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THE
DEAN'S DAUGHTER;

OR,

THE DAYS WE LIVE IN.

BY MRS. GORE,

AUTHORESS OF

"MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS," "MRS. ARMYTAGE," "THE BANKER'S WIFE,"
&c. &c.

"Thus we play the fools with the time; and the spirits of the wise sit in the
clouds and mock us."—SHAKSPEARE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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THE DEAN'S DAUGHTER.

CHAPTER I.

Time from her form hath ta'en away but little of its
 grace,
His touch of thought hath dignified the beauty of her face,
Yet she might mingle in the dance where maidens gaily
 trip,
So bright is still her dark grey eye, so beautiful her lip !
The faded form is often mark'd with sorrow more than
 years,
The wrinkle on the cheek may be the course of secret
 traces,
The mournful lip may murmur of a love it ne'er confest,
And the dimness of the eye betray a heart that cannot
 rest,
But *she* hath been a happy wife. The lover of her youth
May proudly claim the smile that pays the trial of his
 truth.

T. H. BAYLEY.

VOL. III.

B

WILLIAM MORDAUNT was provoked with himself, on reflection, for having allowed the observations of an errand-man of the fine ladies, like Tomlinson, to ruffle his temper; especially when he knew, from his own knowledge that, while Hargreave was in town to complete an extensive purchase of land in the neighbourhood of Dursley, Margaret and her children were on a visit at Mildenhall Abbey; for though Sir Richard acceded, with his usual kindness, to the Viscount's desire that the two young families should grow up in cousinly amity, there was something in the stagnant atmosphere of a house governed by Anne Mordaunt and her husband, which rendered an annual visit to the Abbey a penance much to be avoided.

“Margaret is safe and happy at Mildenhall,” mused William. “I don't wonder at Hargreave's shirking a place where, to say nothing of its intrinsic dulness, he is sure to be humbugged out of some piece of patronage or preferment. Reginald would not let Satan himself escape unmulcted, if he once crossed his cloven feet under

his dinner-table. But Dick will be going down to fetch away his wife in a few days; and I will take the opportunity to accompany him and satisfy myself, by personal observation, that Tomlinson's insinuations are, as usual, unfounded."

Many years had elapsed—nearly ten—since, in their colloquy at Oak Hill, immediately after the death of the Dean, William expressed to Hargreave his desire that they could visit together the ancient seat of the Mordaunts. By a strange chance, though both had severally paid frequent visits to the Mildenhalls, that wish was still unrealised.

"I go as seldom as I can. There is not a spark of real love between us," said William to his brother-in-law, as, on the appointed day, they travelled together towards the Abbey, (which, most characteristically, was still unattainable by railroad).—"Anne Mordaunt's pinched lips and cold grey eyes chill me to the marrow. I always fancy in them a suppressed smile of triumph, when she displays her seven stunted little olive-branches—which, puny as they are,

exclude me from all prospect of succession to the family honours."

"A wretched race, indeed; justifying half that is urged against consanguineous alliances. I confess disliking her ladyship as much as you do—though not on the same grounds. I have never forgiven her neglect of Margaret, when left a friendless orphan. And if I needed more to make me detest her, it would be the aspect of Mildenhall village; with its horde of little school-less savages, wallowing in winter in the mire, and dozing in summer in the shade. Your father built schools there. But the Mildenhalls, when they sold the next presentation to the living, exacted,—yes, positively exacted,—that the school-houses should be pulled down!"

"Eteignez les lumières, et allumez le feu,"

quoted William. "I no longer wonder at the number of incendiary fires which blazed last year on the estate. The offices have refused all further insurance of my brother's farms, ex-

cept at a ruinous premium. Well! we have one comfort.—Margaret gets on famously with Lady Mildenhall.”

“Margaret gets on with anybody. Margaret would not be at the trouble of dissent, if Lord Mildenhall were to advocate a bread-tax, a knowledge-tax, or the re-establishment of catholic restrictions.”

“Laissez faire et laissez passer,

is a system that saves a world of trouble,” said William, laughing. “But, for the love of high art and low, admire the effect of the evening sun streaming over yonder glade!—What a golden landscape!—And then, people abuse the sunshine of Cuyp and Both as exaggerated!”

“A beautiful spot—a truly beautiful spot!” replied Hargreave, as the venerable outline of the Abbey came in sight, through a vista of unequalled woodland majesty; and involuntarily a sigh burst from his lips, when he reflected how meanly the outlay of eighty

thousand pounds, would enable his patched and garbled pallazzo at Dursley, to vie with the solid magnificence of the olden time! On nearing the mansion, they rolled through a succession of Gothic gateways, which might have almost passed for triumphal arches, into a court-yard, the time-bleached stones of whose pavement were white as marble.

On one side, this extensive court, overlooked by the north front of the old Abbey, was divided by a balustrade of pierced stonework from the park, whose ancient oaks extended their gigantic arms, as if to overshadow the partition. Round one of them was a circular bench—the least beautiful, because the oldest of the trees;—its branches, staghorned at the summit, having almost the appearance of being scathed by lightning.

The aged tree was, however, dearly prized and carefully tended, even by the present Viscount, rarely as he noticed trees, except for the value of the timber. For it was said to have been planted, a sapling, by a hand no less venerable than that of Margaret Beau-

fort, Countess of Richmond, one of the benefactresses of the ancient Abbey. A century later, the Virgin Queen herself was known to have rested under it, after the labours of the chase, when on a visit at Theobalds.

As is frequently the case with aged trees thus cared for, the lower branches still retained their richness of foliage; and when Sir Richard Hargreave's carriage turned into the court-yard, two persons, apparently Lord and Lady Mildenhall, were seated on the bench in earnest conversation. Little William Hargreave, playing at their feet, was busily counting over a basketful of chestnuts.

But no! it could not be the Viscount. For as the sound of carriage-wheels intimated the approach of guests, Lord Mildenhall suddenly emerged from the porch.

"We fancied you would not be here till to-morrow," said he, as they drew up before the door. And while he extended to Sir Richard, the greeting which his brother had been the first to jump out and receive, William

hastily traversed the court towards the balustrade, and vaulted over it in a moment.

As he suspected, Lady Hargreave was the person seated under the oak tree, with her child playing at her feet. But the cry of joyful salutation with which he was about to hail her, died upon his lips, when the companion with whom she had been so earnestly engaged, turning suddenly from her to the new comer, displayed to his astonished eyes the features of Herbert Fanshawe!

What business had he there at such a time?

A question best answered by stating the concomitant circumstances attending Lady Hargreave's visit to the Abbey.

Never a very lively abode, the gloominess of the rambling old house, ill-tended by an inadequate establishment, appeared on the present occasion unusually oppressive. Two of Lady Mildenhall's sickly progeny were laid up; and Margaret, though reassured by their medical attendant, entertained an indescribable

dread lest their malady might be infectious. Between her own lively children and their formal cousins, there existed small good-will. The little Mordaunts were grudging and peevish; the Hargreaves perhaps a little overbearing; and Margaret's chief study was to keep them friends by keeping them apart.

She had been ten days in the house. A stately dinner party or two, composed of country neighbours invited with most inhospitable reluctance, had alone enlivened her stay; and, but for her pleasure in rambling with the children over the park, and transferring to ivory certain family faces of olden time,—worthies, by means of whose miniature likenesses, she hoped to familiarise her son and daughter with the names and exploits of the Mordaunts,—she would have become more a victim to *ennui* at Mildenhall Abbey, than she had recently found herself at Bardsel Tower.

One morning, a day or two after the first dinner party, she was seated in the picture-gallery, near one of its embayed windows; occu-

pied in copying the fair features and rich coif of Lady Hameltrude de Mordant, as pourtrayed by the circumstantial pencil of Holbein: mentally comparing it with a picture at Hephanger, of one of the Bourne family, supposed to be of the same date; which she deeply regretted, never having been allowed to copy. She would have liked to possess it at Dursley, as a supplement to the collection she was now making for her favourite boudoir.

“Nothing brings back past scenes and recollections more vividly than pictures,” moralised Lady Mordaunt, as, with her cheeks flushed by interest in her occupation, she continued to raise her eyes towards the mildewed canvas before her, then drop them while she proceeded to retouch the ivory. And, following up this idea, she recalled to mind the beautiful sketch of her mother, by Lawrence, which had brightened the walls of Bassingdon Parsonage, and, at a later period, the still more melancholy library of the Deanery of R——. The drawing was now hanging in her dressing-room at Dursley; and

it suddenly occurred to her how, at her husband's and Herbert Fanshawe's first memorable visit to the Dean, Herbert had been charmed by the high-bred loveliness of the face; and how, at his second visit, he had called Sir Claude's attention to the masterly sketch; probably to withdraw his notice from their own courtship.

The whole scene rose before her. For years it had been dismissed from her mind — as something pernicious. Even now, it recurred, as a mere link in a chain of broken recollections. — She remembered how fondly Herbert Fanshawe had whispered to her, while his father was examining the picture. She remembered how nervous she had felt, lest her own should perceive what was going on, and question her after the departure of his guests. — How Herbert Fanshawe had loved her *then*. — Yes! whatever he might have turned out in after life, — cold, calculating, *blasé*, treacherous, — he, *then*, had truly, *truly* loved her.

At that moment, Lady Hargreave raised her eyes, because some intervening object shut out

from her work the always imperfect light of the gothic window ; and lo, they fell upon—could she deceive herself—was she still the dupe of her reverie—they fell upon—Herbert Fanshawe !

Self-contained as usual, his greeting was politely respectful.

“ I come, Lady Hargreave, as a delegate from Lord Mildenhall,” said he, with a slight bow. “ He is anxious you should break through your customary rule of ‘ no luncheon.’ The Hartwells are here. I drove over with them from the Priory, where I arrived on Tuesday, on my way to Morton Castle ; and now I am on the spot, my friend Mildenhall claims the performance of a promise I made thousands of years ago, at Florence, that I would spend a day or two at the Abbey to examine his missals.”

“ You have complied then ?” inquired Margaret, a little startled. “ Will not the Hartwells be offended ?”

“ On the contrary. They were prepared for my departure this afternoon ; but in another direction. The Colonel undertakes to send over

my valet and luggage; unless, indeed, instead of joining the luncheon-party below, you condemn me to depart as I came."

"I am not the hostess here," said Margaret, coldly. "Lady Mildenhall joined of course in my brother's invitation."

"Most kindly. But I thought—I feared—" He hesitated so significantly, that she was forced to expedite his explanation by an interrogatory glance.

"I feared, in short, that *you* might be less indulgent. I am aware that, on learning last year that I was a guest at Morton Castle, you suddenly sent an excuse."

Margaret could not refrain from a smile. "I sent an excuse, one day last winter, to Morton Castle," said she, "because my little girl was attacked with influenza. But till this moment, on my word, I never so much as knew you were acquainted with the Fitzmortons."

"You have probably forgotten that I accompanied Fitzmorton to the East?"

"I remember it now you recall it to

my mind. But it is so long ago. Nine years!"—

"*My* memory is apparently better than yours. *My* life has been, in the interim, less incidental—less happy,"—added he, in a low voice. "With me, there has been nothing to obliterate early impressions."

Half-angry, half-abashed, Lady Hargreave busied herself in putting up her drawing materials. "If you will kindly inform my brother that I will be with Colonel and Miss Hartwell in a moment," said she coldly, "I will finish my arrangements as quickly as I can, and join you in the dining-room."

Thus dismissed, the intruder made a precipitate retreat; nor was there one objectionable feeling mingled with Lady Hargreave's sincere regret, that the party at Mildenhall Abbey should have received so ill-timed an addition. Nothing doubting that Fanshawe had heard from the Hartwells of her being on a visit to her brother, previous to starting from the Priory, she felt provoked at Lord Mildenhall's unusual exercise

of hospitality. Tepid as were his brotherly susceptibilities, he must surely, in former years, have heard her name coupled with that of Herbert Fanshawe, in a manner to render their sojourn under the same roof a cause of annoyance to one and embarrassment to both.

But Lord Mildenhall was not a man of very vivid reminiscences. Had he been so, it would have been difficult for him to converse, as he did, with his brother and sister of their youthful days; as though he had always been a model of fraternal affection. He had pressed Mr. Fanshawe to stay, simply because, having once hasarded a general invitation to him to visit the Abbey, it was less trouble to pay off the engagement while Lady Hargreave was staying in the house. He even apologised to Fanshawe, when the ladies had left the dinner-table on the day of his arrival, for having betrayed him into the *ennui* of a family party; more particularly, as he feared that Lady Mildenhall, having a sick nursery to attend to, would be able to give him very little of her time.

With the same memorable tact, he entreated his sister to aid him in making the house agreeable to his guest.

“Anne is so much engaged with the children,” said he, “that I reckon upon you, Margaret, to assist me in entertaining this fine gentleman, who will be a dead weight on our hands. It won't be labour lost, I can tell you. Fanshawe is a personage in his way: a great man at Woburn and Wynyard and Nuneham, and all that sort of thing:—a rising man, too, who may turn out a useful friend hereafter to the boys.”

At the littleness of her brother Reginald's motives, Margaret had long ceased to marvel. The only thing that *did* astonish her, was the court paid to him by his sagacious guest. Even to Lady Mildenhall, even to her little daughters, whining like guinea-pigs, and blooming like marigolds, his assiduities were as devoted as those paid by aspiring ensigns in the guards to some superannuated ambassadress. It is true one of the ungainly girls was Lady Hargreave's

god-child, and name-child: and he was never weary of calling her "Margaret—dear little Margaret." There was evidently a latent charm for him in the name of Margaret Mordaunt.

In that instance only, however, was there the slightest hint of recurrence to the past. He contrived to make the conversation as general as possible. It was not easy to start a subject in which the Mildenhalls could interest themselves. But Fanshawe was able to give them news of Italian cities and Italian people, whom they had seen and known together; and his descriptions of Spain and Portugal, which he had since visited, were so graphic and so original, that Margaret was often forced to lay down her tapestry to listen. Even when compelled by the Viscount's solemn catechization to enter into the ticklish chapter of French politics and Parisian society, Fanshawe was not betrayed into those flippancies of wicked wit, which at one time constituted his mother-tongue. He contrived at once to edify and to amuse.

"Quite an altered man," said Lady Mildenhall,

to her sister-in-law, after duly be-lauding the strenuous efforts made by Fanshawe, the following day, to entertain her jog-trot country neighbours. "It would be very kind of you Margaret if you would consent to accompany him on horseback to-morrow; as he wants to try the bay mare which Mildenhall has offered to sell him. Your brother is forced to attend the Quarterly Sessions; and one can't expect Mr. Fanshawe to spend the whole morning alone."

"My sister, Lady Hargreave, will be delighted to ride with you, if you choose to try the mare," was Lord Mildenhall's parting word next morning to his guest, as he stepped into his phaeton after breakfast;—a promise he was partly justified in making, for Margaret had been too much startled by the proposal of her sister-in-law to offer serious opposition. "Margaret is a famous horsewoman, and will show you the way across country, if you are inclined to visit the grounds at Castle Leeming, of which Miss Hartwell was talking to you in such raptures the other day. Margaret! if you go so far as Castle Leeming,

be sure you do not allow Mr. Fanshawe to overlook the pinetum."

Unwilling to betray the uneasy consciousness under which she laboured, Lady Hargreave tacitly assented. It would have been too great a compliment to her companion to evince mistrust of herself or *him*. They went therefore as completely alone together as if an attendant groom had not been following them, at twenty yards distance; and Margaret's momentary embarrassment speedily disappeared as they proceeded along one of those beautiful by-roads, through wooded glades and over breezy commons, which so many an English estate contains within its favoured demesne. Both were apparently occupied with the charming variations of landscape passing before their eyes; vying with each other in pointing out striking bits of scenery, to be remembered and sketched at leisure.

Rarely do people to whom it is undesirable to be seen together, set forth upon a ride or walk, whether across Stainmoor, or Dartmoor, or any other depopulated region,—that they are not met

by a detachment of country neighbours, to whom the encounter affords an incident to be marvelously enlarged upon. The far from happy pair had not passed the lodge gates of the Abbey, before they were forced to quit the road for the turf, in order to make way for the outriders of the most censorious dowager in the county; and in the shadiest part of Mildenhurst Hanger, where the badness of the road compelled them to ride close and leisurely (and those who ride close and leisurely usually engage in earnest conversation,) who should appear, in a sudden turning of the road where the long ferns hung mingled with protruding roots of the stately pine trees; but Miss Hartwell, ambling on her pony by the side of her father; an old Colonel of the Line on half pay, renowned as having caused three duels by his tale-bearing.

Compelled to rein up and parley, a thousand civil salutations were exchanged between them; which did not prevent Colonel Hartwell from observing to his daughter, as soon as they were out of sight and hearing, "Mr. Fanshawe has

made rapid progress with Lord Mildenhall's handsome sister. Three days ago they were scarcely on bowing acquaintance!" Nor did the young lady fail to comment upon the fact in a letter addressed next day to her brother—a prating Captain in the household brigade.—A *tête-à-tête* detected in Mildenhurst Hanger was a great fact in a neighbourhood so unfrequented; and Miss Hartwell, already piqued at Fanshawe's precipitate departure from the Priory, took care that the story should lose nothing in her version.

Of such slight materials are concocted half the scandals that distract modern society!—A word more or less—a significant look more or less—in the relation of some equally harmless circumstance, has been known to sow irretrievable dissension between those whom God hath joined, and create irremediable heartbreak in many a happy home.

CHAPTER II.

La femme protestante, à l'extérieur discret, soumis, au langage mesuré, dont la coquetterie n'est trahie par aucune grâce extérieure, donne l'idée la plus austère du mariage sous cette forme. Une espèce de circonscription de la femme dans les devoirs de mère, empêche le développement de l'esprit de société. Il n'y a pas dans les pays protestants ce qu'on appelle esprit ; ce mot rapide, qui étincelle, jété vivement et renvoyé de même. Les femmes protestantes dissertent comme dans leur prêche. Elles ne causent pas.—LA PRINCESSE GHKA.

HERBERT FANSHAWÉ's project of a visit to Mildenhall Abbey, for the purpose of renewing his intimacy with the dignified Lady Hargreave, who appeared to have so little in common with his tender, timid Margaret of other days,—the

slighted daughter of the ruined Dean,—had succeeded beyond his hopes—almost beyond his wishes. For there was more of curiosity than tenderness in his sentiments towards her. In hearts like his, the flame of early love deposits only dust and ashes, easily dispersed by the gales of active life. His plan for seeing her again had arisen spontaneously, on learning from the Hartwells that Lady Hargreave was staying in their neighbourhood. The bustling times we live in, with their express trains and electric telegraphs, are, in fact, too busy for deeply premeditated plotting. People sin upon impulse; but they do not, like our prosy forefathers, approach a crime as their family mansion was approached, through a long tedious avenue, looking it stedfastly in the face.

When Fanshawe perceived with what culpable stupidity the Mildenhalls favoured his *tête-à-têtes* with his former love, he felt ashamed for them, and of himself. He had exceeded his original intentions by endeavouring to explain to his once-loved Margaret much that was really

inexplicable ; and the most eloquent of Solicitors-General could scarcely have attested his pleading by tears that appeared more genuine. But this was enough. He desired no more. He resolved to be wise in time. He would not be run away with, either by his feelings, or the vicious mare which his friend Mildenhall wanted to impose upon him. Sir Richard and William Mordaunt were expected on the Saturday evening. On Saturday morning, he would be off.

But, as has been just observed, in these days of general acceleration, the unforeseen generally predominates. On Friday afternoon, the husband and brother made their appearance by a fast train, in time to find him familiarly seated by the side of Lady Hargreave, under Queen Elizabeth's oak ; entranced, as Leicester may have been on the same favoured spot, by the side of that favourite-favouring princess.

At first, the delinquent was nearly as much vexed, as William Mordaunt was startled. But

the general greeting that ensued was cordial enough to place him at ease; and Lord Mildenhall being, like most matter-of-fact country gentlemen, unrivalled at an explanation, Mr. Fanshawe's accidental visit to the Abbey was soon placed in the clearest light. The three friends of other days, if they met together by chance, were bound in decency to accept the meeting as a stroke of good fortune; and, strange to tell, the extension of their party rendered that evening the pleasantest which Fanshawe had yet spent at the Abbey.

Margaret seemed raised in importance by the affectionate homage of her husband and brother. Even the Mildenhalls were less stiff and unsocial under the influence of Sir Richard's simple-hearted good humour, and Mordaunt's reckless mockery. The latter, indeed, was as a boy out of school, like other men of eager temperament released from official duties. After coffee, the little party drew closer round the fire, and the vast saloon ceased to be gloomy as a catacomb.

Following the fashion of railway travellers, the new comers had brought down a few new books : the last number (always the best) of one of Dickens's life-like stories, and the last number (always the bitterest) of the Westminster Review. William took up a paper-knife, to prepare it for his sister. "I own I never read reviews," observed Herbert Fanshawe disdainfully ; "for the same reason that, in Russia, I never adopted the national custom of a snack ten minutes before dinner : its piquancy spoils one's appetite for the more solid meal."

"The simile don't hold good, Fanshawe," retorted Mordaunt. "It may be compulsory on a man to go through three courses, but certainly not through three volumes ; and I am thankful for a smart *résumé*, which, nine times in ten, supersedes all necessity for the effort. I read the Edinburgh and Quarterly as I do the *précis* of the debates ; simply to spare time and trouble."

"The reviews, moreover, often save one

the expense of purchasing some inferior work," added Lord Mildenhall, gravely.

"Listen to Mildenhall!" exclaimed his brother, laying down his paper-knife to clasp his hands in amazement. "He who, regarding new books, like new bread, as unwholesome food, buys nothing but a Bradshaw or an almanack! He who is supposed to be the identical peer of the realm convicted of citing the destruction of the Alexandrian Library as one of the greatest actions of antiquity! Nay, he is supposed to hold that the Bodleian and British Museum ought to be burned down, by act of parliament, once or twice in a century!"

"How can you say such things, William!" exclaimed Lady Mildenhall, as incapable of understanding a joke as a professor of mathematics. "I am certain your brother never proposed burning down *any thing*! Few people have suffered more from incendiarism than *we* have!"

A retort about setting the Thames on fire

naturally suggested itself. But Fanshawe, whose cue it was to propitiate the heads of the family, sententiously observed that the opinion imputed to Lord Mildenhall, was, he confessed, in some degree his own. "We cannot expect our grandchildren," said he, "to learn all we are preparing for them, in addition to all we have learned in our time. The world has stifled itself by over-study of the past. By poring incessantly over books written chiefly because the authors have consulted other books as their authority, we become the copies of a copy. Miracles might have been accomplished by this time, if, instead of looking exclusively backward, men of genius had dared to look forward. What avail to you and I, for instance, the wars of Greece and Rome? To our age of transition and transaction they afford neither precedent nor example. Thanks to steam guns and minie rifles, *nous avons changé tout cela.*"

"You consider, then," retorted William Mordaunt ironically, "that if the Romans had

not studied Greek, and that if Europe (that grand Republic of Sovereignities) had not learned its Latin grammar, we should at this moment be making tours in diving-bells and balloons, in two unexplored elements ; instead of accomplishing our paltry fifty miles an hour, on vulgar *terra-firma* ?”

“I consider that pedantry and bigotry kept philosophy out of play, or out of work, half a dozen centuries longer than was good for the greatest comfort of the greatest number,” replied Fanshawe.

“I am often tempted to come to the same conclusion,” observed Sir Richard, “when my clerk of the works at Dursley, snubs me with his seven orders of architecture. Why are my library windows to be measured out to me by Palladio or Vitruvius ? Why am I, in foggy Britain, to adopt forms of decoration adapted to the sunny atmosphere of Greece ? If the ruins of the ancient world had become dust like their originators, we should have been compelled to invent constructions, destined perhaps

to surpass what we now worship as incomparable."

"The disease brings its own remedy," observed Herbert Fanshawe. "Having, by force of imitation, dwarfed our conceptions into insignificance, we produce nothing likely to command the imitation of future ages."

"No chef-d'œuvres, perhaps," replied Sir Richard. "But look at the average superiority of our works.—Look at our civil engineering. Look at the progress of the masses. Look at the wholesome improvements, moral and physical, with which the present century has endowed them!"

Lord Mildenhall shrugged his shoulders, muttering something about cures being still wanting for the potatoe-blight and the cholera; to which nobody listened but his wife.

"I am afraid the present century has abstracted more than it has supplied," said Herbert Fanshawe, anxious to keep up a conversation which enabled him to fix his eyes unnoticed on the beautiful woman seated opposite

to him, bending over her tapestry work, half hidden by her husband's elbow-chair. "Society has lost its sociability—pleasure its elegance. The great game of politics has dwindled from the dignity of whist, into a boisterous game of ninepins. Literature is now a trade: art a speculation. Everybody is scrambling for distinctions out of his sphere; and the diffusion of knowledge seems to have vulgarised rather than refined the public mind."

"Of that," argued Sir Richard gravely, "we are still unskilled to judge. We have planted the acorn—we see the sapling thriving. Our children's children can alone derive shelter from the perfect oak."

"Vide Sir Richard Hargreave's last speech at the Mechanics' Institute of R——!" cried William Mordaunt, laughing. "And when your educated populace, my dear Dick, has succeeded in discovering a fifth-rate planet, or the animalculæ which form the parasites of the mite, or some gas, fouler than the foulest which pollutes the Thames, (instead of forging

wills or bank-notes as my brother Mildenhall fully anticipates), let my grand-nephews, in due gratitude, found and obtain a charter for a Monster-academy of arts and sciences, calculated to elevate the minds of swineherds, and refine the taste of ploughboys. Then, as Massinger says,

Then shall we see these valient men of Britain
Like boding owls, creep into tods of ivy,

instead of wickedly fighting the French like their fathers, or burning the Pope in effigy like their grandfathers. What say you, Margaret? Shall your great-grandson, in the twentieth century, construct a new residence at Dursley, setting Doric and Gothic, Lombardic and Paxtonic, at defiance; — perhaps, who knows—out-Ninevehing the ground-plan of Nemroud's palace?"—

A sudden start and embarrassed pause, betrayed Lady Hargreave's total absence of mind. Accustomed to be present at the discussion of abstract questions between her

husband, his cousin Ralph, and the erudite Virginia, in which she took no part and little interest, and (*contente d'ignorer bien des choses pour mieux comprendre le reste*) she had acquired the habit of seeming to listen, while retired into a world of her own. Of what she might now be thinking, it is needless to conjecture. But her husband, while he admired the conscious blushes overspreading her cheeks at having been detected in a reverie, felt thankful that amongst the many transformations he had seen effected by late years, Margaret's simple nature was undisturbed by pretensions to dabble in administrative philosophy, or the *triste science* of setting the world to rights. As became her sex, she was willing to

Hope humbly still—with trembling pinions soar
Wait the great teacher Death, and God adore:

leaving it to the presumptuous Lady Paramount of the Hargreave Lyceum, to dissert and assert, as if she regarded herself as the Apostle of a new Revelation; and to Lady Delavile, of Dela-

vile Abbey, to analyse the votes of majorities, and canvass for converts.

“Margery finds us wretched company. Margery, like the judicious actress in Wilhelm Meister, has been enjoying a nap while we were prosing!” cried William, throwing down the book he was cutting, to take his sister’s work out of her hand, and place it in her netting case. “We must have a ride together to-morrow, darling,” said he. “I dare say Mildenhall has a screw of some sort or other to lend me.”

“There is the bay mare which Mr. Fanshawe has been trying,” said the Viscountess, who seldom opened her lips; and then, only to give utterance to something she had better have kept to herself. “He rode it, I think, the day Margaret accompanied him to Castle Leeming.”

“You have already been riding then?” inquired her brother, a little disappointed: for he had settled it with Hargreave, on their way down, that Margaret must have been

sadly bored during her stay at the Abbey; and that their arrival would afford the signal for her release from durance.

“Once. I rode for an hour or two last Saturday.”

“With Mildenhall?”

“Anne has just told you—with Mr. Fanshawe.”

“You did not mention it when I asked you at dinner how you had been amusing yourself?”

“Perhaps because the ride did *not* amuse me,” said she, having ascertained by a glance that Herbert Fanshawe and her husband were deeply engaged in argument. “To say the truth, I am so spoiled for riding, at Dursley, by my own perfect horse, that Reginald’s stud does not exactly tempt me.”

By this time, the Viscountess was waiting for her sister-in-law to retire to rest; so that there was no time for further explanations.

“How tiresome William is growing,” drawled Lady Mildenhall, as they ascended together the half-lighted old oaken staircase; “and such

shocking principles! Did you hear how he went on, to-night?—It would never surprise me to find him turn socialist, or red republican, or something dreadful of that kind.”

“Yon must not take for earnest every reckless word uttered by my brother.”

“God forbid! but I saw that gentlemanly, quiet, Mr. Fanshawe, positively horror-struck. He kept his eyes fixed upon you, Margaret, as if expecting every moment you would break out and silence your brother. It is really a comfort that the Duchess did not dine with us, as I invited her, to-day. *She* is not used to that sort of debating-society conversation, and might perhaps have taken it amiss.”

On Sir Richard, on the other hand, the impression made by Fanshawe's, mild and prepossessing manners, was equally satisfactory. Alone with Margaret, he expressed himself strongly in favour of his quondam friend.

“The schooling of the world has done wonders for Fanshawe,” said he. “And how wrong one is, Margaret, (according to one of Ralph

Hargreave's favourite phrases), to decide upon the manufactured article from the raw material. When Fanshawe had his fortune to make, I fancied him an *intrigant*. Now he has accomplished his purpose, he seems as simple as a child !”

Margaret could not say “Amen.” It was not for her, however, to remind her wiser husband that *ars est celare artem*; and that the man of the world might find it expedient to wear a closer fitting mask than the jactant Oxonian.

“I believe, after all, that my dislike to him in former days, arose from a mistaken notion that you cared about him,” said the open-hearted Sir Richard; “for I began to tolerate him, Margaret, the moment you took me to your heart. By the way, I have found out what carries him so often to Morton Castle. There is a lady in the case. There is something of engagement between him and Lady Emily: and she and the dowager usually spend the winter, you know, with Fitzmorton.”

“Lady Emily must be much older than Mr. Fanshawe,” said Margaret gravely, “Lady Emily has been out these ten years.”

“That would bring her only to seven-and-twenty. But my father, as you may remember, was wild that she should become Lady Emily Hargreave; and Herbert Fanshawe is six months older than I.—His travels in the East with Fitzmorton, originated, perhaps, in this clandestine attachment.”

“Scarcely, I should think.”

“Fanshawe hinted as much to me, however, just now, when we were alone in the billiard-room. He owned it was an affair of the heart which brings him into our county.”

At that moment, Lady Hargreave might be pardoned for thinking that excess of *bonhommie* is sometimes a failing; that, in the times we live in, want of tact may become a dangerous deficiency.

“I begged him to come and see us the first time he is in our neighbourhood,” added Sir Richard, benignly. “Sir Claude was an inti-

mate friend of my father's ; and Herbert himself a frequent guest at Dursley. It would have seemed inhospitable, when he was talking so frankly about Morton Castle, to abstain from inviting him."

Margaret's answer was faint and cold.

" Well, don't make yourself unhappy, if his company is disagreeable to you. There will be time enough to think about it," added her husband. " For a year to come, Dursley will be in no state to receive visitors."

And this time, Lady Hargreave indulged in a very audible " Amen."

On the day following, and the next—and the next—the weather favoured, beyond their hopes, William Mordaunt's projects of holiday-making.

In spite of the depreciated character of Lord Mildenhall's stables, they made up several pleasant riding parties. The Viscount, who had great confidence in his rich brother-in-law's aptitude for business, found it convenient to join them—to have the benefit of his opinion

concerning the lands he was draining, the woodlands he was clearing, the farms he was building: and as he contrived to engross Sir Richard's attention on these subjects throughout the greater part of their ride, and William was condemned to the younger brother's portion of the slowest horse, Margaret was left nearly as much alone with Herbert Fanshawe, as if the Hartwells and the Dowager-duchess had been again on the look out.

“It really seems more than accident that this fellow should be perpetually whispering into her ear,” muttered William, as he spurred his sorry jade to rejoin them in a picturesque clearing, where the wood-cutters were still at work,—“Dick Hargreave ought to see that it is wrong,—Margaret ought to feel that it is wrong. But God bless them both, *they* are too good to imagine evil! I should do more harm than good if I risked a word of warning to my sister. A woman's mind should not be familiarised with even the suspicion of evil. Many would have remained insensible, it is said,

to the existence of Love, had they never heard mention of the name. For my part, I am convinced that many a virtuous woman has been taunted into levity by finding herself an object of suspicion."

CHAPTER III.

Chaque année qui passe sur notre tête dessèche dans notre cœur quelque beau sentiment, y tarit quelque noble source. Mais l'égoïsme s'épanouit au souffle du temps, et se prélasse plus radieux et plus florissant sur les débris souillés de l'âme.—SANDEAU.

THE following season, Lady Hargreave found herself forced into London society by causes wholly foreign to her inclination. The project of the Great Exhibition had just been made public ; and Ralph Hargreave, who, as representative of one of our most important manufacturing districts, was entering heart and soul into the plan, spared no pains to enlist the co-operation

of his wealthier cousin. Both the manufacturer and the baronet subscribed largely with their purses; both afforded sterling assistance by counsels; and the house in Whitehall Gardens soon became a favourite rendezvous of present benefactors and future exhibitors.

Once roused to perceive the advantages of the gigantic scheme, as a vast stride accomplished in the civilization of the world, Sir Richard became an enthusiastic partizan.—Sir Hurst Clitheroe, moderately charmed at finding himself compelled to contribute to a fund which was not to return him so much as five-eighths of a farthing per cent., was amazed to find with what ardour his phlegmatic brother-in-law embraced so gratuitous a project.

Lady Hargreave, as was her duty, seconded his views. Contrary to the suggestions of her reserved nature, she even became a solicitress in the cause. She canvassed her tradespeople—she canvassed her friends,—and while the fine library in Whitehall Gardens was thronged with people seeking from the calmer faculties of Sir

Richard, information which the restless Ralph was too much occupied to afford, Lady Hargreave was mildly endeavouring to convert the dissidents of her own sex; who were already active in foretelling evil consequences from so prodigious an innovation—an innovation which threatened for a time to withdraw public attention from their fair selves.

“The very nature of my sister-in-law seems altered,” observed Lady Arthur, who, finding her train of suitors diminish as soon as the fountain-head of the late Sir Thomas’s claret and Sillery was dried up, had resumed her previous demureness and was now precision personified. “She, whom poor Richard could never persuade to show common civility to her country neighbours, or maintain our family influence at R—, is now as busy about this foolish wasteful Vanity Fair, as if she pretended to a first class medal.”

“Very natural, very natural! Sir Richard, like all other democratic advocates of progress, is a propagandist of the Crystal Palace faith,”

observed old Colonel Hartwell, chuckling ; “ and my Lady says ditto to Sir Richard.”

“ It is the first time, however, that any one ever saw the Dean's daughter sacrifice her opinions and tastes to those of her husband,” retorted Barty Tomlinson, who was, as usual, eavesdropping. “ If *I* were a married man, nothing would alarm me more than the sudden conversion of my wife from independence to servility.”

As soon as Lady Arthur O'Brennan, to whom this asp-like suggestion was addressed, was out of hearing, Tomlinson proceeded to add—“ Lady Hargreave, with all her primness, finds her account in the Exhibiton mania. Georges Dandin, forsooth, is to be on a committee ; and it must be like the removal of the Great Globe itself from the shoulders of Atlas, to throw off for so many hours a day, the company of that heavy fellow ! When talking to Dick Hargreave (a hybrid mulish compound of Fourierist and country gentleman) one feels as if locked into a vault full of inflammable gas, likely to

explode with the first light introduced into it."

"You have a lively imagination, Sir," said Colonel Hartwell stiffly. "I grant you there may, perhaps, be something too much of the ideologist in Sir Richard Hargreave. But a man possessing in the country a stake of between forty and fifty thousand a year, is entitled, do you see, Sir, to deal in what ideas he thinks proper."

It was nothing new for Tomlinson to be snubbed by certain elders of the people whose names figure in the roll of Doomsday Book as well as of Burke's Landed Gentry. But in the long run, the country gentlemen got the worst of it. Bickering with the little backbiter, whose weapons were always ready sharpened for use, was playing with edged tools.

He was, however, so far justified in his remarks upon Lady Hargreave's altered habits, that sudden changes, whether in man or woman, are usually suspicious. Unwonted restlessness is often the result of latent bodily disease: unwonted lassitude, of latent disease of the mind.

We bring into this world germs of undeveloped frailty, which accidental stimulants quicken into mischief. Unless where the soul's atmosphere is regulated to temperate heat by the steady influence of Religion, weeds may, at any hour, spring up, and choke for ever the better product of the soil.

Margaret, though honestly despising the hollow aspirings of her sisters-in-law, who, instead of cultivating a single real enjoyment, cared only for the impression made by their *seeming* enjoyments on such people as Tomlinson, the Gwendover Horribows, or Mrs. Brampton Brylls, Margaret herself was far from insensible to the charm of flattery. She had enjoyed but little of it. Her girlhood had been embittered by Lady Milicent's malignity. William, dearly as he loved her, had made it a point of conscience to deal impartially with her faults. Her husband, above all, was too conscious of the profoundness of his love, to think it necessary to wear it on the surface.

But the cravings of female nature after adulation, however long suppressed, are never extinguished. As in a factitious atmosphere, some moss-grown tree will suddenly burst into blossom, no sooner did the quiet domestic woman, so little familiar to the staring eye of what is called the world, emerge into the glare of fashionable day, than the acclamations by which her advent was saluted, brought this secret sin into efflorescence.

Her beauty, enhanced by so much simplicity of manners and serenity of character, recommended her to universal admiration. "Who is this Lady Hargreave," cried the idlers, "that she has hitherto profited so little by her rare advantages? Even in her own county, one never heard of her!"—(Happy man! whose wife is never heard of.) "Even among the snobs, she does not appear to have established a *clique*. Yet she enjoys full liberty of action. Her husband does not seem inclined to immure her. Barty Tomlinson tells me that Sir Richard is

far more interested in the condition of the million, than in the one of a million whom he has the happiness to call his wife."

A host of adorers hastened to present themselves as the body-guard of the new beauty. For, as Alphonse Karr has pithily observed, "it is easier to adore a woman than to love her. *Avec de l'imagination et des obstacles, on peut toujours adorer une femme. Il n'est pas aussi facile de l'aimer. On n'adore la plupart des femmes, que faute de les pouvoir aimer.*" To which axiom a female philosopher would have superadded, that there is no danger for a woman in being adored; but, that to be loved, is fatal. Real love is so rare, that the danger is luckily unfrequent. But counterfeits are abroad; and feminine vanity is apt to accept the false Florizel for the true. While Lady Hargreave was inditing circulars, organizing meetings, and presiding at select committees of fine ladies, who monstered their nothings and promulgated their utilitarian doctrines with the most futilitarian grace, Fanshawe was "close at the ear of

Eve, officiating as her secretary—as her counsellor—as her friend. Sir Richard was thankful to him for his services. Fanshawe was not a man of sufficient stamina to march with those who had undertaken to bear that gigantic structure aloft on their shoulders. But his conciliating manners made him a useful instrument in many quarters, where strength of intellect, activity of mind was superfluous. The time and attention of William Mordaunt being already bespoken for one of the most important branches of the scheme, it was essential for Margaret to insure the support of some safe and active aide-de-camp.

No man on earth could be better fitted for the office. No man had his senses and faculties more completely under control. No man united so much superficial refinement with so artful an imitation of nature. The highest triumph of an actor or singer is to accomplish spontaneity: the power of speaking, as if out of the abundance of the heart,—of singing, as the bird sings, from instinctive impulse.—This,

Herbert Fanshawe had achieved. He was the most consummate of mimes ; the master of every situation. In a word, he was eminently qualified to glide, hand in hand with D'Altavilla, on golden skaits, over the frozen surface of fashionable life.

Having discovered with the microscopic eye of a practised observer the one weak point in the character of the Dean's daughter, it was easy to follow up his advantage by a system of adulation, both expressed and implied. Open compliment would have disgusted her ; but she was not above being informed by Herbert Fanshawe how earnestly her presence was ambitioned in that higher sphere of society, by birthright her own, had she not forfeited caste by marrying a *novus homo*. Unaccustomed, on the other hand, to find her dress circumstantially noted, her movements watched, her words applauded, it was more soothing than salutary to listen to the echoed applause of society brought back by a carrier-dove, who never failed to appear before her with an olive-branch in his mouth.

How different from the contentious arguings of Ralph Hargreave—the rough exhortations of her brother—the spites of her sisters-in-law—the djereed-like warfare of Barty Tomlinson—was the polished graciousness of the visitor who supplied her with daily tributes of worship from his club-mates, and praise from his colleagues. He seemed to have instituted himself collector-general of applause; and was master, of that ricochet system of the art of compliment, which praises one by dispraise of another.—Amazing what a weight of censure Lady Arthur, and poor Lady Delavile were made to bear, in order that Margaret might find herself faultless.

“I have a message to you from Lady Delavile, dear Lady Hargreave,” said he, one morning, when he visited Whitehall Gardens on pretence of bringing the last number of the *Charivari*, containing a clever skit on the Great Exhibition, as yet unprovided with the charming plan of its Crystal Palace, to which much of its eventual triumph is owing. “But it is really not worth delivering. Lady Delavile is a woman who

would keep half the telegraphs in the universe at work, to waft her nonsense from Indus to the Pole. Never was peeress so fussy! Never did the matron of a parish-union hold forth in her vocation as her ladyship for this bazaar of bazaars, which would get on quite as well if she restricted herself to her usual futile avocations. If she would but take a lesson from those who allow the grand engine to work its own wonders, content to cheer it in its progress!"

"I should have predicted that Lady Delavile, with her extensive private interests and family connections to keep up—would have proved a far less zealous advocate that we have found her."

"Less zealous? Under certain excitements, Lady Delavile becomes as active as an armadillo! She has taken it into her empty head to 'agitate' in this highly interesting business, is a piece of excellent courtiership. Do you remember Madame Hamelin's retort when one of her visitors praised the beauty of Napoleon's hands—'*De grâce, ne parlons pas politique.*' I

long to make the same reply to Lady Delavile, when I find her over-hurrying herself about our grand project ; running round and round like a squirrel in her miserable little wheel, and fancying she is making the circuit of the universe."

" Still, if no one stirred,—if each of us waited for our neighbours to exert themselves,—what chance of progress ?"

" But why not do as *you* have done, dear Lady Hargreave, the duties within your scope, without interrupting other people by stretching over them to snatch at objects beyond your province ? The planets move in their orbits so steadily, that we have assigned chimeric music to their spheres. Or, should you think that simile too ambitious for the fine ladies of May Fair,—let Lady Delavile look at the nearest ant-hill, (if so homely an object is to be found within the park-palings of Delavile Abbey), and she will see that order is preserved among pismires as among railway-trains, by the advancing column taking one side and the receding another. If the busy emmets were, like her busy ladyship,

to be perpetually running hither and thither, backwards and forwards, molesting their fellow-emmetts, and disturbing the whole community,"—

"*Well?*"—inquired Margaret, with a smile, perceiving that he paused for breath—

"Well! that species of confusion would come to pass, which the slang of Barty Tomlinson graphically describes as Immortal Smash."

"And what would that matter to Lady Delavile?" rejoined Lady Hargreave. "Confusion is her element."

"Most true. If Chaos could come again, I should expect to see her riding in the whirlwind, and directing the storm. Ah! could she—could she—but imagine the refreshment to human nature of finding itself at rest in a quiet drawing-room like this, where it is not necessary to obtain a hearing by rattling out one's words like the Hailstone Chorus!"

How was Lady Hargreave to be otherwise than pleased by a tribute to the tranquillity of her pleasant rooms; which, secure by position

from the tumult of "street-pacing steeds," were converted by her love of flowers into rivalship with the country. Even, if less charmingly inhabited, they would have formed an attractive lounge. But she was not insensible to the preference accorded to them, over Lady Delavile's stately mansion in Grosvenor Square, supreme in aristocratic magnificence, and the resort of the leading men of the day. If she envied any one, indeed, it was Lady Delavile; whose brilliancy, beholding her merged in a nucleus of wits and politicians, she was disposed to mistake for that of a star of the first magnitude. On this point, Fanshawe, who carried in his mind an appraised catalogue of the influences of London, as definitive as the Court Guide, or Dod's Parliamentary Companion, was at some pains to undeceive her.

"You fall into the mistake of supposing that Alexander's empire—that of Holland House—has been divided; and that Lady Delavile succeeds to a kingdom.—A mistake altogether! To represent even a fraction of that dismembered

sovereignty, requires integral merit, in which, I fear, Lady Delavile is deficient. In the first place, she is, as far as I know, a strictly honest woman ;—good wife, good mother, good mistress of a family ;—whereas it is chiefly women expropriated by their own sex, who assume, with advantage, the attributes of ours. In the second, she is as grossly ignorant as most high-born highly-educated English ladies. Were she the Aspasia she fancies herself, she would rest contented with the enjoyment of her husband's splendid fortune, and the power of dispensing to others the blessings comprised in its administration. Lady Delavile is not a Virginia Hargreave, born to Utopia-ise over a Bostonian tea-table, concerning triumphs to be achieved, and the civilization to be accomplished by uplifting the good right-hand from which the flour of corn-cake and pumpkin-pie-making, is just brushed off. Lady Delavile, if she knows anything, is aware that in the English world she is a cypher powerless as Prospero's broken wand. This is not the century for an Abigail Hill, or a

Sarah Jennings to tyrannise over the world. Princess L—— was lucky to have enthroned herself in London during the first half of the 19th century; for trust me, the *femme politique* is now as obsolete among us as a hoop petticoat and lappets.”

“Your wish is father to the thought,” said Lady Hargreave, smiling.

“On the contrary. Entertaining the usual desire of the foul sex to catch the fair one at a disadvantage, nothing pleases me better than to find them swimming out of their depth. In my opinion, Lady Delavile with her ‘private and confidential’ notes, and her little mannikin of a henchman running about all day to pick up early intelligence, and return to her like a cur with a bone in its mouth, is quite as ridiculous as Hercules with his distaff.”

“No one thinks Lady Delavile ridiculous. Look at her influence in society!”

“Her influence with whom? Dotards and hobbledehoys. *Men* despise her. The greatest statesman of recent times chose for his wife a

beautiful woman, remarkable for her total indifference to party interests. A public man as little desires to find a *femme politique* by his fireside, as a hero, an Amazon;—which is one among the many thousand causes that render these halcyon waters, (he glanced from the window as he spoke at a fleet of colliers moored on the opposite shore, and a host of penny steamers crossing each other on the river), dearer than all the rivers of Damascus.”

“I find no fault with them,” replied Margaret. “But even the rivers of Damascus, (you probably mean the rivers of Israel?) may be improved by an enlivening ripple——”

“No, no! I will not hear you say it. May they remain smooth and glassy, to reflect the spotless swan which swims double—swan and shadow—on their surface. Leave agitation, leave the vulgar clash of politics, to the fair Virginia,—half-muse, half-chambermaid,—halb göttlich, und halb ſchweiniſch. ’Tis her vocation! In a new country, every engine must be set in motion to ‘make the rough places plain.’

But here, in the Paradise of civilization, Woman's mission is to be Woman :—a being created to double the beauties of the Garden of Eden, and perfect the felicity of her mate.”

Alas ! was it fated that this more than serpent should poison the ear of a hitherto untempted Eve !—

CHAPTER IV.

Ceux qui ne sont pas hypocrites avec les autres, le sont quelquefois avec eux-mêmes. Nous rusons avec notre conscience. Nous avons pour la tromper mille roueries dans notre sac. Nous sommes sans cesse occupés à jeter des petits gâteaux à ce Cerbère qui veille à la porte de notre cœur.—MADELEINE.

THE league between Lady Clitheroe and Lady Arthur, against their sister-in-law, was becoming offensive and defensive as that between the proud sisters of Cinderella against the patient Grizel of fairy lore. Though neither of them had at any time found much enjoyment in her society, no sooner was it eagerly sought by the *beau monde*, than they began to find themselves

injured by the coolness existing between them.

Originally good-natured and tolerant, they had undergone the usual transformation operated by the wear and tear of London life upon empty and narrow hearts; and were becoming not only envious, but vindictive.

A dislike in common—a jealousy in common,—brought them closer together than they had found themselves since their Dursley spinsterhood. Lady Arthur forgave in Emma her superiority of wealth—Lady Clitheroe in Julia her priority of precedence,—that they might mutually declaim against the estrangement which they taxed the Dean's daughter with having created between them and their brother; towards whom, God wot, they had never cherished one really sisterly sentiment.

“We are like guests—like strangers—in Whitehall Gardens,” said Lady Arthur to Julia. “I never go there without feeling myself thoroughly *de trop*.”

“One can never get a word with Lady Har-

greave alone. — Always surrounded by her satellites! — First, you have William Mordaunt — that cut-and-dry specimen of a treasury clerk, with his second-best coat and umbrella, when the weather is cloudy. Then *la Corinne manquée* — that odious Mrs. Ralph — always full of abolition meetings, sanatory commissions, prison discipline, pauperism, Heaven knows what! She reminds me of a little Skye terrier perpetually scratching up stones. Even poor old Aunt Martha could not stand such a fretful porcupine, by way of drawing-room pet. It ended with her being absolutely exiled from Bardsel.”

“ You have omitted one of the satellites, my dear Julia! Though the others are welcomed so familiarly perhaps, only as a cover to his visits.”

“ Herbert Fanshawe? — True! — That man is never out of the house. And poor Margaret has not the wit to perceive that he goes there only for the chance of meeting Lady Delavile.”

“Lady Delavile? Absurd! Forty-three, with two married daughters.”

“Not absurd,—because still one of the handsomest women in London, and by far the most influential. I would rather belong to Lady Delavile’s set than be a lady of the bed-chamber.”

“*Tous les goûts sont respectables!* But I don’t believe that yours and Herbert Fanshawe’s have, in this respect, the smallest analogy. *On revient toujours à ses premiers amours*: and I am much mistaken if Fanshawe have not retraced his steps to his *belle passion* of the year eighteen hundred and forty no matter what!”

“Margaret?—It is now my turn to cry absurd!—Do you suppose that a man like Fanshawe—so sought, so caressed, so over-rated, whom Lady Emily Morton is straining every nerve to catch, and three parts of whose heart and soul are embarked in political life—would trouble himself with the heavy courtship of a prude like Lady Hargreave; whose

dullness is as much her protection as the leaden medal stuck into the hat of Louis XI. And then," said Lady Arthur demurely, suddenly calling to mind that she was a Bishop's widow, albeit an Irish one, "and then, consider her duty towards my brother—consider all she owes him. Consider how he picked her out of the dirt—provided for her family—cared for her comfort, ay! as Sir Hurst Clitheroe may have cared for yours."—

"Too true!—which makes it the more scandalous that she should encourage Mr. Fanshawe as she certainly does."

"She takes care that *we* shall never perceive it. I have been asked to dine in Whitehall Gardens only twice this season; and then, to meet,—guess whom?"

"The Ralph Hargreaves, or some other of those Bardsel nuisances, whom Margaret has dragged out of the shade."

"Worse still. Old Dursley country neighbours; whom since I married I have been labouring to keep out of my visiting list, and drive from

my memory. Think of having to sit next to Mr. Brampton Brylls, and opposite his mother, arrayed in that sempiternal old chocolate satin gown, which constituted her coronation robes when I was a child."

"What an impertinence on the part of Margaret. Or was it want of tact? Does she ignore or overlook what is due to the sister-in-law of the Marquis of Castle Glynnon.?"

Julia was a little puzzled to determine whether her sister spoke indignantly or ironically.

"Marquis or no Marquis," said she, tartly, "every one has his *quant à soi*: and is bound to make it respected. The consequence is that I have just sent an excuse to a dinner party to which Lady Hargreave has invited me for the 25th."

"I thought you were on intimate terms with Lady Emily Morton and her mother?"

"Well?"

"The Fitzmortons dine in Whitehall Gardens on the 25th."

"Are you certain?"

“ Lord Fitzmorton asked me last night coming out of the opera, whether he was to meet us in Whitehall Gardens, on the 25th. Between him and my husband, you know, there exist certain political relations. As member for R——, Sir Hurst is brought into frequent correspondence with the Lord Lieutenant of the county.”

“ By means of circulars,” was Julia’s unuttered reflection. She contented herself with asking aloud whether her sister was of the party on the 25th.

“ Yes. We accepted—which I am now sorry for. *I* don’t care to meet the Fitzmortons. Lady Emily is too sarcastic for *me*. I was in hopes the dinner was made for the Delaviles; who are just now in such close intercourse with my brother on account of this monster nuisance—this horrible Exhibition. We seldom meet now; and Lady Delavile is a valuable acquaintance.”

“ *C’est selon*. I should have thought that between Lady Delavile and Sir Hurst there must be downright antipathy. So violent a conservative, doubtless, regards your hus-

band as a dangerous radical, and labels him *poison.*”

Lady Clitheroe was about to launch into one of the manifestoes she kept at her tongue's end, for occasions when the loyalty of Sir Hurst Clitheroe was impugned; setting forth, in turgid prose, his attachment to the constitution and institutions of his native country. But, knowing that Julia was cognizant of certain little raws,—certain imprudent after-dinner speeches of the busy knight at public meetings and in election skirmishes, she thought it wise to revert to Lady Delavile.

“It is not simply on her own account, one cares for Lady Delavile's notice,” said she. “But she and those five or six sisters, who knot together and create a crowd in every London party, are dangerous enemies. Impossible to look more benignly insolent than those ‘fat, fair, and foolish’ women; each of whom, by assigning a Christian name to some pet folly, continues to make it pass for a virtue.—Lady Winchcomb, for instance, fancies that,

because she attires her coquetry in the dress of a charity girl, it is no longer Coquetry !”

“ A worldly set, I grant you ; and as plausible as worldly. Still, Lady Delavile is an authority to be conciliated, and I cannot blame Margaret for cultivating her acquaintance. Only I ask leave to remain convinced that there is no more project in her innocent intimacy with Berkeley Square, than in mine with Esther Pilbrowe and her gouty Canon.”

“ And you believe, too, that Mr. Fanshawe has no ulterior views in his growing intimacy with the Delaviles ?”

“ I never thought of *him* in connexion with the affair.”

“ Then you are perhaps the only person of my acquaintance who has *not*. All sorts of unpleasant hints have reached me.—”

“ From such people as Spy Tomlinson.—”

“ Such people as Spy Tomlinson create the news of society. They are the *nouvelles à la main* of an epoch which is *blasé* with printer's ink. No one reads who can listen : or why

should all these lords go lecturing *viva voce* about the country?—”

“Granted, then, that Tomlinson is established as an authority—what has the oracle pronounced?”

“That Lady Hargreave—that my brother—are rendered mere stepping-stones by Herbert Fanshawe; that he is as great an intrigant as Sir Claude; and that, being fifty times cleverer, he is a hundred times more dangerous.”

“I can't fancy him much of an *intrigant*. He is so insolent—so fond of his ease—so complete an epicurean: one of those who wait for the tide of fortune to roll a treasure to their feet.”

“Having previously carefully calculated and provided for its flux and reflux. Nay, he not only calculates for himself, but for his friends. Tomlinson declares that it was Fanshawe who apprised Altavilla of the meagre nature of your fortune; and suggested to him the use of wings, which were anything but the wings of Cupid.”

“How often must I assure you, Emma, that there never was more between me and Altavilla than between yourself and Herbert Fanshawe, at Dursley, a dozen years ago;—a mere flirtation—from which both parties were at liberty to recede.”

“I am glad to hear you say so. The question now, however, is to keep our eyes on Lady Hargreave. Ah! Julia, dear! When poor Lord Arthur indulged in that unusual burst of eloquence at your wedding *déjeûner*, and recommended Richard to ally himself with some family of which all the sons were brave, and all the daughters virtuous, how was one to suppose he would pick out for a brother-in-law a sneak like William Mordaunt; or, for a wife, a smooth-faced hypocrite, like Margaret!”

A grave accusation this. But *was* William Mordaunt a sneak? Was he wilfully or stupidly blind to the fact, that over the unoccupied mind of his sister, Fanshawe was obtaining a dangerous ascendancy? Alas! engrossed like all the world, just then, by a

predominant idea, he thought only of his Committee. At the close of the season, he was to proceed to the Continent to negotiate with foreign artists and artizans; and was far too busy with vocabularies and Henschel,—patent leathern railway bags and Macintoshed travelling caps, to be an active sentinel in Whitehall. By the seeming frankness with which Fanshawe pleaded guilty to a hopeless attachment for Lady Emily Morton, he was thrown completely off his guard; and Sir Richard himself was not more blind to the perils with which Margaret was environed, than the brother who would have seen her dead at his feet, rather than disgraced. Virginia Hargreave, though in some respects a ludicrous parody upon ancient heroism and modern refinement, was, he thought, a safe companion for her;—being, like the majority of her countrywomen, as chaste in mind and feeling as she was careless of conventional forms.

William consequently quitted London for his Continental tour at the close of the season, with

as little anxiety as if he had left Lady Hargreave where her diamonds were deposited, in Lombard-street, in a banker's strong room in a double-Chubbed fire-proof iron chest. As he bestowed his farewell kisses on his little nephew and niece, and talked to them about the pleasures they were about to enjoy in the green valleys of Dursley, while *he* should be ploughing the dusty roads of Italy, he considered his sister Margaret as honestly devoted to the enjoyment of rural pleasures, as either Mary or Bill.

Let us hope—nay, let us be sure that there was no blameable *arrière pensée* in the reserve which prevented Lady Hargreave from acquainting him, when they parted at the South Eastern Station ere he started by the Dover mail, that it was at Oak Hill and *not* at Dursley, she and her children were about to refresh themselves after the flurry of the London season. Probably she felt mortified at having to intimate to her brother that Sir Richard would not hear of her returning home till scaffold-poles and plasterers' pails had disappeared. *He* was obliged to be

there, he said. But there could be no occasion to torment his wife and children with the ill odours of size and varnish.

While William, therefore, was skimming the Channel in a screw-steamer, preparatory to skimming in a few hours that dreary road to Paris, which formerly wasted as many days in listening to the *sacrébleus* of club-tailed postillions, of whom him of Longjumeau at the Opéra Comique alone remains the type, Margaret was enjoying the *dolce far* much more than *niente* of yachting life, which awaited her among the fragrant groves of Oak Hill:

Sir Richard was off to his work-people; not sorry to escape for a time the company of one whose interest in his occupations was as cold as Ralph Hargreave's acceptance of Lady Delavile's ridiculous theories concerning Colonization and Poor Law Bastilles. And once reinstated amidst the mechanics and artists employed to render his country-house what no country-house ought to be—a palace—he forgot that it was the month of August; and that the

little Nautilus, the pearl of the Solent, was afloat on the waters.

The Delaviles were to be her guests for a week or two. He had planned it so. Not to impose a restraint upon his wife during his absence. Of that, Sir Richard—still and always Dick Hargreave—was as incapable as of any other ungenerous action. But he fancied that the company of so stirring a woman as Lady Delavile, would amuse and rouse her: having discovered in Margaret a tendency to *ennui*, which, it is said by sophists, to be inherent in human nature. But the sophists may be wrong. And whenever we discern symptoms of what is called *ennui* in those dearest to us—let us look to it! Variegation in the leaves of a shrub, denotes that there is disease in the pith or fibres. Unnatural listlessness is as much a symptom of unnatural excitement at the core, as the behind-time of a watch of latent irregularity in the works.

Sir Richard Hargreave would scarcely, however, have taxed poor Margaret with being a

victim to *ennui*, had he seen her a few days after her arrival at Oak Hill. The place to which, since his accession to the throne of Hargreavedom he had done wonders, simply by removing every improvement effected by his predecessor, and supplying its shrubberies with the choice trees which amended horticulture has encouraged us to entrust to the mild usage of our southernmost latitudes, was looking wonderfully beautiful: its noble daturas displaying their trumpet-like blossoms as white as snow amidst masses of bright blue salvia; while the autumnal acacia put forth its blush-coloured bunches, and the broad and sheltering foliage of the catalpa was crested with bloom.

But it was less the vegetation of the spot than the transparency of its atmosphere, and pleasant ripple of its waters, that endowed it with sô bewitching a charm. Betwixt towering cypresses with whose spires climbing roses had been trained to intermingle, betwixt spreading branches of cork trees, and pale thickets of ilex, was seen that "shining river" which does not,

perhaps, ere it reach the sea, "seek Ella's bower to give her the wreaths" flung into its waters by a poet; but which certainly affords an exquisite object to the villas and castelets of Cowes.

To Lady Delavile who arrived almost simultaneously with her hostess, the scene was new. The yatch squadron, riding with its snow-white sails on the glassy waves of the Solent, like a newly-alighted flight of lightsome sea-birds, pluming themselves in the sun, created a marine picture of real and specific beauty. No other land attaches a similar fringe to the glorious robes of grim old Ocean; and she was never weary of watching the changes of the river from molten silver to crysophrase, emerald, sapphire,—as the temper of the clouds, or caprice of the winds, agitated its varied complexion.

"Never was a spot susceptible of such entire changes of scenery and decorations, as the play-bills have it," said she, after surveying the lovely view through her double-glasses, as she would have admired a new opera. "Every five

minutes, those restless yachts present a completely new picture. Always, some graceful schooner putting up its sails, or some daring cutter gliding back from her cruise, into still waters; or some yawl defying them both in old-fashioned independence like a country gentleman bundling his way into Boodle's. Then the boats.—The water seems alive to-day. And what neatness in their trim crews—what clockwork regularity in the stroke of their oars!”—

“I am truly sorry that Sir Richard is absent, dear Lady Delavile,” said Margaret, charmed with her enthusiasm; “he is as proud of his Nautilus, which was built according to his own fancies, years before he married, as of the discipline of his men.”

“Which is the Nautilus, my dear?” interrupted the lady, “Oh! the little schooner yonder, at her moorings. I had not noticed her before. I was looking at the Xarifa and the Arrow. Sir Richard, proud of his yacht? You surprise me—I had not supposed him capable of being proud

of anything. Of all my acquaintance, I know no man who accepts, with such stoical complacency the advantages showered upon him by Providence. Some men seem to fancy themselves heirs in tail to the best blessings of this world.—Lord Delavile, my dear! Have I not often called Sir Richard Hargreave, Sir Diogenes? Do I not sometimes say that if a diamond mine turned up on his estate, he would say to his bailiff with undisturbed countenance—‘Ascertain that we have a right to work it. It probably belongs to the Crown.’”

Lord Delavile, thus appealed to, did not find it convenient to raise his eyes from the newspaper in his hand; though, as it was only the supplement to the ‘Times,’ his attention was not likely to be very deeply absorbed. But he was too much accustomed to her ladyship’s incongruities of speech, to say nothing of her caprices of mind, not to believe it probable that, while affecting to compliment, she was endeavouring to wound: and *he* was one of those who speak the truth—and nothing but the

truth—a merit rarer than it ought to be among the golden spurs of modern chivalry.

Lord Delavile belonged indeed to that high caste of nobility, in which good breeding appears innate. Lord Mildenhall was his superior in date by half a century: in distinction, his inferior by ages. The blood of both ran down to them from Magna Charta. But in one case it appeared to have flowed through a tile-drain, impoverished by washy intermixture, and corrupted by earthy particles; in the other, through noble canals and over stately aqueducts; for the nature of the two men was as different as clay from marble. Into whatever position of life Lord Delavile might be thrown, the English gentleman was apparent, like the radiance of Bramah in an avatar. In his hunting-coat and tops, at the covert side,—in a wide-awake and wrap-rascal, struggling with chaw-bacons at an agricultural show,—or in his peer's robes at a coronation pageant,—the stamp of distinction was equally apparent. Nor was there a speck of dirt upon Lord Delavile's

nature, more than on the spotless coat of an ermine.

By Lady Delavile's manœuvres and stratagems indeed, he had been more than once involved in social embarrassments hateful to a man of high honour. But he had borne all with wonderful temper; regarding her mental defects with the same indulgence he would have shown the wife of his bosom if stricken with blindness, deafness, lameness, or any other physical infirmity. He had taken her for better, for worse; and though she proved considerably worse than there was any reason to predict when she appeared in her orange flowers and Brussels lace at the altar of St. George's, Hanover Square, he had remained a model of forbearance.

Cognizant of her varying moods, as a showman of the treacherous antics of his monkey, he saw that, on her arrival at Oak Hill, fair and pleasant as it was, Lady Delavile was thwarted and disappointed. But he did not waste his time in disentangling the perplexed

skein. It might be that some new yachting dress had not been sent home in time for the expedition. It might be that she had received unfavourable news of two Irish elections that were in progress. It might be that her application to Lord Palmerston for a consulship at Ning Po, for the nephew of her groom of the chambers, had not received the instant attention to which she felt herself intitled. It might be that intelligence had arrived from Italy of Altavilla's approaching return, after she had exhibited a painfully exact daguerreotypic likeness of him, the moment his back was turned. But even he—Lord Delavile—though married to her for seven-and-twenty years, knew her not well enough to surmise that she had been meditating the conversion of Ralph Hargreave, the radical; and that she was inexpressibly vexed at his absence. She seemed to have imagined, when she accepted the invitation to Oak Hill, that the cotton-spinner was one and indivisible from the ex-calico printer, as the ring of Saturn from its orb.

CHAPTER V.

The good want power, save to shed barren tears.
The powerful, goodness want : worse need for them.
The wise want love, and those who love, want wisdom :
And all best things are thus confused to ill.

SHELLEY'S PROMETHEUS.

THE visit of a *grande dame* like Lady Delavile to Oak Hill, was of course the means of drawing to the place from the opposite shore, certain supremities of fashion ; who had, for years, surveyed its beautiful groves from afar, as those of Paradise Lost. It had always been afflicting to them that a spot so delicious should have fallen to the share of such parias as the elder Hargreaves. Even since Dick Hargreave came into posses-

sion, though *almost* disposed to overlook, in favour of his lovely wife the defects of his parent stock, they thought it wiser to forbear. "After all, he was a radical; belonging to a class of people always breaking out in the wrong place; — dangerous acquaintances—presuming neighbours. Better allow Oak Hill to remain quietly in the perspective."

But the moment the Delaviles of Delavile Abbey appeared on the scene, the black flag vanished. Lord Delavile had been, in his bachelor days, one of the earliest founders of the R. Y. C.—One of his sons was still a member of the club.—On the morning following his arrival therefore he crossed the water; and was heartily welcomed by the nautical dandies who frequent Cowes as they would frequent a *bal masqué*. Before the day was over, half the yachts at the station had testified their desire to have the honour of inaugurating Lady Delavile into the beauties of the Needles and Freshwater, for which the wind was favourable. And vexed enough she was to find herself under the neces-

sity of adhering to the plebeian deck of the Nautilus, when a whole schoonerful of rank and fashion was waiting for her to complete its freight.

“Come with us to-morrow, dear Lady Delavile,” said Margaret, taking pity on her manifest disappointment. “The Nautilus will be at your orders every day of the week. To-day, I have engagements that will occupy me till your return; and the children, with their governess and tutor, will be overjoyed to succeed to our luncheon and cruise.”

It was amusing to see with what alacrity the release was accepted. In a moment, the cloaks and waterproofs of Lady Delavile were transferred from the boat of the Nautilus to that of the Tiger-Moth; and Lord Felix Taut, who stood waiting on the pier to offer her his arm, (looking somewhat as Monsieur Petipa would look if arrayed in a P-coat and sou'-wester,) placed her smilingly on her elastic cushion, and away flew the gig from east to west, as fast as three pair of

crack oars, or a magic wishing-cap, could carry it.

Lady Hargreave, who had declined Lord Felix's earnest invitation to her to join the party, was waiting the arrival of little William and Mary, for whom she had despatched a messenger to Oak Hill with the glad tidings of a holiday and a sail; when a dirty boy—a species of mudlark such as are always hanging about the landing-places of Cowes, both East and West,—sidled towards her. In the interest of her spotless dress of *batiste écru*, she drew back. Even when the boy addressed her by name, she kept at a sufficient distance while bestowing the alms which his mutterings seemed to implore; and, unable to bear the glare of the sea or heat of the mid-day sun in that unsheltered spot, resolved to ascend the hill, leisurely, and meet the children on the road.

Still, the ragged urchin she had relieved, pursued her; till, annoyed by his importunity, she turned suddenly round and asked what he meant by thus annoying her. All he wanted was

apparently attained in the means of approaching her nearer; for, having placed a letter in her hand, he scudded off at pretty nearly the pace accomplished by the boat of the Tiger-Moth, and was out of sight before she could question him further.

All this occurred within the range of the scores of glasses perpetually on the look-out from the windows of Cowes, and decks of the roadstead; and any idler on the watch may furthermore have noted the astonished air of Lady Hargreave, as she unfolded the note so singularly delivered. She was indeed inexpressibly amazed. For though no signature was affixed, she recognized at once a handwriting which she had not seen for the last ten years; and which, in former days, had never been a source of pleasurable emotions. It was that of her aunt, Lady Milicent; of whom nothing had transpired of late years, save that, after the sale of Hephanger—the scanty neighbourhood of which did not present a sufficiently extended sphere for Dr. Macwheeble's taste for

society or his talents for proselytism,—the happy couple had retired to Bath ; to revel in their handsome fortune in an ample circle of sycophants.

All this was very different from the state of affairs intimated by the few incoherent, crooked lines, which Lady Hargreave was now perusing. She found herself adjured by the memory of her kind grandmother, to hasten to the relief of one who was a prisoner and in exceeding great misery. She was to come secretly, alone,—on foot,—between six and seven in the evening, at which time alone her “unhappy aunt” was accessible.

The spot she was required to visit was a scattered village, situated on the road from Cowes to Ryde ; through which Lady Hargreave frequently passed, without interest, when driving in her pony phaeton. She remembered that, in addition to the usual allowance of hovels, ale-houses, and chandler's shops, it contained a few villas and “cottages of gentility,” such as are always to be found within reach of the sea-side ;

and as the lady of Dursley and Oak Hill was no longer the light-footed, light-limbed Margaret of Bardsel Tower, who made so little of the hilly road to Hargreen, on the arm of her brother or Ralph Hargreave, the prospect of a walk of two miles, or rather four, alone, in that sultry summer heat, was somewhat alarming.

She did not hesitate however. Her mother's sister had appealed to her sense of duty; and throughout the long intervening morning ere she started on her expedition, throughout the idle gossiping visits imposed upon her as a penance for possessing the prettiest villa within lounge of a bathing-place, she could scarcely tranquillize her surmises concerning the strange summons she had received. The hour arrived at last; and, a little ashamed of issuing alone from her gates, a thing foreign to her habits, she started along the dusty road. At that time of the day, as much of the idle world as was not afloat, was usually assembled on the opposite shore; and she noticed, ere she turned into

the shady road, that the Esplanade beneath the Castle was crowded.

As she slowly proceeded, nervous and embarrassed at the strangeness of her expedition, it was but natural that her feelings should recur to those earlier, those earliest days, when Aunt Milicent was a person so alarming to her little heart—the standing referee of Nurse Hatley in all matters of reproof or punishment. That the authority so long dreaded—the severe rigid woman who had driven her with a flaming sword, first out of Lady Bournemouth's affections, and lastly out of her fortune,—could be herself subjected to durance and persecution, seemed impossible. That hard, wilful, selfish woman to be a victim!—That smooth-tongued cozening traitor to prove a tyrant!—How strange a revolution—yet what poetical justice in the decree!—

As she slowly wended her way between well-trimmed hedgerows overgrown here and there with honeysuckle and travellers' joy, Lady Hargreave fell into a train of philosophical reflection

unusual to her. She could not help comparing the dictatorial woman of fashion she had quitted that morning, who, while seeming to conform to the habits of her house, had revolutionised everything—hours, customs, society—making her conscious every moment of the day of a tacit inferiority on the part of herself and her belongings;—with the queer quaint spinster of Bardsel, so far below Lady Delavile in the scale of social distinctions, so far above her in real refinement of mind;—who, in her own house, had been cautious to conform to the tastes and usages of her guest.

Before the Dean's daughter had brought her scale of comparison to a close, she found herself at the spot pointed out by Lady Milicent's missive; and an old man wandering about with a basket of barley-sugar-sticks and cotton stay-laces, in search of human charity, readily informed her in what part of the village Laurel Cottage was to be found.

Laurel Cottage indeed!—Never did place answer better to its name. For all that was

visible on arriving at the wicket, was an overgrown green wall composed of the tree sacred to heroes, unpleached and unpruned, till the branches nearly met over what would have been called a gravel-walk, had it ever chanced to be gravelled ; but which consisted of hard, damp earth, rough with worm-casts, and even now, in the heat of summer, varied here and there in the noisome shade by a clayey half-dried puddle.

On reaching the cottage, a small shabby tenement which, approached in the rear, exhibited in lieu of windows only a mean doorway partly sheltered by a broken wooden lattice, green with damp and overhung by a straggling honeysuckle ; with a few unsightly specimens of household linen hanging to dry on a clothes-line suspended between the porch and an opposite laurel. Visitors were evidently unexpected, and unprovided for, in that desolate approach.

Lady Hargreave pulled the bell-knob, which resisted as though the wire were rusted ; and as no one noticed the appeal, it was probably the case.

After waiting long and impatiently to have the door opened, she crept towards the front of the cottage, opening to a weedy lawn; then, finding a glass-door open, walked unceremoniously into the house. All was still. Two parlour doors presented themselves on either side a mean entrance. Lady Hargreave luckily chanced upon the right one; for, on gently turning the handle, she found herself in presence of two females. The one with her back towards her, square, burly, insolent, like a policeman in woman's clothes, was engrossed by the perusal of an old fragment of newspaper. The individual opposite, fronting the entrance, seated listless and unoccupied in a chair apparently the very reverse of easy,—a strange gaunt-looking woman, in a discoloured dressing-gown, whose head was divested of all covering, save a stubbly crop of short grey hair, and whose careworn haggard face exhibited the vacant stare peculiar to persons of infirm intellect,—appeared to be—(but it was scarcely possible!)—appeared to be the disjointed remnant of what was once

the prim, well-dressed, fair-spoken, Lady Milicent Bourne.

“My dear aunt!” exclaimed Lady Hargreave, hurrying towards her, in reply to the gesture of thankfulness with which her entrance was noted. But in a moment, the attendant dragon was on her feet, and on the alert.

“This invalid lady, Ma’am, is a patient under my charge, and strictly forbidden the excitement of visits and strangers,” said she, drawing herself up to the full altitude of her six feet, and interposing an alarming barrier between her unfortunate charge and the intruder.

“As the nearest relative of Lady Milicent Macwheeble,” replied Lady Hargreave, mildly, “I am intitled to an interview. You can remain present, if you think proper. I should however recommend you to retire.”

Astonished to find her authority so coolly set at nought, the keeper, conscious that it would be dangerous to eject forcibly from the house a lady so richly attired, and exhibiting such unmistakeable symptoms of authority, bustled off

into the kitchen to revenge herself by reprimanding the careless servant maid who shared her duties at Laurel Cottage, for disobedience to orders in allowing a visitor to enter the house ; leaving Margaret during her absence to express with many tears to her unfortunate relative, her deep affliction at finding her in a plight so distressing.

“ Well, may you say so, Margaret,” replied the unfortunate woman, whom at threescore, much care and much sickness had converted into an aged hag. “ I used you ill, child. I used you harshly and unjustly. But you are avenged. That man, that wretch, that assassin, has revenged you. He has been the ruin of me, Margaret. He has stripped me of all I possessed—honour, fortune, reason, health.—Not that I am mad, Margaret ; not that I ever was mad—do not believe *that*, child. Better, perhaps, that my mind were really infirm ; for then, I should be less conscious of the shame I have been brought to. But mad people don't reason, Margaret Mordaunt. Mad people don't plan means for their

own deliverance. That boy, Margaret, whom they allow to come here gathering chickweed and groundsel for sale in these beautiful pleasure-grounds of theirs,—I managed to find out from him where you lived. I knew it was not far from Cowes: and so I have got you here, niece, to my rescue,—I have got you here to defend me against my enemies.—Ha! ha! ha!—He and his step-daughter (as he calls her) go at this hour, every evening, to meeting—evening prayer they call it.—And when they return to-day, ha! ha! ha! ha!—the old bird will be flown, flown, flown!”—

The increasing wildness of Lady Milicent's manner added terror to the heartfelt compassion with which Lady Hargreave was contemplating the wreck before her. She besought the old lady to be calm. But by cross-questioning her concerning the origin of her present wretched establishment, she added fuel to the flames.

“Why am I here? Why am I placed in the power of that dragoon of a woman? I will tell you, Margaret. But I must be brief, child;

for the Philistines will soon be upon us. After we left Hephanger, woe worth the day, for it was wicked of me, it was base, sordid, ungrateful, to allow that old family place to be sold to the heathen; we went to settle in Bath, where that man loved to live, surrounded by people who made him their prophet and Pope, as I did once, Margaret Mordaunt, before I learned that my idol was a block of wood fashioned by my own folly.—Once established there, he brought legions of his canting followers, to prey upon my substance. But that was not the worst. There was a woman—a low-born Scotchwoman—whom he called his step-daughter, the widow of a son of his first wife; (there was no talk of a first marriage, Margaret, when he made a dupe of me in Eaton Place;) and this Mrs. Harrington he brought home to live with us. Yes, child, he, the son of a Greenock dry-salter, brought home one of his low relations to sit at the board of the daughter of the Earl of Bournemouth.”

“Gently, gently, dear aunt,” whispered Mar-

garet, dreading the tempest foreshown by her gradually-rising voice.

“How would you have me gentle, Margaret! They used to sit at my table—eating my bread—and sneering at and jeering me,—those two!—She was young, handsome, insolent, the so-called step-daughter; and, between them, they harrassed and goaded me into violence, and then called me a mad woman!—Me, a mad woman!—Dr. Macwhceble, the hypocrite, pretended to hope, forsooth, that, in answer to his prayers, it would please the Almighty to rid me of the devil by which I was possessed. The woman only laughed,—laughed,—laughed, like a fiend, as she was. *She* was the devil, Margaret, who possessed me; and that they knew, though they went through the farce of calling in doctors and nurses; ay, and keepers, Miss Mordaunt, with handcuffs and strait waistcoats,—*to me*,—who might have been that woman's mother, and compelled her to duty and submission!”

Even with the spectacle before her of Lady

Milicent's terrible humiliation, Margaret could not but call to mind how peculiarly qualified she was for the exercise of despotic power.

“But all this is not what I would tell you,” continued the invalid, in whose eyes there glistened, at intervals, a frantic glare which too sadly justified the precautions of her husband. “I want you to get me out of their hands. You and your brother are my next of kin, Margaret. The Mordaunts are my legal heirs and guardians. William must instantly apply for a *habeas corpus*, to bring me before Chancery; and then and there will I testify against the wolf in sheep's clothing who has brought an Earl's daughter to this horrible pass. Your husband is in Parliament, Lady Hargreave. Let him speak for me—let him act for me; and, as I live and breathe, he shall inherit all I possess.”

“Sir Richard will need no bribe, my dear aunt, to induce him to exert himself in behalf of the injured.”

“Everybody needs bribes, child. Behold,

the flocks are shepherdless, and what man helpeth his neighbour? These people dared not keep me in Bath, Lady Hargreave; because there, the walls have not only ears, but eyes and tongues. They brought me here, because a mild climate suited me: suited *them*, I believe; it clearly don't suit *me!*"—continued the old lady, stretching out her wasted wrists, which were bony as those of a skeleton.

"And have you been here long, Aunt Milicent?"

"How can I tell!—There was snow on the ground when we left home. It was Christmas, I believe. I don't know much about times and seasons. But I am certain that we have been here ever since, watching the weeds grow. And if the hours are long to me, 'tis some comfort that they are longer to *them*. For they thought when they heard me cough in snow time, that my hour was come, and that they were free. And here I am, Margaret, and there you are. I long, long, *long*, remembered a bitter letter which your brother William wrote me, after his

father's death, from Sir Thomas Hargreave's, at Cowes; and so it naturally came to my mind again, when we landed there. I thought of it afterwards—I thought of it always.—At last, I was able to get that boy to make enquiries for me, and answer me, and convey to you that blessed letter. — Margaret — Margaret! — save me, or I perish!”

Long before Lady Milicent concluded her appeal, the woman in charge of her had returned into the room; and stood opposite with her arms akembo and a satisfied air, as if enjoying the scene.

“You see now, Mem, I hope,” said she, addressing Lady Hargreave, at the close of Lady Milicent's harangue, “who was wrong, and who was right. Not fit to be left to herself for ten minutes of the day! All the effect of an unfortunate brain-fever. However, this present attack has been brought on solely by seeing of a stranger; and you'll answer for it, I make bold to hope, to the good doctor, and his step-daughter, whom

I am expecting home to tea, minute after minute."

"Don't stay, child. I won't have you stay, to be insulted and talked down by the false Gamaliel, as you were at Hephanger.—The idiotic chit he used to ask you.—Ha! ha! ha! ha!—The idiotic chit will now be the means of bringing him to judgment—to judgment—to judge—"

"Mind, my lady. I only tell you to *mind*," interrupted the keeper. "If your ladyship continues talking in this rampageous manner, we must find means to stop you."

"Ay, you'll beat me: as she's often done before, Margaret. So get away with you, my dear, that I may be spared," cried the old lady; her short grey hair seeming to bristle on her head with indignation, like that of an angry terrier. "But I'm happy now, Margaret Mordaunt. I shall sleep in my bed, now. My kith and kin are warned. I shall not be murdered in cold blood. So go, my child, and God speed you; and bring you back to me

again, with a stout heart and a strong arm to back you, and complete my deliverance!"

There was so much more sense in the exhortation than might have been expected from a person in a state thus bewildered, that Lady Hargreave judged it best to comply. She really dreaded an interview with the obnoxious Dr. Macwheeble; and, judging from the woman placed in authority over her unfortunate relative, formed no very high opinion of the step-daughter.

"You may rely upon my taking instant steps for your legal protection, my dear aunt," said she, saluting the old lady's skinny hand. "Depend upon every exertion in my power!"

"You are very like your mother, Margaret Mordaunt!"—was Lady Milicent's incoherent reply. "Just so used poor Mary to speak and look! *She* was a kindly creature. If I ever wronged her—if I ever persecuted *you*, God hath dealt hard measure to me in return. I have suffered, Margaret—*how* I have suffered.

Pray Heaven I may also have atoned.—Pray
—*pray* Heaven I may have atoned.”—

Strange moisture glistened in Lady Milicent's hard grey eyes, as she gazed for a moment, still holding her hand, into the face of Lady Hargreave.

Margaret fancied with horror, when she had taken leave and quitted the room, and reached the garden, that she heard a heavy blow, a piteous cry!—

CHAPTER VI.

Le monde ne pardonne point au bonheur qu'il ne sanctionne pas. Il en mine sourdement le fragile édifice ; et quand l'édifice a croulé, il en sâlit les débris, et remue incessamment les ruines, pour que la fleur du souvenir ne puisse y croître et s'y épanouir.

BALZAC.

IT need scarcely be recorded that the homeward walk of Lady Hargreave was sad and harassing. Her gentle mind was overawed by the spectacle she had witnessed, by the wild speeches—the wandering eyes—the up-starting hair of the unfortunate maniac. The sufferings of the aged are always a sorry sight ;

and it was no consolation to know that her own and her mother's wrongs had been visited with such terrible retribution.

Moreover, though there could be no pretext for immuring a woman of Lady Milicent's fortune in a retreat so little suitable to her position in life, Margaret was forced to accept her complaints with a certain reservation. Lady Milicent's accusations, in the present instance, perhaps as far exceeded the truth as when, in presence of Lady Bournemouth's whole establishment, she accused her niece of having murdered her grandmother. This recollection came happily to the support of Dr. Macwheeble.

On attaining the summit of the hill, descending from Osborne to East Cowes, Lady Hargreave discerned in the distance the graceful outline of the Nautilus with her sails set, sweeping towards the landing-pier of Oak Hill. And never had she felt more thankful to Heaven for having bestowed upon her babes to honour her and render her old

age happy, than when reflecting that the light-some vessel before her, which

Chas'd the whistling brine and swirl'd into the bay,

contained her healthy, happy, prosperous children, about to rush home with thankful acknowledgments for their unexpected holiday.

Margaret resolved to hasten on, and order their supper prepared for their arrival. It was half-past seven. The Oak Hill dinner-hour was eight. Her guests would probably soon make their appearance.

Soon? Alas! as she reached the garden entrance opening to the western lawn, seated under a deep verandah covered with climbing plants in full flower, Lord and Lady Delavile already awaited her return—Lord and Lady Delavile, and a third person.

“We have brought you a recruit, dear Lady Hargreave,” cried the Viscountess from a distance, in her shrillest tones. “A reluctant re-

cruit, moreover, to his everlasting shame be it spoken !” —

“ Fanshawe would not hear of intruding upon you for dinner, my dear Lady Hargreave,” added Lord Delavile, advancing to meet her ; while Herbert Fanshawe stood with his hat uplifted, as if waiting her authorisation to make himself at home. At her first glimpse of the group, however, he had appeared more like the master of the house than an invited guest.

“ Was Mr. Fanshawe made prisoner by the Tiger Moth, or was it a voluntary surrender ?” inquired Margaret, with a constrained smile, after giving her hand to her visitor, who was instantly at his ease.

“ We found him on board Lord Felix’s cutter ; where, by the way, dear Lady Hargreave, you were fully expected.”

“ As I can testify,” added Fanshawe. “ I was tempted to embark this morning, before my eyes were half open, by an assurance that Lady Delavile *and Lady Hargreave* were to form part of the crew.”

“And so after a most delightful sail, we brought him off forcibly in the boat,” added Lord Delavile. “All the others were engaged to dinner at the Castle; and we persuaded Fanshawe that it would be a disgrace to the hospitality of Cowes, if he was known to have dined alone at Aris’s.”

“It would at least, have been using *us* very shabbily, after Mr. Fanshawe had been informed how much our party was in need of extension,” said Lady Hargreave. “Sir Richard is detained at Dursley. I trust Mr. Fanshawe, you have made up your mind to stay and assist me in entertaining Lord Delavile?”

Of course he would stay. It was exactly what he had always intended. It was exactly what Lady Delavile, so prone to form other people’s engagements for them, had originally projected. Her ladyship immediately settled it *for* Lady Hargreave, not *with* Lady Hargreave, that while they were dressing for dinner, the boat of the Nautilus should be despatched back across the water, to bring back

Mr. Fanshawe's luggage from the Globe. And lo! the new-comer slipped as quietly into the neat little bachelor bedroom with hangings of straw-coloured chintz, as though he had slept there the previous night.

Had he indeed slept there the preceding night, it would have been sorely against the wish of Margaret; who wanted, just then, no addition to her family circle. But during the process of changing her yachting dress for the high muslin gown which constituted her summer-evening costume, it occurred to her, that Fanshawe's arrival might prove a blessing. Lady Milicent's position was urgent. Her visit to Laurel Cottage would give the alarm; and the patient might be removed to secret confinement hard to discover, before she was able to obtain assistance or even counsel from Sir Richard. Against consulting Lord Delavile, she had fully resolved; as in that case, not the smallest cabin-boy of the R.Y.S. but would have heard, before the expiration of four-and-twenty hours (thanks to the ramifications of the United Gossip Asso-

ciation of which Lady Delavile was a vice-president) that "poor dear Lady Hargreave possessed a host of mad relations; one of whom was chained up by the family in a miserable asylum somewhere in the Isle of Wight."

Herbert Fanshawe, with his unimpassioned self-possession, would be the very man to confer with Dr. Macwheeble, if conference proved indispensable to the relief of the invalid. Herbert Fanshawe, with his diplomatic caution, would be the very man to preserve the strictest secrecy on the subject, when they should have succeeded in their purpose.

Great therefore was his surprise, on finding a billet placed in his hands as soon as his eyes had opened the following morning on the straw-coloured hangings, and the glorious brightness of the sea, extended like a mirror beyond—in the handwriting of the Dean's daughter!—He fancied, for a moment, that he must be still dreaming! That Margaret, by whom he was uniformly treated with such reserve—such polished coldness—should write of her own

accord to propose a secret meeting, was almost a blow to him.

Propose one however she did. She actually begged him to detach himself from the Oak Hill party, immediately after breakfast, and hasten to the pine tree-bench on the shore; where Lady Hargreave promised to be in waiting. There was no disguise—no subterfuge—no caution. The letter was written in her own handwriting, signed with her own name, and sealed with her usual seal. And yet, she dared to bid him beware of being seen by the Delaviles on his way to their place of rendezvous!—

“Englishwomen are the most inscrutable beings!” mused he, as he leisurely tied his cravat, and studied his physiognomy in the glass. “Such inordinate value on character; in conduct such reckless waste!—Not even a patent envelope!—That hoddy-hoddy *soubrette* of hers, Mrs. Harston, probably read every syllable of the billet, before she delivered it to my man.”

It was an agitated breakfast. Though Lady Delavile recounted, according to her wont,

the contents of her private and confidential foreign correspondence, which far exceeded in interest, if not volume, that of Downing Street, confidential, but not private; though Lord Delavile endeavoured to amuse his hostess by an account of their cruise in the Tiger-Moth, and the epicuro-nautical life of Vice-Commodore Lord Felix Taut,—Margaret could scarcely affect an interest in the conversation. He could have worshipped her for what he considered the *naïveté* of sending him a curious admixture of coffee and dietetic cocoa, compounded in a fit of absence of mind, in place of the tea he asked for.

After breakfast, cunning woman, she sent for the children, to engage Lady Delavile's attention; Lord Delavile having already disappeared on his daily pilgrimage across the water to the Club. And the moment little Mary had taken possession of the Viscountess, her mother slipped out of the room; and had reached the pine-trees before Herbert Fanshawe, with his cigar

in his mouth, made his leisurely appearance at the spot.

“Ever avoid an air of haste,” said he, as if reciting one of Bacon’s apothegms, “when you wish to avoid exciting attention.”

Time pressed. Without noticing his impertinence, she commenced her explanation: which was far more rapid and more clear than her disappointed auditor could have desired. In a few minutes, he was in possession of the whole story. In a few minutes, he was aware of being sought as a privy councillor; different—oh! how different from his selfish anticipations!

“As the friend of my brother Mildenhall,” said Lady Hargreave, “you will, I am persuaded, afford me such aid as *he* would give me, were he on the spot. I need not tell you that *his* part in the play would never be of a dangerous or compromising nature. But I am most anxious to do my duty by my mother’s sister, without, if possible, attracting publicity to her affliction.”

Undoubtedly—unquestionably.—He would

do anything and everything Lady Hargreave might suggest. Perhaps it would be better if they repaired together to the house; demanded an interview with this Dr. Macwheeble; and threatened him with legal investigation, unless his wife was instantly furnished with those comforts and decencies of life which her fortune intitled her to enjoy.

“Suppose, then,” replied Margaret, “that we persuade the Delaviles to join the sailing party to St. Clare, which you were talking about yesterday evening. *You* will not perhaps mind renouncing it, to render so great a service to my family, as well as to a woman so unfortunate. In that case, we might drive as if towards Ryde; and stop the carriage at the entrance of the village, to avoid attracting notice.”

Such a proposition was not likely to be rejected by Herbert Fanshawe. He would rather, however, she had shown a little less *sang-froid* in proposing to him half a morning's *tête-à-tête*. But it was clear that her mind was absorbed in the critical position of the unfortunate Lady

Milicent ; for, as if she feared to have failed in sufficiently interesting his feelings in behalf of her unhappy relative, she began to retrace in more circumstantial detail, the picture of her wretched retreat.

She spoke with emotion, for she spoke out of the abundance of her heart ; and before she had ended her story, tears were streaming down her cheeks. Fanshawe, who was seated beside her, naturally drew closer to whisper words of encouragement and kindness ; as specious as though he had borrowed them of his saccharine friend Altavilla, so much in the habit of whispering, according to Moore's simile,—

As if bottled velvet slipp'd over his lips.

In a moment, however, he interrupted himself. His quick eye discerned, hastily retreating among the arbutus bushes, a couple of jacketed and straw-hat-ed dandies, who had ascended the bank from the shore ; and who, on finding the bench occupied by, instead of the assembled Oak Hill party to

whom their message from the Castle was addressed, only what they conceived to be a remarkably happy pair, were hurrying away, thoroughly ashamed of their intrusion.

But Fanshawe understood the danger of such a misunderstanding. Awkward as was the position, it must be met, face to face.

“We came with a message to Lady Delavile,” said Captain Rhys, on finding himself hailed, and required to show his letters of marque. “Lord Delavile told us we should find her hereabouts; and from below, we mistook Lady Hargreave’s dress for hers.”

“Naturally enough; for they are as nearly alike as possible,” interposed Margaret, rallying her spirits. “I have just left her. Lady Delavile is afraid, I believe, to dazzle her eyes by noonday sunshine. Let us all return together and find her under the verandah.”

In returning, as proposed, it was only natural for Captain Rhys and his friend as they followed Lady Hargreave up the ascent to the house, to exchange shrugs and glances, as much

as to say—"old fellow! we have put our foot into it."

Poor Margaret was however much too full of her family troubles to take heed of them. As soon as she had conducted them to Lady Delavile, and expressed her wish to be exempted from the morning's engagements, on pretence of an urgent visit to be paid, she returned to her own room, to address a letter to Lord Mildenhall on the subject of Lady Milicent's sufferings. She had not much hope that he would lift up so much as a finger in her behalf. He was one of those who expect the duties of life to be fulfilled by other people for their benefit, without the smallest reciprocity of exertion. But in William's absence from England, to whom else could she apply?—It was too painful to have to say to her husband—"My nearest female relative is insane. Help me to save her from the scourge and strait waistcoat; and to pray that our children may not be similarly afflicted." To Fanshawe, devoid of personal interest in the question, but so considerate and so judicious, it was far easier to be indebted.

To Lady Delavile meanwhile, though accustomed to the independence of the great ladies, her *commensales*, the coolness of Margaret was astounding. She, Lady Delavile, had brought Herbert Fanshawe home with her to Oak Hill, for the sole purpose of relieving by his ready wit and extensive information, the *ennui* of being alone with Lord Delavile and Lady Hargreave; and here was this model wife,—whose domestic virtues she had heard cited by Ralph Hargreave as though she were a Lady Rachel Russell or a Margaret Roper,—making assignations with the most fashionable of modern *roués*, as unblushingly as though she were reciting a canticle. Of all audacities, Lady Delavile thought this the most audacious. Had she been on speaking terms with Lord Delavile on any other topics than those of public interest, she certainly would have intrusted to him her conviction that their beautiful hostess, if not already numbered with the fallen angels, was progressing rapidly towards the abdication of her wings.

And if such the opinion of a woman predis-

posed to like and admire her, what was likely to be the award of the ninety and nine triflers, envious of the prosperity of one who was neither of their clique, nor over-awed by its self-constituted ascendancy.

Margaret had been seen (by that ubiquitous spy called "Somebody," who, like Satan in the time of Job, is perpetually 'wandering up and down on the earth, and walking up and down in it,') to receive a billet from a disreputable-looking boy. She had next been watched, by the same mysterious agent, leaving her home almost clandestinely—quite unattended—to take what she was never known to do at Oak Hill—a solitary walk. That same evening (the same evening, mind you, quoth Somebody), who should suddenly appear at Cowes, (aha!) but Herbert Fanshawe,—so much talked about for the Dean's daughter before Dick Hargreave came forward to offer her his hand; and according to the account of Hartwell of the Blues, her faithful shepherd in the family pinfold at Mildenhall. Last of all, Somebody had heard it whispered at

the Club by Captain Rhys, and this was a more exquisite song than the other, that Lady Hargreave and Fanshawe had been found together in a secluded spot of the grounds at Oak Hill, under circumstances that left no doubt of the good understanding between them. At this, Somebody of course expressed himself inexpressibly shocked; and Everybody, like echo, was inexpressibly shocked in its turn.

Lady Delavile, before all things a woman of the world, took care when they met at the dinner-table that evening, to enlarge volubly on the beauties of St. Clare, and the pleasantness of their morning's sail; careful not to let it appear that she was either annoyed, or surprised. At present, she did not see her way clearly through Margaret's conduct or intentions. Why, therefore, create a coolness between them, on mere supposition; when Oak Hill afforded so far more luxurious a means of enjoying the pastime of yachting, than by paying five-and-twenty guineas a week for an ill-furnished villa? Fanshawe, too, was a person to be conciliated.

Independent of his inherent qualifications, he was cousin to the Duke of Merioneth, who, finding that his young kinsman had achieved independence, had lately taken it into his head to oppress him with patronage. Her ladyship continued, therefore, to look on and see nothing ; fixing her eyes upon objects in aërial perspective, and talking incessantly of past and future, as though the present had no existence.

One evening, a pleasant twilight after a series of summer showers, when the glow-worms were beginning to gleam out upon the moss and the moon upon the rippling waters of the Solent, Lady Delavile (the little family party being increased by a few friends whom she had coolly invited to meet herself at Oak Hill, small change, she considered them, for the five-guinea-piece Ralph Hargreave, of which she had been defrauded), was endeavouring to rouse up the indolent and dispirited Margaret, to form arrangements for their party to the regatta. The Nautilus was entered for the cup. What was to be their post? In other words,

how were they to render themselves most conspicuous, and place themselves most in the way?—

Lady Hargreave was perfectly passive—perfectly acquiescent. Whatever her guest desired, should be done. She was evidently as indifferent to the success of the *Nautilus*, and the event of the regatta, as if the Cup were to be sailed for by the pirogues of cannibals. Throughout the day, she had been watching the door; evidently anxious, evidently looking out for squalls, though the weather-glass was auspicious.

“I was in hopes, my dear Lady Hargreave,” said Lord Delavile, attributing her dejected air to the continued absence of her husband, “that my friend Hargreave would have made his appearance here for a couple of days, for this regatta. He used to talk so much to us, at Dursley, of sailing and Oak Hill.”

“Sir Richard was extremely fond of both, before he began his improvements. He would, however, have been here now, Lord Delavile, not for the regatta, but for the pleasure of

meeting you under his roof, had not his brother-in-law, Sir Hurst Clitheroe, been obliged to preside over some public meeting at R——, relative to the Great Exhibition. He took the opportunity to bring Lady Clitheroe and her children, to pay a long-promised visit to Dursley, which, of course, detains Sir Richard.”

“True! I saw the meeting announced in our county paper,” replied Lord Delavile. “There was a—a not very wise—address, signed by Sir Hurst. I should have found more fault with it, had I surmised that it would be the pretext for depriving me of the company of my friend Hargreave.”

Margaret had not spirits to make the reply required of her. She would willingly have said what politeness demanded, to a person she so sincerely regarded as Lord Delavile. But a heavy weight was on her heart.

A bell heard in the distance announced, at that moment, that the last steamer from Southampton was arriving; and the idlers lounging in various parts of the room, enjoying the cool

evening air that entered through the conservatory, after a hot and stormy day, rose up and stood under the verandah which shaded the western aspect of the house, to see the boat rapidly approach the pier; its lamps resembling the fiery eyes of some marine-monster, rushing upon shore.

It touched the landing-place; and the clamour of arrivals and departures reached them in a murmur, even at that remote spot. Five minutes afterwards, hasty footsteps were heard approaching the house, which the whole party had re-entered. In a moment, a stranger was among them. A stranger?—not exactly. To the amazement of all present—to the inexpressible surprise of Herbert Fanshawe,—Sir Richard Hargreave made his appearance; weary, travel-stained, haggard—exhibiting a face where assumed smiles struggled with unconcealable annoyance.

Margaret came timidly forward, to mingle her welcome with the general outcry of gratulation and astonishment. Lady Delavile

looked alarmed, expecting some Lucy of Lammermoor-ish catastrophe. Somebody had evidently sent for this inopportune husband.

Her ladyship was, of course, far too clever to divine anything so natural as that the Somebody on this occasion was no other than his wife!—

CHAPTER VII.

En amour, il y a toujours *un* qui aime l'autre. Il était décidé a n'être jamais plus que *l'autre*.—ALPHONSE KARR.

Cette âme machinée comme un théâtre, cachait mille fausses trappes, par lesquelles on pouvait se montrer ou disparaître subitement. C'était un spectacle d'éternelle surprises, sans que l'artifice pût être soupçonné. Tout cela paraissait plus naturel que la nature ; plus vrai que la vérité.—ÉMILE SOUVESTRE.

IN that uneventful phase of society which presumes to call itself the Great World, anything catastrophic—anything that tends to

produce a ripple on the mill-pond, becomes miraculous; as a molehill becomes a mountain on Salisbury Plain.

Next morning, albeit that crisis of the Vectian year, the Cup day, excitement of a private nature had the best of it at Cowes.

“Shocking affair this, at Oak Hill!—*Le mari* has made his appearance.—A terrible scene!—Sir Richard walked up, unannounced, from the last Southampton steamer; found Fanshawe and Lady Hargreave sitting apart from the rest of the party under the tent; and what followed might be surmised—”

“He turned Fanshawe out of the house?”

“N-n-o!—On the contrary, they were seen at the sandwich-tray, drinking sherry and seltzer-water together. But the countenances of both plainly showed what was passing in their minds.”

As if in the year of grace eighteen hundred and fifty, *any* countenance showed plainly what was passing in its mind!

Still more completely were the gossips at

fault, when, the following day, Lady Hargreave made her appearance at the regatta, looking unusually handsome, and unusually well-dressed; leaning upon the arm of Herbert Fanshawe, in the face of the whole club-house—and *no Sir Richard!* Somebody had a great mind to be angry. But as Lady Delavile, in one of her happiest humours, was patting the Dean's daughter on the arm, perfectly satisfied, what business had anybody else to dissent? "Much better obtain an insight into the odds, and make your bets on the race."

On this occasion, there was some excuse for the blunder of Somebody. It was difficult to conjecture that Lady Hargreave had sent for her husband, in terms it was difficult for him to resist: explaining her sad discovery concerning the unfortunate Lady Milicent. She told him that, at first unwilling to annoy him, she had obtained the interference of Mr. Fanshawe who, invited by Lady Delavile, was a guest at Oak Hill; and who, having warmly espoused the cause of the unhappy old lady, had met

with threats and insults. The burly Doctor had not hesitated to resort to violent means to expel him from the sanctum at Laurel Cottage.

Under these circumstances, Margaret felt sure that, however inconvenient to his affairs at Dursley, Sir Richard would hasten to her assistance; and the result was, that, eager to fulfil her wishes, he arrived four-and-twenty hours before she had thought it possible he could reach Oak Hill.

It is true he was a little angry with her. He considered that she had done wrong in delegating to a mere acquaintance, a distasteful office which belonged of right to himself. And, late as it was when the male part of the Oak Hill party separated for the night after enjoying in the calm moonlight of that delicious night, the best of cigars and weakest of iced cognac and water, he repaired afterwards to Fanshawe's room, to confer with him touching the family dilemma; to hear from him how intolerable a brute the Greenock doctor had shown himself; and how immediately the attention of a magistrate ought

to be called to Lady Milicent's distresses. There was no sort of occasion, he averred, for the coercion practised on her.

That Lord Delavile's valet, who apparently kept irregular hours in regatta time, should have met the master of the house coming out of Mr. Fanshawe's room at two o'clock in the morning, after a prolonged conference, with a face as haggard and portentous as that of O. Smith in a melodrama, was naturally repeated the following day, at the Club, to the great edification of Somebody.

Moreover, in the accounts of the regatta transmitted for several following days to all parts of England, by Somebody's "own correspondent," after a description of the races won and the sums lost upon them—of an accident by which a wherry was run down, and a bet by which a "broken dandy, lately on his travels," was finally done up,—came an account of the company assembled at Cowes:—"The As of course—the Bs with their pretty daughters, Lady C. good-humoured and foolish as usual—and

that beautiful Lady Hargreave—but no Sir Richard:”—the text being varied by allusions to Fanshawe, and hints that matters at Oak Hill were getting a little too bad; slight rumours, but barbed like thistle seed, to be wafted afar off and take root wherever they alighted.

One such letter passing through the hands of Barty Tomlinson, or Early Intelligence, was as sure of a circulation of thousands of copies, as one of Dickens's serials or a popular pamphlet.

Lady Hargreave, whom her noble guests insisted upon dragging to the regatta-ball, would perhaps have found herself for the first time coldly received, had not the most kindly-natured of the *grandes dames* present, a woman too well-looking and too well-dressed to be envious of poor Margaret's gentle loveliness, taken her under her wing; saying aloud that, as Sir Richard was too idle to come, she must act as her chaperon.

To expect companionship from Lady Dela-

vile on such an occasion, was much the same as to expect it from a dragon-fly. No sooner did that veteran of fashion find herself in the illuminated atmosphere of a crowded room, no matter where, than she was hovering and darting from acquaintance to acquaintance, asking hurried questions and making the answers to them; talking incessantly, yet having nothing to say; enveloping trifles in mystery, yet treating important mysteries as a trifle. Lord Delavile judiciously stole off to the whist-table; and but for Lady A——'s opportune intervention, Margaret would have remained alone in the crowd.

For, to the great disappointment of the lovers of scandal, no Herbert Fanshawe was in attendance! Some protested that there had been a hostile meeting betwixt him and Sir Richard; and that one or both was dangerously wounded. Lady Hargreave, under the worldly tutorage of Lady Delavile having been forced out, in spite of all, to save appearances. Others declared that the moment Sir Richard made his appearance at

Oak Hill, Fanshawe chartered a steamer and was off for the main-land. One thing was clear : that the gossips, (to borrow Mark Lemon's famous pun), since they knew nothing def-in-ite had better have remained dumb-in-it : for they were furlongs distant from the truth.

For some months past—more than some—more than six—Herbert Fanshawe had been soliciting, or rather, beating about the bush, to obtain the reversion of an important diplomatic post ; which, according to private information he had received, was likely to fall vacant in the course of the autumn. In these our times, talent—nay, even merit,—needs to be powerfully backed to achieve promotion. Sir Claude had in his life-time worn threadbare the family interest ; and Herbert was well aware that he had only his connexion with the Duke of Merioneth to recommend him to ministerial notice. This cousinship, accordingly, he had been rubbing up, with the utmost assiduity throughout the season ; by calling the Duchess's carriage at every party—filling a place at their Graces'

dinner-table at a moment's notice, when some guest had suddenly excused himself; and procuring autographs, ancient and modern, spurious and genuine, to increase his Grace's "unrivalled collection." He had promised a Napoleon—a Marlborough—a Turenne—a Julius Cæsar—a Romulus, or Remus,—no matter what that was fabulous or absurd,—by way of keeping up the steam of the family interest.

The Duke was really disposed to serve him; because he could do so without self-sacrifice. He possessed neither son nor nephew. His title and estates were to descend to a kinsman, whom he disliked as intuitively as people are apt to dislike their heirs; and he was as fond of Fanshawe as he was capable of being of anything not bound in vellum or dug out of a barrow. A professed Archæologist, the Duke of Merioneth was as dry as the dust of ages in which he delighted.

He had, however, really besieged the Treasury in favour of the kinsman, who, if rich only in autographs, was likely to do more honour to the

family tree than the Sir Clod who was hereafter to duke it in his stead; and having obtained information that the envoy to whose functions Herbert Fanshawe was ambitious to succeed, had applied to the Foreign Office for six months' leave of absence on the score of ill-health, the Duke addressed a letter to his *protégé*, marked "to be forwarded," commanding him instantly to town. It required an express—and expedited by a Duke,—to bring Herbert Fanshawe to London in the month of August, when regattas and moors were in their prime;—and it went to his heart to leave Oak Hill—even re-submitted as it was to marital authority.

More than once, more than twice, in his life, had Fanshawe, who piqued himself on his usurped reputation of stoic, become the dupe of his own feelings as regarded the Dean's daughter. At the suggestion of his father, he originally aspired to make a conquest of Margaret Mordaunt, as heiress to Lady Bournemouth, and only daughter of the future Lord Mildenhall. But the corner of his heart that

was not evil, prevailed; and the beautiful Margaret, the gentle Margaret, had, instead, made a conquest of himself. At Dursley, in his collegian-hood, he loved her as truly as *he* was capable of loving. Some hearts are shaken by that mighty passion, as the oak is by the gale:--the leaves rustle, the twigs waver, but branch and stem remain immovable. Others ply like the poplar, or tremble like the aspen. Fanshawe loved like the sturdier tree. The breeze passed, and left no trace of its influence.

A second time, at his own suggestion, he had placed himself within range of her charms; her indifference towards him having piqued him into a desire of subjugating so brilliant a tigress. And again, the loveliness and inartificiality of Margaret had effected the conquest of his shallow heart. As much as he was capable of becoming the slave of woman, he was hers. That is, if the metropolis had been in flames, out of millions of her sex, she was the one whose life he would have sought to save. He

would have given half he possessed to believe that the passion was reciprocal. But on this point, he did not deceive himself.

“Better for me, perhaps, that she should remain indifferent,” was his philosophical reflection, when on his way across the blue waters to Cowes, for the chance of being invited to Oak Hill. “Playing at fast and loose, in this way, never commits a man. Whereas a regular *liaison* is a millstone round his neck. I have still my fortune to make; and it is not safe to forget, even for a minute, that one is living in the reign of Queen Victoria—not in that of George IV.”

When the Duke of Merioneth's letter arrived, therefore, he hesitated no more about embarking in the first steamer, and thence, per express train to town,—than if there had been no regatta in the world—no Lady Milicent—no Lady Hargreave. Of Somebody, he never thought. He did not belong to the class of men who stand in awe of Somebody. This was a fault; because, according to his own

account, he had still his fortune to make. This was a fault; because, according to the account of Downing Street, he was ambitious to re-inaugurate himself in the *corps diplomatique*. And to public men, public opinion should be as the fiat of Olympus.

As the steamer thumped and whistled its way athwart Cowes Roads, where the Royal Yacht Squadron was setting up its white wings for the regatta, like a flight of merry sea-gulls pluming themselves for the day, he could not forbear a retrospective glance towards the groves and fragrant gardens of Oak Hill. The shores of the fair island, lined with yellow furze blossoms, might have pretended to the name of the Gold Coast; while the Royal Standard of England floated gaily on the tower predominating above. A fair scene, a lovely spot, that pleasant island, created to form a resort for the gay and prosperous! "Pity," mused Herbert Fanshawe, "that scandal should also have selected it for her favourite home!" If at that moment his mind reverted to beautiful Sicily with Scylla

howling on her coast, he was not often so pedantic.

As the steamer rapidly ascended the Southampton River, instead of noticing its embowered shores, or venerable ruins, his thoughts were occupied in vexatious self-accusation. Not in repentance. Fanshawe was a man who never repented. But he accused himself of having been an ass for overstepping the bounds of prudence, by a too ardent declaration of attachment to Lady Hargreave, as they were returning together in the barouche from their visit to Laurel Cottage. It is true she had made no exaggerated show of resentment. As if aware that the day for Lucretia's dagger was past, she contented herself with wielding the no less cutting weapon of dignified coldness. Thanks to the lessons of Lady Delavile, she was clearly becoming a woman of the world !

His departure from Oak Hill, meanwhile, was sincerely regretted by Sir Richard ; who had experienced much annoyance in his dealings with the Greenock doctor. Macwheeble asserted, and not mildly, his right to manage his insane

wife, according to the suggestions of his own judgment. It was likely enough, he said, that Lady Milicent might complain of harsh usage. People labouring under cerebral disease, were usually prejudiced against those by whom they were submitted to coercion. But it had become necessary for the safety of the family, to place her under restraint; because, ere they quitted Bath, she had not only attempted the life of her husband, but publicly accused him of an illicit connexion with one of his nearest female relatives. She also taxed him with having administered poison to her mother, the late Countess of Bournemouth, with a view to the earlier declaration of his marriage; an accusation, as he shrewdly observed, which had been at one time extended to Lady Hargreave. As to her present humble habitation, it had been chosen, as such retreats are usually chosen, chiefly with a view to secrecy, in order to spare the feelings of the family; and Dr. Macwheeble considered it hard that they, expressly repudiated by Lady Milicent when in her right mind, should seize the opportunity of her infirm condition,

to come forward in her behalf for his molestation.

There was so much of truth in this defence, that Sir Richard found it difficult to persist in asserting the rights of the old lady to milder usage. And now that Fanshawe was gone, collateral evidence of her neglected state was unproduceable. The motive of his departure had been fully explained. But never had Dick Hargreave more deeply regretted the departure of a stranger from within his gates.

On Margaret's return home from the second day's regatta, a conference took place between her and her husband, in which he communicated with so much feeling how deeply he had been touched by the sight of Lady Milicent, and the difficulty he had found in making better terms for her with the man who not only hardened his heart like Pharoah, but paralyzed all argument by investing his replies in the vagueness of texts,—that Margaret, all gratitude and grief, appeared at the dinner-table with eyes so red as to excite a thousand surmises.

Sir Richard on the other hand was grave and taciturn. His mind was oppressed by all he had seen and heard. Lord Delavile, to whom a family quarrel was by no means a thing difficult to imagine, fancied he was doing a kind thing to both parties by talking incessantly about the morning's diversion, the comparative beauty and tonnage of the yachts engaged; and Camper and White would probably have been somewhat puzzled by certain of the terms employed, and not a few of the criticisms indulged in.

For Margaret was nearly as silent as her husband. If within an hour of the apparently impulsive avowal of attachment made to her by Herbert Fanshawe, she had despatched the express to Dursley by which Sir Richard's presence at Oak Hill was earnestly solicited, on pretence of requiring his interference in Lady Milicent's affairs, she had insured his coming quite as much as a safeguard against herself, as against the renewal of Fanshawe's protestations. In the secrecy of her soul, she felt guilty—convicted—shame-stricken. Of the party at Oak Hill he alone attributed the departure of the delin-

quent to other than the motives he had chosen to assign. *She* was convinced that he had fled before the face of the man whose hospitality he had sought to betray; and admitted that he had done well.

But had she, in the depths of her soul, nothing to repent and atone? The best of human beings when required to descend, dark lantern in hand, into the gloomy vault of his conscience, is apt to be startled by mouldering skeletons of neglected duties, indelible archives of broken promises, and shabby capitulations—if not accomplished, premeditated. Nor could Margaret reflect without a pang, upon the weakness which had allowed her to admit within the flowery walls of her Eden at Oak Hill, that serpent with a smiling face and forked tongue, which had left upon its fair lawn the trail of its sinuous way.

Profoundly degraded in her own estimation, she sat silent and humiliated in presence of her husband; right thankful to the eternal chatter of Lady Delavile, who, after half an hour's dissertation and laying down the law, would, if nobody

contradicted her, turn round and occupy another half hour in contradicting herself; and who now so engrossed Sir Richard's attention as to prevent his discerning her want of spirits.

He *did* discern it however; for it was not difficult to look through and listen through the flimsy web of Lady Delavile's discourse, to objects more interesting in the distance. But he naturally attributed her sadness to the same cause by which his own spirit was darkened. Sir Richard, like most men of tranquil temperament, entertained an especial horror of insanity. The idea that such a calamity might have been entailed on his posterity, was a source of terror and grief which he could not shake off. He would have given worlds that he had not been compelled to see that gibbering woman, with her glaring eyes and stubbly grey hair. Her incoherent words rang in his ears through all the plausible jabber of Lady Delavile. Heaven above! If he should ever be called upon to behold his beloved Margaret thus horribly visited,—his

pretty prattling Mary,—his grave and prematurely reasoning boy!—

It did not at all surprise him to see tears stealing down the cheeks of his lovely wife, as, later in the evening, she sat apart from her guests in the moonlight streaming into the verandah. He would not, however, allow her to give way to melancholy. With such hereditary predispositions, she must not remain much alone. She must not be permitted to fall back upon herself, or indulge in painful reminiscences.

Alas! already the poison he had imbibed was beginning to work. He was already thinking of how she was to be “treated.” It was clear he looked upon her as marked out for a dreadful fate,—as an incipient martyr,—And thus, while the gossips on the opposite shore were busied in predicting disunion to Oak Hill, a cause of domestic misery, how far remote from these conjectures, had arisen to cast the shadow of the upas-tree over its once happy roof!—

CHAPTER VIII.

Shallow. There are many complaints, Davy, against this Vizor: an arrant knave, on my knowledge.

Davy. I grant your worship that he is a knave, Sir: but the knave is mine honest friend, Sir; therefore I beseech your worship, let him be countenanced.

SHAKSPEARE.

IT had been settled previous to Sir Richard's departure for the Isle of Wight, that the Clitheroes were to remain at Dursley during his absence. Sir Hurst having to attend at R—— one of those public meetings, which affix such fatal manacles to the hands of public men without accomplishing any other purpose; ex-

cept, perhaps, that of affording an annual safety-valve to the wired-down eloquence of a few local, gas-inflated, demagogues.

Lady Clitheroe was by no means sorry to find herself for a time lady-paramount at Dursley. With all her self-conceit, she had sense to perceive the superiority of Lady Hargreave's household arrangements over her own ; and was glad to ascertain, at second-hand, according to her own vulgar phrase, how " things were done " at Morton Castle and Delavile Abbey. Nor was there any personal repugnance to prevent *her* from parading the family carriages and liveries in the High Street of R——, from gossiping with old Mrs. Pleydell, and her niece, Mrs. Pinhorn ; or even endeavouring to extract mischief out of the stern and truthful Mrs. Barnes. On the contrary, as their member's wife, she considered herself as much intitled to inflict daily visits on the inhabitants of R——, as though a gilt pestle and mortar had figured in justification over her door.

Great, therefore, was her vexation when, within four days of his departure for Cowes, Sir Richard not only returned, but returned accompanied by his wife and children. Lady Clitheroe saw in a moment from Margaret's countenance that something was wrong. For in addition to her previous cares, Lady Hargreave had experienced with unusual force in passing the lodge-gates of Dursley, the painful presentiments she had described to her brother. In answer to Emma's pertinacious inquiries, however, she stated only that she had quitted Oak Hill, so suddenly, in obedience to the wish of her husband; and as to questioning *him*, his sister entertained too strong a recollection of the impenetrable and obstinate Dick of earlier days, to hazard any attempt towards decyphering the mystery. She knew that, as the wind bloweth where it listeth, her brother's comings and goings were imperative.

At Cowes, the sudden evaporation of the Oak Hill party proved equally startling. For though it had been always arranged that, immediately

after the regatta, the Delaviles were to take their departure for Scotland, to enjoy grouse-shooting and deer-stalking in the midst of the fashionable throng assembled at the castle of one of their sons-in-law,—it was difficult to explain why the Nautilus was to be laid up a month before its usual time; or why Oak Hill was to be abruptly reconverted into Paradise Lost. Captain Rhys contrived to extract from the master of the Nautilus that “his horders had been quite hunforseen; that it had hallways been settled for my lady and the young folks to spend the hawtum in the hisland.”

Speaking on which hint, the gallant captain made it—clearly understood at the Club, that Sir Richard Hargreave had stooped like a sea-eagle upon his defenceless home, and carried off his trembling family in his talons. One or two of the married men applauded his spirit; and one or two of the married ladies approved his caution. But not a soul at West Cowes, but was as clearly convinced as if they had witnessed

the fact through Lord Rosse's telescope, that a terrible family crisis had occurred on the opposite shore ; that Herbert Fanshawe had proved what Chateaubriand's translation of Milton calls the Evil one—*Le mal unique* : an opinion rapidly promulgated throughout the empire, by means of penny-postage, and idle scribblers.

The true motive of Sir Richard's sudden proposition to his wife to return with him to Dursley Park, which *he* considerably attributed to the necessity under which he found himself of being frequently in town throughout the autumn, as a Commissioner of the Great Exhibition, and his desire that one of the family should in the interim remain at home to inspect the improvements, was his disinclination that Margaret should remain in the vicinity of Laurel Cottage ; where Dr. Macwheeble persisted in domiciliating his unfortunate wife.

That Lady Hargreave would return to the spot, he felt certain ; and he dreaded the influence on *her* excitable feelings, of what had

produced so indelible an impression on his own.

To entrust to his sister Emma a remote hint of such a contingency, was impossible; and in order to silence her officious conjectures, he replied to her inquiries in his surliest and most imperious manner: "Lady Hargreave quitted the Isle of Wight *because I chose it.*" Whereupon Lady Clitheroe, finding Blue Beard in quite as ferocious a mood as the most sister-in-lawish malice could desire, abandoned poor Fatima to her destiny.

This did not prevent her from addressing a letter on the subject to her sister, Lady Arthur; who was feeding her melancholy and the carp in the reservoir of the old castle, at Hombourg les Bains: under much suspicion of designs upon the hand of a German mediatized prince, for whose meagre exchequer her jointure would have created a California.

"Dick and his wife are at Dursley again," wrote the unscrupulous Emma; "and adding but little to its enlivenment. As your quondam

friend Altavilla would say in his delicious French and honeyed accents, 'Je vois bien chère quelque chose se passa ;' but whether it will pass without a domestic thunder-storm, I cannot pretend to guess. At present, they scarcely speak to each other ; and not much to any one else."

To which communication, Lady Arthur replied with sororial tenderness: "I longed to show your letter to William Mordaunt ; who passed through this place the other day, in his capacity of national bagman, on his road to the linen warehouses at Dresden, and Bohemian glass-manufactory at Prague. But I fancy *he* would be as little able as yourself to afford *le mot de l'énigme*. A clue to the mystery has reached me, however, from a very opposite quarter. You may remember my giving to Lord and Lady Phelim O'Brennan a letter of introduction to Lady Hargreave, when they left London for Ryde at the close of the season ; which letter, they took care to leave in proper form at Oak Hill. As Margaret

has at command a yacht, and carriage-horses, and saddle-horses, it would have been no great stretch of politeness, had she made an excursion of half-a-dozen miles to return their visit. But though she was never at the trouble of making out Brigstock Terrace, rumours concerning her were not equally slow in finding their way. Dick, like a blind mole as he is, has been entertaining not only Herbert Fanshawe under his roof, it seems, but all Cowes at his expense. Margaret proves, after all, to be a *Tartuffe en falbalas!* To think that, while pretending such affection for her husband and children, she should have been keeping up that flirtation before the flood, with Fanshawe;—a man whose mind is in so advanced a state of decomposition, that no sanatory commission would undertake to purify the atmosphere corrupted by his presence. For mercy's sake, keep an eye upon them! Do not allow her to expose herself and us. No need for our family name, though it may *not* be inscribed in Doomsday Book, to be

dragged through the mire by these Mor-daunts."

Fortified by such a missive, Lady Clitheroe did not fail to play the Emma of other times to the Margaret of other times, who was now Lady Hargreave of Dursley Park. Whenever occasion offered, the forked tongue of the adder darted forth. She did not scruple to introduce the name of Herbert Fanshawe into the conversation, by way of torture to Margaret, as much *à-propos de bottes* as some Latin citation in the speech of a county member. Nor did Sir Richard ever fail to answer to the cue; frequently expressing wonder whether their friend had obtained the appointment he was expecting: probably not; for brilliant men like Herbert Fanshawe were seldom made available by Government. Government was afraid of introducing squibs and crackers too near their powder magazine.

On such occasions, Lady Clitheroe looked through and through poor Margaret, as if

invoking the walls of Dursley to fall and cover the family shame.

A sort of choke-damp was beginning to annihilate the spirits of the party, when by that great good Luck, which Champfort calls the *sobriquet* of Providence,—Ralph Hargreave suddenly made his appearance among them. It was as the apparition of a good spirit in a pantomime, in spangled tights and with a silver wand, to restore everything and everybody to order. He brought reality, where romance had prevailed—he brought truth—he brought conviction. Emma Clitheroe trembled at the sight of him. For she knew that his fearless nature never hesitated to call things by their right names ; or to judge people by their real intentions.

His business at Dursley, however, was neither to intimidate a hypocritical woman, nor sustain an oppressed one. It was of a far more comprehensive nature. Standing largely committed towards an important, a wealthy, an

enlightened constituency as regarded the prospects of the Exhibition, the construction of which was now in advanced progress, he wanted to ascertain from his kinsman the exact views and intentions of the commission, as regarded both the exhibitors and the public. The tangible interests of hundreds of enterprising manufacturers — of thousands of industrious workmen—hung on the information demanded; and had any one, at that juncture, interposed into the discussion the name of a next-to-nothing like Herbert Fanshawe, Ralph would probably have saluted it with a burst of expletives scarcely fit for audition by ears polite.

To afford him the verifications so honestly insisted upon, Sir Richard entreated his cousin to accompany him to town, whither he must repair in a few days; not a little stimulated in his haste to quit Dursley by his dislike of the empty pomposities of Sir Hurst Clitheroe.

Unluckily for all parties, however, there arrived, previous to his departure for town, a letter from Mildenhall Abbey; proposing on the part

of the Viscount a visit from himself, his Viscountess, and two of his progeny, in requital for that paid him by the Hargreaves the preceding year.

“No, by Jove! It can't and shan't be!” was Dick Hargreave's unceremonious rejoinder, when the proposition was recited to him, in presence of the Clitheroes. “Tell your brother, Margaret, that we are going to London. Tell him we are going to the devil. Tell him what you will; only within these doors he and his do not enter till I see cause to issue a fiat to the contrary!”

This tirade sounded as if harshly intended towards Margaret; regarding as it did the son of her father, the representative of her father's house. It was, on the contrary, a demonstration of marital fondness; or, as Wordsworth says of the

instinctive tenderness, the same
Which is in the blood of all.

Sir Richard had not forgiven, and could not

forgive, the answer made by Lord Mildenhall to his appeal for co-operation in behalf of Lady Milicent Macwheeble; that "it was Sir Richard's exclusive business to assist her; that Margaret, the only person who had benefited by Lady Bournemouth's fortune and consequence, was the only member of the family whom it behoved to trouble herself with the care and comfort of the lunatic."

Such was the motive of his ungraciousness towards his wife's brother, which Emma saw fit to interpret into jealous resentment; and which even Ralph Hargreave knew not how to account for. He was afraid something must be wrong between the wedded pair, whose unanimity was one of the dearest wishes of his heart.

If the present age of velocity and acceleration have its evils, let us give it the full benefit of its advantages.—Its impressions are more transitory than those of slower times, its grievances less lasting.—By the time Dick Hargreave was whirled to London, he had forgotten Lord

Mildenhall. Even the woeful image of the haggard old aunt of his Margaret faded from his mind, when he came within scope of that varied, potent, influential throng of London life; whose busy hum is probably as grand a chorus as was ever achieved by the great orchestra of human nature. (Sir) Richard was himself again, the moment that, arm-in-arm with his energetic cousin, he set foot in his crowded club in Pall Mall, the very focus of intellectual agitation.

Though pheasant-shooting had begun, London was as crowded as in July. Curiosity was on tiptoe concerning the great work in progress; and the opposition of a few egotists, and not a few humbugs, served only to cheer on the zeal of those intent upon forwarding so grand an effort of civilization. Not alone commissioners, not alone committee men, like the two Hargreaves, but every individual of spirit and enlightenment in the kingdom, was exerting himself or promoting the exertions of others, in so important a cause. The triflers who

derided the whole affair as a gigantic peep-show, little understood with what noble and far-sighted views it was forwarded by the true friends of the human race.

“I am sorry to meet you in London, Hargreave,” said Lord Fitzmorton, one of the first persons he ran against in the library; “for my mother has just addressed an invitation to yourself and Lady Hargreave for Monday next, to spend a few days. We shall have a pleasant party, which you would have enjoyed and enhanced.”

“I am here for a fortnight at least,” replied Sir Richard; “but my wife need not be debarred the pleasure of a visit to Morton Castle. My sister and Sir Hurst leave Dursley on Saturday; and Lady Hargreave will be quite at liberty.”

“Then sit down and write her a line by to-day’s post, like a good fellow, as you are; and leave her at liberty no longer. Lay your conjugal commands upon her to join our party at Morton.”

“Spoken, my dear Fitzmorton, like a bachelor, as *you* are. I trust I know better!” replied Sir Richard, laughing. “I was just about to announce to her, however, my safe arrival in town; and will not fail to beg that she will consult her own inclinations on the subject of your invitation; a sure guide to Morton Castle.”

Before this letter arrived, Margaret had despatched her acceptance; chiefly to insure herself against any proposal on the part of the Clitheroes to extend their protracted visit. But a sojourn at Morton Castle was never a waste of time. The host himself was an agreeable, lively, popular man, whose shallowness of intellect was never remarkable, because he did not pretend to be deep; and though no one took kinder care of his own comfort, he was equally careful of the comfort of others. Among his many good qualities, was a warm affection for his only sister, Lady Emily, for whose amusement, when she came with her mother

to visit his bachelor palace, these parties at Morton Castle were devised.

He was vexed that his handsome sister should be like himself, unmarried at thirty. But as in his own case, it was a matter of choice. Many pretendants had sought her hand; and all in vain. From the period when Sir Thomas Hargreave marked her down for a daughter-in-law, she had dismissed as many suitors as Penelope. Some people, (including Mrs. Brampton Brylls of Bryllholm Place, whose son was among the rejected,) sneeringly declared that Lady Emily was too clever by half; that she was vain, proud, fastidious and fantastical. Others whispered that she had a secret attachment. Her brother was simply of opinion, that she was too honest-hearted to marry unless her whole heart could accompany the gift of her hand.

Whatever the cause of her celibacy, it certainly did not weigh on her spirits; for few of the guests at Morton could compete with her

witty though somewhat sarcastic sallies. To Lady Hargreave, she was sincerely attached; at once admiring and loving her ladylike simplicity of manners and character. In her, there was none of that straining after effect, which is the besetting sin of the Dursley Park order of society. Not a word, not a gesture ever escaped her, which the purest taste could have disavowed.

“I am so glad, so *very* glad you are come,” said Lady Emily rushing forward to embrace her in the inner vestibule of the hall. “Fitzmorton arrived from town last night, and endeavoured to persuade us that you were established with Sir Richard in Whitehall Gardens; assisting to hatch this wonderful Roc’s egg of a Crystal Palace.”

“But you did not seriously believe that I was going to break my engagement?”

“No, no! Mr. Fanshawe, who luckily accompanied my brother, told us the truth: that Sir Richard, though in town, was as

completely a widower as Orpheus; and going about from club to club, singing

Che farò senza Euridice !'

Lady Hargreave had scarcely got over the shock of hearing that Fanshawe was in the house, and the vexation of finding that he had been talking of her with levity, when she had to undergo her formal welcome from Lady Fitzmorton; a fat, good-humoured old lady, with a double chin, and housekeeper-looking cap and plum-coloured silk gown; whose chief care in life was to prevent people from sitting in draughts, walking out in thin shoes, or running any other risk of taking cold. She loved to talk over with Lady Hargreave, who was a first favourite, the remedies to be employed when her children should have the measles or chicken-pox: and as a prudent, sensible young woman, who never smiled at her precautions, she considered the Dean's daughter a far safer companion for her own, than the flighty family at Delavile Abbey.

“My son, with Captain Rhys and Mr. Fanshawe, (old yachting friends, my dear Lady Hargreave, when Fitzmorton made that foolish expedition up the Nile, and caught that dreadful fever), have been shooting all day in the Rixford coverts,” said she, by way of explaining Lord Fitzmorton’s absence.

“Mr. Fanshawe, then, has not yet obtained the appointment he was expecting?” inquired Margaret, dreading lest the variations of her complexion should become apparent to the sagacious eye of Lady Emily.

“What appointment, my dear Lady Hargreave?” said the good-humoured dowager, who, devoid of the boss of eventuality, cared little and knew less about what was going on beyond the limits of her family circle.

“Mr. Fanshawe has long been soliciting an envoyship, mamma,” interrupted her daughter. “Don’t you remember the Duke of Merioneth telling us, at Delavile Abbey, that they had been promised the first which fell vacant?”—

“The Duke of Merioneth, with fifty thou-

sand a-year, applying for an envoyship, my dear?—Impossible.”

“For his cousin, Mr. Fanshawe, mamma.”

“When Mr. Fanshawe was with us, at Cowes,” said Lady Hargreave, as calmly as she could, “he fully expected to spend the winter at Italy.”

“He was too sanguine, I am afraid,” rejoined Lady Emily. “It is pretty certain, however, that he will succeed to Sir Robert Branxholm, whenever that worthy gentleman makes up his mind to pack up his medals and cameos and come back to the old England where he is neither known nor wanted. But though as old as Nestor and almost as prosy, the only words Sir Robert cannot get himself to pronounce are ‘I resign;’ and poor Mr. Fanshawe is consequently kept dangling in the air, like a spider hanging to its thread.”

Nothing very sentimental in all this. Nothing at all resembling the courtship of which Herbert Fanshawe had afforded hints to Sir Richard Hargreave. There was not, however, much time to reflect upon it. The gong had

already sounded, and the rest of the party dispersed to dress for dinner.

When Lady Hargreave returned to the drawing-room, the first object that met her eye was Lady Emily seated on an opposite sofa, her flowing flaxen ringlets enveloping her fair face in a cloud of light, and affording stronger relief to the dark well-turned head and well-curled sable whiskers of Herbert Fanshawe, as close to her side as though they had been sitting to Wyon for a double medallion! No sooner had Margaret taken her seat among the matrons of the party, than he rose, glided across the room, and having extended his hand in salutation, bowed over that which she could not withhold, with the most Grandisonian politeness; then, with equal ceremony, retreated to the place from whence he came. It fell to his share, that is, he *made* it fall to his share, to take out Lady Emily to dinner. But as the party consisted at present of only ten persons, the conversation became general; and, as is usually the case in such parties, both sociable and

pleasant. There was no effort, no attempt at wit. Lord Fitzmorton would have scorned to invite to his table a monkey-man of the Barty Tomlinson or Early Intelligence class, to entertain his company. *His* guests were his friends ; far more capable of deriving pleasure from each other's simple conversation, than from the commonplace book stories and gingered repartees of a *pique-assiette*.

This was much to Herbert Fanshawe's advantage ; who, unless when spurred into unnatural efforts by antagonism, was one of the pleasantest companions in the world. His tone was so exactly modulated to the pitch-pipe of the society he frequented ! His anecdotes were so new and so telling. He had been familiar in his own and foreign countries, with so many of those whose lives form a matter of history, whose habits are such matter of interest. When disposed to afford information, he did not come down upon you, after the fashion of Ralph Hargreave ; insisting on your seeing with his eyes and believing with his faith—like a Roman

centurion converting one of Alaric's Goths at the point of the spear. On the contrary, he shed so much of the *soave licor* of sophistry, on the *orli del vaso*, that people swallowed his brilliant arguments without wincing. Even when tempted to be sarcastic, Fanshawe's satire was of so polished a nature, that the iron entered your soul without your perceiving it. As the executioner's wife, in the time of Louis XIII., said of the "sweet performances" of her husband, "he cut off your head so dexterously, that you were unaware of the blow; till, on shaking it, it rolled at your feet."

Lady Hargreave was vexed with herself for being carried away by his brilliant sallies. Still more vexed with *him*, when, on endeavouring to enter into conversation with her neighbour Lord Fitzmorton, in order not to appear too deeply engrossed by that of the pseudo-envoy, he instantly stopped short with pretended deference, to listen; thereby fixing upon her slightest remark, the attention of the whole party. She had little doubt that the annoyance was inten-

tional. For, throughout the evening, as well as the chatty pleasant breakfast of the following morning, not a word did he address to her. His homage was exclusively for the brilliant and beautiful Lady Emily Morton.

“Charming fellow, is he not?” said Lord Fitzmorton, cordially, as he presented to Lady Hargreave on the second night of her visit, the bed candle and glass of iced water she asked for. “We generally have recourse to a game at Post, or Racing, or *jeux innocens* of some kind or other, to get through the evening at the Castle, when there is a formal party. But, by Jove! with Fanshawe in the house, nothing of the kind is wanted. He carries one through the day before one fancies it has begun!”

“Mr. Fanshawe has been particularly entertaining this evening,” said Lady Hargreave coldly.

“He is no favourite of yours, I see. Married women in general are afraid of his leading their husbands into mischief. A sad dog, I’m afraid,—a terrible flirt,—a ruthless Massacrer of the

Innocents,—is my friend Fanshawe!—But somehow or other, he is the sort of Prodigio whose return everybody welcomes—a fatal encouragement to his levity!—For the next twenty years, he won't be a day older than twenty.”

Amiable, but credulous Lord of Morton Castle!—The son of Sir Claude Fanshawe,—in his very cradle *désabusé du monde*,—had attained before he began to dog's-ear his Eton grammar, the uncomputable years of Thomas Parr!—

CHAPTER IX.

Like vapour from the mountain stream art thou,
Which softly rises on the morning air
And shifts its form with every shifting breeze—
Endearing, generous, bountiful, and kind,
Vain, credulous, and fond of worthless praise.
Courteous and gentle, proud—magnificent—
And yet these adverse qualities in thee,
No dissonance, nor striking contrast make.

JOANNA BAILLIE.

CAPTAIN RHYS who, though too much a man of the world to run the risk of disturbing the good understanding of a pleasant party by hinting, even in the most confidential con-

fidence, all that had been privately circulated at Cowes concerning Fanshawe and the Dean's daughter, was not the less amazed at the estrangement ostensibly existing between parties. He was perfectly cognizant of the *sang froid* of Fanshawe's nature; and that he would have betrayed no surprise on suddenly finding himself, nose to trunk, with an elephant. Still, the ceremonious politeness with which he had saluted Lady Hargreave the evening of his arrival, was so little reconcileable with the attitude in which he had himself discovered them on the pine-bench at Oak Hill, that his best of Latin failed to explain the mystery. Nor was it more satisfactorily interpreted when, on the third day of their visit, he suddenly came upon them in one of the least frequented parts of the American garden, engaged in earnest conversation; Lady Hargreave holding an open letter in her hand.

He thanked goodness, or badness, as a discreet gentleman naturally would, that the splendid growth of the rhododendrons and

azaleas enabled him to strike into another walk, unnoticed by the delinquents. If, however, instead of stealing away in an opposite direction, he had joined them in their promenade, the fact of their being together would have explained itself. Margaret had started for a walk in the grounds, before the arrival of the second post, which on that day made its appearance somewhat earlier than usual; and when the letter-bag was opened in the library by Lady Emily, during the absence of her brother, a letter addressed to Lady Hargreave in a child's handwriting, afforded to Fanshawe a passport to reconciliation such as was not to be neglected.

It was much to his credit, for a man so heartless, that he understood the value to a mother's heart of one of those clumsily-folded epistles, directed in crooked lines and a round-text hand, and not a little peculiar in its orthography—in the concoction of which it is clear that neither tutor nor governess could claim a share. A despatch from the seat of war—a let-

ter marked private and confidential on H.M.S.,—could not command prompter attention.

Having hurried off in the direction pointed out by the hall porter as that Lady Hargreave had taken, Fanshawe managed to meet her in the American Gardens, breathless from haste in her service. Lord Fizmorton, had he been the messenger, would have hastened away faster than he came; to allow her time to read her letter in comfort. But Fanshawe followed her composedly at the distance of a few paces; and when she had reached the signature of little Mary's epistle, advanced to profit by the glow of satisfaction that lighted up her features.

“You look so happy, dearest Lady Hargreave,” said he, “that even a trespasser like myself may surely aspire to a brief moment of mercy. It was to sue for it, indeed, that I came to Morton Castle. I knew I should find you here, and for years we may not meet again. Is it asking too much then to entreat your pardon for a few rash words, wrung from me in a moment of desperation; never—believe me

on my word and faith—never, never again to *be* repeated?”—

“I have no wish to disbelieve you, Mr. Fanshawe,” replied Lady Hargreave, amazed and embarrassed. “Let the subject drop, and be forgotten.”

“Forgotten—no! Forgotten—*never!* But remembered with sincerest repentance and truest gratitude,” replied Fanshawe, speaking almost under her bonnet. “Did you know, could you possibly imagine, all I have suffered in consequence of your displeasure, since I saw you last, you would feel, dearest Lady Hargreave, that your present clemency is not wholly thrown away.”

“And yet, since my arrival here,” rejoined his companion, “I have seen little to induce me to suppose that your mind was otherwise than perfectly at ease—*perfectly* happy!”

“Touched, poor soul!” was the secret ejaculation of Fanshawe. “As jealous, *almost*, as I could wish!—You will readily believe,” he continued, aloud, “that my first object is to

divert suspicion from the real and sole purpose of my visit here. Fitzmorton is a good-natured fellow; but he saw enough of my state of mind when he carried me off from Paris to the Mediterranean, ten years ago, not to possess a ready clue, dear Margaret, to any disturbance of feeling I may betray in your company. Forgive—forgive me.—It was an oversight,” said he, on finding her startled by his familiarity. “I will not again offend.”

No answer was vouchsafed him. His companion felt that he was over-passing the limits she had assigned him. But emotion, of some kind or other, kept her silent.

“You Marg—you, Lady Hargreave, who have led a life of tranquil felicity,” he continued, “are scarcely a competent judge of feelings keen as mine. In *my* cup of destiny, the too brief happiness of other days has deposited lees of bitterness, which mar the aims and ends of life. People do not die, Margaret, of such afflictions.—No! In these times, we rally, and look misfortune in the face.

But between death and the real enjoyment of life, there is a wide and miserable barrier. Look!" said he, stopping short, and pointing out a fine kalmia in the shrubbery, which, from removal, or an unfavourable soil, was exhibiting a mass of yellow fading leaves, and an untimely blossom or two, amidst the bright evergreens by which it was surrounded. "Like yonder half-blighted tree, are my abortive character and prospects. But for the dread of injuring you by my presence in England when it pleased Heaven to remove your father, I should have returned at once, to occupy a seat in Parliament offered by my kinsman the Duke of Merioneth; and, by this time, might have accomplished some distinguished administrative post, enabling me to serve my country in her onward march of aggrandizement. Instead of this, Margaret, forced into a diplomatic career, that I might stifle my disappointments in foreign countries and avoid all further danger of injury to the being I loved best on earth,—my youth was consigned to an idle, frivolous state of

existence, in the most corrupt capitals in Europe; without a guide—without a pole-star—without hope—without affection! What chance, then, that I should preserve my nature from degradation, my soul pure, my heart holy?—I plunged into excesses expressly to harden and embrutify myself. I cared not to preserve the right feelings, the fond sentiments, the high aspirations of my youth, which there was none to share. I closed my eyes to the fair frame of nature—the beautiful scenery of the lands in which I was abiding. I seemed to fear lest the glories of creation should regenerate me; and, by expanding my mind, render the void within still wider—still more desolate.—For, in the midst of all this misery and bitterness—ay, and wickedness—I loved you, Margaret,—loved you—loved you still,—as few were ever loved, as few so loved, ever love in return!”

A smothered sigh—almost a sob—escaped the oppressed bosom of Lady Hargreave. Could it be to her, accustomed only to the most prosaic routine of daily life, that this impas-

sioned invocation was addressed? Could it be her very self, so coolly, calmly regarded by those nearest and dearest to her, who had been thus exclusively, thus fatally beloved?—

“*Château qui parle ou femme qui écoute,*” thought Fanshawe, reverting to the proverb, as he watched her pause of deliberation, and resumed his flowery protestations, in the self-same tones in which Edmund Kean, as the guileful Richard, used to subjugate the ear of gentle Lady Anne. And Margaret—woe the while!—inclined her ear to listen. Human vanity, female frailty, united, left its porch unguarded, to admit the leperous distilment of the poisoner.

We, at least, in our turn, are not compelled to listen. No good purpose is accomplished by dwelling on moments of temptation, when the struggle between our good and evil angels becomes a doubtful strife. But let him who standeth, take heed lest he fall; and let him who standeth, deal mercifully with the fallen.

A vivid flush, partly of shame, partly of

pleasure, arising as much from the confessions to which she had been forced to listen, as to those she had allowed herself to make, burned on the cheek of Lady Hargreave; when, as they approached the house, she encountered Lady Emily, with two or three others of the party, coming in search of her.

“Captain Rhys told us, dear Lady Hargreave, that we should find you in the American shrubberies,” said she. “And here we are, with another letter brought by the bag; which Mr. Fanshawe pretended was too heavy for him to carry.”

“Familiar of old with my friend Mordaunt’s clerkly manuscript and lengthy style,” said the accused, “I did not choose that Lady Hargreave should experience any such drawback upon the pleasure of dwelling, again and again, on a welcome little letter from home.”

“Too true!—I’m afraid children are one’s pleasantest correspondants,” said Lady Emily, addressing the rest of the party, while Margaret was examining a voluminous packet,

bearing the Roman post-mark. "Children are not only merry and wise, but too merry to be *too* wise:—happy birds, who mistake every season for spring, and sing the whole year round!"

"Grave philosophy, dear Lady Emily, for the lips which give it utterance," observed Fanshawe, attaching himself to her side, after ascertaining, by a furtive glance, that Lady Hargrave had stolen away, and re-entered the house, for the perusal of her brother's letter. "How long is it, may I ask, since your sprightly ladyship enlisted under the banner of the Neri?"—

"When the head grows white, 'tis time its reflections should darken. My maid pointed out to me, alas! this morning half-a-dozen grey hairs in these miserable streamers," replied Lady Emily, passing her hand lightly through the long, fair ringlets escaping from her straw bonnet.

"You make me tremble!" cried Fanshawe, with well-acted dismay. "If *you* have accom-

plished grey hairs, *I*, your senior, must make up my mind to baldness; to disguise which, a vagabond like myself must have recourse to Sir Hurst Clitheroe's caoutchoc wig, instead of pretending to the laurel wreath which, pedants assure us, was invented to cover the naked poll of Julius Cæsar. No matter! Let us see things, *en beau*, as long as we can. When evening really arrives, time enough for the shadows of life to lengthen, and darken our hearts."

"*Parlez pour vous!*" said Lady Emily. "*I* mean to attain a chirrupping old age! My phosphoric gaiety shines only in the dark. If, like the sick animals in Peru, who accomplish their own cure by gnawing the bark of the quinine-tree, (whatever it may please to call itself in the lingo of botanic pedantry), I have strengthened my mind by mastication of bitter food, I see no reason why I should not profit by my experience. Portia's wig and gown do not make her an hour the older, whatever their influence in convicting the miserly Jew."

Fanshawe was a little puzzled. Though a master of the art of irony, Lady Emily Morton was as much beforehand with him as in such trivialities as a shrewd woman ever excels a clever man. He was not quite sure, therefore, but that, having discovered the game he was playing with Lady Hargreave, she was not making him her butt. But he was one of those who, in such dilemmas, charge straight to the front.

“Lady Hargreave has deserted us, I see,” said he, pretending to look round, and to discern only the group of loungers of whom they were fifty yards in advance. “The fair Margaret has retreated into the solitude of her chamber, to try and work herself over Mordaunt’s epistle into a fit of sentiment, as she did over the nonsense verses of her little girl. Poor dear Lady Hargreave! She makes it as much her duty to cultivate the domestic affections, as a Scotch gardener to force his kail and asparagus for Christmas Day. The Deanery of R——, however, was not much

of a hot-bed for the human heart. Dean Mordaunt was a selfish old fellow ; and his cold bloodedness has yielded a notable crop in Lord Mildenhall ; compared to whom a stock-fish is marrow. As to his charming sister, a homeless loveless childhood has, I fear, produced a mere automaton. Pleasing as she is, Lady Hargreave is as cold as a stone."

"Cold, or warm, or tepid, I love her dearly," replied Lady Emily, with spirit. "I detest the mania for hair-splitting analysis now so prevalent, which serves only to depreciate merit and crush all honest enthusiasm. Too much criticism is spoiling our literature ; too much criticism is spoiling our society. I have not been half so fond of flowers since I was beguiled by Lady Delavile into attending a botanical lecture ; where I saw the beauties of the parterre dissected, petal by petal, and coldly pored and prosed over. No, no, Mr. Fanshawe ! an anatomist may be excused for endeavouring, through the contours of the Venus de Medicis, to trace her skeleton. But don't let us play so

barbarous a part to a woman deserving the utmost admiration we can accord her."

It was difficult for even Herbert Fanshawe not to admire the grace and spirit with which the foils were wielded by Lady Emily Morton as the champion of her rival. Her fine eyes seemed to give out sparks of electricity, like a tiger's back under provocation. He contented himself, however, with reflection when the rest of the party halted to admire a border of beautiful crysanthemums, bursting into bloom:—"a charming girl, certainly; a companion qualified to keep one's wits awake. — Somewhat different from the dear, placid, meaningless Dudù of Dursley Park.—Well, well! 'tis labour lost to think about her.—Ten thousand pounds, and helpless hands, would never do for a miserable dog like myself; who, for any droits of primogeniture, might as well have been born, like Pains, a second brother."

Margaret, meanwhile, proceeded, a little too leisurely, perhaps, to examine her brother's

letter. For on attaining the solitude of her chamber, instead of immediately breaking the seal, she began, even before she laid aside her bonnet and cloak, to reconsider all she had been hearing, and all, or nearly all, she had said in return. She was thoroughly conscious of her fault. She did not sin blindly. But like victims to the first fumes of intoxication, she was surrounded by so delusive a world of novel impressions, that she did not even wish to recover her reason. Her solitude was peopled with fairy forms, elves, sprites,—the luminous atoms that swarm in the sunshine of the lover and the poet; and she sat herself down with her hands clasped over her eyes, not to exclude, but to enjoy the spectacle of their antics. Oh! who will whisper to her infatuated soul a form of exorcism to expel such delusions for evermore!—

William Mordaunt's letter ran some risk of being forgotten. Nor was it till the day had so far closed that she was forced to have recourse to the candles on the toilet-table to

peruse it, that Lady Hargreave laboured through the following pages.

“I have not written to you regularly, dearest Margaret, because, having many matters of business on which I am forced to correspond with Richard and Ralph, I entertain no doubt that my itinerary duly reaches your darling ladyship through their hands, and obtains interest by the transmission. It is time, however, that I addressed a word or two to yourself; to palliate, though not obviate, the proverbial destiny of the absent—of being always in the wrong. My first news is, that, to repay me for any difficulties or privations I may have undergone, besides that of losing your company, my mission has been perfectly successful. I am a pragmatistical ass, however, to talk about privations; when my tour has been, in fact, a series of triumphs. Not the least among them is that of finding our National Exhibition the object of universal enthusiasm. Even those who were, at first,

cautious of co-operation, have been completely won over by the exquisite plans of the Crystal Palace which have lately reached us. I can scarcely tell you, dear Margaret, how Paxton's notion has charmed me! But you, who know of old, that if I enter into a project at all, I do it with my whole heart and soul; or, as Ralph Hargreave would say, that, if I plunge at all, I take a header,—will readily understand my gratification at being saluted with salvos of applause, instead of the feeble “we will see,” which my proposals at first met with. But even of the Crystal Palace, at present, enough. Let me now talk of you and yours; or, as might be expected of so bold an egotist, first, of myself. I shall not be with you at Christmas, dearest sister. I cannot be in England before the meeting of Parliament. I, as faithful to your fireside at the grand festival of the year, as its holly or mince-pies, must be at Marseilles or Lyons, when you are listening to those precious Dursley wails, whose serpent makes me hiss to think of. Let me,

however, be in your champagne-cup freshly remembered ; or, like Banquo's ghost, my fetch shall walk in and occupy my vacant chair.

“ I heard much talk of you at Naples, darling ;—yes, at Naples. From an adorer, too. But don't puzzle your brains to guess his name. You never saw him ; and, in that, have sustained little loss. But, though no Adonis, your Pastor Fido is a prodigious man in his own esteem : one Prince Rafiarelli, who swears he fell in love with you, last year, at some Court *fête*. ‘ I never saw your beautiful Lady Agraffe but once,’ said he. ‘ I never met her *dans la haute* ; and my friend Altavilla, who knows her well, explained that she did not exactly belong to the *grand monde*, but was a *noblesse de bourse*.’ The impudent varlets ! However, on finding that I had the honour of being brother to your *beaux yeux*, (such a pair of miserable grey eyes as they are !) the Prince made me free of his palaces, galleries, villas, and, *ahimè!* of his very tedious company---for

he is a regular *incommodo*, and not at all likely to find it out.

“Apropos of Altavilla. When I first stumbled against him at the San Carlo, he made me as stiff a bow as Sir Hurst Clitheroe would bestow upon a man who had just passed through Basinghall Street: evidently afraid of having to answer for me in society, or bestow a dish of macaroni on me in return for all the turtle administered to him by the house of Hargreave. But, on finding that I wanted neither his notice nor a dinner,—that is, on meeting me at Temple’s, and learning that my errand at Naples was partly a Government mission,—he became as *affettuoso* as ever; and would fain have wrapped me up in cotton, like the trinkets he is so fond of displaying. His cat-like, stealthy movements appear to me, in his native climate, more feline than ever.

“Tell Ralph Hargreave, if he is with you (as I hope, for you cannot be too much together), that a forced march through Austria and Italy, such as I have undergone, would

reconcile him to all the little stains and blemishes he is so fond of discovering and endeavouring to efface, in the institutions of our dear old England. Half my pleasure, in my tour, has been invalidated by the traces visible at every step, of the outrages and outbreaks of the last two years. To look on this country now, is like surveying a beautiful corpse, disfigured by the gashes of the assassin. Oh! dear Margaret, we have much to be thankful for, that we live in an island blest with a liberal Constitution and a popular Sovereign. For a land to be happy, loyalty should form a predominant element of its atmosphere. In Naples, how is this to be?

“But *are* we sufficiently thankful? Do we recognise, day by day, the great blessings conferred upon us? I say ‘we,’ my Margaret, in a private, rather than a national sense; for since I have been roaming about the world, it has often, often recurred to my mind, from how much misery we two were redeemed by the affection of that best of good fellows, whose

name you bear. A few moments of our lives bore so dark a complexion, Meg, that the sunshine in which we are basking demands a double share of gratitude. We must not quite forget that grim old Deanery. I shall not be at R—— this winter, and therefore delegate to your hands my annual gift to old Harman and his cross wife; and my visit to the excellent Dean, whom from my soul I thank and reverence, for his defence of my father's character, and forbearance towards my father's children.

“ You will think me growing very serious—and justly; for I am approaching the subject of your last letter, which I found lying at the Legation at Naples. The conduct of Mildenhall in that sad affair of Lady Milicent does not surprise me. For years past, I have ceased to be astonished at any shabby or churlish proceeding of his lordship. How my father came to have such a son, or we such a brother, I am puzzled to guess—except that Stony Arabia lies next door to Arabia Felix. But what really grieves me in the business—for with our

crabbed old aunt I entertain little sympathy—is, that Dick should have been harassed on her account. I am afraid this family calamity will be a heavy blow to him; for I happen to know—there has been, hitherto, no motive for his concealing it—that he entertains the greatest horror of insanity, and believes in its hereditary tendencies.

“An additional motive, my own dear sister, for your utmost endeavours to reward the disinterested affection which embroiled him with all his kith and kin, in order to make you his wife. I see your little head toss proudly, as I have occasionally seen it before at similar exhortations. But I will not shrink from an unpalatable lesson, which, I much fear, may be wanting. Lady Arthur O'Brennan, whom I saw some months ago at Hombourg, clinging, like a drowning woman, to the skirts of every titled dowager in the place, took occasion to favour me with some bitter hints concerning I know not what levities between you and Fanshawe, which got wind at Cowes. I need not

tell you, dear Margaret, that I silenced *her* in a moment. But I could not so easily silence the world. Why, why have you received Fanshawe as an inmate during my absence?—Why do you encourage him as a familiar friend?—For years, I have warned you against that man. If you love me, therefore, dear sister—my all that I love and value upon earth,—do not again compel me to recur to this hateful subject.

So prays your devoted brother,

W. M.”

Had this letter reached the hands of Dean Mordaunt's daughter only the preceding day, she would have recognized the justice of every syllable it contained, and perhaps laid its counsels to her heart. But now, her heart was hardened. Her mind was in a state of unnatural excitement. Remorse was unavowedly stirring within her; such as, when we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us, so often

assumes the form of indignation against our accusers.

Enraged against William, or perhaps apprehensive that the letter might fall into other hands than her own, she suddenly crushed it together, and threw it into the fire which was blazing in the grate.

“*Why* do I receive him as an inmate? Why, why?” murmured she. “It becomes my brother to inquire!—*Who* goaded me into a marriage with one for whom, *he knew*, I never entertained that warm affection which is the safe-guard of married life?—William is aware that the Hargreaves were always my enemies; and now wonders that they malign me!—He means well—means kindly. But I am no longer a child to be lectured out of friendships that please me, and acquaintanceships which console me for my banishment from that world, in which, as Lord Mildenhall’s sister, I am intitled to move, were I not branded (as his Neapolitan friend has informed him), as a *noblesse de bourse*!”

Lady Hargreave was piqued by every line of her brother's letter,—at Rafiarelli's impertinence, and the conference concerning her failings, held with the frivolous Julia. But above all, she was piqued against Margaret Lady Hargreave; for having hearkened to the voice of the charmer, and sunk in her own esteem.

It was no frailty of the senses, which was obtaining dominion over her. It was the foolish romance of false sentiment;—the up-starting flame of a long-smouldering first love, imperfectly extinguished in her girlhood.

That night, when she retired to rest, Mrs. Harston, now a portly spinster but still her faithful attendant, inquired somewhat anxiously, as she was placing her ladyship's magnificent rings in their morocco-case, what had become of a small engraved antique sapphire, said to have belonged to Mary Queen of Scots (as is usually said of all curious old rings), one of the few hereditary treasures of Margaret Mordaunt,

which had disappeared from the ring-box.

“It is gone, Harston.—You can put one of the other rings from my jewel box into the vacant place.”

“*Gone*, my lady? Lost, and her ladyship take it so quietly?—A ring which her ladyship so much valued!—Would my lady give her leave to make inquiries about it in the house?”

No! Her ladyship wished to hear nothing further on the subject. “No one was in fault. It had not been lost at Morton Castle.”

Would that it had been lost!—It was the donor not the ring, whose safety was in danger.—

CHAPTER X.

This lady, in the blossom of my youth,
When my first fire knew no adulterate incense,
Nor I no way to flatter but my fondness,
For all the bravery my friends could show me,
In all the faith my innocence could find me,
In the best language my true tongue could teach me,
And all the broken sighs my heart could render,
I sued and served. Long did I woo the lady ;
Long was my travail—long my haste to win her ;
With all the duty of my soul I serv'd her
That she might love.—She *did* :—but never *me*.

TAYLOR.

WHEN, at the close of the week, Lady Hargreave returned to Dursley Park, in the dusk of a dim, misty, chilly November day, she felt

as if the tomb of all the Capulets would afford by comparison a cheerful sojourn. Heavy rains rendered the quarter still infested by workmen, more than usually unsightly and cheerless. The very rooks sat moping in grim despondency on the leafless boughs. The old house-dog could scarcely get up a whine of welcome. It had been a gusty day; and the vast stove in the new hall, of which the stucco was still moist, gave out more smoke than warmth. The place looked as dreary as the house she came from was bright and joyous. Margaret heaved a deep sigh. It had been whispered to her the preceding evening, that, had their evil fate been more propitious, they might have been on the eve of starting for the sunny clime of Italy—to fill together an honourable and pleasant post—to enjoy together an Elysium upon earth. “*They?*” No! let us not degrade the name of our Margaret by any such vile association.

When she entered the library, lighted up to receive her, she noticed a bundle of open news-

papers and new publications, as if recently thrown upon the table.

“Brought down by Sir Richard and Mr. Hargreave, my lady, who arrived about half an hour back,” said the butler, in answer to her inquiring glance. “The gentlemen are gone to the stables, my lady. But Robert has run round to apprise my master of your ladyship’s arrival.”

If Robert appeared to her ladyship a little officious, her opinion on the subject did not escape her. Already, she was on the stairs, on her way to the school-room.

The dinner was constrained; though Ralph, who was on his road homewards to Hargreen, was full of life and animation. But between Margaret and her husband, there arose none of those playful words or idle confidences, which constitute the charm of a domestic re-union between a loving couple rarely parted, and happily re-united. On such occasions, what pleasant nothings are interchanged!—Allusions understood, ere half pronounced; explanations

seemingly valueless, but which like counters at play, are worth thousands to the players !

Ralph perceived nothing of what was passing. Blest with a peculiarly voluble wife, he saw, perhaps, no fault in Margaret's taciturnity.

"I forwarded you a letter from your brother, to Morton Castle," said Sir Richard, when the servants disappeared at dessert. "Rome, I think, was the postmark. Is he on his way home?"

"A letter from Mordaunt?" interrupted Ralph Hargreave. "The idle dog has not written *me* a line for weeks past ! Do let us see the letter, Margaret. Or if it contain family secrets," he continued, noticing her sudden flush, "read us such passages as concern the community in general."

"William merely informed me that his journey had accomplished all its objects," said Lady Hargreave, coldly ; "and that he should be back before the meeting of Parliament."

“Willy must have grown a shocking prosy fellow,” observed Sir Richard, “if that was all the information he managed to afford in a packet on which I had to place half-a-dozen blue stamps!”—

“You scarcely wish, I should imagine, to hear all the idle gossip of Austria and Italy?” observed Lady Hargreave.

“*I* do, and am not ashamed to own it,” said Ralph. “It is by straws of that nature thrown into the air, that one learns which way the wind blows. I want immensely to learn how King Bomba is going on.”

“In that case, I am sorry that I have destroyed my brother’s letter,” said Lady Hargreave, coldly.

“*Destroyed* it, and Willy still away?—Well! I wonder at your courage!”

“My wife never was a hoarder of letters,” interposed Sir Richard in an apologetic tone. “I doubt whether, at this moment, she has half-a-dozen in her possession.”

The accusing colour rose to Margaret's temples. She remembered only too accurately, exactly how many were contained in her ebony casket.

"And if we want Italian news," added her husband, perceiving that his cousin's questioning annoyed his wife, "we must soon apply to Fanshawe. I see by the papers that his appointment is all but certain."

"By the papers, quotha! Dick my boy! Will you *ever* come to years of discretion? Will you *ever* put away childish things? Havn't you *vous* to perceive that these announcements in the papers are merely feelers, put forth by Fanshawe's friends of the press, to satisfy Government that his appointment would be universally popular? — Do you suppose our friend Herbert would have wasted so much time in toadying editors and sub-editors, unless with this object in view?"—

"Mr. Fanshawe, whom I left to-day at

Morton Castle," said Lady Hargreave, almost haughtily, "is, I believe, entirely indebted for his appointment to the interest of his cousin the Duke of Merioneth."

"He *is* appointed then?"—rejoined Ralph, coolly. "Well, for *his* sake, I'm glad of it; and a little, perhaps, for ours; for between ourselves, Fanshawe's a dangerous fellow. I could as soon make a pet of a fish, or reptile. As to the Duke of Merioneth obtaining an embassy for him, the days are done when dukes could do anything of the kind. It is as much as they can manage to obtain office for themselves. Old Merioneth is not a borough-holder, and does not tell exorbitantly even in his own county. I'm not sure that I would accept *his* influence in exchange for *ours*."

Sir Richard was silent; pondering, perhaps, on the possibility that Margaret's renewed intimacy with Fanshawe, at Morton Castle, might have exercised some influence in the extraordinary change perceptible in her de-

portment. She was grown abrupt, flighty ; her cheek was flushed, her eye wild, her—speech incoherent. Sorely against his will, her strangeness recalled to his mind the terrible visitation of Lady Milicent Macwheeble. He would almost rather have believed that Fanshawe had temporarily inspired her with some of his fantastic impertinence of fashionable pretension, than that such a calamity should be impending.

“What is the matter with her?—She is not herself to-night,”—said Ralph, when Lady Hargreave left them to their wine.

“Nothing is the matter with her that I know of. But, now and then, after giving free course to her aristocratic instincts among such people as the Fitzmortons and Delaviles I'm afraid poor Margaret feels some repulsion on returning to her plebeian husband. Do you remember Hoffman's story, Ralph, of the Swedish girl who married the merman?”

“Nonsense, nonsense!”

“Nonsense, in your teeth, my doughty

cousin," rejoined Dick, with a good-humoured smile, filling, for each, a bumper of fragrant claret. "Margaret and I are, and have ever been, God be thanked, the best of friends. But we always understand each other more satisfactorily when Willy Mordaunt is at hand to serve as our mutual interpreter. You know—we all know—that Margaret was persuaded into marrying me. It was not on her part an act of that instinctive love which, for the happiness of married life, wedlock should be. It was *my* fault, Ralph. Nobody's but mine. I was wrong, nay, I was criminal to persecute her with my addresses, when I saw that every concession accorded me was against the grain."

"Again, I exclaim, nonsense, nonsense!—At Bardsel, Margaret grew really attached to you."—

"Ay, *grew*. But it was *à contre cœur*. And forced flowers have no fragrance—forced fruit, no flavour; fair seeming, Ralph, and nothing else. Don't fancy, however, that I

complain. She has been a good, kind, dutiful wife. I had no right to expect that the Dean's daughter, who, from the first moment of our meeting, betrayed a personal dislike, should ever love me as Elinor Royd, for instance, loves her husband—whom she chose in his rusty surplice, and adopted from that moment into her heart, of hearts. No! Margaret likes me as well as she can; and what more have I a right to ask for? We have been perfectly happy together. I never cross her wishes, nor she, mine. If there exists a higher and more sacred order of conjugal affection, I had perhaps no right to aspire to it."

"Dick, you are talking like a fool!" said Ralph, looking intently at his glass, that his cousin might not discern the moisture gathering in his eyes.

"Perhaps so; but like an honest fool. My wife is not the less dear to me, because I have always seen that her strongest affections were centred in her children, rather than

her husband. That it *is* in them they are centred fully satisfies me. I have implicit confidence in Margaret. Her nature is chaste, her spirit honourable, her principles excellent. She is come of a gentle race. The Dean, though inert and feeble, was intrinsically a gentleman ; and, like old Faliero,

I trust unto the blood of Loredano
Warm in her veins."

Ralph Hargreave allowed a scarcely audible groan to escape him.

"But, above all," resumed Sir Richard, with expansion, "I am comforted by the certainty that though Margaret may feel a little ashamed at times of her sheepish uncouth husband, she has been far happier as his wife, than if she had married the finest of the fine gentlemen who may have dazzled her eyes for a moment ; and who would, by this time, have flung her aside, an unconsidered, neglected wife."

"You sometimes call me a philosopher,

Dick," said his cousin, after a pause, during which he finished his wine. "But you pass me by a long chalk. I am as incapable of such generous self-abnegation as yours, as of winning the battle of Waterloo."

"Yet I imbibed my philosophy, such as it is, from a spring where we used to drink together," replied Sir Richard. "As long as I can remember, the old folks at Bardsel,—Aunt Martha, and your excellent father, Ralph,—used to lay down as law, 'Do the duty that lies nearest to you; and extract all the happiness you can from the resources within your reach.' Instead, therefore, of fretting, after my irrevocable marriage, because I did not find myself adored, which I had no claim or pretension to be, I satisfied myself with possessing a charming wife, who regarded and respected me, and was, at least, incapable of adoring another man. Excellent philosophy, as you observe; for it has afforded me a happy instead of a repining life."

“You’re a good fellow, and that’s the truth on’t and the best on’t,” rejoined his cousin. “But to go and do likewise, people must be born with a temperament like yours. Preaching to oneself would never do it. I, for my own savage part, would as soon be united to a Parian statuette, as to a woman who would not laugh with me, cry with me, sell the shoes off her feet for me, and then walk barefoot to the diggings to earn more, for my sake.—Such a wife I’ve got; and here’s her health, and long life to her.”—

“Amen!” cried Sir Richard, unable to resist a smile at his kinsman’s quaint enthusiasm. But in broaching a fresh bottle of claret, they naturally broached a fresh subject.

“This is good news of Willy Mordaunt’s return,” said Ralph. “I long to see him again. He will be good fun after his travels. The only fault one could ever find with him, was that he had lived in too narrow a circle.

He will return liberalised. He will return a cosmopolitan."

"More of us than will ever care to own it, are likely to improve our minds and manners under the influence of the Exhibition agitation," rejoined Sir Richard. "Few events in my remembrance have more successfully promoted the fusion of classes. The Aristocracy has been forced into contact with the intelligent and educated industrial classes; and both have benefited. Even you, Ralph—don't call me out for saying so—are not half so rabid a radical as you were a couple of years ago."

"I never know what people mean by the word radical. I was a reformer then; I am a reformer now. It has not cooled my zeal to find collaborators in the good cause, as valuable as they were undreamed of, in the highest order of society—nay, in the *very* highest. While from golden calves, like our relative Sir Hurst, it is as hard to

extract a guinea or an hour's work in behalf of his fellow creatures, as out of the master of a Union. In this Exhibition question, in the institution of Baths and Wash-houses, in all endeavours for the melioration and comfort of the poor in which I have co-operated, it is from the great, and not from the middling, I have received the most gratuitous aid. It ought to be so. There is nothing marvellous in the fact. But till proof came, I was incredulous."

"On the other hand," rejoined Sir Richard, "you, Ralph Hargreave, the convert, have reciprocally converted others. What the Manchester school has effected in politics, *you* have done for ethics, by convincing dukes and duchesses that a man may be a cotton-spinner, yet write the Queen's English as well as Macaulay, and speak half the languages of Europe into the bargain; to say nothing of being a good-looking, pleasant fellow, who knows how to carve a fricandeau,

and dress a wild-duck. Another glass of claret, Ralph; and may I live to see you a lord of the Treasury!"

But that a certain amount of excellent Château Margoux was circulating like nectar in his veins, Ralph would have been almost angry.

"No!" said he, "you both over-rate and under-rate me. I never exclaimed with Falstaff, as you insinuate, 'Stand aside, Nobility!' Neither have I ever aspired to the slow tortures of place. I can be a martyr on easier terms. I will not, however, protest too much, like the lady in Hamlet,—or yourself against coming into Parliament; lest like you, I should have to swallow more of my own words than are by any means easy of digestion. Conscious of my deficiency of administrative talent, I am certain of affecting a million's worth more good in my place in the House of Commons, than in the Cabinet; where I should be abhorrently tolerated by my colleagues, and perhaps end

in becoming a temporizer and a sneak. Instead of which, after doing my duty in Parliament, I go down into Lancashire, and play the great man,—a Solon in the eyes of Hargreen, and a Cincinnatus in my own!—”

“Still, the award of ‘God’s men and columns’ has its charm for even the sternest patriot.”

“But I am *not* the sternest patriot! I am as soft at the core as a grenadilla. My work-people’s happiness, Virginia’s adoration, and my own self-esteem, are more to me than the freedom of the City of London, in the finest of gold boxes; I hold with Göthe, that

Er, den Besten seiner Zeit genug gethan,
Der hat gelebt für alle Zeiten.”

Coffee was now announced, and on re-joining Lady Hargreave in the drawing-room, the flow of their conversation was speedily checked by her grave face and evident absence of manner. How was she to call up spirits to converse with them? She was

fresh from the perusal of a letter which had followed her from Morton Castle ;—a letter which she had already judged it expedient to destroy ;—a letter attempting to justify the writer's retaining possession of a certain sapphire ring, which he had forcibly taken from her hand !

Next day, as Ralph Hargreave was going over the improved wing of the house with his cousins, previous to proceeding on his journey, he seized a moment when he found himself alone with Margaret to use a friend's most dangerous privilege of plain-speaking.

“ Dick is spending a mint of money here !” said he, “ nearly as much as would build a town, or found a colony.”

“ Yes ! I believe he has already found his expenses treble the estimates of Sir Simon Stucco,” replied Lady Hargreave.

“ But, why not remonstrate, Margaret ?”

“ Because Sir Richard's money is his own ; and he is intitled to spend it in his own way.”

“No man's money is his own.—It is a deposit for his children ; and yours, my dear Margaret, will be poorer by hundreds of thousands for this ambitious folly.”

“Why should we term a folly that which creates happiness for others?—Sir Richard has set his heart upon rendering Dursley a show place. Why prevent him?—Even as a vanity, it is surely a very harmless one.”

“Don't talk like an irresponsible being. To squander one's life or one's fortune, Margaret, is more than a folly,—it is a crime. It grieves me to see you wasting yours ; for I love you both with all my heart. Since your brother is absent, dear Margaret, let *me* speak to you as a brother.”

For a moment, Lady Hargreave was touched by his earnestness. It brought back to her mind the Ralph of Bardsel,—of Hargreen.

“I know nothing, my dear Ralph,” said she, “of my husband's income or plans, or engagements. Nor do I attempt to over-rule

his tastes ; for I own I should be angry if he interfered with mine."

"Just what I complain of; just what *he* complains of!" was Ralph Hargreave's injudicious rejoinder. "Do you suppose it is for this sort of apathetic mutual etiquette, that people swear at the altar to become one flesh, one heart, one soul; for richer, for poorer, for better, for worse? Margaret—Margaret! consult your better self.—Be a wife; be a mother; be a Christian!—Remember the forcible lesson of Dante, that *this day will never dawn again*.—Let us be wise in time, or wisdom will come too late."

"I have done," was Margaret's chilling rejoinder. "Since Sir Richard complains of me to his friends, it is time that I should have recourse for counsel to my own."

CHAPTER XI.

On crée des monstres ou des anges. Or, comme faiblesse et humanité sont termes synonymes, on ne s'intéresse guères à qui reste toujours fort. Il importe moins de savoir ce que l'homme peut ne *pas* commettre, que ce qu'ayant commis, il peut effacer.

CHASLES.

THE Hargreaves were not disposed that winter to prolong their Christmas holidays. Hospitality, in the state of their house, was out of the question. But the workmen had for a time departed; leaving the stucco to harden, and mortar and plaster to dry, ere the gilders and decorators commenced their

costly operations ; and Sir Richard profited by the interim to proceed to business, in town. Margaret was charmed by his determination. Though her interest in the progress of the Crystal Palace was not quite so enthusiastic as that of her husband, she was right glad to escape from her own society, to which, in the country, she was frequently reduced.

London was unusually sociable. Sir Richard hastened to assemble at his table, in Whitehall Gardens, the members of his committee and other friends who were exercising their energies in forwarding the grand project of the day. By that vast undertaking, the interest of his own improvements was thoroughly eclipsed. Never had his time passed more pleasantly. Margaret seemed to take pride and pleasure in rendering their house agreeable, though she abstained from the meagre frigid assemblies of the *avant saison* ; where people meet at eleven and disperse at twelve, having nothing to furnish matter for their chit chat which was not discussed the

preceding night, and where even the *toilettes* exhibited, consist of the obsolete finery of a preceding season; unless when some injudicious coquette attempts to inaugurate a new Parisian fashion, and gets laughed at for her presumption by a society which, however much it may resemble the sheep of Panurge, is unanimous in anathematizing the unlucky mutton which first oversteps the hedge.

Instead of joining these cold and colourless assemblages, Lady Hargreave collected daily dinner-parties at home; and every one acquainted with London during the short days of the year, when so few houses are open for hospitality, can appreciate the charm of sociable chatty dinners, whose brilliant lights, lively conversation, and excellent cheer, seem doubly acceptable after the dull, foggy, muddy, chilly hours of a Laplandish February morning. It became a thing sought after, to dine with the Hargreaves. At White's, one of the favourite questions of the day was, "who is invited

—who omitted ;” and the *roués* began to make their court to Herbert Fanshawe, as the best means of securing an invitation. As an excuse to each other for thus suddenly cultivating an acquaintance *extra muros* of the exclusive world, they discovered that “the house in Whitehall Gardens had gained immensely by the absence of that confounded prig, William Mordaunt.”

Margaret herself appeared to be in unusual spirits. Her children, of whose beauty and intelligence she was as proud as though the impulsive fondness of mother-love were not in some degree deficient in her nature, were sitting to Mrs. Thornycroft for a group, originating in that pleasing artist's successful portraits of the royal children. A capital likeness had been attained ; and it was admitted both by friends and by better judges, that little William Mordaunt, now in his tenth year, afforded a model for an infant Apollo, such as Phidias, or Flaxman, or Thorwaldsen might have prayed for. Herbert

Fanshawe informed Lady Hargreave that Marochetti and Monti were wild to obtain the advantage of a study from her son.

With pardonable vanity, she was anxious that the group should appear in the annual exhibition, on a year when half Europe was likely to become spectators of the shows of our metropolis ; and every day, the children were taken from their lessons, and carried off to the sculptress' atelier.

One morning, as she was getting into the carriage with them on their daily errand, to profit by the short daylight accorded in February by our murky atmosphere, a railway cab, overburthened with baggage, drove at the same moment to the door ; out of which jumped an ill-dressed and weary-looking man, who nevertheless insisted upon being embraced by his sister and her offspring. Already, William Mordaunt had ordered his servant and baggage to proceed to his lodgings ; intending to stay and talk with Lady Hargreave, from whom he had

never before in his life undergone so long a separation ; for, with the egotism of most travellers returning home after prolonged absence, he fancied his arrival as much a matter of importance to others as to himself ; and that every thing must, for a moment, give way.

It went to his heart, therefore, when Margaret, instead of ordering away her carriage and returning to the house, informed him she had an engagement till three o'clock ; at which hour, she hoped he would return.

“ Why where on earth are you going with Mary and Willy so dressed out, at this hour of the day ? ” said he, in a tone of some vexation.

“ They are sitting for their likenesses, and we are already late. Good bye, dear William. Between three and four, I shall expect you.”

“ Between three and four, she should expect him ! ” And this, after a separation of

six months ! William Mordaunt stood transfixed upon the pavement, staring wonderingly after the departing carriage ; till a civil butler advanced, and, far more cordially than his lady, begged to know whether Mr. Mordaunt would not please to step in, and breakfast after his journey,—or whether one of the servants should fetch another cab ?

“ No ; he would walk to the nearest stand ! ” He would not, at that moment, be indebted to anything wearing the livery of the Hargreaves. And walk he did, doggedly, and with his hat over his eyes, towards Charing Cross ;—regardless of his unbrushed clothes, and forgetting there was a public to be deprecated.

“ Engaged to accompany her children ! ”—Why not despatch the governess, or tutor, in her place ?—Or why not, at least, invite him into the carriage to accompany her ?—

Alas ! it was the daily custom of Herbert Fanshawe to inspect the progress of the modelling, with advice unasked for, and flat-

teries all but fulsome; and it would scarcely have done to expose his intimacy in the family to the discriminating eye of her brother. She was right. For the moment the idea crossed his mind that some evil influence must have interposed betwixt him and his sister, the shape instantaneously assumed by his chimera was that of Herbert Fanshawe.

On reaching his solitary lodging, which so sudden an arrival found unprepared,—disorderly, cheerless, smelling of soot, and garnished only by a file of Christmas bills lying on his bureau,—the windows dirty, the fire vainly endeavouring to send its smoke up the damp chimney,—poor Mordaunt felt inclined to rush back to those warmer climes whose cheerfulness lies nearer the surface.

For Margaret, he found no forgiveness. While his servant, in unpacking his baggage, laid successively before him the hundreds of trifles which, in the course of his tour, he had

collected for her and her children, all the delight he had promised himself in presenting them, was turned to gall. Above all, there were two rich cases, the result of a commission which, on his departure, he had received from Sir Richard (backed by a blank cheque upon his banker) to purchase at Naples for his sister and little Mary the most perfect specimens of pink coral that could be procured; and at Rome, a few of the finest cameos and intaglios, to be set by Froment Meurice in the lid of a work-box for Lady Hargreave's use.—William had taken such pleasure in the selection!—He had succeeded so perfectly!—But where was the pleasure of pampering the tastes of one so heartless as Margaret;—whom the world's vain breath of flattery was whirling away from their hearts.—

“Between three and four!”—No! He would *not* return to content himself with the wearied and divided attention she was likely to yield him. Wounded to the quick, he

became nearly as hard-hearted as his sister. He dressed himself—refreshed himself—then, rousing himself to forget his injuries, and renew those kindly sympathies which, after a long absence from town, came rushing through the veins of a London man like the current of the Thames through the arches of London Bridge, he hurried off to his Club; certain of meeting *there* the cherishing reception, withheld where he was better entitled to expect it.

His anticipations were fully justified. “Ha! Mordaunt, old fellow!—Welcome, welcome back to England!”—burst from scores of voices. It was the high tide of the day. The room was crowded, and many circled round, to question and to comment. The curious had so much to ask; the gossips so much to tell. The politicians wanted to know whether it was true that France, like Sgnanalle’s wife, insisted on being cudgelled by her tyrant: and whether Austria, after grinning and showing her fangs, and being

scourged for the insubordinate act, was crouching to the earth again, a still more spiritless hound than before? — Touching Naples, no one inquired: Altavilla supplying, by his correspondence with the *beau monde*, a choicer series of romances than ever issued from Italian invention since the days of Boccaccio.

The grander topics exhausted, what a cloud of small talk! He was blinded, as by the dust from a chaff-mill. Had he heard this—had he heard that.—Was he aware that several girders in the Crystal Palace had given way—that thousands of panes of glass were broken daily by the wind—that flights of birds were in possession of the building—that nothing had yet arrived for exhibition from foreign countries—that bales upon bales were in the docks, for which no warehouses had been provided—that Russia had refused to contribute a single article—that Nicholas had given orders for a complete set of household

furniture in malachite and gold, to be ready for the opening—that Ministers could not hold out till the 1st of May—that the Whigs were safe for the next three years; all the directly contradictory *on dits*, in short, which circulate in London Clubs, at that season of the year when candlelight assists in expediting the departure of the post.

For such things, William Mordaunt cared not. He wanted to talk of home. As a schoolboy, returning for the holidays, is more anxious about his pony's cough, or Chloe's last litter, than for the decisions of the recent Quarter Sessions or the result of some Bumbledom Election, he would have better liked to hear one word of the Hargreaves, than all the prospective glories of the Crystal Palace.

Yet, with a sort of nervous presentiment, he feared to lead to the subject. Forthcoming marriages were discussed, births, deaths, and inheritanceships, which had

occurred during his absence. But his friends seemed pointedly to avoid all allusion to the name he loved.

At length, he espied Barty Tomlinson in the distance, cogitating over the Globe;—chiefly because several other men were anxiously waiting for it.

“Now, then,” mused Mordaunt, “if any unpleasant news awaits me, I am sure to hear it.”

“Ha! Binks the Bagman, back again?” cried Barty, the moment he caught sight of him. “How are you, my dear fellow? But I need not ask. You have grown fat and flourishing upon your travels. And how do the Great Mogul, and the Cham of Tartary, and all the other potentates with whom you have been treating for samples of their dry goods and tobacco?—Does the descendant of Prester John still continue to ride on a white elephant, with cab action?”—

“*You*, I find, still continue to ride your

high horse," retorted William, provoked to see how many a smile rewarded this rhodomontade. "But what are you doing in town, Tomlinson, this open weather?—Why are you not at Melton?"—

"Hard up, my dear fellow. That twenty pounds I paid to the Crystal Palace subscription, by way of conscience-money, was my last farthing. I had serious thoughts, however, of applying to your brother-in-law, to mount me. Hargreave has sixteen hunters eating their heads off; being too much occupied here, at his committee,—or on guard, Heaven knows where,—to recollect there is such a thing in the world as a hound or bullfinch."

"And why had you recourse to second thoughts?"

"Because Dick Hargreave, the best fellow on earth, is apt to have screws in his stable; and because, when out of sorts, which one sees more than occasionally, he sometimes clothes his negatives in language such as

would be excised by the Lord Chamberlain from an Adelphi farce."

"I thought you were on better terms. I have seen you ride his horses at Dursley."

"Ay; *that* was before

Some demon whisper'd Hargreave, have a taste.

Ever since the bricklayers took possession of Dick Hargreave's house, the megrims have possession of his head."

William Mordaunt dared not proceed in his questioning. There were too many loungers around them, attentive to their colloquy.

"I met Lady Arthur O'Brennan, last night, at a flower-show in Piccadilly, that is, at one of Lady Fivepercent's carpet dances," resumed Tomlinson, as eager to fasten upon a new comer as became his reptile nature; "and the fair Julia, (who by the way, is making up to poor old Lord Hardbake, who has neither heard nor seen for the last twenty years, and to whom she is forced to pay her addresses through a pair of blue

spectacles and an acoustic tube !) the fair Julia is frantic against Sir Richard and Lady Hargreave ; either for not making her a daily fixture at their dinners, like the claret pitchers and ice pails ; or, as *she* tells the story, for becoming touters to the Great Exhibition, and sending to Coventry all those who oppose it."

"And *does* Lady Arthur oppose it?"

"Ay ! on the same grounds which fortify the Clitheroes in opposition. Wanting spirit to contribute liberally to its support, they fancy they redeem themselves by disguising their stinginess as a matter of principle. Sir Hurst evidently considers it a heroic act to start on tiptoes, and discharge his little popgun against the Rock of Gibraltar."

"Dick Hargreave must have been wasting his time not to have converted his sisters."

"His *sisters*, my dear fellow ? He has enough on his hands, I fancy, in—that is—his improvement at Dursley, and all that

sort of thing, you know," hesitated Tomlinson, as if checking what he was about to utter. "By the way, Mordaunt, you were all but knocking against Herbert Fanshawe on your way home. Now tell us! did you really observe so many arms and hearts and houses wide open to welcome that 'distinguished young diplomatist,' as the newspapers proclaim to be the case? Is poor old Sir Robert Branhholm to be paragraphed out of his appointment, to make way for the varnished boots which have made up their minds to stand in his shoes?"—

"I heard no hint of Sir Robert's removal. He gave me a capital dinner, I remember. On the spot, of course, his successor-presumptive's name was never mentioned."

"I thought so, when I read those outrageous puffs: like the overflowing audiences recorded in the playbills of some theatre on the eve of bankruptcy!"

"Come, come! Fanshawe is *not* on the eve of bankruptcy!" cried Early Intelligence,

insinuating his little wiggy head into the circle. "I never saw him so bumptious! There are bets flying about at the Coventry, that he marries Lady Emily Morton within a month."—

A roar of laughter saluted the announcement. But though the peculiar way in which Barty Tomlinson seemed to address his merriment on the subject to Mordaunt, purported to remind all present of the now notorious flirtation of Fanshawe with the Dean's daughter, poor William accepted the rumour as extenuating and satisfactory. With the slightest chance of such an event impending, Fanshawe's intimacy in Whitehall Gardens could only be of a friendly nature.

William Mordaunt's warm heart already relented towards his sister. He had judged her too severely. He had no right to be testy with the dear Margaret to whom he was so fondly attached. At all events, the children had not offended him. He yearned towards

those lovely, loving children. Before he had so much as skimmed an evening paper, his overcoat was hastily buttoned on again, and he was on his way back to Whitehall Gardens.

And this time, he was perfectly content with the warmth of his reception. Lady Hargreave embraced him with earnest tenderness; and the seeming slight of the morning was explained by the deference due to the golden value of an artist's time. At all events, while his sister, all kindness, beauty, and grace, addressed him in those endearing tones of other days which brought before him, in a moment, the Margaret of the Deanery—nay, the Margaret of Bassingdon,—it was impossible not to put his trust in her. Never had he seen her look more lovely. Never had he been so struck by the seemliness and elegance of her surroundings. After the mis-matched and gloomy magnificence of the Italian palaces,—after the whitewashed barns which, in Ger-

many, call themselves castles,—after the superficial polish of Paris,—a well-furnished London mansion, where everything is intended for use, where warmth and light appear spontaneous, and where the appliances and means of modern luxury are calculated alike to facilitate the labours of life and embellish its pleasures,—struck him as scarcely less marvellous than the creation of Aladdin's lamp.

It has been said by a shrewd observer that it is worth while to travel on the continent to see how amiable the English become when once out of their own country. But it is far better worth while to see them on their return: civilized, subdued, but appreciating, as for the first time, the homely happiness of an English fireside; and the open-handedness and open-heartedness of their own country-people.

In those pleasant, airy, bowery rooms in Whitehall Gardens, where, notwithstanding the contradictory testimony of a radiating

grate, February, adorned with garlands of roses, carnations, and lilies of the valley, assumed the appearance of summer, Margaret appeared before his eyes as the Eve of the Eden of civilization.

Oppressed by a thousand pleasurable emotions, Mordaunt was not at leisure to discern that the improved beauty imparting such lustre to her face, arose from a certain intensity of expression, of sentiment, of sensibility, which had never before brightened its exquisitely feminine features. But even had he noticed it, how, alas! was he to surmise that the light streaming from her eyes, and the glow animating her cheek, had their origin while listening, amidst the shrubberies of Oak Hill, to the stirring stanzas of Locksly Hall, recited by the mellow voice of Herbert Fanshawe!

His happiness in his sister's company was not perfected till the children had been sent for, questioned, and caressed; preparatory to receiving from Uncle William those charming

cadeaux, for which a servant had been hastily despatched. His own gifts to his sister were offered and accepted as if transferred from the left hand to the right; but he chose to leave to Dick Hargreave the pleasure of surprising his wife with the more precious tributes which had a claim to greater gratitude. When his brother-in-law at length made his appearance, to enjoy his unexpected arrival, though Mordaunt accosted him of course with the crude English formula of, "Hargreave, how are you?" he longed to throw his arms round him and embrace him, as a foreigner would fearlessly have done, to thank him for the peace and plenty in which his sister was installed; and still more for the perfect happiness portrayed in his own genial countenance. It was just so that William, who loved him as a brother—more than as a brother, as a *friend*,—could wish to see him.

"How unlucky, dear Margaret, that we have people to dinner to-day!" exclaimed the

master of the house. "It would have been so pleasant to close round the fire, with the children to dessert, to question Uncle William about his travels!"

"You have a party then?" inquired Mordaunt.

"A dozen or so of country neighbours, who have come up for the meeting of Parliament. The Delaviles, Fanshawe and his love Lady Emily Morton, with her mother.—A few others—I scarcely know whom."

"In that case, I had better dine at the Coventry."

"I would never forgive you if you did. Besides," he added, in a lower voice, "you have to bring me the Roman bracelet, and the coral, and cameos. We dine at eight. As you have to go home and dress, my dear fellow, you should be thinking of moving."

"What a world it is!" murmured Mordaunt, as he hurried home through a gathering fog. "Here is a couple as happy, perhaps, as ever Providence brought together—"

rich in all this world can offer,—attached, worthy, confident in each other,—and people can't let them alone, or believe in their happiness, but must raise scandals at their expense!—There have been moments when I myself have ventured to mistrust appearances. I am now at ease. How much, how much have I to be thankful for to God and him, for the happiness Dick Hargreave has secured to my father's daughter!"—

CHAPTER XII.

Oh! sweet pale Margaret,
Oh! rare pale Margaret,
What lit your eyes with tearful power,
Like moonlight on a falling shower!
Who lent you, love, your mortal dower
Of precious thought, and aspect pale,
Your melancholy sweet and frail?
From the evening-lighted wood,
From the westward-winding flood,
From all things outward you have won
A tearful grace; as though you stood
Between the rainbow and the sun.

TENNYSON.

WILLIAM MORDAUNT was the lion of the dinner-party in Whitehall Gardens. In what

is called the world, anybody who arrives from anywhere, with anything to relate, is welcomed as a godsend: not alone a Layard arriving from Nineveh, or a Brooke from Borneo, or, as we trust, a Franklin may yet arrive from the Arctic regions; but the last idler from Paris, who can describe the cut of the Emperor's mustachios and epaulets; or the last sportsman from Newmarket, with mysterious whispers from Nat.

For a second, Mordaunt almost diverted from Ralph Hargreave the attention and cross-questioning of Lady Delavile. But when she saw how much his attention was distracted by gazing at his sister, and how little he had to relate about Golden Fleeces, Archdukes, and Grand-duchesses, she resumed her courtship of the handsome radical, from whose honest nature her flatteries glided off "like dew-drops from a lion's mane," or raindrops from the plumage of some noble bird; while a gleam in his dark eyes betrayed a sense of the ludicrous expressing that he

had never, in the course of his life, heard so much flagrant nonsense as from this mock oracle of the coteries.

When the ladies left the room, Fanshawe, who, throughout dinner, had appeared unconscious of the presence of any one but Lady Emily Morton, beside whom he was seated, glided into the vacant chair next William Mordaunt; and began to express with so much warmth his satisfaction at seeing him again, that Margaret's brother felt ashamed of his previous suspicions.

"Of course," said he, "you spent a day or two at —— on your return? *Do* tell me, Mordaunt, honestly and as one of my very earliest friends, was my appointment canvassed there?—Do they shortly expect me?"—

"Honestly then, I never once heard mention of your name."

"Thank Heaven! Old Branhholm is one of my poor father's diplomatic contemporaries. They were attachés together, and re-

mained friends to the last. And nothing would annoy me more than that Sir Robert should imagine I had been endeavouring to undermine him at the Foreign Office; as the officiousness of those confounded newspapers might lead him to suppose."

"Console yourself! the old fellow was thinking only of his *beccafichi*, and prosing over the numismatic collection which he intends to bequeath to the nation; to be decently interred, of course, among our archæological treasures in the catacombs of the British Museum."

"You have taken a serious weight off my mind," murmured Fanshawe, helping himself to candied ginger.

"In point of fact," resumed Mordaunt, "there is no thought or talk whatever of his quitting Italy."

Herbert Fanshawe smiled, with an air of superior information, implying:

"I, who have the key of the Foreign Office in my waistcoat pocket, could tell you, per-

haps, more on the subject than is known out of Downing Street !” — He contented himself with replying aloud, — “ I am not in the slightest hurry to replace him. I can wait. But I should be *really* sorry if a man of his time of life exposed himself to the mortification of a recall.”

“ *Monseigneur, j’attendrai !*” rejoined William, with shrewder sarcasm than might have been expected of him ; and he and his companion now proceeded up-stairs, to coffee, still engaged in conversation ; entering the drawing-room just as Lady Delavile was admiring on Margaret’s handsome arm, the rich Roman bracelet, enriched with a fine antique, presented to her by her brother.

“ You should have worn your coral comb, Margaret,” said he, while her female friends crowded round her with compliments. “ It is the prettiest specimen of modern jewellery I have ever seen.”

Lady Hargreave, who saw in it only a present from her husband which she was

little in the mood to be thankful for, found a ready pretext for refusal. But her brother heard her not. He was watching, at the further extremity of the room, his little nephew and niece:—Mary, so vain of her pink coral necklace; Willy, so delighted with its delicate colour peeping out between the dark curls of her waving hair, that he quite forgot to feel disappointed that his Reh-horn hunting whip was still detained at the Custom House. Their arms were entwined together. They were whispering to each other, regardless of any other human being in the room. And, involuntarily, the devoted affection of the boy brought back to William's mind his days of Bassingdon Parsonage. There was wanting only a lecture from Nurse Hatley to convert the little group into the Margaret and William of other days.

A few minutes afterwards, he moved into the inner room, to set down his coffee-cup on some table less loaded with books and engravings than the rest; where sat Lord Dela-

vile, engaged in conversation with another of the party, who, as William's entrance was masked by the tapestry *portières*, did not observe it.

Lady Fitzmorton and her daughter escorted by Fanshawe, who had just passed through the room on their way to the carriage, to proceed to a concert at the Dowager Lady Grey's, still furnished, apparently, a topic of conversation.

"I wonder Fitzmorton does not see through the thing, and call him to account," said Lord Delavile's companion (Sir Hurst Clitheroe's colleague in the representation of R——.) "'Tis a scandalous business altogether. Fanshawe has no more thought of proposing to her than of proposing to *me*! The flirtation is a mere blind to his far more serious *liaison* with—"

He paused; for Lord Delavile, having caught sight of Mordaunt's embarrassing position and distressed countenance, made an imperative sign to him to be silent. But

William had heard enough. His mind had previously misgiven him on the subject. This should not go on. Before four-and-twenty hours had elapsed, he would bring all parties to an explanation.

When he turned back to the drawing-room, the Delaviles' carriage was announced, —they, and nearly all the rest of the party, being about to attend the concert; and, as Ralph Hargreave had already stolen off to the Reform Club for the enjoyment of his cigar, Margaret requested her brother to take Lady Delavile to her carriage. On his return, every one was gone; and his sister and her husband were standing together beside the fire, not, as he at first fancied, waiting to bid him good night, but discussing together a letter which Sir Richard held in his hand.

“All I can say is that if you *would* go, it would greatly please and oblige me,” were the first words uttered by Dick Hargreave that met William Mordaunt's ear.

“You never mentioned the subject to me before.”

“How could I? I did not receive the letter till this afternoon. It does not come off till next week; and there would be a sacrifice of only three days.”

“With London as full as it is now, the sacrifice of three days is worthy consideration. The day your friend Elinor has fixed, is that on which Macready takes his leave of the stage; which I have always promised myself to attend.”

“Pardon me! You are wrong by ten days in your calculation.”

“William, too, of whom I have seen so little lately;—why must I leave him so soon?”—

“Where is it you want her to go?”—inquired Mordaunt, whom all this opposition rendered a little curious.

“To Lyndon. Elinor Royd's child (by the way perhaps, no one has told you that she has a fine boy)—Elinor's child, to whom, by long

engagement I am to be godfather, is about to be christened. Having scruples of conscience against proxies, she requires me to be present; and has invited my wife to accompany me, in so amiable, so grateful, so humble a tone, that I cannot bear she should be disappointed."

"But she won't be disappointed. Margaret *cannot* refuse so reasonable a request."

"Indeed she can," replied Lady Hargreave, quietly. "I have not the least intention of going. Lyndon is an immense way off. Mrs. Royd was never a particular friend of mine."

"You have, however, often told me," said her brother, "that on your visit to Dursley after my poor father's death, Elinor Maitland was the only person whose kindness consoled you. You told me how valuable were her counsels—how conciliating her manners! Never forget such an obligation as that,

Margaret!—No—no! you cannot hesitate about accepting her invitation.”

“I do not hesitate. I most positively decline it,” replied Lady Hargreave, in stern displeasure; for she fancied that her brother was reviving these Dursley reminiscences solely to humiliate and annoy her.

“You *refuse* to accompany Dick on this friendly visit—”

“Don't torment her!” interrupted Dick, evidently because he foresaw the ungracious answer he was about to provoke. “If Margaret don't like to go, why should she?—A long journey at this time of year, is certainly somewhat of a bore.”—

“It will be a far greater bore to you to be alone.”

“Not if it would annoy my wife to be my companion. Besides, I need not be alone. The children are especially invited by one who regards them almost as her own; and though I should be sorry to take Mary

so far at this season of the year, Willy would be the better for it. The boy must learn to rough it; or we shan't have him ready for Eton next spring."

"There can be no reason why Willy should not accept Mrs. Royd's invitation," said Lady Hargreave, in a relenting tone.

"None whatever. He has scarcely enjoyed a day's holiday this winter. And the journey would amuse and instruct him."

"Speak to his tutor, then, to-morrow. Not to the boy himself, if you please. The prospect of a week's pleasure would thoroughly interrupt his studies in the interim."

"And you *really* do not mean to accompany your husband?" inquired William, who was waiting, hat in hand, the close of the discussion, to wish them good night.

"I really do *not*. You seem to think it a crime if, on any point, I venture to consult my own taste and convenience."

“Good night, Margaret,” was all her brother could utter. After shaking hands, in silence with Sir Richard Hargreave, he was out of the room.

“Is this my sister?—Is this my dear gentle Margaret?”—was his first thought, as he prepared for a hurried walk homewards. His next was of a severer nature. “And who has done this? Who has changed her thus? Who has rendered her cold, ungrateful, worldly? It seems but yesterday since, on occasion of his first visit to the Deanery with Hargreave, my heart foreboded evil to arise from her acquaintance with that man—with that *rascal!*”—he continued, clenching his hand, as he walked along. A sudden thought struck him that, instead of going directly at home, he would hasten off and interrogate Ralph Hargreave concerning all he had been hearing. Ralph might afford some explanation to pacify his feelings, and prevent his passing a sleepless night.

He hurried accordingly to Maurigy's

Hotel, where Hargreave had permanent chambers. As a matter of course, he was, at that hour, refused admittance by the hall porter. "Mr. Hargreave *was* come home; But he had retired to his bed-room, and was probably undressed."

On the plea of business, however, Mordaunt persisted; and having summoned the head-waiter, by whom he could be recognised as an intimate friend and connection of Mr. Hargreave's, a yawning individual made his appearance stretching his arms, out of the coffee-room, where he had been dozing in defiance of the glare of gas. On seeing Mordaunt, the inert mass was instantaneously galvanised into the spruce, active, and obliging waiter.

"See Mr. Hargreave, Sir?—Of course, Sir.—Will you allow me to show you the way up stairs, Sir?—The old room, Mr. Mordaunt—thirty-four, to the left of the stairs!"

Taking two steps at a time, he was at the door, and in the room, without waiting for an announcement. Ralph was already in the act of undressing.

“What, in Heaven’s name, is the matter?” cried he, really believing, for a moment, that Mordaunt had taken too much wine—so heated and breathless did he appear.

“Nothing’s the matter. Only I want you to answer me a few questions.”

“As many as you choose; if you will first please to get off the sleeve of my dressing-gown, which I have just thrown off, and let me put it on again, and accompany you into the other room, where the lights are still burning.”

William Mordaunt cared nothing, just then, for light or dark. Excited as he was, he went on talking all the time Ralph was throwing on his wrapper. Almost before he was certain that the waiter, who had been stirring up the fire in the sitting-room, had departed, and closed the door, he

burst *in medias res* into the subject of his visit.

“Hargreave—I am perfectly wretched!” cried he, “and you, and you only can help me.”

“I’m heartily ready to do so, my dear Mordaunt. But what ails you?”

“I am all but distracted at the change I find in my sister.”

Ralph’s countenance fell. He had supposed himself about to be entrusted with some affair of honour. He was *not* prepared to talk about his cousin’s wife.

“I have been half a year away,” persisted Mordaunt, “and God knows what has occurred between her and her husband during my absence. Her manner to him is cold, almost insulting. Answer me, Ralph, answer me like a good and upright man as you are. Answer me in all sincerity before God.—*Has* Margaret been disgracing herself?”

“No!” cried Ralph Hargreave, firmly and energetically. “What do you take me for?”

Should I have been sitting in a friendly way by her side, if I thought she had betrayed the friend I love and honour?"

Tears were already bursting from the eyes of Mordaunt. That one harsh monosyllable had made him the happiest of men.

"Forgive my violence," he faltered, "you can scarcely guess what I have been suffering; you can scarcely understand how dear she is to me. You love your wife, Ralph. But what is such an affection compared to that of two orphans, who have struggled through life together,—mutually reliant, mutually attached? Margaret is to *me* as a cherished child—an only child!"—

"I know it, my dear fellow, I know it, William, I know it. And therefore am rejoiced at your return to England. For though all is not *lost*, as you seem to fancy, all is not *well*. Margaret wants talking to. *I* made the attempt. But from *me* the advice appeared officious and impertinent, which you are intitled to offer. Dick, as

I need not tell you, has always spoiled her. Dick is blinded by affection. But our Margaret has fallen into bad hands, Mordaunt. And though, at present, all they have taught her is waywardness and levity, Fanshawe's influence is not to be trusted."

"Trusted? There lives not a man more unprincipled!"—

"The best thing that could happen would be for him to get his mission, and be off to Italy. Out of sight—out of mind. They would soon forget each other." Involuntarily William Mordaunt shuddered at hearing them thus definitively coupled together! "I have sometimes thought," continued Ralph, "that it would not be a bad dodge to give him a helping hand with government. We might perhaps do more than the Duke of Merioneth, with all his strawberry leaves. And as far as I am concerned, I shan't be easy till he is on t'other side the Channel."

"What a degrading alternative for Dick

Hargreave's wife!" cried William, as he hurriedly paced the room.

"It might have been worse. But if we exert ourselves, all may still be well. You must have a serious explanation with her."

"Not I!—*my* explanation shall be with *him*!"

"You can't be such a blockhead, Mordaunt! To draw the attention of all London to circumstances of which more than half London is ignorant! Besides, what right have you to interfere? Margaret may be Dean Mordaunt's daughter, but she is Dick Hargreave's wife; and if *he* choose to sanction her intimacy with this fellow, which, trust me, he would not do unless as sure of her as of his salvation, what business have you to step in and create dissension. Fanshawe would tell you, with a sweet smile, that he frequented Whitehall Gardens at Sir Richard Hargreave's express invitation.

You would find yourself completely in the wrong!"—

"*Damn him!*"—

"With all my heart. But *our* business is with Margaret. As I said before, advise her kindly and mildly. Appeal to her feelings. Plead the interests of her children. Plead as real affection always knows how to plead; and, my life upon it, you will soften *her* heart as Hamlet that of his mother."

"You are right, perhaps. I am afraid you are right," groaned Mordaunt. "To-morrow, then, I will request a private interview with her. I dread it, Ralph. But the attempt must be made. Good-night, old fellow. We both want rest. I don't apologise for having disturbed you. You are nearly as much attached as I am to Dick, and to my sister."

Next day, however, William Mordaunt found that his purpose was not immediately accomplishable. His official duties detained him the whole morning. On Lady Hargreave's

side, Mrs. Thornycroft was to be attended to. It was not for three days he could manage to obtain an audience ; for which, in the interim, his anxiety increased a hundred-fold. A passing skirmish with Barty Tomlinson at his club—a passing wrangle with Lady Arthur, who called him to her carriage in the drive in Hyde Park, as he was on his road to take his first survey of the Crystal Palace, to which his private cares prevented him from rendering the homage so much its due,—convinced him that his sister's fatal folly had created one of the current scandals of the day. Twice, when people began alluding in his presence to the newspaper announcement of the diplomatic preferment of Fanshawe, and discussing what influence it would have upon his "love affairs," a sudden perception that *he* was listening, produced an accusatory silence.

But while congratulating himself that his arrival in England would bring all these miseries to an end, he little surmised that, so

far from regretting his return, no one was more sincere in welcoming him to England than Herbert Fanshawe;—no one more anxious to see him exercise a restraining power over his sister. For Herbert had placed himself in the position of the rash necromancer of old, who evoked a spirit which his skill was not potent enough to control; and he was horror-struck at perceiving that *his* Lady of Locksley Hall, instead of purposing to add his homage to the luxuries of Dursley, Oak Hill, and Whitehall Gardens, was deeply impressed by the principle that a woman who has withdrawn her affections from her husband, is no longer intitled to profit by his protection, or enjoy the worldly goods with which he has endowed her. Lady Hargreave was capable, he verily believed, of quitting her husband's roof, and consummating his own ruin, by seeking refuge under *his*;—and from the moment this alarming prospect presented itself, he had relaxed in this insidious devotion. It was by no

means with such intentions he had endeavoured to insinuate himself into her heart, and blight her domestic happiness.

No one better understood than Herbert Fanshawe that we live under the sceptre of Queen Victoria—a matron and a mother—not under that of George IV.—the profligate king, and king of profligates. It had not needed the early lessons of Sir Claude to impress upon his mind that—failing landed and funded property, railway shares, or debenture—character constitutes a valuable investment for a public man. For some time past, he had been administering to the infirm condition of his own, as tenderly as Dean Mordaunt, to the delicacy of his digestion, or the shapeliness of his nails. The Duke of Merioneth had apprised his aspiring kinsman that, if he intended to achieve preferment, he must go through those forms of confession and absolution, which, in the times of Charles X., were exacted of the man who applied for a passport for a journey.

It was providential, therefore, since circumsppection was the order of the day—that Margaret's brother had made his appearance to tame down the romantic mood into which she was soaring; which he, as well as Sir Richard, did not scruple to attribute to incipient and hereditary flightiness of nature, such as had broken out so disastrously in the unfortunate Lady Milicent. Under sanction of Mordaunt's presence, Fanshawe trusted he should retain his honorary post in Whitehall Gardens; which he had been almost alarmed into resigning.

Meanwhile, Margaret, conscience-stung and unhappy, but still a prey to the infatuation created by vanity and stimulated by luxurious idleness, was endeavouring to silence the remorseful promptings of her soul in the turmoil of fashionable life. Over her conduct, religion had ceased to exercise a regulating influence. She continued to observe its outward forms. Early habit so far prevailed

that exterior usages were respected. But she never enjoyed a really pious nature.—She was not one of those who, grateful for mighty benefits, rush to their chamber, and, on their knees, pour forth their gratitude to God; or who, in an extremity of sorrow, instructively exclaim—“Lord, save us!—We perish!”—Even such piety as she possessed—such piety as forms the natural dowry of the young,—had been repressed by her residence in a cathedral town; where the jargon and forms, and mechanical adjuncts of divine worship, are so wantonly converted into vulgar topics of discussion, that veneration is stifled at the fountain-head.

The sure and safe guardian of her soul was consequently absent from his post; and when once, in the day of her temptation, she had hardened that heart which she had lately ceased to examine, and long ceased to discipline, what chance,—what chance!—

The moment her brother made his appearance in London, Margaret resolved to

oppose and resent whatever interference he might attempt. Especially qualified by nature to become in married life, what Hawthorne terms "a gentle parasite, the soft reflection of a more powerful existence," the fatality which had united her to one of whom, not being the man of her choice, she presumed to fancy herself the superior, had hollowed her heart into a vacuum where even its natural affections were doomed to droop and perish.

Even the children, once her darlings, had occasion to notice the change in their mother's temper. Her beautiful boy—her pride—had more than once stood gazing with wonder at the frowns which occasionally contracted her countenance; till his own large blue eyes, mild and heavenly as we fancy those of a seraph, became filled with tears, as from a vague presentiment that evil was impending.

Once, indeed—one morning when little Willy interrupted her while reading the

newspaper, she reproved him, for the first time in his little life, so harshly, that the boy fell into a passionate fit of weeping. But even before his sobs reached her ear, Margaret had caught him to her heart,—had covered him with caresses.—Ere they were reconciled, she all but asked pardon for her impatience!

It was just at that moment, while Willy was seated on her knee with his arm flung round her neck, and Mary, kneeling by her side, holding the hand of her brother, that their uncle made his appearance to claim the fulfilment of his sister's promise to grant him half an hour's private conversation. The visit was untimely. It went to her heart at that moment, to send the children away.

Already, he felt half inclined to withdraw his request. She would not have thus occupied her solitude, had Fanshawe obtained over her mind the evil influence he dreaded. But no sooner were the children out of

sight, than Lady Hargreave's manner resumed its defiant hardness.

"What have you got to say to me William?" said she, as if hastening to meet the worst. "Are you going to follow the example of Emma Clitheroe and her sister; and preach to me, that, because I am beginning to find pleasure in society, La Trappe is a safer sojourn than what is called the world?"

"I am not going to preach to you. I am not going even to reason with you," he replied, astonished into abruptness by the fearlessness with which she challenged reproof. "I only want to tell you, Margaret, that if I am to hear your name coupled with those of your sex who have dishonoured it, you will fairly break my heart. My life, since I returned to England, sister, has been one prolonged agony! You do not know—women *never* know—how remorselessly their conduct is discussed at clubs—at messes—at the covert-side—wherever

men alone are gathered together. Rumours have reached me—”

“Don't talk to me of rumours! I have done no wrong, and defy all blame.”

“Look me in the face, then, Margaret, and repeat the words, and I am satisfied.”

She looked him in the face. But, on meeting his eye, did *not* repeat the words—they seemed to die upon her lips. “Never,” said she, “never, since I married, were my husband and myself on happier terms. What right, then, have his family—the world—yourself—to find fault with my conduct?—Sir Richard Hargreave is satisfied.—Do not attempt to stir up strife between us.”

“God forbid!—God, in his mercy, forbid! But is there no one else in this world, Margaret, to whom you are responsible? Is there no brother who has watched over you from girlhood, and would have sacrificed his own heart's blood to do you service,—no brother who has loved and adored you? For

your sake, I have stifled the natural instincts of my age—I have taught myself to look on love and marriage as perils to be avoided—that you might have no rival in my heart—that I might be ever near you—ever, *ever* near you,—to guard you from evil, Margaret,—to remove the thorns of life from your path.”—

“You have been a most kind brother. Do I deny it? But be kinder still: and do not treat as a child one who, as a woman, may resent your lessons.”

“If I treat you as a child, 'tis because you have been to me as a child;—because you *are* my child—you, *once* so good, so true, so chaste!”

Margaret started, as if wounded to the quick. “And who dares insinuate that I am no longer so?” cried she, with indignation.

“Hundreds!”—

“Hundreds, then, who bear false witness!” she exclaimed, with flashing eyes. “No one

is safe from calumny, dear brother. But I swear to you, by all that is holiest on earth—by my father's memory—by my hopes of salvation—if I were unworthy to bear my husband's name—if I had sinned as you say the world accuses me—I should not be at this moment in this house.”

“I believe you! Your assertions are needless. If I thought otherwise, Margaret, I would not answer for not—no matter!—But it is against this pride and self-confidence, my darling sister, that I would now warn you. It is against the plotting of a fellow without feeling, without principle, without a soul. Fanshawe is incapable of one kind or generous sentiment. If, at this moment, he could advance his interests in life by trampling on your heart, he would witness your shame without a pang.”

“If you persist in this ungenerous tone, I will not listen to another syllable,” cried Margaret, rising as if to leave the room. “You are most unjust, William, most cruel!”

“I am your brother; intitled to scarify a wound which may yet carry you to the grave. There is not a reptile, Margaret, there is not a rabid animal on earth, whose slaver is more dangerous than the assiduities of Fanshawe. No! you shall not go! By force will I detain you to hear what your own levity has rendered urgent. Oh! sister, sister! My own little Margaret of Bassingdon,—listen to me. Do not throw away your happiness—the happiness of the best husband that ever breathed,—the happiness of the fair children whom God has given you—the happiness of the poor brother who would die to serve you—to gratify a vain, flimsy egotist, of whose pleasures you are but one of a thousand idle toys. Our name is yet honest, darling Margaret. My father’s memory is undisgraced.—Your husband is unexasperated.—Be wise, be merciful, be yourself!—Dismiss this man from your heart.—It can be done without exciting notice; he is about to leave

the country.—Be the intimacy dropped at once—at once, and for ever !”

“ Why should I be so ungenerous ? Why should I so gratuitously wound the feelings of a friend ? *He* would not renounce *my* regard in deference to the idle gossip of society.”

“ Would he *not* !” —

“ Again I say, you are unfair.”

“ And do you mean then to place 'in the scale against your husband, children, brother, this mere acquaintance, — this lover who, when he might have honourably offered you his hand, demurred from prudential motives ?—

“ Demurred from disinterested consideration for my welfare.”

“ Infatuated ! — ungrateful !” — exclaimed William Mordaunt, wildly tossing his arms.

“ Ay—*ungrateful* ! *That* is the word ! For years past, brother, have you been wounding my feelings by presenting my

husband to me in the light of a benefactor. I was always to be '*grateful*'—a word that grates against the very soul of a woman and a wife. A wife must *love*, a *woman* must love. And you, William, you who stifled my young affection by exacting this constant tax—this debasing tax—are answerable for any attachment, which in my humiliation I may have formed elsewhere."

"Don't say that word again, Margaret!" cried he, almost frantic. "*Don't*—I cannot answer for myself if I hear my father's daughter indulge in so shameless an avowal."

"I do not fear you," replied Lady Hargreave, less moved by his violence than by his previous remonstrances. "You would scarcely strike me,—you would scarcely *stab* me,—because I find the society of one of your friends pleasanter than that of a man who cares more for his architect's estimates, and the state of Vancouver's Island, than for—"

She paused. Tears, extorted by remorse

at the menaces into which he had been goaded, were stealing down William Mordaunt's manly face. A pang struck to the heart of Lady Hargreave. Never but once before, had she seen her brother weep. It was as they stood together by the death-bed of their father.

Heart-struck and ashamed, she was about to throw herself into his arms, and sue for pardon;—no longer the haughty, indignant Lady Hargreave—but reconverted into the fond sister—the Dean's daughter;—when, unluckily, a step approached the door; and the good-humoured voice of her husband, humming a popular air, was heard without—familiar, common-place—recalling all the disgusts fostered by the fastidiousness of her arch-enemy.

Mordaunt had scarcely time to dash the tears from his eyes, ere his brother-in-law was with them. Sir Richard Hargreave took no note of their discomposure. He was fresh from his committee,—full of news, over-

flowing with spirits. His errand was simply to make arrangements with his wife concerning little Willy's journey with him to Lyndon.

CHAPTER XIV.

But yet she liv'd, and all too soon,
Recover'd from that death-like swoon—
But dead to reason—every sense
Had been o'erstrung by pangs intense.
She feared—she felt—that something ill
Lay on her soul, so deep and chill—
That there was sin and shame she knew,
That some one was to die—but *who* ?
She had forgotten ;—did she breathe,
Could this be still the earth beneath,
The sky above—and men around ?

BYRON.

WHEN the morning arrived for the departure of Sir Richard and her boy, Margaret began to fancy they would never be off.

Little Willy had a slight cold ; which his father seemed to think a sufficient reason for postponing the journey. " A day later, and they might still be in time for the christening." But Lady Hargreave, contrary to her usual carefulness on her children's account, would not hear of delay. " Well wrapt up, the boy could not possibly increase his cold. Mrs. Royd was expecting them. In a small household like hers, it was inconvenient to be kept in suspense."

The truth, alas ! was, that for four days past, not a syllable of or from Herbert Fanshawe had reached her ears ; and she was eager to free herself from observation, in order to ascertain the cause of this mysterious silence.

When the carriage came to the door to convey them to the Euston Square Station, Margaret had hardly patience with her husband's vacillation. He, who had been hitherto all impatience for the journey, now seemed to regard it with repugnance. He

led the child to his mother to be taken leave of; and while she appeared to be absorbed in noticing the richly-furred dress presented to him by his father for the journey, Sir Richard hastily embraced her. But Lady Hargreave's farewell kiss to little Willy appeared so cold to the child, that, when he had reached the door, he burst from Sir Richard's hold; and, rushing back to his mother, seized and covered with caresses the hand that hung down upon her velvet dress.

“God bless you, my dear boy! Be good—be obedient,—and come back to me safe!” said Margaret, touched by his dutiful affection.

When they drove from the door, she returned hastily into her dressing-room, and prepared to write to Herbert Fanshawe:—straight from the best affections of the human heart to its worst treachery!—But when once a woman loses sight of Duty—the cloud by day, the pillar of fire by night, vouchsafed to guide us through the wilderness—there is no

guessing into what shadow of darkness her steps may wander. From bad to worse, the progress is scarcely perceptible.

When her letter of inquiry was written and despatched, Margaret occupied herself in wandering like an unquiet spirit through her spacious apartments, awaiting her messenger's return. One moment, she gazed from her window on the animated panorama below, where the boats darted along like swallows on the wing, while her leaden Mercury still tarried by the way; then, in unreasonable impatience, turned from one gorgeous time-piece to another in her lofty saloon, hoping to find her watch at fault. But, alas! the minutes kept true time; though her own immortal soul had escaped its regulator.

At last—at last—the butler made his appearance, salver in hand, bearing a note. Lady Hargreave hastened to seize it. No answer.—Her own letter returned!—

“Mr. Fanshawe has been out of town

these two days, my Lady. Mr. Fanshawe is gone down to Morton Castle. The footman brought back the letter, and waits your Ladyship's further orders about it."

"I will send it by the post," said Lady Hargreave, taking it calmly from the waiter.

But scarcely had the butler left the room, when she gave way to the irritation produced by this vexatious surprise.

"Gone to Morton Castle!"—

She might have added with the frantic Constance:

Gone to be married! Gone to swear a peace!

for, within half an hour of her first intimation of coming events, the following characteristic epistle was placed in her hand.

"Mr. Fanshawe's servant has just brought *this*, my Lady," said the butler, re-appearing with what he supposed would be a peculiarly acceptable letter—as explanatory of the move-

ment which had appeared to surprise his mistress. "I think it must have been overlooked, my Lady, as Mr. Fanshawe has been out of town these two days. Probably, your Ladyship's letter reminded the person who had neglected his orders to deliver it."

Lady Hargreave thought her over-considerate domestic would never leave the room; for he seized the opportunity to make up the fire with elaborate neatness; and draw down with much precaution the holland-blinds of the bow-window, through which a glaring spring sun was shining into the grate. At length, she was alone; and able to break the well-known seal, emblazoned with a too well-known tortuous serpent-like entanglement of H's and F's. The letter, dated from Morton Castle (but evidently written in London), ran as follows:

"I have to claim your congratulations,—nay, your double congratulations, my dearest friend; for my appointment will be gazetted

on Saturday, and my marriage is at length settled. For some time past, you must have foreseen this: for the one event is, in fact, consequent on the other. The Duke of Merioneth having received an intimation from high authority, last autumn, that, as it was indispensable for the Legation at —— to be established on a footing enabling the British Minister to do its honours with liberal hospitality and rigid domestic decorum, I saw at once that my only chance of advancement lay in a suitable marriage, a marriage such as awaits me with Emily Morton; whose weakness in my favour, dearest Lady Hargreave, we have sometimes laughed at; but who, you will admit, is the very wife for a poor envoy like myself.

“A man loves but once in his life. Happy he who loves where he can offer his hand. But next to this rarest of human blisses, is a well-assorted match; and from such, I hope to derive my future tranquil happiness. That I have your best wishes

I am certain ; and your long-standing friendship for Emily will, I earnestly trust, determine you to treat with clemency and kindness

Your most devoted and grateful

Humble servant,

H. F——.”

Well that the butler had drawn down the blinds to exclude the sunshine !—Margaret could scarcely have borne that it should glare in upon her miserable condition ; as, for more than an hour, she sat transfixed in the corner of the sofa where she had perused this heartless and artful epistle. And was this the end of all ?—Ay, the *very* end ! She had been duped,—deceived,—rendered the blind to Fanshawe's courtship ; which if openly attempted, Lady Fitzmorton who disliked him, would have instantly checked. For months past, had she filled this honourable post, in blind besotted infatuation ; risking her soul's salvation,—her husband's honour,—her children's future weal, for the

shallow vain delight of fancying herself adored by a coxcomb !

And now, what was to become of her ? How could she presume to turn anew for happiness, to the desecrated hearth of domestic life ?—Though less guilty than the world supposed her,—was she not *too* guilty to hope for peace on earth, or pardon from above ?—

By good fortune, Lady Hargreave had previously issued orders that no visitors should be admitted. No one therefore interfered or molested her.

For hours did she remain there ; entranced in her reflections,—growing gradually colder and colder.—She was roused at last by the exulting step and voice of her brother William, approaching the room.

“ How are you, darling sister ?—All alone ?—At what o'clock this morning did they start ? ”—cried he, as he drew near, questioning, but without waiting a reply. “ I am come to sue for pardon, Meg ; on my knees if you

wish it,—for I am much too happy to be proud! But how could you be so cruel, when you saw me all but distracted t'other day, as to withhold the half dozen words which would have relieved my uneasiness? Why leave me to learn from the gossip of the clubs that Fanshawe was an engaged man, on the eve of marriage; and that my accusations were as foolish as they were false?"

Lady Hargreave gazed at him in vacant stupefaction.

"Everybody is charmed with the match," continued William, imputing her silence to prolonged displeasure against himself. "Lady Emily is a universal favourite; and people are so glad that her exemplary constancy should be rewarded by this capital appointment—in *my* opinion, pleasanter than any of the great embassies."

"The appointment, then, is as certain as the marriage?" inquired Margaret, in a hoarse voice.

"As if you did not know! But I must

say, you kept their counsel better than ever friend did before; which, I verily believe, greatly contributed to the happy conclusion of the business. You need not, however, have kept *me* in the dark. You might have trusted *me*. And it would have saved me such worlds of anxiety.”—

Lady Hargreave made several attempts to interrupt him. But the words died in her throat.

“Come hither, William,” said she, faintly, when he had done, pointing to a place beside her on the sofa. “I am not well.—I have scarcely breath to explain.—But, at least, I will not add the sin of hypocrisy to my other faults. I must not mislead so good, so kind, a brother. It would be easy to leave you in the error that you cling to. But I can’t, dear William.—I *must* tell you the whole, *whole* truth.—No one has been so startled by this marriage as myself. Herbert Fanshawe deceived me—deceived me, as you said he would.”

William Mordaunt threw himself into the seat she pointed out to him. All the blood in his body seemed throbbing in his temples. He had scarcely courage to listen further.

“Do not mistake me,” said Margaret, enlightened by his agitation. “Do not suppose that my declarations of the other evening were disingenuous. I confessed to you then, as I do now, the utmost of my crime—to have listened to this glozing tempter, and not driven him from my door. But I have done no worse. If I have no longer a right to the confidence of my husband, I have not forfeited my claim to my children’s love and duty.”

The hand of her brother instantly sought her own. He was comparatively relieved. Had Herbert Fanshawe at that moment entered the room, he would not have sprung upon his throat and throttled him, as might have been the case some moments before.

“Here is his letter,” continued the broken-spirited woman. “Read it, and absolve me

if you can. I do not accuse *him*. It is myself, whose weakness, whose wickedness, is at this moment stirring the tempest in my mind."

William Mordaunt hastily perused the letter. His first impulse was to crumple the paper and throw it into the fire. Second thoughts were wiser. Having re-smoothed and refolded it, he gave it back to his sister. It was a document that *ought* to remain in her possession. But having done so, he took her hand kindly, and held it soothingly in his own.

"I have no wish," she added, the frozen current of her blood beginning to flow more freely at this simple demonstration of sympathy, "to say one word in extenuation of my folly. The word you used the other night, and which I resented,—I resented I fear because it was the true one to apply to my conduct—'Ungrateful.' Yes! never was woman *more* ungrateful than I to my husband! Never was man more devoted, more

indulgent, more true, more generous, than he to *me*—than he to *mine*. And yet I allowed a mere specious well-spoken man of fashion, to make him an object of mockery in my presence.—Ungrateful!—*Ungrateful!*”

Her brother, however he might pity her anguish, could not gainsay her words.

“And now,” said Lady Hargreave, as if endeavouring to throw off the threefold weight that oppressed her, “tell me, William, what is to be my future punishment?—What is my present duty?—Be your injunction what it may, I will abide by it.—You are a man of unswerving principle.—If Richard is my husband, he is your *friend*. You would not have him injured or deceived.—Answer me!—Does it behove me to tell him all?—To humble myself before him and throw myself on his mercy?”—

Mordaunt's first impulse was in favour of unreserved frankness. But he paused ere he replied. It was his business to consider the happiness of Hargreave. Would not the

remainder of his life be irremediably embittered by discovering how little dependence could be placed on the principles of her who bore his name, and to whom the guidance of his children was entrusted?—

“Had your fault been greater,” was his long-considered answer, “I should have held it your duty to withdraw from this house at once and for ever. As it is, I must more explicitly understand the extent of your repentance—of your intentions—your feelings!”—

“My feelings are those of the bitterest shame. My intentions, if I may be permitted to fulfil them, are to merit the renewal of my husband's love and confidence by unlimited devotion to his wishes, by the grateful devotion in which you justly accused me of being deficient. My task shall be diligently done.—I will serve seven other years for his affection, as Jacob for Leah.”

“You promise well, my poor sister,” replied Mordaunt, almost alarmed by the

strenuous firmness which impelled her words from between her close-set teeth, though a tremulous movement in her now crimson eyelids showed that the spirit within was fluttering. "God prosper your endeavours."

"If I fail, rebuke me!" said she. "If I fail, restrain me. If I fail, remind me of the agony and humiliation of this day. Be ever near me, dearest William. You have been my stay through good and evil; never again desert my side,"—sobbed Margaret, whose tears burst forth from their frozen source, the moment her brother, sustaining her on his shoulder, imprinted on her forehead a kiss of pardon and peace.

"You admit that you owe to Dick Hargreave," whispered he, after endeavouring to calm her emotion, "as much as was ever owed by wife to husband. See that it be equitably paid; I ask no more. See that the life of your children's father is made happy; and let us both forget the past."

William suddenly started up, to screen

Lady Hargreave's distracted appearance and dishevelled hair from the observation of the butler; who at that moment entered the room, holding something in his hand. Had Mordaunt been suffering less keenly from mental agitation, he must have noticed the scared and breathless appearance of the man. But he was thinking only of his sister; and advanced towards the intruder, as if to receive his message.

Instead of being surprised at his interference, the servant hastily beckoned him from the room. No sooner had they reached the lobby, than, trembling and incoherent, he placed the paper he was holding in the hands of his master's brother-in-law.

"The clerk who brought it is waiting below, Sir," faltered he. "Oh! Mr. Mordaunt!—My poor, poor master!—"

It contained a telegraphic message. It announced a terrible collision, by which several carriages of the train in which

Sir Richard Hargreave had quitted London that morning, were destroyed, and many passengers fatally injured!

William had scarcely courage to read to the end. But the technical brevity of such despatches soon brought the whole truth under his eyes. "Sir Richard Hargreave and son seriously injured; fracture and contusions. Bring down as soon as possible the best surgical advice."

The message was dated from a station about four hours' distance from town. The clerk in attendance was bidden to state that, in half an hour, an express train would start from the Euston Station, to convey down the line the friends and medical attendants of the sufferers.

Not a second must be lost. Too much deference to the feelings of his sister might be the cause of sacrificing, by delay, the valuable life that was in peril. With as much precaution as there was time to use, therefore, he communicated to Margaret the

dreadful intelligence ; entrusted her, half-fainting, to the care of the terror-struck Harston ; and rushed off, as fast as a Hansom could carry him, in search of Brodie or Copland. Neither was to be found. With a third, a surgeon of scarcely inferior eminence, he was more fortunate. Accompanied by an assistant bearing his fearful accessories, they reached the Euston Square Station five minutes before the appointed time. But there, to the grief and horror of William Mordaunt, the first person he saw was Lady Hargreave, supported by her servants. He had not so much as adjured her not to think of accompanying him ; because at the moment of leaving her, she was nearly unconscious.

“My lady *would* come, Mr. Mordaunt,” was Harston’s explanation. “It was morally impossible to prevent her.”

Hastily excusing himself to the surgeon, for leaving him to find his own way, he placed the poor fainting woman with

Harston in the carriage retained for their use; and prepared himself to support her during the hours of suspense awaiting her. But *how* support her?—She had already ascertained at the Electric Telegraph Office, that news had reached them of the death of one of the sufferers by the recent collision.

“It was *not* Sir Richard Hargreave, the Member of Parliament, *that* they knew. But they could say nothing about the child that accompanied him.” To them, the child was only a child. To Margaret it was her beautiful boy: her own—her only! No wonder the words shaped themselves on her lips, or at least the thought in her heart—

Sinful Macduff! They were all slain for thee!

She was too faint to confide her forebodings, even to her brother. The railway whistle sounded. They started. They were on their rapid way; yet to Margaret's dis-

tracted mind, each hour that conveyed them over scores and scores of miles constituted a weary lagging day. Though she *looked* stricken into stone, every fibre of her frame was astir. The whole story of her past life seemed unfolded before her like a scroll :—her early trials ;—her heart's hardening ;—her heart's softening ;—her too transitory love for that faultless being of whom she had proved unworthy ; the coming of the first born ; the noble boy, the loving lovely child whom she was about to find crushed and tortured—perhaps gone for ever—perhaps unable to bestow one parting kiss upon his heartbroken mother. She remembered her husband's reluctance to depart. She remembered urging them to go. She remembered *why* she had urged them to go. And then “up-starting in her agony,” prayed aloud for pardon ;—prayed aloud that she might be permitted to die with them—with them, whom she had murdered.

Oh ! hours of agony !—Yet such *have*

been, and will be again and again endured,—in this age of speculation, when, as we have before asserted, the unforeseen predominates, and the hazardous is recklessly undertaken. The days we live in have indeed verified the lesson that, “in the midst of life, we are in death !”—

At length, after how many inquiries, after how many disappointments, the train paused suddenly : not within the railings of a station ; but in the open fields. A signal had been given. They could proceed no further. The line, a little lower down was encumbered by fragments of broken carriages ; part of which were embedded in the declivity of the embankment. They were to walk the last quarter of a mile. They must reach the —— Station on foot.

“ Don't wait for me. The servants will take care of me. I will follow you as I can ;” said Margaret, bravely. “ Hurry on, hurry on, with the surgeon.—There is life and death in every moment.”—

Mordaunt saw the wisdom of her injunction, and obeyed. Stumbling on among fragments of broken carriages, and the contents of a demolished luggage-van—for it was now dusk—he and his companion with some difficulty reached the station; where a regiment of stiff stern policemen was drawn up, who, had they been on the spot a few hours earlier, and mindful of their duty, might have prevented this hideous waste of life.

Mordaunt and his companion were escorted, by men bearing lanterns, to a small inn, about fifty yards from the station, apparently constructed in express anticipation of casualties; to which the first-class passengers, *dead* and *dying*, had been removed.

The surgeon now assumed his post of superiority, and professional answers awaited his professional inquiries.

Sir Richard was still alive. He was suffering from compound fracture of the thigh, and extensive spinal injury. It was unlikely that he would survive through the night.

The boy! Neither Mordaunt nor the surgeons thought, at that moment, of the boy. The mother was not yet arrived. There was nobody to inquire about the boy.

When she *was* lifted into the crowded hall, *that* was Margaret's first question. William and the London surgeon had been conducted, by the local directors in attendance, into the room where lay the mangled suffering form of what was once Dick Hargreave. *She* asked for the little boy, and was taken into an adjoining dressing-room; where, on a sofa, neglected, forsaken, forgotten, lay a patient little fellow—his head tied up in blood-streaked bandages—whose first faint murmur was,—“Dear mother! thank you—thank you for coming.—How is my poor papa?”—

How instantaneously a mother's heart understood the art of assuaging his sufferings! She raised his throbbing head—she administered drink to his parched lips; but,

alas! one glance at the little sufferer confirmed the intelligence vouchsafed by the station-master to her inquiries. "The doctors had hopes of preserving the sight of one eye; but the unfortunate young gentleman would, they feared, be maimed and disfigured."—

The room in which they were, abutted on the chamber where Sir Richard was lying; and the house being slightly run up, like most railway hotels, scarcely a word passed in one that was not audible in the other. The door of the little dressing-room, indeed, opened into the passage common to both; and she knew, for she had seen them pass, that the surgeons were there,—that amputation was impending; and, for the next half hour, scarcely dared uncloset her ears to the moans and endearing words of her little boy, lest some sudden shriek or cry, wrung by torment out of the heart of him who was undergoing this frightful operation, should reach her, and drive her to desperation.

She heard stifled exclamations of pain ; but the voice was that of her brother,—of William,—who stood by the bedside of his suffering friend, scarcely able to bear the sight of the sufferings which he sustained with such manly courage. “ My GOD ! my GOD ! have pity on them ! ” was her murmured prayer. For herself, she did not presume to appeal to Divine mercy.

At length, she saw the assistants, bearing their case of instruments, hasten along the passage. “ By Jove, what pluck ! ”—was the ejaculation of the younger of the two, indignantly hushed by his companion. Their superior—the great operator—was closely following them ; his countenance grave as death, but with the cold moisture of intense emotion still standing on his brow. He passed, solemn and silent ; and, for a moment, all was still.

Oh ! Margaret ! scarcely still.—The beatings of thy poor wounded heart were so distinctly audible !—

Whisperings too were soon heard in the ante-room. The attendance of the clergyman, authorised by the departing surgeons, was announced. A still-footed and venerable stranger was piloted through the passage. "I must leave you now, dear, for a moment," whispered Margaret to her boy, in a voice he could hardly recognise as hers; and quietly disengaging her hand from his clinging, moist fingers, she stole out and silently followed the stranger into the presence of her husband. He was bearing thither the elements of the last rites of his faith, demanded by the dying man; and while he administered them, and in a mild but earnest voice recited the promises of salvation, she knelt near the door, humbly, unobserved, without daring so much as to raise her eyes towards the bed of death. When, towards the close, a faint voice gasped the response which certified the faith—the hope—the peace of mind of him whose life was returning into the hands of Him who gave it, she

ventured one furtive glance towards the pillow. She saw her husband's pale, subdued face, bedewed with the damps of death. She saw William, more dead than alive, supporting his head. She saw no more. She fell forward on her knees upon the floor.

When she recovered to the consciousness of life, she was stretched upon the foot of the bed ; with all present administering aid to *her* instead of to the sufferer whose moments were numbered. She signed to them to desist—to attend to *him*.—She raised herself with difficulty on her elbow, to obtain a glimpse of his face.—

“My Margaret!” said he ; “my own Margaret! I thank you darling for being here. If I could have formed a wish in this world, it would have been to see your face again. Dear wife, you have made my days happy. Be equally kind to our poor children. I have appointed you their sole guardian ; and you must live, my Margaret, live to fulfil that mighty charge. You will

have good advisers,—our brothers William and Ralph.—Where is Ralph?—Shan't I see my poor Ralph again?—No—I am nearly spent.—Farewell, Margaret.—Kiss me, wife!—My thanks—my—”

A horrible spasm convulsed the face lighted up almost into beauty by the inspirations of devotion and love.

Chloroform was administered, which, if it could accomplish nothing towards prolonging that valuable life, might at least assuage the torments of the parting hour.

Again and again, was it administered. At length, the surgeons in attendance unlocked from that of Sir Richard the grasping hand of his wife; then, bending over the dead, closed his eyes for ever.—

Mordaunt, when requested to remove his sister from the room, was scarcely able to support *himself*. He returned two hours afterwards, when Margaret was stifling her sobs in the pillow of her sleeping boy; and throwing himself on his knees beside the

bed of death, kissed that cold forehead which not even the spasms of a death of anguish could render otherwise than manly, humane, and noble.

“I am very grieved for thee, my brother Jonathan!”—was the feeling beating in his heart. But he spoke no word. It was too great, too overwhelming a sorrow for utterance.

CONCLUSION.

We dream not of Love's might,
Till Death hath rob'd with soft and solemn light,
The image we enshrine. Before that hour
We have but glimpses of the o'ermastering power,
Within us laid.

LONDON.

WITHIN an hour after that terrible consummation, a host of afflicted friends crowded to the spot ;—among them, Ralph Hargreave, whose silent sorrow was powerful in proportion to his ardent nature ;—Lord Delavile, who had hurried from London the moment the accident was known :—and poor Elinor

Royd, accusing herself as the origin of all, but eager to remove Lady Hargreave and the boy to her quiet home, ten miles distant from the fatal spot.

But Margaret's home was with the dead:—the dead whom she had injured, the dead who had so loved her, and so forgiven!—She did not coldly reject the services of her husband's friend. She allowed poor Elinor to come and establish herself under that sacred roof, to share her vigils, and watch over the suffering boy; to whom, at intervals, she was herself unable to afford efficient attendance.

At length, the work of death was fully done: the tediously prolonged inquest—proving negligence, yet acquitting the negligent, and advising better care for the future,—regardless of the levity which had destroyed, among several lives, one whose loss was irreparable. By the deep gloom with which intelligence of the mournful event overspread the faces of friends, colleagues,

county neighbours, political associates,—it was powerfully demonstrated how true and honest a heart had ceased to beat.

The faithful Elinor undertook the care of poor little Willy, who, though out of danger, was not in a state to admit of removal; while Lady Hargreave, with her brother and Ralph, accompanied to Dursley all that remained of its lamented master. Margaret bore up with the stony stillness of despair throughout the trying journey. But as they entered the lodge gates, her hand involuntarily sought the hand of her brother.

At that moment, the favourite old dun mare, which, as the first ridden by his beloved Margaret at Dursley, had been turned out by her husband to end its days peacefully in the park, came neighing towards the road; and though half-blind with age, started on seeing the hearse, as animals instinctively do, at the approach of some unwonted object. As she stood there, startled and trembling, her rough mane

streaming on the rushing wind that moaned through the leafless avenues, a world of associations burst upon the brain of Lady Hargreave. She scarcely retained the use of her reason when, the solemn procession having reached the portico, the distracted woman was borne, wildly shrieking, into the house.

Since the occurrence of this lamentable event, a subject of general lamentation both in public and private life, more than two years have elapsed. But from the day of the funeral, Dursley Park has been shut up, and deserted. The family-mansion, still incomplete, rears its vast structure of white free-stone, amidst the beautiful woods adjoining Homerton, like a colossal grave-stone to the memory of the dead. But the town of R—— is indignant, and scarcely less so Sir Hurst and Lady Clitheroe, that Margaret and the executors of her husband's will, have declined to finish Dursley accord-

ing to the original plan, and convert it into a show-house for the idlers of the cathedral town; unless the ill-fated little Sir William Hargreave, who still survives,—deformed, disfigured and delicate,—should live to attain his majority, and desire to establish himself at the family seat.

At present, he resides with his mother and sister at Bardsel Tower, which was settled as a dower-house upon Lady Hargreave at her marriage; though rarely visited by her after the death of Aunt Martha, till it received her, a broken-hearted widow, under its sheltering roof. During the first twelve months of her afflicted state, the physician in constant attendance upon the disabled boy, entertained serious apprehensions concerning the fate of his mother. They feared both for her reason and her life. But as the sufferings of the son became alleviated, the health of Lady Hargreave gradually improved; and the affectionate care of her kind and judicious neighbours at Hargreen, as well as the un-

ceasing attendance of her attached brother, have done much towards her restoration. For some time past, though her widow's weeds and depressed air still continue to render more apparent the hollowness of her mournful eyes, and the slightness of her wasted figure, a trace sometimes appears of the beautiful Margaret of other days.

On the day when the second year of her widowhood was accomplished, William Mordaunt, now a prematurely grey-headed man, was forced, though reluctantly, to tender to her acceptance the proposals of Lord Fitzmorton; who, it appeared, had long entertained for her a preference which his good sense had enabled him to repress in due season. But the death of his mother, and establishment of his sister Lady Emily Fanshawe in Italy, had now rendered Morton Castle a less cheerful sojourn than of old; and fortunate indeed would he have felt himself could the object of his attachment and admiration have been tempted to re-

nounce her melancholy seclusion, and accept his coronet and hand.

But at the mere mention of his name, Lady Hargreave shuddered, as though the cold breath of the grave had chilled her heart.

“Tell him, dear brother,” she replied, “that I am grateful for his remembrance, and wish him a good and faithful wife. In *me*, he would marry one whose affections are in the grave, and whose every thought and wish are anchored *there!*” she continued, in a lower voice, pointing to the garden-chair, in which her loving, gentle, uncomplaining, sickly son was daily wheeled round the lawn, escorted by his kind sister. “My pride is humbled to the dust, William; but while it pleases God to spare me, I will fulfil my duties, and patiently endeavour to work out my atonement. Bring me, however, no more such messages; which would become the lips of my brother Mil-denhall, far better than your own.—Respect the memory of the friend we have lost.—My

children shall never know in me other than their father's widow. You, alone, dearest and best of brothers, may feel better disposed to cling to your poor Margaret under the name of the Dean's Daughter."

THE END.

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