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# THE DEWY MORN.

A Novel.

BY

RICHARD JEFFERIES,

AUTHOR OF

'THE GAMEKEEPER AT HOME,' 'THE LIFE OF THE FIELDS,'  
'RED DEER,' ETC.

' Scarce had the sun dried up the dewy morn,  
And scarce the herd gone to the hedge for shade.'  
SHAKESPEARE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



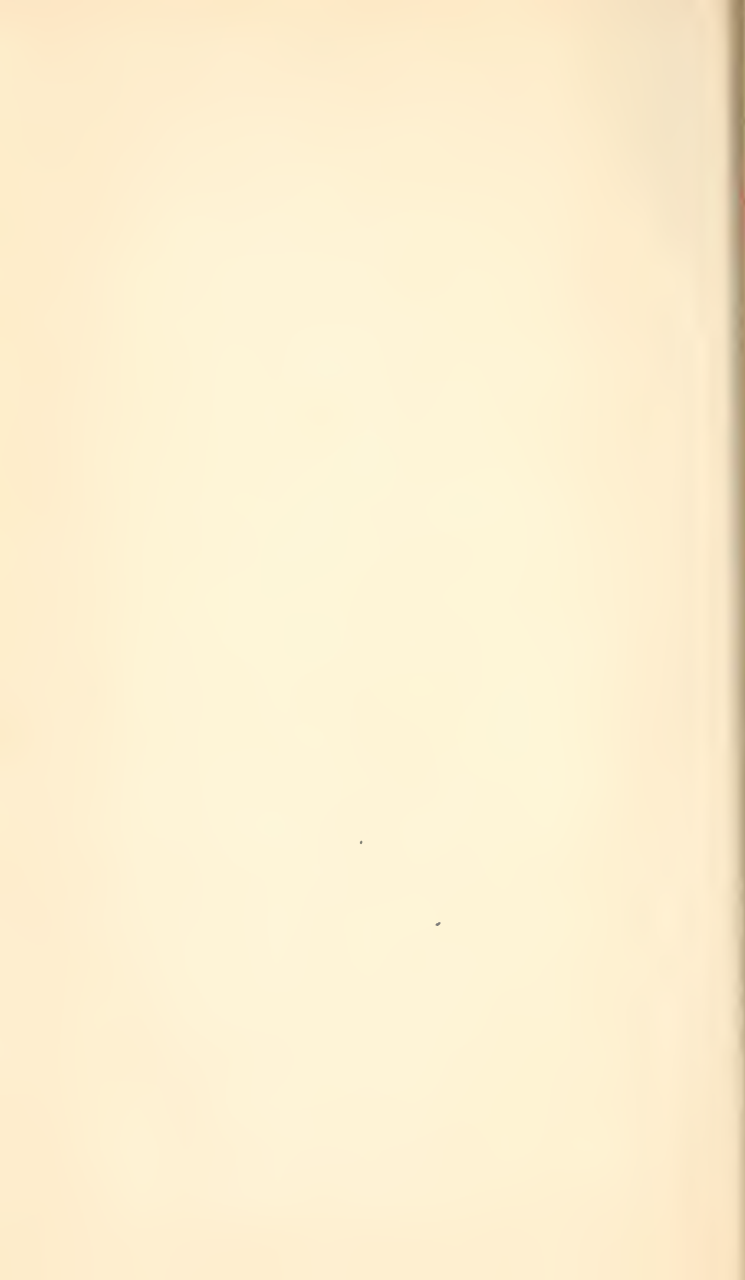
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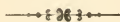
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# THE DEWY MORN.



## CHAPTER I.



ELISE drove rapidly out of the town, and as she passed glanced carelessly once more at the brilliant flowers in the bow-window.

‘Ah, she knows I live here—she is triumphing over me!’ said Rosa to herself, writhing, the cruel fangs of jealousy striking deeply into her. Rosa went to the mirror, looked at herself, and turned away trembling. The truth went home to her like a thrust from a poniard—she had but prettiness, her rival

was beautiful. It was a beauty with which competition was impossible.

Till now the poor girl had held on to a secret hope ; in time, long time, still perhaps in time, some remembrance of the face he once praised, some memory of the features which had once delighted him might move Martial, might bring him repentant to her side.

He had tired of her face ; well, in time he might tire of another's face. After all, the other was only a woman like herself.

This woman was not like herself.

Rosa recognised it in a moment. A woman can see a woman so clearly—faults, excellences, details, all are so clear to her. Rosa recognised the loveliness of the face, the nobleness of the proportioned head, the form, the very way she sat in the plain, old-fashioned pony-carriage was sufficient. This woman was not like herself. This was a woman with whom she could never enter into competition.

Martial was gone from her for ever. No use any more to cultivate these poor flowers, to watch him passing once now and then ; all was over.

The bitter tears flowed, and were not checked ; the brave woman who had borne up against all else broke down utterly now.

She could not have put it into words, but she felt that she was fighting against something stronger than human beings—against an influence—a power which directed circumstances against her. It was not her own fault, not even her lack of singular and exceptional loveliness, not Martial's fickleness ; it was the irresistible Event which decides life. For all might have been—all would have been well had not Felise existed.

The fact of Felise's existence—her birth, her life, her breathing existence at that moment—was the cruel fact that sternly shut her out from happiness. Nothing that Felise had done—no act of hers—simply because she was ; that was enough.

Rosa was weeping the iron tyranny of the universe—of the laws of life which decree pain and unhappiness for no cause whatsoever upon those whom chance selects.

Rosa had done no wrong—why should she suffer? There never lived a better woman; yet she was punished and tortured to the very heart's core.

Human dramatists arrange for all their characters to find happiness in the end. If there be any difficulty some one transfers his or her love with the greatest facility to another person; and thus being all paired off, they dance down the stage to the tune of 'Sir Roger de Coverley.'

The drama of real life never ends like this. Some one has to suffer—always some one has to suffer.

The old Greeks dwelt on the tendency of human affairs to drift downwards irresistibly to unhappiness. Guilt—that is, untoward and often involuntary actions—pulls generation after generation heavily as lead down,



down, down. Sophocles, Æschylus — take which you will, still the same thought pervades their sculptured groups (for they are sculptured in words, nude, noble, unhappy). Grief falls upon human beings as the rain, not selecting good or evil, visiting the innocent, condemning those who have done no wrong.

Rosa, presently becoming calmer, began to reflect, and thought how admirably this beautiful woman would fit in with those poetical fancies of Martial. She had listened to him unmoved; she knew she did not care for these delicate sentiments—these dreams of the imagination. If only she could have taken an interest in them, perhaps this might have been averted. Martial doubtless had at last found that she was not the ideal goddess of his fancy.

But this woman — this Felise, with her features, her beautiful head, her form — this was the ideal Martial imagined. To her he would joyfully transfer his poetical reveries;

and to her, Rosa owned bitterly to herself—to *her* they were fitted.

Another mood, and now losing touch of the deep chords of life which dignified her sorrow, Rosa fell to the level of a mere woman. Martial had not been taken from her by fair means—he had been inveigled, trapped with golden hair, with sweet, false smiles, warm hints of unutterable love. Shameless coquetry—she could see it all—bold advances. How should a man distinguish the false from the true?

A man was so easily beguiled—a man could not see a woman as a woman saw her. These trickeries and soft enchantments—so bold and obvious to a woman—to a man were real. It was a shame. She was indignant he should have been so deceived. For doubtless with this creature's singular outward loveliness there went a corresponding degree of evil fascination.


Rosa hated her as a jealous woman only can hate. Felise's meanness was even worse

than her shamelessness. Rosa easily learned from the merchant that Goring was by no means well-to-do ; this penniless wretch, then, was in reality aiming at Martial's house and home far more than at him. It was simply disgusting. Rosa felt righteous in her own ample dower.





## CHAPTER II.

ELISE was not long reaching home, and Abner came to take charge of the pony. She asked him to meet her that evening at seven o'clock at Mr. Godwin's, just outside in the path, and not to mention to anyone that he was going there. The good-natured, loyal fellow promised to do so ; it was indeed a pleasure to him to do anything for her.

Upstairs in her room Felise printed a few words with pen and ink on a slip of note-paper, so that the writer could not be guessed from the handwriting ; and then waited till seven, which hour she had chosen because Abner would have finished his work.

He was waiting for her just outside Godwin's premises, ready to do her bidding, let it be what it might.

'Here is the money,' said Felise, handing a bag heavy with gold to Robert Godwin in the little side parlour to which he had conducted her.

They were alone. Robert counted it methodically, and began to write a receipt.

'Do not put my name in the receipt,' said Felise, a sudden thought occurring to her.

Robert did as he was bid, and omitted the name. The receipt simply ran, 'Received £70 for the bay horse, Ruy.—Robert Godwin.'

'Now give me the horse,' said she, taking up the paper.

'To-night? I will have him groomed and sent over——'

'No, no—now. Come,' rising and going to the door.

Robert could not refuse. He walked as slowly as he could, wishing to make her stay

as long as possible, for she came and went like the wind. Felise with her own hand took Ruy's halter—he was nothing loth to come with her, remembering the apples—and led him towards the gate.

‘But you will permit me to help you; let me go with you——’

‘There is no need; I have Abner waiting outside.’

Robert Godwin's face at the name became black as night; he said not another word, but merely accompanied her to the gate, and raised his hat in silence.

Felise did not relinquish her hold of the halter, though Abner immediately joined her, till a turn of the lane hid them from Robert Godwin's view.

‘Abner,’ said Felise, stopping, ‘I think—I believe you would be true to me.’

‘That indeed I would, miss!’ His blue eyes lit up, and his countenance grew for the moment handsome with earnestness.

‘I want you to do something for me, and

not to tell a single person—not one, mind—not even your sweetheart.’

Abner grew red—Felise did not know whether he had or had not a sweetheart. His face looked guilty.

‘I won’t tell nobody—not a word, miss; bless you, you may be sure of I.’

‘I believe I may.’ She took the receipt for Ruy, and doubled it up inside the slip of paper with the printed message in the form of a note, and gave it to Abner.

‘I want you to take this horse over to the Manor House, and leave him in Mr. Barnard’s stables; and then go up to the house and see him—wait till you do see him—and give him the note, and come away without a word. Don’t answer a single question; if he asks any, if anyone asks any—say—let me see—say—say, another man gave you sixpence to bring the horse because he was tired. On the road you met him, you know, by chance, and so you don’t know anything.’

‘ All right, miss ; I’ll tell ’em a tale—never fear.’

‘ And then I shall want to know if you have done it ; but I don’t want you to call at our house—ah ! what is that tune you are always whistling ?’

‘ “ Jump into the waggon ” ?’

‘ Yes, “ Phyllis dear ”—that’s it. Now, when you come back, stop outside our gate and whistle it as hard as you can, and I shall understand.’

‘ So I will.’

‘ I shall have two shillings on Saturday, and you shall have them.’

‘ No, miss ; if you please, I don’t want no money—you have a-been terrable good to our folk.’

‘ But you shall have the two shillings.’

‘ Bless you, miss, sixpence will be a-plenty for such a little job as this here !’

‘ Well, well ! wait till Saturday,’ said Felise, determined he should have the two shillings



all the same. 'Now, you're sure you quite understand?'

'I understands; all right, miss; I shall do it famous.' He touched his cap and started.

Felise watched him and Ruy till they turned the corner, and then returned home. She found Mr. Goring in some anxiety about Mary Shaw, who had had a fainting-fit and was lying on the sofa. Felise ran to her side and found poor Mary, usually red as a peony, as white as a sheet; she had fainted all at once as she was running in from the garden, hearing Mr. Goring call.

'And you fell upstairs yesterday.'

'That's lucky,' said Mary, with a faint smile.

'And you're always complaining of a pain in your side.'

'It's nothing—it's the heat—and I ate too many cherries.'

'Well, if it happens again you must see the doctor.'

At which terrible word Mary burst into tears.

‘Oh, don’t you let I see the doctor—now don’t you! I should die of fright, I knows I should; you don’t mean that now—do you, now? Say as you don’t mean it. I can’t abear no doctors.’

To pacify her, for she was trembling all over, Felise promised that the doctor should not be called in unless it was a very bad case indeed.

Quite suddenly Mary sat up, and declared she felt as well as ever; and certainly her colour began to return, and she laughed at her tumbling down.

‘I fell—whop! like a sack out of window—like them sacks the miller pitches out of his window into a cart.’

In ten minutes she was humming merrily as she went about the house. But these little incidents made Felise fear that the girl—to whom she was much attached—had overgrown herself, and that in spite of her stout-

ness and rosiness she was not really very strong. She was remarkably timid, but all cottage folk (and indeed most country people) dislike the idea of a doctor because they seldom resort to one except in serious illness, and the doctor is associated with great troubles.

After awhile Abner reflected that the horse might as well carry him, and by the help of a gate got on Ruy's back, and so arrived very pleasantly at the Manor House. There was but one labourer about, who showed him the stable, and whose questions he easily parried. He had, however, to wait some time for Martial, and spoke to him at last at the porch; Martial, who was not in a good-humour, thrust the note in his pocket on hearing no answer was expected, and thought no more about it, supposing it to be some trifling business. Some hours consequently elapsed before he opened it; he remembered it just as he was about to retire.

The note contained the printed message : 'One who thinks of you returns you your favourite,' and the receipt for Ruy, £70, signed Robert Godwin.

Martial rushed to the stable, and there found his favourite comfortably munching in his old stall. His surprise and delight were about equal. He stayed with Ruy a long time, wondering who it could have been who had made him this magnificent present. Young as he was, it was years now since he had received the least kindness from anyone ; the mercenary manner in which the old merchant had broken off the engagement with Rosa on finding out his poverty was not calculated to increase his faith in the generosity of the world generally.

The note itself gave him no clue ; the letters might have been printed by a man or woman—indeed, by a child ; the watermark, as he held the strip up to the lantern, was partly visible, but the same watermark is impressed on tons of paper. From the

labourer who had received the horse not the slightest information could be obtained, and the messenger who had brought him had disappeared hours ago. It was dark when the man gave him the note, and he would not know him again; indeed, he had taken no notice of him whatever.

Robert Godwin could tell him, no doubt; but Martial instantly decided that Robert Godwin would shut his lips and absolutely refuse. He knew the man too well. It could only have been—it must have been one or other of those wealthy London friends who had petted him in boyhood, and deserted him when of an age to appreciate assistance. They had not then forgotten him.

With this conclusion Martial returned to bed, but woke up in the night with the sudden thought that it was Rosa. She had plenty of money; she knew how fond he was of Ruy; she had bought him back. He jumped up and partly dressed; he was so annoyed at the thought that he was ready to

return Ruy that very night to Godwin. It would look rather absurd riding over to Godwin's at three in the morning, so he decided to wait till breakfast. By breakfast-time, after a look at Ruy and at the downs they had so often breasted together, his attachment for the horse conquered his pride ; he could not send him away.

His cousins had of course heard of the mysterious return of Ruy, and plied him with questions. Martial did not show them the note, but could not conceal the facts. 'It was Rosa, of course,' they said. 'What a dear good girl she is, and what a time it is since we have seen her! We must go and call on her.'

Martial left the room in anger. He saddled Ruy ; yet even the freshness and beauty of the morning, and the pleasure of riding his favourite once more, could not overcome the bitterness of the thought that he owed that delight to Rosa. So entirely had his nature turned against the woman he once adored.

‘ Wait for the Waggon ’ echoed in the stillness of the night round the gables of Beechknoll—the jolly old tune, mellow and loud. Three times Abner whistled it, and Felise, listening in her chamber, knew that Martial had received the horse. Some one else heard the tune too; a window was gently opened, and a low voice called :

‘ Good-night, Ab.’

‘ Night, you,’ said Abner, stumping on down the road.





### CHAPTER III.



HE miller of Glads Mill was a happy man. How many times in her girlhood had the little Felise, wandering round the hamlet, stayed to listen to the rumble of the great wheel, and to glance furtively at the whitened half-length of the miller leaning on the hatch! So few doors now are constructed in this manner that, for the miller's attitude to be understood, it is almost necessary to explain that a hatch is a door which shuts in two pieces. The upper half may be left open to admit air, while the lower half is closed; and it was upon the top of this lower half that the miller leant his arms and gazed stead-



fastly outwards. This attitude has been the chosen one of millers for many generations.

Luke Bond, the miller of Glads Mill, was seldom seen in any other position. He was there most of the day, and far into the evening, rarely going down into the hamlet. Stout, short, red-headed, and broad of face, his arms, shoulders, and big head filled the upper half of the doorway.

Innumerable wooden witticisms were showered on him by the hamlet youth; he was compared to the moon rising in a fog; sometimes they shouted 'Sunset' at him; they alleged that of a dark evening they came up there to see their watches by the light of his red head. Old Bond never took the least heed; he continued to rise, and set, and shine in the doorway more steadfast than all the other luminaries.

The little Felise looked at him furtively, almost afraid; then, as a dog passed by the door and he did not hurt it, by degrees she

gathered courage and ventured to stand by the great water-wheel.

Driven by the pent-up force of water in the deep black pool above, the moss-grown, dripping wheel rolled round and round, the ground trembled under her feet, and the spray and splash beneath foamed white at the foot of the circle.

Forth from a narrow window, like an arrow-slit in the dark wall above the wheel, there drifted out an impalpable dust of flour, which settled on the grass and ivy and blue veronica flowers, and on Felise's jacket. The hard nether millstone ground small and relentlessly, and the white powder of the crushed wheat floated out into the air.

She would stand there for half an hour at a time, watching the green wheel rolling on itself, listening to the musical rhythm of the hopper beating time to the heavy rumble and the splash. Old Bond's eye never moved from her.

Sometimes she went round up the steps to the edge of the black pool in the rickyard, and gazed down into the dark water. If she stayed there too long old Bond used to come up after her and say, 'Now, miss, your uncle will be a-wanting of you.' He did not like her to look earnestly down into the pool. There is an old country superstition that if you gaze too long and too intently at water, ultimately it will draw you into it. Old Bond would not let her stay there long. Felise made no resistance, but went away whenever he wished.

Once when she came she had three red roses in her hand; and, after looking awhile at the green wheel, presently she went quickly up to old Bond, and put the three roses into his hand. Before he could open his slow mouth to speak she was gone. The plough-boys used to say that if you wanted Luke to look at anything you must get some one with a lever to turn his head for him, as sailors turn a capstan.

Bond never forgot the three red roses. 'She be a lady, she be,' he said.

He had drilled his under-worker into wheel-like regularity. The fellow had no volition; he minded the millstones, and the hopper, and the bins as if he had been a pear-tree cog himself in the machinery of the mill, while Bond shone at the doorway the day through.

But in the evenings of summer this happy man shot rats, hiding himself behind a low rick of stubble near the black pool in the rickyard, so as to fire down upon them as they scampered across to his pigsties—these were land-rats, ordinary rascals—or thinning out the brown water-rats as they swam in the brooklet below the mill. Sitting on a log Bond waited so quiet, so patient, so still, that in the end the rats were no match for him. The most patient creature in the world is the toad, which will squat a whole day till he catches his fly. Bond was not one whit behind the toad.

Every beast of the wood, or the hedge, or the burrow, over and above the beasts of the chase and of the warren, according to the ancient writers, is to be called 'rascal.' Bond applied that term freely both to land and water rats, for the first took his barley-meal, and the second was for ever drilling holes in the banks of the stream and wasting the water. He watched for them with the patience of relentless hatred. Ofttimes he sat there through the long stilly evenings of summer, till the solitary candle of the mill was lit and shone feebly forth upon the green wheel under him, casting vast, uncertain, and moving shadows on the wall and dam.

Thus the miller of Glads Mill was a happy man, for he possessed an inexhaustible fund of stolidity. No nervousness and haste, no rushing to and fro, no worry and wear and tear; nor any aspiration deep and high after the beautiful or the true. No longing for any man's applause; no sigh for the light in

any woman's eye. He was complete in himself, like a tree.

If a man could select his fate, what better could he choose than this ?

To be in strong, good health ; to have plenty of simple food and a never-failing appetite ; to sleep like the wall of the mill ; to feel no anxiety for wife or children ; to labour for no ever-receding ideal of fortune or art ; above all, to be content.

See the thin fallen cheek of the man who labours with thought ; see the brow from which the hair wears at the temples ; see the dark rims beneath the eyelids ; the stoop, the ever-increasing ailments that undermine the constitution. Compare these with the oak-like health of the stolid miller.

Beauty—what is beauty, forsooth ? Form and colour ; that is, surface only. Fortune—what is fortune ? Nothing is ever a pleasure or a real profit to him who has to labour for it. Truth—you die in the pursuit, and

the sea beats the beach as it did a thousand years ago.

The stolid are alone happy. Yet there drops from the azure heaven a beam of light, and whomsoever that ray touches must follow it to the end, though cheeks grow pale, though shoulders stoop, though ache and pain increase. The path of the gods pursues beauty, but the stolid are alone happy.

The miller existed, and in his existence—in all the years the heavy wheel had rolled round, till now that streaks of grey appeared in his hair—he had never known but one moment when a flash from the world of romance lit up the neutral tones of his life. This was when Felise put the three red roses in his hand. These were the only flowers planted in his path, but these had never faded.

He never forgot the gift. Clad in immovable content, nothing could rouse any

latent aspiration in his heart; but still he dwelt much upon these roses in his quiet mind, wondered about them, puzzled over the memory of them, tried to understand what they meant. There are some flowers that never die.







## CHAPTER IV.



HE miller did not shoot the rascal rats on Sundays; but habit led him one Sunday evening to take his place on the log by the stubble-rick. It was thus he became conscious that some other creatures besides rats were about, and stealthily shifting himself along the log till he could see round into the rickyard—between the rick and an elder-bush—he watched them without difficulty.

Mary Shaw and Abner Brown had made this retired spot their trysting-place. As a rule, people in the dusk of the evening rather avoided the neighbourhood of the deep and dangerous mill-pool. This suited them very

nicely, and here they spent an hour or so on Sunday evenings in amorous converse.

Miller Bond did not interfere or spoil the game ; in a rude sort of way he rather liked to see it, never having had experience in this line. Nor did he spy on them at all in the spy's spirit ; he looked occasionally, grinned, and said nothing to anyone.

There was scarce another man in his condition in the hamlet who would have been as kindly as this. Had anyone else discovered the lovers, there would have been some horse-play, some trick or other played upon them. The discreditable knaves who loiter about hamlets on Sundays, often make it their especial business to watch those who go off in couples, to track them secretly, and presently annoy them. It is difficult to imagine a practice more low.

Miller Bond chuckled and said nothing. He chuckled first at the loving passages, and secondly because Polly Shaw had rather the character of a prude—not a common character

in hamlets. Prude is not exactly the word ; she was not a coquette then, and she bore a stainless reputation.

You might on a Sunday see Mary coming down the road, dressed in her best (and she dressed very well, having caught the idea of it from Felise), with her parasol in her hand, swinging it like a walking-stick, so that the tip just touched the grass at the side, tossing her proud little head disdainfully as the hamlet lads made loud remarks on her personal appearance.

A very pretty, plump, merry little girl she looked ; the pink of neatness, with her laughing eyes and rosy cheeks, her hair so cleverly arranged, and a silver brooch—real silver (Felise's present)—at her neck, and an air as much as to say, 'I'm Mary Shaw ; you may laugh, and I will laugh with you, but none of your coarse jests for me. Hands off !'

It had always been 'hands off' with pretty Polly Shaw.

A hamlet girl of the cottage order has a

rude ordeal to go through as she enters her teens, and few of them succeed in preserving their modesty, not to mention their reputation.

One harvest, not long before Mary entered service at Mr. Goring's, she was tying up sheaves in the wheatfield, and happened to be quite alone. By-and-by Mr. Robert Godwin walked up, and without any preamble or preliminary courting made her a dishonourable proposal, at the same time holding out his hand on which glittered a silver sixpence. Always the miser.

Polly snatched up a reaping-hook that was lying near and cut at him; it was only by jumping aside that he escaped a fearful gash. He swore at and threatened her with the law for assault, but of course nothing came of it. He never spoke to her again, but he did not forget or forgive.

A rejected lover has the quickest of eyes, second only to those of a jealous woman; and long afterwards Robert Godwin was the only one who suspected Mary Shaw and

Abner Brown. From that hour he determined the old couple should be turned out, in order to injure Mary's prospects as much as possible. He knew there was no other cottage available for them in the hamlet: they could be married and go home there; but if that was shut to them, their future was gloomy and uncertain.

Shaw's mother, when the girl told her of the incident in the wheatfield, severely rebuked her for being such a fool, and missing such a chance. Measter Godwin had heaps of money; she might never catch such a one as he again.

The mother, in fact, would gladly have sold her daughter. All she expressed indignation about was the sixpence.

These morals are born of generations of cruel poverty, and they are perpetuated by the brutal modern system which leaves for the worn-out labourer or labourer's wife no refuge but the workhouse or the grave. Workhouse and grave lower in the distance

all their lives, as a cloud lowers on the horizon. They snatch, therefore, at any means of present enjoyment—drink, or worse; why not? They have no hereafter on earth; no age of ease and comfort. ‘Hang it, let’s take what us can!’ is their maxim.

Some will say, I suppose, that I am painting Robert Godwin in too black colours, and that to be true to nature he ought to have one redeeming trait.

This is one of the special cants of the nineteenth century. A drunken blackguard navy or low seaman stabs his woman, then he begs for a lock of her hair. An extraordinary brute—extraordinary even among a collection of brutes—the other day took up a heavy hammer and smashed his own children on their mother’s breast; but as some redeeming trait—some redeeming cant—was found in his character, he was reprieved from the gallows. A bank secretary steals thousands of pounds which people had deposited for safety; when he is in prison he begs that they

will not confiscate his sister's property. I fail to see anything redeeming in it ; it seems to me the most infernal humbug.

Robert Godwin had no such redeeming trait, and to my idea that was the best thing about him—he was no hypocrite. He was absolutely without any redeeming trait.

He was simply true to his nature. Nor was there anything exceptionally bad in his proffer to Mary Shaw ; it in no degree stamped him as unusually evil ; it was only what others do. Of course that makes it no better ; still this is the real state of things. Such proffers are made every day of the year by the dozen to such poor girls, both by the rich and by those in their own rank of life. Mary herself had had five or six from various individuals. If you had explained to Robert Godwin that he had done a very wicked thing he would have been unfeignedly surprised, for he had never seen it in that light.

Mary was really a good girl, incapable of baseness. She was not to be bought or

tempted ; but she loved with all her heart, and she had a very warm, generous, affectionate heart. Big, broad-chested, loyal Abner and pretty Polly Shaw made in every way a desirable couple.

He was always in the garden, Polly was always running in and out ; it was no wonder the flame was communicated to the tinder. Mr. Goring, full of his trees and his philosophies, never noticed it. Felise, dreaming of Martial, never noticed it ; but the colourless eye of Robert Godwin—the rejected—saw it, and hated Abner.

After a time Miller Bond made another discovery while engaged with these rascal rats, and this was that a second individual occasionally met Mary Shaw in the rickyard by the mill-pool. Mary was frequently sent down into the hamlet ; she had always the excuse of calling for a minute on her mother if she wished to run out after work was over, and Felise never said no. So she had plenty of opportunities.



Who this second man was, Bond did not know; he had so long been isolated at the mill that he knew scarcely any except those who lived in the hamlet, or sent their corn to be ground. It was a gentleman evidently—a gentleman who whispered with Mary Shaw for a few minutes, and gave her silver money, and sometimes stole a kiss, Mary not making much resistance. Why should she? What's in a kiss unseen?—a gentleman, too.

Miller Bond said nothing, but was careful how he fired at the rats not to disturb this pretty little comedy in the rickyard.

It was Martial Barnard who met Mary Shaw in the rickyard, and his object was to learn beforehand the best opportunities of studying the Picture.

Martial had found it difficult to study the Picture because of Felise's uncertain movements, so that he seldom knew where or when to waylay her. By making friends with Felise's maid—not a difficult task to a

handsome young gentleman free with his silver—he managed to discover what Felise was likely to do, and where she would probably walk on the following day; information which Mary extracted by sly questions from her unsuspecting mistress.

Mary was only too delighted to play her part in helping Felise to a lover. In her opinion so beautiful a young lady, and so kind and nice and unaffected, ought to have had several long before now. She was really happy in the idea that she was furthering her dear mistress's interest, for of course she put down Martial as a lover; she could not have understood the fine divisions which Martial had drawn in his mind.

She only wondered why Martial, who was not at all shy with her, did not follow up his lady boldly and openly; that was her idea of making love, following up, and it was not a bad one.

Mary, however, was shrewd enough not to tell Martial of Felise's morning visits to

Robert Godwin's, thinking that she might cause mischief; for Mary, who had hitherto believed her mistress heart-whole, could not at all understand these visits. Felise quite threw out her calculations by suddenly going into Maasbury (to the silversmith's), and the result was that on that day Martial missed seeing the Picture, which was the cause of his lack of good-humour when Abner gave him the note about Ruy at his porch.





## CHAPTER V.

**F** I was to tell you something now,' said Mary Shaw, as she brushed Felise's hair one morning, 'should you be very angry?' blushing scarlet all over her neck, and even partly up her forehead as she spoke.

'You've a sweetheart,' said Felise, laughing at the blush which she saw reflected in the mirror. 'I can see it in your face.'

'Well, perhaps,' said Mary; and, encouraged by her mistress's smile, went on to tell her by little and little of her engagement to Abner.

'How sly you have been!' said Felise; 'and no one ever suspected you.'

‘I didn’t know how you would like it,’ pleaded Mary; and, the confession over, went on to explain the trouble they were in, and to beg Felise’s help.

If Abner’s aged parents were turned out of the cottage there would be no possibility of Mary’s marriage with Abner, for he would have no home to give her.

A separate home was out of the question—it could not be got; the utmost they (or other village lovers) could expect was to live with the parents of bride or bridegroom. At Abner’s home there was room; at Mary Shaw’s there was no room. The Shaw cottage was very small, and fully occupied by her own parents, an aged uncle who had a sort of right to reside with the family, and a crippled cousin (a girl). No place could be found for a fresh couple.

Once old Abner and his wife were turned out of doors, and their hope of future union dissolved altogether. There was no other home for them. Abner might get a bed

somewhere, or he could sleep in a tallet (the room over a stable), but cottage there would be none for wife or children.

So bitterly does the scarcity of homes weigh on the labouring class in the country—a scarcity consequent upon the fact that almost all existing cottages belong to the landowners. Labourers are not able to erect houses for themselves, chiefly because they cannot get the land for the purpose. The few square yards necessary to put a cottage on are inaccessible, no one will sell them such a plot, most waste places have long since been claimed, and squatters are warned off those that remain.

The policy of landowners (or landowners' agents) has for many years been directed to keep down the population, or rather so to manage it as to retain control over it. There has been a strong current setting against the small proprietor, who has not been permitted to come into existence. No man has been allowed to settle in a parish unless under the

immediate thumb of the landowner or his tenants.

Now Abner was in ill-favour with the steward, and there was no chance for him.

Already solicitous enough for the poor old man and his wife, Felise became still more anxious when she understood how Mary's future was concerned. She could not think what to do; she had already applied to Robert Godwin, and been firmly, almost rudely denied.

Mary now came to the pith of her communication. Old Abner Brown was under the impression that if he could but see the Squire in person, he should succeed. The old man dwelt much upon the familiar intercourse he had held with the Squire's grandfather in the olden times, when the distinction between the cottage and the mansion was not so sharply drawn.

He had had small 'deals' with the old Squire; he had run beside the pony when the present Squire's father was learning to ride;

he had worked half a century ago in the gardens attached to the mansion at Maasbury. If he could but see, 't' Squire' face to face and speak with him, he felt sure he should not be turned out of his cottage and garden.

To Felise, unlearned in the ways of the world, this seemed reasonable, and she went at once to Mr. Goring, to ask him how best they could obtain an audience of 't' Squire.'

Mr. Goring, in snowy shirt-sleeves, was sitting under his favourite russet apple-tree, taking his luncheon, which consisted of fruit, bread, and a little Burgundy in a tall old glass. From that spot there was a pleasant glimpse—not a view—a glimpse of the meadows which came up to the orchard fence.

He laughed at the idea of 't' Squire' taking into account the services old Abner had rendered to his grandfather. Besides, he would be in London, as Parliament was sitting—no, on second thoughts, he remem-



bered Cornleigh Cornleigh, Esq., was at home pending some political proceedings in contemplation, of which more presently. The man was at home, and could be seen every Wednesday—this was Wednesday—about noon in the justice-room at The House.

He sat there when at home to administer the law upon rogues and vagabonds—such offences as could be dealt with by one magistrate; the petty sessions being held once a fortnight. It would be easy to see him there, and old Abner no doubt could make his application as soon as the rogues were disposed of; but it was perfectly useless.

Felise wished to try—Mr. Goring would not say he did not mind her trying, and yet he did not say she should not. In truth, any application to such a person was distasteful to him; yet there was the incontrovertible fact of his being in authority, and no one else could save poor old Abner from his doom. While Goring hesitated, Felise ran and ordered the pony-carriage, and sent Shaw

down to tell the old man she would call for him in ten minutes.

Mr. Goring sat by his luncheon, which was now unheeded, and heard the pony-carriage go rattling down the road. The glass of Burgundy was untouched—a wasp came to the fruit upon his plate.

This was one of the bitter moments of his life, bringing home to him his impotence to do good. Had he bustled about in the world, perhaps by this time he would have made sufficient money to enable him to carry out his wishes. How easily a cottage might have been built had he but had a hundred and fifty pounds at his disposal!

He had neglected to struggle with the world, and the world was his master. He had retired out of the dust of the battle, weary of the selfishness, the sham, and cant. As a result, in the midst of his peaceful trees, he was powerless. He had not even made political capital of his views, and had no circle of friends to back him up.

If anyone elects to dwell with himself alone in a garden planted with his own trees, and a mind stocked with his own ideas, he must suffer this deprivation.

It was not the first time he had felt this ; but he thought he had shut out the world behind his trees, and behind his own advancing years. Now he found he had not done so.

Meditating thus the wine became tasteless, the fruit sour ; his trees appeared but timber, the meadow only grass—the idea, the thought, the fancy was gone from all. Had he then wasted upon these the mind that should have been devoted to his fellow-creatures ?

One thing he determined upon ; he would no longer remain silent. He would make the wants and the sufferings of these poor people known ; he would appeal to old friends whose letters had ceased to reach him these twenty years ; he would stir, and act, and speak as well as dream among his flowers and trees.



## CHAPTER VI.

**I** KNOWED there was something as I had to tell you,' said old Abner, crouched in the pony-carriage, his knees nearly touching his chin, and holding one of his sticks with both hands. 'I knowed there was something when you called that day. But bless you, they won't never turn I out of that there garden.'

Entering the outskirts of the town they saw Mrs. Cornleigh Cornleigh, a shaven young cleric with her, just coming from a model farm-building. Felise glanced at her, half drew rein, hesitated, and drove on again. To appeal to a woman would in theory be

the best proceeding, yet Felise did not do so. Something prevented her from making the attempt, partly perhaps the reluctance one woman feels to beg anything of another woman—partly some recollection of the character Mrs. Cornleigh Cornleigh bore.

A handsome woman, she had not the least beauty. Letitia Cornleigh Cornleigh possessed a good figure; a little full perhaps, but not so full as is usual at her age, for she had long passed forty. Indeed, an air of hard self-preservation was her most pronounced expression. She seemed, as you looked at her, to defy you and Time and all alike.

Her features were small, well-cut, and regular; her teeth singularly good, and pearly; her hair pale yellow; her eyes a clear light blue, with long lashes. She had most of the groundwork and foundation of loveliness; she was handsome, yet without beauty. Perhaps it was her haughty boldness which repelled the observer—the

haughty boldness which said, 'I am so high, so irreproachable, I can say anything, do anything, go anywhere, because I am Letitia Cornleigh Cornleigh.'

At a distance this expression was not seen; looked at, for instance, by gas-light from the balcony of a ball-room, Mrs. Cornleigh Cornleigh appeared superb. Could she have been painted from a distance she would have been pronounced an exceptionally handsome woman.

This haughty, innocent boldness sometimes led to queer positions, as when she questioned the veterinary surgeon so closely respecting a horse they were examining as to put the poor man to the blush.

Letitia was very clever, very clever; and it was quite understood that she was the ruler---Cornleigh reigned, and Letitia governed. In fact, she had been selected (being almost dowerless) for this purpose, for Cornleigh's parents and friends were aware that some one with a strong will was needed to guide

him. So the marriage was negotiated, and everyone said, 'What a good thing it was for Cornleigh! Wonderful woman of business! Capital thing for Cornleigh!'

The phrase became established, and it was the regular thing to remark, whenever the improvements at Maasbury town were mentioned, or any allusion made to the family, 'By-the-bye, what a good thing it was for Cornleigh when he married Letitia! Capital thing for Cornleigh!'

All the improvements which had straitened the old town, depriving it of its pleasant appearance and of its ancient freedom, sprang from Mrs. Cornleigh Cornleigh.

With her, too, there came into existence a new law, especially applicable to and enforced in the country part of the estate; but whether this law originated with her, or from the swarm of shaven clericalism around her, was never quite clear. With her reign, at all events, it was first promulgated, and had since been carried out with the utmost

severity. As she was undoubtedly the master-spirit at The House, popular opinion appeared in the right in attributing the execution—if not the inception—to Letitia.

This statute ordained that if any cottage girl disgraced herself and became the mother of illegitimate offspring, forthwith the cottage was to be cleared of all its inhabitants. The girl, the parents, the grandfather, all and single who chanced to dwell within its walls were summarily cleared out, and denied any residence upon the estate. If the marriage ceremony had been performed—however late in the day—the matter was permitted to drop. If not, if it had been omitted—no matter what the extenuating circumstances—out they must turn, bag and baggage, young, middle-aged, and decrepit, to take their chance in the world.

Punishment was thus dealt out in a retrospective manner to everyone, however remotely concerned, and might fall on four generations: on the helpless infant, the



mother, her parents, and grand-parents. It would be impossible to imagine anything more cruel, more unjust, more utterly inhuman.

The cottage was simply cleaned out, as it might be for sanitary purposes during a plague, and the whole family swept as if with a broom from off the country-side.

This inhuman and abominable law, surpassing all that transpires in the darkest places of Russia, was strictly enforced.

The rulers at The House, whether the haughty lady or her shaven advisers, looked with such sacerdotal horror upon this inexpiable crime that nothing less than absolute extinction could suffice. The estate—the lands of Cornleigh Cornleigh, Esq.—must be made sweet and clean. Such horrible contamination must be removed from the surface of that part of the earth which he possessed.

Village girls are exposed to great temptation, and have to go through a rude ordeal.

Besides which they have feelings, these poor girls, and sometimes succumb to love; you would scarce believe it, would you? The scarcity of cottages, and the difficulty of obtaining possession of one, often put an almost insurmountable obstacle in the way of marriage, which obstacle is mainly due to the policy of keeping cottages under the tenant-farmer's control for the supposed benefit of the estate. The House thus kept the population short of cottages, and then punished those who transgressed for want of a home of their own.

This law had been put in force several times since Felise came as a child to Beechknoll, but she had never heard of it. No one ever spoke to her of such things. Something in the child's aspect stilled the giddy tongues that gossiped so freely. To the woman grown, no one—not even Mary Shaw, favourite as she was—would have presumed to mention it. Her pure beauty sur-

rounded her with a rampart across which no evil could penetrate.

Feudal statutes of this kind still exist here and there, although this particular law is not common. Not only the law, but the power to make the law was the wrong in Mr. Goring's opinion. Why should any one person possess the power to issue such a ukase? They do possess the power, and will do so while nine-tenths of each agricultural hamlet are at the absolute disposal of the proprietor of the soil.

If the people lived in their own houses, however humble those houses might be, nothing of the sort would be possible. But they do not live in their own houses. All the efforts of generations after generations of Cornleigh Cornleights have been directed to compel them to dwell in landowners' houses, under the thumb of the tenant-farmer and the steward.

It may be said, there is nothing to prevent

a man living in his own house ; but how can you build a house without land to put it on ? How can you get that land if Cornleigh Cornleigh will not sell it to you ?

Cornleigh Cornleigh, Esq., had got the land.

Felise glanced at the upright form of Mrs. Cornleigh Cornleigh, and decided not to appeal to her. She drove on to the lodge-gates, and asked there for the justice-room ; at that word she was rudely told to go round to the back, and left to find her way to the back as well as she might. A passer-by gave her the information—he was a young man, and glad to assist beauty.

They had to go round some distance and approach The House from another quarter up a long lane ; but found a high iron gate across the lane, and had to wait till it pleased a woman to open it. Then it was a regulation that no horse or vehicle must pass

farther; the pony-carriage had to be left there, just inside the gate, to fare as it might. Felise and her client went down the lane afoot; there was a wall twenty feet high each side.





## CHAPTER VII.



HE old man walked very slowly with two sticks, and paused each step to look about him. He was puzzled; he had not been into the town for years, and the place was so altered he did not know it.

‘Why, this lane,’ he said presently, speaking in his own dialect which I translate, ‘used to be a public road, and that side was the park; it was all open then. What, won’t they let nobody go in the park, then? That side there was a row of big elms; they be cut down then, and that there wall builded. Well, to be sure! Where’s the church?’ he

asked, as they came to a turning. 'Be he gone, then?'

He had forgotten that he had heard all about the changes from others. To the very aged, as to children, to hear of a thing is very different to seeing it; they do not realise it till they see it.

The church was gone, sure enough, and nothing left to mark the site; tombs, stones, all moved out of the way. It dated from the twelfth century, and was considered an architectural treasure; it was, too, pleasant to look at, with its ivy, the great elms adjacent, and the rookery in them, where the rooks in springtime caw, caw, and the jackdaws jack, jack, daw—made such a noise to compensate for the silence of the dead under them.

Wood-pigeons came to the elms sometimes; thrushes sang in the ancient gnarled hawthorns, old as the days of matchlocks; they came, too, to the walls of the old church for the ivy-berries. There were

grey buttresses propping up the bank of the graveyard, and in these grey buttresses the blue tits had nests deep in the cavities. Old Abner minded taking a tit's nest there when he was a boy—seventy years ago.

The church was gone; the graveyard clean dug away, buttresses and all; the elms down, and the site occupied by the various 'offices' common to the precincts of a mansion.

Letitia did not like the church—that grey antiquity—so near the drawing-room; there were funerals in churches, babies brought to be christened, and bells were rung. Besides, it obstructed that clear sweep which ought to be found round a mansion; in short, it was in the way: there could be no ring-fence while it stood there with the public road leading up to it.

Her shaven advisers hailed the idea of removing it—which entailed building a new one elsewhere—with vast delight. To build a great new church was to them an immense



profit—the profit of the personal social influence which repays those who ‘labour’ in these movements. Such is the secret motive in half the church restorations throughout the country—the glorification of the ‘labourer’ who sets all this afoot.

Those who understand human nature will readily perceive that the town subscribed liberally to this work which was to deprive it of its chief feature, to shut up its park, and to close a valuable right of way.

Many a painter had come to look at and sketch the ancient building. Therein reposed the entire history of Maasbury town. The births, the marriages, the deaths of six hundred years were enclosed in it like a casket. All the associations of the old families of the town were bound up in it.

The children for hundreds of years had played in the park, gathering the buttercups, inhaling the fresh sweet air, building up their little frames with store of health.

The open lane gave access to one side of

the town—the only access for vehicles without going round a long distance.

To deprive themselves of these advantages the inhabitants subscribed most liberally; they held public meetings to give the necessary sanction to the enterprise; they signed petitions and memorials, and never ceased to agitate till it was accomplished. Nor were they satisfied till the very bones of their ancestors had been shovelled away and stables built on the site of their ancient altar. Such is Public Spirit.

Those who do not understand human nature would have expected a strenuous opposition to be offered to these changes. Very likely they will, too, repeat the satisfied remark we so often hear about our successful system of self-government.

Our towns are governed by servility or clique; true self-government is totally unknown.

‘Where’s the mill?’ was the old man’s next inquiry.

The mill which stood under the elms and rookery, and was remarkable for a curious wheel, was gone too.

‘Where’s the dove-cot?’ said he.

The dove-cot, which the monks had erected four hundred years since, had disappeared.

Letitia had succeeded in forming a clear sweep round the mansion, and its privacy was now complete. It was absolutely isolated, and guarded by lodge-keepers in every direction.

High walls shut in the view, and led the intruder, like a covered way, to a narrow passage, damp and cold even on a summer’s day, in which was a door and bell. On justice-room days if you rang the bell you were admitted to the justice-room.

When people saw how Letitia was enclosing the mansion, making all things modern and taking an iron grip of Maasbury, they said, ‘Capital thing for Cornleigh! Just the wife for Cornleigh!’

It took Felise full a quarter of an hour to

get the old man along from the iron gate to the door in the damp passage, so exercised was he over these changes. They seemed to quite turn his brain, and set his mind upside down--as the world had been turned since his day.

Inside the door they mounted a flight of dark steps, and emerged in the justice-room.

There were two large windows in it looking on the 'offices' which covered the site of the ancient church; a large table in the centre at which were two chairs, one an armchair; a bookcase, and a form against the wall. About the table there was a carpet; that part of the room where the public stood was carpetless.

The bookcase, curiously enough, stood near the door by which the public entered. It was filled from the top to the bottom shelf with a set of volumes exactly alike, bound in morocco; and Felise, as she passed it, noticed that the backs of the books were lettered in gold, 'The Sporting Calendar.'

Cornleigh Cornleigh was very exact in this particular: 'The Sporting Calendar' was specially bound for him year after year in the same style, and deposited in this bookcase. One would have fancied that a favourite work would have been kept in the library, or in the Squire's private study, not in a semi-public apartment, bare and comfortless.

This was one of the Cornleigh Cornleigh anomalies; and yet perhaps it was not so singular, as the Squire never entered the library, and had no private study, nor did he ever open these sporting volumes he so carefully accumulated. He had been to race-courses, and had heard the slang of the ring from his youth up; but he had never made a bet in his life.

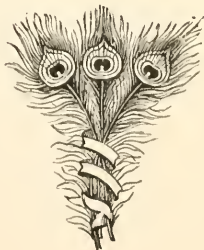
'The Sporting Calendar' was absolutely useless to him. You may frequently observe analogous cases—valuable volumes on the shelves of persons who never consult them, while genuine students can scarcely obtain an

extract. Why Cornleigh Cornleigh put so much stress upon the possession of 'The Sporting Calendar,' why he did this and many other things, is not to be easily come at.

'T' Squire!' ejaculated old Abner, as he caught sight of the magistrate at the table.


'Silence!' cried a constable; then seeing Felise, his aggressive voice dropped, and he motioned them to a hard wooden form placed against the wall opposite the table. There they sat down—Felise and the ancient labourer—side by side, like Beauty and the Beast.

Some uninteresting cases were being disposed of; they must wait till public business was finished.





## CHAPTER VIII.

ORNLEIGH CORNLEIGH sat sideways in his armchair, facing a little towards the window, and apparently listened with the deepest attention to the details of the prosecution. His whole mind seemed to be concentrated upon the business before him.

His youthful face was rather prepossessing; he was a blonde man, and his features had an expression of ingenuousness, such as is proper to youth. The countenance of eighteen had been carried on through the years, and remained set on the shoulders of the man of fifty. The face had not grown with time.

His light hair was parted at the side, and brushed back precisely as his fond mother had parted it and brushed it back in his school-days. It had never obtained a distinctive set and character. Nor was there the least trace of beard or moustache.

A line—one single thin line—ran up his forehead, and remained there always, the groove of effort, of mental labour. A little mind has to work harder than a great one, and such work leaves traces behind it. His chin was the best part, being well cut, and somewhat indicative of will, an indication it so far fulfilled that although he was the worst hand at speechmaking in the world, he never shrank from the task, and it was whispered that even Letitia had discovered he could not be driven beyond a certain point.

A habit of always looking downwards, as if listening to a sermon, concealed very good blue eyes, which, half-closed in this way, were conspicuously fringed with whitish eyelashes.



You saw nothing but the eyelids and the whitish eyelashes.

It was his way to sit sideways in this manner, his hands folded, ingenuously looking downwards, in a state of the profoundest attention—or of the most perfect indifference.

Not a trace of his fifty years appeared in his countenance or hair; he looked not a day over thirty. His dress was faultless, marked with a red-silk handkerchief, the corner of which always projected from the breast-pocket. Only long practice and great skill could have so folded the inevitable red-silk handkerchief, that precisely the same extent of its edge should invariably be visible. In this particular, as in 'The Sporting Calendar,' the Squire was very exact.

Nothing in his attitude betrayed the slightest interest in the entry of Felise, although such a person was seldom indeed to be seen in the justice-room. No curiosity was shown by casual glances in her direc-

tion; it might have been a matter of conjecture if he had or had not seen her come in. The fringe of whitish eyelashes was not raised—not the faintest sparkle of inquiry could be traced in the expression of his face.

Yet they were a singular and unique pair, these two sitting upon the hard wooden form, side by side in the justice-room, at the rear of constables, and ill-savoured rogues and vagabonds standing up for sentence.

Clad in the simplest and plainest of black dresses, Felise's exceptional loveliness only shone the purer.

His two sticks in one withered hand, his chin not far from his knees, his shrunken cheeks the hue of clay, colourless for lack of blood—of beefsteaks and ale—the patriarch swung his body to and fro, muttering to himself, 'I knowed yer grandfather.'

The magistrate's clerk, who also sat at the table, was quite alive to the contrast, and frequently glanced towards the form;

so did the sergeant of police present, and even the rogue and vagabond in the corner just sentenced to fourteen days for begging.

But whether Cornleigh Cornleigh saw Felise or not, it was impossible to determine. The man was inscrutable.

People for years past had asked themselves similar questions about Cornleigh; if he saw, or did not see? whether he saw and kept things to himself, or whether his mind was a blank? He seemed to be listening intently, to be pondering profoundly, but nothing ever came of it.

The gamekeeper, who knew him best, used to puzzle in his cups over the point, and told many anecdotes illustrating the subject. When out alone with the Squire shooting, he had seen a hare run right between Cornleigh's legs, and Cornleigh never so much as took his gun from under his arm. The hare ran by and escaped. 'For, of course, I couldn't fire till

he did,' said the keeper; 'I couldn't take the game out of his mouth. But he never lifted his gun.'

Another time the Squire did put up his gun and aim at a partridge, or at least point it at a covey; and after a minute or two, during which the birds flew out of range, he took it down again without pulling the trigger. On the other hand, when there was a party of sportsmen out with him, the Squire shot better than any of them, and was noted as a marksman.

'Nobody can't make him out,' said the keeper. 'But let folk say what they likes agen him, there's one thing as *I* can say. He have never give me nothing—he bean't free-handed loike some gennelmen—but he never don't find no fault. He comes and looks at the chicks or at the puppies, but he never finds no fault. He don't nag. I have been with him nineteen year, and he have never said a word to I.'

This, however, did not decide the question

as to whether the Squire did or did not see things.

‘ But you look here,’ went on the keeper, growing warm over his ale. ‘ ’Tis very well knowed as he takes after his grandfather in his face—well, now you look here. His grandfather, as folk says, knowed all the pretty wenches for ten mile round, and knowed a deuced sight too much about ’em. But this yer one never looks at no girls.’

Inscrutability was the Squire’s chief characteristic.

Ingenuous and docile, he had always done as he was bid. He obeyed his mother without question ; he married Letitia because the sagacious old lady bade him. Since then he had obeyed Letitia.

He did as he was bid by his steward, Robert Godwin. He did as he was bid by his solicitor, who prompted him at public meetings. By virtue of his position, he sat as chairman at the Petty Sessions, and pro-

nounced the sentences whispered to him by his right-hand man. He did as he was bid by the party-whip in Parliament.

‘Just the thing for Cornleigh! Capital thing for Cornleigh! Just the wife for Cornleigh!’ they said when it was seen how she was leading him in the correct path; how the waste lands were claimed; the lanes diverted; the estate enclosed in a rigid ring-fence; the town straitened—all for the profit of the property. ‘Most energetic woman, and just the wife for Cornleigh!’

There were ladies in the town who, in strict privacy, could not endure Letitia. ‘So masterful you know, dear;’ because, in short, she was the grey mare. Every woman likes her own way, but no woman can endure to see another woman master even over a man who does not concern her. They hated the grey mare, and very carefully copied the dresses she wore.

Hard sentences were frequently pronounced at the Petty Sessions where Cornleigh sat

as chairman—justice's justice—it was not peculiar to Maasbury. Cornleigh delivered them sitting sideways with folded hands, looking downwards, and every now and then raising the whitish fringe of his eyelids and jerking his words out, to again relapse into the downward gaze. Not the slightest sympathy, pity, or interest ever appeared in his face or in the tones of his voice. With right and equity he had nothing to do; he simply said what was put into his mouth.

Some of the old folk in the town, well-to-do folk who remembered his handsome grandfather—said to have disputed the first place for nobility of appearance with Byron—felt a sneaking kindness for the Squire in spite of the straitened town, in spite of his absolute lack of interest in the place which belonged to him, and the innumerable petty acts of oppression perpetrated under his authority.

There was not one of these old families that had not at different times rendered

services to the House of Cornleigh. They would have been amply satisfied with recognition in the streets, with a nod, a wave of the hand; they fancied they were entitled to this. They did not receive it.

Cornleigh never saw them; he passed them just as he passed the pillar-box; he would look them right in the face without knowing it. Yet if he was spoken to he would answer affably, and even offer a cigar, and the next day go by the same individual without turning his head.

As for Letitia, she trampled on them in contemptuous indifference. 'Such a capital thing for Cornleigh! Just the wife for Cornleigh!' Now in course of time it usually happens that great houses, even houses like the House of Cornleigh, come to need friends: Letitia's was hardly the way to secure them.

But there are people in this servile world who will endure any trampling, and at the first beck rush delightedly to proffer their



assistance. Perhaps Letitia understood this. These old folk—in order to disguise their inborn servility from themselves—used to say that after all it was not Cornleigh; *he* was all right; *he* did not do these things, only his agents, and of course a gentleman could not be expected to know everything his groom was about. If only Cornleigh Cornleigh could be got at he would be a very good fellow indeed.

The Squire was inimitable in doing nothing. He pottered about in a way not easily described, because to describe you must mention something, and Cornleigh did nothing to mention. If he took up the newspaper he did not read it; in fact, he never read anything. He sat about, and presently strolled down to the estate-office; then came out and stood in the doorway, and lit his cigar and looked up and down the street, seeing no one.

His cigar was always an especially good

one—Cornleigh was exact in his cigars as in his ‘Sporting Calendar;’ it was a common remark in the hotel bars, ‘This cigar is equal to Cornleigh’s!’





## CHAPTER IX.



THIS morning cigar usually led him across the now secluded and private park, and along a narrow waggon-track to the gamekeeper's. After looking at the puppies or the coops without a word, the Squire would go back into the waggon-track, and post himself against a gate under an oak-tree.

He often had dogs with him; and, as he began his second cigar, he let these dogs hunt as they listed, driving pheasants one way, chicks another, giving tongue at rabbits, 'and jest playing old Harry, hang 'em!' said the keeper, with an accent on 'em' that

made it sound perilously like 'him.' Here the Squire enjoyed his cigar in the sunshine, and looked downwards at nothing. He was often here for an hour at a time.

Sometimes the dogs would come back to his feet, fawn on him, and streak his trousers with their sandy paws; finding he took no notice, away they ran again to chivy everything in the hedge.

Occasionally a blue jay crossed over from the firs and screamed to his fellow just as he reached the ash cover. Squirrels darted out into the lane, limping along the ground, and rushed back at the sound of the scampering dogs.

The white clouds drifted over—shadow and sunshine; light airs rustled the oak leaves; sweet summer sounds whispered over grass and spray.

Enclosed within its thick bark the oak was passive to the beauty of the summer hours. As unobservant as the oak, it seemed that the man, enclosed in a thick bark of indif-

ference, was passive as the timber ; he neither saw nor heard.

A maxim, well established, is that the man or the woman always come out in their deeds. Whatever they may profess, in time the act betrays them, and upon that outward act and deed the world invariably bases its opinion of their character. Is this just ?

Do you always do as you would like to do were it in your power ? I find that circumstances force me often to act in a manner quite opposite to what I should prefer ; I am of course judged by my acts, but do they really afford a true key to my character ? I think not.

What passes in a man's mind it is not possible to tell, and in despite of Cornleigh's apparent indifference, it occurs to me to hazard the inquiry whether after all, he did not see the sunshine, the green leaf, the flower-grown grass. Did he in some dim way enter into the frolic joy of his dogs, released from control ? Did he enjoy the

quiet—the absolute do-nothing of the lane? Did he slumber awake under the rich colour of the sky, seeing it without looking?

There was no Letitia in nature; no one with a loud voice who must be obeyed.

The keeper believed the Squire, when the family were at their house in London, made up pretences to run down a day or two, just to come and do his cigar in the lane. ‘He likes to do nothing with nobody to help him,’ said the keeper.

There was some resemblance in this to the oak’s passive happiness in self-absorption—receiving the sun’s rays, receiving the air as it blew; silent under the song of birds; doing nothing, saying nothing; simply existing. So it seemed as if Cornleigh simply existed.

Wits in the town asked the question if Cornleigh did or did not know himself to be a fool? Some thought his mind so perfect a blank as to be also oblivious to his own failings. Others thought they detected a painful consciousness of his own defects,

and averred that his supineness was only a cloak. The dispute was never settled.

A French saying, I think, points out that everyone has his own way of getting out of the rain. Possibly quiescence—doing as he was bid, without will of his own—was Cornleigh's method.

But if indeed the man was conscious, or partly conscious of mental deficiency, then a great sadness is wound up with the lot of Cornleigh Cornleigh, master of so many many acres; a mere helpless jelly in the hands of Letitia.

How singularly just and thoughtful the world was in its way! 'Just the thing for Cornleigh! Capital thing for Cornleigh! Most energetic woman—just the thing for Cornleigh!'

The oak's passive existence was perhaps his only refuge. There was, indeed, a whisper that Letitia even could not drive him beyond a certain point; he would have his ease; he would not work and slave in

society all the year round ; he would smoke his cigar in the lane. Wise in her generation, Letitia soon learned to let him alone in this one particular.

The dogs came back again and fawned upon him—he did not stroke them—they rolled on the grass and left him once more for the hedges. All dogs and animals were very fond of him, though he showed not the slightest interest in them; perhaps they saw some companionship in his helpless state to their own dumb condition.

Yet you must understand that there was no deficiency you could fix on. Cornleigh could write a letter, add up accounts, go through all the routine of life as perfectly as Letitia herself. Those who most bitterly denounced the fool could not mention a single foolish whim, a single foolish word, not so much as a false step of which he had been guilty.

The fool was very self-possessed and reasonable in all his ways and actions.



Cornleigh Cornleigh was taken a wide round of travel by the most energetic woman, but he saw nothing in the countries he was carried through. He was once heard to remark that there were a good many fir-trees in Russia—having ridden in a train for six hundred miles through fir-woods—but that was the only circumstance he had noticed.

His speeches at election-times were written out for him by his solicitor and Letitia ; he learned them by heart and jerked them out, bits at a time, interspersed with hums and haws. This had not mattered in the least ; the place had been under Robert Godwin's thumb, and his return had been certain. If the Squire had held up a dog in his arms to bark for him to the crowd, his success would have been equally great. Some awkward changes, however, had of late begun to creep even into Maasbury. He had sat already nearly twenty-five years in Parliament without once opening his lips, but he

was punctually there at the divisions, and invariably on the right side.

The question was once propounded—so many questions were propounded about Cornleigh—why on earth such a man as this was chosen by the gentry as the representative of the Borough and Hundreds of Maasbury? Could they not pick a smarter man than this from their ranks?

Analysis was made, and it was found that there were about fourteen other landowners and J.P.'s in that district, each of whom was possessed of sufficient wealth to sit in the House of Commons. Yet these fourteen had selected Cornleigh—for the crowd of voters merely recorded their selection. How could this be?

On examining the characters of each one of these fourteen magnates, however, a remarkable discovery was made. Every one of these possessed qualities of stupidity more marked than Cornleigh's; little acts, words, ways, could be mentioned by which each

had branded himself as a more or less consummate ass.

The reason was now apparent why Cornleigh was chosen ; he was the least foolish of the lot.

What the state of *their* minds must have been, considering that Cornleigh Cornleigh stood out as the most sensible of the number, it is difficult to conjecture. What ever could these other fourteen have been like ?

From the date when this discovery was made Cornleigh rose considerably in the estimation of Maasbury ; they began to be proud of him, and as some one said, 'After all, silence is golden.'

Moreover, the world always appreciates a solid plum, and approves those who get the solid plum. Now it was understood that Cornleigh's patient voting on the right side in every division for five-and-twenty years had at last aroused his party to the necessity of rewarding such diligence, to encourage the

others. A promise of a baronetage had been made, and if only Cornleigh could hold on, and appear in Parliament when next his party obtained the Government, he would be Sir Edward Cornleigh Cornleigh, Bart., to a certainty. My Lady Letitia Cornleigh already claimed all the precedence the title could give her.

A baronetage is a baronetage, or it is not a baronetage. Conferred upon an upstart millionaire it is nothing ; conferred upon an ancient county family it indicates very considerable social rank. The antiquity of the house gilds the title. There was no questioning the fact that the House of Cornleigh was one of the most ancient in the county.

When it was known that such a promise had been given in the responsible quarter, a great many wise old fogies, who had never looked upon Cornleigh as very bright, began to change their tone, and ' By Jove, you know, there must be something in the fellow after all ! But of course it's all Letitia's doing.

Wonderful woman—most energetic woman—  
just the woman for Cornleigh !

Some manœuvres in connection with the political future rendered Cornleigh's presence in the county desirable just now. This was why he was at home while Parliament was sitting ; he ran up to vote in important divisions, and returned to his cigar in the lane.





## CHAPTER X.



SPECTRE had risen up of recent years to disturb the repose of the House of Cornleigh. Since the passing of the Ballot Act, Letitia had never felt quite secure upon her throne, for it seemed to her that it threatened to cut the very ground away from under their feet, especially if, as was threatened, the power to vote was extended to the agricultural labourers.

If the agricultural labourer was allowed to vote—in secret and free from control by aid of the Ballot—what would he do to the House of Cornleigh?

Robert Godwin reassured her, the family solicitor reassured her, the fourteen other district magnates reassured her; but Letitia was a clever woman, and she had instincts which far surpassed, in clearness of insight, all their logical training and boasted masculine superiority. Letitia was certain that the Ballot, if the labourers obtained votes, would put the axe to the root of the tree of Cornleigh.

After the promise of the baronetage her anxiety redoubled, for it became an object of the utmost importance that Cornleigh should be returned once more to Parliament. Even supposing his party did not enter into power, still they retained great influence in a high quarter, and it was morally certain that he would become Sir Edward.

Bitterness therefore was heaped upon the abominable Ballot Act: it was the symbol of all things vile in the eyes of the Cornleigh party, it was un-English, it was directed against the dearest traditions of our country;

in short, the Ballot Act, as Gambetta said of something else, was the Enemy.

The Ballot Act is the Act which enables every person to go and record his vote without fear of after-consequences from the vengeance of any party whose wishes he has crossed.

The Ballot Act is the Magna Charta of modern days.

Under it a man can act as he thinks and feels, and knows to be right, and is not to be overawed by any threat, fear, or authority.

It secures to every Englishman genuine liberty, and under it free voting took place for the first time in all English history.

The boast of Britain is freedom, but there was no freedom till the Ballot became law.

I went as a boy to an election *to see the fighting*. Boys like to see fighting; it is their nature. There was a crowd about the polling booths armed with stout sticks, and all wearing a certain colour. If any man



dared to so much as pass by whose colour was not their colour, he was set upon and beaten.

I retain a vivid mental picture of one man on a white horse, who boldly rode up to record his vote with his colour—not the crowd's colour—in his buttonhole. They swarmed round him, these noble freeborn people armed with sticks; they beat him on his horse, and they beat his horse; they dragged him off his horse and beat him, holding him up for the purpose; at last he fell down and they beat him on the ground, and presently began to drag and haul him along like a sack, helpless and insensible as he was. I lost sight of him in the surging mass of freeborn electors, and what became of him I do not know.

This was fine fun for boys to look at. Now I went to see the fighting, but I never forgot the man on the white horse.

To call this freedom appeared to me ever afterwards as simply a deliberate lie.

Instead of freedom it was despotism of the worst and most tyrannous description.

Under the Ballot Act the man on the white horse, if still living, can go up and record his vote in perfect safety; the vote he has given will never be known; and no Robert Godwin can harass him for acting according to his conscience.

So deep is the impression made on the popular mind by the oppressions visited on those who dared to vote as they thought, that even now at this day, people have but partly rid themselves of the fear that some one will seek private and secret vengeance on them for doing as they believe right. Those who desire to uphold the cause of liberty should see that the secrecy of the Ballot is really secrecy, for suspicions have got about that it is not always so even now.

You can now understand how an enormous power was taken from the hands of Robert Godwin when the new Magna Charta was passed, and why Letitia, clever woman

as she was, dreaded the enfranchisement of the agricultural labourer.

The view taken by the Cornleigh party was that the Ballot (which secures freedom) was demoralising (now just think !) in its action on the people, *who had always hitherto been accustomed to an atmosphere of freedom.*

Is not this a deliberate lie ?

This sentence written out by Letitia was acquired by heart by the Squire, and introduced as a climax upon every public occasion. The respectable inhabitants of Maasbury applauded it to the echo.

This deliberate lie became the motto of the Cornleigh party. It is a lie so flagrant—so palpable—so coarse and unscrupulous, that it is a marvel any English gentleman can make up his mind to utter it.

Though there was no special trade in Maasbury—and not many shoemakers with their radical awls—still there were large workshops, there was a railway station and its attendant workmen, there were bricklayers

(fearfully wicked, self-willed people, bricklayers—nearly as bad as shoemakers), and some very large brickfields, the home of desperation, according to the Cornleigh creed.

At the last election these folk, voting at last without fear of Robert Godwin and his agents (wonderful it is that such men should find so many willing tools in the practice of oppression), these men ran Cornleigh Cornleigh, Esq., very hard indeed, and reduced his usual majority to a mere handful.

Was it not natural then that Letitia, with the title of 'My Lady' hanging before her eyes, should be fearful of the next election?

Even if the next election came and found the agricultural labourers still without the right to vote, it must not be forgotten that it would be Cornleigh's final chance. The labourers' claims could not be postponed any longer; if not at the next election, at the next after that they would be sure to vote, and how then with Cornleigh Cornleigh?

And there was another consideration. An election is a costly matter : if he was secure of return, the money was well spent ; but if Cornleigh's narrow majority melted away and he lost it, the money would be wasted.

The diabolical Ballot Act—the abominable Ballot Act—with its demoralising influence on a people hitherto accustomed to an atmosphere of freedom !

There had been rumours flying about for some time that in despite of having married so energetic a woman, and in despite of having wrung the last shilling from the tenants, Cornleigh was not so rich as he ought to be, considering the extent of his property. Seasons had been bad, and although the district had partially escaped at first, still they had been trying and unprofitable, and there was now very serious trouble among the tenants. The expenses of the exquisite Letitia, and of the young Cornleigh boys and girls, were no trifle. Personally the Squire never seemed to spend

a shilling, unless for a new silk handkerchief for his coat-pocket.

Yet there were rumours of borrowed money; rumours of the mansion being about to be let—imagine the loss to the town in the absence of ‘the family’ on the Continent!—rumours of the Squire’s being afraid to face the cost of another and perhaps dubious election; rumours of his having intimated an intention of not appearing again as a candidate unless the party liberally supported him with money.

These rumours had so far an aspect of truth, that the Squire, instead of being in London, was at home while Parliament was sitting. But everyone was confident that Letitia would manage things: ‘Just the woman for Cornleigh! Capital thing for Cornleigh!’



## CHAPTER XI.

**B**UT some thought [it strange that the House of Cornleigh should fear the serfs upon its wide domain — those serfs who had enjoyed for so many centuries its fostering care. Why fear those poor helpless cottagers whose destinies they had swayed so long — whose hearts they had doubtless gained by centuries of kindness ?

Oh foolish House of Cornleigh ! Foolish Houses of Cornleigh — very much in the plural, for they are a multitude in number — not to have made friends with Flesh and Blood, instead of grasping so blindly only at the mud underneath ; neglecting and utterly

ignoring the hearts that beat in the homesteads, laying hands so ambitiously on the mere surface of the earth.

Assuredly the Houses of Cornleigh will be swept away when the Browns and Shaws and similar folk can give utterance to their minds in the practical form of the vote under the shelter of Modern Magna Charta.

There is nothing so good as Law ; nothing so evil as the Letter of the Law. Sitting alone in his justice-room, or in the midst of the fourteen other magnates at the Petty Sessions, Cornleigh administered the Letter of the Law in its harshest form to the labourers and poor folk who came under the jurisdiction of his tribunal. Most unjust—though strictly legal—were the sentences delivered upon the men who had nominally broken their contracts of service with the tenant farmers.

It was policy—deep statesmanship—on the part of the landowning Petty Sessions in every case to strictly administer the Law in favour



of their own tenants. Nor were the tenants themselves blameless in bringing such charges—legally, yet foolishly—against their men, well knowing that the men would not receive equity.

Foolish Houses of Cornleigh, making yourselves infamous for unjust justice.

The wits in Maasbury dubbed the Squire, Mr. Justice Shallow Cornleigh.

The name stuck, but it was unjust to Shakespeare's Justice Shallow; for it is a remarkable fact that in Shakespeare even the despicable characters have traits of manliness. Even Pistol beat a man.

Justice Shallow had heard the chimes at midnight, had made the acquaintance of the *bona robas*, had been intoxicated (by inference), had sown wild oats in his youth.

Mr. Justice Shallow Cornleigh had never been man enough to hear the chimes at midnight, nor to sow wild oats. His youth was blameless.

Justice Shallow had corn and beeves—

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riches gained by his own perseverance and parsimony in his settled middle-age.

Mr. Justice Shallow Cornleigh had indeed land and beeves, but he had them in the same way as the puppy gets the hearthrug—because he was born in the family, not because of any exertions of his own.

Justice Shallow had spirit enough left in his old days to lend Falstaff a thousand pounds to push him at Court.

Mr. Justice Shallow Cornleigh scrupulously bound every volume of 'The Sporting Calendar,' but had never made a bet.

Justice Shallow, lean and foolish, had traits of manliness; but of Cornleigh nothing of the sort had ever been recorded. The head of the House of Cornleigh was a non-entity.

This was his fault, his guilt, his crime, in that he did nothing—that he left all things to his steward Robert Godwin, to his Letitia, to the fourteen other magnates whose sentences he pronounced in Petty Sessions.

With his authority he stamped their folly, and became responsible for it. Iniquity was done in his name, and he cast down his eyes and did not see it.

It is a terrible thing when a fool sits in the place of power. Oppression is done without redress.

The system is beyond defence which permits fools to sit in the place of power.

Cornleigh himself was personally guiltless, but he made possible the crimes of others; he signed his name and sanctioned their tyrannies. Yet even in Maasbury, where so much had been done to alienate everyone, there was no animosity against the Squire himself. It was felt that it was not him.

‘Just the thing for Cornleigh! Capital thing for Cornleigh! Most energetic woman—just the woman for Cornleigh!’

Whenever an important division was at hand, the Squire ran up to town, patiently sat out the debate, recorded his vote on the

right side, and came down home again to his morning cigar in the lane.

His morning cigar in the lane under the oak was Cornleigh's real life. Cast down upon the sward, his gaze did not appear conscious of the sunshine or the shade, the white clouds drifting over, the squirrels leaping, the blackbirds passing from time to time. But we do not see with our eyes only; we possess a sense which enables us to feel that things are there without actually seeing them. The outward appearance is not always an indication of the inner feelings, any more than the acts by which the world judges are always of our own free will. The inscrutable Squire may have seen, may have felt, and understood much more than he was credited with. 'He never looks at no girls,' said the keeper.

Possibly Cornleigh saw the 'girls' without exhibiting signs of admiration; possibly he had sometimes met women whose gentleness of demeanour reminded him that a happier

fate might have been his had not a Letitia appeared; possibly sweeter feminine influences might have led him to act a little for himself, to examine and think before he affixed his signature to documents, of the real effect of which he was now profoundly ignorant or indifferent.

Still she was 'just the woman for Cornleigh.'

Possibly the Squire, sitting sideways in his justice-room, was really perfectly conscious of Felise's presence, and not insensible to her loveliness.

When at last the business was over, and some one asked if anyone wished to make an application to the magistrate, Felise motioned old Abner to rise, and advanced with him to the table. For a moment the Squire glanced at her, instantly resuming his downward look.

'You wish to make an application?' said the magistrate's clerk. Old Abner did not answer him, but stared hard at Cornleigh.

'I knowed yer grandfeyther,' he said,

shaking as he held on to the edge of the table in lieu of his sticks. For once I must write the words as he spoke them.

The Squire did not reply.

‘I knowed yer grandfeyther,’ repeated the old labourer. ‘You bean’t such a man as he wur.’

‘What is it you want?’ asked the clerk.

‘State what you want,’ repeated Cornleigh.

‘You bean’t half the man yer grandfeyther wur,’ said old Abner. ‘Why doan’t yer do summat? Why be yer allus at home? Yer grandfeyther used to come round to us folk.’

‘This is irrelevant,’ said the clerk.

‘Irrelevant,’ said the Squire.

‘Don’t you know what you want?’ asked the clerk. Had not Felise been there they would have quickly hustled the old fellow away.

‘Want! of course I knows. I wants to know why *he* doan’t do summat. There be a passel [parcel] of fools about, I can tell ’ee.’

‘His worship cannot sit here to listen to this,’ said the clerk.

‘Why bean’t yer gone up to Parliament House?’ said old Brown, quite heedless of the clerk.

‘Perhaps you will be good enough to explain what the man wants,’ said the clerk, addressing Felise.

A little confused by the unfamiliar surroundings, Felise tried to make them understand. The clerk helped her by cross-questioning, and at last it was clear that the application was for permission for the aged labourer to end his days in his cottage.

‘He has made such a capital garden,’ said Felise, able to speak now. ‘He will never be able to live away from his garden. Could you not let him stay, Mr. Cornleigh? He worked for your grandfather and for your father—he really has been a faithful old servant, and he cannot have much longer to live. It is not a great thing to grant. Do, please, think how very old and helpless he is!’

The Squire glanced at her—the excitement had flushed her cheek; she was radiantly beautiful—and as quickly looked down again.

‘It is clearly a matter for Mr. Godwin,’ said the clerk.

‘Evidently it is a matter for Godwin,’ said the Squire, who always repeated what his advisers had said for him.

‘No, no,’ said Felise quickly. ‘Do, please, decide this one little thing yourself, Mr. Cornleigh.’

The Squire got up and went into the next room, followed by the clerk; they held a short consultation, and returned again.

‘His worship will confer with his steward,’ said the clerk.

‘But—but,’ said Felise, ‘if you would look into it yourself, Mr. Cornleigh, you would see—you would——’

‘Mr. Cornleigh will confer with his steward,’ said the clerk, closing his book and rising.

‘I—I—hum—ah—-I mean,’ said the Squire,



as he too rose and began to retreat, glancing momentarily, 'I will confer with my steward.'

'But doan't you know I?' said old Abner, as the Squire turned his back. 'Doan't you know I? Bless 'ee, I bought pegs of yer grandfeyther!'

Squire and clerk were gone together; old Abner became very indignant.

'Why didn't he speak to I?' he grumbled. 'I knowed his grandfeyther. Why doan't he do summat hisself? A bean't half the man his grandfeyther wur.'

Felise could not persuade him to come away till the sergeant of police approached, and taking the old man by the arm quietly led him downstairs, and out into the roadway. There he went quietly with her, still muttering to himself about the Squire's 'grandfeyther.' She drove him home, and left him at the cottage.

Mr. Goring was not in the least surprised at the failure of the attempt; for they con-

sidered it a failure since the Squire was going to consult with Mr. Godwin.

Mary Shaw was very dull and down-hearted when she heard about it ; she had had such hopes in her mistress, believing that her beauty would be sure to carry the day.

In his cottage old Abner was complaining to his wife of Felise's interference and bad management. He was sure he should have got on all right if he had seen the Squire by himself, but she spoilt everything. ' Hur would keep talking,' he said. ' Hur kept on talk, talk, talk.' The truth being that he could say nothing for himself, and Felise had explained everything.

Ingratitude is the nature of old Abner's race ; so many hundred years of hard poverty and petty oppression have crushed out the better feelings, especially in the aged. For one act of kindness in eighty years, why should they feel grateful ?

Still the fact remains that they are un-

grateful, speaking ill of those who wish them well, incapable of understanding goodness of heart ; the fact remains and renders them uninteresting and repellent, so that sympathy cannot attach itself to them. A little experience of their ways is sufficient to destroy the interest of the kindest-hearted.





## CHAPTER XII.

**F**ELISE was sitting with Martial in the shade of the trees in Robert Godwin's garden. This was a week after the return of Ruy, whose return had in fact brought it about, though in a manner unknown to either of them. The scanty foliage of the tall poplars and dying sycamores scarce gave them shelter from the slant rays of the evening sun.

In that garden nothing had been planted afresh for generations ; the boughs fell away with age, and no new spray grew to fill the interstice, till by degrees there was not much left beyond the trunks, stark and sere-tipped.

The apples had ceased to bear, and the plums, as the felt slips rotted from the nails, drooped forward from the wall, destroying themselves with their own weight.

The caterpillar had worked its fell intent, and the leaves remaining were shrivelled and brown.

Mosses grew along the coping of the wall, and marked with green lines the mortar between the stones.

A ragged hedge had encroached inwards on the grass plot ; briars and brambles laid their hands on the turf.

The sward was whitish-green ; neglected for twenty years, it had been recently mown, and the stalks of the grasses gave it this colour.

A sense of scantiness—meanness and scantiness—was everywhere about the place. Before them was the end wall of the house ; it was narrow and low, and the roof sharp-pitched ; the grey-stone slates weighed heavily on it. Some lichen had partly

covered the brick against which the red sunset had shone so many years. The one small window at this end overlooking the garden was discoloured, and the panes seemed to have lost their transparency.

Beyond the house the farm-buildings and ricks stood out plainly ; no trees intervened to give seclusion to the homestead.

The mean and scanty house, the bare trees, the whitish-green grass plot, the entire absence of flowers, the gravel path unweeded, the neglect and desolation indicated that the owners for generations had found their solace elsewhere than in the culture of home.

The butterflies from the meadows at hand floated over, and left this sullen patch in the midst of the summer cloth of gold far behind them. The swallows did not descend to the eaves, for their nests had been thrust down with poles year after year till their affectionate clinging had at last been repulsed.

All the glory of the summer evening could not light up the meanness of the place.

A great passion renders the eyes of the imaginative as unobservant as those who possess no imagination. Felise did not see the scanty foliage which hardly prevented the sun from burning her cheek, the mean and flowerless garden, or the narrow and discoloured window. Her heart was occupied, and the sterile scene was nothing. Martial was there, and that was enough.

They were talking of things not in the least relevant to their thoughts, as is often the case when the world, if it could see, would smile and say, 'They are love-making.' Deeds in no degree exhibit the real character, nor do words express the ideas in the inmost mind. Even the deepest lovers whose hearts are as one often talk quite apart from their thoughts. But Martial was not a lover.

'I like to see Shakespeare played,' Martial was saying, 'without any scenery or accessories.'

Newspaper topics, the passing book, some

allusion to the theatre—these were the subjects they had discussed, as chance acquaintances discuss them. Felise happened to remark that she much wished to see Shakespeare on the stage.

‘He is spoiled,’ said Martial, ‘with rich dresses and diamond rings on the actresses’ fingers, with gorgeous scenery, with the very accuracy of the imitation of his era. It is not Shakespeare—it is dress and glitter, and strut and mouthing; and you can never forget the advertisements which tell you you must admire it, it is so real, so lifelike. But that is just what makes it so unreal.’

‘Too mechanical,’ said Felise.

‘Yes, that is it, too much machinery and upholstery—the spirit of the play buried under Turkey-pile carpets, smothered and lost. But if you can only see Shakespeare on bare planks, in a common room—a mere bare platform—and perhaps but badly lighted, and the players in their ordinary dresses, or but just distinguished with a



sword, or some emblem, and without any scenery at all, then, indeed, it is most beautiful.'

'He is full of beautiful thoughts,' she said.

'And then those beautiful thoughts come straight to you,' he went on, 'and you feel them and think with them. It does not matter in the least if the actors are good or bad, indeed it does not want any acting at all—the words are enough; and as you listen, lo! the bare planks of the platform fade away, and the depth of the green forest comes, and you hear the sound of falling water, and the song of birds, and yonder are deer in the glade. Something goes right to your heart, and it is so real and so true that the tears rise in your eyes—for there is something sad in life always, and there is something sad in the very joyfulness of Shakespeare's songs. When they sing, "For love is crowned with the prime"—you remember "Between the acres of the rye"—

you can see the green corn and hear the nightingale, who sings while the corn is green. It is so beautiful, and yet it is so sad.'

'I wish I could see it played like that.'

'There are no actors then—Shakespeare plays to you,' said Martial. 'He plays himself, and speaks to you. It needs no actors. The best actors are in the way, they interfere; you see them and not Shakespeare. It is very wonderful, I cannot understand it, but there is that in Shakespeare which is not in any other book—something that makes things real, as when Juliet tears down the artificial green leaves and throws them to Romeo; the leaves are as real as real can be.'

'I will try and hear the plays without good actors,' said Felise.

'You can see the stars plainly when Jessica's lover speaks of them,' went on Martial, excited with a favourite subject and all aglow with his fired imagination; 'you can see the heavens inlaid. You have seen

the sky, I am sure you have, thickly studded with stars, so close together that the point of a needle would scarcely go between them. Once now and then the sky is like this. When I hear the words spoken on the stage I can shut my eyes and see the sky white with these myriads of stars. Shakespeare was always out-of-doors, in the fields and woods, and on the hills—you may be certain that he was ; some of his plays ought to be played in a green meadow. And the poems, they are hawthorn and June roses. But no one seems to care about them now—no one cares for anything outside cities. In the sonnets——’ he stopped suddenly, and looked at his watch. ‘ Mr. Godwin is a long time,’ in a different and ordinary tone of voice.

Martial had caught himself at his old extravagances, his old romancing, his old ideals coming up again, and beside a woman. This would not do. He would guard himself carefully in future, and talk of anything but the ideal or imaginative.

All that Felise had once found in her solitary communings among the woods and far hills, now came to her in the tones of his voice. Yet she had scarcely heard the words he had uttered, and barely followed their meaning. She was thinking so deeply of the man, she could not think of what he said; she was silent for some time after he ceased.

Presently, remembering he was one of Cornleigh's largest tenants, she mentioned the case of old Abner, and asked if Martial would use his influence with the Squire.

'I have no influence,' said Martial; 'I am very sorry. I can do nothing. Don't you know that farmers are despised? This Cornleigh Cornleigh was once asked by a tenant to put down a plank-floor in his house, as he suffered from rheumatism, and the stone-floor was cold. The Squire said stone-floors were good enough for farmers.'

'I have heard that Mrs. Cornleigh says

it is ridiculous farmers' daughters should be called "Miss."'

'There is not the least chance for your aged cottager,' said Martial. 'To the work-house he must go; it's good enough for him, you see. It is brutally cruel.'

'Why are people so unfeeling?' said Felise. 'I cannot understand why they are so harsh.'

'Perhaps it is a lack of perception,' said Martial. 'They do not see the misery they are causing; they cannot put themselves in some one else's place. Has Mr. Goring been asked to sign the requisition and subscribe to the testimonial?'

'Testimonial?'

'To Edward Cornleigh Cornleigh, Esq., for his long and faithful service in Parliament. There is to be a grand demonstration to induce him to continue our representative. Everybody will go to Maasbury that day.'


'Papa—I mean Mr. Goring—will not subscribe, I am sure.'

Of trifles like these they talked while the sun declined, conversing not of what was in their thoughts, but making up little speeches addressed to the audience, as it were.





### CHAPTER XIII.

 ELISE was thinking: 'How well he talks—what ideas he has! his voice is low, but it is deep and strong; his lips are well-shaped—I should like a kiss. That is a shabby old coat; yes, your coat is much worn, sir, but it suits you; you look a gentleman all the more, perhaps. How I should like to give you a new one! Who gave you that gold pin in your tie, I wonder—some woman? His ears are good; most men have ill-formed ears. His hair is very fine, like silk. I wonder what he is thinking of—me—is he thinking of me at all? There is a small mole on his neck. Why doesn't he look at me—he has such fine eyes? Your

hands are not small, sir, nor are they white. I do not like white hands; they look as if they could not do anything. Your hands are a little sun-browned, and they are not small and feeble; I think you could give anyone a hard knock, though you are not very big. Why don't you look at me? Look at me straight in the face, now do, there's a dear! I hope he is trustful, but why does he look away?—he looks anywhere rather than at me. Yes, you have a very good neck—that makes your head appear so good. Why do you want to hide your eyes? I wish my hair was just the same shade as his; how nice it must be to have hair that colour! His boots have been mended. Ah! it is hard times with him—wish I was sharing them! His handkerchief wants darning. How glad I am I gave him his horse again! How angry papa will be when he finds out what I did! He *is* handsome—I wonder how many girls have flattered him! I dare say he is quite spoilt. Will he ever like me? He will not



look at me ; I will contradict him presently, then perhaps he will.'

Martial was thinking : 'How fortunate I exhausted all my romance before I met her ! There is no knowing to what lengths I should have gone ; but luckily all those extravagances are gone by. These are very common old Windsor chairs. I don't believe our miserly steward has a respectable chair in his dog-kennel, *i.e.* his house—wretched hard old chairs ; but how gracefully she rests herself in hers ! Her body seems to poise on itself and repose without the chair, as if the chair was merely put there to content the eye of the spectator ; she rests like an Immortal on the ether. Really she does do things nicely—to see her walk, it is a picture. I think she sighs now and then. I believe she breathed more deeply just then ; of course she does that because it makes her bust swell and fall more. Oh yes, the cunning of these women is something beyond the power of man to circumvent. Breathe

as deeply as you like, it is no use. I am case-hardened. I have been through all these experiences—old birds and chaff, you have heard. Very beautiful no doubt, but still a woman. Very interesting indeed. I know more than you think. What a lovely shoulder she has beneath that dress—I shall never forget it. You don't know what a view I had when you were bathing. And her hair reaches down to her knee, very nearly ; thick, too, wavy and fine. But that is nothing to her shape and her knee—there, she has just moved her knee. I can see it quite plainly through the dress as I saw it then, white and dewy from the water. She makes believe to listen to everything I say—just as if she cared, just as if she liked what I say about things. What a stupid I am to talk to her of anything beside a bonnet ! I can feel she keeps looking at me ; very likely she wants to try another glance on me—long and passionate. No, no, nothing of the kind ; I won't permit you. I will keep my eyes on

the grass or the trees as firm as possible. In the sonnets there is a line—pooh! I will not remember such folly. I wish she would move a little farther away. I can feel her sitting near me. I don't like this—when's Godwin coming? I must get out of it. Her shoulder and her neck, and her white knee—her dress is quite transparent to me. I never could have thought there was anyone so lovely in the world. Now her hand—there it is drooping; it is not only white, it is lit up within with some delicious light—some clearness, as if it was the dawn under the skin. There, she has raised her hand; she rests her head against it a moment. Now see, it is not transparent like that of anyone very ill; it is plump, but it is alight, aglow,—the dawn is inside it. She is Greek, and yet she is not; she is English-Greek; the mingling of the styles of the antique and the English produces the greatest beauty. She feels delicious to sit by; something seems to influence me; it is extraordinarily pleasant

sitting by her. There is something dreamy in it, as if she were Cytherea. Here, what am I at! Romancing. She's only a woman. However, I need not worry myself about occasional lapses. I am hardened enough, in all conscience. This sort of creature is very well as a Picture; you don't want to get excited over it. She looked straight at me then. No, I am *not* going to look at you—much too cold for that. Must say something, I suppose. Now I have sat by her once, I could do so every day without the least danger. There, the sunlight has touched her hair——'

Aloud he said: 'The sun is still very warm, although sinking.'

'The warm weather is welcome to you, I suppose; it is good for your wheat, is it not?' she replied.

'Yes, it is; still it is not much use. It is too late—or seems so. Any weather is good enough for a despised farmer.'

'I do not see why they should be despised.'

‘I am weary of it,’ said Martial, suddenly throwing off his air of studied indifference. ‘We go on—at least I do—from hand to mouth, year after year; it is a most unpleasant position. We are permitted to exist—on charity. As a great favour, out of his gracious benevolence our landlord presents us with ten per cent.—as a present, not as our right. I think I shall get out of it. I am very much inclined to sell off and go to the States——’

‘The States!’ repeated Felise in a low voice, shocked and alarmed.

‘Yes, I think so. This system of touch-the-hat is too much for me. Certainly the farmers are very much to blame; it is perfectly sickening to see their servility, all praising and be-lauding and applauding the very men they hate. There is nothing sturdy or independent about the British farmer of our day—truckling to the landlord, and truckling to the steward, and truckling to the solicitor, and truckling to the parson; it is

most contemptible. If they had had the courage to say what they thought, and if they had had the common-sense to combine together, they could have done whatever they chose. But as for combination, they are incapable of it. Now it is too late.'

'Why too late?'

'The labourers — your old cottager, for instance—are going to have votes, and in future the country, I mean the rural districts, will be in their hands. The farmers as a governing class will disappear.'

'Then old Abner will be able to stay in his cottage,' said Felise, naturally jumping to a conclusion.

'Events will not move quick enough to serve him, I fear,' said Martial. 'His wrong is but one among so many. What rouses my indignation is the complacent assertion that there is really nothing wrong. So much philanthropy, and so many reforms in work-houses and prisons, and in the laws, they say, have removed everything cruel and harsh,

while I believe it is just the reverse; I believe there is just as much cruelty and harshness in the workhouses and prisons and infirmaries—in the whole system—as ever there was. Really, I do think that the more philanthropy is talked about, and especially scientific philanthropy, the more individual suffering there is. It is all so vague. They give thousands to hospitals—not a penny to a poor man. Cornleigh Cornleigh would subscribe a hundred pounds to a new hospital, but he would not permit your aged cottager to stay in his home—nothing of the sort; drive him to the workhouse. There is nothing so cold-hearted as philanthropy.’

‘You mean it is all given to the buildings, and not to the sufferers.’

‘That is it; but I am afraid the sun is too warm for you.’ The sunset-glow now came full upon Felise’s face.

‘No, not at all. Besides, I have my sunshade.’

She had her sunshade, indeed, and had

thrown it carelessly over her shoulder, so that if the sun had been shining at her back it would have protected her ; but the rays came from the right hand—across Martial—so that the parasol was useless in the position she had it. If she had shaded herself from the sun she could not have seen him, as the parasol would intervene—that was the reason of her apparent carelessness.

The door of the house creaked, and Robert Godwin came out ; they rose and met him. He said that he should not require Martial's services further that evening—would he come the day after next ? Martial agreed, and went to fetch Ruy from the stable. Both of them accompanied Felise some way towards her home, then wished her 'good-evening,' and parted.

The same scene occurred on the next occasion of Barnard's visit to Godwin ; Martial and Felise sat in the scanty shade of the poplars on the white-green lawn, thinking of one thing, and talking of another.



That the altered position of their affairs might be thrown into relief, it seemed best to delineate the circumstances first before explaining them; just as actors come on the stage and begin to tell their story afterwards. Robert Godwin had contrived this, and every other evening Felise and Martial, in the shade of the tall poplar, sat on his lawn, idle, side by side, till the glow of the sunset touched her cheek.





## CHAPTER XIV.



Our old habits are suspended, how rapidly the touch of living hands disappears from our inanimate surroundings. Almost the instant the living hand is withdrawn, dust settles on the furniture and the room.

Dust thickens in the ink; the pen corrodes; papers become gritty; the moisture of the air or the heat of the sun curls photographs; desolation dwells in every nook and corner.

The smooth surface of the polished table is strewn with the fine particles deposited by the atmosphere; it is sown with dust. Time so soon asserts his reign. But a day or two is sufficient; the flowers left in the vase

wither, and the air becomes dull and lifeless let but the door be closed for three days.

When I return to my chamber and find it thus, I hasten to push the books aslant from the positions in which they have been lying, to upset some of the papers and give them a new aspect, to flick the dust from the table, to open the window. The change is instant; immediately the chairs appear comfortable, and the room a habitation for the living. Yet it is sorrowful to reflect how soon—but a day or two—and already the dust has gathered over the place we filled.

Robert Godwin was sitting at his desk in his bedroom—his desk you will remember was the washstand, and stood by the narrow window. Half the embrasure of the window—deep in the thick wall—was lit by the slant rays of the evening sun. Cobwebs had grown in the corner of the casement, and stretched out over the piles of papers.

They were gritty with dust; they had not been touched lately. Dust was thicken-

ing the ink ; the pen was corroding ; fragments of a torn-up envelope lay on the floor. He sat there, but the desk and the window were full of desolation. Old habits were suspended ; the touch of the living hand was withdrawn. The pen was not dipped in the ink, the papers remained unmoved, and dust collected in the folds, and spiders spun threads about them.

He sat with his left arm on the wash-stand in such a position that he could see what was doing in the garden underneath. He was watching Felise and Martial, whom he had himself set there to be watched.

The slow sun scarcely moved in the western sky, and the lines of shade cast by the bars of the casement dragged upwards. Flies buzzed against the pane—buzzed and crawled and buzzed again—the only sound in the still room.

Fixed and intent upon the pair in the shade of the grey poplar-tree, Robert Godwin sat and watched and watched, and held this

thing up close and closer to his mind to see and understand it.

He had worked it out in this way: so soon as Felise had purchased Ruy she ceased to walk over; that was reasonable enough, because there was nothing to attract her. But what had become of the horse? She did not ride him, and Godwin could not hear that it was at Mr. Goring's. There were plenty to bring him information, for although they hated him they hastened to serve his will.

This is man. Not man as he would be if his aspirations were encouraged instead of being beaten out of him, but man as he exists on sufferance, the slave-man. His meanest and basest parts are encouraged, his servility rewarded, his treachery accounted a merit. This is the slave-man.

No tyrant, however evil, has yet lacked ready hands to execute his most abominable will. To read how eagerly men have rushed to serve the despot is the bitterest, the saddest

matter of history ; it is the saddest sight in our own day.

Godwin had mean tools enough ready to serve him with hand or tongue ; yet he never paid them. They received no reward, to serve him was its own reward—to such a depth of degradation does the slave-man descend.

These miserable village wretches, from whom this despot took away the spring, from whom he had tried to take their common, over whom he had domineered so long, were only too proud and glad if they could do him some mean service. He paid his labourers the lowest of all the farmers, yet he never wanted for ploughman or carter. They would work for him sixpence cheaper than for any other, and overtime for nothing ; they would submit to be driven and hectorred ; they clung to his employment as a glad thing.

The meanness of man—slave-man—is inexpressible. Some, I verily believe, delight

to be slave-men ; it is a joy to them, and they would not change their condition ; not only miserable village wretches, but men in good position, well-to-do sycophants.

Godwin had but to ask once if Ruy was at Mr. Goring's, and several tongues informed him that the horse had never been there.

Three or four days afterwards he met Martial on Ruy. Neither of them said anything about the horse—Martial, because he knew the man well, and that he would not give him any information ; Robert, for several reasons.

With the clue in his hands, and behind the scenes, Godwin easily understood how Ruy had passed back into Martial's possession.

Felise had bought the horse to give him to her lover.

She had come over morning after morning to feed the bay with apples because she loved his original owner. She stroked his neck—it was as if she had stroked Martial's

head; she spoke to him gently as if she caressed her lover; she walked beside him, and reluctantly left him at the stall.

She was poor, yet she had got seventy pounds together to return her lover his favourite.

This thing then had been in her mind that sleepless night when he delved by the lantern, when after nine years hope began to shine like a sunrise upon him.

This was in her mind as she stood at his side, when he felt the touch of her dress, and inhaled the sweetness of her breath. While the sunrise of hope shone upon him, her heart was given to another; given, too, in the boldest, the most open manner—a manner at which the world would make mock and mouthing as beyond a modest affection.

The lash was laid upon his naked heart; it cut deeply, but he made no sign.

It would have been easy for him to set mischief afoot; he had no doubt Felise had kept her uncle in ignorance of what she had



done. But he said nothing ; he watched and waited.

He held a secret with Felise ; this was a strong position. In a measure she was in his power.

He would not play into her hands and let another man—let Martial know that she had done this for love of him.

Would any woman now have let another woman know that a man had in secret gone to some great length for her ?

The solace of his hands was lost ; no occupation could numb the biting of the sharp pain within. From his workmen he suddenly snatched their tools, and beat his heart as it were against solid stone and timber. From the stone-breaker in the yard he seized his hammer and broke the very stones—the hard flints—shattering them as if the blow destroyed the nerve. He used the saw and the axe ; he stooped and put his shoulder to the heavy beams and trunks of timber ; with vehement energy he strove to overcome.

There were always works in progress upon the estate; he visited them, and threw his body against the weight and inertia of dull matter. It availed nothing; the pain was not to be beaten out.

One thing only he could not do now—he could not write. The pen was laid aside, and the dust thickened in the ink, and rendered the papers gritty.

The carpenter can plane and hammer, and the mason can use his trowel; the blacksmith can swing his sledge and whistle at his bellows; the ploughman can follow his plough though the load of sorrow be at his heart, and the grief, never to be wholly healed, remain open. But to write—who can write? The spectre rises between the mind and the paper; letters may be traced, but meaning flies before it can be transcribed.

There is no labour so heavy as writing when the heart is cruelly hurt.

He could not do it; nothing else was projected, but letters accumulated and piles

of accounts lay as they were thrown in the ledge of the window.

So long as he had Felise to himself, so long he had endured. For, in a sense, he had had her to himself.

Dwelling upon her the whole day through, and day after day, month after month, for nine years, she had come to be his own. Bitter as his thought was, he had poured it all out upon her—he had surrounded her with his feelings; she was unconscious of it, but it was the same to him as if she had known. Round her he had thrown a circle of his bitterness—an invisible ring; enclosed in that circle she was inaccessible to him, but no one else had her.

She no longer walked alone.

Upon a ledge high up an inaccessible cliff there was a great treasure of gold. A man saw it—it was his discovery; but he was not strong enough to climb to it. He passed beneath every day and looked at it. In time another man came, stronger or

cleverer than he, who climbed up and seized the treasure.

Robert Godwin had discovered this woman in her girlhood. He could not obtain her; he had watched her growth; then came another and bore her away.

The cruelty to Rosa of Felise's existence was surpassed by the cruelty to Godwin of Martial's existence. Godwin had done him no wrong; he received this terrible blow.

As Felise had been to Rosa, so was Martial to Godwin. The dramatist renders all his characters happy; human life leaves half at least in sorrow.

There was no solace in his hands, nor in riding to and fro, nor in aught that he could do. His candle burned through the night, for he could not sleep; but he did not seek to pass the hours in working with his hands. The hours passed; that was all.



## CHAPTER XV.



REFLEX action caused by the continual concentration and self-suppression had made Robert Godwin bitter towards those whom he should have cultivated. He rendered himself odious of set purpose in the sight of the woman he loved. The same reflex action now led him on to desire the strangest of strange things. He desired to see with his own eyes the love that passed between Felise and Martial.

Can there be anything more bitter than the view of happiness to the miserable? To the hungry to watch the banquet, to the thirsty to see the spring, to the sleepless to watch the slumberer; but these are little

indeed to the torture of the jealous. The kiss that thrills the heart of the one, sears the senses of the other, as though molten iron had flowed in its sweet dew.

This was the molten iron that Robert Godwin proposed to pour over his naked heart.

Reflex action of the mind was taking him backwards along the path, setting his steps opposite to the goal; leading him to a darkness and a terror.

He contrived it: he fastened himself to the leathern bed of torture; he turned the screws; he stretched the sinews of his limbs upon the rack; while his spectre—his double—watched the writhing of the victim—of himself.

Why are these miserable things? Why cannot we be happy? Why is it so rare? There are some who consider a certain amount of pain and misery as part and parcel of the very scheme of existence; they find some considerable pleasure in observing tor-

ture, for they see in every pang a confirmation of their favourite belief; how pleasant it is to find ourselves in the right! So, no doubt, the Inquisitors watched the flare of the faggots and the agony of the wretch at the stake; his sufferings confirmed their faith; they went home well satisfied, having carried out the scheme of the universe, which ordains that there must be pain.

Godwin tortured himself without conscious knowledge of what he was doing: he was driven along—a force had fastened on him and urged him.

There had been something mooted about an average being taken of the wheat-crop on the Cornleigh estate; the idea had been started by some scientific agriculturist who thought that such statistics would ‘be of the utmost value.’ Such is the invariable phrase—‘of the utmost value.’ Godwin had begun to work out this average from returns furnished to him by the various tenants, and one day he went to the Manor House and

asked Martial to assist him. Barnard disliked the steward ; still he was the steward, and the request was civilly put. He consented, and it was arranged that he should come to Godwin's every other afternoon, and spend two hours or so upon the papers.

Next Godwin ordered his sister, who never inquired into his objects, much less disputed his will, to go and beg Miss Goring to call upon them, 'as Ruy was there again.'

Felise was naturally extremely surprised, and could not imagine how this had happened. She was easily entrapped into going, and found not only Ruy, but Martial. Godwin proposed that they should stroll round the garden; seats had been placed for them. By-and-by he begged them to rest; he would rejoin them in ten minutes. They sat down—he went to his window. Ten minutes reached on to half-an-hour; on again, and an hour had passed before he returned.

Any trap is good enough for birds that desire to be caught. Felise was only too



eager ; Martial not unwilling. What had happened once happened again and again—it is unnecessary to recount the little circumstances which attended each particular meeting. That no pretext might be wanting, Godwin, who had caused the lawn to be mown after so many years' neglect, actually furnished it with tennis. Evening after evening they played and rested, played and rested before him.

From his window behind the accumulated papers, with his left arm on the washstand, he watched the scene in the garden. He could not hear what they said ; he had no doubt they conversed of their love. He stretched himself on the leathern bed of torture ; he turned the screws and tore himself on the rack. He gloated over his own misery.

Two facts by degrees became impressed upon his mind : the first was that Felise was the lover ; Felise was courting, not courted ; Felise was the passionate one.

Martial received her love rather than sought it ; she pressed herself upon him ; he quietly accepted without enthusiasm. Sometimes Godwin asked himself if Martial loved at all.

To the struggling man, labouring for mere subsistence, can there be greater provocation than to hear of another already well to do receiving a large legacy of no value to him ?

Martial did not care for her, did not value her ; yet he had her—for nothing.

Godwin, who would have given his life for her, was despised.

The question occurred to him by-and-by, did Martial in reality know who had returned him the horse ? Was that why he had never mentioned the subject, or made inquiries ? it looked like previous knowledge.

Godwin snorted at the meanness of the man who could knowingly permit a penniless girl to go to so great a sacrifice on his behalf.

Martial took the gift of Ruy as a matter

of course ; he had Felise at his beck and call—a mere mistress to him.

For step by step, Robert Godwin studying these two—holding them up close and closer to his mental vision as those with weak sight hold up objects to their eyes—step by step, thought by thought came at last to believe that Martial's indifference could only arise from possession. How else could he be indifferent to such beauty ? How else except he was cloyed ?

She was Martial's mistress—his willing mistress. This was the secret, and explained all.

Many observed in these days that Robert Godwin, as he rode through the town, was black in the face, as if an invisible hand griped him by the throat and choked him. They said he was apoplectic ; yet apoplectic people were purple, but Godwin's face was black. ' He looks like a black ram,' said the shepherd in the fold.

The evening sun shone upon the whitish-

green lawn, the tall grey poplar cast its narrow shadow, the angular scanty house stood gaunt and unsupported. Not all the glory of the summer could illumine the meanness, the scantiness, the harshness of the leafless place.

Dust thickened in the ink, dust thickened among the folds of the papers in the window-ledge, dust strewed the desk except where Robert Godwin's left arm rested.

One thing leads to another. It was natural that Martial should walk a little way home with Felise; it was an easy step to go as far as the wicket-gate; easy to meet Mr. Goring; not difficult to enter. But a short time elapsed before Martial was a frequent guest at Beechknoll. He did not conceal his opinions, and Mr. Goring found them in a great measure to coincide with his own. He knew a great deal about botany; Mr. Goring was a gardener for his own amusement—a grower of trees and of flowers. Besides, Felise's will was law

and government ; her uncle could not have thwarted her in anything.

Seeing this, Robert Godwin abandoned the statistics under pretence that the materials were incomplete, and released Martial from his attendance. Instead of meeting at Godwin's, they met at Felise's home still more frequently, with still less restraint, with far more opportunities. Robert Godwin knew that they sat among the flowers, and by the sundial—that they strolled in the copse by the trout-pond ; the sweet dew of their kisses was as molten iron on his lips.

He knew these things as he sat at his window, gazing down upon the now vacant lawn. What they talked of, what they did, the close embrace too ardent for words—he knew all ; in his mind he saw all gazing from his window.

The narrow shadow of the poplar faded as the sun went down into the dusk of night. His candle burned on till the dawn.

He must have slept at times, but he did not know it.

At last, in the midst of the night Robert Godwin found some work for his hands to do. In the attic where he had arranged and sorted the lumber, the two old flintlock pistols he had turned up were lying on an oaken press, as he had left them. With sand he rubbed away the rust from the barrels—there was not much, for they had been in a dry place—with oil he loosened the locks. In the road by daylight he found splinters of flint, and fitted them to the weapons. As he tried the trigger the sparks flew; had there been powder in the pans it would have exploded.

They were ordinary pistols, such as people commonly carried when they drove on a journey in the days before railways—in the beginning of the century. They were in perfect preservation, and would send a ball almost as true as ever. They were

the only firearms in the house, for he had never been a sportsman.

In the midst of the night Robert Godwin polished and scoured them, oiled the locks, and fitted the flints.





## CHAPTER XVI.



IN August the loveliest day is when the thunder booms far off at sea, while over the cornfields the sun shines with increased brilliance. The sky over the wheat is blue, but in the distance some large clouds stay motionless. The upper slopes of these mount-like vapours reflect the rays of the sun, beneath they melt away in an indefinite mist which does not throw back the light. The massy ridges above have no foundation beneath reaching to the horizon ; they do not threaten ; they add to the beauty of the level azure, as hills about a plain.

Rolling in from the south comes, the wave



of heavy sound, too distant to cause uneasiness—the boom of an immense breaker on the shore of heaven. After each burst the sun seems to glow fiercer, the warm haze thickens, the rich blue sky is richer, the insects in the air vibrate their wings more rapidly, and a shriller hum arises; butterflies are busier, and in the wheat the reapers bend, cutting at the yellow straw.

Instead of uneasiness the thunder increases the sense of luxurious, tropical sunlight, colour, and glowing life. All things appear aware that the lightning will not approach—it will remain miles at sea—and they throb and pant with pulses quickened by the discharge of electricity.

The lovers were sitting on a green dry bank near the sundial, in the shade of a beech. Round spots of sunlight came through its branches and dotted the grass at their feet. Behind them there was a belt of beeches, on the right hand a thick and high yew-hedge, on the left a great thicket of hawthorn trees;

so that they were enclosed on three sides, but in front the view was open. A square of green sward, raised like a terrace, was before them; at its edge the ground dropped a few feet, and the meadows commenced. Far down their slope the brook passed, and beyond it were the cornfields, undulating away to the hills.

Meadow and brook, wheatfields and hills—a simple landscape, yet such as is not to be surpassed by any on the earth. A common landscape—there are hundreds such in our England—yet beyond compare. There are none like it elsewhere in the wide world.

This green raised platform, like a deck, was the only spot at Beechknoll where a view could be obtained without ascending the steep coombeside by the copse. Mr. Goring had planted himself so round about with trees that nothing could be seen beyond them except in this one place. He had placed a trunk of oak, prepared as a seat, near the sundial under a sycamore by the

yew-hedge, but the lovers to-day preferred the dry green bank.

Beyond the brook in the rising field reapers were labouring at the wheat ; afar off the yellow slopes were scarce distinguishable in the August haze. It was one of those loveliest of August mornings when the idle thunder booms at sea.

Felise had dreamed here so many, many times in the past, it was natural she should bring *him* here. Nominally they were examining a broad portfolio of etchings ; in truth they were purely idle.

The reapers were working hard in the dry, hot wheat, the straw warm to the touch, the earth warm beneath and opening in crevices with heat ; a dry rustling of straw ; a dry impalpable dust filling their throats. The days are long in August, but never long enough for the reapers.

On the greenish face of the sundial, weather-stained and tarnished, the shadow of the gnomon seemed to rest, so slowly the

sun moved on his high summer circle. Love and Time were idle, but the reapers toiled in the corn.

Red berries and pink flowers were on the sprays of the brambles that thrust forth from the thicket of hawthorn. There were nuts on the hazel-rods among the hawthorns, and along the edge of the grass disks of knapweed, and yellow bedstraw, and purple vetch. Where the terrace sloped to the meadow two or three harebells drooped; the light air scarcely swung them.

Butterflies, whose blue wings were edged with another blue, came up the terrace, and fluttered along its verge. Bees visited the clover still flowering in the long grass. In the air, invisible, many thousand insect-wings vibrating beat it to a continuous hum.

The light feet of squirrels in the beeches and among the ferns and moss scarcely made a rustle, unless they moved a dry leaf; the rushing of the water over the hatch at the trout-pond farther away now lifted itself and

now decreased, the sound floated among the tree-trunks. As the dry, warm air came from the corn, the round dots of sunlight shot to and fro on the sward, following the leaves above.

A fervour of heat and light glowed in the atmosphere and was caught and held in the haze. Over the beech-tree the blue shone with light. Rolling along, the boom from the sea passed like a great organ-note, and the earth and air, the grass and living things responded; the light was yet more brilliant, the colours yet more warm; the earth offered the fulness of the harvest.

Two lovers, but one only loving. Martial had yielded and slumbered at the feet of love, yet he did not love. As the vehement August heat causes a slumberous feeling, so the vehement passion of Felise overthrew him, and his nature slumbered at her feet. He was there, and yet he was not hers.

Felise made no inquiry. It was enough that he was there; she wanted him, she did not ask if he needed her. All she required

was that he should be where she could give herself to him.

For she had given herself to him from the depth of her soul. With tenfold quickened perceptions she saw the beauty of the earth, and with that beauty she loved.

She saw the clear definition of the trees, their colour, and the fineness of the extended branches—she was aware of the delicate leaves ; she saw the hues of the wheat, shading from pale yellow to ruddy gold ; her senses were alive to the minutest difference of tint or sound ; to the rustle of the squirrel touching the dry leaf, the rush of the falling water, the hum of the insect-wing ; keen to the difference of motion, the gliding of the dots of sunlight on the sward, the broad flutter of the peacock-butterfly, the quick vibration of the wasp-fly's vane. Her exalted passion strung her naturally fine and sensitive nature ; she seemed to feel the sun's majestic onward sweep in the deep azure—her love made earth divine.

Sometimes under the power of sweet music from an organ—sweet, yet deep and noble—there wakes up within the heart another consciousness, till we seem capable of perceiving more than is usually apparent to the senses. Invisible things are shadowed forth and stand in the air.

Tenfold more so her heart, listening to the music of its own passion, was able to perceive the deeper knowledge shut and closed except to love. This was inwardly ; outwardly she saw hitherto unknown glories in the light and beauty of the day, an art divine in these things.

There came the low boom of the distant thunder ; but the hills slumbered, and the clouds were still. The reapers laboured in the corn.

All the unwritten and inexpressible aspirations of her nature, her noble nature, crowded into this one emotion. In her love was her all, her existence, her breath, her thought, the very expression of her form ; as a flower

grows and bears its one colour and perfume, so she lived and bore this one feeling. Of all else, of the world and of herself, she was utterly careless and unconcerned.

So great was her joy in her love, it seemed the width of the dome of the sky was not wide enough to express it.

Upon the green and tarnished face of the ancient sundial there was written in worn letters, *Nihil nisi umbra*—Nothing without shadow ; no, not even love. The fervour of passion must needs cast the deepest shadow beside it. Let us welcome the shadow if only we can have the sunlight of love.

Through Martial's mind, as he reclined beside her, there passed images of ancient Greece—of the ideal of human beauty expressed in marble as Aphrodite sought the bath, expressed in words resounding to this day. The idea of perfect human beauty—the idea of shape and curve and motion—flows through all their works, even those of pure thought, as Plato's. Without direct



mention or description, still the idea is there. These images passed through Martial's mind—this beauty was hers. In life, in flesh and blood, and actual reality, the ideal was there with him. He worshipped her beauty, and said to himself, 'I do not love.'

Her soul pursued his. She felt as if his man's intellect gave a godlike meaning to the beauty of the sunlight and of the earth. In the expanse of loveliness through which she had wandered dreaming for years—through wood and mead, by stream and hill and wide sea—she had found the central figure, that which made all things plain and completed them.

Till he came the fields, the woods, the hills, the broad sea were incomplete; to all he gave a meaning. She endowed him with all that she perceived in the glory and mystery around her by day and by night.

Of old time the shadow of the gnomon glided over marble; sometimes they built great structures to show the passage of the shadow

more distinctly — observatories of shadow. Not only on this round horizontal disk of greenish metal, not only on those ancient marble slabs, but over the whole earth the shadow advances, for the earth is the gnomon of night. The sunlight and the night, year by year, century by century, cycle by cycle; how long is it? Can anyone say? So long has love, too, endured, passing on and handed down from heart to heart.

The long Roll of Love reaching back into the profoundest abyss of Time, upon it fresh names are written day by day.

Felise's love was pure indeed; yet what is there that the purest love is not capable of for the one to whom the soul is devoted?

Self-immolation, self-sacrifice, death—is there anything love refuses?

Still the shadow slips on the green rust of the dial. Let even life pass from us if only we can have love.

Felise saw the beauty of the earth, and with that beauty she loved; the cool green

flags in the meadow-brook ; the reeds which moved forward and advanced as if about to step forth from the water as they swayed ; the deep blue of the sky ; the ruddy gold of the wheat under the pale yellow haze.

The rolling boom of the thunder came through the fields of light, the earth glowed warmer.

That the wonderful mechanism of the mind, the heart, of life, should be capable of emotion so divine, and yet should so soon perish—is it not unutterably cruel ?

So many, and so many, who have loved in the long passage of time, but are gone as the shadow goes from the dial when the sun sinks. Are, then, our noblest feelings to fade and become void ?

Upon the sundial there were curious graven circles and interwoven angles, remnants of the ancient lore which saw fate in the stars and read things above nature in nature. Symbols and signs are still needed, for the earth and life are still mysterious ; they can-

not be written, they require the inarticulate sign of the magician.

Let us not outlive love in our days, and come to look back with sorrow on those times.

You have seen the ships upon the sea ; they sail hither and thither thousands of miles. Do they find aught equal to love ? Can they bring back precious gems to rival it from the rich south ?

The reapers have been in the corn these thousand years, the miners in the earth, the toilers in the city ; in all the labour and long-suffering is there anything like unto love ? Any reward or profit in the ships, the mines, the warehouses ?

What are the institutions of man, the tawdry state, the false law, the subsidized superstition, and poor morality, that pale shadow of truth—what are these by love ?

Could but love stay, could but love have its will, and no more would be needed for eternity.

Overcome with her beauty, he was at her feet as at the feet of an immortal, such as moved among the violets in the early days.

Her dress was transparent to his eyes—the image of the beautiful knees dewy from the bath could never fade. No dress could hide her. He slumbered in worship at her knees.

The reapers laboured cutting at the wheat, and with bowed backs bound up the sheaves ; the doves came out from the copse and fed among the stubble. Among the beech-trees there floated the sound of the falling water on its way to the cool green flags of the brook. Faint rustling of squirrels' feet, the hum of invisible insects, the flutter of butterflies' wings, the hum of a humble bee wandering among the fern, the call of the grasshoppers in the grass, the amorous sigh of the breeze, the quick maze of the sunlight dots, the sense of all summer things, the distant thunder deepening with the pressure

of its note the voices of the sunlit earth, the fulness of the harvest, the touch of a loving hand.

His head rested upon her left knee—not on her lap, but on her left knee. His weight had been there so long it had compressed a vein, and her limb was growing numb. What of that? if the limb had been dying she would not have moved, she would not have changed her position one iota. She was sitting higher on the bank than he was, so that his head naturally rested there. He remembered the white knee dewy from the water; it was on that he really rested. Her arms like a bower hung over embracing; he looked up, he saw her loving eyes; her lips descended upon his.





## CHAPTER XVII.



HE happiest lady in the land is the lady who can sing like the adorable Patti. The construction of this sentence is not harmonious, and yet perhaps it will convey the meaning better than if it had been studied. She who can sing like Patti.

Upon the sounds of her sweet throat the multitude hang entranced, and for the song they half worship the singer. To be thus courted, thus admired, must indeed be a pleasure, because it is for something personal and genuine, not for any adventitious advantage of position, not because of a crown or wealth, simply for one's self. She

may be excused—nay, she may be praised for pride and vanity in so glorious a possession.

Such joy—such supreme triumph—is only for woman; for man there is no similar altitude, he cannot climb so high. It is not for any man to be like this.

For him the nearest approach—many miles asunder—is to be able to write a really good *Opéra Bouffe*. Something that will set the feet of all a-shuffling, the eyes gleaming, the ears tingling, the whole body aglow with music, and hearts the better for a merry hour. Nothing so good as a good *Opéra Bouffe*. The music, the crossing of the intertwining feet, the graceful chorus-dancing, the changing colour—there is nothing so good as this in our days.

How many hundred dozen Archbishops of Canterbury would it take to equal one bar of 'Madame Angot'?

But then this is far, very far beneath the singer who can sing like the adorable



Patti. To her must the foremost position in all the world be given. For crowned heads are only bowed to because they are crowned, statesmen because they are in place, generals because they are in command, millionaires because they have money. But the singer—the divine singer, the divine Patti—is worshipped because of herself. How delicious to be a little like her! Even to be a little like her is reserved for woman; a man is out of the competition.

I came to these conclusions while I was endeavouring to construct this book in such a manner that the reader should see the events and the people, one after the other, without any wearisome explanations between as to how it came to be so. While I was considering and trying to surmount the difficulty it occurred to me how happy the dramatist must be, since he places his hero and his heroine in living shape at once before you.

There they are on the stage—you see

them, they walk, they breathe, they talk, they accompany their words with appropriate action, and convey their meaning in an indisputable manner.

They stand there before you at once in their full growth. The dramatist has not to present his heroine to you at first as an infant in arms, then as a girl at boarding-school, finally as a full-grown woman. You understand her at once.

The unfortunate narrator is not permitted these advantages. It takes me pages upon pages to describe a single character, and then very probably you do not see half what I hoped you would see. There is no sound of voice, no movement or gesture to convey the impression. But this is not all.

The happy dramatist lets down the curtain upon one scene in town, and lifts it upon another scene in the country; the curtain falls in England and rises in the backwoods of America, and the change is accepted instantly. He has not to set some one before

the footlights to laboriously explain (while the scenes are shifted) how his people get into a train and go down to Somerset, or to follow them three thousand miles, day by day, across the Atlantic. Up rolls the curtain, and there they are at once.

The unfortunate narrator has to tell you how the change came about, why it came about, and when ; and to explain every little circumstance, or else it would appear that he was violating probability. He has to show you the why and wherefore, and to tell you how certain people got into certain positions at a certain time. My arm and hand very often ache with the labour of writing just to explain the simplest set of circumstances, which upon the stage would not have been thought of. They would be taken for granted. This is very hard upon me, I think. Could not you let me write my scenes one after the other, and supply the connecting links for me out of your own imagination, as you do on the stage ?

We left Felise and Martial in a very loving attitude, which, however, was not observable at a distance because of the shadow of the beech-tree. But the next day Martial did not return, nor did he appear the day after, leaving Felise to a wearisome uncertainty. Several days passed, and still he did not come.

She was almost inclined to boldly go over to the Manor House and try and see him, but a trifling circumstance had occurred which deterred her. Miss Barnard sent for the album of Dante instead of fetching it herself, as she had promised to do. Felise fancied this was an indication of disapproval—a silent declaration of opposition. His cousins then had discovered her secret; they considered their Martial might do better.

Her conjecture was correct. When the younger Miss Barnard came home and heard the elder's account of Felise's visit, she at once pronounced that there must be some concealed motive. The elder sister, full of

Dante, looked over and above the lesser motives which animate people, and took them at their word. Her ideal so far elevated her that she regarded affairs with pure eyes, and did not search for pettiness. Such is the effect of an ideal; let us all try and possess some ideal for this reason.

The younger sister, having no Dante, thought more of petty ambitions, and instantly suspected Felise of designs upon Martial. Now as a sharp woman, this young lady (young by comparison) much desired Martial's marriage with Rosa, whose wealth would be so useful in the family, and would enable them to enter more into society. In short, she quite hoped, under the cover, as it were, of this advantageous connection, to be some day advanced to the marriage state herself.

On seeing Rosa, and hearing Rosa's conjecture that Felise was the woman, she at once agreed; there could not be a doubt about it: besides, they tracked him and

ascertained the direction in which he went. Between them, no doubt, they would have found out that it was Felise who sent back Ruy as a present, had not their eyes been blinded by their own estimate of money. They knew Felise was poor, and it never occurred to them that the poor in purse but great in spirit are capable of efforts which the rich become too indolent to make.

The younger sister, being overbearing and masterful, bore down the elder's admiration of Felise, and persuaded her not to go for the album. Felise was right in supposing the sending, instead of coming for it, an indication of hostility. Meantime the younger Miss Barnard left no opportunity of openly proclaiming in Martial's hearing how mean a proceeding it was for a man who had no money to marry a girl with none, and so to drag her down to share his own pitiable condition. Apart, two poor persons might get on ; together, they must sink.

These remarks were not very palatable

to Martial ; besides, he was aware that his cousins sympathized with Rosa, that they visited her, condoled with her, and regarded his conduct as cruel in the extreme.

Just at this time a curious event occurred : Rosa (who was rich already) received a legacy of four thousand pounds, so devised as to be entirely at her own disposal. It is a very different thing to be rich through another person, as Rosa was in the existence of her father, and to be rich one's self. By this legacy Rosa's position became exalted beyond all competition in Maasbury. Being of age, she could do exactly what she chose with the money. Such is the irony of life—to those who have, more comes ; yet, as in Rosa's case, it often happens that they cannot enjoy it.

Rosa, poor girl, felt this legacy as the bitterest blow she had yet received. It mocked her. The day she saw Felise pass and recognised her as 'the other woman,' she fancied she found some consolation in the thought of her money, which gave her a

sense of injured righteousness. That had faded, and now this announcement struck her heavily.

Four thousand pounds, entirely her own, absolutely at her fingers'-ends ; four thousand pounds, and not one moment of happiness ! Though the legacy could not be paid over till the usual period, still, as the daughter of a commercial man, she well knew she could obtain a large portion of it as an advance. But with all that money she could not buy one moment's peace of heart.

She reflected that if she had possessed this money but a short time ago, she need not have consented to a postponement of her engagement with Martial. It would have been enough to have freed his farm from every embarrassment ; and if her father had objected, he could not have prevented her from doing as she chose. In her misery Rosa was not so dutiful in her ideas as she had been in her days of moderate happiness. She would have defied her father now.



Too late. The money had come too late ; her character had strengthened too late—it was a bitter irony.

Since this had happened, of course the Misses Barnard (or the younger and more practical of them) still more earnestly desired the renewal of Martial's engagement with Rosa, and would have done anything feminine spite could devise to have destroyed his increasing admiration of Felise. Martial heard much in an indirect way of Rosa's sufferings, of her improved personal appearance, of the forwardness of women who relied upon their assurance, and so forth, till it was with the utmost difficulty he restrained his inclination to order the backbiters out of his house.

But he had other matters to trouble him ; he had made no secret to Felise, nor indeed to Mr. Goring, of his financial difficulties. Ever since so large a sum had been borrowed for the purchase of the houses for the Misses Barnard—a piece of unpractical

generosity on his part—things had gone from bad to worse. The harvest, beautiful to look at, was worth so little in the market that it scarcely repaid the cost of cultivation. Heavy tithes—the curse of agriculture—had to be deducted from it.

The deduction allowed from the rent was too small to be of practical value, just enough to enable the landlord to pose as a benevolent friend of the farmers. When land itself has fallen from 25 to 50 per cent. in value, the return of 10 or 15 per cent. of the rent is evidently far below the true proportion. To correspond with the fall in freehold value, it ought not to be less than twice as much. Disease was among the cattle and sheep, and those that were healthy could scarcely be sold because the markets were closed.

Martial was at the end of his resources, and had not cash to pay the reapers labouring in the wheat, while Love and Time were idle, the sun glowed, and the distant thunder rolled in from the sea.

Felise counselled him to sell his horse again, and he was obliged to do it. Little did he imagine that he was selling her present. Ruy returned to Robert Godwin, and the reapers were paid.

These influences were not without effect ; they rendered Martial more sensitive than usual. He felt that he ought not to go into the society of a beautiful woman whom he could not marry, and of whom he said to himself, 'I do not love her,' merely because he worshipped her beauty. Yet he went.

After the delirium of exquisite pleasure that lovely morning under the shade of the beech, when ideal beauty came to him unsought, when the dream of his life descended to him in actual reality, as the Immortals descended in the early days of Greece to favoured man, he forcibly woke himself up with a strong wrench.

He would not see her, he would not enter into the circle of her power ; he would resist it and retain his freedom, that freedom

so dearly bought before with loss of self-respect. By sheer strength of will he resolved to retain his individuality—to stand clear of dreams and ideals—to be himself alone.

For some days, with severe self-restraint, he continued in this resolution; but at last, so deeply ingrained in his nature was his worship of the beautiful, he was compelled to own to himself that he must look upon the Picture. He would not go near it or speak to it, but he must look at it.

Wednesday evening he knew was the time when Mary Shaw could generally be found in the rickyard (it was her evening out). She would obtain him a glance at the Picture.





## CHAPTER XVIII.



MILLER BOND had long since found out, in an indirect way, who the gentleman was that met the hamlet prude Mary Shaw in the rickyard by the mill-pool. He had observed, too, that of late this gentleman had ceased to come, and he had heard through his assistant (who watched the machinery while Bond looked over the hatch) of Barnard's frequent visits to Beechknoll.

It was a matter of common hamlet gossip how Miss Felise had thrown over Mr. Godwin 'all of a sudden' and 'took' to 'that there idle Barnard fellow'; not much

of a change for her either, but 'hur be a flighty one, hur be,' was their comment.

The miller had noticed, too, that when Mary Shaw and Abner met in the rickyard, their courting generally ended in Mary's having a burst of crying, sometimes passionately weeping, and becoming so convulsed and overcome that it was with difficulty he could soothe her.

One evening—it was Wednesday—after witnessing such a scene from behind the stubble-rick and elder-bush, the miller saw Abner and Mary start to go away, Mary still hanging upon him, and apparently sobbing. After they had gone the miller composed himself upon the log of timber, hoisted up his gun on his knees, and prepared to shoot the first rat that ventured out now he could do so without disturbing the lovers.

Two or three minutes afterwards he heard a slight cry and a great splash in the mill-pool, and jumped up in alarm to see

what it could be. He had to run some yards before he could see down into the pool. Leaning over the fence he strained his short neck and saw Mary Shaw struggling and gasping in the water.

Some kind of shout or loud exclamation issued from his lips, and then, as if by mechanism, he put his gun to his shoulder and fired up in the air.

At the same moment Martial came up—looked over—exclaimed—tore off his coat, and then paused, for he remembered his heavy boots. They were laced and tied tightly; he got his penknife and slit the laces, kicked them off, stepped upon the fence, balanced himself a second, and sprang forward.

The miller, at the sound of the splash when Martial struck the surface, hurled his gun away and set up another shout. He then began dancing, stamping his feet up and down like a child in a rage.

Martial went down feet first, holding his

breath; the water closed over him. In another second he rose and began to swim, and in half a minute—he had to go round a little to seize her properly—he had hold of poor Mary. She fainted immediately after he touched her.

Martial instantly swam with her towards the side of the pool, for a moment forgetting that he could not land on a perpendicular wall of chalk. As he neared the side he looked up and remembered that there were no means of exit from the pool, which was, in fact, a very large well. He began to tread water and paddle with one hand (holding Mary with the other) while he considered how to get out.

He could not see a way out; steep walls of chalk enclosed him on every side. Another face was now gazing down at him; the miller's man had run up at the sound of the gun, expecting to see a dead rat, instead of which there were two human beings in a trap.



‘Is there no way to get out?’ said Martial.

‘No, that there bean’t,’ said the miller’s man. ‘There bean’t no way out. You be drowned.’

The miller himself stopped dancing with his feet, and now sucked the forefinger first of one hand and then of the other, staring the while without blinking at the pair in the water. First he thrust one finger in his mouth, and then the other, and pulled them out with a sucking sound. His shock head of red hair, as he strained his neck over the fence, was dimly reflected on the ripples of the pool. Martial’s movements sent ripples breaking against the cliffs of chalk.

So far as Martial could see there was not a root, nor a piece of ivy, nor any plant, nor even a blade of grass in a crevice to which he could cling. There was no hatch in the pool; it was outside where the water ran from a culvert into the mill-wheel trough.

So long as he could tread water, or swim to and fro, he should survive ; as his strength decreased he must sink unless help came. The two fools looking down were evidently too stupid to assist him.

‘ Help ! ’ shouted Martial at the top of his voice. ‘ Help ! help ! ’ hoping some one passing might hear and bring the aid of intelligence to direct mere muscles. The perpendicular wall-like sides of chalk sent his voice straight up ; it rose into the air instead of spreading laterally. No one could have heard at a short distance from the edge of the pool.

‘ Us can’t help,’ said the miller’s man, stolidly looking down, with his arms crossed miller-fashion on the fence. ‘ You be drowned.’

‘ Fetch some one else ! ’ said Martial, angry and anxious.

‘ Bean’t no good. Bean’t nobody about.’

Aware that he could not possibly hold out very long with Mary’s dead-weight to

support, Martial began to swim with her slowly round the pool, eagerly scanning the chalk walls for some hole or chink or ledge upon which he could rest his hand and so support himself. There was none. He tried to scrape a hole—the chalk crumbled a little, but was hard under the immediate surface; his nails would be worn to the quick, and even then he could not do it. He might perhaps have done it with his penknife, but he had dropped it on the grass after cutting his laces.

‘Be quick!’ he called. ‘Fetch some one—quick!’

‘They be all gone to Jones’s sale,’ said the miller’s man. ‘You won’t last long.’

Had not Martial been in so dangerous a position I doubt not he would have cursed him with set teeth. But extreme danger silences anger; now danger was increasing every moment, Martial lost his rage at their stupidity. He ceased to regard them as human beings whose disposition concerned

him, at whose senselessness he should feel annoyed, or hurt at their callousness. All his faculties were strained to discover means of escape, and the personal characters of the fools on the brink above faded out of sight. He forgot them as men; he looked at them as machines.

Could he animate these stolidities? Could he set their slow minds in operation by any suggestion?

He asked himself, as he again trod water and paddled with one hand, what he should try to do if he were in their place on the bank and others were in peril.

‘Get a rope!’ he shouted immediately, as the answer to his thought.

‘A raup?’

‘Yes, a rope—quick!’

The miller’s man looked over his shoulder once or twice, lifted his greasy hat and scratched his head; then he turned and walked slowly away to try and find a rope.

Though it was the height of the summer

the water was cold; the rays of the sun never reached it, and Martial felt a distinct loss of heat. It suggested a calculation. How long could he endure?

He crushed down the thought, and addressed himself again to the task of animating the other stolidity on the bank above.

‘Miller! throw me something to hold—something that will float!’

‘You be Miss Goring’s man,’ said Bond, finding speech at last.

‘Throw me a plank—a pole—a rail——’

‘You be hur man. I knows who you be.’

‘Fling me something—a log—a gate—anything!’

‘Hur will go mad,’ said the miller, to whom Martial’s death by drowning was a foregone and accepted conclusion.

He thought not of Martial, but of Felise—Felise who had once given him three red roses.

The sight of Mary in the pool had upset the balance of his brain, which had hung

level like scales not in use so many years. This rude jolt sent his mind oscillating up and down as if the scales had been struck with a fist. Off went his gun—bang! He danced with his feet. He sucked his fore-fingers.

By degrees the scales settled, and he grasped the terrible meaning Martial's death would have to the child who had given him the three red roses. Now Miller Bond would gladly have worked day and night for her sake; he would have faced great danger; he would have done anything for her; his heart was still grateful for those flowers. This very anxiety upset the scales again; and, in short, Miller Bond lost his head.

'A gate,' said Martial; 'unhinge a gate! Throw me something that will float!'

'Thur,' said the miller with an idiotic grin, plucking off his hat and hurling it into the water, as if Martial could cling to the greasy felt—a straw indeed for a drowning man.

Next came his apron, then a shower of little sticks torn from the fence, then a handful of dock leaves ; then he ran to and fro and returned with a heavy iron sheep-trough, which he raised above his head.

‘Take care!’ shouted Martial, for if the trough struck him it would stun him, perhaps kill him instantly.

Splash came the trough, raising a wave which washed Martial and his burden to and fro ; the trough sank immediately.


‘Wood!’ shouted Martial ; ‘not iron—iron sinks.’ Danger made him as patient as a mother explaining the properties of things to a little child. ‘Get some wood.’

‘Hur will go mad,’ said the miller, whose brain-scales were settling again. He paused, and gazed down at the pair in the water.

‘Thur bean’t no raup,’ said the miller’s man, coming back.



## CHAPTER XIX.

‘ O rope!’ cried Martial; ‘then get a chain.’

‘Gawd!’ said the miller’s man.  
‘A chain. To be zure.’

As if the substitution of a chain for a rope was indeed a wonderful idea. He started again for a chain—this time more quickly; Martial had begun to animate him. These slow and stolid minds, while under the immediate influence of a stronger intelligence, can be forced into activity; but once let that stronger intelligence go far enough away for them to escape its personal influence and they sink back into immovability.

The marvellous intellect of the great Julius



Cæsar exercised the most extraordinary power over the men with whom he was surrounded, insomuch that nothing was too much for them, no danger too great, no fatigue too prolonged, no rapidity of movement too trying. But when once the sea divided him from part of his forces, those very men fell by degrees into stolid immovability, so that neither orders, threats, nor persuasions could for months induce them to sail to his assistance, though they well understood his danger. It is recorded of him that he had his eyes turned day and night towards the sea; still they delayed to send, so dense already had their stolidity become. So, too, when a great genius who has stirred the world and wakened its dull heart ceases to address it, it speedily falls back into stolidity.

The miller's man started quickly for the chain; but, out of sight of Martial, his feet resumed their accustomed slowness of motion.

‘Wood — throw something of wood —

timber!' cried Martial again to the miller, whose red head projected over the fence.

'When was you and she going to be married?' said the miller.

'Wood—rails—posts!' reiterated Martial.

'Chain,' said the miller's man, appearing with a set of chain-traces such as are used on waggons. He let the end of the chain down, Martial grasped it. The miller took hold above behind his man, and they began to haul; but Martial was obliged to let the chain slip through his fingers—his wrist was not strong enough. When he and Mary began to rise out of the water their combined weight was too much for his sinews. In endeavouring to get out of the water, as for instance into a boat, the weight of the body seems suddenly increased.

Martial was not Herculean in proportions or strength; he was sinewy and able to bear fatigue, but not powerful in the manner of a dray-horse. There was nothing gigantic in his muscles.

Already wearied and chilled by the icy well-water, he could not endure so great a strain. They ceased hauling; he held the chain, and it was so far an advantage to him that it supported him; he had not to tread water or paddle.

Once more with some failing at heart, he tried to think. What could he do if in their place? Endeavouring to reverse the actual condition of things, he said to himself, 'I am trying to get out: suppose I was trying to get in safely, what should I do? I should put down a ladder.'

'A ladder!' he shouted. 'Fetch a ladder!'

'Gawd!' cried the miller's man, opening his mouth, overcome with amazement that anyone should have so many ideas. 'Come, master; takes two with a long ladder.'

The miller turned to go with his man.

'Fasten the chain first,' said Martial.

But their minds were occupied with the new notion of a ladder, and they forgot the chain. It slipped from the fence and im-

mediately sank ; had they fastened it Martial could have clung to it. He was obliged to recommence treading water ; then, weary of that, he began to swim slowly in a circle.

Chilled so as to have lost feeling in his extremities, his arms were growing stiff, and he felt that his chest did not inflate itself fully, so that he lost the sense of buoyancy proper to a swimmer. The store of force inherent in his frame was slipping from him ; the limbs were there and the muscles remained, but the invisible power which moves them oozed away. Round the dark pool he partly dragged, partly supported his burden ; it was better to swim on than to try and keep in one spot.

Would they never come with the ladder ? Perhaps they would not find one in time. Some one might have called at the mill, and they were stopping to load his cart with sacks of flour before they returned to assist him.

The pool was in deep shadow, being under

a hill. Blackness everywhere about him ; no gleam or glisten on the surface ; the shadow was heavy on the pool.

Would they never come with the ladder ? The mill-clack was audible in the well-like cavity of the pool ; it beat time—time that was ebbing fast. How slow they were !

The shadow had been idle on the dial in the hour of love ; now it shot forward, racing to the edge, slipping from which it would disappear and end with the ending of life.

Suddenly a glow of lovely light poured down into the darksome pit, a delicate rosy brilliance gleaming on the ripples of his progress, tinting the white chalk walls. He looked up and saw overhead a cloud, which by some magic had been filled with the hues of the sunset, and reflected them like a mirror down upon him. Mary's pale inanimate face, washed by the cold water, seemed to take upon itself the colours of happy childhood—the roseate tint of laughing joyfulness. The sunset was thrown from the sky into the depth of the pit.

His heart awoke again at the sight of it; the old, old love of the beautiful—the strength of the hills filled with the light of the sun—all the strong desire of life and colour and loveliness filled him again with fresh effort.

Felise appeared to his mind in the glow of the rosy cloud. Till that moment, absorbed in the struggle, he had not thought of her. She came to him with the light. A low sound escaped from his lips. He should lose her—if he sank he should lose her; she would not be his.

The greatest gift, the most wonderful and precious given to man; the deep love, the ideal beauty—he should lose it. He had himself purposely kept away from her. Oh, the folly of his scrupulous fancy! His freedom; his poverty; his paltry excuses to himself—the folly, the exceeding folly of it! Felise!—he spoke the name on his lips, yet the word did not issue as sound. If only those moments would return again, but it was too late.

It was unfortunate for him that he had thought of Felise ; it weakened him ; it affected his heart. His head seemed to become a blank — the pit, the chalk walls, the rosy cloud disappeared ; all was blank, as it felt to him, for an illimitable length of time, really the one-hundredth of a second ; for that fragmentary moment he had fainted. But his heart beat again, and he saw a ladder descending, as it were, from the rosy glow above.

Felise ! he tried to say, as he grasped it ; he clung to it ; he got his foot on it, and paused and breathed—breathed fully. He began to go up carrying poor Mary ; he paused again and breathed. Up again ; they hauled him over the fence, and he fell on the grass exhausted.

‘ Hur’s dead,’ said the miller’s man, pushing Mary as she lay, having dropped from Martial’s arms, with his foot. His heavy shoe partly rolled her over ; as he withdrew it she rolled back again.

‘All auver with hur,’ he said.

At this Martial stood up, collecting his energies, and insisted upon one of them going for assistance. Then on the spot he began at once to follow the instructions for resuscitation, which he fortunately remembered. She soon showed signs of life—animation had not been really suspended at all, and they carried her down to the mill.

Naturally what followed was confused; women came, and Mary was put to bed with blankets and brandy. A group stood about the mill-door. Martial, as soon as he was certain Mary was safe, was going, when the women above called for a doctor. A horse was found, and Martial rode in his wet clothes over to Maasbury for medical help. Thence he went home as quick as he could in a hired conveyance, but his dress had dried almost by the time he reached the Manor House.

Towards the morning Mary gave birth to a female child, which appeared healthy and



strong, despite its untimely arrival. Mary never saw it. She had been conscious at intervals, and told the doctor and the women something which agitated them; but after the birth she sank, and died in about two hours.





## CHAPTER XX.

**B**Y the old barn under one of the Spanish chestnut-trees, Felise sat down to wait for Martial. She was clad in black—mourning for Mary Shaw. The thickness of the chestnut spray did not permit a single ray of the morning sun to reach her, as the beech had done. No rounded dot of sunshine lit up the black shadow of her dress under the green boughs.

The swallows were still about the barn, as they had been when she came with her rod along the brook. They would never quite leave it till they flew to warmer lands ; even in October they would rest in a row on the ridge, and twitter of their coming journey.

But the songs in the wood hard-by were silent, the thrush and the blackbird had ceased, and the cuckoo had long been gone. There was no music of sweet birds' throats as dry August stooped under her sheaves.

The prickly green fruit of the chestnuts was visible among the boughs, and in the hedge by the copse the red berries of the bryony clustered thickly. Pouting at the top, the thistles which always strew the sward by a wood were ready to pour forth a shower of thistledown. Two large dragon-flies shot to and fro, excited into swiftest motion by the heat. Once a green and golden woodpecker passed, sweeping downwards in his flight almost to the ground, and rising again to the height of the trees.

From afar came the hum of a threshing-machine, winnowing out the fresh corn from the ear. A hum that sank to a mournful note and rose again—a curve of sound. There is something inarticulately human in the cry of the threshing-

machine. Wheat and bread—labour and life—the past of the sowing, the future of the uncertain autumn, hazy and deepening into the gloom of winter. In the glow, and light, and heat of to-day, forget not that the leaves shall fall and the stubble be beaten by the rains and whitened by the snow; yet hope on, because the sunlight and the flowers shall assuredly succeed again. Inarticulately expressing the meaning of the years and the rise and fall of time, the low hum stretches itself across the wide fields of grain.

The sparrows that had chattered so loudly round the eaves of the barn had gone out into the wheat. The swallows came at intervals and again soared into the air. Only the two dragon-flies remained, rushing to and fro.

Martial had told her all, manfully laying bare the recesses of his heart; warned thereto by his experience of the mill-pool, which told him not to trifle longer with the shadow on the dial. While we linger—while we stay—the shadow slips from the edge of the disk into universal night.

‘He cannot love me;’ this was the burden of her thoughts. ‘He cannot love me.’

He could admire her, he could worship her beauty, he could appreciate her worth, he could value her love, he could and would labour for her with all his powers, but he could not love.

He had loved another woman before her, and the spring of love was dry.

A woman will be able to understand the bitterness of this to her—he had loved another, therefore he could not love her.

A creaking of waggon-wheels went by in the narrow lane, it was a load of yellow sheaves, heavily jolting over the ruts, crushing the rushes that had grown in the way, the sheaves brushing against the wild clematis still flowering high up the bushes. She could see the top of the load above the hawthorn and hazel, slowly ascending the hill by the wood.

‘He cannot love me.’

He was hers, and yet he was not hers.

Thus Rosa was in part avenged, and returned bitterness for bitterness to the heart of her rival. Though now forsaken, she had received the first-fruits of love, and they could not be given to another. If Felise's existence was cruel to Rosa, so now Rosa's existence was cruel to Felise—yet not so cruel.

For with a deep sigh Felise became content.

'It is better,' she said—'it is better than not to have him at all. Had that been so, if I could not have had him, then it would have been best that the deep sea should cover me.'

To the bitter jealousy of his first love given to another, she became superior, and overcame the sting and venom of the thought.

It mattered not—he was Martial—he was hers.

But this was not all that her love had overcome. Rumours had been spread abroad

since Mary Shaw's death, of a kind which might have easily caused years of misunderstanding, might even have changed the course of their lives, had it not been for the steadfastness of Felise.

There was a scandal in the hamlet, that the child of Mary Shaw could claim another parent than the common labourer, Abner Brown. A gentleman had been seen to meet her clandestinely. Miller Bond had done this mischief unwittingly. At the inquest they cross-questioned and worried him; they ascertained that Abner was the last person seen with her, and also that another person—Martial Barnard—had frequently met her there. The jury returned a verdict of suicide, but immediately afterwards Abner was arrested by the police on suspicion of murder, and put in the cell at Maasbury.

No one had seen Mary leap in. She had admitted herself on her deathbed that she did so, but that might be to shield

Abner. At all events he would have to go before the magistrates and explain where he was when she did it. Abner said he had walked down into the road on quitting Mary, and heard nothing of the event till hours afterwards. He had left her to go home by herself in the same manner scores of times. Still he was in the cell at Maasbury.

The official theory was very simple and suggestive. They said, 'Here is a poor girl who has a gentleman lover and a labourer lover. It is easy to see that the common labourer would be jealous of the gentleman. On this fateful evening the gentleman is said to have come after the labourer had left. But we are not bound to believe this; the gentleman may have been there first—the labourer may have seen him. Certainly the miller declares the labourer went away; but then he owns he did not look any longer, so that it is possible the labourer may have returned and thrown her in.



Miller Bond states he heard a cry, showing the girl's terror as Abner seized her. These conjectures are sufficient to justify the committal of Abner Brown to await examination. As for the dying admissions of the girl, they are much lessened in value by the extraordinary statement she also made, and which cannot be taken into consideration for a moment. A girl who could say such a thing cannot be believed even on her deathbed.'

So Abner went to the cell at Maasbury, and scandal was very rife at the hamlet, waxing bigger every hour. Miller Bond was in no small degree responsible for this. His confused statements could so easily be twisted to their purpose by malignant minds. In his heart he was anxious above all others to please Felise; as a fact he did or said exactly what was most calculated to give her pain.

The hamlet would not believe Abner, and would not believe the dead; it fastened

eagerly on a scandal which implicated a gentleman. It was not without foundation, because Martial could not publicly explain why he had met Mary Shaw.

Robert Godwin saw in these circumstances, which had so suddenly arisen, a means of gratifying the reflex action in his mind, which prompted him to injure the very person he loved. At his suggestion the police acted in securing Abner; he pointed out the possibility of Abner's guilt; without much possibility a hint from such a quarter was sufficient. This was a savage cut at the unfortunate labourer, and at the same time an unpleasant incident for Mr. Goring.

But it was Felise whom he desired to reach. The hamlet gossips gladly carried the tale to Beechknoll. That the shaft might go home Robert Godwin himself came over. He found Mr. Goring in the garden, and in despite of the other's plain-spoken desire to avoid him, forced him to hear the story. That Martial, while paying

attentions to Miss Goring, had taken an unmanly advantage of this poor girl. Goring, as usual, was working in the garden when Robert would not be shaken off.

‘The whole story is an abominable falsehood,’ said Mr. Goring. ‘Mr. Barnard is incapable of such a thing. I know the real reason for the meetings between them. I must really decline, Mr. Godwin, to discuss the matter further with you.’

‘Barnard will have to tell the truth before the magistrates,’ said Godwin, not in the least abashed. ‘This is not the first discreditable transaction in which he has been engaged. He promised marriage to Miss Rosa Wood, and jilted her. He has wasted his substance and that of his cousins—he is a spendthrift and a scoundrel!’

‘Sir, I request you to quit my premises!’

‘Sir, your name, and that of your niece, will figure largely in the public investigation.’

‘Investigation! I bid you beware of investigation. The world knows already why Mary Shaw committed suicide.’

‘I dare anyone to repeat that statement; they shall be prosecuted for slander.’

‘I repeat the statement. Mary Shaw committed suicide because she knew that her aged father and mother, and all her family, would be expelled from their cottage if her disgrace became known. The poor girl died to save their home for them.’

‘Most infamous!—you shall certainly be prosecuted for slander.’

‘Most infamous, certainly—I cast the word in your teeth, Mr. Godwin. I despise you. You left this poor girl no refuge. You ordered her lover’s parents to quit their home—there was no possibility of their marriage. She was aware of the penalty if she was not married. Rather than see her aged parents turned into the road—to starve or end their broken days in the workhouse—she did this dreadful thing.’

‘You shall be served for slander immediately.’

‘By all means let me be served—I desire nothing better. So much the quicker will your reign come to an end. And now, quit my premises!’

Having no further threat or disclosure to make, Godwin at last retired, so far discomfited.

Martial had acquainted Felise and Mr. Goring with every circumstance the instant after the inquest. Consequently Godwin could make no impression; yet, as he retired discomfited and burning with anger, he reflected that at least he had given form, shape, and substance to an indefinite rumour. He had delivered it at his opponent’s gates, and thrust it home.

Far less causes have led to lifelong separations.

Deeply hurt by poor Mary’s untimely death, Felise could not do enough to satisfy herself for the infant at the mill. She en-

gaged a nurse for it, and saw that every necessity was supplied.

‘If she had only told me,’ Felise repeated; ‘if she had only told me, all would then have been prevented.’

‘I would have sold my land but that they should have had a home,’ said Mr. Goring. ‘I blame Abner greatly. He should have told me. But we were all blind—we should have guessed. Mary could hardly walk upstairs sometimes—and her fainting-fit. Poor child!—poor child!’

The shock of Mary’s death, the imputations against Martial, the arrest of Abner, came very heavily upon Felise. Martial she never doubted for an instant; yet, certain of his innocence as she was, these envenomed shafts always leave a wound. An unwonted gloom fell upon her. The shadow had grown deep and dark upon the dial.

Her love carried her straight past the pitfall of doubt which had been opened beside her path. Her love shone the brighter and

the steadier as she overcame. But she had known sorrow.

Again Rosa was avenged—her rival had known sorrow.

A lesser love might have doubted, might have made inquiries; words might have been spoken never to be forgotten. But this great heart was untouched. Had these insinuations been true, and had she known them to be true, it would have made no difference. No matter what he had done, he would still have been hers. But her glory was that she had not doubted.

Still she had known sorrow, and her head drooped as she waited under the Spanish chestnut. There were no songs in the copse now.

‘He cannot love me,’ she thought. ‘He is mine, but he cannot love me.’

Once, gazing into the clear water of the trout-pool and seeing her own face reflected, she had triumphantly believed in her power to make him love her. She had failed.

Opposite to her the interior of the barn opened wide and gaunt where the great doors had formerly been. Diffused light lit the interior immediately opposite; farther in there was shadow in the summer day. Burnt by sun and beaten by rain, the red tiles of the broad roof, coated with orange moss, glowed under the fervent heat of the August morning. The surface of the roof seemed to fluctuate, as if the colour came and went—now deep, now paler, red-orange alight with sunbeams. Almost touching it, the boughs of the other chestnut massed their cool green against the tiles. Underneath was the shadow of the vast cavern-like interior.

Since Martial had returned and told her all, it seemed as if she could not part from him. Perhaps the sudden loss of Mary had unconsciously rendered her anxious—snatched away without warning; perhaps she feared for him too, so that, though he came every day, yet she dreaded the moment of parting. She had got into the habit of walk-



ing with him as far as the old barn on his way home in the evening, and of coming as far as that to meet him in the morning.

As she sat opposite the barn suddenly she looked up—some slight movement in the cavern-like interior had caught her eye; but, on gazing steadily, she could not see anything. It must have been fancy. She recollected the idle tale that the barn was haunted, only to accuse herself of nervousness. Besides, it was broad daylight.

Immediately afterwards the sound of a shot in the copse startled her; but she smiled, knowing who had fired. Three minutes afterwards Martial came towards her, carrying his little oval-bore rook and rabbit rifle. It was too early for game, but the young rabbits were now ready.

They did not sit down, but walked on towards Beechknoll, past the still elms of the meadows, past the gnarled oaks, by the copses, by the green flags of the brook, pausing now and then in the shade for those

glances which speak so much silently. Be sure she did not think the less of him because he had risked his life in the mill-pool. Natural enough that she should exalt his deed into heroism. When we think so highly of another, it seems impossible but that they must in some degree incline to our wishes. We transfer our feelings to them.

In the dreamy woodlands, by the running brook, it seemed to her that by-and-by surely he must love her.





## CHAPTER XXI.



HE key turned, the heavy door of the cell swung open, and the constable who had just come on guard-duty looked in upon Abner.

‘They’ve put her in,’ he said. ‘It’s all over.’

‘Yes,’ said Abner, without lifting his gaze. He understood what was meant.

‘They’ve planted her,’ said the constable ; his words to us would have sounded hard and cruel in their bareness and naked meaning, but he meant kindly. ‘They’ve planted her.’

Mary Shaw had been interred. Abner still said nothing.

‘Her was buried in oak,’ continued the constable. ‘Not many of her sort as has oak planking.’

‘Who did that?’ asked the prisoner, looking up.

‘Miss Goring paid for it. Leastways her had it done; s’pose Mr. Goring paid for it. She said she could not abear her to be buried in deal like the workhouse folk. So her lies in oak. The kid is all right; Miss Goring have had it seed to. Don’t you fret; there ain’t no case agen you when it comes to a full bench.’

Abner had been simply remanded by Cornleigh Cornleigh till the day of the magistrates’ meeting.

‘I knows that,’ said the prisoner. ‘You knows I didn’t do it; they must be fools as says so.’

‘Well, I told you I’d tell you all as there was,’ said the constable, preparing to lock the door. ‘She could not have been buried nicer if she’d been a young lady. You’ll be

discharged directly you sees the Bench.' The cell-door was closed.

The prisoner's chin drooped on his broad chest. Out from his silent sorrow flowed warm tears, tears which neither the bitter loss of Mary nor the insult and injustice of his confinement could cause, but which flowed at a touch of kindness. Felise's kindness went to his heart, already growing stubborn under the stony handling of fate.

To the dead there is no difference between deal and oak, or elm—a ditch is the same as a tomb; but to the living, who will one day die, there is every difference. Depend upon it, too great respect cannot be paid to the dead. Therein the deepest, the most subtle of the chords of human nature is touched.

In London the coffins of the 'pauper' dead (let the word 'pauper' be accursed!) have been seen to tumble into the stony street; a heap of the dead carted at once, like the carcasses of animals, till they broke down the carriage. What terrible folly our boasted

self-government of boards is capable of—this uttermost folly of destroying respect for the dead to save a few miserable shillings!

Abner Brown was by nature loyal and true—of that ‘grit’ and character of which Nelson’s worthies were made. He was willing to work and to laugh in his work, and to serve with faithful service for three score years and ten. Do you not think he had cause to be grateful? He had three principal causes of gratitude.

His aged and helpless parents were to be turned into the road.

His sweetheart had committed suicide because her parents should not be punished for her disgrace.

He was himself in prison, labelled for ever as a suspected murderer, simply because he was poor; for no man who wore broadcloth and gold watch-chain would have been committed on so unsupported a charge.



## CHAPTER XXII.



HE day of the great presentation to Cornleigh Cornleigh, Esq., happening just now, Mr. Goring drove Felise in to Maasbury to attend the meeting. For five-and-twenty years he had avoided all such movements, retired among his trees, till at the moment when he desired to act he found himself powerless. Absolute silence—absolute retirement, destroys a man's hold on the world. Not for the best of all objects could he now obtain the attention of the well-disposed ; he could call no one to assist the innocent and helpless.

Alone, a man is powerless. It is when his voice acts like a lever that he is mighty ; a

lever that stirs those that hear it, and in their turn they stir others, till the circle widening, an irresistible wave is formed. He had to begin again at the beginning ; first, to see and be present at what was going on ; next, to make friends ; and finally, to set foot in the ring and do battle.

Though happy with Martial, Felise, when by herself, was greatly depressed by the loss of Mary. If I have not set forth her sorrow in so many words, it is because it must be apparent that a nature like hers would be deeply grieved. Mr. Goring did not like her to remain at home alone, and persuaded her to accompany him into the town, thinking it would be in some degree a change. Martial was to join them there and return with them.

At the door of the assembly-room, in Maasbury, they were advised to go up in the gallery, as there was a considerable gathering of the opposition party, and a fight was probable. The gallery was reserved for



ladies, or those who wished to be spectators merely. They went up, and found it already crowded with ladies, many of whom felt an interest in certain proceedings which were to precede the presentation.

Rosa was there, and saw Felise immediately—from that moment her eyes were fixed upon Felise—her glance crossed the looks of all others in the gallery : their eyes were bent upon the platform or the scene beneath ; Rosa's glance was across their line of sight. Felise was unconscious of Rosa's presence, and was occupied in looking for Martial in the crowd below ; at length Mr. Goring pointed him out on the platform.

When an eye looks steadily across the general line of view there seems something sinister in its gaze. Have you never chanced to look aside for a moment from the stage, or the concert, and accidentally caught such a glance regarding some one pitilessly ? Your thought has just been filled with noble sentiment, or the ear with sweet sound ; this in-

errupted glance reminds you that behind the scene of life passions or resentments are still burning.

The front of the crowd in the hall beneath was composed of farmers, or the farming interest, and of respectable tradesmen of Maasbury, who supported the platform with a firm cordon of the 'right sort.' For some depth it was in fact packed with the Cornleigh Cornleigh party. But on the left side there began the thin end of the wedge of opposition, which gradually thickened till at the rear it widened out and held the whole hall by the doorway.

Anyone in the gallery with an eye for tactics could see that if danger was brewing, it would take effect through the thin end of the wedge, which went up within four or five of the platform. If this end were forced forwards by the thick part of the wedge behind, the opposition might very likely succeed in storming the platform.

To defend a position like a platform

effectually you require a very stout cordon in front of it—a cordon equally thick everywhere, and a second body posted towards the other end of the hall to take assailants in flank. Military talent was, however, scarcely to be expected in Maasbury. Robert Godwin was on the platform, of course.

The opposition was composed of smaller tradesmen, work-people, lower middle-class people living in their own houses, men working in small factories, some very respectable persons from the villages (independent freeholders in a small way), a few labourers of strong political opinion who had stumped in and stood with their hands in their pockets, the tenants of rows of little houses that had been built in the suburbs on ground that did not belong to Cornleigh Cornleigh; in short, of 'all sorts and conditions of men.'

Some rushes had occurred already, and a woman who had foolishly ventured into the hall had to be dragged out fainting.

‘Quite a different scene, I assure you,’ whispered Cornleigh Cornleigh’s solicitor (and prompter) to a London visitor at The House who was on the platform—‘altogether a different scene to what we used to have at public meetings a few years ago. We used to have such orderly pleasant meetings, and everything went off smoothly and as you would wish. This is all owing to the ballot, you know ; devilish thing, sir, the ballot !’

Somehow the Maasbury world had begun to lose its reverent awe of Cornleigh Cornleigh, Esq.

Felise was full of wonder at what she saw beneath her ; she could not understand it. She had read the great speeches of Demosthenes ; they read so calm and composed, as if delivered in an atmosphere of perfect peace. They soothed the mind and disposed it to think, and thought is quiet. Why did these people on the floor of the hall appear to hate each other so intensely ? Why did they push and jostle with brutal rudeness,

and use expressions of savage violence? It did not look human.

That men, each in the same likeness, clad alike, speaking the same tongue, living in the same neighbourhood, should be ready to treat each other as blocks of timber to be kicked, pushed, shoved, and thrust about, was inexplicable to her.

The first view of an excited public meeting is very puzzling and disappointing to a mind accustomed to study and to hold opinions without rancour.

Felise felt hurt at the spectacle. It was not right. There was not the least necessity for this roughness—no cause whatever. It seemed to lower humanity.

‘This is mildness itself, as yet,’ said Mr. Goring, replying to her. ‘I remember scenes at elections thirty years ago which made one’s blood curdle. The brutality used to be rather encouraged. The more brutal you could be the better you were esteemed. Now you see why the ballot is such an advance; people

can honestly express their views without this personal violence.'

'Is it quite safe for Martial?' asked Felise, anxious about him; the roar of the surging crowd seemed to threaten *him* most, because it was of him she thought.

'Not the least danger at present.'

'I wish he would leave the platform,' said Felise. 'I do not like it; these people seem as if they would crush anyone who displeased them.'

Ostensibly the meeting had been called for two objects: first, for the formation of a Society for the Encouragement of Art Culture in the Homes of the Poor; secondly, for the presentation of a testimonial to Cornleigh Cornleigh, Esq., on the completion of his twenty-fifth year of Parliamentary service. In reality it was the commencement of a series of operations designed to raise up and unite the supporters of Cornleigh Cornleigh, and the cause he represented.

It had long been felt in the select circle

that worked the party thereabouts that something must be done. A certain amount of apathy had manifested itself even among the farmers; they did not exactly say so, but they seemed to lay the losses and in some cases the ruin that had overtaken them at the door of the landowners, and to the Toryism they represented. Enthusiasm was absent; there was a coldness among the sturdiest of them. A race remarkable for loyalty even to a bad cause or to a bad man, they stood somewhat aloof.

Speeches had been made by some of them of an advanced character, not at all of a resigned and praise-the-authorities-that-be description. Something must be done to stir them up, to get them together and talk to them. Much is sometimes accomplished by getting people together and talking to them.

Besides encouraging their own ranks, there was still harder work to be carried out among the small voters, who had much in-

creased in the neighbourhood of the town ; there was the terrible Ballot Act to be countermined ; and lastly, there was the enfranchisement of the agricultural labourer looming within ' measurable distance.'

Mrs. Cornleigh Cornleigh was in high spirits at the success of her political management. A hint had been dropped, that owing to diminished income, the Squire thought of retiring from the representation at the next election, and this, too, on the eve of his baronetcy. The fourteen other magnates were much discomposed at this ; there was no one among themselves with Cornleigh's prestige to take his place, and they did not want a stranger sent down by the London clubs ; they naturally wished to keep the thing a close preserve. Accordingly purses were opened more freely than could have been expected, and a guarantee fund was formed ; besides which an additional amount was subscribed for immediate political or politico-social work.



‘We want to get into the houses of the working-classes and of the labourers,’ said Letitia. ‘We want to lift up their ideas, to raise their aspirations. Let us begin with Art.’

The proposed Society for the Encouragement of Art Culture in the Homes of the Poor was to furnish the labourer’s cottage with an approved selection of prints and engravings from the works of the great masters, together with water-colours executed by members of the organization. The latter idea proved a great bait, and attracted all the amateurs in the town; every lady who dabbled in paint looked forward to seeing her picture hung at an exhibition that was presently to be held in the house of Cornleigh Cornleigh.

Of all the odd movements that have been started in the last few years, this for ornamenting the cottage with works of art is the most grotesque. To suppose that any man is likely to be the better because a

picture is graciously hung on his walls above the heads of squalling children, and over the table scarcely supplied with bread, is indeed a monstrous perversion of common-sense.

Unless he be a slave-man out of whom poverty has ground all independence, he is much more likely to curse it, to tear it down and trample it under foot, and to abominate the name of Art as synonymous with insult ever afterwards.

Insult it is of the cruellest and harshest kind. The wretched beings require food, and you give them a picture.

Felise gave old Abner Brown half-a-crown to purchase himself a beefsteak and a quart of good ale; that is to say, to buy himself fresh blood to circulate in those old and withered limbs.

Good beef and beer are what the poor want, and you would find it difficult to supply too much of it.

But somehow or other your modern phil-

anthropist cannot endure the idea of beef and beer.

He organizes societies to teach the poor how to cook (ye gods, how to cook! with nothing in the frying-pan nor any lard to grease it), and offers them a cold drink from the pump. In the midst of squalling children, over the deal table scarce supplied with bread, he hangs up a picture.

For the enjoyment of art it is first of all necessary to have a full belly.

May I inquire, too, of any painter, if such chances to light on these pages, whether he would consider it likely to encourage a love of art merely to hang a picture on a wall? whether he has not known even well educated and wealthy people who possessed scores of valuable pictures without the least love of art? whether, in short, even he, a painter of pictures, considered pictures the whole end and aim of art?

Is not art rather in the man than on the wall?

Once now and then I have been into the cottages of farm labourers (who had the good fortune to possess security of tenure) and found old oak furniture; curious grotesque crockery, generally much coloured—the favourite colour red; ancient brazen-faced upright clocks ticking slowly, as the stars go slowly past in the quiet hours of night; odd things on the mantelpiece; an old gun with brass fittings, polished brass ornaments; two or three old books with leather bindings; on the walls quaint smoke-tinted pictures three-score years old.

Outside, trees in the garden—plums, pears, damsons—trees planted by the owner for fruit and shade, but mostly for solace, since it is a pleasant thing to see a tree grow. These people, having no fear of being turned out of doors, had accumulated such treasures, a chair at a time, making the interior home-like. And out of doors they had planted trees; without love of trees, I doubt if there be any art. Of art itself in itself they had

had no thought ; not one had ever tried to draw or paint. They had coloured their strips of flower-garden or bordering with bright yellow flowers ; that was all the paint they knew.

Yet I think this home-life in itself was something like true art. There was a sense of the fitness of things, and good instinctive taste in the selection of interior fittings, furniture, and even of colour.

Oak is our national wood, old oak, dark and deep-shaded—Rembrandt oak—oak is part of our national art. Brass polishes and gleams in sunlight through the window, or glows in the sparkle from winter's fire. It sets off the black oak. Red-coloured china-ware (perhaps it is a shade of pink) is gay and bright under low-pitched ceilings with dark wood beams and no white ceiling. Yellow flowers light up the brown mould. Altogether a realistic picture painted in actual dark oak, actual brass, actual red china, and actual yellow flowers.

Here then there was art in the man. Can you put that taste in by hanging a picture on the wall? Letitia's pictures were chiefly of the pre-Raphaelite ecclesiastical order—saints, saints' lives and deaths, such as were painted in the fourteenth century, and with which life at the present day has no sort of sympathy.

There was not a cottage-tenant on the estate of Cornleigh Cornleigh who could call his cottage his own securely for more than six months. How then was it possible for taste to grow up, or to exercise itself if it was there?

There can be no art in a people who know that at any moment they may be thrust out of doors. Art is of slow growth.

Up in the north they say there is a district where the labourers spend their idle hours in cutting out and sticking together fiddles. I do not care twopence for a fiddle as a fiddle; but still I think if a labouring man coming home from plough, and exposure to

rough wind, and living on coarse fare, can still have spirit enough left to sit down and patiently carve out bits of maple wood and fit them together into a complete and tunable fiddle, then he must have within him some of the true idea of art, and that fiddle is in itself a work of art.

Nothing of the sort will ever be possible in our cottage homes till the people in them know that they can live therein as long as they please provided they pay the rent, and are not liable to be ordered off into the next county or anywhere because they have displeased some one.

However, the movement in Maasbury had proved a social success; it was already well patronized; there were many amateurs up in the gallery who had begun to study for the honour of exhibiting in the house of Cornleigh Cornleigh.

Looking down upon the crowd in the hall from the gallery, it did not appear to care much for art—which is quiet. The hubbub

increased, and the jostling was renewed at short intervals ; the meeting was impatient and wanted things to begin.

The first speakers in nowise concern us ; they were heard sometimes with cheers, and now and then with hoots ; they explained the general organization of the Society.







## CHAPTER XXIII.



T length Cornleigh Cornleigh rose  
and said :

‘Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,—Upon this very important occasion, I—I—hum—ha [‘think,’ whispered the family solicitor behind him]—I think—the—ah—the [‘sympathies,’ whisper] sympathies of all right-minded persons, to whichever party they [hear, hear!—hoo, hoo! ‘Hoo, hoo!’ will do for groans—modern meetings do not groan, they ‘hoo, hoo!’] There is no doubt that in the future of this great country [hear, hear!]—textile fabrics very important—commercial interest—depend on knowledge of colour—education of the eye—practical value—I—I

think—hum—ha—ha—that is [‘competition,’ whisper]—enable us to compete successfully with foreign artists, traders—manufacturers—they should be able to choose the right form, the right hue, and the right place. [Hear, hear!] Connection between agriculture and commerce now—now [‘admitted,’ whisper]—admitted, and the depression of farming [hear, hear!] seen to be injurious, and to—to [‘react,’ whisper]—react upon trade as in this town no doubt [hear, hear! from the tradesmen]—most sincerely hope the worst time past—the spending classes restricted—money—circulation, disastrous—disastrous to working men. [Hoo, hoo, hoo!] The object of this Society is to elevate the artistic ideas of the agricultural labourer [hear, hear!—hoo, hoo!]—contemplation of art—require surroundings—support art manufacture. But incomparably the—the—the—hum—ha [‘highest influence,’ whisper]—the highest effect—influence—art is on the moral and social well-being of the community, and I,

for one, Mr. Chairman, shall be delighted to forward the movement to the utmost of my power. [Hear, hear!] This is not a political meeting [hoo, hoo, hoo!], else I might be tempted to address you. In anticipation of the course of Parliamentary discussion—not a good plan—stupid to—I mean awkward—before subject well-threshed out. Still [hear, hear!—hoo, hoo!]  
—still [hear, hear!—hoo, hoo!]  
—still [hear, hear!—hoo, hoo, hoo!]  
But [hear, hear!—hoo, hoo!]  
—may be permitted, as appealing to the grand sympathies of Englishmen—Englishmen—to allude in the briefest possible manner to innovation—I—hum—ha—ha—I—the [‘From earliest times,’ whisper]—From earliest times the grand boast of the Englishman has been freedom—freedom to express, and say what he likes, voting—open air—light of day [hear, hear!]  
—no sneaking behind anonymous [hear, hear!]  
—go to the poll like men—honest men [hear, hear!—hoo, hoo!]  
—there can be no doubt—I believe the

Ballot Act to be demoralizing in its action on the people who have hitherto been accustomed — accustomed — I — ah — hum — [‘atmosphere,’ whisper] — atmosphere of freedom! [Hear, hear! — hoo, hoo!] The time is coming when that measure, so obnoxious and so — I — I — [‘injurious,’ whisper] — in its action — must be — repealed. [Hoo, hoo! — hear, hear! — hoo, hoo — a rush towards the platform with difficulty repelled.] I — I — anxious to calm — I am sincerely desirous [hoo, hoo!] ever to promote the — the — ah — beneficial — and as I enjoy remarkable good health the late hours of the House of Commons not so — ah — ah — I — able to attend to my duties, and to vote [hoo, hoo!] — your interests — acknowledging your very kind reception, I — I — ah — —’ the speaker sat down in the midst of a perfect howl of hear, hear! and hoo, hoo!

This was a very long and successful speech for Cornleigh Cornleigh. He delivered it by bending his body forwards at each sentence

and jerking the words out—throwing them across the hall. The speech had been written for him by Letitia, and was well expressed in the draft; but his memory, which retained the principal words, forgot the connecting links.

There was a great uproar as he concluded, and one man in the crowd wished to mount the platform and address the meeting on the Ballot; but this the chairman would not permit, on the pretext that the assemblage was non-political. A rush was again made and repelled; suddenly the chairman asked for a show of hands, and some resolution or other was declared carried. A storm of hisses came from near the doorway, met with cries of ‘Turn them out!’

Cornleigh did not appear to hear the disturbance. He sat near the chairman in full view of all, his hands folded, his eyes cast down; the most marked point about him was the red silk handkerchief projecting from his breast-pocket. It would have been difficult

to decide whether the utter quietude of his attitude and expression was due to insensibility, to mere incapacity, or to studied purpose. Cornleigh was inscrutable.

Felise saw Cornleigh's solicitor (and prompter) place a piece of paper in Martial's hand. Martial seemed to remonstrate and wish to return it; but it was pressed upon him.

The Society being now formally established, next came the presentation proceedings. The Vicar of Maasbury advanced and began to speak with the volubility of his order. They had all known the House of Cornleigh [A voice: 'Too long!']—it was established in the midst of them, and was endeared to them all by a thousand deeds of kindness and sympathy; it was interlaced with the prosperity of the town at large; it was interwoven with the progress of every individual inhabitant. For seven hundred years the House of Cornleigh ['What good have 'em done all that time?'] had dwelt in their midst

[‘ Who shut up the park ?’], and they were all proud of the historic interest conferred upon the place by that ancient mansion. [‘ Who stopped up the road ?’] In all that lapse of time there was not on record a single instance of their refusing to assist and to lead with all their prestige movements valuable to the people, or to the trade and manufacture of the town. [‘ Who buys all their grocery in London ?’] That beautiful—that noble—that magnificent new parish church of which they were all so proud [‘ Where’s the old church ?’ ‘ Where’s the old bones ?’ ‘ Who built a stable in the churchyard ?’] owed its origin to the initiation of a lady, to mention whose name was at once sufficient [hoo—hoo !—‘ The grey mare !’] to secure the heartiest applause. [Hoo, hoo, hoo !] Were he to recount but one half of what the family of Cornleigh had accomplished for the benefit of Maasbury— [Hoo, hoo, hoo !—hear, hear, hear !—two rushes and several free fights.] But the immediate object of his addressing them that

afternoon was to recall to their memories— if indeed it wanted recalling, if it was not fresh in their minds—to recall to their memories the services Edward Cornleigh Cornleigh had rendered to them, to the town, to the neighbourhood, to agriculture, and to the country at large by his long, patient, and laborious attendance in the House of Commons as their representative. [Hear, hear!—hear, hear! The Cornleigh party yelled till they overcame the hooting for once.] Fortunately for them Mr. Cornleigh was peculiarly fitted for Parliamentary duties, being blessed with remarkably good health [‘So are cows!’], which good health he devoted with unremitting and disinterested assiduity to the service of his constituency. [Oh, oh!] There was reason to believe that this unremitting attention would, in a short time, receive a reward [‘Yah! my Lady Letitia!’] by no means equal to the efforts he had made, but sufficient nevertheless to cast a reflected lustre over the



constituency which had returned him for five-and-twenty years. [‘And won’t do it again!’] Some persons of a flippant turn of mind were easily captured with long speeches — with mere wind and bombast—but men of a right way of thinking valued actions, valued deeds, beyond the mere piling of words upon words. The manner in which Mr. Cornleigh had sat through the wearisome debates, the manner in which he had recorded his vote [‘Against everything any good of!’]—these patient actions far surpassed the vain ambitions of talkative politicians. [Hear, hear!—hear, hear!—free fights—a hat thrown on the platform.] Sufficient notice, indeed, could not be taken of this noble exception to the current vice of the day—the vice of self-advertisement—the talk, talk, talking of one’s self into observation. [‘He’d talk if he could!’] It was no wonder that the subscriptions to the testimonial had proved so large—no wonder that it had extended far beyond the expectations of the most sanguine,

when they looked back in this way upon the services of Mr. Cornleigh to the town and to agriculture. [Hear, hear! from the compact body of tenant-farmers.] Around the town of Maasbury there reached a wide domain—the domain of the House of Cornleigh, which, under their fostering care, had reached a pitch of cultivation rarely seen. [Cheers from the tenant-farmers.] Upon that domain they saw smiling homesteads in the midst of trees, or under the hills, surrounded with corn and grass lands, with groups of cattle in the fields and well-paid labourers [hoo, hoo!—hoo, hoo!]; and they saw fields drained and in the utmost order—they saw the smoke curling upwards from the peaceful villages, so contented and prosperous under Mr. Cornleigh's rule—a rule which was a happy mingling of lenity and severity, such as a good parent displayed. [Oh, oh! 'Pull him down!' 'Robert Godwin!' Hiss! Robert was on the platform.] When they saw these things they realised the blessing of a land-

lord [hoo, hoo, hoo!]*—*they realised the blessing of a system of land-ownership which it was now so madly desired to destroy—a system which enabled a benevolent and clear-sighted man to arbitrate in all cases of dispute, to eliminate seeds of discord, and to create around him a fortunate, a happy, and a contented tenantry. [Hear, hear!*—*hear, hear! The tenant-farmers howled their loudest applause.] But not content with what he and his predecessors had accomplished, Mr. Cornleigh, ably assisted by his talented and beloved lady, desired to still farther extend the sphere of his usefulness and benevolence by entering into the cottage home, and placing upon the wall the images of those sainted men and women which the greatest masters of art had handed down to us, in order that the ploughman and the carter might enjoy privileges as great as those of the wealthiest, in order that they might lift up their aspirations, in order—*[*Hear, hear!*—*hear, hear.*]* He would not

trespass longer upon them — he had to propose that a testimonial be presented to Edward Cornleigh Cornleigh, Esq., in recognition of his long and faithful service in Parliament, and of his devoted labours for the benefit of the town of Maasbury and of agriculture. [Hear, hear!—hoo, hoo!]

A still more violent attempt was made to storm the platform as the speaker concluded. It was frustrated by the compact body of tenants in the front, but the result of all this pushing was that the thin end of the wedge had become much thickened. On the platform Robert Godwin had fixed his glance upon Martial somewhat in the same way as Rosa had fastened hers upon Felise. His colourless eyes, like those of a fish, never moved from Barnard.

‘Look, Martial is going to speak!’ said Felise. Martial had advanced to the edge of the platform; at this even Rosa looked that way. In his hand he held a piece of paper; he had, in fact, been selected by the


solicitor to the House of Cornleigh to second the resolution moved by the last speaker. He had remonstrated, but they would take no denial. The largest tenant upon the estate was ill; it fell to him as the next on the roll to laud the House of Cornleigh.

He was cheered by the compact body of tenant-farmers in front; at the rear they did not know him, and shouted 'Who are you?'





## CHAPTER XXIV.

‘ENTLEMEN,’ said Martial in a faltering voice, nervously twisting the piece of paper, ‘this piece of paper has been put into my hands much against my will [‘Speak up!’]—much against my will. [‘Throw it down then!’] It contains the words in which I am to second the resolution. But I really feel—I do not wish—I am in an awkward position [‘Go home to bed!’], you must understand. [‘Yah! Open your mouth,’ from the opposition. Hear, hear! ‘Let him speak! Fair play—fair play!’ from the tenant-farmers.] My private opinions, then, are not—are not—I [Hear, hear!—hoo, hoo! ‘Why can’t you say

what you mean?'] So I will, gentlemen,' said Martial, his face flushed, and his temper rising and overcoming his nervousness; 'I will do as that gentleman recommends, I will say what I mean, which is the best thing to do after all. We have just listened to a long and I suppose we must call it an eloquent speech [hear, hear!], the burden of which was the great advantage we all derive—and especially agriculturists like myself—from the interest taken in us by Mr. Cornleigh. [Hear, hear!—hear, hear! from the tenant-farmers.] I suppose you all know I am a farmer. I will now give you a fact—not a speech but a fact—in illustration, or rather as a practical comment upon that eloquent speech. [Hear, hear!—hear, hear! from the tenant-farmers.] Gentlemen, this afternoon before I entered this hall I posted a letter formally stating that I intended—that I was compelled—to give up my farm [sensation], and of course that will be followed by a sale by auction of my stock and effects.

Gentlemen, I am ruined. Gentlemen, I do not believe I shall have fifty pounds over when the auction takes place. I beg you to receive this as a practical comment upon the eloquent speech to which you have just listened. [Hear, hear!—cheers from the opposition; tenant-farmers in dead silence; whispering on the platform.] You will now understand why I shrank from seconding a resolution to the terms of which I could not conscientiously subscribe. [Hear, hear!—opposition cheers.] But as it has been forced upon me, I feel entitled to speak out. [‘Go on—go on!—hurrah!’ tremendous opposition applause; dead silence among the tenant-farmers; agitation on the platform.] It was well—it was appropriate—it was fitting that the eloquent speech we have just heard should have been addressed to you by a person interested in maintaining a subsidised falsehood [shouts of applause from the opposition]—by a person interested in maintaining that huge octopus, the Church—



that huge octopus which saps with its innumerable suckers the strength out of the land. It was well and it was fitting that the Church which takes our substance in its tithes should eloquently support the landowner who takes our substance in rent. [Frantic applause from the opposition; hoots and yells from the tenant-farmers; another great push for the platform; free fights; Robert Godwin conferring with the solicitor, Cornleigh's prompter.] Gentlemen, for long years past we have been suffering heavy losses from various causes which fall under two divisions, prominent in the first division being the inclement seasons and the enormous competition of America; for these no man is responsible, and I lay no blame at any man's door. In the second division of the causes which have increased the depression, there stands out in strong relief the high and disproportionate rents which we were compelled to pay in seasons of prosperity. There stands out in strong relief the tithes which

in seasons of prosperity and adversity alike we have been compelled to pay to the Church. These two together are more than equal to the incidence of competition and the failure of sunshine. In our years of prosperity the landlord forced from us the last shilling, so that we were unable to lay by savings for the future. When times of adversity came we had no reserve to meet them with. Tardily, very tardily, the landlord has at length somewhat lowered his rent, but this relief has come too late; slight in itself, grudgingly given, it is too late. [Hear, hear! from the opposition.] But if the landlord has at last, under irresistible pressure—bear this in mind, under irresistible pressure and not from any benevolence—if at last he has reduced *his* rent, the Church has not reduced its rent. No, not one penny—not one penny—after all that it has received from the tenant-farmers in years gone by, the subscriptions, the moral and physical support—in our distress this Church,

which preaches kindness and consideration for others, has not abated one single penny, but has taken from our sides its pound of flesh. [Shouts from the opposition ; shouts from the tenant-farmers, and indescribable uproar. Robert Godwin advanced and put his hand on Martial's shoulder, but Cornleigh's solicitor drew him back.] I repeat, its pound of flesh ; for there are men whom I know, men with families, with growing sons and daughters, and with little children who have been forced, first to partially starve themselves and their children, and finally to go forth penniless into the world. Let me ask you whether we ought to feel grateful ? [Uproar and fighting. 'Pull him down!' from the tenant-farmers ; 'Go on !' from the opposition.] Gentlemen, I do not hesitate to denounce the whole system as a cruel farce. ['Pull him down !' from the tenants.] We have often, very often, at our public dinners and meetings, heard persons get up and make eloquent speeches, attributing

every species of benevolence to our landlords and to our landlords' agents. ['Robert Godwin!' hoo, hoo, hoo! from the opposition.] The truth, as we all know, is exactly the reverse. In return for our loyalty they have oppressed us, and, I will add, they have insulted us in every possible manner. We have been less than dogs ['Pull him down!' from the tenant-farmers]; we have been expected to cringe with our hats off [hiss, hiss! from the tenant-farmers: 'Let him speak!' 'Fair play; fair play!' from the opposition]; we have been expected to look down humbly and to be only too thankful to be noticed, like a dog you pat with your hand [hoo, hoo, hoo! from the tenant-farmers. Angry cries from the opposition: 'Let him speak, or we'll drive everyone off the platform!']; we have been expected to kow-tow to our landlords, and not only to them, but to all their agents, friends, and hangers-on; to stand hat in hand before their parsons, and before their solicitors, and before their stewards,

and before their gardeners and their game-keepers—before their very grooms! I deeply regret to say—the truth is forced from me—gentlemen, I deeply regret to own to you that a very large proportion of farmers have consented to this kow-towing, this hat-touching, this contemptible humility. [Yells from the tenant-farmers, who made an effort to tear Barnard from the platform, but were pulled back by the opposition: fighting and hard blows exchanged; at length comparative quiet.] The very memory of it fills me with disgust; such servility has probably never been equalled on the part of free men—such servility as that exhibited by the mass of farmers to their landlord's circle, down to his very gardener! But why was there this servility? Does anyone suppose that farmers humiliated themselves in this manner of their own free will? No, indeed. The guilt—for it is nothing less than guilt—lies with the landlords, who, through their agents, forced us to this infamy. [Hear, hear! from the

opposition ; cheers and counter-cheers.] I say "guilt," because it is a criminal thing to force a man to part with his own self-respect. [Cheers and uproar.] Either bow the knee and touch the hat—either do as we bid you, vote as we please, give up your very conscience—either bow the knee and touch your hat or leave your farm. [‘Shame!’ cheers and yelling.] We have been asked by a clergyman in an eloquent speech to acknowledge the advantages we have derived from a landlord. I ask you again whether you think we have reason to be grateful? [‘No, no!’ cheers; hoo-hooing from the tenant-farmers.] Gentlemen, I cannot express my astonishment that a member of a Church which professes to hold a falsehood as an abomination [cheers] can have the cool assurance to stand here in the light of day and deliver statements so absolutely at variance with fact. [Agitation on the platform; Robert Godwin held back by the solicitor.] I tell you—and you are, most of you, aware of the

fact yourselves—that there does not exist a race of free men on the face of the earth who have been so completely under the thumb as farmers. There are many tenants of Mr. Cornleigh's here this afternoon. There is not one of these who would dare, were voting not now secret under the Ballot Act, to vote contrary to Mr. Cornleigh's wishes. [Uproar—savage blows exchanged; Robert Godwin seizes Martial by the shoulder; excited cries, 'Let him alone—let him speak!' Martial shakes Robert off roughly.] You see how much liberty—you see we should not be allowed even to speak! [Cheers.] Till the Ballot Act was passed not a farmer dared to vote contrary to his landlord's opinion; I warn you all that the Ballot Act is not perfect; the secrets of voting are allowed to leak out, and pressure is still put on. I warn you of this! I say that the man who discloses the secret of another man's vote, deserves as severe a punishment as is awarded to perjury. Hear, hear! from the opposition; uproar from

the tenant-farmers.] We hear very much nowadays of this or that landlord having reduced rent, or having returned ten, twenty, or thirty per cent. at audit. This is generous indeed, is it not? For the very same land has fallen in value fifty per cent.—an acre that was worth £70 is now hardly worth £35, and in fact you cannot get a purchaser at all. What better proof could there be that the letting value must have depreciated equally? We know that the trade and commerce of this country are declining; it is traced to the depression of farming, and who is responsible for the depression of farming? [Shouts of ‘Cornleigh, Cornleigh!’] Now let us kow-tow and bend the knee and touch the hat to our landlords’ grooms and gardeners, stewards, solicitors, agents, and sycophants. [Uproar.] We hear now of landlords seeking tenants; using every blandishment, offering every advantage—even the shooting—fancy, permission to shoot!—lowering rents, and doing everything possible to attract tenants



now they find their rent-rolls diminishing and their cash disappearing. Was there ever anything more despicable? To grind us and oppress us, to insult us and ride over us in their time of prosperity; and now to fawn on us and treat us as equals, to beckon to us, and to hope to get over us with such manifestations of affection! [Cheers from the opposition; groans from the tenant-farmers.] The whole thing is a farce, a disgraceful farce and national shame [cheers, met with frantic yelling from the farmers]; a disgraceful farce—I am disgusted with it—I see you are disgusted with it—every man of common-sense in the country is disgusted with it. There never will be any more prosperity in English agriculture till the entire system is revised; till a man can cultivate the land free from vexatious hindrances, mediæval hindrances, superstitious hindrances, and burdens such as tithes, ordinary and extraordinary; till there be nothing to contend against but the seasons and the honest

competition of the United States. I am thankful to say I have done with it. To me it is not so serious a matter as it is to many. I am young; I can work [cheers from the opposition]; if need be, I can emigrate to those United States. But it is a bitter thing to older men thus forced from their homesteads. To me, too, it will be a bitter thing to quit the old home where I was born, where my father lived, where my grandfather lived, with which all my associations are bound up; but there will be one great compensation for me—from this afternoon I have done with the landlord's agent; I have done with the steward, with the solicitor, with the parson, with the gardener and the game-keeper; I have done with the groom, and the whole circle of despicable sycophants!

Tremendous cheering and groaning, in the midst of which Martial got off the platform into the crowd. Felise drew her breath, for to her it seemed that in the surging mass he was knocked to and fro like a tennis-ball.

The opposition helped him towards the door ; the tenant-farmers pushed and struggled and struck to crush him, hooting their loudest at the man who had expressed the very thoughts in their own hearts. He got out at last without hurt, having lost his hat ; his coat, having been torn open violently, was split. At the foot of the gallery staircase he found Mr. Goring and Felise ; he had to buy a new hat before they started for Beechknoll. The meeting continued for some time, and several speeches were made ; but the testimonial was declared to be voted unanimously.

‘It is the first time the truth has been spoken in Maasbury since—since the Crusades,’ said Mr. Goring, as they drove homewards. ‘Did you notice Cornleigh?’

‘I never thought of him—personally,’ said Martial. ‘It was the whole system I thought of.’

‘Well, there he sat demurely all the time, with that faint scarce perceptible smile on

his face. I wonder whether it is conceit or stupidity—his hands folded, and looking down in the same innocent manner as if it did not concern him in the least?’

‘Are you quite sure you are not hurt?’ said Felise.

‘My shoulder is bruised a little—nothing else.’

Presently they saw in the distance the village church by which Mary Shaw was buried.

‘Could there be anything more grotesque—more hideous in its mockery?’ said Mr. Goring, ‘than to hang up pictures in cottages, and Mary lying there for want of a home?’





## CHAPTER XXV.



FEW days afterwards Felise started early in the morning to meet Martial. She was half an hour before the usual time ; she was restless and anxious, and could not wait. There was no definite cause for her anxiety—it was a vague feeling of uneasiness, traceable in a great measure to the unhappy death of Mary. By that sudden loss her confidence in the future had been shaken.

Till some sharp sorrow comes we look forward frankly, and never question the certainty that to-morrow will bring the same settled and pleasant circumstances which surround us to-day.

Her confidence in the future was shaken. Martial was hers now—but to-morrow ?

Mary had only left the house an hour, when under the uncontrollable impulse of her secret unhappiness she leaped into the mill-pool.

Felise could not bear Martial to be away from her ; so long as he was near, her heart was at peace ; the instant he was gone, her uneasiness returned. She could not wait till the usual time, but started too soon.

There was also the thought that now Martial had given up his farm, in a little while he would leave his house, and would perhaps go from her for months—no one could say for how long.

The brook by which she walked flowed on through the meadow, now with its waters level with the sward, now deep between steep banks where the current had worn away the earth. Sometimes a blackbird rushed out from under a hawthorn-bush at her approach ; the blackbird loves the water

always, and most of all in the warm August days. Now and again the breeze rustled the green flags, tipped with brown, and the tall reeds in the corner seemed to advance and step towards her as they bowed. Felise walked musing by the brook, dreaming in the sunshine, through the shadow of the willows and alders, by the purple loosestrife lifting its spires almost to her hand, by the green rushes where the furrow came to the stream.

Far, far up in the azure there were thin wisps of white cloud idling motionless in the air, flecks such as a painter might throw from his brush ; and between them yet more faint and extended webs of vapour. It was hardly cloud—it was thistledown cloud—so fine, delicate, and vanishing, the eye could scarcely trace the lines and pencilling on the sky.

Less brilliantly white because it passed through these, the sunshine fell softly upon the aftermath—on the short grass ; and in

the brook, looking down from the high bank, she saw the image of the sun, shorn of his dazzling rays, reflected in the water.

The heat was not so overwhelming, the light not so fiery and white-hot; the breeze which blew at times came almost cool, and the rustling of the flags sounded dreamily. A softness and repose had settled on the aftermath and on the stubble; there was haze in the distance, and the masses of elm foliage were rounded and smooth.

The cawing of the rooks going over scarce disturbed the silence of the morning; there was a tone of complacent rest in their calls to each other. Nothing was quick or suggested haste but the 'hist-hist' of a wood-pigeon's wings cleaving the air with vehement strokes.

Flags and tall grasses and green things, growing down to the water's edge and encroaching on the bank, hid the forget-me-nots under their tangled cover.

Once again the shadow was idle on the



dial ; Time was idle, drowsy in summer indolence.

Away in the stubble women were gleaning, gathering ears of wheat from among the streaked convolvulus and the pale field veronica. A sound of pastoral things stays in the word 'gleaning ;' yet it is the most aching of labours—stoop, stoop, stoop. They laboured and sought the ears of wheat while the summer was slumbering around them.

Love lingered by the brook and watched the running water, touching the reeds and letting them slip through the fingers, pausing to gather a flower, and then in the act sparing it. Let it bloom ; do not injure a flower ; let it stay in the sunshine by the running stream.

All things seem possible in the open air.

By the water some part of her old faith returned to her. The voice of the sunshine was hope ; in the breeze there was a soothing reassurance ; a swallow flew before her, following the winding brook low over the

sward, and thought shot forward swifter than he.

There are moments when the earth is so beautiful that sorrow seems a dream. It cannot be—it is not real, this regret; we have fancied it, or surely the sun would not shine, the water sparkle like this. To the beautiful, sadness is unknown—it is not in its sphere; is this why we instinctively cling to loveliness?

He had said that he could not love her; yet by the running water, in the soft light of the cloud-shaded sunshine, she felt that it was not true: he would love her, he must love. Some day he must love her.

So by the stream and through the woodlands Felise came to the old barn, and sat down under the chestnut-tree. A jackdaw flew from it, calling 'jack-jack-daw' as he passed over the ridge of yellow-red tiles. In a minute or two she got up—she had sat down opposite the cavernous space where the doors of the barn had been—and went

round the tree and sat down so as to have it between her and the barn. Either there had been some slight scarce perceptible movement of something in the barn, or the shadow had deepened, or her imagination, more nervous than usual, fancied it. Of course it was nothing—she would have laughed at the idea of the barn being haunted ; yet she went round and sat down behind the chestnut.

Almost immediately a hand was placed on her shoulder ; she started, and, as happens in sudden alarm, her lips parted. Before she could cry out a handkerchief was thrust between her teeth, choking the sound in her throat. A loop of stout cord descended round her shoulders and was drawn tight effectually pinioning her arms. Savage force was used to throw her on the ground, and the cord rapidly wound round and round her body to her ankles till she lay swathed in rope. So swiftly was it done that she was helpless before she recognised Robert Godwin.

He knew her strength; it would have been difficult even for him, powerful as he was, to have mastered her in fair wrestling: at least it would have taken time—there would have been a struggle.

But the sudden gag in her mouth not only prevented her crying out, it seemed for the moment to stop her breath; she was, too, sitting down, a position unfavourable to effort. The loop of rope fastened her arms; she was thrown and bound, at his mercy.

Roughly turning her over and over to wind the cord about her, he had not recked that her beautiful face must touch the earth. Now she lay as he had left her on her back, extended at full length; there were marks where a root had pressed into the soft cheek, and a dry leaf adhered to her forehead. Her hat had fallen off—her head was bare.

From below the shoulder to her ankles she was wrapped in a spiral of rope, prevent-

ing all movement of her limbs; she could lift her head, her limbs were powerless.

An undulation—a wave of muscular exertion went along her form; with all her strength she strove to burst the cords. They would not yield; her breast heaved—her torso seemed to enlarge as she inflated her chest, and setting her shoulders firmly, arched her back and lifted herself, suspended between the neck and the feet. Twice the undulation passed along her form—twice she raised herself on her neck and heels, the body suspended between—arched—and with her limbs pressed outwards against her bonds. All the strength of her beautiful torso—all the strength inhaled upon the hills—was put forth in those great efforts; the rope stretched, but would not give way. Then she lay still and looked up at Godwin.

His face, usually so black, was blanched to a ghastly paleness—a paleness behind which the dark and sombre expression still

remained. Without a word he rushed inside the barn and brought out Ruy, who had been tethered to the broken plough inside.

The reflex action—the brooding—had done this. It was his duty to punish her.

The evil thought had grown in his mind—all her conduct had strengthened his belief that she was Martial's mistress.

His unapproachable idol had degraded herself—she must be punished—her beauty must be broken as idols were broken. Not in revenge for her loving another, but because she had destroyed her ideal self. She was guilty of crime against herself, and that beauty which she had debased must be ground out of her face for ever with Ruy's iron hoof.

Her lover's horse—the horse she had fed and petted; yes, under Ruy's hoof her beauty should perish. One stamp of that hoof and the lovely mould of her features would become indistinguishable. To kill her was nothing ;

he did not intend that, but that she should live in her crushed shame.

There could have been no more distinct proof of his insanity than his thinking to break the mould without inflicting death, for Ruy's weight would press down the very brain.

For this chance he had watched morning after morning; but Martial had come too soon, or she had sat looking towards his place of ambush—some little circumstance had delayed him. It was his or Ruy's movements in the shadow that Felise had seen.

Holding the bridle, he stood a moment and looked down upon the captive.

One glance of intolerable indignation shot from her eyes; then she lifted her head and looked towards the wood—looking for Martial.

He understood, and drew Ruy forward; the horse hesitated to advance, seeing her on the ground almost under him. At the

trampling of his hoofs she turned her head again, and comprehended what Godwin intended to do. Her features flushed—it was the suppression of the cry which her gagged lips endeavoured to utter.

Godwin pulled at the bridle. Ruy came up till his hoof cut the sward within a few inches of her ear, but would not step farther. Godwin struggled with the horse and tugged at the bridle. Ruy drew back ; for the third time the man conquered and dragged him to her.

In that moment the undulation passed along her form, and she struggled to roll over—to shield her face, to turn it to the ground. Godwin put his foot upon her chest, and pressing firmly prevented her. Dragging at the bridle he had aroused Ruy's temper ; Ruy jerked his head and would not come. Godwin paused and took out his pocket-knife, intending to stab the horse and drive him by sudden pain over her.

His foot pressed heavily on her chest.



She raised her head ; she saw a quick something pass through the air ; it was in itself invisible, yet something passed ; there was a sharp report, and she fainted.

The bullet struck Ruy by the temple ; he staggered back, reared, and fell over on his side. By main strength Martial dragged Felise away along the ground, lest the last plunging kicks of the horse should strike her ; but Ruy did not turn after he fell—he was dead almost instantly. Robert had rushed from the spot at the sound of the rifle.

The little Lancaster oval-bore from which the shot had been fired lay among the thistles at the edge of the copse where Martial had dropped it. Emerging from the wood as he came to meet Felise, he saw Godwin's foot upon her breast and the horse angrily jerking at his bridle. A shout died on his lips, and the rifle came up to his shoulder. As Robert took out his knife the tube was levelled, and in another instant the ball would have crashed

through his brain. But Martial's good genius, at the instant his finger felt the trigger, caused him to change his aim from the man to the horse; the tube scarcely moved a quarter of an inch, but that quarter of an inch made the entire difference.

In after-days he shuddered at the recollection that in his anger and fear for Felise he might have shot Godwin; the deed might be justifiable, still it would have been homicide, and a weight on his mind for years. The mere change of his thought—a change effected in the hundredth part of a second—had saved him from this.

He cut the rope; he lifted her head; he called upon her name. His kisses fell fast on her lips, and under those kisses she awoke to the consciousness of a stream of incoherent words full of one meaning—love. Passion poured upon her—a flood of love fell upon her heart. His trembling arms held her to his breast, his eyes swam with tears; she knew that he loved her, and her joy was supreme.



## CHAPTER XXVI.

**X**CEPT that the mark lingered on her cheek where the root had pressed against it, and that her limbs shook a little, Felise sustained no injury. The shock and terror, great as it was, was overcome by the happiness which so quickly followed it.

Martial loved her. In his struggle with the water in the dark mill-pool, in his struggle with the stolidity and stupidity which are difficult as fate to overcome—when death drew near him he saw clearly how great and noble, how precious she was, how inestimable her love. Her value was made known to him with that distinctness of mental vision

which comes in the last apparent moments of life. The thought that he should lose her was more bitter than death—so bitter, so keen that he thought not of death, but of his loss in it. From that instant he was hers; but yet even then his own peril had not forced him to admit that he himself loved her. He valued her—he did not love her.

But *her* peril changed all things. Instantly there fell from him the artificial restraints he had cultivated, and his heart burst forth. His passion, so long kept back, overcame him utterly.

In truth, he had loved her from the first. Not only her loveliness, but that indefinable personality which is stronger than beauty had seized upon his mind from the very beginning. Denying it to himself, fighting against it, fleeing from it, still it was there. Her peril forced him to own his passion. The past was utterly gone, and he worshipped her with all the fervour of his heart.

So overcome was he with the violence of

his emotion that instead of supporting her, she supported him. Her physical exhaustion disappeared quickly; his moral excitement could not subside. She held his head upon her breast; she soothed him; she whispered gently; her strong arms were about him.

Once again they knew no Time. The shadow of the chestnut-tree swung slowly round; the doves came to the wood from the stubble; a blue kingfisher passed, going to the brook; the gleaners rested in the field.

When at last they moved homewards it was beyond noon; they walked through the woodlands beneath the shade, they stayed beneath the oaks, they lingered at the curves of the brook: the breeze whispered their love in the trees; the murmur of the water sang to them; to the sunshine their love gave a meaning. The swallow flew before, but just above the grass; their hearts were swifter than he to respond to each other's thought.

At home they had much to tell Mr. Goring of Godwin's insanity. He could scarcely credit

it, because he knew no reason for his madness; paradox as it appears, this is correct—we instinctively search for a reason for madness. While they talked in the little room, the window in which looked out on the garden, there was the sound of wheels, and a carriage stopped at the gate. In a moment Mr. Cornleigh Cornleigh was announced, and immediately afterwards entered; he carried a parcel under his arm.

‘Morning, Goring,’ he said in his jerky disconnected way, bowing to Felise at the same time very politely. ‘Fine weather—harvest—eh! Most of the corn got in about here—eh! Happened to be driving along the road—thought I would just call—excuse intrusion.’

Mr. Goring put a chair for him, and the Squire seated himself comfortably, facing Felise.

‘The fact is,’ continued Cornleigh, aware that they were waiting for him to explain, ‘I’ve some pictures here,’ undoing his parcel.

‘Fine engravings—first-rate—high art—great masters—raise their aspirations—labourers I mean. Were you at our meeting?’

‘I was,’ said Martial meaningly.

Cornleigh did not apparently notice the remark.

‘Want you to help us,’ continued Cornleigh, handing one of the engravings to Mr. Goring. ‘Distribute them, you know—worthy people; have heard you take great interest—charitable—so on. Really fine works,’ turning to Felise. ‘Just look,’ spreading them on the table. Felise could not do less than advance and look at the engravings.

Of all the people in the world Cornleigh Cornleigh, Esq., was the last person Goring would have expected to call upon him. No one could ever quite fathom Cornleigh, but there was an explanation of this move. His political prompter—the family solicitor—a man of much broader knowledge of the world than Godwin, had advised him some time

since, in view of the next election, to endeavour to gain over certain opponents by a little cheap attention. Amongst these was Goring. The political prompter understood human nature well. He knew that the bitterest and coarsest opponent is often only an opponent because he has not been noticed; wounded vanity and overwhelming conceit is often at the bottom of it. Let the Squire call, or Letitia, and half the enmity would vanish. He was right in nine out of ten cases; Mr. Goring was the tenth, and the exception. This at least was the pretext Cornleigh put forward to Letitia.

But perhaps Cornleigh, sitting so quiet and demurely looking downwards that day in the justice-room, had seen Felise; perhaps he had made inquiries; perhaps he had seized the first opportunity to call and see her, to speak with her, so opposite as she was to the lady whom the world cheerfully pronounced to be 'just the woman for Cornleigh.'



The engravings were really very good ; Felise said so.

‘ Important to raise aspirations, you see,’ said Cornleigh. ‘ Textile fabrics ’ (recurring to his speech), ‘ manufactures, trade—hum—ha—hum—supported by agriculture. Hope you will help us, Miss Goring.’

‘ Mr. Cornleigh, I think the poor people need something to eat more than they do pictures,’ replied Felise.

‘ Heard you were very charitable,’ said Cornleigh. ‘ Here’s sovereign,’ laying the coin on the pictures. ‘ Oblige me—give some one you know.’ Then turning to Martial : ‘ Sorry you can’t get on—no need to leave—see steward—arrangements can be made about the farm. Really didn’t know myself—anything wrong.’

‘ I am much obliged,’ said Martial, ‘ but I must decline ; I have determined to have nothing more to do with farming under present conditions.’

‘ Mistake somewhere,’ said Cornleigh—

‘mistake—think it over—come and see me—will speak to steward—put it right.’

This in spite of Martial’s speech! It can hardly be supposed that the Squire was really so obtuse as not to have felt the point of the remarks Martial made at the meeting, and yet it was always difficult to tell whether he did or did not understand anything. Perhaps Letitia had begun to be alarmed at the loss of income as farmer after farmer quitted his tenancy, and had determined that Martial should stay as an instance of a landlord’s clemency and conciliation. Doubtless she had been talking to the Squire about it. As was observed at the Maasbury meeting, now the rents are diminishing it is remarkable how the landlord fawns on the tenant.

‘I cannot turn back,’ said Martial. ‘Thank you very much, but I have made up my mind.’

‘Abner!’ cried Felise; ‘why, there’s Abner!’

He was walking across the garden; she

beckoned to him, and he came to the window.

‘Why, that’s the man—yesterday before me—police withdrew charge. Sad case. Give him sovereign—eh!’—Cornleigh offered a picture and the sovereign on it to the labourer.

‘Not from you, Squire,’ said Abner. ‘I can’t take nothing from you.’

At that moment Robert Godwin burst in among them, followed by the village constable. Godwin’s coat was torn and his face scratched, for he had forced his way through the hedges in his frenzied state; he was, too, soaking wet, having waded across the stream. When he rushed from the barn he ran and walked miles in a straight line, regardless of obstacles; presently he came back and got the policeman.



## CHAPTER XXVII.



HEY all rose at this sudden interruption.

‘Arrest him!’ said Godwin, pointing to Martial.

‘Arrest! What do you mean?’ said Mr. Goring.

‘I—I—ha—ha—hum!’ said Cornleigh.

‘That’s the man—take him! Where’s your handcuffs?’ shouted Godwin.

‘On what charge?’ said Mr. Goring.

‘On what charge?’ asked Cornleigh, naturally repeating, as he had done for so many years.

‘I charge him with attempted murder—he fired at me! come, seize him!’

—Godwin thrust the policeman forward; the constable hesitated and looked towards the magistrate for instructions.

‘I charge *you* with the most brutal assault,’ said Martial. ‘You tried to make the horse trample on Felise’—he held Felise’s arm as if it were necessary to protect her even there.

‘I say arrest him!’ shouted Godwin. ‘Quick—the handcuffs!’

Martial stepped forward with flushed face, but Mr. Goring intervened and held him back.

‘Robert Godwin, leave this house!’ he cried sternly.

‘Leave the house!’ repeated Cornleigh.

‘He is a spendthrift rascal!’ shouted Godwin, pushing to get past Goring, and so at Martial.

Martial tried to get at the fellow.

‘Keep them apart!’ cried Goring.

‘Keep them apart!’ cried Cornleigh, seizing Godwin’s right arm, while the constable held his left.

‘You ruined your cousins — you have brought the Miss Barnards to ruin! You have wasted your substance—you spendthrift rascal!’ screamed the steward.

‘Martial—Martial!’ cried Felise; ‘don’t, dear! don’t strike him—he is insane!’

Martial ceased to press towards the intruder, but Godwin, in his ungovernable fury, dragged Cornleigh and the constable by main force past the window. From the window a stern hand seized the steward’s collar — it was Abner. Godwin turned fiercely towards him.

‘You be the man as killed my Mary,’ said Abner.

‘Liar!’

‘’Twas through you and he’ (nodding towards Cornleigh) ‘as she jumped in the mill-pool. Thank you, miss, for the oak coffin as you give her. Measter Godwin, you knows what you said to Mary in the field once.’

With a great effort Godwin forced himself

free from Cornleigh and the constable, upsetting some flowers in the window; he struck wildly at Abner as he passed—Abner drew back and let the blow expend itself—and rushed at Martial. Felise sprang in front of Martial and received a skirting blow on her arm; she cried out. Martial, Mr. Goring, Cornleigh, and the constable together seized the madman.

Yet such was his immense strength that he dragged them to and fro—he swung them to and fro—the table cracked as their weight pressed on it, the partition-wall trembled as they came against it. Felise beckoned Abner—he ran in and helped. At last the paroxysm decreased; the four of them held Godwin somewhat still, but he continued to shout forth accusations at Martial. They pinioned him against the wall; he ground his teeth and foamed at the mouth, his face was black as night, his colourless eyes glared at Felise.

‘You gave him the horse as a present,’ he

panted. 'Disgraceful! You gave him Ruy as a present, and he—he—he jilted Rosa Wood. He did—there—he was engaged to her—he jilted her!'

'He did not,' said a voice, and Rosa Wood entered. She had knocked several times, but no one answered, and, hearing voices, she had ventured to enter. 'He did not. My father broke off the engagement. It was not Martial.'

'I say arrest him!' shouted Godwin, again struggling.

'You are excited—wait till to-morrow,' said Mr. Goring, hoping to reason with him.

'Wait till to-morrow,' repeated Cornleigh.

'What—you?' cried the steward, as if at last recognising his employer.

'You are excited,' repeated Cornleigh.

'What!' cried Godwin, as if this was too much; that the man he had served so long should turn against and hold him.

'Wait till to-morrow—to-morrow,' repeated Cornleigh.



‘Why, he insulted you on the platform at the meeting,’ said Godwin.

‘Try and be calm,’ said Mr. Goring.

‘Try and be calm,’ repeated Cornleigh.

‘Let me go,’ said Robert, suddenly ceasing to struggle. They left holding him; he walked out of the room and across the lawn, bareheaded in the sunshine.

‘’Twas you as killed my Mary!’ shouted Abner after him; he did not look back.

‘He’ll come to hisself presently,’ said the constable; ‘I’ll just see him home.’ He went after the steward.

As the agitation in the room subsided, Rosa felt the necessity of explaining her appearance.

‘I had something to say to Martial and you,’ she said to Mr. Goring. ‘But I am glad Mr. Cornleigh is here.’

‘I am sorry you found things in such disorder among us,’ said Mr. Goring, offering her a chair, but she continued standing near Felise. She had evidently strung up her resolution, and wished to speak at once.

‘ Martial !’ she said.

‘ Rosa !’ his tone was somewhat constrained.

‘ It is not true that he wasted the Miss Barnards’ money,’ said Rosa, turning a little and speaking towards Mr. Goring. ‘ The truth is just the reverse—he straitened his own means for their sake. Martial ! Martial !’ (she spoke to him by name, but her face was towards Mr. Goring), ‘ I—I did not know till the meeting that you were in such trouble. I—I am very, very sorry—don’t leave the old farm. I will lend you my money—it is four thousand—and you can settle’ (she could not say ‘ marry’)—‘ I mean you can stay. Mr. Cornleigh, you will let him, won’t you ?’

‘ Of course,’ said Cornleigh. ‘ I—I have just mentioned the matter. Barnard, think it over.’

‘ No,’ said Martial, ‘ I cannot do it ; I cannot go back ; I will not submit again.’

‘ Can be arranged,’ said Cornleigh. ‘ Mistake put right, you know ; all a mistake.’

‘Do take it!’ said Rosa. ‘It is my own—no one can stop me; but no one wishes to, for I have told papa. Do take it! it is four thousand—it is plenty.’

‘This is very noble of you,’ said Felise.

‘I hate you!’ whispered Rosa aside.

‘Oh!’ Felise drew back. She understood instantly—a whisper, the sound of which the rest had heard, but had not caught the words, was enough for a woman.

‘I cannot take it, Rosa,’ said Martial. ‘It is too much to thank you for—it is beyond thanks; but I cannot—I would rather work with my hands than return.’

‘But you must have it—I shall not be happy unless. There, I have said it—I will write——’ her voice faltered a little. ‘Mr. Goring, will you come with me?’ Mr. Goring accompanied her to her carriage, she repeated it to him more fully, and begged him to use his influence with Martial, and not to let him leave the old house. He promised to do his best.

Meantime, Cornleigh was fidgeting with

his hat; though he was present, Martial could not quite suppress his feelings, and was perhaps more anxious than absolutely necessary in his inquiries if Felise's arm was hurt. She assured him it was not. Perhaps Cornleigh did not appreciate these attentions to her.

'Must be going,' he said, rising. 'Have engagements. Miss Goring—feel sure I can rely on you to distribute these [the pictures]—worthy people. Good-morning [bowing]—most important, you know—raise aspirations—I—I—ha—hum——' and so exeunt.

Rosa had heard Martial's speech at the meeting in bitter misery; he was leaving his forefathers' home for lack of the money which she possessed so abundantly. If only he had loved her! Her love for him rose stronger than ever—in his ruin, and now that he loved another—he was dearer than ever. This noble woman—noble notwithstanding occasional pettiness—resolved that anyway he should be happy; and after a tearful inter-

view with her father, she drove over to the Manor House ; thence, as Martial was not at home, she conquered her jealousy, and actually followed him to Beechknoll.

Anyway he should be happy—even with *her*. With this money he could marry and stay. The sight of Felise almost staggered her, but she was brave. She could not resist delivering that side-thrust, ‘I hate you!’—still she adhered to her resolution.

By-and-by the constable came back, just to say (and get a glass of ale) that he had seen Mr. Godwin home ; he was quite quiet-like now, and had gone up in his room to do some writing. ‘He will be hisself again to-morrow.’





## CHAPTER XXVIII.



HE yellow moon rising above the hill cast long shadows of the chestnut-trees, and illuminated a section of the barn through the space where the great doors had been. The haze of August seemed to have lingered in the atmosphere after the sun had set, and streaming through it the disk of the moon took a yellowish tint. Thus the harvest colour stayed on into the night; burnt by the sun's heat into the wheat and stubble, as hues are burnt in by the potter's furnace, this hazy yellow remained. There was a faint yellow in the stubble under the moonlight; the dried grass retained a faint hint of it;

the broad roof of the barn was yellowish-red.

Over the fields all things appeared dim and indistinct; the haze of day had settled down into the night. At hand the increasing brilliance of the moon—nearly full—lit up each leaf of the chestnut-trees. A star by the zenith, and one or two low down in the south, shone with the peculiar light of summer—they flickered slowly, and at each scintillation seemed nearly gone; their light was not equal to their size, and there were wide plains of the sky without a visible star.

The owl had gone past, and the bats had exhausted the excitement which seizes them at dusk. There was no sound of any living thing; the wind had fallen, and the low murmur of the brook among its green flags did not reach so far. Under the hill the copse was touched with moonlight down the slope of the tree-tops; their recesses were in the deepest shadow. For while the beams of the moon illumine the side towards it—

that which immediately receives its rays—they are accompanied with little diffused light, and away from the actual impact of the rays there is always a darkness. Each leaf of the chestnut-trees on the side towards the east was brightly lighted, but behind each leaf there was shadow. By day the sunbeams would have gone, as it were, round and under the leaf, and there would have been light everywhere; by night there was a lit-up surface in front, and darkness behind.

Ruy lay as he had fallen, and was stiffening in the moonbeams before the chestnut-tree. Two night-crows were busy upon him; his eyes were already gone.

The crows moved uneasily at the sound of footsteps in the narrow lane, but did not rise till a man emerged from the shadow and came towards the tree. Silently the crows flew away into the dark by the copse; there were dots of white, too, now moving among the thistles by the verge of the wood—these



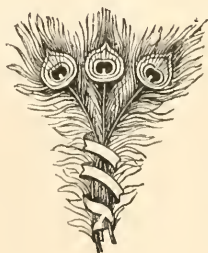
were the white tails of rabbits rushing away to their burrows.

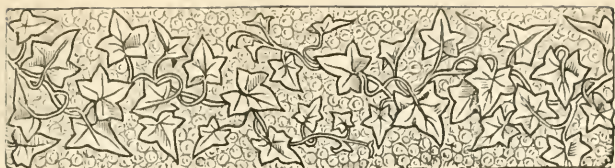
Robert Godwin walked straight to the chestnut-tree, and, pausing on the spot where he had thrown Felise, drew from his pocket one of the old flintlock pistols he had so carefully cleaned. Without a moment's delay, and in the most matter-of-fact manner, he placed the muzzle of the pistol against his breast and touched the trigger. There was a flash as the powder ignited in the pan, but the charge did not explode. At the flash a bird fluttered out from the tree into the night.

Godwin did not hesitate in his fatal purpose because of this accidental reprieve from his own violence. He opened the pan and poured fresh gunpowder into it from some which he carried in a screw of newspaper in his waistcoat-pocket. With a pin he cleaned the touch-hole, and then patiently thrust the grains of powder as well as he could into the aperture, in order that the flame might next time communicate with the charge.

Some time since he had purchased two ounces of loose gunpowder at an ironmonger's in Maasbury—cheap powder, such as is sold for birdkeepers' guns; he would not go to the expense of Curtis and Harvey's diamond-grain. He did not quite know when he bought it whether it was to be used against himself or Martial, or against both.

When he thought he had primed the pistol he closed the pan, again put the muzzle to his breast, and pulled the trigger. The bullet entered his heart and he fell dead; his face struck a bunch of yellow fungi growing in the grass, and lay still there.





## CHAPTER XXIX.



HE had not stayed to look at the stars, or to consider before his deed in the shadow of the chestnut-tree. His purpose was death, and he had walked to it straight without looking to the right or to the left. The dim outline of the hills was nothing to him; he had seen in the hills nothing but mounds of chalk in life, why gaze at them on the eve of death? In the years of his life he had never lifted his eyes to the stars except to see if the sky was clear from cloud.

There was no meaning to him in the stars, or in the hills, or in the sea whose long low surge beat the beach beyond them. The

idea of immortality had never been grasped, nor the idea of anything beyond the material and tangible. It is questionable whether he had ever grasped even the idea of a gas, as it is invisible—that which he could see and touch was all that Godwin knew.

There are many who repeat words of the like import freely, and have no conception of their meaning any more than veritable parrots.

Godwin was true to himself, and repeated no words the import of which he did not understand.

He had been insane when he attacked Felise; he had been insane when he struggled so violently in the room at Beechknoll; but he was not insane at the moment of his death.

The fit had passed from him, and he saw things clearly. As thunder dispels the heaviness of the atmosphere, so the sultry gloom of his brain had been dispelled by that vehement passage of hate and personal

violence. His brooding burst out in uncontrollable action, and immediately afterwards his mind was relieved.

He knew then that the last nine years of his life had been in vain ; that he might as well have been dead those nine years ; that he might as well have been dead from the very moment he beheld her, and his unattainable love began.

How powerful, and yet how uncontrollable by ourselves, is the influence of our life upon the lives of others ! To Robert Godwin the life—the mere existence of Felise had been a terrible fate. For aught you can tell, your existence may be a fate to another—another's to you.

From that instant he might as well have been dead, for his existence since had merely been an increasing madness of desire for the unattainable.

If anyone could have argued with him and pointed out that however great his trouble now, in time—slow time—the trouble would

wear away; in time—slow time—the memory itself would become dull and the vivid impressions fade; that he would come to live again, and to go about his duties as of old—then Robert Godwin would have laughed in derision.

He did not want his trouble to wear away, nor to return to his former self. So deep and so organic was the change produced by inalienable passion that his former condition before it commenced, even in his unhappiness, appeared to him worthless. He would not have returned to it if he could have done so.

The moment he came to himself and saw how hopeless his life had been these nine years past, he was dead. The act had not been committed, but he was dead of intent. He saw that, according to the strict logic of his nature, he should have slain himself nine years since.

The absence of imagination prevented him from amusing himself with possibilities of

another life in another land, of finding a face some day in another country which might in part be to him as this one had been. This absence of imagination prevented him from seeing anything that was not immediately before him ; it slew him, but it rendered him faithful to his passion and to himself in his death.

His death atoned for nothing. The manner and the time of it were absolutely and purely selfish. He died for himself and for no other.

It rendered no reparation—even imaginary or sentimental—for poor Mary Shaw ; it had no appearance even of sacrifice for the sake of those whom he had so harshly treated ; there was no redeeming regret. There was no nobility, however mistaken, nor elevation in it ; with no thought of any other but himself he died, and it seemed to be no matter to the earth any more than the death of the horse beside which he lay.

By-and-by the night-crows returned to the

carcase of the horse in the moonbeams before the chestnut-tree.

Godwin had left his papers in perfect order, notwithstanding the fact that he had done no pen-work for some time. They were all sorted and filed, and a memorandum had been drawn up stating where the money in hand was to be found, and directing the person who should be deputed for the purpose how to make up the accounts from the sorted papers. Not one sixpence of Cornleigh Cornleigh's money was missing, so faithful a servant had he had. The mechanical precision with which this had been done was characteristic of the man.

This was the writing which he had gone upstairs to do, as the constable said, quite quiet and like a lamb. It had occupied him—with intervals of thought—till dusk. He sat awhile after it was finished, then took one of the pistols from the attic where he had accidentally found them, and walked to the barn. As for the act, it scarcely took



three minutes till he was stretched lifeless with his face crushing the yellow fungi.

The silence about the chestnuts and the barn was unbroken till in the morning the rooks awoke in the wood on the hill and flew out over the fields.

Godwin's will had been drawn up years before ; it left his property to his sister, with the strictest proviso that in case of her marriage the money should devolve upon her children. Beyond receiving the interest, her power over it was little. His estate, real and personal, was estimated at about twenty thousand pounds ; an immense sum to be accumulated under such conditions, for sums must be measured by circumstances. That which is a trifle to the financial monarchs of London is a vast amount in the country. What grinding self-denial, what harsh economy to himself and others that twenty thousand pounds represented !

When it became known in the morning that Godwin had destroyed himself, Mr.

Goring and Martial reproached themselves for not at least having endeavoured to obtain his arrest. The circumstances of the assault on Felise, if sworn to before a magistrate, would have secured his detention, and might thus have saved his life.

That they should have thought thus, again shows how little we understand even those who live close to us, and whose actions appear to give a clue to their minds. Had Robert Godwin been confined in a cell for a month, or six months, it would not have altered his purpose. At the first opportunity he would have carried out his determination. Martial had been eager to bring him to answer for his conduct, but Felise had begged so hard that if possible the matter might not be made public, he had submitted.

Artistically speaking, Robert Godwin ought not to have committed suicide; he should have removed himself in some other way—he might have gone off to America, or disappeared. He rather spoils the narrative,

giving a cold deadly sensation to the finale ; but he really could not help it—it was his nature.

Martial received a notification through Cornleigh's solicitor, that if he would reconsider his resolution matters could be arranged for him. Either the Squire was advised to make friends with the enemy, or it was feared that Martial's example might spread, and others leave. Too many had gone already. There seemed the greatest reluctance to part with a tenant, a state of sentiment which to the older farmers contrasted singularly with the treatment they had received a very few years ago.

Rosa wrote him a letter repeating her noble offer ; but despite these persuasions Martial remained unmoved, and took steps to leave the old place. Generous as Rosa's offer was, he could not endure the idea of marrying with the aid of her money. \* Nothing could induce him to accept it ; Rosa had not even this mournful pleasure.

What he should do when the stock was sold, and he stepped for the last time over the threshold of the house his forefathers had dwelt in, Martial had but the vaguest idea. While he was considering one plan and another the thing was settled for him.

A report of his speech at the Maasbury meeting got into the hands of his former London friends, who were so delighted with his independent spirit and opinions—particularly as these chanced to fit their own—that they sent for him to town. The former understanding was renewed, and the old quarrel forgotten. As the years had stolen on, the old folk too began to consider the end; they had no other natural heir but Martial, and with him personally had never disagreed.

An allowance—a very handsome one—was offered to him; but he refused to accept it unless employed in some way. The upshot was he was engaged in the design department of the great firm of marine engineers in


which his friends were the principals. Here his ingenious turn of mind soon found scope. His time was really his own, and he was naturally often at Beechknoll. His friends have given him to understand that at the next election, if it can be arranged, he will be put forward to contest Maasbury independently.

Before the golden tints had faded from the trees, Felise and Martial were married.





## CHAPTER XXX.

UT of the dusk which lingered on the earth, while in the sky the light was approaching, a lark sprang up and, soaring above the darkness, sang by Beechknoll. It was a very early morning in May, and Felise, in her dressing-gown, had stolen quietly to the window, and sat there watching the dawn. Martial was sleeping. They had come down for awhile to be with Mr. Goring, who was lonely even among his trees. The man slept; the woman, wakeful in her happiness, stole to the window where she had so often sat of old time.

Upon the ground there lay a stratum of darkness which seemed scarcely to rise so

high as the eaves—a darkness visible like a mist, thickening in the corners and by the trees. Through this the lark soaring sang in the clear air above.

Afar along the ridge of the hills there was a white light—the dawn—which imperceptibly rushed rapidly through the atmosphere, not only rising to the zenith but spreading horizontally over the fields. The trees that were towards the east began to have beneath them the dim outline of their own shadow on the grass. Already these dim outlines of masses of foliage shadowed on the sward were visible through the sinking stratum of darkness.

Another lark sang at a distance, and then a third ; their notes fell with the last rays of the stars. So long as the night-blue tint of the sky continued the stars shone ; as the dawn-beams shot upwards and increased in brightness this night-blue tint began to change, and with it the stars retired into the depths of space. There was a gleam like dew on the pearls lying by the mirror ; Martial had re-

deemed them, and she had worn them the previous evening.

In a moment, as it seemed to Felise, the darkness on the ground vanished, and all things appeared distinct and clear. Really the change had been gradually advancing—in appearance it seemed effected almost suddenly.

Immediately a thrush commenced to call in the thickets that had been planted so abundantly about the house, a second answered; a blackbird called; then, as if at a signal, the whole choir began to sing. There was a score of them, thrushes and blackbirds; all started at once; their chorus burst upon the dawn.

The stars were gone, and the deep azure of the morning filled the sky. By the ridge of the hill the white light shone brightly; above it a purple mingled luminously with the blue; towards the zenith the loveliness of the colour is not to be written.

The man slept, but the woman, wakeful in



happiness, sat by the window. The dawn shone on her face, and upon the beautiful golden hair drooping to her knees. Her hands were folded, the same attitude in great happiness as in inconsolable sorrow ; the dawn glistened upon the tears in her eyes.

Her feeling was perhaps the deeper because he slept, because she was alone and yet with him. She did not strive, womanlike, to mould her feelings to his mood—she gave way to her own.

Her joy was so great because her life was fulfilled. So soon in the spring-time of youth her life was fulfilled ; there was nothing more beyond to strive or hope for. It was the joy of intense rest in possession.

The man knows no such feeling. To him the joy of existence is in pursuit and conquest ; while he is succeeding, while pursuing and gaining in pursuit he rejoices—the mere possession is little or nothing. The more active his days—the greater his scheme of

the future—so much the more he loves the woman he has chosen.

But the woman has no future. Her all is here. In possession is everything; in that her life is fulfilled.

As the miser gloats over his gold, not for what it will purchase, but for its own sake, so the woman gloats over possession, not for any future success, but because he is hers now.

Of what the day might bring forth she thought nothing, whether it should be profit or failure, so long only as he was there. Of what the years might have in store, wealth or poverty, concerned her nothing so long as he was with her.

A pure rest had come to her life.

Except to love and to love fulfilled, and then only to woman, is such rest ever given. For the heart, and the hand, and the mind of a man are for ever driving onwards, and no profundity of rest ever comes to his inmost consciousness. At dawn he looks forward to the noonday.

So that true and restful happiness is for woman only, though it is given to her by man.

A golden breath came up among the bright whiteness of the light over the ridge of the hill ; there were scarlet streaks, the lips of the morning. In the glorious beauty of the sunrise her heart brimmed to the full of love.

‘ Felise.’

Her answer was a kiss amid the dew of loving tears.

THE END.

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