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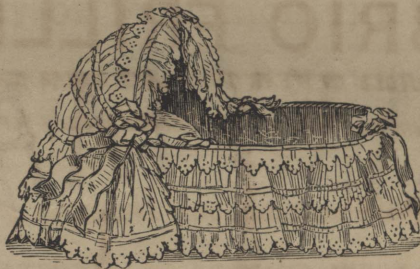
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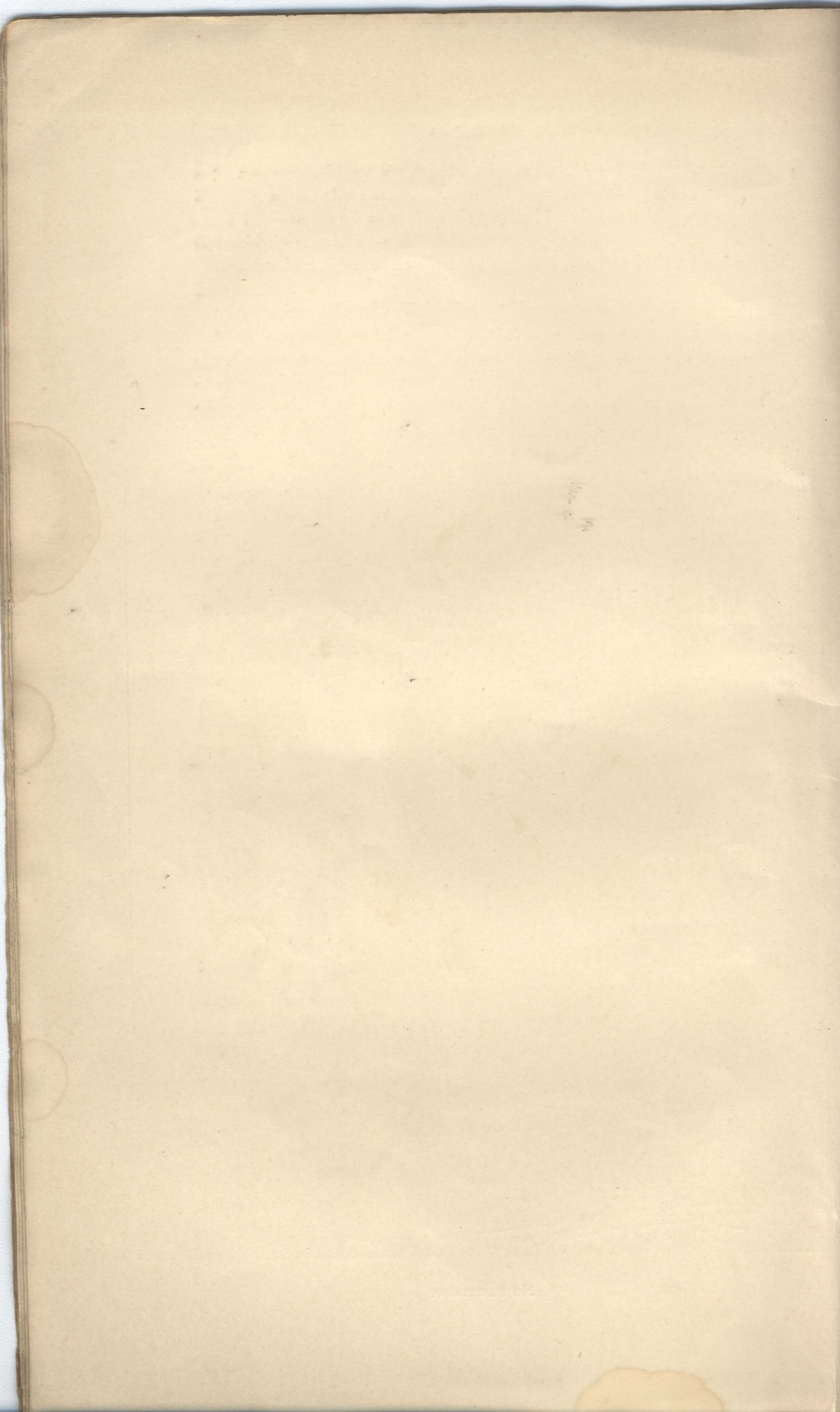
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'Tell me, Madelaine, are you happy now?



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CHAPTER XVII.

THE LOVES AND HOPES OF ALBERT FITZALLEN.

FELIX GRAHAM, when he left poor Mary Snow, did not go on immediately to the doctor's shop. He had made up his mind that Mary Snow should never be his wife, and therefore considered it wise to lose no time in making such arrangements as might be necessary both for his release and for hers. But, nevertheless, he had not the heart to go about the work the moment that he left her. He passed by the apothecary's, and looking in saw a young man working sedulously at a pestle. If Albert Fitzallen were fit to be her husband and willing to be so, poor as he was himself, he would still make some pecuniary sacrifice by which he might quiet his own conscience and make Mary's marriage possible. He still had a sum of 1,200*l.* belonging to him, that being all his remaining capital; and the half of that he would give to Mary as her dower. So in two days he returned, and again looking in at the doctor's shop, again saw the young man at his work.

'Yes, sir, my name is Albert Fitzallen,' said the medical aspirant, coming round the counter. There was no one else in the shop, and Felix hardly knew how to accost him on so momentous a subject, while he was still in charge of all that store of medicine, and liable to be called away at any moment to relieve the ailments of Clapham. Albert Fitzallen was a pale-faced, light-haired youth, with an incipient moustache, with his hair parted in equal divisions over his forehead, with elaborate shirt-cuffs elaborately turned back, and with a white apron tied round him so that he might pursue his vocation without injury to his nether garments. His face, however, was not bad, nor mean, and had there not been about him a little air of pretension, assumed perhaps to carry off the combined apron and beard, Felix would have regarded him altogether with favourable eyes.

'Is it in the medical way?' asked Fitzallen, when Graham suggested that he should step out with him for a few minutes. Graham explained that it was not in the medical way,—that it was in a way altogether of a private nature; and then the young man, pulling off his apron and wiping his hands on a thoroughly medicated towel, invoked the master of the establishment from an inner room, and in

a few minutes Mary Snow's two lovers were walking together, side by side, along the causeway.

'I believe you know Miss Snow,' said Felix, rushing at once into the middle of all those delicate circumstances.

Albert Fitzallen drew himself up, and declared that he had that honour.

'I also know her,' said Felix. 'My name is Felix Graham——'

'Oh, sir, very well,' said Albert. The street in which they were standing was desolate, and the young man was able to assume a look of decided hostility without encountering any other eyes than those of his rival. 'If you have anything to say to me, sir, I am quite prepared to listen to you—to listen to you, and to answer you. I have heard your name mentioned by Miss Snow.' And Albert Fitzallen stood his ground as though he were at once going to cover himself with his pistol arm.

'Yes, I know you have. Mary has told me what has passed between you. You may regard me, Mr. Fitzallen, as Mary's best and surest friend.'

'I know you have been a friend to her; I am aware of that. But, Mr. Graham, if you will allow me to say so, friendship is one thing, and the warm love of a devoted bosom is another.'

'Quite so,' said Felix.

'A woman's heart is a treasure not to be bought by any efforts of friendship,' said Fitzallen.

'I fully agree with you there,' said Graham.

'Far be it from me to make any boast,' continued the other, 'or even to hint that I have gained a place in that lady's affections. I know my own position too well, and say proudly that I am existing only on hope.' Here, to show his pride, he hit himself with his closed fist on his shirt-front. 'But, Mr. Graham, I am free to declare, even in your presence, though you may be her best and surest friend,'—and there was not wanting, from the tone of his voice a strong flavour of scorn as he repeated these words—'that I do exist on hope, let your claims be what they will. If you desire to make such hope on my part a cause of quarrel, I have nothing to say against it.' And then he twirled all that he could twirl of that incipient moustache.

'By no means,' said Graham.

'Oh, very well,' said Fitzallen. 'Then we understand that the arena of love is open to us both. I do not fail to appreciate the immense advantages which you enjoy in this struggle.' And then Fitzallen looked up into Graham's ugly face, and thought of his own appearance in the looking-glass.

'What I want to know is this,' said Felix. 'If you marry Mary Snow, what means have you of maintaining her? Would your mother receive her into her house? I presume you are not a

partner in that shop; but would it be possible to get you in as a partner, supposing Mary were to marry you and had a little money as her fortune?’

‘Eh!’ said Albert, dropping his look of pride, allowing his hand to fall from his lips, and standing still before his companion with his mouth wide open.

‘Of course you mean honestly by dear Mary.’

‘Oh, sir, yes, on the honour of a gentleman. My intentions, sir, are —. Mr. Graham, I love that young lady with a devotion of heart, that—that—that—. Then you don’t mean to marry her yourself; eh, Mr. Graham?’

‘No, Mr. Fitzallen, I do not. And now, if you will so far confide in me, we will talk over your prospects.’

‘Oh, very well. I’m sure you are very kind. But Miss Snow did tell me——’

‘Yes, I know she did, and she was quite right. But as you said just now, a woman’s heart cannot be bought by friendship. I have not been a bad friend to Mary, but I had no right to expect that I could win her love in that way. Whether or no you may be able to succeed, I will not say, but I have abandoned the pursuit.’ In all which Graham intended to be exceedingly honest, but was, in truth, rather hypocritical.

‘Then the course is open to me,’ said Fitzallen.

‘Yes, the course is open,’ answered Graham.

‘But the race has still to be run. Don’t you think that Miss Snow is of her nature very—very cold?’

Felix remembered the one kiss beneath the lamp-post,—the one kiss given, and received. He remembered also that Mary’s acquaintance with the gentleman must necessarily have been short; and he made no answer to this question. But he made a comparison. What would Madeline have said and done had he attempted such an iniquity? And he thought of her flashing eyes and terrible scorn, of the utter indignation of all the Staveley family, and of the wretched abyss into which the offender would have fallen.

He brought back the subject at once to the young man’s means, to his mother, and to the doctor’s shop; and though he learned nothing that was very promising, neither did he learn anything that was the reverse. Albert Fitzallen did not ride a very high horse when he learned that his supposed rival was so anxious to assist him. He was quite willing to be guided by Graham, and, in that matter of the proposed partnership, was sure that old Balsam, the owner of the business, would be glad to take a sum of money down. ‘He has a son of his own,’ said Albert, ‘but he don’t take to it at all. He’s gone into wine and spirits; but he don’t sell half as much as he drinks.’

Felix then proposed that he should call on Mrs. Fitzallen, and to

this Albert gave a blushing consent. 'Mother has heard of it,' said Albert, 'but I don't exactly know how.' Perhaps Mrs. Fitzallen was as attentive as Mrs. Thomas had been to stray documents packed away in odd places. 'And I suppose I may call on—on—Mary?' asked the lover, as Graham took his leave. But Felix could give no authority for this, and explained that Mrs. Thomas might be found to be a dragon still guarding the Hesperides. Would it not be better to wait till Mary's father had been informed? and then, if all things went well, he might prosecute the affair in due form and as an acknowledged lover.

All this was very nice, and as it was quite unexpected, Fitzallen could not but regard himself as a fortunate young man. He had never contemplated the possibility of Mary Snow being an heiress. And when his mother had spoken to him of the hopelessness of his passion, had suggested that he might perhaps marry his Mary in five or six years. Now the dearest wish of his heart was brought close within his reach, and he must have been a happy man. But yet, though this certainly was so, nevertheless, there was a feeling of coldness about his love, and almost of disappointment as he again took his place behind the counter. The sorrows of Lydia in the play when she finds that her passion meets with general approbation are very absurd, but, nevertheless, are quite true to nature. Lovers would be great losers if the path of love were always to run smooth. Under such a dispensation, indeed, there would probably be no lovers. The matter would be too tame. Albert did not probably bethink himself of a becoming disguise, as did Lydia,—of an amiable ladder of ropes, of a conscious moon, or a Scotch parson; but he did feel, in some undefined manner, that the romance of his life had been taken away from him. Five minutes under a lamp-post with Mary Snow was sweeter to him than the promise of a whole bevy of evenings spent in the same society, with all the comforts of his mother's drawing-room around him. Ah, yes, dear readers—my male readers of course I mean—were not those minutes under the lamp-post always very pleasant?

But Graham encountered none of this feeling when he discussed the same subject with Albert's mother. She was sufficiently alive to the material view of the matter, and knew how much of a man's married happiness depends on his supplies of bread and butter. Six hundred pounds! Mr. Graham was very kind—very kind indeed. She hadn't a word to say against Mary Snow. She had seen her, and thought her very pretty and modest looking. Albert was certainly warmly attached to the young lady. Of that she was quite certain. And she would say this of Albert,—that a better-disposed young man did not exist anywhere. He came home quite regular to his meals, and spent ten hours a day behind the counter in Mr. Balsam's shop—ten hours a day, Sundays included, which

Mrs. Fitzallen regarded as a great drawback to the medical line—as should I also, most undoubtedly. But six hundred pounds would make a great difference. Mrs. Fitzallen little doubted but that sum would tempt Mr. Balsam into a partnership, or perhaps the five hundred, leaving one hundred for furniture. In such a case Albert would spend his Sundays at home, of course. After that, so much having been settled, Felix Graham got into an omnibus and took himself back to his own chambers.

So far was so good. This idea of a model wife had already become a very expensive idea, and in winding it up to its natural conclusion poor Graham was willing to spend almost every shilling that he could call his own. But there was still another difficulty in his way. What would Snow père say? Snow père was, he knew, a man with whom dealings would be more difficult than with Albert Fitzallen. And then, seeing that he had already promised to give his remaining possessions to Albert Fitzallen, with what could he bribe Snow père to abandon that natural ambition to have a barrister for his son-in-law? In these days, too, Snow père had derogated even from the position in which Graham had first known him, and had become but little better than a drunken, begging impostor. What a father-in-law to have had! And then Felix Graham thought of Judge Staveley.

He sent, however, to the engraver, and the man was not long in obeying the summons. In latter days Graham had not seen him frequently having bestowed his alms through Mary, and was shocked at the unmistakable evidence of the gin-shop which the man's appearance and voice betrayed. How dreadful to the sight are those watery eyes; that red, uneven, pimpled nose; those fallen cheeks; and that hanging, slobbered mouth! Look at the uncombed hair, the beard half shorn, the weak, impotent gait of the man, and the tattered raiment, all eloquent of gin! You would fain hold your nose when he comes nigh you, he carries with him so foul an evidence of his only and his hourly indulgence. You would do so, had you not still a respect for his feelings, which he himself has entirely forgotten to maintain. How terrible is that absolute loss of all personal dignity which the drunkard is obliged to undergo! And then his voice! Every tone has been formed by gin, and tells of the havoc which the compound has made within his throat. I do not know whether such a man as this is not the vilest thing which grovels on God's earth. There are women whom we affect to scorn with the full power of our contempt; but I doubt whether any woman sinks to a depth so low as that. She also may be a drunkard, and as such may more nearly move our pity and affect our hearts, but I do not think she ever becomes so nauseous a thing as the man that has abandoned all the hopes of life for gin. You can still touch her;—ay, and if the task be in one's way, can

touch her gently, striving to bring her back to decency. But the other! Well, one should be willing to touch him too, to make that attempt of bringing back upon him also. I can only say that the task is both nauseous and unpromising. Look at him as he stands there before the foul, reeking, sloppy bar, with the glass in his hand, which he has just emptied. See the grimace with which he puts it down, as though the dram had been almost too unpalatable. It is the last touch of hypocrisy with which he attempts to cover the offence;—as though he were to say, ‘I do it for my stomach’s sake; but you know how I abhor it.’ Then he skulks sullenly away, speaking a word to no one,—shuffling with his feet, shaking himself in his foul rags, pressing himself into a heap—as though striving to drive the warmth of the spirit into his extremities! And there he stands lounging at the corner of the street, till his short patience is exhausted, and he returns with his last penny for the other glass. When that has been swallowed the policeman is his guardian.

Reader, such as you and I have come to that, when abandoned by the respect which a man owes to himself. May God in his mercy watch over us and protect us both!

Such a man was Snow père as he stood before Graham in his chambers in the Temple. He could not ask him to sit down, so he himself stood up as he talked to him. At first the man was civil, twirling his old hat about, and shifting from one foot to the other;—very civil, and also somewhat timid, for he knew that he was half drunk at the moment. But when he began to ascertain what was Graham’s object in sending for him, and to understand that the gentleman before him did not propose to himself the honour of being his son-in-law, then his civility left him, and, drunk as he was, he spoke out his mind with sufficient freedom.

‘You mean to say, Mr. Graham’—and under the effect of gin he turned the name into Gorm—‘that you are going to throw that young girl over?’

‘I mean to say no such thing. I shall do for her all that is in my power. And if that is not as much as she deserves, it will, at any rate, be more than you deserve for her.’

‘And you won’t marry her?’

‘No; I shall not marry her. Nor does she wish it. I trust that she will be engaged, with my full approbation—’

‘And what the deuce, sir, is your full approbation to me? Whose child is she, I should like to know? Look here, Mr. Gorm; perhaps you forget that you wrote me this letter when I allowed you to have the charge of that young girl?’ And he took out from his breast a very greasy pocket-book, and displayed to Felix his own much-worn letter,—holding it, however, at a distance, so that it should not be torn from his hands by any sudden raid. ‘Do you

think, sir, I would have given up my child if I didn't know she was to be married respectable? My child is as dear to me as another man's.'

'I hope she is. And you are a very lucky fellow to have her so well provided for. I've told you all I've got to say, and now you may go.'

'Mr. Gorm!'

'I've nothing more to say; and if I had, I would not say it to you now. Your child shall be taken care of.'

'That's what I call pretty cool on the part of any gentleman. And you're to break your word,—a regular breach of promise, and nothing aint to come of it! I'll tell you what, Mr. Gorm, you'll find that something will come of it. What do you think I took this letter for?'

'You took it, I hope, for Mary's protection.'

'And by — she shall be protected.'

'She shall, undoubtedly; but I fear not by you. For the present I will protect her; and I hope that soon a husband will do so who will love her. Now, Mr. Snow, I've told you all I've got to say, and I must trouble you to leave me.'

Nevertheless there were many more words between them before Graham could find himself alone in his chambers. Though Snow père might be a thought tipsy—a sheet or so in the wind, as folks say, he was not more tipsy than was customary with him, and knew pretty well what he was about. 'And what am I to do with myself, Mr. Gorm?' he asked in a snivelling voice, when the idea began to strike him that it might perhaps be held by the courts of law that his intended son-in-law was doing well by his daughter.

'Work,' said Graham, turning upon him sharply and almost fiercely.

'That's all very well. It's very well to say "Work!"'

'You'll find it well to do it, too. Work, and don't drink. You hardly think, I suppose, that if I had married your daughter I should have found myself obliged to support you in idleness?'

'It would have been a great comfort in my old age to have had a daughter's house to go to,' said Snow, naïvely, and now reduced to lachrymose distress.

But when he found that Felix would do nothing for him; that he would not on the present occasion lend him a sovereign, or even half a crown, he again became indignant and paternal, and in this state of mind was turned out of the room.

'Heaven and earth!' said Felix to himself, clenching his hands and striking the table with both of them at the same moment. That was the man with whom he had proposed to link himself in the closest ties of family connection. Albert Fitzallen did not know Mr. Snow; but it might be a question whether it would not be Graham's duty to introduce them to each other.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MISS STAVELEY DECLINES TO EAT MINCED VEAL.

THE house at Noningsby was now very quiet. All the visitors had gone, including even the Arbuthnots. Felix Graham and Sophia Furnival, that terrible pair of guests, had relieved Mrs. Staveley of their presence; but, alas! the mischief they had done remained behind them. The house was very quiet, for Augustus and the judge were up in town during the greater part of the week, and Madeline and her mother were alone. The judge was to come back to Noningsby but once before he commenced the circuit which was to terminate at Alston; and it seemed to be acknowledged now on all sides that nothing more of importance was to be done or said in that locality until after Lady Mason's trial.

It may be imagined that poor Madeline was not very happy. Felix had gone away, having made no sign, and she knew that her mother rejoiced that he had so gone. She never accused her mother of cruelty, even within her own heart. She seemed to realize to herself the assurance that a marriage with the man she loved was a happiness which she had no right to expect. She knew that her father was rich. She was aware that in all probability her own fortune would be considerable. She was quite sure that Felix Graham was clever and fit to make his way through the world. And yet she did not think it hard that she should be separated from him. She acknowledged from the very first that he was not the sort of man whom she ought to have loved, and therefore she was prepared to submit.

It was, no doubt, the fact that Felix Graham had never whispered to her a word of love, and that therefore, on that ground, she had no excuse for hope. But, had that been all, she would not have despaired. Had that been all, she might have doubted, but her doubt would have been strongly mingled with the sweetness of hope. He had never whispered a syllable of love, but she had heard the tone of his voice as she spoke a word to him at his chamber door; she had seen his eyes as they fell on her when he was lifted into the carriage; she had felt the tremor of his touch on that evening when she walked up to him across the drawing-room and shook hands with him. Such a girl as Madeline Staveley does not analyze her feelings on such a matter, and then draw her conclusions. But a conclusion is drawn; the mind does receive an

impression; and the conclusion and impression are as true as though they had been reached by the aid of logical reasoning. Had the match been such as her mother would have approved, she would have had a hope as to Felix Graham's love—strong enough for happiness.

As it was, there was no use in hoping; and therefore she resolved—having gone through much logical reasoning on this head—that by her all ideas of love must be abandoned. As regarded herself, she must be content to rest by her mother's side as a flower ungathered. That she could marry no man without the approval of her father and mother was a thing to her quite certain; but it was, at any rate, as certain that she could marry no man without her own approval. Felix Graham was beyond her reach. That verdict she herself pronounced, and to it she submitted. But Peregrine Orme was still more distant from her;—Peregrine Orme, or any other of the curled darlings who might come that way playing the part of a suitor. She knew what she owed to her mother, but she also knew her own privileges.

There was nothing said on the subject between the mother and child during three days. Lady Staveley was more than ordinarily affectionate to her daughter, and in that way made known the thoughts which were oppressing her; but she did so in no other way. All this Madeline understood, and thanked her mother with the sweetest smiles and the most constant companionship. Nor was she, even now, absolutely unhappy, or wretchedly miserable; as under such circumstances would be the case with many girls. She knew all that she was prepared to abandon, but she understood also how much remained to her. Her life was her own, and with her life the energy to use it. Her soul was free. And her heart, though burdened with love, could endure its load without sinking. Let him go forth on his career. She would remain in the shade, and be contented while she watched it.

So strictly wise and philosophically serene had Madeline become within a few days of Graham's departure, that she snubbed poor Mrs. Baker, when that goodnatured and sharp-witted housekeeper said a word or two in praise of her late patient.

'We are very lonely, aint we, miss, without Mr. Graham to look after?' said Mrs. Baker.

'I'm sure we are all very glad that he has so far recovered as to be able to be moved.'

'That's in course,—though I still say that he went before her ought. He was such a nice gentleman. Where there's one better, there's twenty worse; and as full of cleverness as an egg's full of meat.' In answer to which Madeline said nothing.

'At any rate, Miss Madeline, you ought to say a word for him,' continued Mrs. Baker; 'for he used to worship the sound of your

voice. 'I've known him lay there and listen, listen, listen, for your very footfall.'

'How can you talk such stuff, Mrs. Baker? You have never known anything of the kind—and even if he had, how could you know it? You should not talk such nonsense to me, and I beg you won't again.' Then she went away, and began to read a paper about sick people written by Florence Nightingale.

But it was by no means Lady Staveley's desire that her daughter should take to the Florence Nightingale line of life. The charities of Noningsby were done on a large scale, in a quiet, handsome, methodical manner, and were regarded by the mistress of the mansion as a very material part of her life's duty; but she would have been driven distracted had she been told that a daughter of hers was about to devote herself exclusively to charity. Her ideas of general religion were the same. Morning and evening prayers, church twice on Sundays, attendance at the Lord's table at any rate once a month, were to herself—and in her estimation for her own family—essentials of life. And they had on her their practical effects. She was not given to backbiting—though, when stirred by any motive near to her own belongings, she would say an illnatured word or two. She was mild and forbearing to her inferiors. Her hand was open to the poor. She was devoted to her husband and her children. In no respect was she self-seeking or self-indulgent. But, nevertheless, she appreciated thoroughly the comforts of a good income—for herself and for her children. She liked to see nice-dressed and nice-mannered people about her, preferring those whose fathers and mothers were nice before them. She liked to go about in her own carriage, comfortably. She liked the feeling that her husband was a judge, and that he and she were therefore above other lawyers and other lawyers' wives. She would not like to have seen Mrs. Furnival walk out of a room before her, nor perhaps to see Sophia Furnival when married take precedence of her own married daughter. She liked to live in a large place like Noningsby, and preferred country society to that of the neighbouring town.

It will be said that I have drawn an impossible character, and depicted a woman who served both God and Mammon. To this accusation I will not plead, but will ask my accusers whether in their life's travail they have met no such ladies as Lady Staveley?

But such as she was, whether good or bad, she had no desire whatever that her daughter should withdraw herself from the world, and give up to sick women what was meant for mankind. Her idea of a woman's duties comprehended the birth, bringing up, education, and settlement in life of children, also due attendance upon a husband, with a close regard to his special taste in cookery. There was her granddaughter Marian. She was already thinking

what sort of a wife she would make, and what commencements of education would best fit her to be a good mother. It is hardly too much to say that Marian's future children were already a subject of care to her. Such being her disposition, it was by no means matter of joy to her when she found that Madeline was laying out for herself little ways of life, tending in some slight degree to the monastic. Nothing was said about it, but she fancied that Madeline had doffed a ribbon or two in her usual evening attire. That she read during certain fixed hours in the morning was very manifest. As to that daily afternoon service at four o'clock—she had very often attended that, and it was hardly worthy of remark that she now went to it every day. But there seemed at this time to be a monotonous regularity about her visits to the poor, which told to Lady Staveley's mind—she hardly knew what tale. She herself visited the poor, seeing some of them almost daily. If it was foul weather they came to her, and if it was fair weather she went to them. But Madeline, without saying a word to any one, had adopted a plan of going out exactly at the same hour with exactly the same object, in all sorts of weather. All this made Lady Staveley uneasy; and then, by way of counterpoise, she talked of balls, and offered Madeline *carte blanche* as to a new dress for that special one which would grace the assizes. 'I don't think I shall go,' said Madeline; and thus Lady Staveley became really unhappy. Would not Felix Graham be better than no son-in-law? When some one had once very strongly praised Florence Nightingale in Lady Staveley's presence, she had stoutly declared her opinion that it was a young woman's duty to get married. For myself, I am inclined to agree with her. Then came the second Friday after Graham's departure, and Lady Staveley observed, as she and her daughter sat at dinner alone, that Madeline would eat nothing but potatoes and seakale. 'My dear, you will be ill if you don't eat some meat.'

'Oh no, I shall not,' said Madeline with her prettiest smile.

'But you always used to like minced veal.'

'So I do, but I won't have any to-day, mamma, thank you.'

Then Lady Staveley resolved that she would tell the judge that Felix Graham, bad as he might be, might come there if he pleased. Even Felix Graham would be better than no son-in-law at all.

On the following day, the Saturday, the judge came down with Augustus, to spend his last Sunday at home before the beginning of his circuit, and some little conversation respecting Felix Graham did take place between him and his wife.

'If they are both really fond of each other, they had better marry,' said the judge, curtly.

'But it is terrible to think of their having no income,' said his wife.

‘We must get them an income. You’ll find that Graham will fall on his legs at last.’

‘He’s a very long time before he begins to use them,’ said Lady Staveley. ‘And then you know The Cleeve is such a nice property, and Mr. Orme is——’

‘But, my love, it seems that she does not like Mr. Orme.’

‘No, she doesn’t,’ said the poor mother in a tone of voice that was very lachrymose. ‘But if she would only wait she might like him,—might she not now? He is such a very handsome young man.’

‘If you ask me, I don’t think his beauty will do it.’

‘I don’t suppose she cares for that sort of thing,’ said Lady Staveley, almost crying. ‘But I’m sure of this, if she were to go and make a nun of herself, it would break my heart,—it would, indeed. I should never hold up my head again.’

What could Lady Staveley’s idea have been of the sorrows of some other mothers, whose daughters throw themselves away after a different fashion?

After lunch on Sunday the judge asked his daughter to walk with him, and on that occasion the second church service was abandoned. She got on her bonnet and gloves, her walking-boots and winter shawl, and putting her arm happily and comfortably within his, started for what she knew would be a long walk.

‘We’ll get as far as the bottom of Cleeve Hill,’ said the judge.

Now the bottom of Cleeve Hill, by the path across the fields and the common, was five miles from Noningsby.

‘Oh, as for that, I’ll walk to the top if you like,’ said Madeline.

‘If you do, my dear, you’ll have to go up alone,’ said the judge. And so they started.

There was a crisp, sharp enjoyment attached to a long walk with her father which Madeline always loved, and on the present occasion she was willing to be very happy; but as she started, with her arm beneath his, she feared she knew not what. She had a secret, and her father might touch upon it; she had a sore, though it was not an unwholesome festering sore, and her father might probe the wound. There was, therefore, the slightest shade of hypocrisy in the alacrity with which she prepared herself, and in the pleasant tone of her voice as she walked down the avenue towards the gate.

But by the time that they had gone a mile, when their feet had left the road and were pressing the grassy field-path, there was no longer any hypocrisy in her happiness. Madeline believed that no human being could talk as did her father, and on this occasion he came out with his freshest thoughts and his brightest wit. Nor did he, by any means, have the talk all to himself. The delight of Judge Staveley’s conversation consisted chiefly in that—that though he

might bring on to the carpet all the wit and all the information going, he rarely uttered much beyond his own share of words. And now they talked of pictures and politics—of the new gallery that was not to be built at Charing Cross, and the great onslaught which was not to end in the dismissal of Ministers. And then they got to books—to novels, new poetry, magazines, essays, and reviews; and with the slightest touch of pleasant sarcasm the judge passed sentence on the latest efforts of his literary contemporaries. And thus at last they settled down on a certain paper which had lately appeared in a certain Quarterly—a paper on a grave subject, which had been much discussed—and the judge on a sudden stayed his hand, and spared his raillery. ‘You have not heard, I suppose, who wrote that?’ said he. No; Madeline had not heard. She would much like to know. When young people begin their world of reading there is nothing so pleasant to them as knowing the little secrets of literature; who wrote this and that, of which folk are then talking;—who manages this periodical, and puts the salt and pepper into those reviews. The judge always knew these events of the inner literary world, and would communicate them freely to Madeline as they walked. No; there was no longer the slightest touch of hypocrisy in her pleasant manner and eager voice as she answered, ‘No, papa, I have not heard. Was it Mr. So-and-so?’ and she named an ephemeral literary giant of the day. ‘No,’ said the judge, ‘it was not So-and-so; but yet you might guess, as you know the gentleman.’ Then the slight shade of hypocrisy came upon her again in a moment. ‘She couldn’t guess,’ she said; ‘she didn’t know.’ But as she thus spoke the tone of her voice was altered. ‘That article,’ said the judge, ‘was written by Felix Graham. It is uncommonly clever, and yet there are a great many people who abuse it.’

And now all conversation was stopped. Poor Madeline, who had been so ready with her questions, so eager with her answers, so communicative and so inquiring, was stricken dumb on the instant. She had ceased for some time to lean upon his arm, and therefore he could not feel her hand tremble; and he was too generous and too kind to look into her face; but he knew that he had touched the fibres of her heart, and that all her presence of mind had for the moment fled from her. Of course such was the case, and of course he knew it. Had he not brought her out there, that they might be alone together when he subjected her to the violence of this shower-bath?

‘Yes,’ he continued, ‘that was written by our friend Graham. Do you remember, Madeline, the conversation which you and I had about him in the library some time since?’

‘Yes,’ she said, ‘she remembered it.’

‘And so do I,’ said the judge, ‘and have thought much about it

since. A very clever fellow is Felix Graham. There can be no doubt of that.'

'Is he?' said Madeline.

I am inclined to think that the judge also had lost something of his presence of mind, or, at least, of his usual power of conversation. He had brought his daughter out there with the express purpose of saying to her a special word or two; he had beat very wide about the bush with the view of mentioning a certain name; and now that his daughter was there, and the name had been mentioned, it seemed that he hardly knew how to proceed.

'Yes, he is clever enough,' repeated the judge, 'clever enough: and of high principles and an honest purpose. The fault which people find with him is this,—that he is not practical. He won't take the world as he finds it. If he can mend it, well and good; we all ought to do something to mend it; but while we are mending it we must live in it.'

'Yes, we must live in it,' said Madeline, who hardly knew at the moment whether it would be better to live or die in it. Had her father remarked that they must all take wings and fly to heaven, she would have assented.

Then the judge walked on a few paces in silence, bethinking himself that he might as well speak out at once the words which he had to say. 'Madeline, my darling,' said he, 'have you the courage to tell me openly what you think of Felix Graham?'

'What I think of him, papa?'

'Yes, my child. It may be that you are in some difficulty at this moment, and that I can help you. It may be that your heart is sadder than it would be if you knew all my thoughts and wishes respecting you, and all your mother's. I have never had many secrets from my children, Madeline, and I should be pleased now if you could see into my mind and know all my thoughts and wishes as they regard you.'

'Dear papa!'

'To see you happy—you and Augustus and Isabella—that is now our happiness; not to see you rich or great. High position and a plentiful income are great blessings in this world, so that they be achieved without a stain. But even in this world they are not the greatest blessings. There are things much sweeter than them.' As he said this, Madeline did not attempt to answer him, but she put her arm once more within his, and clung to his side.

'Money and rank are only good, if every step by which they are gained be good also. I should never blush to see my girl the wife of a poor man whom she loved; but I should be stricken to the core of my heart if I knew that she had become the wife of a rich man whom she did not love.'

'Papa!' she said, clinging to him. She had meant to assure him

that that sorrow should never be his, but she could not get beyond the one word.

‘If you love this man, let him come,’ said the judge, carried by his feelings somewhat beyond the point to which he had intended to go. ‘I know no harm of him. I know nothing but good of him. If you are sure of your own heart, let it be so. He shall be to me as another son,—to me and to your mother. Tell me, Madeline, shall it be so?’

She was sure enough of her own heart; but how was she to be sure of that other heart? ‘It shall be so,’ said her father. But a man could not be turned into a lover and a husband because she and her father agreed to desire it;—not even if her mother would join in that wish. She had confessed to her mother that she loved this man, and the confession had been repeated to her father. But she had never expressed even a hope that she was loved in return. ‘But he has never spoken to me, papa,’ she said, whispering the words ever so softly lest the winds should carry them.

‘No; I know he has never spoken to you,’ said the judge. ‘He told me so himself. I like him the better for that.’

So then there had been other communications made besides that which she had made to her mother. Mr. Graham had spoken to her father, and had spoken to him about her. In what way had he done this, and how had he spoken? What had been his object, and when had it been done? Had she been indiscreet, and allowed him to read her secret? And then a horrid thought came across her mind. Was he to come there and offer her his hand because he pitied and was sorry for her? The Friday fastings and the evening church and the sick visits would be better far than that. She could not however muster courage to ask her father any question as to that interview between him and Mr. Graham.

‘Well, my love,’ he said, ‘I know it is impertinent to ask a young lady to speak on such a subject; but fathers are impertinent. Be frank with me. I have told you what I think, and your mamma agrees with me. Young Mr. Orme would have been her favourite——’

‘Oh, papa, that is impossible.’

‘So I perceive, my dear, and therefore we will say no more about it. I only mention his name because I want you to understand that you may speak to your mamma quite openly on the subject. He is a fine young fellow, is Peregrine Orme.’

‘I’m sure he is, papa.’

‘But that is no reason you should marry him if you don’t like him.’

‘I could never like him,—in that way.’

‘Very well, my dear. There is an end of that, and I’m sorry for him. I think that if I had been a young man at The Cleeve, I

should have done just the same. And now let us decide this important question. When Master Graham's ribs, arms, and collar bones are a little stronger, shall we ask him to come back to Noningsby ?

'If you please, papa.'

'Very well, we'll have him here for the assize week. Poor fellow, he'll have a hard job of work on hand just then, and won't have much time for philandering. With Chaffanbrass to watch him on his own side, and Leatherham on the other, I don't envy him his position. I almost think I should keep my arm in the sling till the assizes were over, by way of exciting a little pity.'

'Is Mr. Graham going to defend Lady Mason ?'

'To help to do so, my dear.'

'But, papa, she is innocent; don't you feel sure of that ?'

The judge was not quite so sure as he had been once. However, he said nothing of his doubts to Madeline. 'Mr. Graham's task on that account will only be the more trying if it becomes difficult to establish her innocence.'

'Poor lady!' said Madeline. 'You won't be the judge; will you, papa ?'

'No, certainly not. I would have preferred to have gone any other circuit than to have presided in a case affecting so near a neighbour, and I may almost say a friend. Baron Maltby will sit in that court.'

'And will Mr. Graham have to do much, papa ?'

'It will be an occasion of very great anxiety to him, no doubt.' And then they began to return home,—Madeline forming a little plan in her mind by which Mr. Furnival and Mr. Chaffanbrass were to fail absolutely in making out that lady's innocence, but the fact was to be established to the satisfaction of the whole court, and of all the world, by the judicious energy of Felix Graham.

On their homeward journey the judge again spoke of pictures and books, of failures and successes, and Madeline listened to him gratefully. But she did not again take much part in the conversation. She could not now express a very fluent opinion on any subject, and to tell the truth, could have been well satisfied to have been left entirely to her own thoughts. But just before they came out again upon the road, her father stopped her and asked a direct question. 'Tell me, Madeline, are you happy now ?'

'Yes, papa.'

'That is right. And what you are to understand is this; Mr. Graham will now be privileged by your mother and me to address you. He has already asked my permission to do so, and I told him that I must consider the matter before I either gave it or withheld it. I shall now give him that permission.' Whereupon Madeline made her answer by a slight pressure upon his arm.

‘But you may be sure of this, my dear; I shall be very discreet, and commit you to nothing. If he should choose to ask you any question, you will be at liberty to give him any answer that you may think fit.’ But Madeline at once confessed to herself that no such liberty remained to her. If Mr. Graham should choose to ask her a certain question, it would be in her power to give him only one answer. Had he been kept away, had her father told her that such a marriage might not be, she would not have broken her heart. She had already told herself, that under such circumstances, she could live and still live contented. But now,—now if the siege were made, the town would have to capitulate at the first shot. Was it not an understood thing that the governor had been recommended by the king to give up the keys as soon as they were asked for?

‘You will tell your mamma of this my dear,’ said the judge, as they were entering their own gate.

‘Yes,’ said Madeline. But she felt that, in this matter, her father was more surely her friend than her mother. And indeed she could understand her mother’s opposition to poor Felix, much better than her father’s acquiescence.

‘Do, my dear. What is anything to us in this world, if we are not all happy together? She thinks that you have become sad, and she must know that you are so no longer.’

‘But I have not been sad, papa,’ said Madeline, thinking with some pride of her past heroism.

When she reached the hall-door she had one more question to ask; but she could not look in her father’s face as she asked.

‘Papa, is that review you were speaking of here at Noningsby?’

‘You will find it on my study table; but remember, Madeline, I don’t above half go along with him.’

The judge went into his study before dinner, and found that the review had been taken.

CHAPTER XIX.

NO SURRENDER.

SIR PEREGRINE ORME had gone up to London, had had his interview with Mr. Round, and had failed. He had then returned home, and hardly a word on the subject had been spoken between him and Mrs. Orme. Indeed little or nothing was now said between them as to Lady Mason or the trial. What was the use of speaking on a subject that was in every way the cause of so much misery? He had made up his mind that it was no longer possible for him to

take any active step in the matter. He had become bail for her appearance in court, and that was the last trifling act of friendship which he could show her? How was it any longer possible that he could befriend her? He could not speak up on her behalf with eager voice, and strong indignation against her enemies, as had formerly been his practice. He could give her no counsel. His counsel would have taught her to abandon the property in the first instance, let the result be what it might. He had made his little effort in that direction by seeing the attorney, and his little effort had been useless. It was quite clear to him that there was nothing further for him to do;—nothing further for him, who but a week or two since was so actively putting himself forward and letting the world know that he was Lady Mason's champion.

Would he have to go into court as a witness? His mind was troubled much in his endeavour to answer that question. He had been her great friend. For years he had been her nearest neighbour. His daughter-in-law still clung to her. She had lived at his house. She had been chosen to be his wife. Who could speak to her character, if he could not do so? And yet, what could he say, if so called on? Mr. Furnival, Mr. Chaffanbrass—all those who would have the selection of the witnesses, believing themselves in their client's innocence, as no doubt they did, would of course imagine that he believed in it also. Could he tell them that it would not be in his power to utter a single word in her favour?

In these days Mrs. Orme went daily to the Farm. Indeed, she never missed a day from that on which Lady Mason left The Cleeve up to the time of the trial. It seemed to Sir Peregrine that his daughter's affection for this woman had grown with the knowledge of her guilt; but, as I have said before, no discussion on the matter now took place between them. Mrs. Orme would generally take some opportunity of saying that she had been at Orley Farm; but that was all.

Sir Peregrine during this time never left the house once, except for morning service on Sundays. He hung his hat up on its accustomed peg when he returned from that ill-omened visit to Mr. Round, and did not move it for days, ay, for weeks,—except on Sunday mornings. At first his groom would come to him, suggesting to him that he should ride, and the woodman would speak to him about the young coppices; but after a few days they gave up their efforts. His grandson also strove to take him out, speaking to him more earnestly than the servants would do, but it was of no avail. Peregrine, indeed, gave up the attempt sooner, for to him his grandfather did in some sort confess his own weakness. 'I have had a blow,' said he; 'Peregrine, I have had a blow. I am too old to bear up against it;—too old and too weak.' Peregrine knew that he alluded in some way to that proposed marriage, but he was quite in the

dark as to the manner in which his grandfather had been affected by it.

‘People think nothing of that now, sir,’ said he, groping in the dark as he strove to administer consolation.

‘People will think of it;—and I think of it. But never mind, my boy. I have lived my life, and am contented with it. I have lived my life, and have great joy that such as you are left behind to take my place. If I had really injured you I should have broken my heart—have broken my heart.’

Peregrine of course assured him that let what would come to him the pride which he had in his grandfather would always support him. ‘I don’t know anybody else that I could be so proud of,’ said Peregrine; ‘for nobody else that I see thinks so much about other people. And I always was, even when I didn’t seem to think much about it;—always.’

Poor Peregrine! Circumstances had somewhat altered him since that day, now not more than six months ago, in which he had pledged himself to abandon the delights of Cowcross Street. As long as there was a hope for him with Madeline Staveley all this might be very well. He preferred Madeline to Cowcross Street with all its delights. But when there should be no longer any hope—and indeed, as things went now, there was but little ground for hoping—what then? Might it not be that his trial had come on him too early in life, and that he would solace himself in his disappointment, if not with Carrot Bob, with companionships and pursuits which would be as objectionable, and perhaps more expensive?

On three or four occasions his grandfather asked him how things were going at Noningsby, striving to interest himself in something as to which the out-look was not altogether dismal, and by degrees learned,—not exactly all the truth—but as much of the truth as Peregrine knew.

‘Do as she tells you,’ said the grandfather, referring to Lady Staveley’s last words.

‘I suppose I must,’ said Peregrine, sadly. ‘There’s nothing else for it. But if there’s anything that I hate in this world, it’s waiting.’

‘You are both very young,’ said his grandfather.

‘Yes; we are what people call young, I suppose. But I don’t understand all that. Why isn’t a fellow to be happy when he’s young as well as when he’s old?’

Sir Peregrine did not answer him, but no doubt thought that he might alter his opinion in a few years. There is great doubt as to what may be the most enviable time of life with a man. I am inclined to think that it is at that period when his children have all been born but have not yet begun to go astray or to vex him with disappointment; when his own pecuniary prospects are

settled, and he knows pretty well what his tether will allow him; when the appetite is still good and the digestive organs at their full power; when he has ceased to care as to the length of his girdle, and before the doctor warns him against solid breakfasts and port wine after dinner; when his affectations are over and his infirmities have not yet come upon him; while he can still walk his ten miles, and feel some little pride in being able to do so; while he has still nerve to ride his horse to hounds, and can look with some scorn on the ignorance of younger men who have hardly yet learned that noble art. As regards men, this, I think, is the happiest time of life; but who shall answer the question as regards women? In this respect their lot is more liable to disappointment. With the choicest flowers that blow the sweetest aroma of their perfection lasts but for a moment. The hour that sees them at their fullest glory sees also the beginning of their fall.

On one morning before the trial Sir Peregrine rang his bell and requested that Mr. Peregrine might be asked to come to him. Mr. Peregrine was out at the moment, and did not make his appearance much before dark, but the baronet had fully resolved upon having this interview, and ordered that the dinner should be put back for half an hour. 'Tell Mrs. Orme, with my compliments,' he said, 'that if it does not put her to inconvenience we will not dine till seven.' It put Mrs. Orme to no inconvenience; but I am inclined to agree with the cook, who remarked that the compliments ought to have been sent to her.

'Sit down, Peregrine,' he said, when his grandson entered his room with his thick boots and muddy gaiters. 'I have been thinking of something.'

'I and Samson have been cutting down trees all day,' said Peregrine. 'You've no conception how the water lies down in the bottom there; and there's a fall every yard down to the river. It's a sin not to drain it.'

'Any sins of that kind, my boy, shall lie on your own head for the future. I will wash my hands of them.'

'Then I'll go to work at once,' said Peregrine, not quite understanding his grandfather.

'You must go to work on more than that, Peregrine.' And then the old man paused. 'You must not think that I am doing this because I am unhappy for the hour, or that I shall repent it when the moment has gone by.'

'Doing what?' asked Peregrine.

'I have thought much of it, and I know that I am right. I cannot get out as I used to do, and do not care to meet people about business.'

'I never knew you more clear-headed in my life, sir.'

'Well, perhaps not. We'll say nothing about that. What I

intend to do is this;—to give up the property into your hands at Lady-day. You shall be master of The Cleeve from that time forth.'

'Sir?'

'The truth is, you desire employment, and I don't. The property is small, and therefore wants the more looking after. I have never had a regular land steward, but have seen to that myself. If you'll take my advice you'll do the same. There is no better employment for a gentleman. So now, my boy, you may go to work and drain wherever you like. About the Crutchley bottom I have no doubt you're right. I don't know why it has been neglected.' These last words the baronet uttered in a weak, melancholy tone, asking, as it were, forgiveness for his fault; whereas he had spoken out the purport of his great resolution with a clear, strong voice, as though the saying of the words pleased him well.

'I could not hear of such a thing as that,' said his grandson, after a short pause.

'But you have heard it, Perry, and you may be quite sure that I should not have named it had I not fully resolved upon it. I have been thinking of it for days, and have quite made up my mind. You won't turn me out of the house, I know.'

'All the same. I will not hear of it,' said the young man, stoutly.

'Peregrine!'

'I know very well what it all means, sir, and I am not at all astonished. You have wished to do something out of sheer goodness of heart, and you have been balked.'

'We will not talk about that, Peregrine.'

'But I must say a few words about it. All that has made you unhappy, and—and—and——' He wanted to explain that his grandfather was ashamed of his baffled attempt, and for that reason was cowed and down at heart at the present moment; but that in the three or four months when this trial would be over and the wonder passed away, all that would be forgotten, and he would be again as well as ever. But Peregrine, though he understood all this, was hardly able to express himself.

'My boy,' said the old man, 'I know very well what you mean. What you say is partly true, and partly not quite true. Some day, perhaps, when we are sitting here together over the fire, I shall be better able to talk over all this; but not now, Perry. God has been very good to me, and given me so much that I will not repine at this sorrow. I have lived my life, and am content.'

'Oh yes, of course all that's true enough. And if God should choose that you should—die, you know, or I either, some people would be sorry, but we shouldn't complain ourselves. But what I say is this: you should never give up as long as you live. There's

a sort of feeling about it which I can't explain. One should always say to oneself, No surrender.' And Peregrine, as he spoke, stood up from his chair, thrust his hands into his trousers-pockets, and shook his head.

Sir Peregrine smiled as he answered him. 'But Perry, my boy, we can't always say that. When the heart and the spirit and the body have all surrendered, why should the voice tell a foolish falsehood?'

'But it shouldn't be a falsehood,' said Peregrine. 'Nobody should ever knock under of his own accord.'

'You are quite right there, my boy; you are quite right there. Stick to that yourself. But, remember, that you are not to knock under to any of your enemies. The worst that you will meet with are folly, and vice, and extravagance.'

'That's of course,' said Peregrine, by no means wishing on the present occasion to bring under discussion his future contests with any such enemies as those now named by his grandfather.

'And now, suppose you dress for dinner,' said the baronet. 'I've got ahead of you there you see. What I've told you to-day I have already told your mother.'

'I'm sure she doesn't think you right.'

'If she thinks me wrong, she is too kind and well-behaved to say so,—which is more than I can say for her son. Your mother, Perry, never told me that I was wrong yet, though she has had many occasions;—too many, too many. But, come, go and dress for dinner.'

'You are wrong in this, sir, if ever you were wrong in your life,' said Peregrine, leaving the room. His grandfather did not answer him again, but followed him out of the door, and walked briskly across the hall into the drawing-room.

'There's Peregrine been lecturing me about draining,' he said to his daughter-in-law, striving to speak in a half-bantering tone of voice, as though things were going well with him.

'Lecturing you!' said Mrs. Orme.

'And he's right, too. There's nothing like it. He'll make a better farmer, I take it, than Lucius Mason. You'll live to see him know the value of an acre of land as well as any man in the county. It's the very thing that he's fit for. He'll do better with the property than ever I did.'

There was something beautiful in the effort which the old man was making when watched by the eyes of one who knew him as well as did his daughter-in-law. She knew him, and understood all the workings of his mind, and the deep sorrow of his heart. In very truth, the star of his life was going out darkly under a cloud; but he was battling against his sorrow and shame—not that he might be rid of them himself, but that others might not have to share them. That doctrine of 'No surrender' was strong within

his bosom, and he understood the motto in a finer sense than that in which his grandson had used it. He would not tell them that his heart was broken,—not if he could help it. He would not display his wound if it might be in his power to hide it. He would not confess that lands, and houses, and seignorial functions were no longer of value in his eyes. As far as might be possible he would bear his own load till that and the memory of his last folly might be hidden together in the grave.

But he knew that he was no longer fit for a man's work, and that it would be well that he should abandon it. He had made a terrible mistake. In his old age he had gambled for a large stake, and had lost it all. He had ventured to love;—to increase the small number of those who were nearest and dearest to him, to add one to those whom he regarded as best and purest,—and he had been terribly deceived. He had for many years almost worshipped the one lady who had sat at his table, and now in his old age he had asked her to share her place of honour with another. What that other was need not now be told. And the world knew that this woman was to have been his wife! He had boasted loudly that he would give her that place and those rights. He had ventured his all upon her innocence and her purity. He had ventured his all,—and he had lost.

I do not say that on this account there was any need that he should be stricken to the ground,—that it behoved him as a man of high feeling to be broken-hearted. He would have been a greater man had he possessed the power to bear up against all this, and to go forth to the world bearing his burden bravely on his shoulders. But Sir Peregrine Orme was not a great man, and possessed few or none of the elements of greatness. He was a man of a singularly pure mind, and endowed with a strong feeling of chivalry. It had been everything to him to be spoken of by the world as a man free from reproach,—who had lived with clean hands and with clean people around him. All manner of delinquencies he could forgive in his dependents which did not tell of absolute baseness; but it would have half killed him had he ever learned that those he loved had become false or fraudulent. When his grandson had come to trouble about the rats, he had acted, not over-cleverly, a certain amount of paternal anger; but had Peregrine broken his promise to him, no acting would have been necessary. It may therefore be imagined what were now his feelings as to Lady Mason.

Her he could forgive for deceiving him. He had told his daughter-in-law that he would forgive her; and it was a thing done. But he could not forgive himself in that he had been deceived. He could not forgive himself for having mingled with the sweet current of his Edith's life the foul waters of that criminal

tragedy. He could not now bid her desert Lady Mason; for was it not true that the woman's wickedness was known to them two, through her resolve not to injure those who had befriended her? But all this made the matter worse rather than better to him. It is all very well to say, 'No surrender;' but when the load placed upon the back is too heavy to be borne, the back must break or bend beneath it.

His load was too heavy to be borne, and therefore he said to himself that he would put it down. He would not again see Lord Alston and the old friends of former days. He would attend no more at the magistrates' bench, but would send his grandson out into his place. For the few days that remained to him in this world, he might be well contented to abandon the turmoils and troubles of life. 'It will not be for long,' he said to himself over and over again. And then he would sit in his arm-chair for hours, intending to turn his mind to such solemn thoughts as might befit a dying man. But, as he sat there, he would still think of Lady Mason. He would remember her as she had leaned against his breast on that day that he kissed her; and then he would remember her as she was when she spoke those horrid words to him—'Yes; I did it; at night, when I was alone.' And this was the woman whom he had loved! This was the woman whom he still loved,—if all the truth might be confessed.

His grandson, though he read much of his grandfather's mind, had failed to read it all. He did not know how often Sir Peregrine repeated to himself those words, 'No Surrender,' or how gallantly he strove to live up to them. Lands and money and seats of honour he would surrender, as a man surrenders his tools when he has done his work; but his tone of feeling and his principle he would not surrender, though the maintenance of them should crush him with their weight. The woman had been very vile, desperately false, wicked beyond belief, with premeditated villany, for years and years;—and this was the woman whom he had wished to make the bosom companion of his latter days!

'Samson is happy now, I suppose, that he has got the axe in his hand,' he said to his grandson.

'Pretty well for that, sir, I think.'

'That man will cut down every tree about the place, if you'll let him.' And in that way he strove to talk about the affairs of the property.

CHAPTER XX.

WHAT REBEKAH DID FOR HER SON.

EVERY day Mrs. Orme went up to Orley Farm and sat for two hours with Lady Mason. We may say that there was now no longer any secret between them, and that she whose life had been so innocent, so pure, and so good, could look into the inmost heart and soul of that other woman whose career had been supported by the proceeds of one terrible life-long iniquity. And now, by degrees, Lady Mason would begin to plead for herself, or, rather, to put in a plea for the deed she had done, acknowledging, however, that she, the doer of it, had fallen almost below forgiveness through the crime. 'Was he not his son as much as that other one; and had I not deserved of him that he should do this thing for me?' And again 'Never once did I ask of him any favour for myself from the day that I gave myself to him, because he had been good to my father and mother. Up to the very hour of his death I never asked him to spend a shilling on my own account. But I asked him to do this thing for his child; and when at last he refused me, I told him that I myself would cause it to be done.'

'You told him so?'

'I did; and I think that he believed me. He knew that I was one who would act up to my word. I told him that Orley Farm should belong to our babe.'

'And what did he say?'

He bade me beware of my soul. My answer was very terrible, and I will not shock you with it. Ah me! it is easy to talk of repentance, but repentance will not come with a word.'

In these days Mrs. Orme became gradually aware that hitherto she had comprehended but little of Lady Mason's character. There was a power of endurance about her, and a courage that was almost awful to the mind of the weaker, softer, and better woman. Lady Mason, during her sojourn at The Cleeve, had seemed almost to sink under her misfortune; nor had there been any hypocrisy, any pretence in her apparent misery. She had been very wretched;—as wretched a human creature, we may say, as any crawling God's earth at that time. But she had borne her load, and, bearing it, had gone about her work, still striving with desperate courage as the ground on which she trod continued to give way beneath her

feet, inch by inch. They had known and pitied her misery; they had loved her for misery—as it is in the nature of such people to do;—but they had little known how great had been the cause for it. They had sympathized with the female weakness which had succumbed when there was hardly any necessity for succumbing. Had they then known all, they would have wondered at the strength which made a struggle possible under such circumstances.

Even now she would not yield. I have said that there had been no hypocrisy in her misery during those weeks last past; and I have said so truly. But there had perhaps been some pretences, some acting of a part, some almost necessary pretence as to her weakness. Was she not bound to account to those around her for her great sorrow? And was it not above all things needful that she should enlist their sympathy and obtain their aid? She had been obliged to cry to them for help, though obliged also to confess that there was little reason for such crying. ‘I am a woman, and weak,’ she had said, ‘and therefore cannot walk alone, now that the way is stony.’ But what had been the truth with her? How would she have cried, had it been possible for her to utter the sharp cry of her heart? The waters had been closing over her head, and she had clutched at a hand to save her; but the owner of that hand might not know how imminent, how close was the danger.

But in these days, as she sat in her own room with Mrs. Orme, the owner of that hand might know everything. The secret had been told, and there was no longer need for pretence. As she could now expose to view the whole load of her wretchedness, so also could she make known the strength that was still left for endurance. And these two women who had become endeared to each other under such terrible circumstances, came together at these meetings with more of the equality of friendship than had ever existed at The Cleeve. It may seem strange that it should be so—strange that the acknowledged forger of her husband’s will should be able to maintain a better claim for equal friendship than the lady who was believed to be innocent and true! But it was so. Now she stood on true ground;—now, as she sat there with Mrs. Orme, she could speak from her heart, pouring forth the real workings of her mind. From Mrs. Orme she had no longer aught to fear; nor from Sir Peregrine. Everything was known to them, and she could now tell of every incident of her crime with an outspoken boldness that in itself was incompatible with the humble bearing of an inferior in the presence of one above her.

And she did still hope. The one point to be gained was this; that her son, her only son, the child on whose behalf this crime had been committed, should never know her shame, or live to be disgraced by her guilt. If she could be punished, she would say, and he left in ignorance of her punishment, she would not care

what indignities they might heap upon her. She had heard of penal servitude, of years, terribly long, passed in all the misery of vile companionship; of solitary confinement, and the dull madness which it engenders; of all the terrors of a life spent under circumstances bearable only by the uneducated, the rude, and the vile. But all this was as nothing to her compared with the loss of honour to her son. 'I should live,' she would say; 'but he would die. You cannot ask me to become his murderer!'

It was on this point that they differed always. Mrs. Orme would have had her confess everything to Lucius, and strove to make her understand that if he were so told, the blow would fall less heavily than it would do if the knowledge came to him from her conviction at the trial. But the mother would not bring herself to believe that it was absolutely necessary that he should ever know it. 'There was the property! Yes; but let the trial come, and if she were acquitted, then let some arrangement be made about that. The lawyers might find out some cause why it should be surrendered.' But Mrs. Orme feared that if the trial were over, and the criminal saved from justice, the property would not be surrendered. And then how would that wish of repentance be possible? After all was not that the one thing necessary?

I will not say that Mrs. Orme in these days ever regretted that her sympathy and friendship had been thus bestowed, but she frequently acknowledged to herself that the position was too difficult for her. There was no one whose assistance she could ask; for she felt that she could not in this matter ask counsel from Sir Peregrine. She herself was good, and pure, and straight-minded, and simple in her perception of right and wrong; but Lady Mason was greater than she in force of character,—a stronger woman in every way, endowed with more force of will, with more power of mind, with greater energy, and a swifter flow of words. Sometimes she almost thought it would be better that she should stay away from Orley Farm; but then she had promised to be true to her wretched friend, and the mother's solicitude for her son still softened the mother's heart.

In these days, till the evening came, Lucius Mason never made his way into his mother's sitting-room, which indeed was the drawing-room of the house,—and he and Mrs. Orme, as a rule, hardly ever met each other. If he saw her as she entered or left the place, he would lift his hat to her and pass by without speaking. He was not admitted to those councils of his mother's, and would not submit to ask after his mother's welfare or to inquire as to her affairs from a stranger. On no other subject was it possible that he should now speak to the daily visitor and the only visitor at Orley Farm. All this Mrs. Orme understood, and saw that the young man was alone and comfortless. He passed his hours below,

in his own room, and twice a day his mother found him in the parlour, and then they sat through their silent, miserable meals. She would then leave him, always saying some soft words of motherly love, and putting her hand either upon his shoulder or his arm. On such occasions he was never rough to her, but he would never respond to her caress. She had ill-treated him, preferring in her trouble the assistance of a stranger to his assistance. She would ask him neither for his money nor his counsel, and as she had thus chosen to stand aloof from him, he also would stand aloof from her. Not for always,—as he said to himself over and over again; for his heart misgave him when he saw the lines of care so plainly written on his mother's brow. Not for always should it be so. The day of the trial would soon be present, and the day of the trial would soon be over; then again would they be friends. Poor young man! Unfortunate young man!

Mrs. Orme saw all this, and to her it was very terrible. What would be the world to her, if her boy should frown at her, and look black when she caressed him? And she thought that it was the fault of the mother rather than of the son; as indeed was not all that wretchedness the mother's fault? But then again, there was the one great difficulty. How could any step be taken in the right direction till the whole truth had been confessed to him?

The two women were sitting together in that upstairs room; and the day of the trial was now not a full week distant from them, when Mrs. Orme again tried to persuade the mother to intrust her son with the burden of all her misery. On the preceding day Mr. Solomon Aram had been down at Orley Farm, and had been with Lady Mason for an hour.

‘He knows the truth!’ Lady Mason had said to her friend. ‘I am sure of that.’

‘But did he ask you?’

‘Oh, no, he did not ask me that. He asked of little things that happened at the time; but from his manner I am sure he knows it all. He says—that I shall escape.’

‘Did he say escape?’

‘No; not that word, but it was the same thing. He spoke to Lucius, for I saw them on the lawn together.’

‘You do not know what he said to him?’

‘No; for Lucius would not speak to me, and I could not ask him.’ And then they both were silent, for Mrs. Orme was thinking how she could bring about that matter that was so near her heart. Lady Mason was seated in a large old-fashioned arm-chair, in which she now passed nearly all her time. The table was by her side, but she rarely turned herself to it. She sat leaning with her elbow on her arm, supporting her face with her hand; and opposite to her, so close that she might look into her face and watch every

movement of her eyes, sat Mrs. Orme,—intent upon that one thing, that the woman before her should be brought to repent the evil she had done.

‘And you have not spoken to Lucius?’

‘No,’ she answered. ‘No more than I have told you. What could I say to him about the man?’

‘Not about Mr. Aram. It might not be necessary to speak of him. He has his work to do; and I suppose that he must do it in his own way?’

‘Yes; he must do it, in his own way. Lucius would not understand.’

‘Unless you told him everything, of course he could not understand.’

‘That is impossible.’

‘No, Lady Mason, it is not impossible. Dear Lady Mason, do not turn from me in that way. It is for your sake,—because I love you, that I press you to do this. If he knew it all——’

‘Could you tell your son such a tale?’ said Lady Mason, turning upon her sharply, and speaking almost with an air of anger.

Mrs. Orme was for a moment silenced, for she could not at once bring herself to conceive it possible that she could be so circumstanced. But at last she answered. ‘Yes,’ she said, ‘I think I could, if——.’ And then she paused.

‘If you had done such a deed! Ah, you do not know, for the doing of it would be impossible to you. You can never understand what was my childhood, and how my young years were passed. I never loved anything but him;—that is, till I knew you, and——.’ But instead of finishing her sentence she pointed down towards The Cleeve. ‘How, then, can I tell him? Mrs. Orme, I would let them pull me to pieces, bit by bit, if in that way I could save him.’

‘Not in that way,’ said Mrs. Orme; ‘not in that way.’

But Lady Mason went on pouring forth the pent-up feelings of her bosom, not regarding the faint words of her companion. ‘Till he lay in my arms I had loved nothing. From my earliest years I had been taught to love money, wealth, and property; but as to myself the teachings had never come home to me. When they bade me marry the old man because he was rich, I obeyed them,—not caring for his riches, but knowing that it behoved me to relieve them of the burden of my support. He was kinder to me than they had been, and I did for him the best I could. But his money and his wealth were little to me. He told me over and over again that when he died I should have the means to live, and that was enough. I would not pretend to him that I cared for the grandeur of his children who despised me. But then came my baby, and the world was all altered for me. What could I do for the only thing that I

had ever called my own? Money and riches they had told me were everything.'

'But they had told you wrong,' said Mrs. Orme, as she wiped the tears from her eyes.

'They had told me falsely. I had heard nothing but falsehoods from my youth upwards,' she answered fiercely. 'For myself I had not cared for these things; but why should not he have money and riches and land? His father had them to give over and above what had already made those sons and daughters so rich and proud. Why should not this other child also be his father's heir? Was he not as well born as they? was he not as fair a child? What did Rebekah do, Mrs. Orme? Did she not do worse; and did it not all go well with her? Why should my boy be an Ishmael? Why should I be treated as the bondwoman, and see my little one perish of thirst in this world's wilderness?'

'No Saviour had lived and died for the world in those days,' said Mrs. Orme.

'And no Saviour had lived and died for me,' said the wretched woman, almost shrieking in her despair. The lines of her face were terrible to be seen as she thus spoke, and an agony of anguish loaded her brow upon which Mrs. Orme was frightened to look. She fell on her knees before the wretched woman, and taking her by both her hands strove all she could to find some comfort for her.

'Ah, do not say so. Do not say that. Whatever may come, that misery—that worst of miseries need not oppress you. If that indeed were true!'

'It was true;—and how should it be otherwise?'

'But now,—now. It need not be true now. Lady Mason, for your soul's sake say that it is so now.'

'Mrs. Orme,' she said, speaking with a singular quiescence of tone after the violence of her last words, 'it seems to me that I care more for his soul than for my own. For myself I can bear even that. But if he were a castaway——!'

I will not attempt to report the words that passed between them for the next half-hour, for they concerned a matter which I may not dare to handle too closely in such pages as these. But Mrs. Orme still knelt there at her feet, pressing Lady Mason's hands, pressing against her knees, as with all the eagerness of true affection she endeavoured to bring her to a frame of mind that would admit of some comfort. But it all ended in this:—Let everything be told to Lucius, so that the first step back to honesty might be taken,—and then let them trust to Him whose mercy can ever temper the wind to the shorn lamb.

But, as Lady Mason had once said to herself, repentance will not come with a word. 'I cannot tell him,' she said at last. 'It is a thing impossible. I should die at his feet before the words were spoken.'

‘I will do it for you,’ said Mrs. Orme, offering from pure charity to take upon herself a task perhaps as heavy as any that a human creature could perform. ‘I will tell him.’

‘No, no,’ screamed Lady Mason, taking Mrs. Orme by both her arms as she spoke. ‘You will not do so: say that you will not. Remember your promise to me. Remember why it is that you know it all yourself.’

‘I will not, surely, unless you bid me,’ said Mrs. Orme.

‘No, no; I do not bid you. Mind, I do not bid you. I will not have it done. Better anything than that, while it may yet be avoided. I have your promise; have I not?’

‘Oh, yes; of course I should not do it unless you told me.’ And then, after some further short stay, during which but little was said, Mrs. Orme got up to go.

‘You will come to me to-morrow,’ said Lady Mason.

‘Yes, certainly,’ said Mrs. Orme.

‘Because I feared that I had offended you.’

‘Oh, no; I will take no offence from you.’

‘You should not, for you know what I have to bear. You know, and no one else knows. Sir Peregrine does not know. He cannot understand. But you know and understand it all. And, Mrs. Orme, what you do now will be counted to you for great treasure,—for very great treasure. You are better than the Samaritan, for he went on his way. But you will stay till the last. Yes; I know you will stay.’ And the poor creature kissed her only friend;—kissed her hands and her forehead and her breast. Then Mrs. Orme went without speaking, for her heart was full, and the words would not come to her; but as she went she said to herself that she would stay till the last.

Standing alone on the steps before the front door she found Lucius Mason all alone, and some feeling moved her to speak a word to him as she passed. ‘I hope all this does not trouble you much, Mr. Mason,’ she said, offering her hand to him. She felt that her words were hypocritical as she was speaking them; but under such circumstances what else could she say to him?

‘Well, Mrs. Orme, such an episode in one’s family history does give one some trouble. I am unhappy,—very unhappy; but not too much so to thank you for your most unusual kindness to my poor mother.’ And then, having been so far encouraged by her speaking to him, he accompanied her round the house on to the lawn, from whence a path led away through a shrubbery on to the road which would take her by the village of Coldharbour to The Cleeve.

‘Mr. Mason,’ she said, as they walked for a few steps together before the house, ‘do not suppose that I presume to interfere between you and your mother.’

‘ You have a right to interfere now,’ he said.

‘ But I think you might comfort her if you would be more with her. Would it not be better if you could talk freely together about all this?’

‘ It would be better,’ he said; ‘ but I fear that that is no longer possible. When this trial is over, and the world knows that she is innocent; when people shall see how cruelly she has been used——’

Mrs. Orme might not tell the truth to him, but she could with difficulty bear to hear him dwell thus confidently on hopes which were so false. ‘ The future is in the hands of God, Mr. Mason; but for the present——’

‘ The present and the future are both in His hands, Mrs. Orme. I know my mother’s innocence, and would have done a son’s part towards establishing it;—but she would not allow me. All this will soon be over now, and then, I trust, she and I will once again understand each other. Till then I doubt whether I should be wise to interfere. Good morning, Mrs. Orme; and pray believe that I appreciate at its full worth all that you are doing for her.’ Then he again lifted his hat and left her.

Lady Mason from her window saw them as they walked together, and her heart for a moment misgave her. Could it be that her friend was treacherous to her? Was it possible that even now she was telling everything that she had sworn that she would not tell? Why were they two together, seeing that they passed each other day by day without intercourse? And so she watched with anxious eyes till they parted, and then she saw that Lucius stood idly on the terrace swinging his stick as he looked down the hill towards the orchard below him. He would not have stood thus calmly had he already heard his mother’s shame. This she knew, and having laid aside her immediate fears she retreated back to her chair. No; she would not tell him: at any rate till the trial should be over.

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INDIGESTION is a weakness or want of power in the digestive juices in the stomach to convert what we eat and drink into healthy matter, for the proper nourishment of the whole system. It is caused by everything which weakens the system in general, or the stomach in particular. From it proceed nearly all the diseases to which we are liable; for it is very certain, that if we could always keep the stomach right we should rarely die by old age or accident. Indigestion produces a great variety of unpleasant sensations: amongst the most prominent of its miserable effects are a want of, or an inordinate appetite, sometimes attended with a constant craving for drink, a distension or swelling of enlargement of the stomach, flatulency, heartburn, pains in the stomach, acidity, unpleasant taste in the mouth, perhaps sickness, rumbling noise in the bowels: in some cases of depraved digestion there is nearly a complete disrelish for food, but still the appetite is not greatly impaired, as at the stated period of meals persons so afflicted can eat heartily, although without much gratification; a long train of nervous symptoms are also frequent attendants, general debility, great languidness, and incapacity for exertion. The minds of persons so afflicted frequently become irritable and desponding, and great anxiety is observable in the countenance; they appear thoughtful, melancholy, and dejected, under great apprehension of some imaginary danger, will start at any unexpected noise or occurrence, and become so agitated that they require some

time to calm and collect themselves; yet for all this the mind is exhilarated without much difficulty; pleasing events, society will for a time dissipate all appearance of disease; but the excitement produced by an agreeable change vanishes soon after the cause has gone by. Other symptoms are, violent palpitations, restlessness, the sleep disturbed by frightful dreams and startings, and affording little or no refreshment; occasionally there is much moaning, with a sense of weight and oppression upon the chest, nightmare, &c.

It is almost impossible to enumerate all the symptoms of this first invader upon the constitution, as in a hundred cases of *Indigestion* there will probably be something peculiar to each; but, be they what they may, they are all occasioned by the food becoming a burden rather than a support to the stomach; and in all its stages the medicine most wanted is that which will afford speedy and effectual assistance to the digestive organs, and give energy to the nervous and muscular systems,—nothing can more speedily or with more certainty effect so desirable an object than *Norton's Extract of Camomile Flowers*. The herb has from time immemorial been highly esteemed in England as a grateful anodyne, imparting an aromatic bitter to the taste, and a pleasing degree of warmth and strength to the stomach; and in all cases of indigestion, gout in the stomach, windy colic, and general weakness, it has for ages been strongly recommended by the most eminent practitioners as very useful and beneficial. The

great, indeed only, objection to its use has been the large quantity of water which it takes to dissolve a small part of the flowers and which must be taken with it into the stomach. It requires a quarter of a pint of boiling water to dissolve the soluble portion of one drachm of Camomile Flowers; and, when one or even two ounces may be taken with advantage, it must at once be seen how impossible it is to take a proper dose of this wholesome herb in the form of tea; and the only reason why it has not long since been placed the very first in rank of all restorative medicines is, that in taking it the stomach has always been loaded with water, which tends in a great measure to counteract, and very frequently wholly to destroy the effect. It must be evident that loading a weak stomach with a large quantity of water, merely for the purpose of conveying into it a small quantity of medicine must be injurious; and that the medicine must possess powerful renovating properties only to counteract the bad effects likely to be produced by the water. Generally speaking, this has been the case with Camomile Flowers, a herb possessing the highest restorative qualities, and when properly taken, decidedly the most speedy restorer, and the most certain preserver of health.

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them justice to say, that they are really the most valuable of all TONIC MEDICINES. By the word tonic is meant a medicine which gives strength to the stomach sufficient to digest in proper quantities all wholesome food, which increases the power of every nerve and muscle of the human body, or, in other words, invigorates the nervous and muscular systems. The solidity or firmness of the whole tissue of the body which so quickly follows the use of *Norton's Camomile Pills*, their certain and speedy effects in repairing the partial dilapidations from time and intemperance, and their lasting salutary influence on the whole frame, is most convincing, that in the smallest compass is contained the largest quantity of the tonic principle, of so peculiar a nature as to pervade the whole system, through which it diffuses health and strength sufficient to resist the formation of disease, and also to fortify the constitution against contagion; as such, the general use is strongly recommended as preventative during the prevalence or malignant fever or other infectious diseases, and to persons attending sick rooms they are invaluable as in no one instance have they ever failed in preventing the taking of illness even under the most trying circumstances.

As *Norton's Camomile Pills* are particularly recommended for all stomach complaints or indigestion, it will probably be expected that some advice should be given respecting diet, though after all that has been written upon the subject, after the publication of volume upon volume, after the countless essays on diet, as a means of prolonging life, it would be unnecessary to say more did we not feel it our duty to make this humble endeavour of inducing the public regard them not, but to adopt that course which is dictated by nature, by reason, and by common sense. Those persons who study the wholesomes, and are governed by the opinions of writers on diet, are uniformly both unhealthy in body and weak in mind. There can be no doubt that the palate is designed to inform us what is proper for the stomach, and of course that must best instruct us what food to take and what to avoid: we want no other adviser. Nothing can be more clear than that those articles which are agreeable to the taste, were by nature intended for our food and sustenance whether liquid or solid, foreign or of native

action: if they are pure and unadulterated, no harm need be dreaded by their use; they will only injure by abuse. Contentedly, whatever the palate approves, eat and drink always in moderation, but never in excess; keeping in mind that the first business of digestion is performed in the mouth, the second in the stomach; and that, in order that the stomach may be able to do its work properly, it is requisite the first business should be well performed; this consists in masticating or chewing the solid food so as to break down and separate the large and small substances of meat and vegetables, mixing them well, and blending them together before they are swallowed; this is particularly urged upon all to take up some time to their meals and never eat in haste. If you conform to this short and plain, but comprehensive advice, and find that there are various things which others eat and drink with pleasure and without inconvenience, and which would be pleasant to yourself only that they disagree, you may safely conclude that the fault is in the stomach, that it does not possess the power which it ought to do, that it wants assistance, and the sooner that assistance is afforded the better. A very short trial of this medicine will best prove how soon it will ease the stomach in a condition to perform its usual ease all the work which nature intended for it. By its use you will soon be able to enjoy, in moderation, whatever is agreeable to the taste, and unable to name one individual article of food which disagrees with its unpleasantly on the stomach. Never let that a small meal well digested affords more nourishment to the system than a large meal even of the same food, when digested perfectly. Let the dish be ever so delicious, ever so enticing a variety offered, the more ever so enchanting, never forget that temperance tends to preserve health, and moderation is the health of enjoyment. But should an impropriety be at any time, or ever often committed, by which the stomach becomes overloaded or disordered, render it immediate aid by taking a dose of *Norton's*

Camomile Pills, which will so promptly assist in carrying off the burden thus imposed upon it that all will soon be right again.

It is most certainly true that every person in his lifetime consumes a quantity of noxious matter, which if taken at one meal would be fatal: it is these small quantities of noxious matter, which are introduced into our food, either by accident or wilful adulteration, which we find so often upset the stomach, and not unfrequently lay the foundation of illness, and perhaps final ruination to health. To preserve the constitution, it should be our constant care, if possible, to counteract the effect of these small quantities of unwholesome matter; and whenever, in that way, an enemy to the constitution finds its way into the stomach, a friend should be immediately sent after it, which would prevent its mischievous effects, and expel it altogether; no better friend can be found, nor one which will perform the task with greater certainty than **NORTON'S CAMOMILE PILLS**. And let it be observed that the longer this medicine is taken the less it will be wanted; it can in no case become habitual, as its entire action is to give energy and force to the stomach, which is the spring of life, the source from which the whole frame draws its succour and support. After an excess of eating or drinking, and upon every occasion of the general health being at all disturbed, these **PILLS** should be immediately taken, as they will stop and eradicate disease at its commencement. Indeed, it is most confidently asserted, that by the timely use of this medicine only, and a common degree of caution, any person may enjoy all the comforts within his reach, may pass through life without an illness, and with the certainty of attaining a healthy **OLD AGE**.

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