above the noise of waters, which seemed the last low wail of drowning despair.

It was a human being, almost in the agony of death, who claimed his aid, and that was sufficient for Captain Clifford, who, without one moment's hesitation, threw off his coat and plunged at once into the gulf of waters. What words could describe his emotion now, or the new strength that it gave to his efforts, when the white face of Fanny rose with a look of ghastly terror to the surface, as she held out her hands to him for help!

Never afterwards did Frederick Clifford forget the moment when her imploring eyes were fastened on him, while her long fair hair streamed far out on the tide, and Fanny was swept helplessly onward, till overwhelmed in the whirling and foaming waters. Captain Clifford was a strong and practised swimmer; without a momentary fear, or a single doubt of success, therefore, he struck out boldly, firmly, desperately, towards the disappearing figure which floated along, struggling and plunging in the strong, un pitying tide.

The roaring of the stream, rapid as a mill-race, became deafening, yet, above every conflicting sound, another wild shriek from the drowning girl reached his ear, and he loudly shouted in reply to give her hope, still retaining himself the most perfect presence of mind. Twice had Fanny risen above the surface, and well did Captain Clifford know that after the third time there is no return. No sooner had he discovered that it was Fanny whose life seemed in such almost hopeless danger, than he made almost superhuman efforts to preserve her young life, feeling endowed with the strength of ten men in such a cause, and he had at length nearly overtaken her, in the darkest and deepest pool.

Now the rushing stream closed finally over Fanny's head, and she felt for an instant that mysterious sensation universally experienced

among drowning persons, when their senses are about to be extinguished, as if every past hour, every past event of her life, every feeling, and every action, had flashed up before her memory, as clear, distinct, and vivid as any painting on a wall.

Sky, earth, and air appeared all one mass of black confusion to Captain Clifford, and a chill sensation like death itself was creeping over him; but the remembrance that it was Fanny he would save thrilled like electricity through his frame, and imparted fresh powers to every effort. His strength began to give way, but he raised his head for a moment to breathe, and resolutely dived again. Beneath the foaming stream, as in a mirror, Captain Clifford discovered the girlish form of Fanny, like a snow-wreath, on the river's rocky bed, and now firmly grasping her white frock, he clutched it tightly in his hand. With a sensation of joy, he now felt her hand grasping his coat; but then came the moment of utmost danger. In her drowning efforts to rise, Fanny's clothes completely saturated with water, became heavier still, and her spasmodic struggles now greatly increased the danger of attempting the rescue; but Captain Clifford, though apparently on the brink of destruction himself, resolved to save Fanny, or to perish in the attempt.

He never could tell how the deed had been

done at last; but Fanny was eventually placed insensible on the bank, her eyes fixed in a sort of death stare, her cheek white as that of a corpse, her long tresses drenched and dragged in matted confusion over her shoulders, and waving down far below her waist. Soon, however, he perceived the colour returning to Fanny's lips, till at length those eyes that had seemed shut for ever in the calmest sleep of death were gently opened, and she languidly gazed at her deliverer like a newly awakened infant.

Scarcely had Captain Clifford placed Fanny safely on a neighbouring bank of grass, before the stranger whose presence had so recently alarmed her advanced in evident anxiety, and volunteered his very skilful aid in doing all that the Humane Society could have dictated, and more, for her recovery.

As the faint hue of returning life glowed over Fanny's transparent cheek, Captain Clifford watched her progress to restored life, engrossed with newly-inspired feelings of most intense interest and of the most ardent attachment, not now within the reach of a single prudential consideration. Captain Clifford was surprised to observe with what aversion Fanny shrunk from the presence of his companion, who, nevertheless, made himself assiduously useful in assisting to carry her towards the nearest house.

When Captain Clifford would have borne Fanny in the direction of O'Hara's cottage, his assistant vehemently opposed this, and hurriedly pointed in an opposite direction. There, at some distance, a small farm stood by the way-side, into which Fanny was supported, and where she received every attention from an old woman, who knew her well, and who, while hurriedly assisting her to put on some coarse but dry clothing, bemoaned, with expressions of devoted respect, over this alarming accident to "the dearest and best of young ladies." Captain Clifford felt that all the old woman said came far short of his own feelings, which he scarcely felt entitled in any, even the remotest degree, to express at present, greatly as Fanny had been endeared to him by needing his assistance; but he listened with interest, while the farmer's wife, displaying a volubility hardly to be matched in Europe, told story after story of Fanny's kindness to the poor, in reading to them during sickness, and consoling them during sorrow.

Meanwhile Fanny's colour had become like that of a white rose in its bloom, when she tried to speak of the gratitude she owed to her preserver; but words would not come, therefore she could only weep hysterically, while choking sobs stopped her utterance. It seemed still as if the gurgling sound of many waters yet vibrated in her ears;

and when Captain Clifford stole on tip-toe up to the couch where she lay, all the words Fanny could utter were, "Dreadful! dreadful! oh, how dreadful! What a horrid dream it all appears! I still hear that thundering, rushing noise! It seemed impossible you could save me; it seemed impossible you could save yourself!"

"Had you perished, we should have perished together! I would have died rather than fail!" replied Captain Clifford, in accents of deep and truthful emotion. "Tell me that you are only frightened, not hurt or bruised."

"Not hurt, bruised, nor even frightened now," replied Fanny, with shuddering thankfulness, and faintly smiling, "only grateful for this deliverance to a kind Providence,—and to you."

"Never mind me," answered Captain Clifford, seeing a bright tear of hysterical agitation glitter in Fanny's eye; "what I did was of no consequence."

"Of no consequence to have saved my life?" asked Fanny, smiling, with a look of timid gratitude. "It is not such an every-day event with me to be drowned!"

"But I have been picking up young ladies out of the water these twenty years! That is the only thing on earth I excel in. My favourite vocation is to be a second Amadis of Gaul in rescuing beautiful damsels from danger. To say

that I would any day give my life for yours, is nothing. Mere life is not the greatest of all sacrifices, but I would yield every earthly hope of my future years to make you happy. Now, do not say a word more about gratitude," added he, seeing Fanny anxious to say a great deal; "your eyes have spoken quite eloquently enough for the occasion, such as it is."

"You ought to consider this, what public speakers so often say, 'the proudest moment of your life,' and be assured that I shall remember it to the last moment of my existence. What a number of things people have promised to remember then!" answered Fanny, now becoming gradually restored to her usual vivacity. "Have you sent for my guardian to Rose Elan? The bravest of us dare not keep him waiting dinner a moment, and it is now almost his hour. He is quite disgracefully punctual in general, and will be alarmed as well as angry if I am longer absent."

"That strange-looking stranger who assisted me to bring you here has gone for Mr. O'Hara. He seems long of returning, and it appeared as if, in hastily leaving this house, he took a wrong turn away from your home; but he professed to know the road perfectly, and to know you also, as well as all your belongings, intimately."

“How can that be, when I never spoke to him in my life before, unless he is the man I fear, and in that case he dare not meet my guardian,” said Fanny, reflectively; and then resuming her usual animated, say-what-I-please manner, she added, “Our island to-day seems perfectly swarming with nameless incognitos! . Where do you all come from? I should like to banish one of my escort for life—but not —— you.”

Fanny’s youth, her *naïveté*, her ignorance of the world, her confidence in himself, and all her little girlish caprices, were delightful to Captain Clifford, who felt, as the day advanced and their conversation became more earnest, that her character was growing into his knowledge and admiration by degrees, like a beautiful landscape on which the morning light is gradually dawning, so as to display all its loveliness, bright and cheering as sunshine, at last.

After some time, the rather officious stranger returned, saying he had thought it better to bring a covered car from the neighbouring village, and that he would himself drive Fanny to Loch Elan. Seeing that the vehicle could carry only two, he requested Captain Clifford to precede them a few minutes, in order to prepare Mrs. O’Hara for the appearance of Fanny in a very unusual costume, and, truth to say, in a rather dishevelled state. This suggestion seemed to the young officer so

perfectly judicious that he was astonished to find Fanny resolutely opposed to it, and evidently frightened at the proposition. She insisted on either walking home, or that the farm-servant who brought the carriage should drive her there; but she spoke with most peremptory decision to the stranger in declining his offer. He stood silent while she spoke, with a look of cold but concentrated firmness, evidently resolved, if possible, to carry his point; but Fanny, too, could be decided when necessary. There was a commanding power in his manner very difficult to withstand, when again and more peremptorily the stranger repeated that she was evidently feverish, and unfit for so long a walk; therefore he must insist that, being a better driver than the farm-servant, he should himself convey her safely home.

“But,” said Fanny, now for the first time scrutinizing the car, “this belongs to the neighbouring convent! I have seen it often turning in towards that gloomy gate! No! no! let me walk. Mamma has warned us often of our danger from Papists, and into that carriage nothing but force shall make me enter.”

Both gentlemen were standing beside her at the door, in full discussion how to proceed, when Fanny was suddenly almost thrown down by old Neptune springing rapturously upon her, and the next moment, a few paces off, O’Hara appeared

advancing at a hurried pace along the road, evidently in search of her. When he saw Fanny standing beside the spring-cart, as if about to enter, a look of startling wildness arose in the expression of his eye, and on suddenly observing O'Grady, a dark, angry frown, almost death-like in its flash of irrepressible rage, overspread his whole countenance. Before any one could stop him, O'Hara rushed headlong towards O'Grady, and, with the fury of a maniac, felled him at a single blow to the earth.

Captain Clifford sprang forward to prevent this apparently unaccountable attack from being repeated, and, after a vehement struggle, he succeeded in mastering O'Hara. The infuriated guardian was apparently so excited, that it seemed almost like the effect of intoxication to witness the violent tone with which he almost shrieked out, in accents of delirious fury, saying, "You and your accomplice there would steal my ward away; but you are both foiled. She is safe now! If I die for it, Fanny shall not be enticed away from me by my worst of enemies, O'Grady, or by any of his assistants."

"I am no accomplice! I never saw this person—this Mr. O'Grady, if that be his name—till a moment since," answered Captain Clifford, almost smiling at the accusation, but anxious to soothe O'Hara, who appeared on the very edge of

derangement, as his blazing eye remained fixed on O'Grady; "this person and I are perfect strangers."

"Of course! You and he will say anything to compass your ends, and swear it too. I know O'Grady and his religion of falsehoods. With those who abjure truth, we know not what to believe or unbelieve. For what purpose is that covered car here? It belongs to the convent of St. Bridget," said O'Hara, his voice becoming more and more infuriated, while his countenance grew darker than a thunder-cloud. "Yes! you are—I know no other reason why you should protect that wretch from my vengeance now—yes! you are one of the Popish agents to convey my ward away, and I see your motive."

"What magnificent motive can that be?" said Captain Clifford, good-humouredly. "In all the blundering life of an Irishman, you never were more mistaken: I am an officer in the army, and a Protestant."

"Of course! of course! I know it all; and you will be a Mormonite or a Quaker to-morrow, if your superiors command it. No! no! no! I am up to a Jesuit yet, and down upon him too! Depart both of you together, and the first who darkens this island again with his shadow, shall be sent to the shades. Go! get into your car together, and——"

“Excuse me there, Sir; we are utter strangers, that individual and I. We do not at all fancy each other’s society. At least I can answer for myself,” replied Captain Clifford, stealing a look of satirical contempt at the not very prepossessing figure of O’Grady, struggling up after his fall, and covered with dust. “Unless you had obligingly announced that gentleman’s name, now picking himself up from the gutter, I never should have known him; therefore do not indissolubly unite us for better or worse. He may be the Wandering Jew, for anything I know or care.”

O’Hara turned away with contemptuous incredulity, saying, “But I both know and care that this dear child shall not be shut up in the soul-and-body prison of a convent. The bird that soars nearest to heaven is a lark, Fanny, the gayest as well as the merriest of living creatures, and my little ward shall not be closed up in a dark, dismal cage, like your favourite bullfinch.”

“Indeed, there was no danger! You must believe this gentleman!” exclaimed Fanny, in a tone of earnest remonstrance. “He saved my life; I should have been actually drowned in the river, if he had not rescued me.”

“Better be drowned entirely, than fall into the clutches of O’Grady and his accomplices,” answered O’Hara, doggedly. “Fanny! come with

me now. If by word or look you ever hold further communication with these two individuals, whatever be the name or character they choose to assume, you will—yes! you will break my heart.”

Fanny silently took the extended arm of her guardian, who stalked superbly away, without again looking round. Her eyes spoke, though her voice did not, as with one tearful glance to Captain Clifford which implied a very grateful farewell, and was followed by a rich flood of colour on her cheek, she slowly and rather unwillingly disappeared. The agitated girl then did her best to keep up with the very rapid pace of O'Hara, who hurried arbitrarily along, as if he were beset, muttering to himself in momentarily increasing excitement, “The earth shall not long contain us both! O'Grady has sworn to ruin me. His own life depends on destroying my character. Perhaps at last my increasing evidence about the murder of Sir Francis may become so completed, that it cannot but be credited. I may hang him yet! One of us must fall! Give me but revenge, and I could die to-morrow!”

Captain Clifford, when they finally departed, gracefully lifted his hat to Fanny, and stood immovable as long as she remained in sight. He then proceeded homewards through the forest path, tracing, as he advanced, the small, light

footstep imprinted a moment before by Fanny's step on the grass, while he felt a new delight in catching now and then a distant glimpse of her receding figure, as well as in recalling the expression of her dark smiling eyes, so feminine in their youthful vivacity.

From the incidents of an hour, Captain Clifford felt that he had laid up recollections and emotions that might last him for life, since, truly, this was the first time that the deeper sensibilities of his nature had found an object capable of arousing them into existence. The gay young soldier could scarcely now collect his thoughts, when proceeding absently onwards, audibly humming a favourite air, while dreaming in the broad daylight a thousand happy visions in which Fanny and he were to be the chief actors, and not a possible difficulty was allowed to intrude on his imaginary felicity, or to cast its teasing shadow over his path of love and joy. He had ten thousand plans how to see Fanny again, and how to speak to her. While revelling in this new luxury of hopes and fears, all Captain Clifford's plans ended, like an old comedy, in his kneeling with the beautiful Fanny before a whole row of obstinate parents and guardians, to ask her father, if she had a father, and to ask his own best of mothers, for their consent to a marriage upon nothing, with no expectations.

Captain Clifford at length secretly tried to laugh himself out of this pleasant infatuation, and he even hypocritically told himself that he would not bring such adversity on any girl he loved, as to persuade her into a penniless marriage—that he could easily break the spell—and that an attachment so suddenly formed might be as suddenly forgotten. But no! His feelings revenged themselves for being so under-estimated, by becoming even more engrossing than ever, and while he struggled to be freed from their too attractive influence, the fetters of a most chivalrous attachment seemed to rivet themselves inextricably round his heart. In short, Captain Clifford at last acknowledged to himself, that his enthusiasm about Fanny was an engrossing sentiment which had grown up in a day, eclipsing all previous plans, hopes, thoughts, or fears, and that his whole past history seemed to him as nothing, compared with that future which he resolved, if possible, to share with the fascinating Fanny, if he might hope to find her equally fascinated with him.

Next day, the whole neighbourhood around Elan Castle assembled to witness the funeral of Lord Tipperary, which was to be a perfect raree-show of magnificence, to astonish the whole country with wax tapers, black feathers, and black velvet. It seemed a perfect burlesque for the young Lord to call himself chief mourner, or

to fasten weepers on the coat of one so incapable of a tear, or even of a serious thought; but his glossy suit of mourning was a model for "The Inconsolable-woe Department" in any mourning shop, while the whole house became, for that day only, and by particular desire, a model also of decorous grief.

When the young peer returned with O'Hara his factor, accompanied by the lawyers, to search for the late Lord Tipperary's will, his two guests, not having themselves any prospect of a legacy, nor much concern about how many thousands or tens of thousands "the old miser" had amassed, set off, as soon as they could make a tolerable pretext, in full career for Loch Elan, on the bright waters of which their little skiff was in a few moments skimming along towards that well-remembered point, where they had so lately met Theresa and Fanny.

Not a trace was now to be seen of any living creature on the whole island; therefore, after mooring their boat to the rough, unfinished pier, Lord Brentford and his lively companion sprung on shore, and sauntered together, by tacit agreement, towards O'Hara's beautiful garden. In accordance with the solemn ceremony of that day, it seemed to the young sportsmen as if everything around had a grave, Sabbath-look. The gay tent and its flaunting little pennant were

taken down, and on every window of O'Hara's house the white blinds had been lowered, so that it looked quite uninhabited.

The two gentlemen, ensconced behind a large tree not very far distant from the little rustic white gate, were consulting whether any plausible pretext could be invented to excuse their calling at the cottage, when they were surprised suddenly to observe a man, who had landed a few minutes before themselves, approaching stealthily towards the only window at all open, and cautiously looking in. Captain Clifford instantly laid his hand on the arm of Lord Brentford, and made a sign for him to remain perfectly still, while they both watched, with some curiosity and much amusement, to ascertain what could be the object of so clandestine an approach to O'Hara's house.

The factor himself they knew to be absent, shut up for some hours with their host, Lord Tipperary, on business; and if the two young girls were alone in the house, with only a maid, it seemed very possible that an intruder, evidently so much afraid of openly advancing, might be quite unexpected as well as far from welcome. It was, therefore, something more and better than mere idle curiosity that made Lord Brentford, with his companion, lurk quite invisibly behind the friendly trunk of a massive beech, waiting to see what would follow, and feeling in

a state of rather nonsensical excitement in the hope of an adventure.

“ I mean to write one day ‘ The History of a Minute,’ said Lord Brentford; “ for there are moments worth a century, amidst scenery like this, amidst excellent sport, with an hospitable host at home, charming young ladies near, and the hope at this instant of an adventure.”

“ True!” answered Captain Clifford; “ there certainly are moments, the brilliant colouring of which is like that on a butterfly’s wing, so radiant, and, alas! so transient. Such were those minutes I spent yesterday here with the beautiful Fanny.”

“ Strike me sentimental, Clifford! you are in love!”

“ There certainly are some of the most fatal symptoms about both you and me,” whispered Captain Clifford, in a very under-tone, and with a half-jesting look, while he still continued sedulously to watch that stranger lurking round the windows of Rose Elan. “ I have come to be quite a believer in the unaccountable magnetic influence of one person over another; and from the first moment of our acquaintance, Fanny became like no other girl on earth to me.”

“ I know always in half-a-moment who I am to like or hate,” interrupted Lord Brentford; “ and I am never mistaken!”

“ Of course not,” continued Captain Clifford,

in reply. "Fanny and I were probably born for each other. I hope she has money, for I have none! We must have been acquainted in some previous state of existence; and we are now falling into one of those headlong, over-head-and-ears, heart-rending attachments, which amaze and perplex common-place men, and which amaze most those who know the parties best. I am astonished at my own case—you are astonished—everybody will be astonished!"

"Yes!" replied Lord Brentford, laughing. "Your affair reminds me of the bean that grew gigantic in a single day. That young lady is as beautiful as a Greek statue, and I admired her large, round straw-hat immensely; but, after all—"

"I hate every sentence with a *but* in it; and besides, Brentford, you are most hypocritically pretending indifference, when I know you are fully more *épris* yourself with the little brunette."

"I know a maiden fair to see.—Take care!

She can both false and friendly be.—Beware!

Trust her not—she is fooling thee."

"Well, perhaps she has actually made some impression on a heart, always like adamant till yesterday. I never cared for any of the Anne Brownlows of society, hackneyed like myself in the world; nor was I in much danger from your favourite Fanny, with her eyes calm and bright as an evening star; but Theresa is like the im-

possible heroine of some old romance ; and really the wildest language of enthusiasm could scarcely do her justice."

"Brentford! one would really fancy you in earnest!" exclaimed Captain Clifford, with a rather unsentimental laugh. "In the days when we were young and foolish—that is to say, two months ago—you formerly raved like a maniac about Lady Emily Tudor. How was Lady Mary Heneage looking when you saw her last? What did Miss Armitage say, when you stole her bouquet a week since? And was Lady Sophia as captivating as ever, when you spoke all that nonsense about love and sentiment to her at the opera?"

"I never admired one of those young ladies in my life," interrupted Lord Brentford, with laughing indignation. "Did I ever know one of them? Are there any such people in existence? I have forgotten them all—every one. No! I always intended to marry in the end a rich widow, who can bring a good recommendation from her last place ; but now there lives in the world but one mortal worth a thought—if she be a mortal—and her Christian name seems to be Theresa. What more deponent sayeth not, because he does not know."

"You see what she is ; but you would like, perhaps, to discover what she has?"

“A hundred thousand pounds, I hope. I could not go for less, considering the present state of my money-market. I should be dog-cheap at 50,000*l.*; and really, as money is the grand machinery of human life, anything less is only enough for a solitary bachelor to be miserable upon. We must find out more about these wards of O’Hara’s, for there is evidently some exquisite mystery about them. Tipperary tells me, it is the wonder of wonders throughout this neighbourhood now, who and what they are.”

Within the cottage there had now arisen a sound of music; and Lord Brentford thought he could trace the air of Mozart’s requiem, sung by two fresh, clear, youthful voices, in perfect harmony, and with a thrill of melancholy, that evidenced in both great sensibility and taste. The stranger, looking round the shrubbery, now made strenuous efforts to see into that room from whence those attractive sounds proceeded; and an impression arose in Captain Clifford’s mind that this must be either a maniac broke loose from confinement, or a housebreaker wishing to steal into the cottage. The adventurer was evidently determined at least to gain a glimpse of the musicians within; and it was obvious that he succeeded at last, for he gazed clandestinely in at a window on the ground floor, with an eagerness that defies description. The stranger then turned round, and

anxiously surveyed the whole surrounding country, where all was intensely solitary and quiet. Not a leaf rustled, not a bird sung, not a living animal was visible, and even the voices of the two young girls soon died into silence.

“What will that odd being do next?” whispered Captain Clifford, unable to help watching the rather eccentric movements of this very questionable-looking individual, whom he had now recognised as the Papist that O’Hara had denounced on the previous day, and afterwards so violently assaulted; therefore, he now imparted this fact to Lord Brentford, and both gentlemen felt rather called upon to see out this whole affair. The next act of that supposed robber, however, rather astonished Captain Clifford, and put to flight every previous anticipation of the two concealed observers. O’Grady advanced with a decided step to the door, where he knocked such a hurried, thundering peal, as had not been heard on Isle Elan since the knocker and door had first become united. He loudly continued his summons, with increasing vehemence, until Mrs. O’Hara’s one maid-of-all-work flew to the door, her cap in sympathy with its wearer vibrating wildly on her head, with an air of comic animation.

Behind the startled-looking maid appeared two young faces, fresh and radiant in youthful beauty,

but with an expression of mingled excitement and alarm, while eagerly listening for what was to follow this very arbitrary, rather startling summons, in the absence of Mr. and Mrs. O'Hara. Captain Clifford and his companion meanwhile, taking dexterous advantage of this temporary confusion, glided up to a pillar of the portico, where they could observe the conduct of this evidently unexpected intruder, and be ready in case of necessity to appear, should the man prove, as they suspected, to be insane.

O'Grady rudely pushed aside the maid, and at once advanced hurriedly towards Theresa, saying, "I come with a message from Mrs. O'Hara, to say that she needs your presence immediately. A frightful accident has happened; Mrs. O'Hara is now quite insensible. There is the most urgent haste; and she begged you not to delay one moment. Perhaps she may not be alive when we reach the spot. My boat waits, and there is not an instant to lose!"

"Is she ill? What accident has occurred?" asked Theresa, with trembling anxiety, while her cheek grew pale, and her lip quivered with affright. "Tell us the worst at once!"

"You waste time! Not an instant should be lost!" exclaimed O'Grady, impatiently. "You shall hear all when we are embarked. Mrs. O'Hara awaits you near the convent-gate, and

wishes me to row you there immediately. It is of the greatest importance, she says, not to delay an instant—not a second!”

Theresa and Fanny looked at each other in blank perplexity. They were at a loss what to apprehend, but something very distressing had apparently occurred to their much-loved friend, Mrs. O'Hara; therefore, in silent alarm and agitation, they prepared to obey a summons, the cause of which they feared to anticipate. Without delay, therefore, they bonneted and shawled, ready to depart, while Captain Clifford, from his quiet niche of observation, perceived that this authoritative stranger watched their progress, with his half-shut eyes askance, gleaming slyly out, like those of a snake, while a smile of ill-concealed triumph lurked about his mouth.

Lord Brentford and Captain Clifford, instead of appearing at once, which might have been startling, went to the pier, and were found busy apparently in arranging their fishing-tackle, when the two young ladies approached, with hasty, agitated steps, preceded by O'Grady, urging them on to greater speed, reiterating his assurance that Mrs. O'Hara was in most imminent danger from an accident, and allowing them not a momentary pause to consider his message.

As they reached the pier, and were eagerly springing into O'Grady's boat, Lord Brentford

approached, followed by Captain Clifford, so as with respectful politeness to intercept their progress and retard their embarkation, when Theresa, who started on seeing them, and coloured deeply, exclaimed, in a voice of most deeply distressed anxiety,—

“We are going on a very sad errand! I fear it is a case of life and death. Do not stop us a moment! Some frightful accident has happened to the best friend we have on earth, and her messenger has not even had time to tell us the circumstances until we are on board. Excuse me, then.”

“No! I never excuse anybody anything,” answered Lord Brentford, laughing; but adding, in a low whisper, “I must say at this moment, one word of warning. Are you very sure that this odd-looking, mustard-faced man comes from Mrs. O’Hara? He does not, somehow, make an honest impression on me, and my opinion of him is rather shady; for, to declare the whole truth, that stranger looks to me as like a villain as any man in Ireland.”

Lord Brentford’s low, earnest voice had at once startled Theresa into attention; therefore, when O’Grady returned from the boat, making an imperative signal that all was ready, the girls both hesitated, and looked inquiringly at Lord Brentford for advice. They felt that he might be

trusted,—that he was a perfect gentleman,—that he seemed truly interested in their welfare,—and that he was most evidently doubtful of their safety under the proposed escort of Mr. O'Grady.

“What shall we do?” was the question unmistakeably beaming in the soft clear eyes of Fanny, which now became anxiously fixed upon Captain Clifford. How he wished there had been some real danger to brave again in her defence now! but he resolved, at all events, to speak out, saying,—

“I heard this Mr. O'Grady assert that some accident had happened to your guardian, or to Mrs. O'Hara; but we saw them both, not an hour since, with Lord Tipperary, walking towards Castle Elan, where they intended to remain some hours; therefore, it is not likely, unless they are in the habit of it, that they were in two places at once, driving near the convent, while lunching at Castle Elan. If you feel anxious about their safety, we shall most gladly row you across the bay ourselves now in Lord Tipperary's boat. That Mr. O'Hara may not put us in the stocks for being impostors, I shall give you our names as correctly as an Army List. Let me then introduce Lord Brentford, and his much-esteemed cousin, Captain Clifford of the Rifles.”

The easy, gentleman-like self-confidence with which these lively words were spoken, appeared

so prepossessing, and, in fact, irresistible, that Theresa, with a glowing cheek and with sparkling eyes that spoke a world of gratitude, held out her hand to the frank good-humoured speaker, saying,—

“Be our guardians, then, till we find Mr. and Mrs. O’Hara. He has often told us that we have a secret danger to fear from some Popish manœuvres. Perhaps I now, for the first time, see the enemy he warned Fanny so earnestly against yesterday.’

“Not for the first time, nor for the last,” interrupted O’Grady, advancing with a calm smile of perfect self-possession. “Who can wonder that Mr. O’Hara is afraid of my influence with you, when my sole object is to rescue two young girls from the evil influence of a man who has perverted you to Protestantism, who has kept you from the enjoyment of large estates, and who was tried years ago for the murder of your own father. Ever since my very accidentally discovering in this place that you both survive, I have ceaselessly watched over you with very deep interest. In early infancy you were stolen by O’Hara, and the world believes you dead. Come with me now, and the strange secret of your origin shall at once be told to both. If you refuse, that important mystery shall never be revealed, while the world continues to go round.”

Theresa and Fanny exchanged looks not only of astonishment, but of most painful perplexity, while the expression of their countenances changed as rapidly as the clouds in a windy sky. O'Grady meanwhile folded his arms, looking calm and inscrutable; the only one present who seemed indifferent to what should follow. Lord Brentford and Captain Clifford remained standing, ready to offer their best services, but evidently at a loss now what to do or say, and greatly astonished at all that had been said by O'Grady, with so much energy and apparent truth. Captain Clifford felt on this occasion that hidden sympathy with Fanny which alone can unite heart to heart, and he drew nearer to protect her. Theresa then at length broke the long silence which had fallen on the party, by saying, in accents of extreme emotion, while tears glistened like diamonds in her eyes,—

“ I never saw my father; I never heard how he died; but what you say of Mr. O'Hara is quite impossible. He has always been kinder than kind to Fanny and me. He tells us little now, certainly, about our own history, because he plainly says there are very strong reasons for such secrecy; that it would be dangerous to ourselves if we knew all. If anything Mr. O'Hara ever did in respect to us were unfair, I am certain our dear, good, best of friends, Mrs. O'Hara, who is a perfect mother to us, would not allow him. She would die

on the spot rather than wrong us, or any one alive. Mr. O'Grady, I do not believe you!"

Theresa fixed her large, clear, honest eyes on O'Grady, with the fearlessness of a spoiled child accustomed to say all she pleased, while he looked perseveringly on the ground, and merely answered in a low whispering voice, which sounded sternly between his closed teeth,—

"Then you consent to be for ever cheated of a high position belonging to yourself and your sister. You give up legal guardians who would assert your rights. Come with me now, and I shall place you in the path to home, friends, and fortune."

"Not if you take us to a convent, which is the grave of all these blessings," answered Theresa, with immovable decision which became her well, and now her countenance looked beautiful, with an expression of lofty seriousness. "We have been well warned what the dark dungeons of a nunnery are, under the despotic tyranny of the priest; and I would much rather that a turnkey locked me up in a prison-cell, as he is responsible to the law for his conduct, which a priest is not."

"You are right," said Captain Clifford, energetically. "I know the whole masquerade that is got up to entice young victims within the grating. I have seen that whole farce acted over! the pretended cheerfulness previously, the death-

like monotony afterwards, the downcast look, the petty squabbles, and the yet more petty intrigues of a convent; the vain longings of imprisoned minds for excitement, the efforts to vary an endless sameness, and to make trifles important. No court ladies quarrel more about etiquette than the nuns in one convent I know, about which of them shall put on St. Bridget's petticoat. I have been behind the tapestry, and discovered that the worst vices are hid in those dungeons of misery. Let me advise you to give up life rather than give yourself up to such an existence of disguise in mind, in body, in look, in dress, in everything."

"Trust me," replied Theresa, while once more, as formerly, many fitful smiles were glimmering across her face. "I should be thought rather young to die now, therefore how much too young to resign all that constitutes human life, and to suffer annihilation without death. Our guardian has been a very kind guardian, and a very safe one, therefore we wish for no change—least of all into those gloomy walls there across the water, which I have always looked at with horror."

"You can be legally claimed, and you shall be so," muttered O'Grady, with a look that Theresa thought almost satanic in its malignity. "You who are scarcely out of the nursery, shall now be both placed under guardianship, where no

power of man dare interfere. Once at this convent, in which I had hoped to place you now, and you are as secure as in the Inquisition at Rome. See if you are not settled there soon, either voluntarily or involuntarily. Incontestable proofs of your identity are about to be produced, and you shall both be claimed. If any power exists in the will of a dying father, you shall be rescued from the hands of O'Hara, his murderer, and sooner or later your destiny becomes inevitable."

"That is all an invention! It is quite false," exclaimed Theresa, impetuously, as if hoping by the vehemence of her denial to prove O'Grady wrong. "Do not speak another word, Sir, for I shall not believe it."

Both Fanny and Theresa had become white as death, and now remained immovable, with their large speaking eyes fixed in panic-struck silence, as if they were fascinated with terror, on O'Grady, long after he had ceased to talk. They seemed for a time deprived of all power to think or move, till at length Fanny turning towards Captain Clifford, extended to him her trembling hand, saying, "Take us away! Take us to Mr. O'Hara! Our kind guardian will explain all. We have often been warned that if our retreat were found out, some great danger besets us from this person. I know him now to be Mr. O'Hara's

cruel enemy and ours. Take us, then, where we can find dear good Mrs. O'Hara. Everybody is happy and safe with her."

"Which you will never be again if this party has any influence," observed Captain Clifford, glancing contemptuously towards O'Grady. "He seems to be a very base and dangerous concern, and looks as if he had come out in search of his lost respectability."

"We were warned that he wears every imaginable disguise," answered Fanny. "The Jesuits allow an unlimited choice of characters to be dramatically assumed."

"Most true! I assure you it is a fact that an officer of ours, who obtained a long leave of absence, went to Rome, where the Jesuits perverted my friend, and at once ordained him as a priest. If you will believe me, he received her Majesty's pay for six months as an officer in the British army, while he was at the same time a priest of the Popish Church."

"If that be not swindling," exclaimed Fanny, indignantly, "I should like to know what is!"

"This reverend priest and *ci-devant* brother-officer of mine has even now a special dispensation to attend balls, operas, and plays, without wearing any external paraphernalia to indicate his priesthood; so that, being very handsome and insinuating, he is diligently converting the young

ladies while dancing polkas or quadrilles, and disseminates Romanism by special licence of his Church at a concert or a theatre. I assure you this is no exaggeration."

The two agitated girls and their very willing escort were embarked in Lord Tipperary's boat, and about to put off, when a sudden thought struck Captain Clifford, and he sprang back on the pier, saying to O'Grady, " You have most unjustifiably threatened and terrified those young ladies, and you have moreover endeavoured on false pretences to carry them away; I cannot, therefore, allow you to escape without being confronted with their guardian, and making you explain to him what your object has been,—what your future threats implied. A place in our boat is vacant; you shall accompany us to Elan Castle."

Captain Clifford's voice and manner were so imperative that few could have attempted to resist him, and O'Grady was certainly not one. The prisoner, as he might now be considered, immediately walked forward with long measured strides, as if he considered this authoritative invitation quite a matter of course, and no one could have guessed it to be otherwise than welcome, but for the livid paleness that suddenly overspread his averted countenance, and the greater care, if possible, than ever with which he preserved the custody of his eyes. They were not raised for

one momentary glance around during the whole voyage across Loch Elan, nor throughout the walk which followed to Lord Tipperary's. Captain Clifford observed in an under-tone to Fanny, that he had never in his long life before seen so impassible a countenance as that of O'Grady, without either the glow or the shadow of human feelings. His face was thin even to emaciation, the skin so like parchment it seemed as if no living blood circulated there, and his crisp wiry hair was combed smoothly back from a low protruding forehead. The severity of O'Grady's features now was such that they seemed as if moulded in iron, and his hard, cold voice, when he answered a question, sounded like iron too.

An almost instantaneous feeling of confidence had been at once established between the four young people so very accidentally thrown together, and it was as pleasing for the two gentlemen to afford their protection as it was advantageous now for the girls to receive it.

Captain Clifford had that peculiar air of negligent self-confidence and graceful ease belonging to a man of the world, which gave and added effect to all he said,—and, truth to say, he said a great deal to the quiet, modest, blushing Fanny. He had already, with characteristic precipitancy fallen deeply, sincerely, and passionately in love with that timid, girlish young beauty, whose bright eyes

sparkled in a flutter of shy excitement whenever she felt obliged to answer him, and whose pretty mouth, like a rosebud, had smiling dimples constantly quivering around it. Fanny's voice, if she spoke, was music itself—low, sweet, and trembling with timidity when forced to reply; but the little she said now evinced a degree of sensibility and even of intellect far beyond her early years.

The very last thing that Fanny had supposed possible in real actual life, not in fairy tales, was love at first sight; but who ever saw in this world before, she thought, such a man as Captain Clifford, so young in years, yet a veteran in military glory, so chivalrous, so courteous to herself, yet so stern and determined in protecting her from O'Grady's intrusion? There existed a depth of practical enthusiasm in Fanny's character, which even her own sister Theresa scarcely could fathom, and she was completely enraptured now with the whole character she ascribed to Captain Clifford. Whatever was noble, generous, or high-minded, struck a chord in her mind that vibrated harmoniously to its own nature, and her very private conviction was now, that she might live for ever without once again seeing the equal of Captain Clifford, without even wishing to do so. All the romantic heroes Fanny had read of in a circulating library were mere yea-and-nay ordinary men in comparison, and if she never saw Captain Clifford himself

again, she could live on the pleasant remembrance of having for a short time known the most amiable of men. His sentiments were on all occasions exalted, while there was a courageous honesty in whatever he said, which disdained to conceal either the good or the evil of his mind. Captain Clifford always spoke first and thought afterwards, quite regardless of consequences, yet all he said inevitably increased the esteem and attachment of those who heard him. Fanny, who had thought much and read more, thought she had at length found one who realized every romantic dream which had ever given her a zest for poetry, music, or fiction.

Theresa, meanwhile, had been so completely overcome by the scene with O'Grady, that she gladly accepted Lord Brentford's arm to support her faltering steps, and Fanny, her eyes glittering with sunshiny tears of agitation, was leaning with a confiding smile on Captain Clifford, when Mrs. O'Hara, who chanced to be at her window, observed the little cavalcade approaching. She started, with a look of grave regret, on perceiving her much-loved young protégées accompanied, on such apparently intimate terms, by strangers, and her attention became much more anxiously fixed on the two gentlemen than on O'Grady, who walked somewhat aloof, in a very sulky state of most gloomy abstraction.

A short animated explanation was now volun-

teered by Theresa to Mrs. O'Hara of her day's adventures, and Lord Brentford thought she looked herself, while speaking in rapid, animated accents full of natural grace, as gay as a butterfly on the first day of its wings. With kind consideration she suppressed, however, for the present, all that O'Grady had said against her guardian as being too painful, and as being perfectly false.

Mrs. O'Hara, after listening with affectionate interest to the hurried recital, became evidently rather impatient now to give the three strangers a hurried dismissal. She politely thanked Lord Brentford and Captain Clifford for their timely protection of her girls; but Mrs. O'Hara's manner had suddenly assumed a degree of restraint very unusual, while the girls observed that the truthful Susan never once expressed any wish or expectation that she should ever meet them again. Hers appeared to be a final speech of thanks and a final farewell, spoken with the most distant possible civility, and it became at once evident that they must go. Before their hurried interview closed, however, Mrs. O'Hara urged upon Lord Brentford and Captain Clifford her earnest wish that they would keep O'Grady, at whom the gentle Susan looked with unmitigated antipathy, in some sort of custody till O'Hara should come from Lord Tipperary's private room, where business was in progress that she dared not interrupt.

“Mother!” exclaimed Theresa, with a look of comic vexation, after the gentlemen had bowed themselves off, “you did not look half-pleased to welcome these very kind protectors of ours, nor half-grateful,—scarcely even half-civil. I am sure at the last moment you all but desired them to go about their business!”

“My dear girl! it was fortunate certainly that any one chanced to be on the spot who could deliver you from O’Grady; but what took these strangers again to Isle Elan this morning? There is no very first-rate sport on our shore to entice young men often there. Yesterday you told me of the little dialogue, with much harmless nonsense, that took place among you all accidentally on the pier, and I did not object to it for once, with friends of Lord Tipperary’s; but any intimacy continued would be most prejudicial, as your names might soon become bandied about in this little busy neighbourhood from lip to lip, with gossip or even scandal destructive to you both. These are lounging, idle men, addicted to London habits, and of very high rank. As O’Hara said yesterday, perhaps mere fashionable scamps, who, after they leave this amusement-seeking, do-nothing house, will of course think no more about you; therefore, I wish to prevent my own dear girls from thinking another thought about them.”

“Quite right,” said Theresa, colouring scarlet,

and turning hastily away; "we shall make a point of forgetting the strangers to-morrow, or perhaps next week; but for this one day, mother, it is a pleasure to feel so obliged."

"I never in my life beheld two more gentleman-like, agreeable, and apparently well-intentioned young men," continued Susan, in a tone of regretful remorse, "and it goes against my very heart to discourage your continuing the acquaintance; but, my very dear girls, these two pleasant strangers have evidently no object on earth except to kill a great deal of superfluous time. Without any deeper feeling than vanity, they would make a daily lounge of our island, and it might be an unpronounceable calamity if, continuing indifferent themselves, they at last succeeded in making either of you care for them. I would rather put my own Theresa and Fanny both in my pocket, than let them meet those agreeable strangers any more. Let both always continue strangers to us, for they belong to a different sphere entirely."

Theresa felt at this moment as if the future had suddenly become a blank wall before her! Must she, then, forget or disbelieve all that Lord Brentford had said and looked during their recent walk? Yes; she felt convinced in her secret soul that Mrs. O'Hara's warning was right and motherly, while Susan added, during their pro-

gress back to the Castle, "Young men like these, made for society, are like children in a toy-shop, caring little what they destroy, provided merely their own ennui be diverted. During a dull country visit, such gay young sportsmen could amuse themselves very well by dawdling off an hour or two daily in your cheerful society. Young people can always entertain each other; but my duty is to foresee for you both, girls, and I do fear that you might be eventually, as so many other girls have been, plunged into a lasting, romantic, and unreturned attachment."

"Not quite impossible," said Theresa, laughing and colouring; "I heard Captain Clifford rallying Lord Brentford yesterday on the extreme inconstancy of his preferences. There seemed to be about fifty young ladies in the case, and he ended by saying, 'If I saw you enter St. George's, Hanover-square, in full procession to-morrow, with bride and bride's-maids all complete, to be married, I should not feel quite sure, Brentford, that your changeable mind would not change before reaching the altar.'"

"Not at all unlikely! Besides, Theresa, there are men—not a few—whose greatest ambition is to become the object of a girl's first love," observed Mrs. O'Hara, in a tone of anxious reflection; "to take, as it were, the cream off her earliest affections; and to feel assured that here-

after, even if they give up all mutual intimacy, the impression made on her memory can never by time or by any circumstances be effaced. Whether the remembrance be painful, or pleasing, or heart-breaking, still it becomes daguerreotyped indelibly on a heart that, while it beats, must still beat with that ineffaceable stamp of the deceiver's image upon it. Such a triumph of vanity my own dear girls must not allow to any one. It might be given at the unreturned sacrifice of all your best and holiest affections, while it plunges the victim into a gulph of silent suffering—very silent indeed! such as I would willingly die to protect my darling young girls from ever experiencing.”

“Thanks, dear mother, for your most affectionate warning; perhaps it was needed,” said Theresa, in a low, subdued voice, and with a burning blush glowing on her cheek. “Already Lord Brentford had requested us to make an appointment for next morning at the pier again, that we might walk as far as the old Abbey together. He asked leave to keep some violets I had picked in our garden, with a smile meant to be very fascinating—and perhaps it was. He offered me some prints and drawings to copy, described his beautiful place in the country, and in his conversation painted pictures of life, as it might and should be, with those who loved each other, that

certainly were very eloquent and attractive. Yes, mother, you are right! We must avoid those strangers! We should dread their fascinations, as a moth should avoid the candle that would scorch it. If Lord Brentford be, as you think, an insincere man, which he probably is, then he might be a dangerous one, so I herewith bid him farewell! and, as Byron says, 'If for ever, still for ever fare-thee-well!'"

Theresa gaily kissed her hand in the air, as an imaginary adieu to Lord Brentford, with a laughing vivacity which convinced Mrs. O'Hara that her lively favourite was indeed "fancy free;" for never did any young mortal seem to rejoice more happily, more fearlessly, more good-humouredly, in the bright dawn of existence, than that true-hearted girl, without a thought but of making all around enjoy life as she did herself. Still Theresa buried deep in the bottom of her own heart a conviction that Lord Brentford might not really be a vain and heartless jilt, such as Mrs. O'Hara recommended her to forget. No! that countenance so full of frankness and good humour, those eyes so lighted up with vivacity, that manner so full of refinement, and that voice so indicative of sensibility, could not be the faithless index of mere vanity and selfish deceit. So thought Theresa in her very private mind, while Mrs. O'Hara, perhaps divining what the sanguine

girl still hoped and believed of Lord Brentford and his companion, added,—

“ The world says—though to be sure that only means, in this case, an old lady in the village who told me—that Captain Clifford is engaged to marry some girl of fashion in London ; I forget her name, but it does not much signify to us ! A Miss Anne Brownlow, I think, of Torchester Abbey. Lord Brentford, also, has been betrothed to an heiress cousin of his own, ever since he was a mere boy whipping his top. The match was arranged once upon a time, that he may become rich enough to buy back some fine estate which was alienated long ago from his ancient family. These two very agreeable strangers are both good-looking young men certainly, but quite out of our line.”

Never was there a more unpopular speech spoken by any orator, public or private, than Mrs. O'Hara's, but it proved very effectual. Theresa blushed scarlet, and Fanny became pale, while they unwillingly listened, but both were convinced at once of Mrs. O'Hara being perfectly right as well as most truly kind in all she said, and they silently acquiesced in her very unsatisfactory warning. How many are the unspoken disappointments of life, never to be revealed ! Fanny, young and simple-hearted, felt that she could not wish, even had it been possible, to forget Captain Clifford. He never must know of the interest she had felt in

him, never!—but she resolved to pray for his happiness; and, in romantic remembrance of him, she heroically resolved to remain for ever and ever single, unloving, and unloved through a long solitary life. Hitherto Fanny had felt no sorrow, and feared none, her pleasant existence having been buoyed up with the heedless felicity of girlhood, free in her affections, joyous in her anticipations, gay in spirit, and kind in every impulse; but now, for the first time, her heart-strings gave out a sadder tone than they ever previously sounded, for she felt, and felt for the first time, the uncertainties of life and its most painful disappointments.

Fanny's feelings were always deeper and more permanent than the lively, high-spirited Theresa's, who threw off care or sorrow from the quicksilver of her mind at once. When accompanying Mrs. O'Hara with Fanny in the evening back to Isle Elan, she soon left the party, and started off suddenly in keen pursuit of a splendid butterfly or purple emperor, which fluttered along the meadow, like a gorgeous flower endowed with wings. On no account would the active merry girl have injured it, but this chace merely for excitement was to Theresa as irresistible as fox-hunting to a sportsman, and on she flew, trying with her large round hat to cover, without injuring, the gay little fugitive, gay as herself, which con-

stantly escaped. It was too provoking! Theresa paused at last to recover her breath, looking while she stood amidst sunshine and summer breezes the very picture of girlish animation, when suddenly, to her extreme astonishment, Lord Brentford appeared from a side path in the forest. Having pursued the already exhausted insect for a very short distance, he captured and presented it to Theresa, saying, "This is certainly the queen of beauty dressed for a butterflies' ball in very full costume. I never saw so beautiful a specimen; but everything here is superlative. I expect some reward now for my trouble; therefore, did you say, or is it asking too much, that I may call at the cottage to-morrow to admire your flowers?"

"There are much better in Lord Tipperary's garden," replied Theresa, turning away with a good-humoured smile, till nothing was visible of her but the immense hat and a stray ringlet fluttering far out in the breeze. "My pansies and auriculas are very little worthy of notice, after what you must be accustomed to in London. Besides, they shall not be tormented by strangers, and my camellias hate to be picked."

"Are these your special favourites? For my own part, I used to think nothing in creation half so beautiful as a rose, but I have lately seen that when roses and lilies are united into one, they become still more to be admired. Surely some

one that I know must have had the same liberal fairy for a god-mother who endowed Cinderella with so many perfections."

"I remember that sentence in an old novel," said Theresa, laughing. "I am sure one of Mrs. Radcliffe's heroes said it to the heroine, who answered that she liked such eloquence, because, being so very high-flown and brilliant, it reminded her of a rocket at Vauxhall."

"I should not deserve to enjoy this almost unhopd for opportunity of speaking to you so soon again, if I did not make good and diligent use of it. I thought the ice between us had been broken, but you seem inclined to freeze it up again," said Lord Brentford, affecting to speak very acrimoniously; "you will irritate the best tempered man in the world by disbelieving my sincerity. Even if a certain young lady despises my admiration, she should at least credit its reality. You look so like a picture, that I wish you would step into the canvas again to be seen for ever. If I may without offence praise the beauty of a rose in your garden, why not your own also?"

"Flowers and pictures are made for nothing better than to be looked at and admired. They are put to no confusion by empty praise; and even among plants, I respect the violet most, because it hides from mere common-place, road-side admira-

tion, and its presence is only known by the good it does in diffusing a pleasant fragrance."

"Then let me bring you a boat-load of the very finest from Lord Tipperary's garden to-morrow; for I could imagine no greater pleasure through life than to scatter flowers along your path—flowers without a thorn. You have always been determined to make me feel unwelcome on that island. If it be possible to put a poor man out of spirits and out of countenance, you seem resolved to do so now, but I am determined to be brave. I shall defy you and wear your colours, whether permitted or not. I shall land on your territories every day."

"We put an embargo on all foreign vessels approaching our shores; and as Mr. O'Hara has the command of the whole shipping on Loch Elan, he may either warn you off, or more probably take you prisoner."

"Then I never should wish to escape. His only difficulty would be to drive me away! Where you are I could settle for life, and think the time only too short, though hitherto my habit has been to tire of every place and of everything. Indeed, I am almost tired lately of being young and handsome!"

"Indeed! but wait till you are so! Wait till somebody thinks you either one or the other!" replied Theresa, archly. "You must be put in the corner for becoming so intolerably conceited."

“ We seem both inclined for a good, comfortable quarrel—so now for it ! Pray do not waste any superfluous civility on the most undeserving of men ; but, at the same time, take notice that I shall neither rest nor sleep till you think as highly of me as most people say I deserve,” replied Lord Brentford, in a tone of rallying good humour, but, at the same time, with a look of animated interest most irresistibly flattering. “ I am, in sober earnest, most desirous of recommending myself to somebody who shall be nameless. Tell me now what style of lover you would prefer. Shall I set up in the sentimental line ? then bring me a flute ; if you prefer sonneteering, I could perhaps find the rhyme to porringer, though till to-day I have been only a very ‘mute, inglorious Milton—’ ”

“ Do not take so much trouble about my likings or dislikings, but say all these flattering civilities to your beautiful and accomplished cousins in London,” said Theresa, with a slight laugh, but in a tone of some reproach. “ Truth and sincerity are better than poetry ; but I must go now, as there are people waiting for me. Farewell, probably, for ever ! I never talked so much to a stranger before, and never shall again ; but we are greatly obliged for your saving us from being entrapped into the convent ! Our very diverting acquaintance is, however, a very short one to look back upon, and will probably be—

how melancholy to relate!—shorter still, if we look forward.”

“Then do not look forward; it would be most unfeeling if you do, for I dare not contemplate any future in which we shall not be friends, or more than friends. Say, then, that such a future would be welcome to you as it would be to myself. You will remember me till we meet again to-morrow, without dislike?”

Theresa coloured, and shook her head with more seriousness than she usually testified, believing that all he now said was merely a soon-to-be-forgotten jest, and she was about gravely to move away towards Mrs. O'Hara, when Lord Brentford said, in a tone of intense anxiety not to be misinterpreted, “You look, if that were possible, actually offended. What can I have said amiss? You should always, indeed, look angry, for it is so very becoming; but has any one invented something against me? Do not be afraid to name the villain, for I shall only half-murder the wretch who has enviously misrepresented me, though he ought to die ten thousand deaths. Can the mischief-maker be your guardian? He looked very grimly at me the very first time we met! I have been trying all day since then to see him, but he is more inaccessible than a prime-minister. All my difficulties in life, however, and especially all my difficulties now about seeing you again, must

be conquered. I shall give them to the winds, and 'if the winds refuse them, to the waves.' "

"These are both very fickle elements, and therefore exceedingly suitable for your purpose," observed Theresa, relaxing into a smile of girlish humour, mingled with sadness, and retreating towards Mrs. O'Hara, while her countenance, as she did so, gradually assumed a look of shy and very pretty defiance. "You have thrown away a vast deal of good nonsense on me, that would have been better bestowed on somebody else. On your own relations! I am told you are quite a model cousin; therefore you are probably rehearsing now all those rubbishy compliments, which are wasted on a stranger, to be bestowed in earnest on a relation soon. She will find you in very good practice when you go home; and a few such morsels of lackadaisical sentiment will be a pleasant addition. Now farewell, a long, long farewell!"

For an instant Theresa's voice quivered with emotion, for one moment her eyes filled with tears, but she hastened away and was gone. Lord Brentford, surprised, vexed, and greatly excited, stood transfixed to the spot, gazing at her light graceful step, at the last flutter of her white dress, at her blue sash flaunting out behind like a pennon, and at her long glossy ringlets streaming in the wind, as if every curl were alive. It was a charming picture, not thrown away upon the young

peer, who resolved to seek a distinct explanation, and to give one himself, next day. To make, in short, a formal declaration, to obtain a sanction for his addresses from O'Hara, and whatever mystery the guardian might have to reveal, Lord Brentford resolved nothing should interfere with his own resolute intentions. He thought Theresa in every respect perfection! that her face might have been the *beau ideal* of Guido, and her figure of Titian; but he admired most of all her gay holiday manner, her holiday feelings, and her holiday expression of countenance. Lord Brentford felt piqued to the last excess, mortified, humbled, and astonished, at seeing her move, he believed, so carelessly and unceremoniously away, as if she had been alone in a prairie; and the blood mounted to his very temples, when he thought how very little this too fascinating girl seemed to care for him, and how very much he already cared for her. This must not last! The young peer resolved, in the private committee of his own thoughts, that Theresa's indifference must be conquered. When thus treated as a mere nobody, he did not recognise himself! Accustomed to be the idol of every ball-room in London, toadied by mothers, and admired by daughters, he now found himself apparently considered as the very commonest specimen of human nature, and this was not to be borne from one who had so attracted his admiration.

A new chord had been struck in the mind of Lord Brentford, the vibration of which sounded into the very depths of his hitherto impregnable heart, and seemed to open a fresh era in the interests and affections of his future life; while now his whole ingenuity was at work to invent some plausible excuse on which, if an immediate declaration seemed too precipitate, he might call scores of times at Isle Elan—on which he could go there to-morrow, and the next day, and the next. In short, Lord Brentford had a motive now to live for, a difficulty now to struggle against, hopes and fears more interesting than he ever felt before, and he who always hitherto found everything in his prosperous life go on castors, suddenly encountered all the excitement he needed. Life itself seemed dearer to him, when there was a cause now in which he had become eager to conquer, or even ready to die.

“Clifford!” said Lord Brentford, unable when they next met to restrain his raptures, “that teasing, aggravating, but most attractive girl’s countenance is quite extravagantly beautiful. It has become printed on my heart for ever! I like merry, joyous give-and-take people, who have a little ‘go’ in their conversation to keep me on the alert. Your pretty, quiet, demure little friend, Fanny, seems a mere specimen of every-day good-girlism—that sort of young lady who will marry

the first country curate with a white tie who asks her."

"If that be the case, I shall take orders to-morrow," exclaimed Captain Clifford, settling his neckcloth at the mirror. "All the good I ever felt in my nature is warmed into life by her presence. You are very malicious, Brentford, to alarm me into jealousy, for this is becoming quite a serious case with me, and only Moore's words can express my feelings,—

"Though brimm'd with blessings pure and rare,
Life's cup before me lay :
Unless thy love were mingled there,
I'd spurn the draught away."

"Well, Clifford, as the bravest of the brave should marry the fairest of the fair, you must be destined for that pretty Fanny. Keep to the regimental uniform in which you have so often distinguished yourself, and, after all, I shall back you yet against the whole curate world. Be another Othello, and tell her all the dangers you have passed in Africa. Exhibit to her also that book of beauty you brought from Kaffir-land. It will humble the fair Fanny by showing her the style of features you are accustomed to admire, each young lady with lips like those of a hippopotamus, and adorned like our English pigs with a nose-ring. You might stuff the Chancellor's wool-sack, by reaping their heads."

CHAPTER III.

“Talk not of seventy years as age ; in seven
I have seen more changes, down from monarchs to
The humblest individual under heaven,
Than might suffice a moderate century through.
I knew that nought was lasting, but now even
Change grows too changeable, without being new :
Nought’s permanent among the human race.”

BYRON.

MEANTIME, at Elan Castle, that strange and mournful scrutiny was carried on, the inevitable consequence of death, when every secret repository of the deceased must be rifled and inspected. Locks that no hand had touched for years, except that of the one only possessor ; letters long anxiously concealed from mortal eye, memorials of never-to-be-forgotten affection ; memorandums on confidential business ; secret hoards of gold ; untold debts that never were before suspected ; and private hopes or fears never previously confided to another,—all are dragged forth at last into the broad light of day. Those who have loved the dead then look around, with tears of dumb anguish, on this most melancholy disruption among desks, escritaires, and

boxes, ruthlessly emptied of all their contents, and thus betraying all their once carefully concealed mysteries.

Lord Tipperary's bureau contained endless very secret drawers, full of deeds, letters, and accounts, all carefully arranged; but as men are sometimes exceedingly whimsical about where a last will is deposited, the late Lord's would not let itself be found. The celebrated Lord Hailes' will was found behind a shutter, and that of Lord Tipperary, when at last discovered, had been placed in a hat-box which stood over his cabinet of china. This precious document was carefully examined by the London solicitor present, who declared that it displayed every mark of authenticity, bearing the testator's seal and signature on every sheet of parchment. How strange is that distinct individuality of character in each person's handwriting, on which the whole safety of every transaction in the mercantile country of great Britain depends! Lord Tipperary's autograph was duly identified by those who knew it as well as they knew his face. The date was more than a year previous to his death; but the contents filled every one present with blank amazement. A preliminary declaration appeared at the commencement, setting forth that Lord Tipperary took this opportunity of making a confession that he had long been secretly united to the Romish faith. He then bequeathed, with the

exception of a very trifling legacy to his daughter Lady Dora, all he possessed to the Popish Church, appointing as his trustees Dr. O'Grady, of St. Bridget's, and the Cardinal Archbishop of Munster.

Never was there a scene of greater consternation and amazement than that which now took place in the business-room at Elan Castle. As Mr. Farnley, the old family solicitor, dropped the sheets from his hand, powerless with astonishment, O'Hara, looking hot and red with fury, snatched them up and scanned their contents again and again, as if his very soul were being breathed into the parchment. He investigated the writing, the seal, the signature, the very paper-mark, with the keen eye of a hawk at its prey; but all in vain. Not a flaw appeared in the whole composition; yet O'Hara knew it was not, and could not be, Lord Tipperary's own actual will. A silence had ensued, solemn as at a funeral. Every eye now gazed at O'Hara, who said, in low, deep accents, while his pale lip quivered with overwhelming agitation, "This is a clever forgery! It is most artistically done, by some well-practised villain. I guess who. I know who. That is not the handwriting of the late Lord Tipperary."

O'Hara's eyes became more and more steadfastly riveted on the deed, till at length a dark cloud seemed to obscure his sight—his livid face became yet more livid—he breathed hard, and grinding the heel of his boot into the very floor, he threw down

the will with angry contempt, saying, "I am ready to swear that this is not the signature of my deceased benefactor, Lord Tipperary."

In the will, spurious or not, mention was especially made of an old, peculiarly embroidered pocket-book, containing bank-notes to the amount of 6,000*l*. This had been described as lying concealed in the private drawer of a certain desk, which the document distinctly indicated; but after a laborious search, no trace of this precious packet was discoverable, though the deceased Lord Tipperary's valet deposed to having seen the case very recently in his late master's possession. Several very valuable trinkets were also missing, and the whole house was aghast on hearing of so unaccountable a loss, while every servant naturally had that most uncomfortable feeling so common among a household when anything valuable is astray, as if each individual among them were suspected of having stolen it. They became all instantly on the defensive, and all very angry, while the valet in particular, who had a most unimpeachable character of many years' duration, felt as if every eye were turned especially on him with suspicion. He was furious!

In an incredibly short time three policemen from Dublin, who had immediately been sent for, arrived to search the house. Among these the head constable was a clever, loud, authoritative man, with enormous

whiskers that planted out his whole face as if he were looking over a hedge, and dark overshadowing eyebrows which looked like a mouse stuck over each eye. He proposed to begin by going over every inch of the house from garret to cellar, and no game at hide-and-seek was ever more keenly played. Not a drawer, a trunk, or an old pill-box was left uninvestigated. At length that most active and energetic of constables arrived, with the family-mob that followed him, at the small business-room usually occupied by O'Hara, and it was afterwards alleged, though no one observed it now, that he changed countenance visibly as the police took possession of the factor's own favourite sanctum, while his eye became anxiously fixed on a tin box marked "Brownlow Papers—Private."

"Your keys!" exclaimed the head-constable, turning his large bushy head partly round towards O'Hara, and making it obvious to all around that in his look and manner there appeared something suspicious. "Your keys! Why do you hesitate? Deliver them up instantly. I have no time to wait for any one's convenience."

O'Hara, startled and astonished by this rough address, gave by mistake the wrong key, on perceiving which, after it had been vainly tried, the constable angrily thrust the whole bunch back to him, saying, "No false keys! I am up to that trick! You are shuffling, Sir!"

The servants, accustomed to estimate Mr. O'Hara as a very great man, listened in horrified surprise to the tone thus assumed towards him ; but nothing spreads more easily or faster than suspicion, and in a moment every eye became insidiously fixed on the factor, while the new Lord Tipperary, himself irritated at the dénouement respecting his predecessor's will, was glad to see any one pointed out, on whose unfortunate head he might vent some of his pent-up irritability.

O'Hara's hand shook with suppressed excitement on observing the head-constable's harsh vigilant eye upon him, and that functionary's extremely suspicious manner, as he delivered up the right key. This was afterwards construed into a sure sign of guilt ! His face became pale also when the private box, containing the Brownlow papers, was opened ; and there were some letters, dated Torchester Abbey, which he made a last vigorous effort to preserve from examination, — certainly a most conclusive proof, as the constable audibly observed, that something in them was amiss.

“That lock of Mr. O'Hara's was so safe that Bramah or Chubb might be proud to have made it,” muttered the chief-constable loud enough to be heard. “We shall see what it concealed !”

The policeman then shuffled for several minutes in the box, over which he bent very low. At

length, after throwing out on the floor a medley of bonds, mortgages, notes-of-hand, deeds, old wills, and letters, all dated "Torchester Abbey," which seemed to relate, Mr. Farnley remarked, only to some infant daughters of a Sir Francis Brownlow, the constable suddenly sprung up, with a look of astonishment and of well-acted dismay, holding up, as a huntsman holds up a fox to his hounds, the embroidered pocket-book, and saying, "I thought so! I saw it in his face! There is the man who stole this book!"

With a loud cry of rage and agony, O'Hara rushed forward to clutch hold of the constable's collar, exclaiming, in accents shrill with excitement, "He placed it there! I saw him take the pocket-book from his sleeve! Vile juggler! you placed it there. Oh! believe me, all of you! I saw him! He placed it there!" O'Hara looked wildly round, and observing every eye gravely averted, or fixed upon him with still graver suspicion, he clenched his shut hands over his eyes with frantic vehemence, then threw his arms up to heaven, and solemnly exclaimed, in slow earnest accents, "God be my witness, he placed it there!"

"Don't swear!" said the constable, in an admonitory tone of superior morality, "I cannot suffer that."

"Do you take me for a common sailor in his cups?" asked O'Hara, in a tone of suppressed

fury, increased by the immovable calmness of his persecutor. "It seems to me to-day as if everybody in this world were going mad! Am I seriously accused or suspected of having secreted that pocket-book?"

Not a sound was heard throughout the room in reply. All present were over-awed by the anguish of O'Hara's look, by the agony of his loud despair, as he again and again exclaimed, in tones shrill with anguish, "He placed it there!"

A pause again ensued—a long and dreary pause. Was it an earthquake that made the floor seem as if it rocked beneath O'Hara's feet, as he glanced feverishly round on every downcast face? At length the strong man gave way, and sinking down helplessly on a chair, he bent his head almost to his knees, and groaned aloud. He saw that now any sympathy felt for him was mingled with indignant condemnation; therefore it was not worth accepting. He spurned at the very thought of asking any compassion, yet, seeing Lord Tipperary about silently to withdraw, he called him back in a tone of imperative entreaty, which admitted of no dispute, saying, in accents of deep and agonized despair, "My Lord! I ask nothing for myself!—Nothing! A second time in my miserable existence I am ruined by a cruel conspiracy; and let life itself be the forfeit, if it must be so! Again

I seem a mere foot-ball of Fate, kicked from every strong-hold of credit or of comfort——”

“Blame not fate, but blame the gin-palace,” muttered the constable in an under tone, audible, nevertheless, to many. “I am told Mr. O’Hara has always been like the cat thrown from a garret, sure to fall on his feet, and run into good quarters again. He knows how to fall easy, for he has done it often, and has a lucky way of coming down. He’ll not take to the bottom of the horse-pond yet, till the gin has given him a few more falls. I’ll back Mr. O’Hara for escaping by hook, or by very crooked means, from any given number of scrapes!”

“Villain! you lie!” exclaimed O’Hara, starting from his seat. “No man has undeservedly suffered more unpitied misfortunes than myself, and may a speedy death now be their welcome termination! Oh! how welcome! I could be a calm spectator of my own death, having no hopes left for this world, and no fears for another; but, Lord Tipperary, I have sacred duties of affection that must be remembered. My poor wife will scarcely survive this calamity, and with respect to those two girls under my own guardianship ——”

“Lord Tipperary!” interrupted the policeman who held O’Hara in custody, “we can only listen to the prisoner in a court of law. He is an artful dodger, my Lord, who could impose on the Chief-

Justice himself! The blackest crime which this man has committed is the stealing of those children, and there are persons here ready to prove that his supposed wards are entitled to very large fortunes, which he would dishonestly embezzle. They are legally the wards of ——, of one who is coming here to-morrow, determined to claim them. No mortal can interfere with his rights.”

O'Hara, on hearing these words, sank again upon his seat in pallid dismay, while the constable whispered to all who would listen, “Very drunk indeed! very!”

Lord Tipperary, who hated “scenes,” except on the stage, took this opportunity to escape, and he never rested or looked round till safely sheltered in his own private sitting-room, determined, while he lived, not to see the agonized face of that suspected criminal again. It really was too shocking! The remembrance perfectly haunted him even after he had joined his two entertaining friends at night in the smoking-room. There the newly-endowed peer took several meditative whiffs of his cigar, and then impatiently laid it down, saying, with a very long-drawn yawn, “We have had a horrid business here to-day! A most intolerable bore!”

“Yes!” answered Lord Brentford, absently. “You mean the funeral. Those affairs always come off heavily.”

“By no means! That funeral is the best thing that has happened to me during my natural life. No! Old Tipperary does not deserve the hundredth part of a sigh from me,—selfish old miser! No! It is about the factor. He was entrusted by that old dotard, my predecessor, with uncounted gold, and turns out to be a thief, a swindler, a ——, not exactly a house-breaker, but a desk-breaker. The most finished scoundrel in the three kingdoms, and that is a wide word! In short, the gallows would be much too good for O’Hara!”

“O’Hara!!” exclaimed Captain Clifford incredulously. He had one of those finer natures, very slow to take up an evil impression against any one, and stoutly resisted doing so now. “What a different account I heard of him to-day, from a young inmate of his own house who knows him well!—from one whose opinion upon any subject I should be glad to take.”

“O’Hara is in custody for robbing me of £6,000,” replied Lord Tipperary very drily, for he was one of those who consider it an insult, when anything he says is doubted. “A more thorough-paced rascal does not live.”

Captain Clifford looked at Lord Brentford in consternation, but still unconvinced, after which he told Lord Tipperary as much as he chose to communicate of the pleasant adventures he and Lord Brentford had enjoyed lately in meeting with

Theresa and Fanny. The Captain cast a veil, however, over his opinion of their superlative attractions, not wishing to awaken Lord Tipperary's curiosity on that subject, and desiring to hoard up for himself alone every recollection and every thought connected with Isle Elan.

"As for the factor's wife, who is very highly spoken of," continued Lord Tipperary, lighting a second cigar, "and his nieces, or wards, whatever they are, this is of course an awkward affair for them. O'Hara will be hanged, or at least he ought to be, and O'Grady tells me he has been already tried in Middlesex for a most atrocious murder! The servants unluckily, after the discovery, brought his truly respectable wife back here. It was absurd, as bad news travels always too fast without sending it express. Ladies are a bore on all occasions of excitement. Mrs. O'Hara, unfortunate woman! and the two wards, will be sure all to go off in hysterics, and I am tired of scenes leading to sal volatile and hartshorn."

"Can nothing be done to avert so much distress?" asked Captain Clifford, anxiously. "Should O'Hara prove innocent—which is most probable—only think how shocking it would be, if his wards suffered a long night of suspense and misery on his account."

"There is no doubt of his guilt!" interrupted Lord Tipperary, obstinately; "there cannot be!"

“But there is great doubt in my mind,” interrupted Captain Clifford, earnestly; and the flash of intelligence that lighted up his eyes was superb. “If you heard those amiable girls speak of O’Hara, you never would or could believe a word against him. His truly excellent wife too! There must be some dreadful mistake. Let us go to the room where he is imprisoned!”

“Excuse me! I saw and heard enough for ten years, or twenty, to come. My nerves have not yet recovered the scene that took place; nor will they, till the day after to-morrow,” replied Lord Tipperary, lighting another cigar. “That fellow is an actor in tragedy equal to Kean.”

“But are you sure it was acting?” persevered Captain Clifford, anxiously. “Think what a broken-hearted woman his excellent wife will be—think of those interesting girls, his wards, who are so gratefully attached to him.”

“There are two sides to that subject, for O’Grady tells me that their pretended guardian has defrauded them immensely,” answered Lord Tipperary, with a superior smile. “He tells me that they are very well born, and that they really are, moreover, very good-looking girls.”

“Good-looking!!” exclaimed Lord Brentford, quite thrown off his guard by enthusiasm; “you may travel round the world with a lantern and back again, before you find the equal of either.

Their eyes so full of light and life, their step so elastic, their spirits so buoyant, their whole character and conversation so original and picturesque. Their manner has the fearlessness of perfect and most delightful *naïveté*, so frank and open-hearted, while both have a quickness of intellect in conversation not to be surpassed."

"Indeed! I must get a glimpse of them tomorrow; but defend me from another scene with the old fellow himself," answered Lord Tipperary, pouring himself out a glass of wine, and meditatively sipping it. "I am told he drinks, and that is an incurable fault which leads to all others; but here is a toast,—'Success to every style of life, the honester, the better,—and the soberer.'"

"Gin in England and whiskey in Ireland are the bane of all mankind," observed Captain Clifford, tossing off his bumper of port. "Gin used to be called 'hell-broth,' and who would not pity those who are its slaves for time—its victims for eternity?"

"Yes! I would not have believed O'Hara capable of dishonesty, had he been a sober man habitually, but the constable—an odd-looking fellow, all whiskers and eye-brows—whispered to me that O'Hara was at the very moment quite drunk, and he did look very excited!"

"No wonder!" exclaimed Captain Clifford. "If I found myself unjustly accused of a shabby mean

crime like theft, should I not instantly knock everybody down, especially the policeman, and show every other symptom of insanity. I must see poor Mrs. O'Hara this very evening, if possible, and her unspeakably interesting wards. Poor girls! How they will suffer! for, whatever O'Hara is, he has been very kind to them."

"Let me go with you," said Lord Tipperary, silyly. "Nothing will suit me better than to sympathize with two very pretty young girls. The more sympathy they need, the better. Now give me an accurate photographic description of both?"

"Who can describe what is indescribable?" replied Captain Clifford, evasively. "Besides, I can think of nothing but their agonizing distress."

"I hate incomprehensible answers," observed Lord Tipperary, laughing; "and, Clifford, seeing you so shy of portrait-painting, my curiosity is redoubled; therefore let us go together, to offer the young ladies our services."

"Would it not be obtrusive in the first shock of their calamity?" objected Lord Brentford. "No one can be more eager than I am to console poor Mrs. O'Hara as well as her young companions, but till some legal inquiry is made, we can do nothing."

"We may tell her," interposed Captain Clifford, warmly, "that no one can believe in O'Hara's guilt."

“But I do!” interrupted Lord Tipperary, pertinaciously. “I am not blinded by partiality to his good worthy wife, or to the rather pretty wards; and what has their merit to do with O’Hara’s guilt? Breach of trust, stealing in a dwelling-house, petty larceny, and intoxication!—he ought to be hanged twice over!”

Lord Tipperary sipped his wine with an obstinately determined look, and Captain Clifford buried all his thoughts respecting Mrs. O’Hara and her wards in the deepest depths of his own mind; resolved, however, not to retire for the night, until he had ascertained what his utmost efforts could do to give them the consolation they must so greatly need. Lord Brentford, who guessed his cousin’s good intention, was equally resolute to second all his endeavours; but they both, as by mutual consent, said less than they thought.

“I am constantly looking into the bottom of that well where Truth lies,” whispered Captain Clifford to his cousin, when the smoking party broke up; “and I have an unaccountable conviction, amounting to clairvoyance, that this horrid affair about Mr. O’Hara will all turn out a cruel mistake.”

“Then it is a mistake that will hang O’Hara,” exclaimed Lord Tipperary in a fierce voice; “I have not the hundredth part of a doubt that he is guilty! That clever constable has found innu-

merable jewel-cases, the contents of which are absent without leave, and he tells me that there never was a more guilty air than O'Hara's, when asked if he knew anything of them. His cheek and lip became bloodless, and he looked quite fit to commit either suicide or murder on the spot. The policeman himself is afraid to approach O'Hara. Depend upon it this is a bad case."

"I depend upon nothing till it be proved."

"But," continued Lord Tipperary, becoming more and more irritated, "his guilt is an almost ascertained fact!"

"Well, then! I never believe in facts! I sometimes believe in theories, but never in facts,—never! Tipperary, you look me through now, as if you were an Old Bailey counsel cross-examining a thief's witness, but I maintain that O'Hara is innocent, till proved to be guilty," exclaimed Captain Clifford, with generous obstinacy. "Innocence under a false accusation looks very like guilt. But you are quite ferocious against that poor man, Tipperary."

"And you are a Red-cross knight in defence of this disreputable and most dishonest factor; or shall I rather accuse you of admiring the very pretty wards? Whoever those girls are, with such a guardian, they are no fit acquaintances for us; therefore, let me advise you, if in danger of liking either, to 'pluck such a girl from your memory,

though your very heart may be at the root.' Now, my good cousin, do not, pray, 'look as if you would knock me into the middle of next week for saying so, or the week after,'—

“Shall a woman's virtues move
Me to perish for her love?
Or her well deservings, known,
Make me quite forget my own?
Be she fairer than the day,
Or the flow'ry meads in May,
If she be not so to me,
What care I how fair she be.”

While Lord Tipperary audibly hummed these words, Captain Clifford became gravely silent, and so deep a shadow of thought gathered over his handsome countenance, that their convivial host wished he would be less serious, and more like his usual diverting self, as nothing became more delightfully amusing than “Clifford at his best.” There was in his conversation generally a captivating singularity, and his style of narrating a story was very dramatic, without ever becoming theatrical. If he told an anecdote, every intonation and attitude of the various parties he described was represented to the life, so that Monsieur Alexandre might have envied him his powers of mimicry. Not a look or a tone was ever forgotten, and yet his whole representation sprung from a perfectly unstudied impulse of natural imitativeness. He was, in short, to the continual amuse-

ment of his friends, when in spirits, a mimic, a ventriloquist, a conjuror, a musician, an actor of all work, and a first-rate singer; but the real depth and strength of his character were utterly unfathomable to those daily associates with whom he showed only the sparkling surface. Nothing escaped Captain Clifford's observation, nor his memory; and he could draw a pen and ink sketch, years afterwards, of scenes he had once witnessed or shared in.

When Lord Tipperary sat down to write his letters that evening, he found the blotting-book and letter-paper scrawled over with endless representations of a smiling young girl, wearing a very broad-brimmed hat, and adorned with very long ringlets. Sometimes the incognita was pictured laughingly playing with a large shaggy dog, sometimes arm-in-arm with a sister, and on one occasion standing with a prodigious bouquet of flowers, while an unmistakeable likeness of the gallant captain himself knelt at her feet.

"It is not come to that yet, I trust!" said Lord Tipperary, slyly pointing out the sketch to Lord Brentford, while Captain Clifford waited with desperate patience to snatch the sketch out of their satirical hands; "you should at least ascertain what name the young lady has, Clifford, before offering her the use of your own."

"My good friend! in the comedy of life which

we are all acting, that speech is not set down for you, but for some cautious old square-toes of an uncle or guardian," answered Captain Clifford, jestingly. "A great mind like mine is very soon made up, and I have some hopes that the story of those girls has a mystery in it which would complete the charm of knowing them. O'Grady promised, on my liberating him from our custody, that he would put me up to some good old-fashioned romance of the pre-Raphaelite school relating to them. I have already elected myself the hero."

"Keep to Anne Brownlow, with all her follies and affectations, rather than make such a plunge in the dark, Clifford," exclaimed Lord Tipperary, impressively. "The fair Anne has lately been your greatest admirer among the ten thousand who are setting their best little bonnets at you. I am credibly told, that when Anne Brownlow heard of your regiment being under orders for the East, she threw herself and bonnet, in an agony of grief, on the nearest ottoman."

"To do her justice, Anne, who has no more heart than a pumpkin, is quite incapable of so much emotion about anything. 'All giggle, blush,—half-pertness, and half-pout,' there is some deficiency in the girl, and, as we say in Scotland, she always wants two-pence to the shilling! I know as well as if it were printed on the sky that she is quite indifferent to me. Even on the

most affecting occasions, when a tear is in her eye, a smile is on her lip. I have seen Anne looking so silly, sometimes, when wriggling most painfully on the horns of a dilemma, whether to laugh or to cry, and always relapsing into that imbecile smile!"

"Well!" said Lord Brentford, yawning, "I equally abhor companions who are in the pathetic vein, or those who bore one with jocularities. There shall be no court jesters when I am king. It is so fatiguing to watch constantly for people's witticisms, and to get up an impromptu laugh, while struggling in vain to see the point of a joke, if any point there be."

"For my own part," observed Captain Clifford, "I am a most superior person, but the least in the world of a gossip, and I should dearly like to set Anne Brownlow at these young incognitas, and to see her ferret out their whole history and antecedents. No pointer in pursuit of game could better follow a track. If they ever meet, I hope to be fourth in the quartette! I can think of nothing now but that lovely Fanny's distress about her guardian.

'I sigh to think how soon that brow
 In grief may lose its ev'ry ray,
 And that light heart, so joyous now,
 Almost forget it once was gay.'

CHAPTER IV.

“ Who does the best his circumstance allows
Does well, acts nobly—angels could no more.”

YOUNG.

WHEN O'Hara, condemned in the stern looks of all around, was locked up alone, in a well-secured room, he felt as if in an oppressive dream, as if a fearful night-mare were on him, not allowing a single connected thought. In the heavy gloom, his very life-springs seemed suspended, while, nevertheless, he had an intense consciousness of misery, and gradually his aspect became like that of one risen from the dead, or just descending into the grave.

By degrees, the whole progress of events formed themselves into a sort of recollection, and dimly, as through a fog, the recent scene became visible to his mind; while the figure most prominent there, was that of the police constable, whose conduct and language had been throughout so unaccountably adverse to himself. It was surely very mysterious how that stranger had laboured to criminate him! What could have made him

an enemy? O'Hara tried to recal his look and voice, but in the recent hurry and confusion, these had left no very distinct impression. He retained merely a vague recollection of the man's immeasurable whiskers, and of those bushy eye-brows overhanging, so that scarcely an inch of his real face remained visible beneath a hat which had seemed immovably planted on his head. The constable's eager determination to get hold of O'Hara's papers and to search his desk now occurred very prominently to his memory, and the longer the irritated prisoner reflected, the more insufferable his thoughts became. The room seemed to become too small, as he paced up and down like a caged lion, and his step grew more and more hurried, as if he could escape from himself by the rapidity of unceasing motion.

In his stormy cogitations, the only fault of which O'Hara could accuse his own conscience was, occasional, but not very frequent, intoxication! That insidious vice never had become quite habitual, but the factor having been seen once or twice in that state, his reputation, of course, thereby considerably suffered. The neighbours and servants never would have taken up an evil report so easily against him, had it not been previously whispered among them that, unfortunately, there had been some undeniable transgressions of sobriety on the part of O'Hara, and that, like Tam

O'Shanter, he sometimes, not often, was "No' just fou, but unco' canty."

The factor, thus imprisoned and alone, felt in all its bitterness how dear was the penalty he paid now for his occasional indulgence, and as he thought of poor Susan sharing his ruin, of his wards probably falling now into the grasp of their worst enemy, O'Hara ground his teeth with agony, and felt in all the bitterness of self-reproach, that there lived not a being on the wide earth who had more acute reason to upbraid himself for his own fall. Had he been the justly respected husband of that exemplary Susan, might he not now have boldly appealed to his long-known, unimpeachable character, for an acquittal from Lord Tipperary; and in such a case, many neighbours would have testified that, still, as in the first few years of his married life, his every word, his every action, his very looks, had been, like his own poor Susan's, beyond all criticism, irreproachable; but, alas! who did not of late consider it a notorious fact that O'Hara had been vulnerable to the one temptation of drinking, and might be equally yielding to other and worse propensities!

While O'Hara was fiercely pacing up and down, like a hyena in his cage, he accidentally approached a table near the window, on which stood several glasses and bottles, as if placed there by accident. One of these was filled to the very muzzle with

gin! O'Hara stood almost panic-struck for a moment at so totally unexpected an apparition, at discovering this appeal to his weak side, which seemed to him unaccountable in a room not usually inhabited; and suddenly there darted into his now wide-awake mind, a dark, dim suspicion that here was a deliberate trap laid for him by some enemy.

Nevertheless, there was the power of obtaining temporary oblivion placed within his grasp. He could now forget in a moment all the intolerable miseries that baited and maddened him! He had but to drink the contents of that bottle, and for some hours all would be forgotten in a delirium of frenzied excitement. Who can describe the fierce struggle that ensued within O'Hara's mind, when he tried to battle with his intense craving to drown all thought! His eyes glared with fierce desire, his parched lips quivered, his hand trembled, his heart beat almost aloud, as he clutched the enticing bottle in his grasp, exclaiming between his clenched teeth—"Yes! Patrick O'Hara! Ruin and perdition for ever and ever are here before you; a drunkard's end, and a malefactor's grave. One draught of this, and my fate is sealed! Not such were the blessings that my own Susan's daily prayers should have drawn down on her husband's head! Could my worst enemy injure me more than I have injured myself? Shall I drink

as a toast now to my own destruction, body, soul, and reputation? No!—for Susan's sake, No!"

With a sudden impulse of almost frantic resolution O'Hara strode to the window, dashed out a pane of glass with his clenched fist, threw the bottle vehemently out, watched its whirling progress in falling, saw it shivered into a thousand fragments on the gravel underneath, and then laughed with almost delirious joy, exclaiming,—

“ I have conquered! The struggle is over! Let my enemy now do his worst! Susan! Susan! your name is my talisman! May it be so always! Unless I become my own enemy, no other can triumph over me! Now the victory is gained! Even O'Grady cannot reach me, if I am true to myself! That man—that wicked perverter of my whole existence!” —

At this moment O'Hara observed that the lock of his door became cautiously turned. It was then slowly pushed open, and a head appeared. That head displayed the large whiskers and beetling eyebrows of the constable, who glanced first at the table. Seeing that the bottle of gin had been removed, his grim countenance assumed a look of more complacency; his expression acquired an air of confident success, and he entered, leaving the door ajar, standing behind which several persons were half concealed.

At this moment a sudden idea shot into the

clever head of O'Hara. He would pretend to be drunk, so as to throw the enemy off his guard, and thus, perhaps, discover the constable's intentions. Instantly casting himself down on the only seat, O'Hara, who knew but too well what was the aspect of intoxication, imitated one of its worst stages to the very life, singing little snatches of songs, and muttering to himself with a well-acted look of the most abject idiocy. The policeman, perceiving this, cautiously entered, still buttoned up, as usual, to the very chin. Even his enormous frieze coat might have intimidated any ordinary prisoner; and his face was buried in whiskers, but wearing an expression of cautious satisfaction as he said, approaching O'Hara—

“ Well, Sir! how do you do?”

“ I shall not tell you or any man how I do!” muttered O'Hara, in very tipsy accents; “ I am no worse and no better than other people!”

“ Don't be downcast, Sir!—all may go right yet, though you are come to a sad fix now! Friends can help you, if you will only agree to help yourself. I have been sent with a proposal; agree to that, and you shall be set at liberty to-night.”

O'Hara looked more intoxicated than before, and seemed totally unable to articulate; but he gave a drunken hiccup, intimating attention. His acting was inimitable, and the policeman felt

sure of his man ; therefore he proceeded with his proposition, speaking to O'Hara in a slow, distinct, impressive whisper.

“ Before many minutes can elapse you will be a handcuffed prisoner, beyond all hope of escape. On one condition I could obtain your instant liberty.”

“ How ? ” exclaimed O'Hara, springing bolt upright on his feet, with a sudden vehemence that made the constable start back aghast, and look anxiously round to his assistants at the door. He felt intimidated to find the prisoner's understanding so much more acute than had been expected ; but looking again at O'Hara's face, distorted with agitation, he recovered himself, saying, in a bland insinuating voice—

“ You, Mr. O'Hara, and you only, have the master-key to a mystery respecting the origin of those girls, long under your guardianship. Are they not the daughters of Sir Francis Brownlow ? Do not attempt to deny that ! But if you will bring forward all the papers and the persons necessary to prove it, so that the Cardinal of Munster, appointed guardian by their father's will, shall obtain legal custody of their persons and property, the reward shall be,—what will keep you in brandy and cigars for the rest of your days.”

“ Never ! never !—not for a million of worlds ! ” exclaimed O'Hara, vehemently, while his whole

frame trembled like a leaf in the blast; "who says that any mystery is here? There is one bright speck in the long dark web of my own miserable existence, and it is what I have been able to do for those girls. There is but one hope of happiness left to me here or hereafter, and it rests on the prayers offered up for me and for them by their dying mother! Oh! if an angel from earth can look back when she has become an angel in heaven, let that mother see, that though I have betrayed myself to misery by forgetting her advice, I never can betray those girls to their enemies. Never! never!"

There was a sort of savage grandeur in the excited tone and vehement manner of O'Hara, as he almost fiercely uttered these words, most impressive, and almost intimidating. The depth and sincerity of his emotion were overwhelming, while his eyes became fastened on the constable with almost maniacal intensity. By degrees O'Hara's expression changed to one of rapidly increasing perplexity and surprise. The policeman shrank before those blazing eyes. They seemed to look through him, and he was gradually escaping towards the door, where a posse of constables stood, when the prisoner suddenly rushed almost madly forward and sprang upon him, exclaiming, in a loud, wild, shrieking voice—

"It is he!—it is O'Grady! Stop him! stop

him! Oh! stop him! Let me trample the wretch to atoms like an insect that has stung me!"

O'Hara's voice became more and more shrill from the extremity of his eagerness, while he continued to exclaim, in accents that became hoarse in their fierce excitement—

"Stop that man! it is O'Grady! the villain who planned my ruin!—the wretch who commits every crime under heaven, and calls it religion! He wears a thousand disguises—a policeman to-day, a bricklayer to-morrow. He it is who has forged Lord Tipperary's will! he who rifled the pocket-book of its contents! Let me tear the very flesh from his bones! Let me gibbet him on the nearest tree!"

"You seem both resolved that the gallows shall not be robbed of their due," said Lord Tipperary, who had been attracted down stairs by the noise. "How very mad the poor creature looks! He will do a mischief to himself or others. The prisoner should be hand-cuffed. That almost delirious fierceness shows a man capable of any crime!"

"Yes!" whispered the constable, confidentially; "you should leave neither a rope nor a razor within his reach. The drunken rage Mr. O'Hara is in now, blind, you see, with insane fury, shows how easily that man might become a murderer as well as a forger. I feel half afraid of the

villain myself, though fear and I have long been strangers.”

When O'Hara was again locked up in the room alone, his whole spirit seemed to have undergone a collapse; while every quivering nerve of his body appeared to suffer under a separate and most painful sensitiveness. In the tempest and hurricane of agonized rage, O'Hara could more easily have leaped down any precipice, or rushed into any raging flame, than have controlled himself into apparent calmness, though fully conscious of the evil inferences to which his haggard and almost ghastly excitement gave rise. A thousand agonizing thoughts rioted fiercely through his burning soul; but as the shades of night closed heavily around the solitary prisoner, his thoughts became exceedingly solemn, for O'Hara's own heart and conscience now told him how sadly his vice of occasional intoxication confirmed every suspicion against him; and he told himself over and over again that all but the faithful Susan would believe the story of his disgrace.

The bell of an adjoining steeple tolled midnight, but O'Hara did not even attempt to sleep. Wearily he paced up and down his narrow prison, lost in bitter, heart-sunk thought, when suddenly his attention was attracted by a light footstep hastily approaching; a low whisper became audible behind the door; it was hurriedly unlocked; and the next

moment O'Hara found himself clasped in the arms of his wife, who sobbed convulsively on his shoulder. Susan's tears were those of a trusting woman, in sympathy for one dear as her own soul, who had been ruined, she firmly believed, by a cruel injustice. Hers was the deep commiseration of a devoted wife, convinced that her husband was falsely accused, yet conscious how frightfully circumstances and appearances told against him. She riveted her arms around O'Hara, as if to shield him from every sorrow, and wept without control.

At Elan Castle that night every door was closed, every shutter barred, no lamp shone in the silent hall, and no moon lighted up the heavens, when a group of four individuals, one man, followed by three females rolled up in cloaks, quietly stole out by a back entrance, and walked hurriedly towards the railway-station, only half-a-mile off. Not a word was spoken by the retreating fugitives as they hurried darkly onwards in the gloom, without once stopping to look behind, and they reached the platform at Tipperary precisely as the last bell sounded for starting.

With anxious haste the party secured tickets, plunged into a vacant carriage, and were instantly whirled off. To the clerk at the station it seemed almost incredible that four persons, apparently of good position, could be serious in asking for third-class tickets. Their voice and manner were

very unlike people obliged to travel in such pauper style, and the railway-official privately made some bitter professional reflections on the meanness of those who place themselves among travellers of inferior rank, merely to save expense. He thought it despicable, and threw a world of indignant contempt into his manner of tossing the tickets to those third-class applicants, whom he had thought first-class at least. The evident endeavour of this party to avoid his notice only awakened it the more, and he wondered to perceive that they carried no baggage except a small desk, which the gentleman clasped anxiously in his arms, and would not trust even to the railway porter for a moment.

The smoke of that express-train was not yet out of sight, and the whistle continued still audible, when several persons rushed into the station, vociferously exclaiming that a culprit had escaped in one of those carriages, accompanied by his wife and two wards. Vainly were signals made to recal the whirling train, and vainly was the long arm of the electric telegraph tried afterwards to recapture them. The four fugitives, on arriving at a very obscure station, about thirty miles off, had left their seats, and no trace remained of where they were concealed.

“So much the better!” exclaimed Captain Clifford, in a tone of heartfelt pleasure, when after-

wards told of this unexpected escape. "My only regret is, not to have had any opportunity to express my sympathy with poor Mrs. O'Hara and her young companions. Though it would have been very wrong for me to assist O'Hara in eluding a trial, yet I am thankful that he has got away, guilty, or not guilty."

"Guilty, upon my honour!" interposed Lord Tipperary, imperatively. "My *ci-devant* factor is the greatest rascal un-hung, and he shall not remain un-hung long. The police must spare no effort to retake him. The villain! he might hunt at Melton for a whole season on my 6,000*l.*!"

"For my own part," said Captain Clifford, generously, "I shall neither rest nor sleep till I can discover some way of serving those who accompany him. These poor girls may be plunged into real, even frightful privations. At the very worst, however, they are better off than if pillaged, besides being imprisoned for ever, by pretended guardians among the Jesuits at St. Bridget's. May a kind Providence shield them both from the worst and most irremediable of all calamities!"

"Clifford! whatever you do to discover and to assist Mrs. O'Hara, let me share in the enterprise," added Lord Brentford, warmly. "I dare not name what I would gladly give to rescue them from the smallest difficulty."

CHAPTER V.

“Who can express that fear
When the heart longs to know what it is death to hear!”
MOORE.

AS a reservoir of concealment for the unfortunate or the guilty, there is no place like London. There the largest number of persons ever collected together in any city on earth exists, and the world contains not poorer lodgings than the poorest in its nameless haunts of wretchedness. There, within sight and hearing of all that is luxurious and splendid in wealthy enjoyment, may be seen, not a hundred yards off, gaunt poverty and wasting starvation in a degree of most abject misery scarcely to be credited.

Within a small, close, dark room, if room it might be called, scanty of furniture, and still more scanty of air, sat Patrick O'Hara, beside a fireless grate, plunged in gloomy abstraction. He had arrived here the night before, and had looked zealously out all day in vain for some employment, anything to keep those around him from want, “to drive the wolf from the door;” but every heart had

of course been closed against a miscellaneous man unable to produce any testimonials, and he had returned to this wretched home overwhelmed with apprehensions.

“My own good, best of Susans! to your courage and ingenuity, unassisted and alone, I owe my escape from an undeserved and most ignominious death,” he said, clasping the hand of his trembling and shivering wife in his own, and speaking with a melancholy tenderness such as no voice could express like his. “My one evil propensity has sunk me as low as a man can sink and live. Oh! shall I be able now to struggle along the right road, rendering my future life a comfort to you and these dear girls, or must it continue, as it might at last become, a curse to you all?”

“My husband! my own dear Patrick!” replied Susan, deeply moved, while tears were brimming into her eyes, “my devoted love to you is as much for adversity as for our happier days, and could survive any trial. Be true to yourself now, and abandon for ever that one evil which has benighted your whole existence, and which places you within the grasp of O’Grady himself. Be sober, dear Patrick, and then, indeed, we may ‘hope to the end.’”

“If I betray you or these girls by my vicious propensity, then an evil demon might disdain to become such a wretch,” exclaimed O’Hara,

earnestly ; “ yet, can I always refrain? Might I not as well attempt to pluck the sun out of the firmament, as to cure myself entirely? The craving!—the wolfish craving!—who can tell till they have suffered it, what that is ; but Susan, if ever your husband seems likely to relapse, shut me up as a lunatic,—or put me to death, for that would be a mercy compared with the horrors I suffer sometimes now. Madness, itself, is not so fearful as that horrid, horrid delirium when steps appear to be pursuing me, faces to be looking out of the ground at me, monsters to be gazing at me from above, hideous noises ringing in my ears,—then, give my wretched soul oblivion only for ten minutes, and the world contains nothing I would take in exchange.”

“ Nothing? ” asked Susan, in a tone of sorrowful and very gentle remonstrance. “ My own dear husband must not say so, when I claim his remembrance. Surely, Patrick, you never wish to forget the wife who would willingly die to serve you.”

“ Might I not well wish to forget, that through my means your youth is blighted, Susan ; your fortune squandered ; your uncomplaining heart broken? Can I look at your eyes dimmed with tears, at your cheek faded with anguish, at your form shrunk into premature age? Can I see you homeless and desolate, blown about from place to place like a leaf in autumn by every wind, and not feel an

agony of self-reproach, to which death itself would be but a trifle. Time has not made those furrows on your sweet face, my own Susan ; but sorrow and shame. Oh ! that I had yet to be born ! oh ! that some one would bury me ! ” exclaimed O’Hara, in a tone of the fiercest agony, and clasping his hands above his head, while he fiercely stamped his foot in a paroxysm of self-reproach. “ I envy none but the silent tenants of the tomb ! Give me but rest—rest for ever and ever. My evil habits seem still an iron chain that cannot be broken. If I do not hurry on the welcome arrival of my last hour, it is for your sake, Susan. I ought to be aloof from every kind and gentle tie,—alone in my degradation, like a Pariah in the desert, ‘ any-where, any-where out of the world.’ I long only to place myself at rest, now, beneath the turf, in silence and oblivion.”

“ You can never attain to oblivion,” answered Susan, in a low voice of reverential awe. “ Patrick ! you have received the solemn gift of life, and it cannot be parted with. Ages on ages must roll on for ever and ever and ever, yet you cannot, cannot cease to exist. Whether in endless happiness, or in endless and intolerable misery our eternity be passed, depends on how we live a few short years and how we die. Think, Patrick ; oh ! think of that. The mountains may fall on us and the hills may cover us, but we cannot forget or be forgotten. Bear all,

then,—bear anything, everything for a very brief period, and still thank God for ordering our affairs, not as you wish, but as He knows to be in the long run of eternity best. Live on, and hope on. I can endure undespairingly while we endure together; and indeed, Patrick, love such as mine for my own dear husband, can scarcely be entirely satisfied without suffering for him.”

“ My kind, generous Susan! Your devotion to so bad a husband is a perfect fanaticism!” said O’Hara, laying his hand on her arm with a momentary gleam of cheerfulness which instantly passed away. “ There are no circumstances in which I can now connect the idea of happiness with existence. None! Once I had hope; but what human spirit can withstand my malignant destiny? My whole life has been one theatre of calamity. Even now, am I not O’Grady’s mark for the utmost vigilance of cruelty? How can mortal man escape utter ruin, haunted by an enemy such as mine, who has ground down my very heart-strings and blasted my good name, my fortune, my happiness, my all! What are the most ingenious inventions of cruelty compared to his? No one will assist me now. I possess not a friend on the visible earth. They all have melted like a mist away. Hereafter my name must for ever be execrated wherever it is known, and no mortal will believe in my innocence.”

“ But I know it, and God sees it !” interrupted his gentle wife, in a mild tone of hopeful firmness, while she affectionately pressed his arm. “ You have a worse enemy than O’Grady to fear, Patrick. Keep from the gin-palaces, and all may yet go well. Never again betray yourself to destruction, and no one else can entirely ruin us. My own dear husband ! trust in the affection of your faithful wife, as well as in the goodness of a merciful Providence, and let us unite in preserving those dear girls from the many serious difficulties that surround them. Even their short acquaintance with those young men of rank and fashion, Lord Tipperary’s friends, might have been fatal to their happiness, and may have its dangers yet. The disparity of their apparent position in life, rendered it impossible that those strangers could intend anything more than to beguile an idle hour with our dear and precious girls ; therefore I, as an adopted mother, and you as a guardian, were bound to discourage, as we did, all intimacy.”

“ Ah ! Susan ! If there be a chord of agony more excruciating than any other in my battered and miserable heart, it is when I think of my wards — of what they were born to, of their deplorable poverty now, and of the angel-mother who entrusted them to my care. It is fearful, all ! I swore by everything that is tremendous, on earth or in heaven, to protect those girls from O’Grady’s

snares ; yet, who can tell how soon they may both now fall into his power ! I shall never rest till that rascal is hanged for the murder of their father : and should I fail, then—then, many a desperate wretch, less miserable than I, has found rest in the bottom of the Serpentine, and why should not Patrick O'Hara ? ”

Susan shudderingly clasped her hands over her ears, fixing her stony, tearless eyes on O'Hara's almost maniacal countenance. Her thoughts became confused in a sort of breathless horror, and as he despondingly left the room, all within her thoughts became a chaos of grief and apprehension. She then sank silently on her knees in solitude, and prayed with almost unmitigated anguish for consolation, and for better feelings to arise in O'Hara, that miserable, that terrifying, and yet that much-loved husband. No faults of his could render him otherwise than dear to Susan ; and few could have seen the deep, devoted, trusting attachment of his pious, excellent wife, without for her sake wishing him well.

The beautiful energy of woman's nature, cheerfully to sustain, for the sake of those she loves, all the weight of adversity, was more and more exercised by Susan and by her two beloved young companions, as all three were destined now for the first time in their lives to feel the sting of actual pinching poverty. They obtained a very scanty sub-

sistence by needle-work ; they toiled night and day with unconquerable diligence, and they only ventured out for air under the protection of O'Hara, after the night had closed in impenetrable darkness, so as apparently to prevent the possibility of recognition. O'Hara, with his tattered hat slouched over his face in the gloomy streets, yet felt a nervous apprehension of being traced by those priestly foes, whose power seemed to extend through all space, and whose practised penetration can detect any disguise.

O'Hara, conscious that no device would be spared to starve, terrify, or even bribe him into betraying his two young wards to the unsafe custody of O'Grady, felt not merely resolute to protect them, in reverence for the memory of his benefactress, great as that reverence was, but he became, perhaps, more intensely eager on the subject from bitter hatred to O'Grady, the deadliest and the most successful of enemies.

“ My dear young wards ! ” he said one day, when they were all hastening home from a twilight walk, “ even in a prison, or in a lunatic asylum, you would have more safety, liberty, and comfort than in the convent where O'Grady claims a legal power to take you, if we are discovered.”

“ The starving and sleeplessness would soon make me very fit to be locked up in a mad-

house," replied Theresa, reflectively. "I have rather a prejudice in favour of living where friends can reach me, and where the law can protect me."

At this moment, a heavy footstep became audible close behind the speakers, and a man much muffled up overtook them. He looked like a watchman, and after passing hastily on, he suddenly turned round, flashed up his lantern into a glare, and holding it aloft, hurriedly examined the party, saying, "Your name is O'Hara, is it not?"

"My name is Norval," answered O'Hara, pushing the stranger fiercely aside; "move off, or you shall be prostrated this instant on the street. Move off!"

As O'Hara looked perfectly able to execute his threat, that intruder immediately darkened his lantern and vanished, but not before he had completely scrutinized the faces of all present, without letting a glimpse of his own be seen. The harsh inquisitiveness of the stranger's tone had been very startling, while Susan, terrified and weary, hurried onwards till they passed the entrance to a brilliantly illuminated gin-palace, where, lurking behind the blazing doorway, Theresa thought she descried the same individual carefully scanning their appearance. She secretly pointed this out to Mrs.

O'Hara, whose whole heart quailed with terror, while their subsequent progress became almost a flight through these silent dark lanes to their desolate home,—more desolate than ever now, having lost its only luxury of being safe.

As the terrified party entered, all felt an agitating certainty that their steps had been tracked to the very door. O'Hara declared now that no walls could hide him from his foes; that he never could reckon anywhere on a moment's security; that it was impossible by any human means to wrap himself up, as he had hoped to do, in a shroud of impenetrable obscurity. From that day, with nervous restlessness, he changed his lodgings continually; tossed about, as he said, by the storms of an adverse fate, till the life of life in him seemed finally extinguished. Sleep fled from his eyes and peace from his heart, until at length, in the madness of his misery, O'Hara once more had fatal recourse to deeper and deeper potations. Memory, character, fortune, and hope were all at length blasted, blighted, and extinguished apparently for ever to the wretched O'Hara in one mighty and irretrievable ruin. Still he clung with the whole force of his being to that one only unneglected duty of screening his wards from the snares of O'Grady, and even from being discovered by the friends of Lord Tipperary, whose further intimacy

with these young almost unprotected girls he would have felt it an imperative duty to terminate, even if his own personal safety had not demanded a most undiscoverable concealment. Too truly, now, did these lines of Byron apply to him :—

“ The wither'd frame, the ruin'd mind,
The wreck by passion left behind,
A shrivell'd scroll, a scatter'd leaf,
Sear'd by the autumn-blast of grief ! ”

CHAPTER VI.

“ There firm and patient, Susan still depends
Upon her efforts—not upon her friends;
She is with persevering strength endued,
And can be cheerful—for she will be good.”

CRABBE.

NEVER did suffering fall on more uncomplaining victims than on Mrs. O'Hara, whose every hope seemed born only to perish, and on the two inexperienced girls, still so child-like in their youthful loveliness, who were now to battle nobly with all the terrifying difficulties of gaunt and haggard poverty in the perplexing world of London. Theresa and Fanny resolved, with Mrs. O'Hara, that theirs should not be a helpless, tearful, lack-a-daisical sorrow, but that they would rouse up all the spirit within them courageously to meet this calamitous period, and faithfully to assist each other. Susan's deep and silent grief was evidently wearing her down to the very grave, and often, when working to excess, the girls perceived that her head became giddy, her eyes seemed dazzled, and her hands fell powerless, under the weight of over-

wrought energy. Though a mere shadow of her former self, Susan was never even yet beyond the reach of consolation, nor did she ever for a moment give way to idle despondency, remembering always that her husband's very life was at stake. Fearful were the privations that stared Susan in the face, but she roused up a healthy courage to meet them all, and would not despair while the smallest globule of hope remained to live upon.

The widest theatre in this world of human existence certainly is London. Mrs. O'Hara knew, in her own very kind and anxious heart, that the most dangerous of all situations in that boundless city is that of young girls, possessing the attractive gift of beauty. In seeking for employment, as Theresa smilingly remarked, she could not of course hawk about her few accomplishments in a basket, stopping all passers by, to ask if they could or would give her anything to do; but Susan, though feeble, ill, and heart-broken, set out herself to ascertain if she could procure for both her young wards a safe asylum in the private workshop of some respectable dress-maker.

For such an undertaking both Theresa and Fanny were perfectly ready and perfectly qualified, but it proved a long and weary search. Before emerging from the dismal precincts of her own scanty lodging, Susan had to traverse through the intricate labyrinth of a long narrow street, where

ragged children were wallowing in the gutters, where the slatternly mothers idly looked on, desolate, and uncared for, and where the men wore such miserable rags, that it was an inscrutable mystery how such clothes contrived to hang together. Here it seemed as if every inhabitant found it hard to live, or rather impossible; but all their wretchedness became naturally accounted for when Mrs. O'Hara saw, at the head of that poverty-stricken street, the two great causes of ruin to the poor—a flaring gas and gin-palace, with its usual opposite neighbour, a very accommodating, easy-going, pawnbroker's shop.

Susan knew in her own secret soul, though she dared not yet acknowledge it to herself, that these two receptacles of vice and misery were becoming the last stage of ruin to her own unhappy husband. She feared that O'Hara might be, at that very moment, disposing of all he could part with, and more than he could spare, in the desperation with which he sought any how and anywhere for oblivion. At the pawnbroker's gin-tickets were given, entitling their infatuated purchasers to claim at the spirit-dealers twice the amount in gin of what he could have been allowed for his property in cash, and thus these two dens of iniquity played into each other's hands, to the enormous profit of both. All these unhappy victims, when they had made a deposit at the pawnbroker's, might be seen

hurrying immediately straight across the narrow street to the warm blazing door of the gin-palace left invitingly open, where they might get "drunk for sixpence, and dead-drunk for a shilling." Thence, after being thoroughly rifled of all their funds, the miserable wretches were sent, as soon as possible, reeling towards their own home, if they still possessed one, or towards some mere kennel of a lodging-house, or to the kennel itself, where their sin and their misery might be, for a brief period, buried in forgetfulness.

It was but the night before that Mrs. O'Hara had been overwhelmed with the shock of seeing her own degraded, but still much-loved husband return home a reeling, staggering, blaspheming drunkard, and she paused for one moment to gaze in heart-breaking sorrow into this ensnaring den of wild debauchery. A prodigious lamp glared over the whole scene of dissipation, while every window was red with gorgeous light, and attractive warmth. Every time the heavy inner door was opened or shut for entrance or departure, the sound burst forth of loud talking, of discordant music, and of noisy laughter, while the counter was beset by crowds of men, women, and even children, struggling, wrangling, drinking, or drunk. During the moment she stood there, Susan mournfully reflected that to obtain a welcome at the iniquitous counter of such glittering palaces, there was

scarcely any crime, cruelty, or treachery on earth, which had not at various times been perpetrated. Mothers had poisoned their own offspring to gain money from the burial-clubs, that they might squander it there; fathers had sold their children to ruin; sons had stripped the bed-clothes off their dying parents; husbands had murdered their wives, and wives had betrayed their husbands to the gallows, all—all, to satisfy the craving of a thirst that nothing can satisfy.

While Susan gazed thus fearfully into these horrid precincts, the heavy inner-door again swung open, a discordant penny-concert of screeching ballad-singers and cracked violins was in out-of-tune progress, and Susan saw with her own eyes the spirit-dealer, a man of bland civility, handing to her own husband a large glass of gin, a draught, as she well knew, of liquid death, while the landlord said, in a tone of assumed friendliness, "It will do you good!"

While Susan observed the greedy haste with which, at a single draught, her husband swallowed it down, the thought suddenly flashed into her mind, with a horrid foreboding of evil, that O'Hara had but to betray those girls into the hands of their popish enemies, and he would probably become endowed by them with an income enabling him to indulge without limit in that vice, which, during his better hours, he abhorred, and

which would evidently soon extinguish his life, while, nevertheless, now he was its pitiable and degraded slave.

Susan mentally prayed for O'Hara again as those only pray who have no other hope but in prayer, while scalding tears, large and heavy, fell from her almost blinded eyes. When Mrs. O'Hara turned away, with her heart almost broken in thinking of the past and future, she was about slowly to "move on," when a party of three gentlemen, all laughing in the utmost pitch of merriment, walked up the street, respectfully attended by a policeman. He certainly, however, had them not in custody, as the aristocratic looking trio, all in most gleeful spirits, seemed rather to have him completely in their custody, and at their despotic command.

"Our tour among the savage tribes of London, and among the housebreakers, cracksmen, and low lodgings has amused me more than I expected, and really dispelled the black cloud of *ennui* which hung over my spirits ever since we were in Ireland," exclaimed a voice that Susan recognised as that of Lord Tipperary, and she shrank back, feeling as if it would be worse than death if he observed her. "What a day we have had of it! Not a mad-house, a jail, or a gin-palace in all London that has not been explored! Nothing could be more new and exciting! Jack Ketch's

Warren was a most extraordinary receptacle of vice, misery, and drunkenness, but, on the whole, I think the insane people were scarcely quite so diverting as I expected."

"Yet," observed Lord Brentford, "that mad-house album contained some very clever hits, and I rather liked the ingenious maniac who wishes to rebuild London by breaking to pieces the stones of Stonehenge. The women were not half ridiculous! I thought they would all have been fancying themselves tea-pots, and that style of thing, but very few showed off at all."

"Most of the patients seemed driven to insanity by drink, and I would not have missed for all the day-light amusements of London what we have seen in those gin-palaces. It was equal to any farce in the Adelphi," exclaimed Lord Tipperary enthusiastically. "Nevertheless, we have unluckily missed our chief object in not finding that unmitigated rascal, O'Hara! O'Grady tells me the villain is prowling about in those glittering scenes of low dissipation, and find him I must, to get back that cheque for 6,000*l*. If the wretch be above ground, he shall swing for it!"

"But," interrupted Captain Clifford, who had not before spoken, "you really are by no means sure of O'Hara's guilt; and think of his exemplary wife. Everybody praises her——"

"Yes, Clifford! and of the two young wards,"

added Lord Tipperary slyly. "Those poor girls whom he has cheated, as O'Grady tells me, of some great inheritance. I suspect that neither Brentford nor you would have volunteered into my forlorn hope had O'Hara, the guardian, escaped alone. When he is retaken, I must positively see those incognita girls, for you both seem almost caught. It may be the better for each of you if this rascally factor were hung out of your way."

"Here is the last and worst gin-palace we are to ransack!" said Lord Brentford, beckoning the policeman forward; and Susan, with increased consternation, at once recognised O'Grady. "Look! there seems a wretched female cowering towards the door! Truly women, when once depraved, become worse than men. Now, my good lady, tell us, are you drunk or sober?"

A face pallid as death turned slowly towards the speaker, and a pair of large honest eyes looked full at Lord Brentford, who did not in the least recognise Mrs. O'Hara, though the broad glare of gas shone out on her trembling form. There was a general expression of propriety about Susan's whole dress and aspect that commanded instant respect, and Captain Clifford, starting with astonishment, as if he had seen an apparition from another world, exclaimed, in accents of real kindness,—

“ I cannot surely be mistaken! How can this be? You are Mrs. —— ”

In an agony of dread, fear, and shame, Susan grasped Captain Clifford's arm like a vice, and fastening her hot tearless eyes on him, attempted to speak, but her pale lips moved without uttering an articulate sound. At length she was able to say, in accents breathless from agitation,—

“ Yes, you have seen me before ! ”

In a low deep whisper she then added,—

“ Do not name me ! My husband is there. He is not guilty ! If you have a spark of mercy, then, detain your companions for five minutes. Do not betray him ! Do not bear heavily on a broken heart ! Give me a few moments ! Let my husband escape by the back door ! Oh ! believe me, he is innocent ! It is all a black conspiracy against him ! ”

“ Brentford, did you ever hear of any one being ordered gin for her health ? ” exclaimed Captain Clifford, with ready presence of mind, assuming a look of humorous surprise, and turning to his listening friends, while Mrs. O'Hara vanished. “ We must allow this good woman five minutes, for she professes to be immensely respectable, and is anxious not to show herself publicly as a customer here. ”

“ Frederick Clifford, you were always an amateur in beggars ! ” said Lord Tipperary, carelessly. “ To a universally sympathising spirit like yours,

there seems to be some poetical interest even in showing kindness to a woman who frequents the gin-palace, and meets us by moonlight in a blind alley."

Susan, meanwhile, in an agony of sorrow and fear, of pale and speechless dismay, darted through the glass-door to warn off her husband, and vanished. Regardless of all around, but with lip and cheek blanched to a marble whiteness, she pushed past the bland smiling landlord, rushed through a double row of intoxicated wretches, of ragged shirtless-looking vagabonds, and approaching her husband, she whispered in his ear, with all the eagerness of desperation, to hasten away with her by a back entrance.

"Susan! my Susan! You in this den!" exclaimed O'Hara, starting up with a mixture of grief and shame, while his feverish breath came forth laden with gin. "Have I brought you, good, and pure and excellent Susan, to this scene of destruction and misery? I would rather have seen my death-warrant here at this hour, than you, my poor Susan!"

"Never mind, dear Patrick, only escape instantly!" whispered she, in a voice so soft and low, that it seemed, in comparison of the noise and imprecations around, like the hush after a storm. "Do not think of me—only fly! My being here is of no consequence, but——"

“Of no consequence, that I have reduced you, Susan, to this?” exclaimed O’Hara, in a tone of gloomy frenzy. “My poor, poor wife! Oh! curse me! curse me! and I might feel relieved from a weight of self-reproach. Let any one put a pistol to my head and I shall thank him—but to see you, my Susan, so forgiving, is death itself. I cannot, cannot reform. Habit has fastened its long clutch upon me now. I can only be a most wretched ever-sinning penitent—I ‘know the right, and choose the wrong.’ You see me, oh! how wretched ——!”

A low moan of half delirious despair burst forth from the very soul of O’Hara, when the torrent of his words was ended, and fiercely tossing his tumbler into the grate, he started to his feet in a paroxysm of almost insane excitement, while gazing at Susan, who looked the very image of pale and ghastly desolation, every muscle of her face quivering with anguish.

“Let my enemies take me, Susan,” he exclaimed, in a tone of rigid agony, “they will but save me from destroying myself!”

The landlord, who had been stealthily watching O’Hara, at this moment stole clandestinely towards the outer door, which he opened, and spoke in a low, earnest, hurried tone to those without, among whom Susan again recognised O’Grady; and he then closed as well as double-locked it.

“Patrick!” she whispered, in a voice of almost

frantic anxiety, that might have moved a stone, "for my sake, save yourself—for my sake, fly!"

"No, Susan! you and the girls would all be better off if I were dead—if I were gone for ever and ever!" answered O'Hara, in a tone of more than human despondency. "Alas! that I should have lived to ruin you all! No wonder I tried to drown my memory in brandy! I must drug it, too, with opium—extinguish, annihilate it!"

"Patrick! my husband! look—look at the door! Do you not see O'Grady?" exclaimed Susan, in a hollow whisper; "fly, if it were only to disappoint your cruel enemy! Live, if only to prove your own innocence—to punish him! Oh! live, to be acquitted!"

"And revenged!" added O'Hara, sternly, turning round to escape; for though love could not persuade him to value life, hatred made him unwilling to die the victim of O'Grady. Seeing that persevering enemy about to triumph over him now—seeing that the police had entered with him, and that Lord Tipperary was following O'Grady, his brow flushed the deepest red, he made a spring like lightning to the back door, threw it open, and disappeared in the thickest darkness.

O'Grady pursued with the speed of thought, and vanished also; while Susan, with streaming eyes and a desperate assumption of calmness, endeavoured to watch their progress. Long and loudly

the voice of O'Grady was heard vociferating, "Stop thief!" Long their heavy footsteps were to be traced, thundering along the pavement, till, at length, the trembling Susan heard the distant sound of a violent scuffle, so vehement and prolonged, that she thought it impossible both should survive; and, sinking on the nearest bench, she clasped her hands over her eyes, awaiting in an agony of apprehension the dreaded result.

"Can I not be of any use to you? Let me take you home," said Captain Clifford, sitting humanely down beside the suffering Susan. "Where do you live?"

"Thanks!—more than thanks!" replied Susan, in a faint voice, that sounded like the heart's utmost agony; "but, every one must leave me, Sir! Kind as your intentions are, the dangers that surround all those I love are fearful! The greatest of all evils among those very dear to me, might arise from any one knowing our wretched abode. Your sphere of life is far, indeed, removed from what ours is now. My own existence has been a tragical volume in which every succeeding page grows sadder. You cannot help us more, but I shall never forget your kindness in aiding me to save my husband. For your sake, for my own, and for the sake of others that I need not name, never attempt to see me or mine again—never!"

At this moment, the slow measured tramp of many feet might be heard approaching, and a shutter was carried into the room, on which a lifeless figure lay extended. Susan's heart sickened with suspense; a sensation of choking arose in her throat; a dizziness in her head; and one paramount terror lest she should behold her husband in custody made the blood rush back to her very heart. None who saw Mrs. O'Hara's face at that moment ever to their dying hour forgot its look of mortal agony. Her hood had dropped off, and her face, white as the wall, bore a red spot burning on each cheek; it gave her the look of a painted corpse, while her eyes, with an almost vacant stare, became fastened on the moving bier. At length, with forced calmness, and with trembling hands, Susan approached the stretcher, raised the covering, and perceived, with a perfect shock of relief that it was not her husband who lay there. She then hurriedly drew back, and, in the fulness of a thankful heart, burst into tears of uncontrollable agitation. Seeing this, Captain Clifford, with ever-ready kindness, threw a window wide open, that the breeze might blow refreshingly on her. He flew for water, spilling most of it in his extreme haste on the floor, and on his return, found that Mrs. O'Hara had disappeared, leaving not a trace behind.

The newspapers next day contained a frightful

account of the daring villain, O'Hara, who had been nearly taken up at the Sun-flower public-house, in Frying-pan-alley, and a frightful sketch was given of his previous career in crime and debauchery, with the offer superadded of 50*l.* from Lord Tipperary, to any one who should give information by which the guilty man could be apprehended.

Every person who read the particulars shuddered to think what dangerous villains there are going loose in the world, and hoped O'Hara would soon be lodged in Newgate, not even to be liberated on a ticket-of-leave. Crowds more numerous than ever, frequented the Sun-flower now, to see the scene of this daring criminal's escape, and to sympathize in O'Grady's sufferings, who had been very considerably damaged by the onset of his intended victim, and became quite a hero in public estimation afterwards.

From this time a most persevering advertisement appeared, day after day, in that mysterious column of the *Times* dedicated to run-away sons, husbands, clerks, or other missing absconders of all descriptions. It was teasing for the faithful decypherers of these interesting notices, to observe how long this one communication remained to be unsuccessfully repeated. Many an old gentleman at his club conned gravely through his spectacles over the following not-to-be-understood words,

and felt a gossiping wish to know what it meant:—

“If Mrs. O’H—— will send her direction to Bentick and Co., Army Agents, Pall-mall, she will hear of something to her advantage. No unfair use shall be made of her confidence; but every effort shall be tried, to fulfil her wishes and to relieve her distress.”

As all those who become advertised for, are invariably promised that everything shall be arranged entirely to their satisfaction, it is almost wonderful that more wanderers do not leave home on speculation to obtain such advantageous terms of peace! Unfortunately, however, the *Times* never penetrated to Whittington-lane, Holborn, where Mrs. O’Hara now lived, or rather starved, and the friendly advertisement, having died a natural death, was buried in oblivion by all except the generous-hearted, well-meaning Captain Clifford.

He thought with the profoundest anxiety of those two young and once happy girls, now reduced, probably, to such fearful difficulties, and he felt that his heart had been Fanny’s ever since the first day they met, was so now, and would be for evermore. He thought over all Fanny’s gentle looks, her tones of voice, her pretty ways, her buoyant step, her joyous glance, her many innocent pleasures, and feeling more and more

shocked, even to imagine the sufferings under which she might now be labouring, Captain Clifford never relaxed his efforts to trace out the place where her guardian was concealed, in all which attempts he was most zealously seconded by Lord Brentford. Fanny's image stood beside Frederick Clifford's mind continually. Her dark, beaming eyes, seemed to follow him in every flash of joy, in every cloud of sorrow, in sunshine and shadow. Whatever emotion sprung up in his mind was heightened and ennobled by his disinterested attachment. Fanny's name now influenced his whole intellectual and moral being, while the mere hopes of again finding himself beside her filled Captain Clifford with an ecstasy of happiness which his very dreams often re-echoed in many a pleasant picture of coming felicity.

The last refuge of Mrs. O'Hara, for concealment and economy, was a lodging, certainly the *beau-ideal* of utter wretchedness. She dared not take her husband to any place, however obscure, where he was already known, lest his hiding-hole should be traced; but she obtained a nearly empty room, up a winding, dreary, wooden staircase, large, gaunt, and gloomy, which Susan proceeded at once to improve into what might, perhaps, be called a home. Much had to be done by the diligent affection of Mrs. O'Hara, before that wretched den seemed habitable. On the low roof the plaster

was smoked perfectly black, the side-walls were scrawled over with coarse drawings, the broken windows were stuffed with wisps of hay, and the cobwebs hung like ancient banners of crape from every dark and desolate corner. There the poorest of the poor, indolent from despondency, had resided; and it was long since the sweeping besom of tidiness had visited those precincts.

In such a scene Susan O'Hara, with all the tenderness of pitying, sympathizing, most devoted love, nursed her erring husband through a long attack of brain fever, with an intensity of wakeful care that any nobleman in his palace might have envied. What could a bed of down, or a dozen of paid attendants, have been to that fevered man, tossing in mad delirium, under a thousand wild, incoherent and frightful visions, compared to the soft, cool hand gently laid on his burning forehead, the kind word lowly whispered in his ear, during a momentary gleam of peace; the watchful, night-and-day affection which anticipated his every wish, and yet had the tact never to be officious. Time plodded on at a leaden pace, while O'Hara slowly, and, truth to say, most unwillingly, recovered. His was a bold, reckless spirit, without fear of death, but he had not fortitude to face the trials of life. When O'Hara first saw poor Susan and the two girls patiently stitching shirts, or binding shoes, to work out a scanty maintenance for himself and

them, he writhed on his bed in an agony of helpless remorse, and felt as if his heart were clenched in burning steel. After clasping his hands for several minutes over his eyes in wild, deep, uncontrollable despair, and grinding his teeth in agony of spirit, he suddenly burst into a frantic, thundering laugh of delirious merriment, saying, in shrill accents of bitter irony,—

“Well, my Susan! How pleasant this is! Did I not promise you, when we married, a happy home? Who does not at last confess, in the wreck of every hope, that a fool’s paradise is the only paradise on this weary earth! Let us try to live in one now! This three-penny lodging—this rat-hole—is a most splendid residence. My income, of less than nothing a-year, is abundant for every luxury, and my wife is now doing some lounging, idle, lady-like work for her own amusement. How long is it since I was unfortunate enough to be brought here?”

“Three weeks, my dear Patrick; and now reward us for all our care by promising you will put a brave and good heart to a very steep hill. Do your best with me, to bear the worst, and to keep off any greater misfortunes.”

“Now, Susan, tell me, upon your honour and word, how many hours a day have you toiled and worked during my illness to maintain your worst of husbands? Tell me truly,” added O’Hara, in a voice

of fierce despair. "I never got anything but truth from my Susan yet—let me have it now. How many hours a day have you stitched those shirts for my support?"

"Eighteen," answered Susan, in a low trembling accent, as if confessing some crime; "but yesterday, being Sunday, we had an entire rest. Madame St. Armand offered the girls and me double pay to work all Sunday, and I am afraid some of her workwomen accepted the bribe. Poor things! theirs is a fearful life! As one of them said to me, 'No holiday, no Sunday, but all days the same! the very same.' Theirs is truly a mournful existence!"

"Yes, Susan; and yours! Have you not cursed me yet, as the cause of all your misery?" asked O'Hara, in a voice of stern despondency. "Curse me now! Give me rope enough, and let me hang myself! May my next cup of drink be poison! May my next breath be my last! Let me die! Oh, Susan! if I could but die to serve you, what suffering is there on earth that would not be welcome!"

"Then live, rather, to reward my affection—to be a star in my dark night of sorrow," answered Susan, in a low, sweet, hardly audible voice. "Fight manfully every inch of the ground against temptation, misfortune, and death. Fight as a Christian, and we must conquer. No sight on

earth is so sublime as that of a man battling bravely through besetting calamities."

O'Hara, scarcely pausing to listen, followed the current of his own miserable thoughts, saying in accents of the lowest wretchedness, "I wish that, like Peter Schemil's, the shadow could be sold of black remorse for the vices we have been betrayed into. That shadow of shame and sorrow haunts me for ever and ever, by night and by day, and besets my very dreams. I am a grovelling wretch here, on my bed of agony, with a dead weight of existence upon me that cannot be got rid of, and my poor, poor wife wearing out her life-springs in a struggle to keep me from the welcome grave. Susan!" added he, glancing round the room with a look of sudden alarm, "where are Theresa and Fanny?"

"Working at Madame St. Armand's. I thought it better that our girls should only come home at night, when their sewing is done," replied Mrs. O'Hara, thoughtfully. "The fact is, that Lord Brentford and Captain Clifford are unceasing in their efforts to trace us out—perhaps, with a kind intention; but any intimacy under such disparity of circumstances would be dangerous—most dangerous to all parties."

"True," replied O'Hara, with unusual energy. "Better that they should starve on an honest crust, hard-earned though it is, than either be discovered

here by the Papists, or endangered by receiving assistance from young men of whom I never heard any good—and, indeed, what good could one expect from friends of Lord Tipperary, a mere fashionable scamp, and most implacable against me!”

“At present our girls are safe among a hundred others,” added Susan, trying to speak cheerfully, though tears stood congealed in her eyes. “Madame St. Armand’s is a thoroughly respectable house. She has on hand at present several wedding orders, a Polish ball, two Court Drawing-rooms, and some Chiswick fêtes for next week; therefore, being under a press of work, the dress-maker seemed quite glad to secure ‘two clever additional hands.’”

O’Hara, when he pictured to his mind’s eye, Theresa and Fanny transplanted from Lough Elan to wither away in such a scene, threw himself back on the pillow, and groaned aloud, saying, in accents of agonised thought, “Such is the punishment of my being ever betrayed into intoxication; and yet, O’Grady, who first misled me, seems always to prosper. Oh! in the grand, but mysterious drama of human existence, how strange, how incomprehensible is all around us—how impossible to understand even our own condition, our own selves! Once, when a mere boy, Susan, I happened to see how an Irish peasant killed his poultry; and I never forgot it. He snatched up a well-fed prosperous-looking fowl,

in its heedless enjoyment when picking grain, and he plucked every feather from its body or wings, till the torn, lacerated, quivering creature in helpless agony expired. Such is life; such is death to many—such it is to me! How glorious a gift human existence would be if there were neither sin, suffering nor death. As a young lady of my acquaintance once observed, in her most thoughtful mood, ‘To think of dying and of being buried, really is not nice!’”

“But, Patrick! mere happiness never was our being’s end and aim, or all would, indeed, die bankrupts as you describe,” said Susan, earnestly. “This is but the porch at which we are struggling on to better things and brighter scenes. Hope on—hope for ever and ever—let us rest on the hope which can never disappoint us, and we shall at last reach such a world as you describe, free from sin, grief, or death.”

“And happy thou! through all the change of time,
Whom Want can never burden with a crime;
Whose joyless heart, and never lighten’d care,
Can nobly scorn the refuge of Despair.
Like ocean’s wand’rer, guided by his star,
Thy heaven-taught spirit looks to Him afar!”

R. MONTGOMERY.

CHAPTER XVII.

“ Now shut from sunny light and air,
How can she choose but pine ?
She plies her needle till the lamp
Is waxing pale and dim ;
She hears the watchman's heavy tramp,
And she must watch like him.”

No men in the world work so long and so unremittingly as those women who become the over-tasked slaves of the needle. The merest drudge among animals could not exist on so small a proportion of food and rest, compared with the immense amount of labour, as the exhausted victims who stitched daily and nightly for Madame St. Armand. Wearily the unfortunate needle-women sat hour after hour, the gas flaring in their half-blinded eyes, without daring to relax a single stitch, or even to have the recreation of a yawn, till several of those young girls, when the stimulus of labour ceased and they left off sewing, fell back in a faint ; and others were obliged to lie down on the bare floor at night for an hour, before they had strength to undress. Something that called itself tea was

handed round by the taskmistress, but it tasted of nothing except the well, and many left their stale unpalatable food untasted, being totally unable to swallow from exhaustion. The more wearied had to drink their tea standing, or they would have been instantly asleep as soon as the perpetual click of their needle ceased, and they all bathed their faces frequently in cold water, to revive some degree of animation.

Night and day these girls sat huddled together on benches, row behind row, in apparently endless succession, all plying the needle in total silence. Hours passed heavily on with Theresa and Fanny, for the scene was indeed cold, desolate, and unwholesome. That morning they thought, with sad remembrance, how bright the sun looked now, probably, on the gay landscapes of Lough Elan—glittered there over the breezy ocean, and brightened the dazzling hues of their gorgeous flower-gardens; but it sent only a faint beam of light through the dust-engrained, patched, and broken windows of Madame St. Armand's work-room. Still both Fanny and Theresa retained all the brilliancy of their own wild-rose complexion, for they had not yet begun to wither under their sufferings.

From the pale lips of the drooping, heart-sick girls beside them, not a sound proceeded; but they were all herded together in silent, gloomy com-

panionship, while their eyes, bleared, red-hot, and dried up with inflammation, seemed incapable of a tear.

“It appears as if the taper of wholesome life must expire in such a scene!” whispered Theresa to Fanny. “The faint, sick effluvia here is like the smell of old tallow candles and stuff petticoats! I was always a martyr to bad odours, and this will extinguish me in a week!”

“How these poor girls stitch on and on, as if working by machinery,” added Fanny, looking mournfully round. “Their aspect of hopeless, haggard, dogged perseverance is dreadful! Why were they born! It appears as if nothing could ever for one moment rouse or interest them again! Do you see those poor young creatures who work standing, in order to keep themselves awake?”

“Yes! And the poor girls with those jaded, miserable faces—those colourless, washed-out complexions—making up such gay and gorgeous dresses, regardless of expense,” observed Theresa. “For some weeks, none of those mere sewing machines have enjoyed more than five hours’ rest, going to bed,—or rather laying down on a rug at twelve, and getting up at four o’clock; but the *bal costumé*, at the Turkish Ambassador’s, has brought very hurried orders from fifty ladies for Friday next, who must have their dresses home positively, and to a moment, and without fail.”

“Of course,” answered Fanny, smiling sadly, “that gay profusion of pink and blue satin, of red and green velvet, of blonde, lace, feathers, and flowers scattered among those wasted, withering girls who are struggling to keep awake, and half-blind with long continued labour, is a strange contrast of gaiety and gravity. Look at those others, yet more unfortunate, who are rushing through a large order for mourning, the most killing work for the eyesight of all when carried on like that, night and day as well as day and night. Who that never saw this scene would believe its horrors and its sufferings to be possible in free and happy England?”

The two sisters sat a little apart from the other workers, while their air and expression, much more than their simple but very neat dress, marked them superior to all the rest. Fanny now worked on in silence, but Theresa accompanied her sewing by a low melancholy air, which she hummed to herself in plaintive accents, while she interrupted it for a moment, saying to her sister, “These ballads console me, Fanny, for they prove that one human being, at least, has sympathised with our unhappy state and understood our misery. Sister!—

“Work ! work ! work !

While the cock is crowing aloof !

And work ! work ! work !

Till the stars shine through the roof !

“Seam, and gusset, and band,
 Band, and gusset, and seam.
 Till over the buttons I fall asleep,
 And sew them on in a dream !

“ Oh ! Men with sisters dear !
 Oh ! Men with mothers and wives !
 It is not linen you’re wearing out,
 But human creatures’ lives !

“ A little weeping would ease my heart,
 But in their briny bed
 My tears must stop, for every drop
 Hinders needle and thread !

“ Oh ! but for one short hour !
 A respite, however brief !
 No blessed leisure for Love or Hope,
 But only time for grief !

Gradually Theresa’s always impulsive feelings grew excited, while she warbled these affecting words by degrees more and more audibly, till at length her whole spirit became awakened to the keenest emotions, and forgetful of all else she sung almost aloud, with a power, pathos, and passion truly overwhelming. It was the echo of her own breaking heart !

“ What sound can that be from the sewing-room ? ” asked Madame St. Armand’s forewoman of her assistant, an elderly personage of parchment complexion and iron frame, in whose veins it seemed as if the milk of human kindness never could flow, and whose eyes expressed a malevolent

indifference to suffering. "Go and inquire what is the matter."

"Probably another of those poor wretches gone deranged," replied the messenger, carelessly rising. "We should require a bedlam attached to this place, as well as a blind asylum. The girls scarcely last so well now as they did. We have had four go blind already this year, and that new one is the second who has become mad. I thought she would not easily tame!"

"Ever since Madame St. Armand fined the girls half-a-day's pay if they arrive late, the poor creatures, having neither watch nor clock, come often an hour or even two hours before we open the door, and they get fatigued with waiting."

"Girls! be silent over your work. We must have no complaining," said the forewoman, entering the sewing-room authoritatively. "I am sorry to say that the five hours' rest you were all promised to-night must now be shortened. Mrs. Daniel Brownlow, of Torchester Abbey, who was the great city-heiress, has given a prodigious order for dresses on the very scantiest notice, and therefore we cannot help ourselves: they must be done. You shall, however, receive an extra allowance of bread, and, as the proverb says, 'enough is as good as a feast.'"

"Yes, when there is enough!" muttered Theresa, glancing compassionately at the crowd of half-

starved skeleton faces around, while every pulse of girlhood beat in her with tumultuous indignation. "No mere animal is stinted as these are of rest and food!"

Theresa, as soon as her task-mistress left the room, hurriedly threw up the window next her and leaned far out, gasping for breath. She turned her glance from every earthly object, so gaunt with misery and horror, to the pure and glorious sky, now gemmed with stars, and she wept bitterly when thinking on happy days vanished in darkness for ever. A thousand wild schemes for bettering the condition of herself and Fanny darted through her mind, but they were full of vague confusion, while her large eyes became dilated with tears, and the colour fading from her cheek, left her white as the dress she held in her hand. Then turning to Fanny, she said, "Oh! how sad it makes me to see you look so jaded, so utterly worn—to feel that there is no rest for either of us, when aching in every limb with weariness. Dear Fanny! in our joyous days, at Loch Elan, I often forgot I had a body at all, unless I saw it reflected in a mirror! Now, it seems a weight scarcely to be borne!"

Before their usual early hour next morning, according to Madame St. Armand's peremptory order, Theresa and Fanny were again in rapid progress towards the work-room, through a succession of

streets and squares. The hour was between night and morning, while many a gilt shutter was closed in the splendid squares. The vegetable-carts were ponderously making their way towards Covent Garden; the earliest dairy-maids were carrying about their milk-pails; and the latest parties were at last breaking up, where long lines of carriage-lamps glittered along the street, only outblazed by the gin palaces, in which coachmen and footmen were seeking oblivion of their weariness, feeling how true it is that "nature's mightiest effort is to wait."

Nowhere on earth are the contrasts of human life brought into such obvious prominence, as in the midnight scene, indoors and outside, of a London ball; the brilliantly lighted drawing-room, shining in dazzling sumptuousness with all that can adorn the most cheerful hours of life, and the dull cold scene below, full of crashing carriages, capering horses, wearied servants, sleeping coachmen, and noisy link-boys. The rising sun flared brightly over Cavendish-square when Theresa and Fanny, alarmed to find that it was so late as nearly five in the morning, tried to shorten the distance by striking across an angle. While they pulled their bonnets more closely down, and being dressed very tidily, but in the very plainest and most unnoticeable manner, they hoped to glide on unobserved, especially as they kept clear of the crowd by skirting

round the railing of the garden, not once venturing to look up.

At a distance they could overhear the loud vociferous shout of many a ragged link-boy, calling with an odd appearance of familiarity names dignified in the peerage, celebrated in history, distinguished at court, and borne now by the very idols of society. Theresa at a distance heard the hoarse Irish voice of a tattered-looking man shout the name of the "Duchess of Limerick," the most exclusive of all exclusives in Belgravia; and then she started and hurried more rapidly on, for with loud and vociferous repetition, the cry arose of "Lord Brentford's carriage stops the way!"

At this unexpected sound, Theresa grasped her sister's arm more closely, and accelerated her already rapid pace, while the colour suddenly burned on her crimson cheek, and an unbidden tear glittered in her eye. She paced on and on, her heart beating and her lip quivering, while the memory of happier days was aroused in the mind of both sisters to momentary agony. Her terror of being accidentally seen in their present humble circumstances amounted to absolute torture; therefore, Theresa and Fanny turned hastily into Henrietta-street. There they had almost arrived at Madame St. Armand's work-room, safe and unperceived by any one, when an interesting little girl of the lower classes, about six years old, ran up to ask what

o'clock it was. Theresa, with an artist's eye, stopped an instant to admire her, and wished she could have sketched that infant face on the spot. The child was one of those little creatures answering to Charles Lamb's description, "not brought up, but dragged up;" yet the pale, blanched features were beaming with intelligent affection, while she fondly turned to play with a small vulgar-looking terrier-dog. It was as capricious as any drawing-room pet of the most aristocratic species, and Theresa for a short moment lingered to sympathise with the careless, happy smiles of one human being, who had never yet known what it is to anticipate suffering. At this very moment the dog had gambolled into the middle of the street, and the child had heedlessly followed, when a carriage came thundering along, almost at a gallop, and whirled round the corner from Cavendish-square. It was driven by a half-intoxicated coachman, much too proud of his position on the coach-box to care for the canaille in the street, or to observe that very small playful child, till she was almost under the wheels of his furiously driven chariot.

Theresa, perceiving the little girl's imminent danger, rushed fearlessly forward and snatched her back, while she glanced upwards with an expression in her bright eyes of sparkling indignation and alarm, her cheeks glowing like the earliest rose of morning. The coachman, angry and ashamed

to have so nearly caused an accident, whipped his horses recklessly on, and the carriage vanished in an instant, but not before Lord Brentford, shut up inside, had observed Theresa—had seen her start of surprise, her vivid blush, and the death-like pallor that followed. Instantly on recognising her, the young peer sprung forward, vociferating loudly for his servants to stop, and to let him alight immediately, but all in vain. Never was a coachman more vigorously scolded than Lord Brentford's, when he drew up at last in Park-lane, so that his imprisoned master could get out; feeling at the moment as if in the whole world there was nothing more to be regretted than this provoking casualty—no object worth a thought but to trace out the long-lost Theresa, and once more to converse with her.

In Madame St. Armand's work-room, during all the day, Theresa's colour burned the deepest carnation, and her dark-blue eyes had in them an expression of impatience, unlike the quiet, subdued melancholy of all those toil-worn girls who sat in heavy silence around. Theresa now broke her threads at a snap, pricked her fingers till the blood flowed, impatiently tossed her ringlets, and as hours on hours passed gloomily on, she became more and more irritable in all her movements. At length, starting up with a vehement expression of long-suppressed, intolerable misery, she, to the

utter horror of poor Fanny, almost distractedly tore down the whole seam of a skirt she had been for the last hour laboriously making, and after throwing the tattered remains on the floor, she trod upon it with vehemence. The young Theresa looked like a little fury, while she ground her white teeth together, and stamped with her small foot on the unoffending dress, saying in wild accents of strong determination,—

“Not another day,—not another hour,—not another stitch will I work! Must I hear no sound for ever and ever but these everlasting needles! All that makes life endurable is banished from this wretched, degrading place. I will not stay to have my faculties benumbed, my eyes blinded, my spirits ruined, my heart broken!”

Saying these words, Theresa sat down and burst into tears. At the sound of any one venturing to speak, every head in the room was for a brief moment raised in wonder; but very few of the girls around had energy enough left to show much interest in anything. All present looked listless, apathetic, worn out, as if scarcely a breath of life passed through their pale lips, as if a cannon-ball tumbling into the room could not have aroused them. One or two, however, of the younger girls, who had recently become needlewomen, yet retained life enough to sympathise with the unbroken spirit of a new recruit like Theresa, not

yet completely subdued to vacant, passionless desolation, in whom sorrow and suffering, as it ravaged through the young heart, could still produce external emotion.

A tear gathered in the eye of those nearest, as they silently resumed their weary work, awe-struck at this almost fierce rebellion of Theresa against her task-mistress, and grudging that one short moment should have elapsed in a stare of surprise without bringing them nearer to the close of their almost endless labour.

Could Fanny and Theresa be sisters, they thought, with so remarkable a contrast in their manner and disposition? Fanny sat like a beautiful cameo, pale, still, and silent in her gentle sorrow, while Theresa could be compared only to an angry Hebe, her large eyes looking twice their usual size, her lip curling with scornful indignation, and her cheeks glowing with the richest scarlet. There was a passionate beauty in her spirited countenance, perfectly dazzling and totally different from the settled, tearless sorrow of Fanny, who scarcely paused to utter a monosyllable, anxious only to get through her allotted task, which ought sooner or later to be done,—for she must work or die.

“Fanny! how can you go on with that ceaseless work, when my heart is breaking!” exclaimed Theresa, while a fresh flood of tears burst from her

eyes. "Are you an automaton?—a mere sewing machine! Put down the dress for one moment, or I shall snatch it out of your hand! Send me to the wilds of Siberia, to the deserts of Africa, but let me have liberty and air! I feel suffocated here."

"Remember, Theresa, that our kindest of mothers is starving," whispered Fanny, while her hands trembled with emotion, and her lips grew paler. "We must not beat ourselves in madness against the bars of our cage. You are born for whatever happens to you, and should make the best in this incomprehensible world, of all events, sad, sad though they are."

"Sad, Fanny! What a poor insufficient word! Every spark of joyousness is quenched out of my heart! The world has become a prison to us, a workhouse, not a home! What a short summer of happiness we have had, and oh! how dreary the winter that has followed! This is death in life! Once I was a total unbeliever in sorrow or want; but now I have seen the funeral of every hope in existence. Do not attempt to put a stopper in my thoughts, Fanny, now, or my heart will burst. Why have I feelings, if we are to feel only wretchedness? and what future in this world is there for me but the grave?"

Theresa paused, and with the versatility of her nature she suddenly changed her tone, saying in a voice of emphatic impressiveness,—

“Fanny! we must not lie still, like a couple of stones, dead, cold and heavy, at the bottom, but rise to the surface of all our troubles. I have shed all my tears now, and none are left; but I cannot put up for another hour with Madame St. Armand’s intolerable insolence and perpetual hemming. You and I never were made for crimping muslin, or for stitching on hooks and eyes. I really have a soul above buttons. I never was intended for a poor woman! it is not my vocation! I have no doubt that we were cut out originally to be Duchesses, but are now made up by mistake into milliners. From henceforth I am determined to be afraid of nothing or of nobody; but first to elbow my own way out of all our overwhelming troubles, and then to conduct you.”

Fanny looked up in tearful surprise at her sister’s hysterical merriment, and was shocked to observe the feverish excitement that burned on her cheek and blazed in Theresa’s eye, as she continued saying, “I have a presentiment that we shall get brilliantly out of this wretched den, or I shall perish in the attempt! Surely, in the lottery of life, we are not always to draw a blank! Perhaps Lord Brentford may one day find us out, though how, when, and where it is impossible to guess. Misery need not eat up our hearts as it is doing now, when there are friends such as he from whom Mrs. O’Hara might receive help.”

“Theresa! my own dear sister,” exclaimed Fanny indignantly, and now a crimson tide poured in torrents over her face and neck, while she stood up with an energy of emotion more than equal to the other’s, saying—and a tearless sob nearly choked her as she did so—“there is degradation in the very thought of our mother receiving help from any one on whom we have no claim,—none at least that ought to be urged,—a mere accidental intimacy of a day. We can receive no favour from any living man, especially one who is young and unmarried, Theresa! for we cannot honourably repay him. Never let us mention the name of Lord Brentford again.”

Theresa, feeling that she had been wrong, covered her face with her hands, and burst into a convulsive agony of tears. It was startling to behold the strong anguish that shook the young girl’s very soul, as she threw herself into Fanny’s arms, and wept with the vehement sorrow of a penitent child. Her sister’s face had become livid as the dead, yet no tears came to Fanny’s relief; but after embracing Theresa with unutterable and most sorrowful affection, she turned mournfully away, and hurriedly resumed her work, feeling that more than life depended on her diligence, on her own quiet energy to do all and to endure all.

“Yes!” thought Fanny, earnestly plying her needle, though nearly blinded with un-shed tears;

“it is the appointment of God that I must now provide with my own hands for the wants of each passing hour, and it is religion to obey.”

“I must and shall give this up!” sobbed Theresa, becoming again irritated almost to delirium by the external composure of her trembling sister. Nothing irritates a fiery nature so much as the calmness of others, and poor Theresa became more and more excited, saying, “Fanny, stop, if it were only for a moment! Are we created for no better purpose than to grow old and ugly in this dreary den, threading our needles for ever, and sighing our very hearts out, as you are doing now, for one gasp of air! No!—no!—no! I must escape from this degrading place!”

“Not, surely, to the far worse degradation of asking charity! and there is no other way for us to exist, Theresa,” answered Fanny, not pausing for an instant to look off her work. “Wretched as we are now, yet worse than the worst that poverty could inflict may yet be endured, if we do wrong. As yet our misfortunes are not our own fault; but if we act rashly or meanly, the blame becomes ours, and we might live to wish ourselves back, with consciences at rest, in this dreary den.”

“If I fling myself into the chapter of accidents, can I come out worse off than we are now? Blindness and starvation threaten me; but you are mistaken in thinking that I would deliberately rush

into worse dangers. No! but crying in a corner never yet helped anybody, or I should cast myself on the floor, and weep my very heart out; nor does good advice assist one, dear Fanny, or you give me abundance," exclaimed Theresa, her buoyant spirits rising as she spoke. "But I have a plan. For instance, in the 'Times' we used every day formerly to read innumerable advertisements for nursery governesses, who are to make themselves universally useful in the house, upon a perfect nothing of a salary, or less than nothing. Now, here am I, ready to accept anything, and to teach everything. I shall sing through an opera, or get up the fine linen of the family, give lessons in dancing, or bake their pastry. If an advertising lady with nine daughters were to offer me but two-pence a year, paid quarterly, I am at her service. She may throw as many little boys into the bargain as she pleases, and I am ready to teach the piano, to mend the clothes, to speak French, to brush the girls' hair and the boys' jackets, to sing, to read, to be generally useful and obliging, to stay in a garret without fire or candles, to sit up all night with those who are sick, and to teach all day those who are well."

Fanny looked up with a tearful smile at the returning vivacity of her sister's spirits, which nothing was ever able very long to depress; and Theresa appeared for one brief moment like her

old merry self, as she continued to talk rattlingly on, that no time might be left to think, saying—

“Then, Fanny, as always happens in governess-novels, the eldest son and heir of the family falls in love, of course, with me. After I have walked, talked, and sung with him daily for several months, without ever suspecting that he cared one atom for my modest, insignificant self, I am quite astonished and shocked when he proposes. For weeks he has beset my steps at every turn, but it never once occurred to me for a moment to guess his long-concealed attachment. The mamma now behaves atrociously, by not at once consenting, in a rapture of joy, that I shall be welcomed as her son’s wife, to supplant her at the head of his table. There must be the usual dissolute old peer, whom I have refused with contempt, and whose attentions have endangered my reputation. In virtuous indignation at the old lady for believing the evil reports against me, and in the usual heroine style, I pack up my effects to leave the house. Without a shilling on earth in my purse, I glide or totter into the street—for, you know, heroines never walk like ordinary mortals. I often wonder how young ladies look when ‘springing’ or ‘bounding’ into a room, and whether one could take lessons at a dancing-school, of tottering, gliding, bounding, and springing, or of leaving the room, like Mrs. Gamp in ‘a walking

swoon.' I am determined to be a heroine, so hear out the tale. My lover takes a brain-fever, and is at the point of death, when at last the cruel, persecuting, hard-hearted, never-to-be-sufficiently-detested mother comes to my lodging, and entreats that I will marry her son. With some difficulty I consent—everybody forgives everybody—and I go off triumphantly in my carriage drawn by four greys; the postilions in red jackets, and my ten bridesmaids, as usual, in blue silk and feathers."

"My dear Theresa, you are delirious! What shilling novel have you been studying lately?"

"It is perfect folly to be in difficulties, when we read in real printed books how every young lady seems able to maintain herself on her drawings. I wonder what my top-heavy castles and hay-stack trees would fetch at Colnaghi's? Or suppose I take an engagement as companion to a deaf old lady! I make her tea, thread her needle, laugh at all her jokes, listen to her longest stories, attend her through a tiresome illness, banish all her relations, help her to make an angry will, and at last succeed to her whole fortune."

"Theresa, no wonder you cannot be a needle-woman! What visions from dream-land are these that addle your busy brain?" said Fanny, looking up in tearful astonishment. "Your agonizing mirth is worse now, my own dear sister, than the lowest depression, for it sounds so like insanity."

"I dare not reflect. Were I to sit down and

reflect for ten minutes, I should grow ten years older. I must rattle on or die! If I pause to think for one moment, Fanny, my heart will break! Oh, how impossible it seems even to understand ourselves! I have always appeared to myself to have two different natures united; and at this moment, in the very lowest depths of my misery, never did I feel a more irresistible impulse to the most extravagant mirth."

"That is not uncommon," said Fanny, pursuing her work. "When a man is being tried for his very life, his mind is often wandering to the most trifling, ridiculous ideas imaginable. He will even divert his wretchedness by counting the nails along the foot-board, or studying the pattern of the carpet, or even, like Sir Thomas More, jest with his executioner. Few ever feel utterly miserable; for it is curious that all the greatest sufferings of life come from looking either backwards or forwards. There is no moment of life totally unendurable, if people only take an event as it comes, neither looking back to its causes, nor forward to its effects. Remorse and fear are the dark shadows that follow our sins, and these are the utterly inconsolable miseries of life."

"Fanny, it seems like some horrid jest of fate that you and I are here!" exclaimed Theresa, some time afterwards, bursting into her former tone of wild hysterical merriment. "Mr. O'Grady's hints about our history, when we saw him, were

quite delightfully mysterious; and we must, I suspect, have been dropped in a couple of baskets at somebody's door, or stolen by gipsies. Do we look like anybody's poor relations? There is some grand secret about my origin, and what can that be? I shall constantly examine the aristocracy passing along in their carriages, to discover what family I most resemble. We shall surely be claimed and embraced at last by some long-lost relatives, who will make us heirs to a boundless fortune. Have you no faint remembrance, glimmering and quivering in your mind, Fanny," added Theresa, in a sudden tone of thrilling seriousness, "like some half-forgotten dream of our earliest infancy, that we were snatched out of bed one night, long, long ago; that some one carried us, in the dead of night, into a large dark room,—I see it now! We were then hurried off in a carriage. I remember the pale, gasping form of one who looked beautiful even in death—she imprints on my forehead a burning kiss of agony! —I feel it now!"

"People when drowning remember, the moment before they become insensible, as I did in the river lately, all the scenes that ever happened to them, as distinctly as if painted in a panorama before their eyes," said Fanny, reflectively. "Nothing that once occurred in this world seems ever obliterated again; and perhaps your remembrance now

is some past reality, raked up by the feverish agony of your mind from the dim corners of a forgotten memory."

"True! most true! Oh! how distinctly at this instant I recollect some wild scene of shipwreck! I seem yet in the roaring deep—I feel the giddiness of sinking—I struggle for something to grasp hold of—I hear the loud splash of many falling spars—I clutch at nothing—I am in a bottomless deep—and the white surf, like cold arms, embraces me. Mr. O'Grady said that our guardian first took to drinking from remorse of conscience; and when I ask him about the past, why does he always turn away in silence? Why?"

"Mr. O'Hara says you had a brain-fever in childhood, which has left some of its unaccountable delusions in your mind, my dear sister; but they are all unreal as shadows in a stream," replied Fanny, in a voice gentle and soothing; like a summer breeze. "You cannot be serious in talking all this French-novel rubbish, Theresa? My own dear sister, keep composed. We have been deeply tried with fearful and most sudden adversity. Who would not pity us if they knew all? But let us, at least, comfort one another—let us keep in the path of hard-working, stern, rock-like duty, cold and dark though it be; and, Theresa, while we hope the best, never let us hope what is impossible."

“I must hope something, Fanny, or die. Let me dream that I am flying, even if I awake only falling! As there seems nothing real to rest upon, let me escape from wretched realities to any castle in the air that diverts my misery. To gentle natures like yours, a quiet, peaceable fit of crying is enough for the greatest of calamities; but I should be dead or mad unless these wild visions illuminated this maze of misery,” replied Theresa, with a look of helpless, bitter agony. “I am too frightened and miserable to venture one serious look into our own wretchedness. If I were to think sense now, instead of talking nonsense, there would be no safety-valve for all this agony, and a burning fire is consuming my very soul. Give me anything but my own thoughts! oh! anything but them!—a feather to play with—a straw! and, truly, it is only a drowning person, Fanny, who learns the value of a straw to hold by.”

“Dear Theresa! any absurd fancies now would bring us to grief; already they have made you idle to-day. I could starve or die for you; but if we would live, we must work on, and work for ever without one moment’s pause,” replied Fanny, not stopping to look off her needle. “Such is the iron necessity laid on us now, and our religion should be shown in calmly submitting.”

“No, Fanny; impossible! You can pursue the

quiet, dove-like tenor of your way, with that look of stony perseverance, but I cannot sit still. I cannot sit here," exclaimed Theresa, the big, impatient tears standing in her eyes, and rolling in large drops over her almost child-like face. "Mine is the courage of despair, and there is no courage equal to that. Wait here, then, Fanny, till I return, rich and happy, to release you from this den. How often I feel as if we had lived in some previous state, and that I remembered all events as they shall follow, having seen them before. There is a sort of clairvoyance into the future as well as into the past; and at this moment I have a bright presentiment, as clear as if the scenes had occurred in former years, that all shall yet go well with us both."

"Not by any rash or desperate step, which can only lead to ruin!" remonstrated Fanny, in a tone of reproachful and most sorrowful anxiety. "My own dear, wild, warm-hearted sister, do not think of leaving a safe though miserable shelter; it would be wrong, rash, sinful!"

"Fanny, I have none of your calm bravery—of your still-life fortitude. I have a strong heart for enterprise, and some vague hope of success; therefore, let me go from certain death here, in the hope of coming back to release you hereafter. Try, then, to live till I reappear, and try to hope for better days. Should I never return, Fanny, my

only excuse will be, that I am dead. And now," continued Theresa, with a momentary relapse into her strange, wild merriment, "I must go to pack my imperial, dressing-box and jewel-cases for a journey to the moon or elsewhere, and take money enough to pay the turnpikes on my road of life. It is a stormy sea, but our anchor here is none of the safest. Fanny, if you want fresh air, here is a crack in this window-pane, and by sitting close beside it, you will now and then be able to breathe. I must go while the daylight lasts. When destroying that unlucky dress, I cast the die and dare not remain. I thirst for one gasp of country air again, or to be 'anywhere—anywhere—out of the world!'"

Fanny looked in trembling grief at Theresa's flushed countenance and quivering lip, as she took up a small Bible that lay beside them, saying, in accents of deep and solemn emotion, "Let me leave this with you, Fanny! it is our only remaining possession. Should I live and do well, I shall return here to claim it; but if evil come—if we never meet again—look for your comfort here, as 'I with my latest breath shall pray you may find consolation. It is agony to go, but it would be death to remain. The very little patience I ever possessed has long been extinct. I cannot sit still to die here; far less, Fanny, to see you there, withering like a broken lily. Yes!

I must try some desperate remedy to save myself and you. Dear sister! what can there be for you in remaining here?"

"There is death," replied Fanny, mournfully and solemnly contemplating her own thin, white hand, almost transparent in its delicacy; "I await the will of God in this den, the only safe and honest refuge of our misery."

Theresa, with a burst of agonized emotion, clasped Fanny in her arms, and riveted them round her as if they were never to be relaxed. She sobbed spasmodically for several minutes in a paroxysm of helpless sorrow; and then, with a short glance of loathing disgust at the cold, dingy room, at the endless row of needlewomen listlessly plying on with their unceasing task, and giving a long look of agonized affection at Fanny, she said in broken accents, "It is for your sake, dear sister, more than my own, that I go. Here we can have only blindness, starvation, grinding poverty, and certain death; surely, therefore, something must be tried for our deliverance."

With a wild throb of the heart that nearly stifled her, convulsed by most agonized grief, but resolute, Theresa rapidly left the room. Had the weeping girl ventured to look back, she never probably could have persevered in going, for there she would have seen her sister stretched insensible on the floor.

As Theresa rushed down stairs, every pulse of her body bounding in feverish agony, she met the forewoman of Madame Armand hurriedly advancing with a large basket. This very consequential official, Mrs. Cornillon, was in a sort of pompous haste, so that she scarcely noticed Theresa's agitation, but seemed glad to meet her at the moment, being in search of some one to assist in trying on dresses and bonnets; therefore she desired that Theresa should instantly accompany her in a cab to Mrs. Daniel Brownlow's house, where several important orders had to be received and executed instantly. The pale and trembling girl felt glad of this momentary refuge, before launching herself on the wide world alone, in search of better employment; and as she sat opposite Mrs. Cornillon, assuming apparent ease of manner while despair was gnawing at her heart, Theresa looked so extremely beautiful in her agitation, that even the preoccupied forewoman of Madame Armand's establishment silently awarded her the diploma of beauty, with double first-class honours.

“So closely our whims on our miseries tread,
That the laugh is invoked ere the tear can be dried;
And as fast as the rain-drop of Pity is shed,
The goose-plumage of Folly can turn it aside.”

MOORE.

Theresa, after their arrival in Grosvenor-square, stood for some time apart and unobserved in Mrs.

Brownlow's dressing-room, where the self-important forewoman began laying down the law emphatically on dress and fashion to an immeasurably large, red-faced, bloated-looking woman, drowned in ringlets, of most imperious manner, of most extensive dimensions, and of most hopelessly florid complexion—in the nose particularly. Theresa privately thought Mrs. Brownlow looked like a walking apoplexy.

“Indeed, Madame! this long waist gives you quite the figure of a sylph!” exclaimed Mrs. Cornillon, stepping a few paces back to admire her own success. She gave an appealing glance now to Madame Fleurie, Mrs. Brownlow's own abigail, who condescended with the air of a duchess *incog.* to hold the pins while Mrs. Cornillon arranged the massive dress in graceful folds. To Theresa's great surprise, and, truth to say, very great amusement, these two immensely important officials now discussed Mrs. Brownlow's costume and appearance, as if she had been a mere puppet in their hands, but certainly a very beautiful one, which they had a delight in adorning.

“Do you not think,” said Mrs. Cornillon, in a tone of polite deference to the abigail, “that another plait here, Madame Fleurie, would give a graceful sweep to the figure?”

“Charming!” replied the abigail, with an admiring glance at Mrs. Brownlow's immense pro-

portions and mulberry complexion. "Also a bow of ribbons there!"

"I intended a bouquet of flowers," answered Mrs. Cornillon, rather piqued at the interference. "A bunch of carnations will suit Mrs. Brownlow's complexion. She becomes bright colours most."

Theresa, looking at Mrs. Brownlow's beet-root face, wondered to hear that she became any colour, or that she could be supposed to have a complexion at all, and it was with anything but admiration that the juvenile Theresa watched that lady strutting about before the complaisant milliner, like a peacock which had only now, after moulting, regained its tail. While the scene continued, Theresa's chief astonishment was, how Mrs. Cornillon found gravity enough left in the world to look so much admiration and to say with immovable solemnity,

"We must have a graceful fall of gold blonde from the shoulders. That will be lovely, and nothing suits your style better than a mixture of *ponceau* and pink. You would look charming with a bunch of scarlet and yellow camellias, as a bouquet in front, and the sleeves looped up with moss-rose buds."

The atrocious Mrs. Cornillon appealed once more to the no less atrocious Madame Fleurie, who gravely gave her sanction to this arrange-

ment. No prime minister speaking on national business to his secretary ever looked more impressed with the vast importance of his subject, and a most anxious consultation about the most suitable berthe followed, between these two authorities, evidently playing into each other's hands. The debate became very keen whether they should mingle yellow Cape-jessamines in the bouquet, or gold China-asters; and Theresa privately thought that the most diverting burlesque on the stage could not be more utterly ridiculous. She greatly dreaded the moment when a similar scene should commence about trying on Mrs. Brownlow's bonnet, feeling afraid that, were she to become still more absurd, it might be impossible to refrain from bursting into one of her old uncontrollable fits of almost hysterical laughter. She thought Mrs. Brownlow looked like a big doll in the hands of two great "big little" girls, and in the buoyant amusement with which Theresa watched Mrs. Brownlow's state-toilet from her distant and respectful corner, she wondered at the audacity with which an elderly personage could be thus made ridiculous by these attendant officials to her very face.

"The effect is too perfect!" exclaimed Mrs. Cornillon, stepping back once more with a look of delighted enchantment at the massive dimensions of Mrs. Brownlow. "We shall have great credit

in this dress, Madam! You really do look most effective now. That costume is quite after the manner of Vandyck! Mrs. Brownlow has such taste!" added she, still addressing Madame Fleurie, as if the wearer had not been present. "Mrs. Brownlow improves whatever she wears. She has a certain style like nobody else, and so much breadth to carry it off. I am quite proud of our customer——and now for the bonnet! Madame Armand composed this coiffure with great care. She scarcely slept a wink last night for considering where this bow should be placed. It was completed quite in a moment of inspiration at last!"

If Mrs. Cornillon was great on the subject of dresses, she was greater still in caps, and quite supreme in bonnets. A light soufflet of gauze, lace, feathers, and flowers, now emerged from Madame Armand's box, looking like a rainbow of gossamer. It seemed of undoubted Parisian parentage, and was carried by Madame Fleurie on the tip of her finger to Mrs. Cornillon, both exclaiming over its beauties in well got-up ecstasies of admiration. The little, almost baby-like bonnet, seemed indeed a most astonishing composition, and was "Quite extravagantly cheap at 5*l.* 10*s.*," as Mrs. Cornillon almost upon oath declared; adding, with dignified emphasis, "Nobody has this but the French Empress, and no one in this country ever yet saw it."

As Theresa knew secretly that this very bonnet had been tried on by six ladies at least during the morning, and that it had been a fortnight adorning the shop, she felt rather shocked for Mrs. Cornillon's veracity, and very particularly glad she was not called forward to confirm any such assertion, as she must have turned Queen's evidence. This bonnet was of the florid-gothic Cranbourne-alley school, all pink and blue, such as a bride of seventeen might have worn, and when Mrs. Brownlow's rubicund face shone out amidst the soft maze of tulle and gauze, mingled with pale blush-roses, Theresa prudently turned away that she might not laugh outright.

"This is lovely! I knew it would suit Mrs. Brownlow exactly," exclaimed the abominable Mrs. Cornillon, trying to pull the fantastic little thing far enough on that lady's head to look decent, but the attempt proved impossible. The bonnet would obstinately look as if made for a child, Mrs. Brownlow's immense face would incorrigibly stare out, like a harvest-moon, and Mrs. Cornillon felt at her wit's end.

"Rather small, I see," observed she, fussily placing mirrors for Mrs. Brownlow to admire herself in all round, and turning to her complaisant oracle, Madame Fleurie, "I intend to put a ruche near the face of pale pink, mixed with rose-buds and primroses. I am sure you will be delighted

with the effect. Mrs. Brownlow bears a great deal of trimming round the face, and looks so very well in a ruche. This bonnet certainly does appear the least degree too small, but my young woman here shall put it on and show you the effect!"

Theresa, in her corner, had been rather unprepared for this very startling proposition. It came with the suddenness of electricity, and before having time to becalm herself, she was standing before Mrs. Brownlow with the little, fanciful, pretty, ridiculous-looking bonnet on her own beautiful head, her face covered with blushes, and a scarlet flush rising to her very forehead.

"There, now, you see exactly how it will look;" said Mrs. Cornillon in her usual business-like tone, while Theresa stole one smiling glance into the numerous mirrors around, and thought——no matter what she thought, for girls will be girls all the world over, and the small bonnet on her head was certainly most becoming. One little sigh she gave, and one very depreciating glance at the flame-coloured complexion of Mrs. Brownlow, which seemed to grow redder and her face larger every time Theresa looked.

"Let me see the bonnet in front again," said Mrs. Brownlow, from whom Theresa had diligently turned away, being in a state of ill-suppressed laughter, but now she forcibly composed her face

to be looked at, while Mrs. Brownlow continued to speak, saying, "I wish the whole costume to be unique and very becoming; but at the same time —— My stars! Who is that? What a resemblance!" exclaimed Mrs. Brownlow, her eyes falling suddenly on Theresa, whose beautiful face was quivering and dimpling with shyness and with suppressed laughter. "Who on earth are you? Where do you come from? What is your name?"

"My name is Ward," replied Theresa, timidly.

"And the voice, too?" added Mrs. Brownlow, with a look of increasing astonishment. "Let me look! Turn your face to the light. Wonderful! oh how wonderful!"

Theresa felt more than she ever did in her life before at a loss what to do or to think, as every turn of her countenance brought out a new outcry of amazement from the very exclamatory Mrs. Brownlow, who added, almost breathlessly, though attempting to recover herself, "Where do you come from? Tell me your whole history at once."

"I have, till now, lived always in Ireland," answered Theresa, looking modestly down. "I came to London only some time ago in search of employment."

"Then the resemblance is totally unaccountable," added Mrs. Brownlow, musingly. "But my husband often says I have a perfect genius for

discovering likenesses! I wonder if it would strike Daniel! I am resolved he shall be called in to see you."

When Mr. Brownlow, after hearing his wife's account of the pretty milliner, entered with his usual quiet, stealthy pace, his appearance reminded Theresa of a large dull tom-cat. She observed he was by no means so enthusiastic about finding out her own supposed likeness to somebody as his lady; but he coldly said, in a tone of consummate indifference, while levelling his gold eye-glass at Theresa, who trembled like a culprit before him, "The hair is very similar in colour, certainly."

Nothing among the small provocations of life is more teasing than not to have a favourite likeness perceived at once; therefore, the indignant Mrs. Brownlow, unmindful of Theresa's modest shrinking confusion, answered in some irritation, while the most brilliant of bonnets quivered on her head with excitement.

"Look at the profile! look at the full face! look at every feature! Well, I never!"——

Theresa now glanced round with a smile, and was hurriedly unpinning the bonnet-strings, while Mr. Brownlow shifted from one foot to another with an irritable growl of impatience at his wife's pertinacity, and turned once more with a scrutinizing expression to examine Theresa's countenance. Her extreme beauty astonished him; but, never very

acute at resemblances, he merely observed, with his usual glossy smoothness of manner, in a tone that his wife thought extremely stupid, "The hair certainly is very similar, but she is taller."

"Nonsense!" snapped his wife impatiently. "Just think for one moment of the picture in our drawing-room at Torchester, and look at this face,—the shape and colour of the eyes—the form of the nose, the mouth—the very attitude of the hands! So you are Irish?" asked Mrs. Brownlow, imperatively. "What friends have you there?"

"I come from the neighbourhood of Tipperary," answered Theresa, who had been constantly warned by O'Hara never to say more than she could help about her own origin, and who, in fact, knew little or nothing herself. "I am very friendless everywhere, and those to whom I belong are all poorer, if possible, than myself."

There was a tone of deep depression in the youthful voice of Theresa, which might have reached any heart less pre-occupied than Mrs. Daniel Brownlow's; but she had returned to her mirror and to her bonnet, all the excitement and wonder about Theresa being tamed down to vacuity by her husband's unobservant indifference. Again the red, pimpled face was paraded before a group of mirrors; again, Mrs. Brownlow curtsied to herself, and backed to watch the general effect; again, Mrs. Cornillon suggested a bow here, a flower there, and

an improvement everywhere. Again, Mrs. Brownlow pulled the frail pretty bonnet almost to pieces, trying in vain to make it look as well on her head as on Theresa's, but she succeeded only in looking very like an Egyptian sphynx, and at last impatiently tossed it down.

When Miss Brownlow's dress was fitted on, in another room, it required to be greatly altered, so that several seams had to be picked out and re-sewed; therefore, Mrs. Cornillon offered that, as Mrs. Brownlow was unwilling to let the dress be sent back, in case of its not being returned for the forthcoming ball to take place that night, Theresa should remain in Madame Fleurie's room to execute all the necessary improvements. It was a short reprieve to Theresa from, she scarcely knew what, of dread and despair to find herself seated in such a shelter, with some hours yet to spare for diligent work and quiet thought, instead of being launched into the dreary world of London streets. Busily she plied her needle, with trembling hands, while many a quiet tear coursed slowly down her face, as all the anxious realities of her position became more and more forced on her mind.

It was ten o'clock at night before Theresa's task could be completed, and Miss Brownlow came down impatiently to hurry the progress of her dress. When she perceived, accidentally, what fair and delicate hands were hastening through the work,

Anne Brownlow glanced in surprise at the crimson cheeks of this young stranger, burning with agitation. She saw that the bright eyes which looked up at her were glittering with tears, and she paused to observe what seemed to her astonished eyes like a beautiful picture.

Anne herself had grown up—a mere hairdresser's beauty, somewhat of the wax-doll school. She was, in short, rather pretty, very silly, very ignorant, and exceedingly accomplished, but with some heart left amidst a world of rubbish. She looked pityingly at the young milliner, so lovely, yet evidently so very unhappy. When Theresa glanced up at her for a moment, there was in those dark eyes such an expression of ghastly anxiety, that Anne felt perfectly startled at the sight of so much evidently suppressed agitation, and turned to Madame Fleurie, saying, in the pert accent of a spoiled, good-humoured child, "Now, I guess, you have never offered a cup of tea to your wearied visitor, old Flowery?"

"No!" replied the abigail, indifferently. "My cousin, Dr. O'Grady, in his Treatise on Fasting, says that the more people have to do, the less they should eat."

"You act on that rule of course, yourself," asked Anne, looking with secret diversion at the well-fed Madame Fleurie's expression of obsequious annoyance. "Look at those white lips, at those haggard

cheeks ! I was credibly told, yesterday, that Madame Armand's needle-women are about five degrees worse off than negro slaves ! Those girls not being her actual property, she does not care, too, if they be worked out at once. No loss accrues to her when the workwomen are all dead in a few months, buried, or blind, for other victims are ready, in troops, to follow through the workroom into the grave."

A momentary silence ensued, and as Anne stood beside Theresa, Madame Fleurie became suddenly struck with a certain degree of resemblance between them. It seemed like that of a fine picture by Titian, to a glaring daub by his youngest pupil ; but still they were in some respects wonderfully alike, and perhaps Anne herself perceived this, for she added in a tone of some kindness,—

" I had tea in my own dressing-room, and abundance remained, so come with me to drink a cup, if you are not impatient to go home."

" Home ! " sighed Theresa, in a tone of almost inaudible despondency, " I have no home."

Anne had relapsed into a butterfly-flutter about her ball, and was too much excited to look into other people's feelings beyond a momentary impulse of curiosity. Mrs. Brownlow's carriage was announced, while Theresa, seated at a respectful distance, continued deep in her very welcome cup of tea ; and Anne, totally forgetful of everything

but the ball, darted off, buttoning on her gloves and humming a quadrille in utter oblivion of every one except her intended partners.

A housemaid who entered to tidy the dressing-room some time afterwards, imagined that Theresa had been desired to wait for some farther orders, as the wearied girl reclined on a sofa surrounded by the fragments of her work. There she had fallen fast asleep, and slept almost beyond the possibility of being awakened, till Anne Brownlow, long after midnight, returned from her ball and exclaimed, in accents of impatient surprise on seeing the slumbering intruder, "There now! Madame Fleurie always goes out at night whenever we do, and everything is neglected at home! Only think of that milliner-girl having slept like a dormouse on my sofa, and she is not aroused yet. Those poor wretches are never above half awake, I believe, or above a quarter fed! Madame Armand is the most rapid milliner in London, therefore her assistants are of course obliged to be as quick as fifty race-horses. I daresay my visitor here has not enjoyed forty winks for the last month!"

"Poor creature!" said Mrs. Brownlow, carelessly; "I hope we shall both soon sleep as soundly ourselves. Let her stay here till morning, and now, dear Anne, good night. I was so pleased to see you dancing a second polka with Lord Tipperary. He seems quite a gem of a partner,

but Lord Brentford is the most eligible of all eligibles."

"Yes, Mamma; you should have heard him say, in his own odd, conceited, detestable way, that I had caught him for a partner by this beautiful wreath of water lilies. He says I remind him of the most beautiful and enchanting fairy he ever beheld, to whom he lost his heart some months ago, on the Irish coast. Lord Brentford spoke a great deal of fiddle-faddle nonsense about the trouble he is taking to find her again; and I told him, that had I ever supposed he possessed a heart at all, I should have made a point, long ago, of breaking it."

The sleeping Theresa awoke, widely, at the sound of Lord Brentford's name, for it rang on her ears laden with the memory of other days; and when Anne Brownlow accidentally looked round, she saw a pair of star-like eyes flashing brightly upon her, surrounded by a wealth of beautiful hair, scattered in masses around a crimson cheek. A profusion of shining curls stretched far over the pillow in long streaming ringlets, from a small head nestling into the cushions, which was supported by a round white arm, and the prettiest hand in the world. Anne felt for a moment perfectly startled with admiration; but every thought was put to sleep the next moment by her own weariness: and with a terrific yawn, that

seemed as if it would dislocate every joint in her body, the good-humoured butterfly-girl, as soon as she could tear off her dress, fell into bed; and fell asleep while comparing whether Lord Brentford or Lord Tipperary danced the polka best.

“It must be confessed,” thought Anne, “that Captain Clifford excels both; but I cannot make up my mind to be quite disinterested. He is so amusing! so unlike everybody else! I wish I had a peerage, as well as an estate, to bestow upon him!” Anne fell asleep dreaming that she had succeeded to both title and property, backed by an offer from Captain Clifford.

No young lady was more accomplished in the modern style than Anne Brownlow, but with no more mind than a wax doll. In music she was of the piano-breaking school, and played or sung as well as any one, without feeling or taste, could possibly do. She danced like a ballet girl, blundered through half-a-dozen languages, misspelt her own, and interspersed her conversation with scraps of French, as well as with morsels of Italian. When nothing crossed her humour she was good-natured and silly; all smiles, dimples, and nonsense; obliging when it cost her nothing, and quite ready to praise all who were obviously her inferiors. She made a point of being always particularly inattentive to those visitors she did not care for, that her very particular attention to those

she did like might be the more conspicuous; and when she sometimes allowed herself to become truly anxious about pleasing, there was a fussy patronage in her manner, most annoying and aggravating to the person she was determined to dazzle by her cordiality; and very obnoxious to those she neglected. Her delight was to sit conspicuously in a corner at parties, entirely monopolizing the assiduities of any one individual; and at a ball she preferred dancing with the boy in a jacket from Eton, if entirely devoted to her, rather than share the attentions of any other individual. There was a vacuity in Anne's expression, an empty frivolity in her manner, and a coldness in her voice extremely unprepossessing; and she never improved on acquaintance. At home, like many other young people in the modern school, Anne had not an idea of attending to family hours; for she considered regularity an intolerable restraint; and saw no advantage in the mutual enjoyment of family confidence, family events, family jests, and family affections, around a social family repast. The consequence was, that Mr. Daniel Brownlow, who kept with professional punctuality to established hours, sat down daily, alone, at ten, to a breakfast prepared for the whole party. Solitary in a crowded house, everything around him then grew cold, except his temper, which became hotter as he thought of this per-

petual grievance; and in leaving the breakfast-room, he would sometimes meet Anne, yawningly coming down, dressed in a haze of thin muslin, all ribbons and flowers, to order up for herself a fresh supply of every fanciful luxury she could devise. When a meeting with her somewhat irritated father became inevitable, she would coaxingly advance, saying, "Good morning, Papa, dear! I am half ashamed to be so late! You need not tell me I am a naughty girl, I know it! *Cela va sans dire!* I do hope it will not inconvenience you if I bespeak an early dinner to-day. I am going to the opera afterwards. You and Mamma will be much happier dining at your own hour alone! Good-by! *au revoir!* *A propos,* could you spare me the carriage this morning? I am quite ashamed to interfere with your airing, but it will be such a favour! Now I am off for the rest of this day, so take care of yourself, dear Papa, and do not be over-fatigued with walking to your office. *A propos!* Could you spare me ten pounds? My ball-dresses are all quite atrocious now! Lady Maria Calder's allowance is more than double mine, and she gets such beautiful presents!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

“Remember mercy! haply thou shalt save,
If only one of all that mournful band,
From jail, from workhouse, or an early grave!
Hear thou, and Heaven shall hear thy voice for mercy crave.’

NORTON.

ON the day of Theresa's departure, and for many a long day afterwards, there were two places vacant in the crowded, silent, dingy workroom of Madame Armand. Fanny, under the care of poor worn out, heart-broken Susan, was laid on a pallet of straw, delirious with fever, and Theresa had gone—no mortal could guess where!

Did O'Hara know? He seemed less miserably anxious, after a few days, than might have been expected, and there was even in his face sometimes a singular smile, impossible to be understood; it looked so like some secret source of pleasurable amusement, that none were to share,—or it looked at times to Susan, though she could not bear to acknowledge that even to herself, like the last flicker of a worn-out intellect drenched in gin, till his faculties were finally

almost extinguished. What could be the cause that brought into O'Hara's eyes, whenever Theresa's name latterly was mentioned, a suppressed smile; and once or twice produced a sneering, taunting laugh of apparent triumph? He now discouraged all attempts to trace out her place of concealment, and he changed the subject whenever she was mentioned, but still there seemed more and more obviously a twinkle of Irish humour in his eye, whenever Susan recommenced her often repeated and most anxious conjectures, what could have become of Theresa.

"Make your mind easy, old woman!" he said one morning, emphatically, almost triumphantly, and turning away to hide a smile. "Theresa is the girl, I always told you, to fall upon her feet wherever she wanders. I'll answer for Theresa. Do not then wear out the little that is left of you, Susan, with misery about Theresa. You really look to-day fit only to be buried! Like ~~Sydney Smith~~, you have left off your flesh to sit in your bones!"

"Patrick! if you know any good tidings of our dear girl, tell me!" implored Susan, pointing to Fanny, who lay on her couch like a vision from the world of spirits, so perfectly spectral was the transparency of her wasted cheeks, while her large dark eyes seemed as if they filled her whole face. "Look at our poor Fanny pining with anxiety and sorrow about her lost sister. If there be

any secrets, mine will all soon be in the safe keeping of the tomb, but set Fanny's mind at rest, Patrick, if you can."

"I dare not tell you all, Susan,—not even you,—especially as my little wife is so painfully conscientious, and a secret exists now respecting Theresa, which if betrayed would ruin all who know it. Theresa certainly made a condition that you and Fanny were to be told all, but I must not, can not venture, now to say more than this, that in the chapter of accidents you will at last meet happily again."

"Thanks, Patrick, thanks! I am satisfied to know she is well, and where you think her safe," answered the pale, shadowy-looking Susan, quietly resuming her work, from which she had scarcely looked up these many days, as her industry was now their only support. "I have no object at heart but your welfare, and that of the dear girls."

Susan had finished, and carefully folded up one shirt after another, till a dozen were completed, to wait till she could venture towards an obscure part of Westminster, where the shop was situated in which she might claim her scanty and hardly-gained recompense. Mrs. O'Hara had also a wedding order to execute in haste for Madame Armand, and after a time she looked in her abject weariness like one who moved and acted in a dream. Susan's red inflamed eyes became utterly

without lustre or meaning, except when they fell on the restless form of her suffering young patient; and then, who ever saw a more sorrowful expression than that with which the good, kind Susan contemplated that fair and lovely, but emaciated, Fanny; her slumbers broken and feverish, while it became evident that her sleep was not rest, being haunted by disturbing dreams. "My poor girl!" sighed Mrs. O'Hara one day; "I scarcely dare even wish you to recover! In the wild delirium of fever are you not happier far than with the best hopes I can cherish for my darling Fanny, now. Is this, alas, the end of your happy girlhood?"

A low delirious laugh from poor Fanny's bed was all the sound that followed, and it fell on the ear of Susan with a heavy weight of dismal solitary grief. She felt now worse than alone, and large tears fell slowly one by one on her work, but gave no relief; yet in dull aching misery she doggedly plied her busy needle, without indulging in one moment's intermission. Sometimes a sob of intense anguish, and much oftener a prayer of boundless submission, burst from Susan's pallid lips, but still she stitched on, and on, and on. It was the diligence of true-hearted, unselfish affection, without ostentation, and without one thought to spare for herself.

At this moment, a heavy, uncertain, staggering

step was heard on the stairs, and the sound of muttered curses. Oh what depth of degradation exists to which a man may not be reduced who is the slave of intoxication! Sinning and repenting—repenting and sinning again! Susan's heart seemed ready to burst when the door flew open, and O'Hara stumbled into the room, bloated, ragged, dishevelled, and reeking with gin. It was a fearful sight to the pious devoted wife; she felt it like the stroke of death. Her husband's hair hung wildly matted over a face bleared, inflamed, and swollen, while his entire dress had a disreputable, sitting-up-all-night aspect, most revolting to behold.

Susan, clean and tidy, pale as death, but quiet in her silent misery, formed a touching contrast to the reeling husband, who now, with faltering steps, caught hold of a bed-post to steady himself, and swinging his helpless body round it, sat down; then gazing about him with a vacant idiotic expression, he said in angry, hiccuping accents, "O'Grady follows me everywhere! He is gibbering and frowning at us out of the wall now! Look at him! His monster head is staring at me through the window!"

In vain the trembling Susan tried to soothe him, horrified to perceive that her husband had been attacked by that most awful of mental and bodily maladies, the curse of the drunkard, *delirium*

tremens. In a paroxysm of insane excitement, O'Hara threw every missile he could find at his imaginary enemy, loudly cursing O'Grady in every horrid expression of blasphemy which his drunken memory could furnish, or which his singular genius for eloquence could suggest. He struck at the phantom face, which haunted him, with his clenched fist, shivering the window to fragments; he endeavoured to wipe that hideous face off the wall, but still it was there. He knew the whole to be but a phantom of his delirious brain, and yet he battered his clenched hands on the wall till it was besprinkled with his blood. The wretched drunkard felt as if bands of living fire were whirling round his head, and phantoms pursuing him. He thought that loathsome reptiles were crawling over his body, and that he was engaged in mortal combat with O'Grady, whom he felled to the earth, and yet his enemy stood up again as palpable and as powerful as before. O'Hara seemed to find a frightful pleasure in the sinful ingenuity with which he invented new expressions of blasphemy and horror for cursing O'Grady, and terrifying Susan. In this maddening attack of delirium, the miserable man watched with a sort of tipsy exultation the deepening sorrow of his trembling wife, and when at length, in her helpless anguish, the needle dropped from Susan's hand, he burst into a low

laugh of scornful derision, saying, in the shrill accents of insanity—

“Has my wife learned yet to hate me? Look, and tremble! A chain of everlasting destruction is around me. The fire of hell is raging within me. Years since O’Grady drove your wretched husband into drinking, and I am destroyed. Go on with your stitching, Susan! Why do you stop? A drunkard’s wife must have no rest, no peace, no safety, no home, but in the churchyard. O’Grady! I saw him to-day enter the house where Theresa lives, and all will soon be discovered—all—all—all! Take that girl Fanny out of her bed! We must save her from his grasp; we must conceal her yet. I must bundle out of this house!”

“Patrick!” whispered Susan, grasping his arm in a pale agony of woe, that for a moment fixed even O’Hara’s delirious attention, “Fanny’s life depends on perfect quiet; and more than life, her intellects. Oh, my husband! when I remember old times—when I look at her now, and at you, it seems that if people, without having died, could be in hell itself, I am there. Not one earthly hope, not one earthly comfort can I turn to; and even my very prayers—oh God forgive me! God help me to trust in Him still!”

Susan threw herself on her knees beside Fanny’s bed, buried her face in the coverlet, and sobbed till

the very bed shook beneath her. It seemed to Mrs. O'Hara's aching heart that the world and all it contained could add no more to the weight of her calamities, and Susan clasped her hands convulsively over her ears now, that she might no longer hear the revolting language of her blaspheming husband. O'Hara at length, half exhausted and half sobered, seized his wife's arm, saying, in a thick, stuttering, drunken voice, "Give me money! I dare not remain sober—that would be torture unbearable. It is something for one hour to get oblivion. Oh that my forgetfulness could last for ever and ever! Nothing in existence is so awful as to think we cannot part with life—that we cannot cease to be conscious! Let me for a moment forget! All that is hideous and dreadful seems engraved on my memory in characters of fire. Give me money! Give, Susan, and you shall be left alone now, and in peace!"

"I have not one penny on earth—not one farthing!" said Mrs. O'Hara, in a low voice, bursting into tears. "We are within an inch of destruction! Oh! think for one moment!"

"Think! Pretty thoughts mine would be, Susan. Am I to think pleasantly over the loss of character, health, peace, competence—the very clothes I used once to wear—the very home where we were once so happy?" answered O'Hara, in a low, concentrated whisper of utter despair. "Look

now at the threadbare drunkard, fit only to frighten crows! Look, and tell me if you recognise the husband of former days. Good Susan! kind Susan! nothing is left to me but your affection, and a conscience that stings me to madness for having ruined you,—which will one day drive me to Bedlam. The talons of a vulture seem clutching at my very heart—my mind is haunted by ghastly images. All around me has become dark as night, and I shall wander now over God's earth like a condemned spirit in a sunless desert—homeless, hopeless, friendless!”

“Not friendless, Patrick, as long as you have a living wife,” interrupted Susan, solemnly grasping his arm; while, with a long, earnest, imploring glance, she looked tearfully in his face. “Not till death part us.”

“Best of Susans!” exclaimed O'Hara, with a momentary gleam of rational emotion, “can I look at you, good, honest-hearted Susan, and not curse my own black-hearted iniquity? At this moment my whole past existence seems vividly present to my mind, compressed into the size of a nutshell. Yes, not a thought, an action, a hope, a fear, of all my past days is forgotten in the picture. Nothing that has happened on earth perishes entirely from the memory. All appeared now as a dissolving view, and is gone! Again I am, in heart and intellect, in body and soul,

crushed, debased, blighted, blasted, scathed by the degradation of drunkenness! You, Susan, who were, when you married me, full of fresh and happy hopes, are now a ruined beggar! Yet you are still hoping, still trying to reform the besotted drunkard! Do you still think that possible?"

O'Hara laughed a fearful laugh of almost fiendish merriment, of nearly frenzied misery, of remorseful woe; and his unhappy wife turned away, unable to look at him, lest her eyes should seem to reproach O'Hara. There was anguish in every heaving breath she drew. Susan's face had become like a marble statue, except that the white lips quivered as she attempted to speak, saying, in accents of appalling agony, "Patrick! would you like to witness the breaking of a broken heart?"

O'Hara's drunken glance at this moment fell on the neatly-folded, clean-looking pile of some dozen shifts, ready for Madame Armand's order. In a moment he had clutched them all in his arms, and was staggering off towards the door, determined to pledge them at the pawnbroker's, when Susan sprang after her husband, grasped his arm, and with almost a shriek of imploring anguish begged him to return.

"You cannot—you will not—you dare not rob your own wife," she said, sobbing with grief and terror. "My character will be ruined. Take my life, Patrick, rather than make me dishonest. I

could face death rather than shame or guilt. As long as I can earn one morsel of honest bread, you shall share it with me; but spare me this, Patrick; spare your wretched wife from a prison!"

Susan, with the momentary courage of desperation, snatched the parcel from her husband's almost senseless arms, and was hurrying with it to a distant corner of the room, when O'Hara sprung after her, shouting like a perfect demon, and seemed as if he would strike her down to the very earth. At this moment the door opened on a sudden, while several persons, attracted evidently by the loud, excited vociferations of O'Hara, rushed into the room. Seeing the wretched man with his clenched fist raised threateningly above the head of his helpless wife, who stood as if turned into stone, but still convulsively grasping the parcel in her arms, several strangers flew forward, headed by a tall, pale, clerical-looking young man, who instantly collared O'Hara, and shook him almost out of his coat, in the vehemence of his contemptuous indignation.

Mr. Mortimer, the curate of the parish, had long been known as the most benevolent of mortals, but, while actively endeavouring now to recover Mrs. O'Hara from a state of alarming insensibility, he spoke, with a bitterness very foreign to his admirable nature, of the vice and passion which had brought her husband to such a crisis.

“The man who merely threatens to strike his wife should be drummed out of every village, and whipped through every street. In England, marriage used to be the most sacred of bonds, but John Bull is not always so good a husband of late as he used to be. Foreign intercourse has brought in foreign ways! Among the upper classes divorce or separation takes place in ten instances to one of former days, and among the poorer classes every police report teems with such un-English cases as this. A man, brutalized with gin, till he no longer deserves the name of man, beats with cowardly violence the unresisting woman whom he has promised before God and man to protect. Such is the disastrous effect of unnatural excitement and no religious principle. Any poor woman once married to such a brute has no escape from slavery but death.”

While Mr. Mortimer applied restoratives to the pale, crushed, emaciated sufferer, tears stood in that good man's eyes; and when he kindly took her hand, there was an expression of such gentle sympathy in his countenance, so unlike anything to which the trembling Susan had lately been accustomed, that agitation did more for her relief than any other remedy, for her burning eyes became drenched with tears, and she wept convulsively.

Mrs. O'Hara was not one, however, to remain long engrossed with her own sorrows, and she now

pointed faintly to the couch where Fanny lay insensible, while her eye rested hopefully on the calm, intelligent features of the compassionate stranger. Mr. Mortimer no sooner observed this silent appeal, than, advancing to the bed, he opened Fanny's curtains, which hung in melancholy tatters around, and started with undisguised astonishment when he beheld the young tenant of that miserable pallet. It was some minutes before the good curate recovered his surprise, to see a countenance that no sculptor's chisel could have improved; the long dark eye-lashes that rested on Fanny's pale oval cheek, shaded by the redundant wilderness of beautiful ringlets that fell over her round white throat and arms. Mr. Mortimer felt that this was no common case of adversity. As the rich heiress, Miss Plantagenet, that best of women, made him her almoner, he was not, like most curates, obliged to refrain from giving more than his kind sympathy and prayers to the poverty which some clergymen know too well from experience how to pity. Mr. Mortimer felt more than ever grateful to Emily Plantagenet for the discretionary power she gave him to succour the unfortunate. He had a *carte blanche* to do good with the heiress's purse to any reasonable extent, and she thanked him when, by his judicious advice, any benevolent action was done; therefore, he at once felt that this was

a case in which she might, and should be appealed to.

O'Hara meanwhile, without much difficulty, fought his way through a crowd of persons assembled round the door. When they heard that this was merely the too common case of a drunken man assaulting his wife,—as he had not completely murdered her, the excited vagabonds around, most of whom had assembled from the gin-palace opposite, thought this quite a tame every-day affair, not worth more ado, while most of the startled spectators stood helplessly back when they met the almost maniacal glance of O'Hara's blazing eye, and saw the large drops of agony that stood on his furrowed brow.

Not a word was spoken when the wretched and degraded man, with very threatening looks at all around, made a frantic rush towards the door, and reeled staggering into the dark and stormy night; his hair matted, his eye-brows knit, his lips compressed with the stern energy of despair, while a blasphemous curse came burning from his tongue. It was a fearful sight, as O'Hara disappeared in a perfect whirlwind; the roaring blast howling fiercely along the dripping streets, and the rain pattering loudly on the broken window panes. Thus the drunkard went forth, a penniless vagabond, staggering onwards, till he reeled against the unpitying rails, and groaned aloud in

his drunken agony, while thinking, with frantic desire, of a narrow home in the grave—the only home he could now ever hope to reach.

In the drunkard's wretched mind all was chaos and despair. O'Hara's mental powers, once so brilliant, were utterly palsied, while he threw himself now despondingly down on a door-step, awaiting in passive misery all the ruin that must follow. He felt like one blasted by lightning—blind, helpless, desperate—yet retaining an intense capability of suffering. It seemed to him as if one only hope lighted up the gloom of all his stormy, tempestuous thoughts, and that hope was a hope of death-dealing vengeance on his enemy—a vengeance that should bring O'Grady to the gallows—that should grind down his soul to agony and degradation, like that into which he had been himself betrayed. While such a vision gleamed across the intoxicated mind of O'Hara, he suddenly broke the solemn silence of night with frantic shouts of delirious laughter, fragments of songs, cursing and swearing, till a friendly policeman conveyed him raving to the watch-house. Everything that once was man in O'Hara seemed now extinct for ever; but yet, as the brightest stars of heaven are reflected sometimes in a filthy pool, so there still remained one glimmer of heaven-descended light in the miserable heart of Patrick O'Hara, as he muttered to himself, in low

accents that trembled with anguish, "My benefactress! My first and only friend! now in another world, I still could look you in the face when we meet hereafter, for I have not betrayed your daughters to their enemy: O'Grady shall not enjoy that triumph. No! I am not yet so utterly abandoned as that! They are safe! They may one day be happy! I never, never can be,— never in time, and never in eternity. The drunkard's life is a short and sure path to the drunkard's grave."

"O suffering, sad humanity!
O ye afflicted ones who lie
Steep'd to the lips in misery,
Longing, and yet afraid to die.
I pledge you in this cup of grief,
Where floats the fennel's bitter leaf;
The battle of our life is brief."

LONGFELLOW.

CHAPTER XIX.

“Then in life’s goblet freely press
The leaves that give it bitterness;
Nor prize the colour’d waters less,
For in thy darkness and distress
New light and strength they give.”

LONGFELLOW.

WHEN Fanny next awoke, her mind and body had arrived at the state of languor when nothing can possibly cause much emotion or surprise, yet so great and unexpected were the changes which welcomed her return to consciousness, that the wondering girl fancied herself in a pleasant dream, from which her gentle, timid, and long-tried feelings dreaded to awaken. The utter wretchedness into which she had lately been plunged, now seemed in her memory as if it belonged to another world, when her eyes wandered bewilderingly around on a scene that appeared to her most dear and delightful. Fanny found herself in a small, clean, carpeted room, adorned with white curtains, the walls embellished by a very gay paper, and the window-sill adorned with flower-pots. The

long-suffering girl's glimmering thoughts rested with a sensation of feeble pleasure on the pattern of hyacinths and roses that enlivened the pannels of her room, and on a cheerful fire blazing brightly in the grate, while the whole scene around appeared a perfect exemplification of the word comfort. A small kettle was singing cheerfully on the hob, and near it Fanny saw a stranger lady sitting, dressed in black. She seemed of a most pleasing and benevolent aspect, her countenance beaming with good-humour, as she talked in a low under tone to Fanny's dearest and best of friends, Mrs. O'Hara. The two were in very deep and earnest conversation. Susan, evidently very happy, was equipped in a most tidy, respectable, though extremely plain dress, and certainly her whole heart seemed pleasantly beaming in her bright honest eyes, as she respectfully, but very frankly replied to the questions and remarks of her companion.

Fanny's first drowsy impression was that she had been brought to an infirmary, but in this rather startling conjecture, she felt soon most agreeably undeceived, by overhearing parts of the low whispered dialogue going on in an under tone at her side. Nothing sharpens curiosity like the sick-room whisper.

The voice that addressed Mrs. O'Hara was like music itself, so full of gentle sensibility and cheer-

ful benevolence, but the look that accompanied it, was, if possible, more delightfully prepossessing still. It was balm for a wounded spirit like Fanny's to see such a face, and soft tears of pleasure welled into her eyes, while she lay immovably gazing at the speakers.

"Indeed, Mrs. O'Hara," said Miss Plantagenet, in conclusion; "wealth has many drawbacks, very few of the pleasures it bestows are so genuine as the power of doing any service to one who feels it gratefully, as you do. I am more than recompensed! Providence in giving me fortune, gave me no near relatives; therefore I often deplore the loneliness of having neither brothers nor sisters. It is my ambition to be loved—to deserve affection—in all classes of life, to know that there are those who will pray for me, and take a kind interest in my welfare. Life is a barren desert without mutual good offices. Though many misanthropical people warn me that my castle in the air of having a number of sincerely attached friends, will bring me just as many disappointments,—that Time, with his cold wing, must wither my sanguine hopes,—yet I feel and know that in you, Mrs. O'Hara, no one will ever be deceived."

Susan, when her feelings were very deeply moved, was not a fluent talker, but her eyes could always speak eloquently on her behalf, and they said enough to more than satisfy her friendly

benefactress, whose kind heart seemed to imagine no happiness so great as that of bestowing happiness, and who had come with her whole soul to the conclusion that it is indeed much more blessed to give than to receive. Days passed rapidly on—weeks—and Fanny became completely restored to the bloom of health and beauty, though deeply anxious about Theresa, whose place of concealment, she and Mrs. O'Hara were consoled to remember was evidently known to O'Hara, and satisfied him, though for some inscrutable reason he chose to hide it. Where could that dear sister be, from whom Fanny had never till now been above an hour separated. Where?

The morning after Theresa had been left sleeping on a sofa in Anne Brownlow's dressing-room, it was the intention of Mr. and Mrs. Daniel, with their family, to set out early for Torchester Abbey, there to settle during the season, as at least temporary proprietors. It was long since Mr. Attorney Brownlow had merged his position of trustee for his absent brother, Sir Richard, into that of owner and landlord, having convinced himself that the out-of-sight out-of-mind wanderer strolling through the unhealthy Crimea, was very probably deceased. At all events, Sir Richard, while hunting in the wilds of Russia, had imbibed such a taste for uncivilized life, that he despised any adventures short of romance, and

delighted in shooting through African jungles or Crimean marshes every sort of game, from a snipe to an elephant. His pursuits had thus become so active, that Daniel declared he thought all the preserves in Great Britain would scarcely afford his brother a week's sport, and that England itself never could contain him. Several newspapers at the time of Lady Brownlow's death had misled Sir Richard into a belief that one of his nieces, only one, survived from the shipwreck; and that therefore he had merely succeeded to the empty title; while Daniel, who from the first saw that mistake, took care not to correct his brother's impression, that he was himself guardian to the imaginary heiress, with sole management of the estate. Richard felt no wish, therefore, to come home; and having very small means of doing so, Daniel had long satisfactorily considered his brother a complete savage, comfortably disposed of for life, if he were yet alive, but more probably dead. During some years, therefore, Mr. and Mrs. Daniel had tacitly avoided the mention of Sir Richard's objectionable name, and as he never wrote to anybody, it was the natural consequence that nobody ever wrote to him. The only recollection which ever crossed the memory of Mrs. Daniel in respect to Sir Richard was, that if she could get his actual decease comfortably authenticated, her husband would become the

Baronet, and she herself would be Lady Brownlow. It was too teasing!

The Daniel Brownlows were a boisterously and provokingly prosperous-looking family. Never, in short, were three persons more slavishly devoted to rank and fashion than the Brownlows; but their hold of it was as yet very precarious; and though they boasted to each other, trying to persuade themselves that they really were incorporated into the best London set, yet a secret consciousness preyed on the mind of each individual apart, that as yet they were only tolerated on sufferance, and that it required all the exquisite dinners they gave in Grosvenor Square, and all the elegant hospitalities of Torchester Abbey, to act as cork-jackets in keeping their heads above water, throughout the full tide of London fashion. It is a very difficult sea to pilot, and Mrs. Daniel Brownlow lived in constant terror that she might lose one inch of her position. Unfortunately, Mr. Brownlow, though he had distant visions of a seat in Parliament, could never, in his general aspect, and ever-new suit from the tailor, rise above the City of London cut. In his game of life he cared only to play with Court cards, and had the delight common to vulgar men, in dropping the titles of those peers to whom he had once been introduced. He attended frequently at levees, on the same principle that he

went to church, pompously remarking that he thought it right to give "his support" to Church and State. And truly Mr. Daniel Brownlow was now a very great man in his own esteem, in his family circle, and wherever else he could make himself be considered so. In short, the whole family were rising in the world, and extremely well pleased to do so. Mrs. Brownlow went about to parties, a perfect chandelier of diamonds. The Honiton lace flounces, furnished by Madame Armand, on the dress she wore that night, had been at least an inch deeper than those of her perpetual rival, Mrs. Drummond Armitage; and her velvet dress was much more expensive. Mr. Brownlow had conversed with three peers at the ball, one of whom had familiarly called him "old fellow;" and Anne's baby-face glistened with retrospective felicity as she thought over the quadrilles; for though she remarked, in a tone of sentimental regret, that thirty-seven of her best partners had now gone to the Crimean war, yet those left behind were not all rubbish, as long as she could "rough it" with Lords Brentford and Tipperary, or even waste a quadrille on that very agreeable detrimental of the younger-brother species, Captain Clifford. Anne had been brought up to think it the business of every woman to make every man she met in love with her; but she utterly despised and pitied all the romantic love-matches made by her school-

companions, resolving not to marry in haste, nor to have any cause, from deficiency of rank or fortune, to repent at leisure.

Mr. Brownlow, though rather snubbed and avoided at the very fashionable club into which he had got most miraculously elected, contrived to have a card-playing and billiard-winning intimacy with most of the exceedingly fast young men, who were rushing fastest into debt or difficulties, for he assisted often to get them relief at a most terrific per centage. Mrs. Daniel cultivated a peculiar genius for boasting. The chief object for which many ladies go into society seems to be, that they may boast of their numerous invitations, visitors, friendships, and familiar associations with persons of whose acquaintance they are proud, and it is astonishing to observe the skill with which a practised hand brings in promiscuously or accidentally the whole of her engagement list. But Mrs. Brownlow outdid the most ingenious. In company with those who she knew for certain did not visit in houses of exclusive calibre, and who might as well have attempted to take Sebastopol or Cronstadt as to enter one, Mrs. Brownlow ventured on the bold step of pretending she had been there, trusting to the groundless fable being undetected; "I did not see you at Lady Newmarket's ball last night, Mrs. Compton!" she said one day in a tone of languid superiority,

“It was rather a bore to me going at all, as I had dined late at the Duchess of Cornwall’s, and the music there is always worth staying for; but Lady Newmarket never forgives one for disappointing her! Some people are too arbitrary in their friendships, till it really becomes troublesome that one must not refuse one of their invitations without giving offence.”

“Indeed!” replied quiet little Mrs. Compton, rather overawed. “I did not see your name in the list to-day, when we read the *Morning Post*.”

“No! Well, that always happens when Brownlow accompanies me anywhere. He hates having his name ticketed up as an idle man, so we avoid letting the reporter hear us announced.”

The Brownlows were seated at their early breakfast the next morning after Theresa had come to their house, in preparation for the express train to Brentford. Like all persons who have least to do, they travelled always by express. Mr. Brownlow, affecting a look of Parliamentary importance, was cutting up his *Times*, damp from the press; and Mrs. Brownlow, trying to refresh her bouquet of the night before by hot-watering it, while recounting all her little triumphs of the previous night, and laying down the law to her daughter, that in London those only who are hospitable will receive hospitality, consequently Mr. Brownlow’s respectable little income must be made

to do as much as possible, and more, "to give Anne a lift in society."

A London postman's double knock crashing at the house-door brings in its train often so much of good or of evil, that it is wonderful with how little interest that well-known sound is often heard, and never with less excitement by Mr. Brownlow than to-day, especially when he saw that the result was only one ill-folded, shabby, foreign-looking letter, on which the direction had been changed so often that it seemed little short of a miracle how this unprepossessing epistle had ever reached the intended destination. It does so happen generally that if there be a letter that any one throws carelessly down, and almost forgets ever again to take up, it turns out to have been one of the most startling importance; and such was on this occasion the case. Mr. Brownlow finding a few moments to spare in the interval between his two cups of tea, carelessly broke open the seal, and absently unfolded the uninteresting-looking document.—One glance at the date and signature left Daniel Brownlow white as the wall. For several minutes he remained stiff and rigid as a corpse, holding the letter immovably before his face, that none might see his agitation, while an oath of angry annoyance hovered unspoken upon his lips. Mr. Brownlow's eyes flew rapidly over the obnoxious letter, and when it had

been fully perused his face assumed a spectral paleness, and his breakfast, from that moment, remained untasted before him.

Anne, having no natural sensibility, never became conscious of emotion in others, and so little observant was she in general, that her father's face might have become black as a negro's without its taking her attention off the muffin before her; but when, at length, she looked up hurriedly, to remonstrate that they would be too late for the train, her consternation became very great to perceive him in a state that looked almost like paralysis. Rousing himself instantly, when he perceived that he was observed, Mr. Brownlow desired Anne to leave the room instantly, as he had business of consequence to discuss with her mother, and added the astonishing, but, truth to say, very welcome announcement that their departure from London must be delayed.

The delighted Anne, troubled with no more thought than a butterfly, glided gracefully away, humming an opera-tune, and hoping fervently that "papa's" important business might be something to give her a reprieve beyond the night of Mrs. Drummond Armitage's magnificent ball. Mrs. Brownlow, meanwhile, had looked up from her tea-making cares, and started with consternation to perceive the livid alarm imprinted on every feature of her husband's countenance, who reached

out to her the letter he held in his hand, which trembled visibly as he did so. "What in all the earth are we to do or say! I have but a few hours to prepare for this. The letter has been going astray through every post-office in London."

Mr. Brownlow leaned his elbows on the table, and buried his face in both hands, completely overwhelmed; while his managing wife, who had in all great emergencies more strength of mind than her husband, perused the letter twice over deliberately. Her very eyes seemed blasted by reading the contents, and she stood for some moments without sense or motion.

"Well!" exclaimed Mr. Brownlow, with momentarily increasing agitation, "why do you say nothing, and stare at me like an astonished cassowary? What are we to do? Speak!"

"I am completely dumb-founded! This is quite an American 'fix,'" observed Mrs. Brownlow, in a dreamy, almost absent voice, but with a look of most painful astonishment. "This news is as unexpected and unwelcome as snow in summer. That letter brings instant ruin and disgrace to us all."

The contents ran as follows, written in a dashing, free, gentleman-like hand:—

"DEAR DAN,

"As you are now my only living brother, I feel that we ought, for the sake of our dead

parents, and of poor Frank, whom we both loved, to be friends. Let the past be buried, then, in the graves of those once dear to us both, whom we must still and for ever mourn. The last accounts I received, some years ago, from home, announced your being guardian and trustee to our surviving niece; and I trust she may *possibly* have found in you a kind and faithful friend. Business—very important business, I am happy to say, connected with our noble army in the Crimea, takes me, for the very shortest possible time, to old England. I have leisure only for a glimpse of my relatives, being involved in commissariat concerns abroad, which it would be an absolute sin to lose sight of during an hour longer than can be avoided. Trusting that on the 1st of July, then, you will give a joyous welcome, only for a day or so, to a brother who wishes you and yours as well and prosperous as himself; I remain, Dear Dan, yours, with restored confidence and regard,

“ RICHARD BROWNLOW.

“ P.S. Give my love to the young heiress, Frank’s dear girl, and let her be prepared to meet me with affection, for I long to see the ‘ fair daughter of our house and home.’ ”

Had this letter come from the deadliest of enemies, rather than from the kindest of brothers, it

could not have inspired greater consternation; and while Daniel kept his astonished eyes fixed upon the signature, every line seemed to quiver illegibly before his startled observation. He looked apprehensively round, as if already in Richard's actual presence, crushed up the letter in his hand, wishing he could thus exterminate the contents, and then, with blanched lips, he fixed his anxious eyes on the pale countenance of his wife.

“Who ever dreamed that Richard, after fourteen years' absence, would break his resolution—almost an oath—to live and die abroad!” exclaimed Daniel, walking up and down the room at a tearing pace, and viciously grasping the odious letter with angry vehemence, as if it had been a viper in his hand. “My only reason, you know, for concealing Richard's succession from him was, that he really seemed so infinitely better off abroad than he could ever be at home. Torchester is frightfully overburdened with debt and improvements. The place has nearly ruined me already; and as for our refunding the ten-thousandth part of what we have squandered here, that is a flat impossibility.”

“If one of Frank's daughters had survived, as he believes,” observed Mrs. Brownlow, meditatively, “you would have no account to render till she came of age, some years hence; but as

the matter stands now, it is a very awkward affair."

"Where is the use of telling me that? Pray, Mrs. B., if you have no wiser remark to make, hold your tongue for ever. Awkward, indeed! Should I find no way out of this horrid scrape before to-morrow, Richard's first visit will find me in Bedlam."

"Let that be your last resource," answered Mrs. Brownlow, coolly. "We can surely contrive in some way to pull ourselves through this ugly affair! Could you not prevent Richard coming to Torchester at all on some pretext? But then he has given us no time. This being the 30th of June, to-morrow is the 1st of July—"

"Of course it is! We need no almanack to tell that July follows June. I know that, without consulting either you or Thomson's Seasons," replied Mr. Brownlow petulantly; for like all persons, when agitated, he had become very irritable. "Let me beg you not to speak like a drivelling idiot, Mrs. B., or I shall envy the solitude of St. Simon on the top of his pillar. I wish we were all at the bottom of the Dead Sea, but think now, with your woman's wit, always ready at expedients, what is to be done?"

"An old saying declares wisdom to be better than house or lands!" answered Mrs. Brownlow meditatively. "Your brother says he can remain

only some days. We might persuade some one, half in jest, to personate Frank's daughter. Anne might; or stay! I have it! That Irish girl upstairs, who is altering a silk dress for me! I declare we could transform her into the very thing. She would look that character to the life. You know there is really a resemblance, and we can pretend to her that it is a mere practical joke. Only pay her well, and a girl so poor will ask no inconvenient questions."

"Not a bad suggestion! Clever, but wrong! You really are quite a wicked fairy!" observed Mr. Brownlow, walking thoughtfully up and down the room, with a look of keen speculation in his eye. "This is a case of life or death to me, for I could not survive detection and ruin. If Richard were to know all, Mrs. B., I should advise you not to leave me alone with a razor or pistol. I would rather hide myself in the deepest grave than face my honest-hearted brother as a swindling defaulter. All the rents of all the years since poor Frank's death I should have to account for. Nothing is too desperate for me to try! How could it all be managed?"

"That girl up-stairs looks too clever to live, and could act I dare say equal to anything at the minor theatres, if well instructed how to take her part. People in London know nothing of each other's affairs, and our country neighbours know

still less of ours. Anne might be left behind, out of sight here, and also my French maid who has seen the girl. We have no relations of our own, and Richard has no acquaintances here now to gossip with. Let us therefore receive your brother at Torchester, in an ecstasy of domestic affection, introduce his supposed niece to him, and during the few days he remains receive no visitors—not one!”

“I must think this over!” answered Mr. Brownlow, walking hurriedly up and down the room, his thumbs inserted in the arm-holes of his ample waistcoat. “The idea is worthy of a domestic Talleyrand, as you are, Mrs. B. It would require a head like mine, however, to work out the plan.”

At this moment Coverdale, the portly butler, entered to say that a poor man, who would take no denial, wished to have an interview with Mr. Brownlow. “He is a most disreputable-looking person, Sir—smells strongly of gin—but says you will remember him. His name is O’Hara.”

“O’Hara! Show him up this very instant! How very fortunate!” exclaimed Daniel, as the servant vanished. “Patrick O’Hara is now, I believe, without meaning to compliment him, the cleverest rascal on earth! Such an individual, I am sorry to say, we need. O’Grady tells me that O’Hara would sell his very soul for a glass of gin,

and that he is never to be seen sober—never even by accident !”

“ What a fall for any man once so respectable !”

“ So very respectable !” answered Mr. Brownlow, absently ; “ but the less so the better for our purpose at present. My brother Frank always complained latterly that O’Hara chose such very inconvenient times to be drunk, but now I am told he never chooses any time to be sober. The fellow will not be alive in a month, but meanwhile he is an absolute necessity of life to me now.”

“ Give him no money in hand, or he will drink himself to death before our plan be attempted,” interposed Mrs. Brownlow, earnestly. “ Make O’Hara the most magnificent promises in case of success, but not one shilling till all is completed. He cannot be trusted with one penny in advance. If the wretch accepts your terms, let him instruct the girl in her part, propose the affair to her, and relieve me of that burthen. He could take up the idea at once perfectly.”

O’Hara had fallen into a desperate strait indeed, before making up his mind to parade his wretchedness before Mr. Brownlow, in that house where once he had been so deservedly trusted and honoured. As the *ci-devant* factor entered that room, where so often formerly he had honestly and faithfully transacted business with Sir Francis, he stood for a moment overwhelmed with emotion,

while two hot burning tears rolled unheeded down his cheek. In silence, in sorrow, in deep remorseful humiliation, he stood there; the past, the long, long past, glimmering before his mental vision in the fiercest pangs of agony. Bitter, indeed, was the smile with which O'Hara heard the wily Daniel say, as he advanced with extended hand and ineffable condescension, "Come in, my esteemed friend, O'Hara."

"Only think!" muttered the wretched guest, with miserable derision, "that I have lived to hear anybody once more call me an esteemed friend!—me!—Patrick O'Hara! Ah! the time has been, when in this room praise was given by those from whom it seemed indeed an honour!"

The wretched being covered his face with his hands, staggered rather than walked towards a seat, and wept convulsively, bitterly, hopelessly; for he had learned to despair of himself, and to know that temptation had but to appear in order to be victorious.

It was so again. During a long and earnest interview with Daniel which followed, the varying expression on O'Hara's face might have been a study for Lavater, as he sat listening to Mr. Brownlow, in a state of half-tipsy attention. As nothing on earth is more humiliating than the consciousness of receiving unmerited praise, the better nature of O'Hara rebelled against the tone

of commendation in which Daniel Brownlow, with a mean, fawning, lap-dog expression of countenance, attempted to gain over the unwilling man to his wishes. Bribery and threats were, however, more successful than panegyric. O'Hara had, in his mind's eye, the vision of a jail before him on the one hand, or the glittering view of a gin palace on the other. Alas! it was long indeed since he had seen a church, the safeguard from both those evils!

Mr. Brownlow carefully abstained from explaining to O'Hara the object he had to gain, by inducing a strange girl, now in the house, to personate any member of his own family circle; but he left that subject a vague mystery, though O'Hara understood that he would himself be largely recompensed for inducing some female to personate a false character during two days, and that he must instruct her how to act this blackest of lies, which seemed to him at best to bear a somewhat swindling aspect. Must he yield? Yes, he must, for the bribe was enormous, and so also were his debts, his difficulties, and his thirst for gin.

As soon as the preliminaries were fully discussed, O'Hara gave his whole clever mind to this undertaking, and proceeded to the room below stairs, where Theresa had been detained, during the last few hours, on pretext of turning a silk

dress for Mrs. Brownlow. She worked on resolutely, without ever looking up from this new occupation, but picked out the seams in time to a favourite old song, which Theresa hummed in a low melancholy tune to herself:—

“ Who would seek or prize
Delights that end in aching?
Who would trust to ties
That every hour are breaking?

“ Stars that shine and fall,
The flower that drops in spring,—
These, alas ! are types of all
To which our hearts are clinging.”—MOORE.

O'Hara, feeling that he was about to have a very awkward interview with somebody, and to make a very awkward proposition to a perfect stranger, stood irresolutely at the open door during several minutes, with a very unusual twinge of apprehension running spasmodically through his nerves. O'Hara's spirit was resolute, the bribe was large, but his conscience, not yet perfectly drowned, would make itself heard, in accents that brought the hue of shame to his cheek.

At this moment Theresa, accidentally looking up, recognised, with a little scream of astonishment, her guardian; and O'Hara, with equal surprise, discovered his own young ward! Nothing

could ever have exceeded O'Hara's amazement except Theresa's, and nothing could equal Theresa's except that of O'Hara! Scales seemed now to have fallen from the eyes of both! Each asked the other how on earth this had happened, and neither felt for some moments able to answer. At length O'Hara became first restored to his parts of speech, and spoke to Theresa for nearly an hour, making the intended proposition to her, of somewhat theatrically adopting a character, which she at once and most decidedly negatived.

“Never! oh, never!” exclaimed Theresa, her whole face on fire with honest indignation. “My whole life would be blotted over with misery and apprehension, did I use such deceit! If I am to be an actress,—and may that day never, never come,—let it be on the public stage at once. Ask me to be a ballet-dancer, a rope-dancer, but never let me enter any family, like a Jesuit, on false pretences,—quite impossible!”

“Theresa!” replied her guardian, in a low, earnest voice, “I am bound by an oath, till you and Fanny are both of age, or married, never to reveal a secret relating to your birth, the premature disclosure of which would bring on you and Fanny a fearful doom in this world, and perhaps for eternity. The very scene I have asked you to enact in this house is, by a strange

coincidence, deeply connected with that mystery. Amidst all my faults, all my vices—alas! how incurably fatal to myself!—I have still been truthful to your mother's memory. Believe me, then, if I swear that in assuming this character proposed by Mr. Brownlow himself, no one would be really injured, while I should become greatly benefited."

"Impossible! quite impossible!" reiterated Theresa. "It terrifies me to hear you speak of such a fraud!"

"Stupid girl! because your own head is confused, you fancy the world going round," answered O'Hara, dictatorially. "What if the very name and position I ask you to assume is really your own! In time this may perhaps be proved!"

"Impossible!" again exclaimed Theresa, with mingled astonishment and incredulity. "Your desire to make me act the part tempts you to assert this; but I dare not trust to an assurance drawn from circumstances apparently of such extremity. Under no inducement could I consent to assume a position, my right to which is neither known nor acknowledged."

"If ever your miserable guardian has shown his ward a kindness, Theresa, it might now be far more than repaid," said O'Hara, looking down, ashamed to meet his young companion's almost

stern eye. "If you refuse, to-morrow's sun shall shine in vain for me; the cold hand of death must then divide us for ever. I again declare, on the word and oath of a very kind guardian, that no injustice can be done by your obeying me in this instance. Now, shall I be placed in competence for life by your generous effort, or must I be thrust into the grave by your cruel obstinacy? Promise me, Theresa, that you will endeavour to fulfil my wishes; give me your solemn oath never to reveal our secret, or this night shall be a night of never-ending darkness to one who has long been your friend. Now or never!"

O'Hara held out his hand to Theresa, who tremblingly turned away with a look of unutterable perplexity, of loathing horror, which convulsed her every feature, saying, "I cannot and dare not injure my very soul by deceit."

"Then my doom is sealed—my portion has long been despair, let it now be death!" answered O'Hara, clenching his hands with a look of resolute despair, drawing in his breath vehemently, and scarcely suppressing an oath. "The shadow of the grave is on me already. It remains only that I go along that approach, driven by your obstinacy, Theresa, and be found floating on the river to-morrow. I have often thought of that lately—planned it—wished it. Let me at last

conclude this false, wretched, weary life. Even you have forsaken me, Theresa! Oh! that I could forget the past, the future, the present, for ever, and ever, and ever! Each night that I lay my wretched head on the pillow now, it is with a fervent wish never to raise it again; and every morning the light of day becomes more loathsome to me. Not even in my dreams do I obtain a moment's respite from horror of mind."

Theresa felt as if on every side a pitfall were open before her, shadowed with guilt and danger. She quailed in terror before O'Hara's fearful anguish; her heart throbbed, her lips quivered, she hesitated, and grinding her hands together in agony, she felt as if the whole world and all its inhabitants were gone wrong. Theresa's whole power of thought and judgment seemed failing, while a dim perception only remained, that her guardian had threatened his own life, and threw the blame of his despair on her. Theresa did not faint, but in agony, worse than death, heard distinctly every word, while O'Hara added sternly, "My death this night will seal up for ever all the secrets connected with your origin and destiny. That sun has set on the last day of my miserable life. The dark river will soon be passed; and now Theresa's own wilfulness destroys her guardian, extinguishes her birthright as well as Fanny's, and shuts you both up in obscurity for

ever. Farewell! take my forgiveness; but farewell for ever!"

O'Hara had hurried out of the room, and was far advanced along the passage, when Theresa, with an impulse she could not resist, flew after his retreating figure, grasped his arm, and in a whisper of intense terror, exclaimed, "Whatever you ask, I promise; but oh! spare your own life!"

O'Hara silently returned, deeply affected by the sacrifice Theresa had evidently made for his sake; and again he added, in a voice of truthfulness scarcely to be doubted—"When the mystery is explained about yourself, Theresa, it will then become plain that nothing wrong has been done. Believe that—you may entirely believe it. The time may come when you shall be examined on oath in a court of justice as to what you know of your own origin; therefore, to prevent your falling into the grasp of an enemy, as well as to keep an oath solemnly sworn to your mother, I conceal the facts—but trust me now. I would not even ask you to chase a butterfly, Theresa, if it would cause your falling into a ditch; but, believe me, if the mother who entrusted you to my care knew all now, she would desire you to act as I do. How I revere her memory you know, and that when I speak in her venerated name, I am indeed to be relied on. The coincidence is a strange one that brought you to this house; but,

my very dear ward, take with confidence the place I assign you, ask no questions, and only believe that your guardian would die on the spot rather than bid you do wrong."

Theresa sighed very doubtfully. She could not see a way how to believe all O'Hara's very strange assertions, though they in some small degree palliated her scruples. She called herself a foolish idiot, a guilty criminal to yield; but nevertheless, bound by her promise, she once more extended her hand to O'Hara in silent, unwilling acquiescence, while tears not to be checked slowly coursed each other down her face. For the first time in Theresa's life, shame brought its scarlet dye into her blushing cheek, and humiliation dimmed the brightness of her usually sparkling eyes. Theresa's submission was most unwilling; but when that warm-hearted girl counted over again the cost of refusing, she dared not encounter all the fearful penalty of bringing utter destruction, for this life and another, on her always kind guardian; once more, therefore, she promised all that O'Hara asked—listened to those instructions how to act which he gave her—tried to believe his again repeated assurances that the place she assumed was indeed her own—and reiterated to him her solemn pledge that she would observe the most impenetrable, inviolable, and scrupulous secrecy. When O'Hara withdrew, Theresa felt that her

heart was more alone now than it had ever been, alone in its utter desolation, and without the light of a satisfied conscience to cheer her gloom.

“ Oh ! this thought in the midst of enjoyment will stay,
Like a dead leafless branch in the summer's bright ray ;
The beams of the warm sun play round it in vain ;
It may smile in his light, but it blooms not again.”

MOORE.

CHAPTER XX.

“ ‘There was a time,’ he said, in mild,
Heart-humbled tones, ‘thou blessed child!
When young, and haply pure, as thou,
I look’d and pray’d like thee. But now——’
He hung his head ; each nobler aim,
And hope, and feeling, which had slept
From boyhood’s hour, that instant came
Fresh o’er him, and he wept—he wept.”

MOORE.

AMIDST a very wide circle of acquaintances, Daniel Brownlow had long been considered really preeminent for having a most agreeable, fascinating, best-friend-on-earth manner, and for always saying the right thing at the right moment. When his brother Sir Richard’s carriage, therefore, arrived at the gate of Torchester Abbey the following day, and when the wearied, dusty, long-absent traveller alighted, almost bewildered at his old home, Daniel rushed out with energetic eagerness, assuming a look of joyful, red-in-the-face alacrity. Mr. Brownlow actually felt for the moment all he expressed, when, clasping Sir Richard in his arms, burying him in a long embrace, and shedding an actual tear, he exclaimed—

“ My dear,—dear, long-lost, much-loved brother ! do we at last meet ? ”

“ Of course we do, for here I am ! ” answered the more matter-of-fact Sir Richard, smiling ; but he had rather an abhorrence of theatrical scenes, especially as he knew from old experience that Daniel always expressed ten times more, during the first five minutes, than he felt. By expressing much less himself than he felt, Richard used to think he could strike the balance of truth ; and now he fixed a pair of dark, piercing eyes on his very demonstrative brother, saying, with a mixture of sadness and humour,—“ Well, Dan ! you preserve the same warm-hearted manner, I perceive, as ever ! If you have been getting up scenes and speeches during all the fifteen years of my absence, you must be very perfect at them now. Sometimes in former days they were, as you and I know, mere paper currency for gold ; but I mean, during my very short stay, to believe all that is pleasantest and best of you and yours.”

“ My very dear and very welcome brother ! you come back, I see, the same good-natured cynic as ever ! But I can take nothing amiss, in the joy of such a meeting ! it is really too much for my feelings ! ”

An undeniable tear gathered in Daniel’s eye again, which he dashed conspicuously away. No doubt, Mr. Brownlow had momentary impulses

like this of genuine kindness, though they were mere squibs and crackers, which expired in exploding, and left not a wreck behind. Sir Richard knew all this from long, long experience, yet he would not allow himself to recollect the worst now. Fixing on his brother, therefore, eyes that beamed and sparkled with unutterable kindness, he said, in a tone of almost boyish *naïveté*, “Daniel! I believe you really are glad to see me once more!”

“Glad! What a cold, unsatisfactory word!” answered Mr. Brownlow, in a tone of indignant remonstrance. “If I am glad when the sun shines, how ten times more happy than words can express, when the brother and friend of my heart is restored to his home? But come to the drawing-room, where you are impatiently expected by all my belongings; remember, dear Dick, whatever is mine, I consider to be still more yours. There are our niece Theresa, and also your old antagonist at chess, my wife, looking, as you must allow, younger and handsomer than ever.”

Scarcely had Daniel, in a half jesting tone, uttered these words, before he became perfectly sick at heart with apprehension, lest the bold bad scheme suggested by Mrs. Brownlow, to impose on Sir Richard, might at once be discovered; and after Mr. Brownlow’s enthusiastic reception had a little subsided, the bold manœuvrer sunk into a seat,

burying himself behind a double number of "The Times," while he clandestinely glanced over the edge, watching all that followed.

The result was now in the hands of his very clever wife, who affected a tone of blunt though very cordial sisterhood, as the interview progressed, rallying Sir Richard on the good looks he had brought home from foreign climes—and well she might, for he was very handsome, and by no means looked old. Mrs. Brownlow then began pathetically exclaiming over the number of years which had elapsed since they parted, made some touching remarks on the flight of time, tried being very moral and reflective during a few sentences; but as that did not seem particularly to suit her auditor, she dropped again into the lively style, recommended Sir Richard to secure a wife, and asked him why he had not brought home a squaw from the back settlements.

The traveller answered in a tone of good-humoured absence, for his eyes and thoughts had become fixed now on the lovely but very agitated face of Theresa, who sat down after having been presented to him on the sofa, in a state of what appeared to him almost unaccountable emotion. She grew pale and red by turns, till at length her whole face became livid as if she were about to faint, and never once ventured to look up.

"Whatever my beautiful niece's feelings may

be, they are at least perfectly genuine," thought Sir Richard, gazing in astonished perplexity at the aurora-borealis of most vivid colouring which flew over Theresa's face, again and again vanishing into livid white, and returning next moment brighter than before. "Dan's feelings always were as empty and loud as a drum, but poor Frank was true as steel; his child, therefore, must resemble him in veracity. Yet surely all this flare-up of agitation cannot be caused in her mind merely by the return from abroad of an old uncle whom she never saw, and scarcely can have heard of."

Still Sir Richard looked, admired, and wondered; still Mrs. Brownlow talked with a tenuous power; and still Daniel remained safely ensconced behind his "Times," glancing furtively over its edge, when he could clandestinely do so, at the returned wanderer, whose much-dreaded appearance at Torchester had now at length taken place, though happily for so very short a period.

Sir Richard, with an aspect that might have done honour to the pencil of Velasquez, was a noble, soldier-like man, who scarcely seemed forty. His handsome face had become bronzed by the bright sunshine of distant climes, and his dark hair had also become streaked with threads of grey; but there appeared the freshness and vigour of youth in his frank animated bearing, and in his honest, open-hearted, genuine

expression. He was a man of that stamp so rapidly becoming extinct in the world, full of mental vigour and vivacity, wit, humour, and the keenest sensibility, commanding in aspect as well as in abilities, with strength of mind to lead others aright, and strength of principle to command himself. Theresa thought that Sir Richard's large, dark, almost sombre-looking eyes, appeared to see his brother through and through, as if they nailed him to the very wall behind; and she did not wonder that Daniel evidently quailed before so piercing a gaze, though Sir Richard's voice and look, full of irresistible power, were nevertheless most benevolent in their authority.

The post-office had certainly appointed itself tormentor-general to Mr. Daniel Brownlow, for at this very moment it produced another most troublesome and most perplexing letter!

When the late Earl of Brentford sold Torchester Abbey to Alderman Brownlow, he reserved many manorial rights over that property; and among these was a title to shoot, fish, and hunt at all seasons of every year throughout the domain. This privilege had not, however, for many long periods been claimed, therefore it seemed fallen into total disuse; when at length now the brown, old, weather-stained post-bag made its appearance, and there emerged from that soiled, time-worn receptacle a very splendid, consequential-looking

letter, bearing a most impressive coat of arms with innumerable quarterings, cut in a curious, antique style, and surmounted by a coronet, such as only the seal-engravers of several centuries ago ever attempted to carve.

Mr. Brownlow, troubled with a vague idea that some young spendthrift wanted to borrow money of him, felt in a state of universal dissatisfaction when he opened that aristocratic-looking letter, the contents of which did not go far to improve his already aggravated temper. The Éarl of Brentford presented his compliments therein, and begged to intimate that during the next month it was his intention to shoot and fish over the manor and estates of Torchester. His Lordship added, that it would be a great favour if Mr. Brownlow could suggest any convenient farm-house near, where he might find comfortable accommodation immediately for his horses, his servants, his cousin, Captain Clifford, Lord Tipperary, and himself.

Mrs. Brownlow, when she read this formidable missive over the shoulder of her husband, was secretly in an ecstasy of joy. These were all three supposed admirers of Anne's, and any one of the two peers might more than fulfil her motherly ambition by coming forward. Hitherto their progress had been like that of the snail—one step in advance every day, and two backward every

night; but Mrs. Brownlow saw not a shadow of doubt before her that one or all would propose, nor a shadow of difficulty in meantime offering all that agreeable trio accommodation at the Abbey for some days. Mrs. Brownlow resolved that, *coute qui coute*, Anne must be brought home next morning. Should she appear to recognise Theresa in so very different a dress and position, Mrs. Brownlow could trust her own ingenuity to trump up some very inventive story which should satisfy the flippant, superficial mind of her heedless daughter, much too occupied with her numerous admirers to inquire about cousins thus dropped from the moon. Mrs. Brownlow, in short, convinced herself that Anne would care little who this newly-arrived guest was or was not, and would readily believe whatever she pleased to represent, however incredible.

“Though you look as cross as the tongs, Mr. B., I must let our own dear Anne have this chance of settling herself brilliantly,” said Mrs. Brownlow, in a perfect uproar of hopeful excitement. “Lord Brentford and his diverting party must positively be invited to hang up their hats here during a week. Trust me for the rest. Lord Tipperary is quite devoted to Anne; for whether she walks, rides, or stays at home, he keeps always at her side. I have, you know, quite a weakness for the peerage. Any one coming to

my door with a coronet, that alone serves as an 'Open, sesame!'"

"Every young peer, rich and unmarried, must, of course, be in search of a wife," answered Mr. Brownlow, drily. "But Captain Clifford's coronet is yet to come; therefore he will be a mere superfluous detrimental."

"On the contrary, that really distinguished officer is more the fashion, a thousand times, than either of the others. I should be the vainest being alive could I, like Captain Clifford, hand myself up to the highest pinnacle of distinction, without the help of rank or of a single shilling. There he stands on a perfect pedestal, the favourite, or rather the idol, of every mortal living in London. Our festivities at Torchester have more prospect of being paraphrased in the newspapers on account of Captain Clifford's presence, than of all the peers in the peerage."

"Well, take your own obstinate way. Let it be carried *nem. con.* in the Brownlow parliament, that Lord Brentford and his tail shall be invited tomorrow," replied Daniel, assuming a look of comic resignation, while Theresa listened tremblingly to hear this unexpected mention of Lord Brentford. "Though rumour, with its hundred tongues, gives out that your young peer has lost unmentionable sums at billiards to Mr. Drummond Armitage, yet I believe Lord Tipperary has an odd ambition

to be thought worse than he is; therefore, perhaps, rumour is, as usual, misinformed. Though I have an 'honest penny' to give my daughter, yet we must not be too particular; so I do not object to your arranging with Lord Tipperary to marry Anne without loss of time. When the day is fixed, let me know."

"Agreed; and, meanwhile, you may rehearse the part of a benignant old father, unwillingly parting with the best of daughters, added Mrs. Brownlow, delightedly arranging her bracelets and rings. "I am told Lord Brentford, ever since his short trip to Ireland, has taken himself up immensely, and that now he looks back on all his past follies, not to mention extravagances, with loathing and disgust. Lord Tipperary's boyhood was anything but respectable, yet now he seems in a humour to reform, and, failing Lord Brentford, would be the very thing for Anne."

Mr. Brownlow cleared his throat very doubtfully, but not being inclined for a wrangle, he merely left his wife alone, with discretionary powers to invite, manœuvre, and arrange to her heart's content, adding to the party whosoever and whatsoever she pleased.

When Sir Richard Brownlow found himself once more domesticated in a family circle—once more at home in Torchester Abbey—a rush of old memories flooded his heart. In the traveller's

aspect now there appeared something deeply serious, though not melancholy; and when the newly-arrived Baronet suddenly flashed up his brilliant eyes on any one he loved, the expression, so keen in its sensibility, so intellectual in its dignity, was little short of sublime. The rich deep-toned melody of Sir Richard's voice rendered all he said impressive, while it conveyed a pleasing conviction that he who had suffered and felt much, had reflected still more; nevertheless little gleams of pleasantry and little sparkles of wit glittered through his conversation almost constantly. Every event of life, indeed, great or small, came to Sir Richard, elevated by his belief that each circumstance formed part of a plan appointed by divine, unerring Wisdom, not merely for the general good of man, but especially for his own; therefore, he welcomed all vicissitudes with a cheerful, implicit faith in their having a good intention towards himself, and often returned prayerful thanks as much for his sorrows as for his joys. Ever since the painful belief became impressed upon him abroad that Emily Plantagenet really had married another, Sir Richard felt as if no deeper cut could be made into his heart and soul, therefore for the future he always faced the keen blast of adversity with unflinching courage. After the disappointment of his first and only attachment, it seemed as if no event

could surprise or alter the fixed calmness of Sir Richard's aspect and feelings. The pale complexion and bold manly features of Richard Brownlow, harmonized admirably with the noble gravity of his benevolent countenance; and when he spoke on any subject in earnest, his language became gradually excited almost to poetry. Then his thoughts, full of benevolence and piety, soared upwards and onwards, like the flight of an eagle that breasts its way along a sunbeam into the very highest heaven itself. There existed no one on earth before whose presence vice or meanness would have been more ashamed to feel itself laid bare, and Daniel, at the moment, felt as if his mind were a mere dunghill of guilt and selfishness, beside the pure nature of his high-minded brother.

By rapid degrees, all that appeared stiff or icy, in one so long accustomed to battle alone through the sterner aspects of solitary life, had melted into sunshine; and the smile with which Sir Richard looked around that morning on the fireside circle at Torchester, seemed almost like the smile of an angel, so kind, so courteous, and, alas, so confiding! Was there in that saloon one individual who deserved the abounding, the overflowing affection with which Sir Richard looked in the face of each and all? The beaming glance with which, on the day after his arrival, he extended a cordial hand

to his only brother, was returned with one as artificial as if it had been on the stage, but Daniel could call up no look of reciprocal confidence. The silence of his averted eye, however, was compensated by the volubility of a tongue which spoke fluently, and expressed beautifully, a world of nothings in a world of words. Daniel's mere worldly-mannerism resembled that of a bad actor, for he had carefully studied over many phrases of brotherly-kindness which came very glibly off his lips, but as for his eyes, he could not lift them off the ground. It was utterly impossible for Daniel to meet his brother's honest, penetrating look, so that when Sir Richard watched for one answering glance, he drew a blank. The Baronet had instinctively learned a very deep penetration into other minds, so that he often smilingly claimed the gift of "thought reading;" but when Daniel stood beside him now, he almost wished himself in that respect less accomplished. With an ill-suppressed sigh, Sir Richard turned from the flattering, subservient, double-minded companion of his boyhood, to look for something more genuine, or at least less disappointing, in the younger and not so familiar faces around the old fireside.

His brother's wife Sir Richard thought quite as unsatisfactory as Daniel himself. There appeared in her manner a sort of fawning servility totally distasteful to his honest, straightforward

nature, especially as, in the Baronet's discriminating ear, nothing that she said rung tone. Sir Richard, in short, to his utter astonishment and disgust, felt himself an object of servile flattery to his nearest relatives; while, if anything could have put that noble heart and well-disciplined mind out of tune, it would have been that his own brother and his brother's wife could imagine such adulation gratifying to one like himself, who asked only for sincerity and matter-of-fact friendship.

Sir Richard glanced anxiously at the countenance of Daniel's daughter. Anne, who had now arrived, was most incredibly dressed. She sat beside her uncle in a graceful, drooping, willow-like attitude, an all-accomplished nonentity, the very perfection of modern teaching, under-grown and over-educated, with not one ray of nature left in her mind, manners, or habits. Sir Richard privately thought that his niece Anne looked and sat like a milliner's print of the fashions, with her long giraffe-looking neck. That sort of languid, used-up, mindless expression of her eye, was produced from that system of cramming and spurring in the school-room, which brings on precocious acquirements at the expense of health, happiness, and intellect. The contemplative eye of Sir Richard rested long and sadly on his automaton niece, and he who professed to read everybody's thoughts, found no thought there to read. The crater had

been long ago burned out. Anne's intellect produced nothing of home growth, nothing but cuttings without any root, nothing original springing from themselves—root, fruit, and branches all her own.

Last but not least in point of interest, the traveller looked with tender interest at the orphan-heiress of his lamented brother Frank. Theresa, dressed in the very simplest manner, sat almost invisible, having withdrawn to a remote part of the room, anxious apparently to crouch out of sight entirely. His young niece seemed to Sir Richard beautiful beyond any poet's dream, while her large blue eyes had in them an almost supernatural lustre, and the colour on her clear oval cheek was delicately pencilled as the tints of a rainbow, but almost equally changeable. Sir Richard felt astonished at the rapid alterations which took place, from the brightest vermilion to an ashy paleness perfectly startling, whenever he fixed his eye on Theresa; and indeed the first time the kind uncle observed this, Sir Richard almost rose from his seat, believing she was going to faint. When he called her "niece," the trembling accents in which Theresa attempted, with blanched and quivering lips, to answer him, seemed totally and marvellously unaccountable.

"Surely," thought Sir Richard, gazing with astonishment at the greatly embarrassed circle

around him, "there can be nothing in me to inspire actual terror! Yet my own brother is evidently under most painful restraint at my side, Mrs. Brownlow fidgets uneasily in her chair whenever I look up, her daughter stands in evident awe of me, and that poor girl, if she saw a ghost from the other world, could scarcely seem more apprehensive when I speak to her! What can this mean? Are we acting 'Beauty and the Beast?' Hitherto I have always inspired confidence even in strangers, but here, among my own relatives, nothing but fear, probably even dislike! Here, then, is that transient glimpse of my home and kindred that I have so longed for, laboured for, prayed for, and counted the hours for. Such are human hopes and projects! I came resolved that my brother should yet be a brother to me, if kindness could make him so,—that my sister-in-law should love, without as in old times flattering me,—that her daughter should awake to some feelings of affection for a long-absent uncle,—and that Theresa, the child of my murdered brother, should be conciliated into loving and trusting me like a father; but, alas! for my utter, utter disappointment—

'Loves, friendships, hopes, and dear remembrances,
The kind embracings of the heart, and hours
Of happy talk, and smiles coming to tears,—
These are the rays that wander through the gloom
Of mortal life.'

In a glow of the most cordial intentions, Sir Richard now described to the family circle, with that picturesque eloquence for which he had long been preeminent, all he had seen, thought, or felt, during the long period of his wanderings, the strange regions of Russia, of the Crimea, and the stormy shores of the Black Sea. As the rich tones of his very expressive voice became instinct with many deep emotions, Sir Richard forgot for a time the ice-cold atmosphere of some hearts around. He narrated, therefore, for the entertainment of his relatives, old or young, many curious scenes, facts, events and feelings, connected with the stirring adventures of his foreign life, and his long residence in the fort of Sebastopol, when a prisoner there since the declaration of war. These narratives made the traveller's fine eyes glitter, as he recalled them, with bright intelligence. When Sir Richard was proceeding with an incident of thrilling interest, which had taken place at Eupatoria, he glanced round to catch from his listening relatives a look of sympathetic feeling for all he had suffered or seen; but Mrs. Brownlow was clandestinely arranging her daughter's collar; Daniel with a vacant stare attempted to seem as if he listened, though his thoughts were in the business room; and the lack-lustre eyes of Daniel's daughter, Anne, betrayed that her used-up faculties

were totally asleep, dreaming probably of a polka with Lord Brentford.

One countenance now arrested Sir Richard's notice, however, and filled him with gratified interest. During some time he had abstained from even a transient glance at his too timid niece, Theresa; but when his anecdote was tapering towards a close, his eye wandered suddenly towards the very obscure corner of the sofa where she had ensconced herself, so as to appear as if scarcely belonging to the party. Theresa, confident in her own retired, out-of-sight position, raised herself upright, after Sir Richard had spoken some time, while she listened, with parted lips and sparkling eyes, heart, soul and mind, intent on every syllable he uttered. Nothing could be more graceful than her attitude of intense and breathless interest, as first perceived by Sir Richard; but the moment she found herself observed, Theresa shrunk back, like a crushed butterfly, into her former nook again. There, in her retreat among the cushions, Theresa looked as if so apprehensive of being seen, that it would be quite a relief if the floor were to open and swallow her up, while with a hand that trembled visibly she raised a handkerchief to her quivering lips.

Impatient, if possible, to dispel all this unaccountable restraint among those around him,

and almost irritated at its long continuance, Sir Richard now good-humouredly announced that having brought home some presents for his relations, he would lose no time in allowing himself the pleasure of presenting them. The box which his servant was then ordered to bring in looked no trifle in point of dimensions, and splendid, indeed, were the gifts now bestowed by the generous Richard on Daniel's family. For the first time since his arrival, their countenances and voices at length became genuine, as Mrs. Brownlow returned overflowing thanks, while Sir Richard looked at them with a smile of most prepossessing kindness; yet the smile, though pleasing, was a grave and even a sad one. Sir Richard, conscious that all around was hollow and artificial, felt, at the moment, standing in his old home like a tall column surviving alone in the melancholy desert of life, where once he had been surrounded by all its happiest and best affections.

“But when return'd the youth? The youth no more
Return'd exulting to his native shore.
But twenty years were past, and then there came
A worn-out man.”

Thanks and ecstasies having been duly acted over by Daniel's family, on receiving their gifts, the countenance of Sir Richard lighted up with a new and far greater degree of pleasure, when he turned at length towards Theresa, saying,

in accents of subdued emotion—"My very dear niece! child of my lost brother, of my favourite friend, of my earliest companion! what memorial can adequately testify my devoted attachment to his memory and to his only surviving child? Receive from me, then, dear Theresa, what it is my happy privilege to offer you, as a pledge of my ceaseless interest in yourself. Let me supply a father's place in your confidence. While Francis lived, his heart and mine were one. My best consolation for his irreparable loss now, would be to crowd, from day to day, every imaginable happiness around Frank's only daughter,—to shield her from every sorrow."

Sir Richard's deep, organ-toned voice, became subdued almost to a whisper by intense emotion before he paused, and a tear glistened in those very speaking eyes, which he turned towards Theresa, while unclasping before her a case containing the most beautiful gold chain that Storr and Mortimer could produce, from which was suspended a small cross of brilliants. Theresa gave one hurried, remorseful glance at this costly gift of the kind, deceived Sir Richard, and hastily turning away, she mournfully riveted her hands over her eyes, while tears which could not be restrained forced themselves in large drops over her burning face. The weeping girl threw her head disconsolately forward, on the arm of the

sofa where she sat, and sobbed convulsively. She shook like a leaf in the blast of autumn, and when Sir Richard compassionately took her by the hand, it was cold as ice. He glanced round in astonished perplexity at his brother, who looked so confused and alarmed at this display of sudden agitation on the part of Theresa, that a suspicion flashed into Sir Richard's penetrating mind of Daniel having, perhaps, used his orphan niece so unkindly, that all this emotion proceeded from the poor girl being unaccustomed to receive any marks of affection from those she loved. Sir Richard, therefore, spoke some cheering, playful words to the agitated Theresa, though they seemed but to increase her emotion, till at length, giving her a smile that beamed brightly with good-humoured indulgence, he threw over her head the glittering chain which was intended for her, saying, "Accept this gift, dear Theresa, as a mark of my entire confidence and affection. Let it be a chain, never to be broken, of attachment between a friendly uncle and his much-loved niece."

When the shining cross dropped heavily down over her neck, Theresa silently buried her face in her hands, sunk upon the sofa, and fainted!

Mrs. Brownlow now put herself into a matronly bustle, to testify that a fainting fit must be considered her peculiar province, and she at once

swept the whole group of alarmed spectators hurriedly out of the room. As the Baronet hastily obeyed her mandate to withdraw, Mrs. Brownlow significantly touched her forehead, shook her head sorrowfully, and glanced expressively at Theresa, as if to intimate that the dear girl was slightly touched in her intellects, and that seemed indeed to Sir Richard the only plausible way in which her very extraordinary conduct and feelings could be accounted for.

Before the Baronet again saw Theresa, many hours had elapsed, and in the meanwhile a most obvious change had come over her, though not, he felt, for the better. Theresa tried to appear in good spirits, she evidently made gigantic efforts to do so, and a deep stain of scarlet burned on her cheek. She spoke, too, with incessant and evidently feverish volubility, but, nevertheless, her laugh was not the laugh of light-hearted happiness. The shining chain yet sparkled round Theresa's neck; but even the diamond cross, though brighter still, scarcely outshone the dazzling splendour of her eye when Sir Richard approached. Both Mr. and Mrs. Brownlow watched Theresa with a look of stern anxiety, mingled with alarm, as the uncle and niece met, when Theresa, evidently under their watchful control, in faltering accents, attempted to thank Sir Richard for his magnificent gift.

Once or twice Theresa's voice failed before she could begin; and her little speech of thanks, evidently rehearsed, was broken by a long pause of mental suffering, during which her face became convulsed with mental anguish; but at last she said, in a tone of deep, concentrated, and perfectly natural emotion, "I feel totally unworthy of this kindness! Your good opinion is as unmerited a gift to me as these precious jewels. I deserve neither! Keep this present, Sir Richard, till you know me better!—pray do! Oh! that I could be — anything but what I am!"

Theresa bent her head, in a perfect agony of shame and self-reproach; but Sir Richard, astonished to see her trying hurriedly and tearfully to unclasp the chain, took his niece by the hand with irresistible kindness, fixing his deep, serious eyes on her, and saying, "Why is this, my very dear girl? Do you not know that my affection is a debt due to my own brother's child? You never can forfeit that, nor your right to my best good offices. You must endeavour to acquire a proper degree of self-respect to know your own rights. These pleasant ties of relationship are divinely appointed between you and me, for our mutual comfort. We cannot help being related, but we may choose hereafter whether to be friends. It would be my first of enjoyments to make you

happy; and, Theresa, your endeavour should be to love me in return. Is that impossible?"

The warm-hearted Theresa clasped Sir Richard's extended hand in her own, and, with an irresistible impulse of enthusiasm, she kissed it. For that short moment her eyes shone with the clear bright glance of youthful frankness; but the change was sad to behold when, turning again to the greatly perplexed Baronet, she looked sadly in his face, saying in a low voice audible only to himself, "I would give more than life itself, Sir Richard, to be deserving of half your kindness, and to reward it. My heart is at this moment weighed down to the very earth with a most secret and incommunicable sorrow; but whatever may befall me, oh, Sir Richard, believe that I am always and for ever grateful. My very gratitude, indeed, makes me at this moment only the more utterly miserable."

"Forget it, then, by all means! Well, my dear niece, we must one day understand each other better!" answered Sir Richard, passing his hand caressingly over Theresa's drooping head, while he felt touched and astonished at her look of helpless, hopeless misery. "I like to see your very pretty smile, and wish there were not a sob always treading on its heels. I am ready to forgive you for anything except for being afraid of me! Your old uncle, middle-aged at least, loves

young people with all his heart. I indulge them all to excess; and how much more than any others my own darling young niece! Youth and happiness should go together, and are both my delight. Let me see them united in you, Theresa, for the short time we remain together, and I shall enjoy my brief glimpse of home all the more; as we say abroad, ‘Be merry, and strike a light to find yourself!’”

Again Theresa coloured scarlet, not with the ingenuous blush of innocent girlhood, but with the crimson blush of shame; her eyes filled with tears, and her voice changed to a tone of the deepest humiliation, when she answered, saying, “If, then, I endeavour to seem happy, Sir Richard, it shall be for your sake; and in the belief that even, if you knew the very worst of me, still your generous nature would wish well to one so young, so utterly helpless, and so deeply tried.”

Theresa, unable to control a burst of strong emotion, hurried out of the room, while Sir Richard good-humouredly, but most seriously, lamented to himself that his poor niece seemed to have been brought up under some strong delusion fatal to her peace. What could it be? The Baronet determined that her whole affairs and feelings should be probed, before his departure, to the very bottom, trusting that Theresa’s burdened heart might be soon relieved. Truly Sir Richard,

when good was to be done to anyone, or a benefit could be conferred on those he loved, had enterprise and perseverance to a ten-Howard pitch of philanthropy. The worthy Baronet's was a nature to redeem people's estimate of all mankind.

Active preparations were now in progress for the expected arrival at Torchester Abbey of all "Anne's admirers," while Theresa felt as if beset on every side by the already too-well-remembered name of Lord Brentford. It seemed recurring now constantly, and had become "death to her ear," connected as it was with happy Irish life, with the only happy days, the only blameless hours, she seemed ever likely to know upon earth, and which brought to her mind the thought of one whose assiduities, during the very short period of their meeting, were not easily to be forgotten. Could they be otherwise than acceptable to a sensitive, almost solitary girl, unaccustomed to such flattering homage from an admirer so devoted, so animated, so lavish in his expressions of admiration, and apparently so sincere? How should she meet Lord Brentford now? Theresa's heart sunk at the very thought.

"It appears," sighed she heavily, when alone, "as if nothing in life were to go right with me now. But I deserve the very worst. I often feel as if there were invisible agents employed around us on purpose to baffle our wishes and disappoint

all our hopes. For wise and good reasons it is done; but could these constant, very various vexations, great and small, happen daily, hourly, to every mortal, were there not ministering spirits specially working on behalf of each individual, to mix the bitter with the sweet in our cup of life, and so, perhaps, to render it wholesome? Every means I can take to trace out Fanny or Mrs. O'Hara, for whose sake, even more than for my own, I let myself be persuaded into this vile deceit, has failed. They seem lost to me altogether; and my guardian, who, whatever be his faults, has been kind to me, would it not have been some consolation to benefit him? yet his habits render that almost impossible. I feel ruined in my own esteem — wretched beyond expression, because I despise myself, and dread the hour when all others must learn to despise me likewise! Oh! how overwhelmed with grateful misery it renders me, when I am obliged deceitfully to receive the kindnesses of that noble-hearted Sir Richard! Would that I might throw myself at once on his compassion, and confess all! but the promise extorted by Mr. O'Hara is most solemnly binding. Would Fanny have obeyed him in this? No! no! She always had stronger principle. Even she would blame, perhaps despise, but still love her erring sister. I have been led into a great temptation, and fallen—fallen—oh!

how prostrate in my own esteem! The straight path is ever, at last, the only safe one; and this crooked way into which I have been betrayed is leading me on to misery, ending probably in deserved detection. This, then, is the sad end of all my bright hopes, my joyous anticipations in life! Already I have nothing but memories left! How on earth can I ever venture to meet Lord Brentford here! Has he remembered me?"

CHAPTER XXI.

“ To soothe thy sickness, watch thy health,
Partake but never waste thy wealth,
Or stand with smiles, un murmuring by,
And lighten half thy poverty,
Do all but close thy dying eye,
For that I could not live to try,—
To these alone my thoughts aspire;
More can I do—or thou require?”

BYRON.

No mortal need ever endure the utmost sufferings of ennui while he can take an active interest in the welfare of all his fellow-creatures. From the period of Sir Richard's early departure abroad, Emily Plantagenet resolved in all earnestness of heart, that though, in consequence of her father's arbitrary interference having apparently for ever banished the only man she could love, her life could not be happy, it should at least be useful; that during each succeeding day and hour she should count only her opportunities of benefiting others—not to lose one; and that thus she would dig in a mine of duties never to be exhausted. Emily had thus an important object for ever

before her mind's eye, and felt amply rewarded in the mere effort to do good.

Miss Plantagenet observed in Fanny's conduct and feelings, during her tedious recovery, a beautiful illustration of Christianity in one so young; she was so invariably gentle, prayerful, full of intense gratitude to all around, and of anxious desire to please. Emily felt that Fanny's whole disposition was deeply interesting, and she had the same tasteful appreciation of beauty in character that connoisseurs have of beauty in painting. No trait to be admired was lost on one who felt as much pleasure in it as in a delicious perfume, while no stench in the world was so odious to her senses as a selfish, mean, or vicious action. Emily saw in Fanny's religion not the mere passive endurance produced by a helpless submission to fate, but also a strong, enlightened faith in the excellent wisdom of that Divine Being, who wisely appoints the measure of all sufferings. She saw, too, a heartfelt, intelligent gratitude to the friend so unexpectedly raised up in her hour of need. There was a native gracefulness in all Fanny did, said, or thought; and warm as were her expressions of devoted gratitude to Emily Plantagenet, they never seemed overdone or out of taste. Fanny at once gave her whole confidence to a benefactress evidently desirous of obtaining her affection, and she never troubled so generous a

friend with unbelieving doubts whether Miss Plantagenet's benevolence were not over-taxed, or her charitable hospitality worn out. Fanny frankly accepted, as she saw her benefactress intended, all that was done for her advantage; and in the depths of her own grateful heart prayed that she might show herself deserving of so much noble, so much marvellous liberality, so pleasingly bestowed.

A happier trio could scarcely be found than Emily Plantagenet and her two grateful guests, during the first afternoon that Fanny could be allowed to leave the bed she had so long inhabited, and to enjoy a short excursion into the favourite sitting-room of her very kind benefactress, who joyfully arranged the feeble invalid on a sofa near the window, where many fragrant flowers clustered deliciously around, and where the sun shone cheerfully on a face, the pale beauty of which seemed to have become like that of a seraph.

Deeply had Emily felt, during many long years, a weary blank in possessing no near relatives—the penalty, as she always remarked, of being an heiress; and she sometimes even jestingly expressed a wish that Providence had kindly endowed her with any blind old aunt or cousin, that she might have some one on whom to lavish all the kind impulses of her affectionate nature.

The solitude of single ladies less richly endowed with wealth than Emily, in London, is often quite irretrievable, and it may almost be said appalling. If the unmarried cousin among numerous gay relatives once inadvertently lose the thread of connexion with general society, she too often falls into an indolent, desponding, slovenly retirement from all association, and it requires more persevering energy than most ladies are gifted with to buffet alone, through all the slights and purposely given affronts that "patient merit of the unworthy takes."

It happened even to Miss Plantagenet that most of her early friends had scattered themselves of late over the Continent. Some were wintering at Naples, others at Rome; two or three were miscellaneously wandering over the habitable globe; many were nobly fighting their country's battles in the Crimea; and four or five had emigrated finally and for ever to Australia or to Canada. The world is too wide now for that entire unity among connexions once so unbroken through life, when families or neighbours, instead of squatting in distant settlements or gayer cities, were born, married, and died within sight of each other, and when births, marriages, deaths, or sicknesses, were matters of united interest to united relations.

During a long and very tedious illness, from

which she had but lately recovered, Emily for the first time discovered how totally alone people may be amidst a crowd of acquaintances. Then innumerable visitors, with a thundering rap at the door of her town house, pushed in their cards of polite inquiry; but among these there were no kind cousins or old friends to claim as a duty and a pleasure the privilege of being admitted to her sick-room. It was, therefore, an inexpressible joy now to Emily that she had found in Fanny a permanent and very suitable companion. Her young protégé's character was so transparently good, she was so clearly and habitually acting from right feeling based upon sound principle, that it became evident this girl, whom Miss Plantagenet had from the first intended to make the object of her most liberal bounty, deserved in fact to be promoted into her chosen friend.

Emily, in her former hours of solitary convalescence, had sent for Mr. Mortimer, the exemplary curate of that parish in London where she resided. He was a man of no particular income, struggling through oceans of trouble and of almost heroic exertions, to maintain his numerous family, and to do good in his populous district, but poverty checked him coldly in on every side. By means of this exemplary clergyman, the very cream of human excellence, Emily attained that fervent desire of her soul, to achieve something for the

happiness of others, and to see how much one energetic individual can accomplish for the good of all, while living in her own home, and spreading her influence like sunshine around it.

When Fanny one morning, soon after her recovery, lay quiet and undisturbed on the sofa, in a perfect trance of felicity, with Miss Plantagenet by her side, and the good kind Susan holding her hand, Mr. Mortimer entered the drawing-room to give Emily his weekly statement of all that he had recently done on her account for the London poor. Emily's desire was, chiefly, to succour those objects of charity nearest herself, as being most evidently intended by Providence to be benefited by her care, and Fanny had entreated that she might now be a listener, of course a silent one, to the good curate's account of his mission. Seldom had she and Mrs. O'Hara been more enjoyably interested than in the simple narrative of Mr. Mortimer's home-mission to the Metropolitan poor, among whom they had themselves been so lately classed.

After having given some very heart-rending descriptions of patient suffering in the lanes and hovels of his district, Mr. Mortimer proceeded to say that he had been surprised in the morning by a message, requesting him to call at Lord Tipperary's on special business, "and," added the good curate, gravely, "he actually wished me to aid the ends

of justice by becoming a thief-taker! Knowing that I shun no haunts of misery or vice, his Lordship asked me to assist him in detecting a criminal of atrocious character, who has hitherto most marvellously eluded every effort to capture him. It is a painful duty, but still it is a duty for all men, without exception, to assist in preserving the laws of property and life. If a murderer as well as a thief, and this criminal seems to be both, escape with impunity, that becomes a public misfortune. By Lord Tipperary's account, there never existed a more drunken reprobate! Swindling, lying, thieving, and even murder, are among the counts in that wretched man's indictment. I forgot to ask his name, but of course he has a dozen, and a clue has been at last discovered by which Mr. O'Grady undertakes that, if I lend my aid, he may be captured to-morrow."

"But," asked Emily, little conscious of the death-like interest with which her two auditors were listening, while their hearts almost ceased to beat as she spoke, "are you really bound by duty and conscience to give assistance in capturing this man?"

"Undoubtedly, for it is dangerous to society that such a villain should go loose. His crimes appear, from Lord Tipperary's account, to be atrocious; while, at the same time, he is so immensely cunning and so very powerful in strength, that already he has twice broken loose after being taken.

I have merely been asked to persuade an old woman, one of my pensioners, that she must allow O'Grady, with a file of policemen, to be concealed in her own garret, standing close beside the room in which that miserable rascal burrows at night. He reels home every evening after dark, therefore the police are to be in readiness. The criminal must be seized as soon as he sleeps, that being the only chance to prevent a desperate and even murderous resistance."

Susan, by an almost miraculous effort, steadied her voice sufficiently to say, though almost stifled with agitation, "Might you tell us where that lodging is?"

"In the worst locality I know," replied Mr. Mortimer, surprised at the tremulous accents with which that question had been asked. "The wretched man's refuge is in a miserable hole, the wonder and horror of all who enter. The street is most inappropriately named 'Paradise-row!' Lord Tipperary tells me the criminal once had a wife, but he says she forsook him as soon as he got into trouble. There were also two girls in the family, who made, as Lord Tipperary said, a most disgraceful attempt to inveigle some of his nearest relatives, when in Ireland, into marrying them. Altogether the annals of that family are, according to Mr. O'Grady's account, about as odious a tissue of cunning and crime as the wickedness of human

nature ever put together. I feel no scruple about bringing them to punishment, in the hope that it may bring them to repentance."

Every drop of blood was drained from the livid face of Susan O'Hara when she now looked up, during one short moment, at the unconscious speaker, and she would have seemed like a corpse but for those eyes, vivid with a thousand emotions of grief and dismay which became sadly and most mournfully fixed on the placid countenance of Miss Plantagenet. Gradually big tears gathered in Susan's eyes, she bent her head down to the very pillow on which Fanny lay, and her heart sunk in a silent prostration of helpless anguish beyond all power of thought. Susan's mind became a chaos of the blackest misery, in which, however, one frightful image grew more and more prominent,—the image of her own falsely-accused husband struggling fiercely for life and liberty in the hands of his prejudiced assailants.

"He is not guilty! He is innocent of all crime,—that one vice of intoxication has been Patrick's only fault; yet, maddened by a strange and mysterious persecution, he is driven to the very wall now by false accusations. My own husband! who would not pity him? His high spirit rankling under injustice, his bright talents crushed under a load of unmerited suspicion, his very life threatened for crimes he never perpe-

trated! My own husband! once it was my pride and honour to be your wife! Now, if it bring me shame, or death itself, I shall be faithful and devoted as ever."

Susan with speechless intensity of emotion, riveted her hands together, and solemnly looked upwards, while her face assumed gradually an expression of lofty composure, of calm, heaven-born fortitude, and the prayer for guidance, which trembled on her quivering lips seemed answered at once. She then turned towards Fanny, and their eyes met. The glance they now exchanged was one of such mutual pity and sympathising confidence, as might have passed between two beings of a better world, so pure in its affection, so tender in its heart-piercing sorrow, but they dared not yet utter one word, lest the flood-gates of grief should break forth irresistibly in a torrent of uncontrollable distress. Susan could only grasp Fanny by the arm and listen, while Mr. Mortimer's words seemed burned into her very brain as he proceeded, saying,—

"Lord Tipperary had quite despaired of ever regaining his 6,000*l.*; but that too-clever-for-this-world man, O'Grady, brought some of the notes, which he said that villain had offered to a horse-dealer soon after the robbery, in order to hush up some ugly affair of his own on the turf. O'Grady's chief object in pursuing this villain is to find out

two girls, this man's daughters or wards, as he has some romantic story about their having been kidnapped. That man O'Grady has strangely mistaken his vocation in not being a London detective. I believe he is now on the track of both girls."

"It appears as if that one family might give ample work to a whole posse of detectives," observed Emily smiling. "I cannot but pity the poor stolen girls, who have probably been brought up to cunning and intrigue; but this wretched man, according to Lord Tipperary, would disgrace the Newgate Calendar."

These words pierced to Susan's very soul; yet still she sat outwardly composed, writhing with anguish, though secretly nerving her spirit to endure or die. She had a task now before her mind's eye that must be done. With true woman's heroism Mrs. O'Hara summoned to her aid that courage which nothing could shake, being grounded on the strong motive of conjugal affection. The fire of a noble indignation on behalf of her strangely persecuted and most miserable husband, gave energy to every thought; but nothing could at this moment have disturbed the deep serenity of Susan's external manner. It was like the calmness of death, while none but Fanny perceived the tight compression of her lip, the frightful anguish expressed in her eye, and the low, hollow, desponding tone of her voice. Any

trifle would have snapped the frail thread of poor Susan's fortitude, therefore she averted her looks from Fanny, until they were at length left alone together. Then at last the flood-gates gave way. She silently but most fervently kissed the agitated girl, wrung her hands convulsively together, and burst into an irrepressible agony of tears.

"Tell me the worst," whispered Fanny, in a low, feeble, breathless voice. "Should we fly? Must we leave this best of friends,—this blessed asylum—this happy house!"

"Fanny! you shall not become homeless," answered Susan, her utterance impeded by sobs of unspeakable anguish. "Here my friendless girl has found a friend. When Miss Plantagenet offered to keep you with herself, all my prayers on your account were answered. Stay then, Fanny, safe and happy——"

"But, mother—dear mother, you also remain?" asked the trembling girl, anxiously observing that Mrs. O'Hara said nothing of her own future fate. "Our good and very kind benefactress planned everything for your own comfort as much as for mine."

"She did, and God reward her!" exclaimed Susan, clasping her hands fervently together, while tears rushed from her eyes, and fell like rain unheeded on the ground. A long pause ensued, for Mrs. O'Hara could not articulate

another word. Fanny, then feebly raising herself on her elbow, fixed two large earnest eyes with a steadfast gaze on Susan's pale and quivering face. Oh what a world of woe was written there! That countenance betrayed how the heart was running darkly to ruin within—that a mortal struggle against despair was going on in that best of minds—yet still the lamp of faith, though it glimmered but faintly in the storm, could not be utterly extinguished.

“Speak to me, mother! Why do you turn away? Are you never going to speak? Why turn away?” exclaimed Fanny in trembling apprehension, but attempting to rise hurriedly from the sofa. “Our generous benefactress offered a home to you as well as to me. Say, at once, if you think of departing; for, weak and ill as I am, we must go together. You shall not pace this desolate world alone. Mother! let me quote the book of Ruth, which you and I have so often read in happy companionship, ‘Where thou goest, I will go.’”

Susan locked Fanny in her arms for several minutes in a close but silent embrace, and though not a word was uttered, yet the grief that they shared thus together became softened by participation. At length Mrs. O'Hara, with the tenderness of a mother to her infant child, laid Fanny's head on the pillow, saying, in accents of

intense affection, yet of authoritative kindness, “My own dear girl, remain here, and so relieve me of the crushing anxiety it would cause to have one so young, so fragile, so beloved in my charge. You know, Fanny, well what solemn ideas I have of that awful vow which made me my husband’s till death shall part us. Mine was the unconditional oath at the altar, voluntarily—gladly taken. Nothing on this side of the grave can release me from that obligation. Nature is weak, but duty is strong within me; and, truth to say, love stronger still. I love my husband, though with heart-aching affection; therefore let me go, this very hour, to seek him out in his misery. If there be one faint atom of my old influence remaining, let me use it to comfort, perhaps yet even reclaim him. I must pray for Patrick, weep for him, work for him, perhaps even die for him, but never desert him. Now that I am dead to every pleasure of life, let me be the more alive to its duties.”

For a moment Susan’s voice failed, and her head sunk upon Fanny’s shoulder, weighed down with sorrow; but soon by a strong effort she conquered it, saying, in a tone of restored firmness—

“My best consolation is to leave you safe. I shall write a very few lines to our generous benefactress before departing, for words would fail me in her presence to say half what I feel.

Lest my husband should annoy her, no power on earth shall draw from me the secret of where you are. As for myself, when duty is done, Fanny, let the result be left to God."

When Susan paused, her face had in it an expression that any painter might have selected to represent a saint—so calm, so pale, so intelligent, and with an aspect of so much lofty enthusiasm. The watchword of Susan's life had always been "Duty," and now she lost not a moment in preparing to depart. Few were the possessions which had ever, even in her best days, belonged to Susan, and none remained now that the conscientious wanderer could call her own, except the clothes she wore. As Mrs. O'Hara was about to steal away without trusting herself to utter a farewell, Fanny, calling her back in a tone of piercing anxiety, implored her adopted mother to accept all that belonged to herself—the very small sum of money she had earned at Madame Armand's.

"No, Fanny! not now," answered Susan, embracing her. "I might one day be driven to claim your kind offer, but not till my husband reforms. Anything more than absolute necessities at present would be worse than useless. You know well, my dear girl, that before to-morrow's sun had set my last farthing would probably be gone; if I had ten times what you offer, my last possession would be in the pawnbroker's shop,

and my husband himself in a paroxysm of delirious frenzy. No comfort can linger long, Fanny, as you and I know, in a drunkard's home. The shawl I wear to-day may not probably be my own to-morrow; but no one can help me now—not even my own kind, affectionate, dear girl, Fanny.”

“Surely,” exclaimed Fanny earnestly, “it must be mere Quixotism to go from this house, plunging into such scenes of misery and desperation.”

“Not so, my dear girl,” answered Susan, in a tone of gentle resolution. “In Patrick's most dark, troubled, and stormy hours, his heart has still a place for me; and may I not be blessed at last to snatch him from the abyss of destruction. On our wedding-day I voluntarily took in trust the welfare, for time and eternity, of a much-loved husband. I could as soon tear my heart in two as abandon my duty to Patrick now.”

“But,” remonstrated Fanny, becoming fearful of actual danger to Susan personally in her generous enterprise, “it is at present so very hopeless an attempt!”

“Perhaps not, Fanny. Even at the worst, consider how many Christians leave their happy homes to seek hazard and difficulty in reforming the most benighted savages. A devoted missionary thinks his life well sacrificed if, amidst hardships, starvation, death, and even ingratitude, he succeed in reclaiming one soul from destruction.

For my own part, then, dear Fanny, I go now as a missionary to my own husband. Once he loved me—once we were happy together—once I could influence him aright. The glory of his life and mine is gone for ever, and those blessed days can return no more; yet my heart is filled to agony with compassionate sorrow, when contrasting my husband as he was with what he is now. Patrick seems hunted like a wild beast by his enemies; he is falsely accused, and none on earth care for his soul but me. Often, Fanny, in my wakeful nights, I meditate on the awful day of judgment—that great day for which all other days are made. Then I shudder to think, that of one sinner it is described, that ‘He stood speechless.’ Fanny! it makes me sometimes go almost deranged, when I imagine it possible that Patrick, the husband I have loved—loved with all my soul—loved in my very heart of hearts—may hereafter, if not reformed, stand before an assembled universe, speechless, helpless, and condemned. Do not wonder then, my dear girl, that I could be torn limb from limb to save him from such a fate! Shall I not go to my husband, then? Shall I not watch over him, pray for him, prove to Patrick that the religion he now forgets, has taught me to stay by his side, when all others forsake him. My poor, persecuted, lost, but still dear husband, may God help me to serve you!”

Mrs. O'Hara departed immediately, leaving a short but earnest-hearted letter of grateful farewell for Miss Plantagenet, who, with evident astonishment, brought it open to Fanny, saying that nothing could exceed her surprise, except her regret, at this very sudden flight, though the reason given was perfectly natural, as Mrs. O'Hara's husband seemed to require her aid in some case of unexplained emergency.

"Miss Plantagenet," said Fanny, with a voice and look of honest frankness, such as no heart could have withstood, and least of all that of her kind benefactress, "it would be unpardonable to have one shadow of concealment from the friend who has taken me under her roof, and generously given me her confidence. Whatever I risk in telling our calamitous story, let me entreat you to hear it all. If I were upon oath before a jury it could not be more truthfully related than now—at least as far as the circumstances are known to myself. Before I tell you the whole, however, let me thank you again that my life has been saved by your care, and that I am preserved also from dangers that my tongue dare not utter. Kind and good Miss Plantagenet, you will never know half what I owe to such a benefactress, unless you could hear all from which I am rescued."

In simple, but eloquent language, Fanny now

related the entire history of her own short but eventful life. She fearlessly plunged into a confession of all its intricacies, of all its pleasures, of all its pains, of all her conjectures and fears. Fanny honestly acknowledged, — with downcast eyes, however, and many burning blushes—that Captain Clifford had succeeded in making her frequently remember his visit with interest; but from so kind a benefactress nothing should be concealed.

Then at the last she told Miss Plantagenet, who heard with sympathising interest, with what shame, sorrow and surprise Mrs. O'Hara and herself had heard the distorted account given by Lord Tipperary, of the erring and unhappy O'Hara to Mr. Mortimer.

Emily listened with breathless wonder! She could not meanwhile for an instant take her astonished eyes off the countenance of Fanny, glowing in all the beauty of truth, innocence and sensibility. Her own heart meanwhile expanded with the noblest of pleasures, in discovering that she had been privileged thus essentially to benefit any one so truly deserving. Miss Plantagenet's eyes gleamed with benevolent gratification; all had been told, and taking Fanny by the hand, she said with generous warmth, "Now we are friends for life. My earnest wish is at last fulfilled, to find one I may really trust and love. Thank you, Fanny, for being so perfectly open, and for the

mutual benefit we shall be, through life, to each other. As there can be no real friendship without a perfect equality, forget from this hour that you are under any obligation. I hate to oppress people with obligations! I prefer being contradicted, or even 'snubbed,' to being flattered or praised; for sincerity is to me all in all."

"That is not a very common taste. Shall it be my duty now to become as argumentative and aggravating as possible, to beat you at chess, to contradict you about the weather, and to discredit all your latest news," answered Fanny, with her old merry smile, and her eyes yet swimming in happy tears; "You wish me, in short, to rise quite above the poor-relation tone."

"Of course," replied Emily, with a smile of good-humoured raillery; "At the same time, I should feel much more interested in poor relations than in rich ones, if I had either. It would be quite a treasure, if I could find some poverty-stricken connexions, in whose pleasures I might feel entitled to take a friendly interest! Lately, in the run-away-relations column of the *Times*, I read an advertisement that amused and interested me extremely. An old cavalry officer, who had lost all his relatives while himself serving abroad, wished to domesticate himself amidst a large family circle, in whose affairs he could take an interest during his future life. Only fancy the friendly

old officer in white beard and mustachios, telling his military anecdotes to a listening circle of young people, and like an adopted uncle or grandfather, hearing their wishes or plans in return."

"I quite respect him," replied Fanny, smiling; "How different from those matrimonial advertisements of needy men, who would entrap some wretched woman of 'adequate income,' as they always say, into being pillaged, and miserable slaves for life."

"I have, like the old cavalry officer, a keen interest in young people, and had I many juvenile relations, would frequently give one stray cousin for her first ball a becoming Madame Devidress—send another some never-to-be-equalled book—help one boy-cousin in obtaining a pony, and another in buying his first watch."

"To become, in short, a species of good fairy showering down benefits wherever you appear," added Fanny, smiling; "That might be enchanting, and is what I have often fancied, but then everybody must be very grateful, as well as perfectly satisfied."

"How impossible! but such harmless visions make me happy sometimes," replied Emily, with a sweet, but somewhat melancholy smile. "Perhaps my schemes of liberality proceed partly from a sense of weakness. I have an ardent desire to

make myself loved by others, as I love them; but feeling the difficulty of gaining a very warm corner in their affection, I would facilitate the task to myself, and to them, by giving those I most esteem such memorials of my attachment as may bring me often and pleasantly to their remembrance. Yet in several instances the relatives I ardently wished to serve, only laughed at the apparently weak facility with which I parted from my money, looking on it as the mental disease of a feeble mind, only to be ridiculed."

"How many you have already made happy, and how many more will owe, like me, hereafter, all their comfort in life to your singular liberality!" answered Fanny, fixing her earnest thoughtful eyes on Emily. "And all your kind actions are done in so kind a way that it is a setting of gold to the jewel."

"I must endeavour then not to be entirely discouraged,—to find those like you, Fanny, who will not embitter my kindly intentioned heart, by misconceiving my simple motives of truly unaffected desire to be useful. Really, while attempting to do good my purse becomes, like the widow's cruise, inexhaustible," continued Emily in a pleasant happy tone. "By giving to those indigent persons chiefly who live close around, you would scarcely believe how little goes so great a way. My two Scripture readers and Mr. Mortimer

distribute clothes, food, medicines, coals, candles, books and instruction, every day under my own directions, among the struggling poor; yet, contrary to my wish or intention, more of my income is saved than spent."

"Philanthropists, who compassionate the poor heathens of London, may watch personally that every shilling shall tell effectually on the hearts and homes of those who have the nearest claim on their kindness, who are within hail of their own voices, and whose groans of misery might be heard almost at their own fireside," observed Fanny. "The most ignorant barbarians are not in such misery as I have witnessed and even shared lately myself, among hundreds within a ten minutes' walk of Grosvenor Square. How often, in contemplating their squalid misery, I have wondered that the rich and happy were not afraid to sleep in their beds when so many desperate men are living near, who have nothing but their lives to lose, and those lives so utterly wretched that death itself would be a relief!"

"The festering misery of those wretched mortals, living almost in the next street, is indeed a fearful thought—packed, and huddled, and writhing in misery together, like eels in a dish—crowded, filthy, naked, and ignorant," observed Emily in a tone of deep reflection. "The poor of London, amidst close alleys, dark windows, undrained courts,

unpaved foot-paths, the far-off pump, and the Irish fever, are worse off than the savages in a hot climate who sleep luxuriously in the open air, and can eat fruits off the hedges. As Mr. Mortimer says, all permanent improvements in the character and conduct of London savages, must begin with an amendment of their condition, so that they shall be enabled to live in decent comfort, to respect themselves, and to feel a lasting gratitude towards their superiors. All I desire is to give those whose voices are almost within the echo of my own home, plain food, plain clothing, weather-proof lodging, abundant employment, and education enough to understand as well as read their Bibles. Mr. Mortimer, with his enlarged and enlightened views, feels himself a citizen of the world in its best sense. His chief idea of duty is to augment as much as possible the happiness of every human being, and to diminish by every effort the misery that reigns over great masses of mankind in his own parish."

"What a happy man he must be himself," observed Fanny earnestly. "I have always thought the life of an active zealous clergyman the most enviable of all. His heart and conscience can approve of each hourly duty, nothing he does is insignificant, but every action leads on in the chain of everlasting consequences to good, and the blessings he has to bestow are like

sunshine, enough for the whole world, yet so bountiful that each may feel as if he enjoyed all."

"Such clergymen as Mr. Mortimer are to be found everywhere now," observed Emily. "In my childhood it was not so; but the average of curate-life is immensely raised since then. Those who would have been reckoned perfect wonders of active diligence once, are now only up to the ordinary level, for our clergy are all very wide awake at present to the infinite importance of their sacred mission. At Athelstane as well as here my parish clergyman works with a ten-curate power, and much he finds to do."

Well might Emily speak of the good done at Athelstane, chiefly, however, at her own instigation; for did she not employ troops of honest, hard-working labourers in embellishing her grounds; and who ever enjoyed with greater taste or judgment the pleasant hobby of improving the cottages and gardens of her own pretty rural village, by bribing the labourers to keep their own dwellings, inside and outside, conscientiously clean and fresh. It had always been the dream of her youth that by care and encouragement she could bring in a golden era among her tenantry, to the entire exclusion of ignorance, want, intoxication, or crime, and each step which Emily Plantagenet took towards that happy end was her delight. She considered every day lost, in which

something had not been added to the happiness of somebody, and searched out as for hidden treasures every opportunity to do actions of almost romantic liberality.

There are persons who think they can infallibly guess the age from the countenance; but these would have been greatly puzzled to name that of Miss Pantagenet, who had arrived at the period of life which is popularly called "no particular age." The calm and elevated expression of her features might have been, in primitive times, the model of a saint, yet those who expect a religious person to appear with mournful looks and woe-begone colours,—too often in a state of slovenly and slatternly despondency of dress and aspect, would have been sadly disappointed to see with what cheerful grace Emily enjoyed the society of her equals. Miss Plantagenet considered herself born for a position which it was her duty, as much as her pleasure to fill, therefore all her establishment and belongings were consistent with the distinguished place appointed for her by unerring Wisdom. Nothing appeared inconsistent with her birthright. Emily's carriage was handsome, her dress very tasteful, her establishment large, her table hospitable, and all her habits indicative of a large heart, backed by a very capacious purse. She habitually kept up the old family library by adding to it every standard work of permanent

interest, and she now passed a great part of every day with Fanny in reading and discussing together, the best works in history, poetry, and biography. It became the actual study of Miss Plantagenet hereafter to cherish in Fanny that intercourse of perfect equality which is the only basis of real friendship; while nothing pleased Emily more obviously than to see her young and very true-hearted companion maintaining her own opinions with firmness, or questioning those of others with the cheerful frankness that gave grace and interest to all that Fanny said or did. The entire confidence which at length arose between Fanny and her benefactress became as perfect as Miss Plantagenet so generously wished, and constituted at last the best happiness of both. Each now felt how the best charms of nature improve, when we see them reflected from looks that we love.

END OF VOL. II.











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