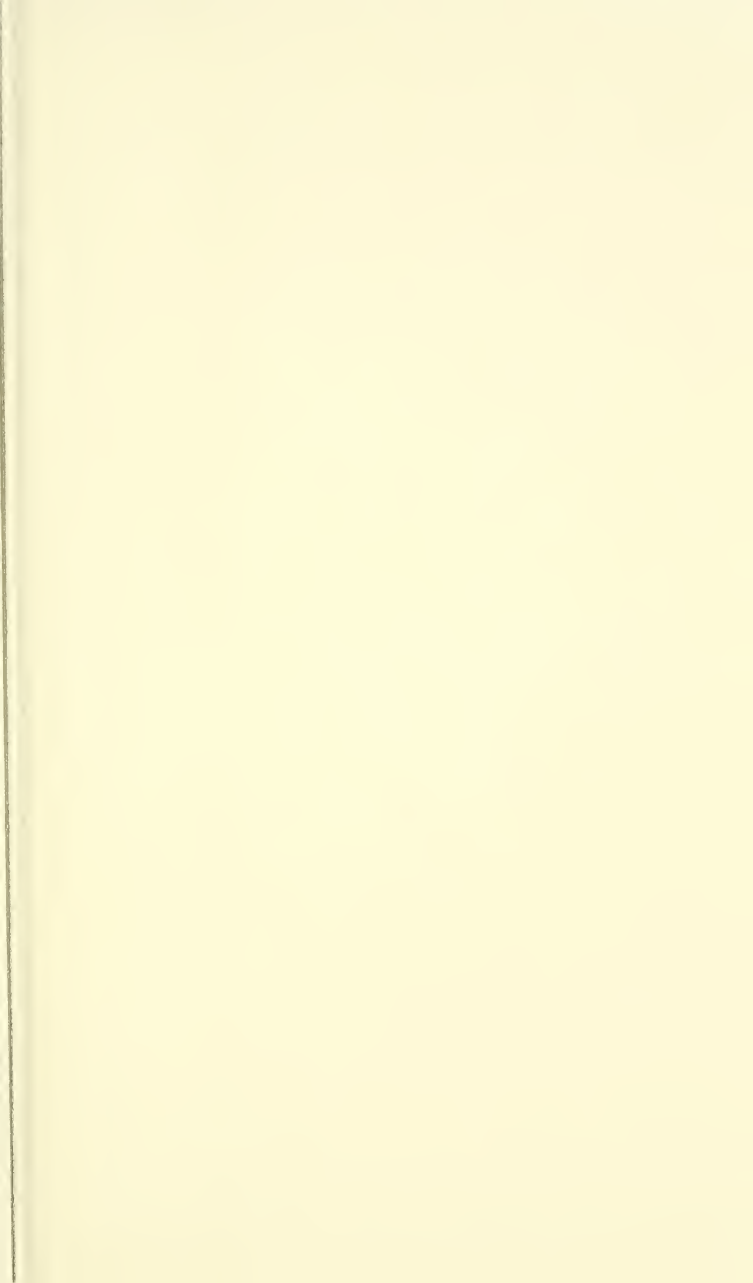
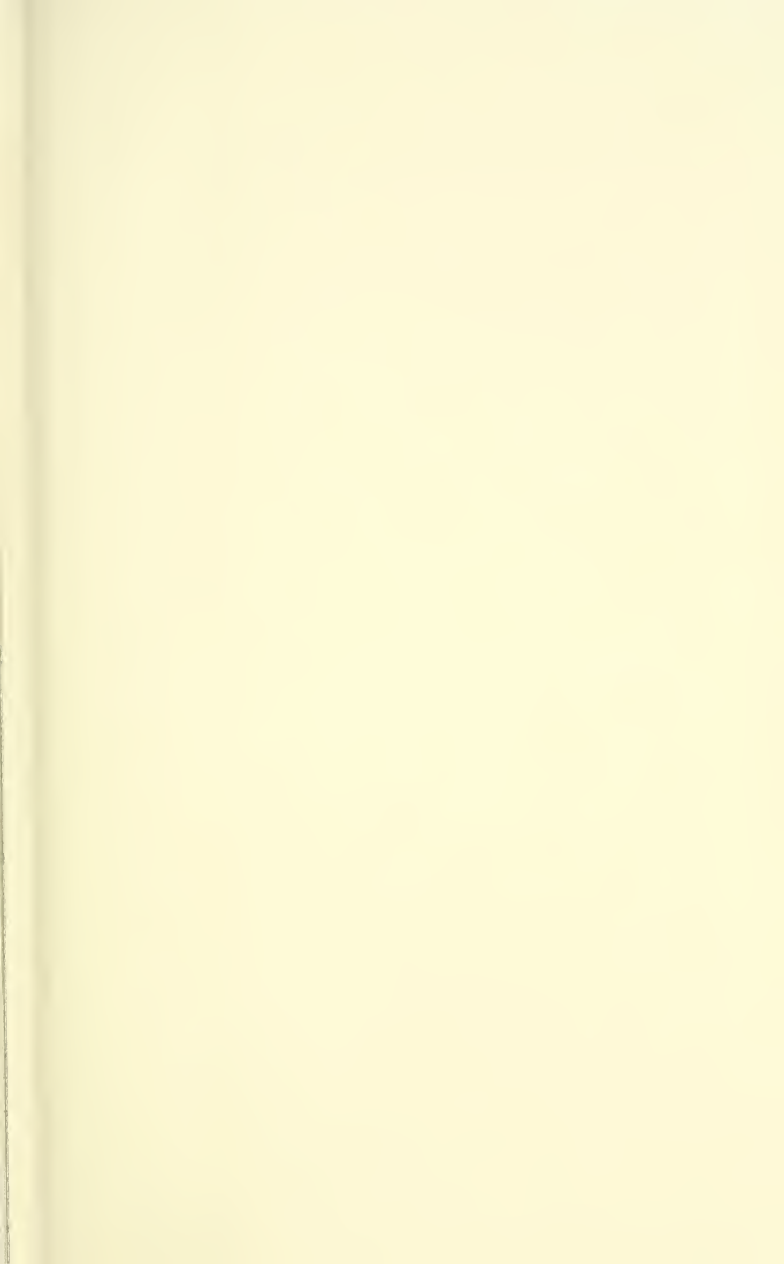


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EAST LYNN

BY

MRS. HENRY WOOD

CHICAGO

W. B. CONKEY COMPANY

FAMOUS FICTION
IN UNIFORM STYLE

JANE EYRE, by Charlotte Bronte
JOHN HALIFAX, by Mrs. Craik
LORNA DOONE, by R. D. Blackmor
EAST LYNNE, by Mrs. Wood
FIRST VIOLIN, by Jessie Fothergill
SCARLET LETTER, by Nathaniel Hawthorne
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SCOTTISH CHIEFS, by Jane Porter

CHICAGO
W. B. CONKEY COMPANY

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EAST LYNNE

CHAPTER I

THE LADY ISABEL

In an easy-chair of the spacious and handsome library of his town-house, sat William, Earl of Mount Severn. His hair was gray, the smoothness of his expansive brow was defaced by premature wrinkles, and his once attractive face bore the pale, unmistakable look of dissipation. One of his feet was cased in folds of linen, as it rested on the soft velvet ottoman, speaking of gout as plainly as any foot ever spoke yet. It would seem—to look at the man as he sat there—that he had grown old before his time. And so he had. His years were barely nine-and-forty, yet in all, save years, he was an aged man.

A noted character had been the Earl of Mount Severn. Not that he had been a renowned politician, or a great general, or an eminent statesman, or even an active member in the Upper House; not for any of these had the earl's name been in the mouths of men. But for the most reckless among the reckless, for the spendthrift among spendthrifts, for the gamester above all gamesters, and for a gay man outstripping the gay—by these characteristics did the world know Lord Mount Severn. It was said his faults were those of his head; that a better heart or a more generous spirit never beat in human form; and there was much truth in this. It had been well for him had he lived and died plain William Vane. Up to his five-and-twentieth year, he had been industrious and steady, had kept his terms in the Temple, and studied late

and early. The sober application of William Vane had been a by-word with the embryo barristers around; Judge Vane, they ironically called him, and they strove ineffectually to allure him away to idleness and pleasure. But young Vane was ambitious, and he knew that on his own talents and exertions must depend his own rising in the world. He was of excellent family, but poor, counting a relative in the old Earl of Mount Severn. The possibility of his succeeding to the earldom never occurred to him, for three healthy lives, two of them young, stood between him and the title. Yet those have died off, one of apoplexy, one of fever in Africa, the third boating at Oxford; and the young Temple student, William Vane, suddenly found himself Earl of Mount Severn, and the lawful possessor of sixty thousand a year.

His first idea was, that he should never be able to spend the money; that such a sum, year by year, could not be spent. It was a wonder his head was not turned by adulation at the onset, for he was courted, flattered and caressed by all classes, from a royal duke downward. He became the most attractive man of his day, the lion in society; for, independent of his newly-acquired wealth and title, he was of distinguished appearance and fascinating manners. But unfortunately, the prudence which had sustained William Vane, the poor law student, in his solitary Temple chambers, entirely forsook William Vane, the young Earl of Mount Severn, and he commenced his career on a scale of speed so great, that all staid people said he was going to ruin and the deuce headlong.

But a peer of the realm, and one whose rent-roll is sixty thousand per annum, does not go to ruin in a day. There sat the earl, in his library now, in his nine-and-fortieth year, and ruin had not come yet—that is, it had not overwhelmed him. But the embarrassments which had clung to him, and been the destruction of his tranquillity, the bane of his existence, who shall describe them? The public knew them pretty well, his private friends knew better, his creditors

best; but none, save himself, knew, or could ever know, the worrying torment that was his portion, well nigh driving him to distraction. Years ago, by dint of looking things steadily in the face, and by economizing, he might have retrieved his position; but he had done what most people do in such cases—put off the evil day *sine die*, and gone on increasing his enormous list of debts. The hour of exposure and ruin was now advancing fast.

Perhaps the earl himself was thinking so, as he sat there before an enormous mass of papers which strewed the library table. His thoughts were back in the past. That was a foolish match of his, that Gretna Green match for love, foolish so far as prudence went; but the countess had been an affectionate wife to him, had borne with his follies and his neglect, had been an admirable mother to their only child. One child alone had been theirs, and in her thirteenth year the countess had died. If they had but been blessed with a son—the earl groaned over the long continued disappointment still—he might have seen a way out of his difficulties. The boy, as soon as he was of age, would have joined with him in cutting off the entail, and—

“My lord,” said a servant, entering the room and interrupting the earl’s castles in the air, “a gentleman is asking to see you.”

“Who?” cried the earl, sharply, not perceiving the card the man was bringing. No unknown person, although wearing the externals of a foreign ambassador, was ever admitted unceremoniously to the presence of Lord Mount Severn. Years of duns had taught the servants caution.

“His card is here, my lord. It is Mr. Carlyle, of West Lynne.”

“Mr. Carlyle, of West Lynne,” groaned the earl, whose foot just then had an awful twinge, “what does he want? Show him up.” The servant did as he was bid, and introduced Mr. Carlyle. Look at the visitor well, reader, for he will play his part in this

history. He was a very tall man of seven-and-twenty, of remarkably noble presence. He was somewhat given to stooping his head when he spoke to any one shorter than himself; it was a peculiar habit, almost to be called a bowing habit, and his father had possessed it before him. When told of it he would laugh, and say he was unconscious of doing it. His features were good, his complexion was pale and clear, his hair dark and his full eyelids drooped over his deep gray eyes. Altogether it was a countenance that both men and women liked to look upon—the index of an honorable, sincere nature—not that it would have been called a handsome face, so much as a pleasing and distinguished one. Though but the son of a country lawyer, and destined to be a lawyer himself, he had received the training of a gentleman, had been educated at Rugby, and taken his degree at Oxford.) He advanced at once to the earl, in the straightforward way of a man of business—of a man who has come on business.

“Mr. Carlyle,” said the latter, holding out his hand—he was always deemed the most affable peer of the age—“I am happy to see you. You perceive I cannot rise, at least without great pain and inconvenience. My enemy, the gout, has possession of me again. Take a seat. Are you staying in town?”

“I have just arrived from West Lynne. The chief object of my journey was to see your lordship.”

“What can I do for you?” asked the earl, uneasily; for a suspicion now crossed his mind that Mr. Carlyle might be acting for some one of his many troublesome creditors.

Mr. Carlyle drew his chair nearer to the earl, and spoke in a low tone: “A rumor came to my ears, my lord, that East Lynne was in the market. If so, I should wish to be the purchaser. What does your lordship expect for it—at a rough estimate?”

“For particulars I must refer you to my men of business, Warburton & Ware. Not less than seventy thousand pounds.”

"Too much, my lord," cried Mr. Carlyle, decisively. "And that's not its value," returned the earl. "These forced sales never do fetch their value," answered the plain-speaking lawyer. "Until this hint was given me by Beauchamp, I had thought East Lynne was settled upon your lordship's daughter."

"There's nothing settled on her," rejoined the earl, the contraction on his brow standing out more plainly. "That comes of your thoughtless runaway marriages. I fell in love with General Conway's daughter, and she went away with me, like a fool; that is, we were both fools together for our pains. The general objected to me and said I must sow my wild oats before he would give me Mary; so I took her to Gretna Green, and she became Countess of Mount Severn, without a settlement. It was an unfortunate affair, taking one thing with another. When her elopement was made known to the general, it killed him."

"Killed him?" interrupted Mr. Carlyle

"It did. He had disease of the heart, and the excitement brought on the crisis. My poor wife never was happy from that hour; she blamed herself for her father's death; and I believe it led to her own. She was ill for years; the doctors called it consumption, but it was more like a wasting insensibly away, and consumption never had been in her family. No luck ever attends runaway marriages; I have noticed it since, in many—many instances; something bad is sure to turn up from it."

"There might have been a settlement executed after the marriage," observed Mr. Carlyle, for the earl had stopped, and seemed lost in thought. "I know there might, but there was not. My wife had possessed no fortune; I was already deep in my career of extravagance, and neither of us thought of making provision for our future children; or, if we thought of it, we did not do it. There is an old saying, Mr. Carlyle, that what may be done at any time is never done."

Mr. Carlyle bowed.

“So my child is portionless,” resumed the earl, with a suppressed sigh. “The thought that it may be an embarrassing thing for her, were I to die before she is settled in life, crosses my mind when I am in a serious mood. That she will marry well there is little doubt, for she possesses beauty in a rare degree, and has been reared as an English girl should be, not to frivolity and foppery. She was trained by her mother (who, save for the mad act she was persuaded into by me, was all goodness and refinement) for the first twelve years of her life, and since then by an admirable governess. No fear that she will be decamping to Gretna Green.”

“She was a very lovely child,” observed the lawyer; “I remember that.”

“Ay, you have seen her at East Lynne, in her mother’s lifetime. But to return to business. If you become the purchaser of the East Lynne estate, Mr. Carlyle, it must be under the rose. The money that it brings, after paying off the mortgage, I must have, as I tell you, for my private use; and you know I should not be able to touch a farthing of it if the confounded public got an inkling of the transfer. In the eyes of the world, the proprietor of East Lynne must be Lord Severn—at least for some little time afterward. Perhaps you will not object to that.”

Mr. Carlyle considered before replying, and then the conversation was resumed, when it was decided that he should see Warburton & Ware the first thing in the morning and confer with them. It was growing late when he rose to leave.

“Stay and dine with me,” said the earl. Mr. Carlyle hesitated, and looked down at his dress—a plain, gentlemanly, morning attire, but certainly not a dinner costume for a peer’s table.

“Oh, that’s nothing,” said the earl; “we shall be quite alone, except my daughter. Mrs. Vane, of Castle Marling, is staying with us. She came up to present my child at the last drawing-room, but I think I heard something about her dining out to-day. If

not, we will have it by ourselves here. Oblige me by touching the bell, Mr. Carlyle."

The servant entered. "Inquire whether Mrs. Vane dines at home," said the earl.

"Mrs. Vane dines out, my lord," was the man's immediate reply. "The carriage is at the door now."

"Very well. Mr. Carlyle remains." At seven o'clock the dinner was announced, and the earl wheeled into the adjoining room. As he and Mr. Carlyle entered it at one door, some one else came in by the opposite one. Who—what—was it? Mr. Carlyle looked, not quite sure whether it was a human being—he almost thought it more like an angel.

A light, graceful, girlish form, a face of surpassing beauty, beauty that is rarely seen, save from the imagination of a painter, dark shining curls falling on her neck and shoulders, smooth as a child's; fair, delicate arms decorated with pearls, and a flowing dress of costly white lace. Altogether the vision did indeed look to the lawyer as one from a fairer world than this.

"My daughter, Mr. Carlyle, the Lady Isabel."

They took their seats at the table. Lord Mount Severn at its head, in spite of his gout and his footstool. And the young lady and Mr. Carlyle opposite each other. Mr. Carlyle had not deemed himself a particular admirer of woman's beauty, but the extraordinary loveliness of the young girl before him nearly took away his senses and his self-possession. Yet it was not so much the perfect contour of the exquisite features that struck him, the rich damask of the delicate cheek, or the luxuriant falling hair; no, it was the sweet expression of the soft dark eyes. Never in his life had he seen eyes so pleasing. He could not keep his gaze from her, and he became conscious, as he grew more familiar with her face, that there was in its character a sad, sorrowful look; only at times was it to be noticed, when the features were in repose, and it lay chiefly in the very eyes he was admiring. Never does this unconsciously mournful expression exist but it is a sure index of sorrow and suffering;

but Mr. Carlyle understood it not. And who could connect sorrow with the anticipated brilliant future of Isabel Vane?

"Isabel," observed the earl, "you are dressed."

"Yes, papa. Not to keep old Mrs. Levison waiting tea. She likes to take it early, and I know Mrs. Vane must have kept her waiting dinner. It was half-past six when she drove from here."

"I hope you will not be late to-night, Isabel."

"It depends upon Mrs. Vane."

"Then I am sure you will be. When the young ladies in this fashionable world of ours turn night into day, it is a bad thing for their roses. What do you say, Mr. Carlyle?"

Mr. Carlyle glanced at the roses on the cheeks opposite to him; they looked too fresh and bright to fade lightly. At the conclusion of dinner a maid entered the room with a white cashmere mantle, placing it over the shoulders of her young lady, as she said the carriage was waiting.

Lady Isabel advanced to the earl. "Good-by, papa."

"Good-night, my love," he answered, drawing her toward him, and kissing her sweet face. "Tell Mrs. Vane I will not have you kept out till morning hours. You are but a child yet. Mr. Carlyle, will you ring? I am debarred from seeing my daughter to the carriage."

"If your lordship will allow me—if Lady Isabel will pardon the attendance of one little used to wait upon young ladies, I shall be proud to see her to her carriage," was the somewhat confused answer of Mr. Carlyle as he touched the bell.

The earl thanked him, and the young lady smiled, and Mr. Carlyle conducted her down the broad, lighted staircase, and stood bareheaded by the door of the luxurious chariot, and handed her in. She put out her hand in her frank, pleasant manner, as she wished him good-night. The carriage rolled on its way, and Mr. Carlyle returned to the earl. "Well, is she not a handsome girl?" he demanded. "Handsome is not

the word for beauty such as hers," was Mr. Carlyle's reply, in a low, warm tone. "I never saw a face half so beautiful."

"She caused quite a sensation at the drawing-room last week—as I hear. This everlasting gout kept me indoors all day. And she is as good as she is beautiful." Could the fate that was to overtake this child have been foreseen by the earl, he would have struck her down to death, in his love, as she stood before him, rather than suffer her to enter upon it.

CHAPTER II

THE BROKEN CROSS

Lady Isabel's carriage continued its way, and deposited her at the residence of Mrs. Levison. Mrs. Levison was nearly eighty years of age, and very severe in speech and manner, or, as Mrs. Vane expressed it, "crabbed." She looked the image of impatience when Isabel entered, with her cap pushed all awry, and pulling at her black satin gown, for Mrs. Vane had kept her waiting dinner, and Isabel was keeping her from her tea; and that does not agree with the aged, with their health or their temper.

"I fear I am late," exclaimed Lady Isabel, as she advanced to Mrs. Levison; "but a gentleman dined with papa to-day, and it made us rather longer at table."

"You are twenty-five minutes behind your time," cried the old lady sharply, "and I want my tea. Emma, order it in."

At that moment a young and elegant man lounged into the room. He was deemed handsome, with his clearly-cut features, his dark eyes, his raven hair, and his white teeth; but to a keen observer those features had not an attractive expression, and the dark eyes had a great knack of looking away while he spoke to you. It was Francis, Captain Levison.

He was grandson to the old lady, and first cousin to Mrs. Vane. Few men were so fascinating in manners (at times and seasons), in face, and in form; few men won so completely upon their hearers' ears, and few were so heartless in their heart of hearts. The world courted him, and society honored him; for, though he was a graceless spendthrift, and it was known that he was, he was the presumptive heir to the old and rich Sir Peter Levison.

The ancient lady spoke up: "Captain Levison, Lady Isabel Vane." They both acknowledged the introduction; and Isabel, a child yet in the way of the world, blushed crimson at the admiring looks cast upon her by the young guardsman. Strange—strange that she should make the acquaintance of those two men in the same day, almost in the same hour; the two, of all the human race, who were to exercise so powerful an influence over her future life!

When they adjourned to the ball-room it was to Isabel as an enchanting scene of dreamland, for her heart was in its spring-tide of early freshness, and the satiety of experience had not come.

"Halloo!" cried an Oxford student, with a long rent-roll in prospective, who was screwing himself against the wall, not to be in the way of the waltzers, "I thought you had given up coming to these places?"

"So I had," replied the fast nobleman addressed, the son of a marquis. "But I am on the lookout, so am forced into them again. I think a ball-room the greatest bore in life."

"On the lookout for what?"

"For a wife. My governor has stopped supplies, and has vowed by his beard not to advance another shilling, or pay a debt, till I reform. As a preliminary step toward it, he insists upon a wife, and I am trying to choose one, for I am deeper in debt than you imagine."

"Take the new beauty, then."

"Who is she?"

"Lady Isabel Vane."

"Much obliged for the suggestion," replied the earl. "But one likes a respectable father-in-law, and Mount Severn is going to smash. He and I are too much in the same line, and might clash in the long run."

"One can't have everything; the girl's beauty is beyond common. I saw that rake, Levison, make up to her. He fancies he can carry all before him, where women are concerned."

"So he does, often," was his quiet reply.

"I hate the fellow! He thinks so much of himself, with his curled hair and shining white teeth; and he's as heartless as an owl. What was that hushed-up business about Miss Charteris?"

"Who's to know? Levison slipped out of the escapade like an eel, and the women protested that he was more sinned against than sinning. Three-fourths of the world believed them."

"And she went abroad and died; and Levison—here he comes! And Mount Severn's daughter with him." They were approaching at that moment, Francis Levison and Lady Isabel. He was expressing his regret at the untoward accident of the cross for the tenth time that night. "I feel that it can never be atoned for," whispered he; "that the heartfelt homage of my whole life would not be sufficient compensation."

He spoke in a tone of thrilling gentleness gratifying to the ear, but dangerous to the heart. Lady Isabel glanced up and caught his eyes gazing upon her with the deepest tenderness—a language hers had never yet encountered. A vivid blush again rose to her cheek, her eyelids fell, and her timid words died away in silence.

"Take care, take care, my young Lady Isabel," murmured the Oxonian under his breath, as they passed him, "that man is as false as he is fair."

"I think he is a rascal," remarked the earl.

"I know he is; I know a thing or two about him. He would ruin her heart for the renown of the exploit.

because she's a beauty, and then fling it away broken. He has none to give in return for the gift."

"Just as much as my new race-horse has," concluded the earl. "She is very beautiful."

CHAPTER III

BARBARA HARE

West Lynne was a town of some importance, particularly in its own eyes, though, being neither a manufacturing one nor a cathedral one, nor even the chief town of the county, it was somewhat primitive in its manners and customs. Passing out at the town, toward the east, you come upon several detached gentlemen's houses, in the vicinity of which stood the church of St. Jude, which was more aristocratic (in the matter of its congregation) than the other churches of West Lynne. For about a mile these houses were scattered, the church being situated at their commencement, close to the busy part of the place, and about a mile farther on you came upon the beautiful estate which was called East Lynne.

Between the gentleman's house mentioned and East Lynne, the mile of road was very solitary, being much overshadowed with trees. One house stood there, and that was three-quarters of a mile before you came to East Lynne. It was on the left side, a square, ugly, red brick house with a weather-cock on the top, standing some little distance from the road. This place was called the Grove, and was the property and residence of Richard Hare, Esq., commonly called Mr. Justice Hare.

Justice and Mrs. Hare had three children, a son and two daughters. Annie was the elder of the girls, and had married young; Barbara, the younger, was now nineteen, and Richard, the eldest—but we shall come to him hereafter.

In this sitting-room, on a chilly evening, early in

May, a few days subsequent to that which had witnessed the visit of Mr. Carlyle to the Earl of Mount Severn, sat Mrs. Hare, a pale, delicate woman, buried in shawls and cushions; but the day had been warm. At the window sat a pretty girl, very fair, with blue eyes, light hair, a bright complexion, and small aquiline features. She was listlessly turning over the leaves of a book.

"Barbara, I am so thirsty," said Mrs. Hare. "If seven o'clock would but strike! I am dying for my tea."

It may occur to the reader that a lady in her own house "dying for her tea," might surely order it brought in, although the customary hour had not struck. Not so Mrs. Hare. Since her husband had first brought her home to that house, four-and-twenty years ago, she had never dared to express a will in it; scarcely, on her own responsibility, to give an order. Justice Hare was stern, imperative, obstinate, and self-conceited; she, timid, gentle, and submissive. She had loved him with all her heart, and her life had been one long yielding of her will to his; in fact, she had no will; his was all in all. Far was she from feeling the servitude a yoke; some natures do not; and to do Mr. Hare justice, his powerful will, that must bear down all before it, was in fault, not his kindness; he never meant to be unkind to his wife. Of his three children, Barbara alone had inherited his will.

"Here comes papa," said Barbara presently. "Oh, I am so glad," cried poor Mrs. Hare. "Perhaps he will not mind having the tea in at once, if I tell him how thirsty I am." The justice came in. A middle-sized man, with pompous features, a pompous walk, and a flaxen wig. In his aquiline nose, compressed lips, and pointed chin, might be traced a resemblance to his daughter; though he never could have been half so good-looking as was pretty Barbara.

"Richard," spoke up Mrs. Hare, from between her shawls, the instant he opened the door.

"Well?"

"Would you please let me have the tea in now? Would you very much mind taking it a little earlier this evening? I am feverish again, and my tongue is so parched I don't know how to speak."

"Oh, it's near seven; you won't have long to wait."

With this exceedingly gracious answer to an invalid's request, Mr. Hare quitted the room again, and banged the door! He had not spoken unkindly or roughly, simply with indifference. But ere Mrs. Hare's meek sigh of disappointment was over, the door was re-opened, and the flaxen wig thrust in again.

"I don't mind if I do have it now. It will be a fine moonlight night, and I am going with Pinner as far as Beauchamp's to smoke a pipe. Order it in, Barbara." The tea was made and partaken of, and the justice departed for Mr. Beauchamp's, Squire Pinner calling for him at the gate. Mr. Beauchamp was a gentleman who farmed a great deal of land, and who was also Lord Mount Severn's agent, or steward for East Lynne. He lived higher up the road, some little distance beyond East Lynne.

"When will he come home?" murmured Barbara, as she leaned her head upon the gate. "Oh, what would life be without him? How miserable these few days have been! I wonder what took him there! I wonder what is detaining him! Corney said he was only gone for a day."

The faint echo of footsteps in the distance stole upon her ear, and Barbara drew a little back, and hid herself under the shelter of the trees, not choosing to be seen by any stray passer-by. But, as they drew near, a sudden change came over her; her eyes lighted up, her cheeks were dyed with crimson, and her veins tingled with excess of rapture—for she knew those footsteps, and loved them, only too well.

Cautiously peeping over the gate again, she looked down the road. A tall form, whose very height and strength bore a grace of which its owner was unconscious, was advancing rapidly toward her from the

direction of West Lynne. Again she shrank away: true love is ever timid: and whatever may have been Barbara Hare's other qualities, her love at least was true and deep. But, instead of the gate opening with the firm, quick motion peculiar to the hand which guided it, the footsteps seemed to pass, and not to have turned at all toward it. Barbara's heart sank, and she stole to the gate again, and looked out with a yearning look.

Yes, sure enough, he was striding on, not thinking of her, not coming to her, and she, in the disappointment and impulse of the moment, called to him: "Archibald!" Mr. Carlyle—it was no other—turned on his heel, and approached the gate. "Is it you, Barbara? Watching for thieves and poachers? How are you?"

"How are you?" she returned, holding the gate open for him to enter, as he shook hands, and striving to calm down her agitation. "When did you return?"

"Only now, by the eight-o'clock train, which got beyond its time, having drawled unpardonably at the stations. They little thought they had me in it, as their looks betrayed when I got out. I have not been home yet."

"No! what will Cornelia say?"

"I went into the office for five minutes. But I have a few words to say to Beauchamp, and am going up at once. Thank you, I cannot come in now; I intend to do so on my return."

"Papa has gone up to Mr. Beauchamp's."

"Mr. Hare! Has he?"

"He and Squire Pinner," continued Barbara. "They have gone to have a smoking bout. And if you wait there with papa, it will be too late to come in, for he is sure not to be home before eleven or twelve." Mr. Carlyle bent his head in deliberation. "Then I think it is of little use my going on," said he, "for my business with Beauchamp is private. I must defer it until to-morrow.

He took the gate out of her hand, closed it, and

placed the hand within his own arm, to walk with her to the house. It was done in a matter-of-fact, real sort of way; nothing of romance or sentiment hallowed it, but Barbara Hare felt that she was in Eden.

"I've brought something for you," he said, as he proceeded to search his pockets. Every pocket was visited, apparently in vain.

"Barbara, I think it is gone. I must have lost it somehow." But, upon a second search, he came upon something in the pocket of his coat-tail. "Here it is, I believe; what brought it there?" He opened a small box, and taking out a long, gold chain, threw it around her neck. A locket was attached to it. The crimson went and came on her cheeks; her heart beat more rapidly. She could not speak a word of thanks.

"What a beautiful chain!" muttered Mrs. Hare, in surprise. "Archibald, you are too good, too generous! This must have cost a great deal; this is beyond a trifle."

"Nonsense!" laughed Mr. Carlyle. "You see the London shopman brought forth some lockets, and enlarged upon their convenience for holding deceased relatives' hair, not to speak of sweethearts, until I told him he might attach one. I thought it might hold that piece of hair you prize, Barbara," he concluded, dropping his voice.

"What piece?" asked Mrs. Hare.

Mr. Carlyle glanced round the room, as if fearful the very walls might hear his whisper. "Richard's; Barbara showed it me one day when she was turning out her desk, and said it was a curl taken off in that illness."

Mrs. Hare sank back in her chair, and hid her face in her hands, shivering visibly. The words evidently awoke some poignant source of deep sorrow. "Oh, my boy! my boy!" she wailed—"my boy; my unhappy boy! Mr. Hare wonders at my ill-health, Archibald; Barbara ridicules it; but there lies the source of all my misery, mental and bodily. Oh, Richard! Richard!"

There was a distressing pause, for the topic admitted of neither hope nor consolation. "Put your chain on again, Barbara," Mr. Carlyle said, after a while, "and I wish you health to wear it out. Health and reformation, young lady!"

Barbara smiled and glanced at him with her pretty blue eyes, so full of love. When he rose to go, Barbara accompanied him to the gate. "I think your mother looks unusually ill," said Mr. Carlyle.

"You know how she suffers a little thing to upset her; and last night she had what she calls one of her dreams," answered Barbara. "She says that it is a warning that something bad is going to happen, and she has been in the most unhappy, feverish state possible all day. Papa has been quite angry over her being so weak and nervous, declaring that she ought to rouse herself out of her 'nerves.' Of course we dare not tell him about the dream."

"It related to—the——"

Mr. Carlyle stopped, and Barbara glanced round with a shudder, and drew closer to him as she whispered. He had not given her his arm this time.

"Yes, to the murder. You know mamma has always declared that Bethel had something to do with it; she says her dreams would have convinced her of it, if nothing else did; and she dreamt she saw him with—you know."

"Hallijohn?" whispered Mr. Carlyle.

"With Hallijohn," assented Barbara, with a shiver. "He was standing over him, as he lay on the floor, just as he did lay on it. And that wretched Afy was standing at the end of the kitchen, looking on."

"But Mrs. Hare ought not to suffer dreams to disturb her peace by day," remonstrated Mr. Carlyle. "It is not to be wondered at that she dreams of the murder, because she is always dwelling upon it; but she should strive and throw the feeling from her with the night."

"You know what mamma is. Of course she ought to do so, but she does not. Papa wonders what makes

her get up so ill and trembling of a morning; and mamma has to make all sorts of evasive excuses; for not a hint, as you are aware, must be breathed to him about the murder."

Mr. Carlyle gravely nodded.

"Mamma does so harp upon Bethel. And I know this dream arose from nothing in the world but because she saw him pass the gate yesterday. Not that she thinks it was he who did it; unfortunately, there is no room for that; but she will persist that he had a hand in it some way, and he haunts her dreams."

They reached the gate, and Mr. Carlyle was about to pass out of it when Barbara laid her hand on his arm to detain him, and spoke in a timid voice: "Archibald!"

"What is it?"

"I have not said a word of thanks to you for this," she said, touching the chain and locket; "my tongue seemed tied. Do not deem me ungrateful."

"You foolish girl! it is not worth any thanks. There! now I am paid. Good-night, Barbara."

He had bent down and kissed her cheek, swung through the gate, laughing, and strode away. "Don't say I never gave you anything," he turned his head round to say, "Good-night."

All her veins were tingling, all her pulses beating; her heart was throbbing with its sense of bliss. He had never kissed her, that she could remember, since she was a child. And when she returned indoors, her spirits were so extravagantly high that Mrs. Hare wondered.

"Ring for the lamp, Barbara, and you can get to your work. But don't have the shutters closed; I like to look out on these light nights."

Barbara, however, did not get to her work; she also, perhaps, liked "looking out on a light night," for she sat down at the window. She was living the last half hour over again. "'Don't say I never gave you anything,'" she murmured; "did he allude to the chain

or to the—kiss? Oh, Archibald, why don't you say that you love me?"

Mr. Carlyle had been all his life upon intimate terms with the Hare family. His father's first wife—for the late lawyer Carlyle had been twice married—had been a cousin of Justice Hare's, and this had caused them to be much together. Archibald, the child of the second Mrs. Carlyle, had alternately teased and petted Anne and Barbara Hare, boy fashion. Sometimes he quarreled with the pretty little girls, sometimes he caressed them, as he would have done had they been his sisters; and he made no scruple of declaring publicly to the pair that Anne was his favorite. A gentle, yielding girl she was, like her mother; whereas Barbara displayed her own will, and it sometimes clashed with young Carlyle's.

Suddenly she started. What was that at the far end of the lawn, just in advance of the shade of the thick trees? Their leaves were not causing the movement, for it was a still night. It had been there some minutes; it was evidently a human form. What was it? Surely it was making signs to her!

Barbara Hare turned sick with utter terror. She must fathom it; she must see who and what it was; for the servants she dared not call, and those movements were imperative, and might not be disregarded. But she possessed more innate courage than falls to the lot of some young ladies.

"Mamma," she said, returning to the parlor and catching up her shawl, while striving to speak without emotion, "I shall just walk down the path, and see if papa is coming."

CHAPTER IV

THE MOONLIGHT INTERVIEW

Cold and still looked the old house in the moonbeams. Never was the moon brighter; it lighted the far-stretching garden, it illuminated even the weathercock aloft, it shone upon the trees and upon one who stood out from the shadow beckoning in it. "Who and what are you?" she asked, under her breath. "What do you want?"

"Barbara," was the whispered, eager answer, "don't you recognize me?" Too surely she did—the voice at any rate—and a cry escaped her, telling more of sorrow than of joy, though betraying both. She penetrated the trees, and burst into tears as one in the dress of a farm laborer caught her in his arms. In spite of his smock-frock, and his straw-wisped hat, and his false whiskers, black as Erebus, she knew him for her brother.

"Oh, Richard! where have you come from? What brings you here?"

"Did you know me, Barbara?" was the rejoinder.

"How was it likely—in this disguise? A thought crossed my mind that it might be some one from you, and even that made me sick with terror. How could you run such a risk as to come here?" she added, wringing her hands. "If you are discovered, it is certain death; death—upon—you know!"

"Upon the gibbet," returned Richard Hare. "I do know it, Barbara."

"Then why risk it? Should mamma see you it will kill her outright."

"I can't live on as I have been living," he answered, gloomily. "I have been working in London ever since——"

"In London!" interrupted Barbara.

"In London, and have never stirred out of it. But it is hard work for me, and now I have an opportunity of doing better, if I can get a little money. Perhaps my mother can let me have it; it is what I have come to ask for."

"How are you working? What at?"

"In a stable-yard."

"A stable-yard!" she uttered, in a deeply shocked tone. "Richard!"

"Did you expect it would be as a merchant, or a banker, or perhaps as secretary to one of her majesty's ministers—or that I was a gentleman at large, living on my fortune?" retorted Richard Hare, in a tone of chafed anguish, painful to hear. "I get twelve shillings a week, and that has to find me in everything."

"Poor Richard! poor Richard!" she wailed, caressing his hand and weeping over it. "Oh, what a miserable night's work that was! Our only comfort is, Richard, that you must have committed the deed in madness."

"I did not commit it at all," he replied.

"What!" she exclaimed.

"Barbara, I swear that I am innocent; I swear I was not present when the man was murdered; I swear that, from my own positive knowledge, my eyesight, I know no more who did it than you. The guessing at it is enough for me; and my guess is as sure and true a one as that the moon is in the heavens."

Barbara shivered as she drew close to him. It was a shivering subject. "You surely do not mean to throw the guilt on Bethel?"

"Bethel!" slightly returned Richard Hare. "He had nothing to do with it. He was after his gins and his snares, that night, though, poacher as he is!"

"Bethel is no poacher, Richard."

"Is he not?" returned Richard Hare, significantly. "The truth as to what he is may come out, some time. Not that I wish it to come out; the man has done no harm to me, and he may go on poaching with impunity till doomsday for all I care. He and Locksley——"

"Richard," interrupted his sister, in a hushed voice, "mamma entertains one fixed idea, which she cannot put from her. She is certain that Bethel had something to do with the murder."

"Then she is wrong. Why should she think so?"

"How the conviction arose at first, I cannot tell you; I do not think she knows herself. But you remember how weak and fanciful she is, and since that dreadful night she is always having what she calls 'dreams'—meaning that she dreams of the murder. In all these dreams Bethel is prominent; and she says she feels an absolute certainty that he was, in some way or other, mixed up in it."

"Barbara, he was no more mixed up in it than you."

"And—you say you were not?"

"I was not even at the cottage at the time; I swear it to you. The man who did the deed was Thorn."

"Thorn!" echoed Barbara, lifting her head. "Who is Thorn?"

"I don't know who. I wish I did; I wish I could unearth him. He was a friend of Afy's."

Barbara threw back her head with a haughty gesture. "Richard!"

"What!"

"You forget yourself when you mention that name to me."

"Well," returned Richard, "it was not to discuss these things that I put myself in jeopardy; and to assert my innocence can do no good; it cannot set aside the coroner's verdict of 'Wilful murder against Richard Hare, the younger.' Is my father as bitter against me as ever?"

"Quite. He never mentions your name, or suffers it to be mentioned; he gave orders to the servants that it never was to be spoken in the house again. Eliza could not, or would not remember, and she persisted in calling your room 'Mr. Richard's.' I think the woman did it heedlessly, not maliciously, to provoke papa; she was a good servant, and had been with us three years, you know. The first time she trans-

gressed, papa warned her; the second, he thundered at her as I believe nobody else in the world can thunder; and the third, he turned her from the doors, never allowing her to get her bonnet, one of the others carrying her bonnet and shawl to the gate, and her boxes were sent away the same day. Papa took an oath that—did you hear of it?"

"What oath? He takes many."

"This was a solemn one, Richard. After the delivery of the verdict, he took an oath in the justice-room, in the presence of his brother magistrates, that if he could find you he would deliver you up to justice, and that he would do it, though you might not turn up for ten years to come. You know his disposition, Richard, and therefore may be sure he will keep it. Indeed, it is most dangerous for you to be here."

"I know that he never treated me as he ought," cried Richard, bitterly. "If my health was delicate, causing my poor mother to indulge me, ought that to have been a reason for his ridiculing me on every possible occasion, public and private? Had my home been made happier I should not have sought the society I did elsewhere. Barbara, I must be allowed an interview with my mother." Barbara Hare reflected before she spoke. "I do not see how it could be managed."

"Why can't she come out to me as you have done? Is she up, or in bed?"

"It is impossible to think of it to-night," returned Barbara, in an alarmed tone. "Papa may be in at any moment; he is spending the evening at Beauchamp's."

"It is hard to have been separated from her eighteen months, and to go back without seeing her," returned Richard. "And about the money? It is a hundred pounds that I want."

"You must be here again to-morrow night, Richard; the money, no doubt, can be yours, but I am not so sure about your seeing mamma. I am terrified for your safety. But, if it is as you say, that you are

innocent," she added, after a pause, "could it not be proved?"

"Who is to prove it? The evidence is strong against me; and Thorn, did I mention him, would be as a myth to other people; nobody knew anything of him."

"Is he a myth?" said Barbara, in a low tone.

"Are you and I myths?" retorted Richard. "So, even you doubt me?"

"Richard," she suddenly exclaimed, "why not tell the whole circumstances to Archibald Carlyle? If any one can help you, or take measures to establish your innocence, he can. And you know that he is true as steel."

"There is no other man living should be trusted with the secret that I am here, except Carlyle. Where is it supposed that I am, Barbara?"

"Some think that you are dead; some that you are in Australia; the very uncertainty has nearly killed mamma. A report arose that you had been seen at Liverpool, in an Australian-bound ship, but we could not trace it to any foundation."

"It had none. I dodged my way to London and there I have been."

"Working in a stable-yard?"

"I could do no better. I was not brought up to anything, and I did understand horses. Besides, a man that the police-runners were after could be more safe in obscurity, considering that he was a gentleman, than——"

Barbara turned suddenly, and placed her hand upon her brother's mouth. "Be silent for your life," she whispered, "here's papa." Voices were heard approaching the gate—those of Justice Hare and Squire Pinner. The latter walked on; the former came in. The brother and sister covered together, scarcely daring to breathe; you might have heard Barbara's heart beating. Mr. Hare closed the gate, and walked on, up the path.

"I must go, Richard," said Barbara, hastily; "I dare not stay another minute. Be here again to-mor-

row night, and meanwhile I will see what can be done."

She was speeding away, but Richard held her back. "You did not seem to believe my assertion of innocence. Barbara, we are here alone in the still night, with God above us; as truly as that you and I must some time meet Him face to face, I told you the truth. It was Thorn murdered Hallijohn, and I had nothing whatever to do with it."

Barbara broke out of the trees and flew along.

CHAPTER V

MR. CARLYLE'S OFFICE

In the center of West Lynne stood two houses adjoining each other, one large, the other much smaller. The large one was the Carlyle residence, and the small one was devoted to the Carlyle offices. The name of Carlyle bore a lofty standing in the country; Carlyle & Davidson were known as first-class practitioners; no pettifogging lawyers were they. It was Carlyle & Davidson in the days gone by; now it was Archibald Carlyle. The old firm were brothers-in-law—the first Mrs. Carlyle having been Mr. Davidson's sister. She had died and left one child, Cornelia, who was grown up when her father married again. The second Mrs. Carlyle died when her son was born—Archibald; and his half sister reared him, loved him and ruled him. She bore for him all the authority of a mother; the boy had known no other, and, when a little child, he had called her Mammy Corny. Mammy Corny had done her duty by him, that was undoubted; but Mammy Corny had never relaxed her rule; with an iron hand she liked to rule him now, in great things as in small, just as she had done in the days of his babyhood. And Archibald generally submitted, for the force of habit is strong. She was a woman of strong sense, but, in some things, weak of judgment; and the ruling passions of her life were love of Archi-

bald and love of saving money. Mr. Davidson had died earlier than Mr. Carlyle, and his fortune—he had never married—was left equally divided between Cornelia and Archibald. Archibald was no blood relation to him, but he loved the open-hearted boy better than his niece Cornelia. Of Mr. Carlyle's property, a small portion only was bequeathed to his daughter, the rest to his son; and in this, perhaps, there was justice, since the £20,000 brought to Mr. Carlyle by his second wife had been chiefly instrumental in the accumulation of his large fortune.

Mr. Carlyle was seated in his own private room in his office the morning after his return from town. His confidential clerk and manager stood near him. It was Mr. Dill, a little, meek-looking man with a bald head. He was sitting at his desk this same morning, when the door timidly opened, and the pretty face of Barbara Hare appeared at it, rosy with blushes.

"Can I see Mr. Carlyle? I am here on some private business for mamma, who was not well enough to come herself. It is a little private matter that she does not wish papa to know of."

"Child," answered the manager, "a lawyer receives visits from many people; and it is not the place of those about him to 'think.'"

He opened the door as he spoke, ushered her into the presence of Mr. Carlyle, and left her. The latter rose in astonishment. "You must regard me as a client, and pardon my intrusion," said Barbara, with a forced laugh, to hide her agitation. "I have a strange thing to tell you, but—is it impossible that any one can hear us?" she broke off with a look of dread. "It would be—it might be—death!"

"It is quite impossible," calmly replied Mr. Carlyle. "The doors are double doors."

"Richard is here!"

"Richard!" repeated Mr. Carlyle. "At West Lynne!"

"He appeared at the house last night in disguise, and made signs to me from the grove of trees. You

may imagine my alarm. He has been in London all this while, half-starving, working—I feel ashamed to mention it to you—in a stable-yard. And, oh, Archibald! he says he is innocent, and that the person who really did it was a man of the name of Thorn.”

“What Thorn?” asked Mr. Carlyle, suppressing all signs of incredulity.

“I don’t know, a friend of Afy, he said. Archibald, he swore to it in the most solemn manner; and I believe, as truly as that I am now repeating it to you, that he was speaking the truth. I want you to see Richard, if possible; he is coming to the same place to-night. If he can tell his own tale to you, perhaps you may find out a way by which his innocence may be made manifest. You are so clever, you can do anything.”

Mr. Carlyle smiled. “Not quite anything, Barbara. Was this the purport of Richard’s visit—to say this?”

“Oh, no! He thinks it is of no use to say it, for nobody would believe him against the evidence. He came to ask for a hundred pounds; he says he has an opportunity of doing better, if he can have that sum. Mamma has sent me to you; she has not the money by her, and she dare not ask papa for it, as it is for Richard. She bade me say that if you will kindly oblige her with the money to-day, she will arrange with you about the repayment.”

“Do you want it now?” asked Mr. Carlyle. “If so, I must send to the bank. Dill never keeps much money in the house when I’m away.”

“Not until evening. Can you manage to see Richard?”

“It is hazardous,” mused Mr. Carlyle; “for him, I mean. Still, if he is to be in the grove to-night, I may as well be there also. What disguise is he in?”

“A farm laborer’s, the best he could adopt about here, with large black whiskers. He is stopping about three miles off, he said, in some obscure hiding-place. And now,” continued Barbara, “I want you

to advise me; had I better inform mamma that Richard is here, or not?"

Mr. Carlyle did not understand, and said so.

"I declare I am bewildered," she exclaimed. "I should have premised that I have not yet told mamma it is Richard himself who is here, but that he has sent a messenger to beg for this money. Would it be advisable to acquaint her?"

"Why should you not? I think you ought to do so."

"Then I will; I was fearing the hazard, for she is sure to insist upon seeing him. Richard also wishes for an interview."

"It is only natural. Mrs. Hare must be thankful to hear, so far, that he is safe."

"I never saw anything like it," returned Barbara; "the change is akin to magic; she says it has put life into her anew."

As Barbara left the office, something large loomed down upon her, like a ship in full sail.

She must have been the tallest lady in the world—out of a caravan. A fine woman in her day, but angular and bony now. Still, in spite of the angles and the bones, there was majesty in the appearance of Miss Carlyle.

"Why—what on earth," began she, "have you been with Archibald for?"

Barbara Hare, wishing Miss Carlyle over in Asia, stammered out the excuse she had given Mr. Dill.

"Your mamma sent you on business! I never heard of such a thing. Twice have I been to see Archibald, and twice did Dill answer that he was engaged and must not be interrupted. I shall make old Dill explain his meaning for observing a mystery over it to me."

"There is no mystery," answered Barbara, feeling quite sick lest Miss Carlyle should proclaim there was, before the clerks, or her father. "Mamma wanted Mr. Carlyle's opinion upon a little private business, and not feeling well enough to come herself, she sent me."

Miss Carlyle went straight to her brother. "I

should like to know what you and Barbara do with a secret between you," she demanded. Mr. Carlyle knew her and her resolute expression well, and he took his course to tell her the truth.

Mr. Carlyle bent forward and spoke in a whisper. "I will tell you if you wish, Cornelia, but it is not a pleasant thing to hear. Richard Hare has returned."

Miss Carlyle looked perfectly aghast. "Richard Hare! Is he mad?"

"It is not a very sane proceeding. He wants money from his mother, and Mrs. Hare sent Barbara to ask me to manage it for her. No wonder poor Barbara was flurried and nervous, for there's danger on all sides."

"Is he at their house?"

"How could he be there and his father in it? He is hiding two or three miles off, disguised as a laborer, and will be at the Grove to-night to receive this money. I have invited the justices to get Mr. Hare safe away from his own house. If he saw Richard he would undoubtedly give him up to justice, and—putting graver considerations aside—that would be pleasant neither for you nor for me. To have a connection gibbeted for a willful murder would be an ugly blot on the Carlyle escutcheon, Cornelia."

Miss Carlyle sat in silence revolving the news, a contraction on her ample brow. "And now you know all, Cornelia, and I do beg you to leave me, for I am overwhelmed with work to-day."

CHAPTER VI

RICHARD HARE, THE YOUNGER

The bench of justices met by appointment at seven o'clock at Miss Carlyle's, one following closely upon the heels of another. The reader may dissent from the expression, "Miss Carlyle's," but it is the correct one, for the house was hers, not her brother's; though it remained his home, as it had been in his father's

time, the home was among the property bequeathed to Miss Carlyle.

At eight o'clock a servant entered the room and addressed his master.

Mr. Carlyle rose, and came back with an open note in his hand.

"I am sorry to find that I must leave you for half an hour; some important business has arisen, but I will be back as soon as I can."

"Who has sent for you?" immediately demanded Miss Corny.

He gave her a quiet look, which she interpreted into a warning not to question. "Mr. Dill is here, and will join you to talk the affair over," he said to his guests. "He knows the law better than I do; but I will not be long."

He quitted his house, and walked with a rapid step toward the Grove. The moon was bright, as on the previous evening. After he had left the town behind him, and was passing the scattered villas already mentioned, he cast an involuntary glance at the wood, which rose behind them on his left hand. It was called Abbey Wood, from the circumstance that in old days an abbey had stood in its vicinity, all traces of which, save tradition, had passed away. There was one small house or cottage, just within the wood, and in that cottage had occurred the murder for which Richard Hare's life was in jeopardy. It was no longer occupied, for nobody would rent it or live in it.

Mr. Carlyle opened the gate of the Grove, and glanced at the trees on either side of him, but he neither saw nor heard any signs of Richard's being concealed there. Barbara was at the window, looking out, and she came herself and opened the door to Mr. Carlyle.

"Mamma is in the most excited state," she whispered to him as he entered. "I knew how it would be."

"Has he come yet?"

"I have no doubt of it; but he has made no signal"

Mrs. Hare, feverish and agitated, with a burning spot on her delicate cheeks, stood by the chair, not occupying it. Mr. Carlyle placed a pocketbook in her hands. "I have brought it chiefly in notes," he said; "they will be easier for him to carry than gold."

Mrs. Hare answered only by a look of gratitude, and clasped Mr. Carlyle's hand in both hers. "Archibald, I must see my boy; how can it be managed? Must I go into the garden to him, or may he come in here?"

"I think he might come in; you know how very bad the night air is for you. Are the servants much astir this evening?"

"Things seemed to have turned out quite kindly," spoke up Barbara. "It happens to be Annie's birthday, so mamma sent me just now into the kitchen with a cake and a bottle of wine, desiring them to drink her health. I shut the door and told them to make themselves comfortable; that if we wanted anything we would ring."

"Then they are safe," observed Mr. Carlyle, "and Richard may come in."

"I will go and ascertain whether he is come," said Barbara.

"Stay where you are, Barbara; I will go myself," interposed Mr. Carlyle. "Have the door open when you see us coming up the path." Barbara gave a faint cry, and, trembling, clutched the arm of Mr. Carlyle. "There he is! See! standing out from the trees, just opposite this window."

Mr. Carlyle turned to Mrs. Hare. "I shall not bring him in immediately; for if I am to have an interview with him, it must be got over first, that I may go back home to the justices, and keep Mr. Hare all safe."

He proceeded on his way, gained the trees, and plunged into them; and, leaning against one, stood Richard Hare. Apart from his disguise, and the false and fierce black whiskers, he was a blue-eyed, fair, pleasant-looking young man, slight and of middle height, and quite as yielding and gentle as his mother. Brains he certainly had. but they were not sharp ones.

"Is my mother coming out to me?" asked Richard, after a few interchanged sentences with Mr. Carlyle. "No. You are to go indoors. Your father is away, and the servants are shut up in the kitchen and will not see you. Though if they did, they could never recognize you in that trim. A fine pair of whiskers, Richard."

"Let us go in, then. I am all in a twitter till I get away. Am I to have the money?"

"Yes, yes. But, Richard, your sister says you wish to disclose to me the true history of that lamentable night. You had better speak while we are here."

"It was Barbara herself wanted you to hear it. I think it of little moment. If the whole place heard the truth from me, it would do no good, for I should get no relief—not even from you."

"Try me, Richard, in as few words as possible."

"Well, there was a row at home about my going so much to Hallijohn's. The governor and my mother thought I went after Afy; perhaps I did, and perhaps I didn't. Hallijohn had asked me to lend him my gun, and that evening, when I went to see Af—when I went to see some one—never mind——"

"Richard," interrupted Mr. Carlyle, "there's an old saying, and it is sound advice: 'Tell the whole truth to your lawyer and your doctor.' If I am to judge whether anything can be attempted for you, you must tell it to me; otherwise, I would rather hear nothing. It shall be sacred trust."

"Then, if I must, I must," returned the yielding Richard. "I did love the girl. I would have waited until I was my own master to make her my wife, though it had been for years and years. I could not do it, you know, in the face of my father's opposition."

"Your wife?" rejoined Mr. Carlyle, with some emphasis.

Richard looked surprised. "Why, you don't suppose I meant anything else! I wouldn't have been such a blackguard."

"Well, go on, Richard. Did she return your love?"

"I can't be certain. Sometimes I thought she did, sometimes not; she used to play and shuffle, and she liked too much to be with—him. I would think her capricious—telling me I must not come this evening, and I must not come the other; but I found out they were the evenings when she was expecting him. We were never there together."

"You forgot that you have not indicated 'him' by any name, Richard. I am at fault."

Richard Hare bent forward till his black whiskers brushed Mr. Carlyle's shoulder. "It was that cursed Thorn."

Mr. Carlyle remembered the name Barbara had mentioned. "Who was Thorn? I never heard of him."

"Neither did anybody else, I expect, in West Lynne. He took precious good care of that. He lives some miles away, and used to come over in secret."

"Courting Afy?"

"Yes, he did come courting her," returned Richard, in a savage tone. "Distance was no barrier. He would come galloping over at dusk, tie his horse to a tree in the wood, and pass an hour or two with Afy. In the house, when her father was not at home; roaming about the woods with her, when he was."

"Come to the point, Richard—to the evening."

"Hallijohn's gun was out of order, and he requested the loan of mine. I had made an appointment with Afy to be at her house that evening, and I went down after dinner, carrying the gun with me. My father called after me to know where I was going; I said, out with young Beauchamp, not caring to meet his opposition; and the lie told against me at the inquest. When I reached Hallijohn's, going the back way along the fields, and through the wood-path, as I generally did go, Afy came out, all reserve, as she could be at times, and said she was unable to receive me then, that I must go back home. We had a few words about it, and as we were speaking, Locksley passed, and saw me with the gun in my hand; but it ended in my giving

way. She could do just what she liked with me, for I loved the very ground she trod on. I gave her the gun, telling her it was loaded, and she took it indoors, shutting me out. I did not go away; I had a suspicion that she had got Thorn there, though she denied it to me; and I hid myself in some trees near the house. Again Locksley came in view and saw me there, and called out to know why I was hiding. I shied further off and did not answer him—what were my private movements to him?—and that also told against me at the inquest. Not long afterward—twenty minutes, perhaps—I heard a shot, which seemed to be in the direction of the cottage. ‘Somebody having a late pop at the partridges,’ thought I; for the sun was then setting, and at the moment I saw Bethel emerge from the trees, and run in the direction of the cottage. That was the shot that killed Hallijohn.”

There was a pause. Mr. Carlyle looked keenly at Richard Hare in the moonlight. “Very soon, almost in the same minute, as it seemed, some one came panting and tearing along the path leading from the cottage. It was Thorn. His appearance startled me; I had never seen a man show more utter terror. His face was livid, his eyes seemed starting, and his lips were drawn back from his teeth. Had I been a strong man, I should surely have attacked him. I was mad with jealousy; for I then saw that Afy had sent me away that she might entertain him.”

“I thought you said this Thorn never came but at dusk?” observed Mr. Carlyle.

“I never knew him to do so until that evening. All I can say is, he was there then. He flew along swiftly, and I afterward heard the sound of his horse’s hoofs galloping away. I wondered what was up that he should look so scared, and scatted away as though the deuce was after him; I wondered whether he had quarreled with Afy. I ran to the house, leaped up the two steps, and—Carlyle—I fell over the prostrate body of Hallijohn! He was lying just within, on the kitchen floor. dead. Blood was round about him, and

my gun, just discharged, was thrown near. He had been shot in the side."

Richard stopped for breath. Mr. Carlyle did not speak.

"I called to Afy. No one answered. No one was in the lower room, and it seemed that no one was in the upper. A sort of panic came over me—a fear. You know they always said at home I was a coward; I could not have remained another minute with that dead man had it been to save my own life. I caught up the gun, and was making off, when——"

"Why did you catch up the gun?" interrupted Mr. Carlyle.

"Ideas pass through our minds quicker than we can speak them, especially in those sort of moments," was the reply of Richard Hare. "Some vague notion flashed on my brain that my gun ought not to be found near the murdered body of Hallijohn. I was flying from the door, I say, when Locksley emerged from the wood, full in view; and what possessed me I can't tell, but I did the worst thing I could—flung the gun indoors again, and got away, although Locksley called after me to stop."

"Nothing told against you so much as that," observed Mr. Carlyle. "Locksley deposed that he had seen you leave the cottage, gun in hand, apparently in great commotion; that the moment you saw him you hesitated, as from fear; flung back the gun, and escaped."

Richard stamped his foot. "Ay; and all owing to my cursed cowardice. They had better have made a woman of me, and brought me up in petticoats. But let me go on. I came upon Bethel. He was standing in the half-circle where the trees have been cut. Now I knew that Bethel, if he had gone straight in the direction of the cottage, must have met Thorn quitting it. 'Did you encounter that hound?' I asked him. 'What hound?' returned Bethel. 'That fine fellow, that Thorn, who comes after Afy,' I answered, for I did not mind mentioning her name in my passion. 'I don't know any Thorn,' returned Bethel,

'and I did not know anybody was after Afy but yourself.' 'Did you hear a shot?' I went on. 'Yes, I did,' he replied; 'I suppose it was Locksley, for he's about this evening.' 'And I saw you,' I continued, 'just at the moment the shot was fired, turn round the corner in the direction of Hallijohn's.' 'So I did,' he said, 'but only to strike into the wood a few paces up. What's your drift?' 'Did you not encounter Thorn, running from the cottage?' I persisted. 'I have encountered no one,' he said, 'and I don't believe anybody's about but ourselves and Locksley.' I quitted him, and came off," concluded Richard Hare. "He evidently had not seen Thorn, and knew nothing."

"And you decamped the same night, Richard; it was a fatal step."

"Yes, I was a fool. I thought I'd wait quiet, and see how things turned out; but you don't know all. Three or four hours later I went to the cottage again, and I managed to get a minute's speech with Afy. I never shall forget it; before I could say a syllable she flew out at me, accusing me of being the murderer of her father, and she fell into hysterics out there on the grass. The noise brought people from the house—plenty were in it then—and I retreated. 'If she can think me guilty, the world will think me guilty,' was my argument; and that night I went right off, to stop in hiding for a day or two, till I saw my way clear. It never came near; the coroner's inquest sat, and the verdict floored me over. And Afy—but I won't accuse her—fanned the flame against me by denying that any one had been there that night. 'She had been at home,' she said, 'and had strolled out at the back door, to the path that led from West Lynne, and was lingering there when she heard a shot. Five minutes afterward she returned to the house, and found Locksley standing over her dead father.'"

Mr. Carlyle remained silent, rapidly running over in his mind the chief points of Richard Hare's communication. "Four of you, as I understand it, were in the vicinity of the cottage that night, and from one

or the other the shot no doubt proceeded. You were at a distance you say, Richard; Bethel, also, could not have been——”

“It was not Bethel who did it,” interrupted Richard; “it was an impossibility. I saw him, as I tell you, in the same moment that the gun was fired.”

“But now, where was Locksley?”

“It is equally impossible that it could have been Locksley. He was within my view at the time, at right angles from me, deep in the wood, away from the paths altogether. It was Thorn did the deed, beyond all doubt, and the verdict ought to have been wilful murder against him. Carlyle, I see you don't believe my story!”

“What you say has startled me, and I must take time to consider whether I believe it or not,” said Mr. Carlyle, in his straightforward manner. “The most singular thing is, if you witnessed this Thorn running from the cottage in the manner you describe, that you did not come forward and denounce him.”

“I didn't do it, because I was a fool, a weak coward, as I have been all my life,” rejoined Richard. “I can't help it, it was born with me, and will go with me to my grave. What would my word have availed that it was Thorn, when there was nobody to corroborate it? And the discharged gun mine, was damning proof against me.”

“Another thing strikes me as curious,” cried Mr. Carlyle. “If this man, Thorn, was in the habit of coming to West Lynne, evening after evening, how was it that he never was observed? This is the first time I have heard any stranger's name mentioned in connection with the affair, or with Afy.”

“Thorn chose by-roads, and he never came, save that once, but at dusk and dark. It was evident to me at the time that he was striving to do it on the secret. I told Afy so, and that it augured no good for her. You are not attaching credit to what I say, and it is only as I expected; nevertheless, I swear that I have related the facts. As surely as that we—I,

Thorn, Afy and Hallijohn, must one day meet together before our Maker, I have told you the truth."

The words were solemn, their tone earnest, and Mr. Carlyle remained silent, his thoughts full.

"To what end, else, should I say this?" went on Richard. "It can do me no service; all the assertion I could put forth would not go a jot toward clearing me."

"No, it would not," assented Mr. Carlyle. "If ever you are cleared, it must be by proofs. But—I will keep my thoughts on the matter, and should anything arise—— What sort of a man was this Thorn?"

"In age he might be three or four-and-twenty, tall and slender; an out-and-out aristocrat."

"And his connections? Where did he live?"

"I never knew. Afy, in her boasting way, would say he had to come from Swainson, a ten-mile ride."

"From Swainson?" quickly interrupted Mr. Carlyle.

"Could it be one of the Thorns of Swainson?"

"None of the Thorns that I know. He was a totally different sort of man, with his perfumed hands, and his rings, and his dainty gloves. That he was an aristocrat I believe, but of bad taste and style, displaying a profusion of jewelry." A half smile flitted over Mr. Carlyle's face.

"Was it real, Richard?"

"It was. He would wear diamond shirt studs, diamond rings, diamond pins; brilliants, all of the first water. My impression was that he put them on to dazzle Afy. She told me once that she could be a grander lady, if she chose, than I could ever make her. 'A lady on the cross,' I answered, 'but never on the square.' Thorn was not a man to entertain honest intentions to one in the station of Afy Hallijohn; but girls are as simple as geese."

"By your description, it could not have been one of the Thorns of Swainson. Wealthy tradesmen, fathers of young families, short, stout and heavy as Dutchmen, staid and most respectable. Very unlikely men are they to run into an expedition of that sort."

"What expedition?" questioned Richard. "The murder?"

"The riding after Afy. Richard, where is Afy?"

Richard Hare lifted his eyes in surprise. "How should I know? I was just going to ask you."

Mr. Carlyle paused. He thought Richard's answer an evasive one. "She disappeared immediately after the funeral; and it was thought—in short, Richard, the neighborhood gave her credit for having gone after and joined you."

"No! did they? What a pack of idiots! I have never seen or heard of her, Carlyle, since that unfortunate night. If she went after anybody, it was after Thorn."

"Was the man good-looking?"

"I suppose the world would call him so. Afy thought such an Adonis had never been coined out of fable. He had shiny black hair and whiskers, dark eyes and handsome features. But his vain dandyism spoilt him; would you believe that his handkerchiefs were soaked in scent? They were of the finest cambric, silky as a hair, as fine as the one Barbara bought at Lynneborough and gave a guinea for; only hers had a wreath of embroidery around it."

Mr. Carlyle could ascertain no more particulars, and it was time Richard went indoors. He left the poor banned exile to his short interview with his hysterical and tearful mother, Richard nearly as hysterical as she, and made the best of his way home again.

The magistrates made a good evening of it, Mr. Carlyle entertaining them to supper, mutton chops and bread and cheese. They took up their pipes for another whiff when the meal was over, but Miss Carlyle retired to bed; the smoke, to which she had not been accustomed since her father's death, had made her head ache and her eyes smart. About eleven they wished Mr. Carlyle good-night and departed, but Mr. Dill, in obedience to a nod from his superior, remained.

"Sit down again a moment, Dill; I want to ask you

a question. You are intimate with the Thorns, of Swainson; do they happen to have any relative, a nephew or cousin, perhaps, a dandy young fellow?"

"I went over last Sunday fortnight to spend the day with young Jacob," was the answer of Mr. Dill, one wider from the point than he generally gave. Mr. Carlyle smiled.

"Young Jacob! He must be forty, I suppose."

"About that. But you and I estimate age differently, Mr. Archibald. They have no nephew; the old man never had but those two children, Jacob and Edward. Neither have they any cousin. Rich men they are growing now. Jacob has set up his carriage."

Mr. Carlyle mused, but he expected the answer, for neither had he heard of the brothers Thorn, tanners, curriers and leather dressers, possessing a relative of the name. "Dill," said he, "something has arisen, which, in my mind, casts a doubt upon Richard Hare's guilt. I question whether he had anything to do with the murder."

Mr. Dill opened his eyes. "But his flight, Mr. Archibald? And his stopping away?"

"Suspicious circumstances, I grant. Still, I have good cause to doubt. At the time it happened, some dandy fellow used to come courting Afy Hallijohn in secret; a tall, slender man, as he is described to me, bearing the name of Thorn, and living at Swainson. Could it have been one of the Thorn family?"

"Mr. Archibald!" remonstrated the old clerk; "as if those two respected gentlemen, with their wives and babies, would come sneaking after that flyaway Afy!"

"No reflection on them," returned Mr. Carlyle. "This was a young man, three or four-and-twenty, a head taller than either. I thought it might be a relative."

"I have repeatedly heard them say that they are alone in the world; that they are the two last of the name. Depend upon it, it was nobody connected with them," and wishing Mr. Carlyle good-night, he departed.

The servant came in to remove the glasses and the obnoxious pipes. Mr. Carlyle sat in a brown study; presently he looked round at the man.

"Is Joyce gone to bed?"

"No, sir. She is just going."

"Send her here when you have taken away those things."

Joyce came in—the upper servant at Miss Carlyle's. She was of middle height, and would never see five-and-thirty again; her forehead was broad, her gray eyes were deeply set, and her face was pale. Altogether she was plain, but sensible-looking. She was the half-sister of Afy Hallijohn.

"Shut the door, Joyce."

Joyce did as she was bid, came forward, and stood by the table.

"Have you ever heard from your sister, Joyce?" began Mr. Carlyle, somewhat abruptly. "No, sir," was the reply; "I think it would be a wonder if I did hear."

"Why so?"

"If she could go off with Richard Hare, who had sent her father into his grave, she would be more likely to hide herself and her doings than to proclaim them to me, sir."

"Who was that other, that fine gentleman, who came after her?"

The color mantled in Joyce's cheeks, and she dropped her voice.

"Sir! did you hear of him?"

"Not at that time. Since. He came from Swainson, did he not?"

"I believe so, sir. Afy never would say much about him. We did not agree upon the point. I said a person of his rank would do her no good; and Afy flew out when I spoke against him."

Mr. Carlyle caught her up. "His rank. What his rank?"

"Afy bragged of his being next door to a lord; and he looked like it. I only saw him once; I had gone home early, and there sat him and Afy. His white

hands were all glittering with rings, and his shirt was finished off with shining stones where the buttons ought to be."

"Have you seen him since?"

"Never since, never but once; and I don't think I should know him if I did see him. He got up, sir, as soon as I went into the parlor, shook hands with Afy, and left. A fine, upright man he was, nearly as tall as you are, sir, but very slim. Those soldiers always carry themselves well."

"How do you know he was a soldier?" quickly rejoined Mr. Carlyle. "Afy told me so. 'The captain,' she used to call him; but she said he was not a captain yet awhile—the next grade to it—a—a——"

"Lieutenant?" suggested Mr. Carlyle.

"Yes, sir, that was it—Lieutenant Thorn."

"Joyce," said Mr. Carlyle, "has it never struck you that Afy is more likely to have followed Lieutenant Thorn than Richard Hare?"

"No, sir," answered Joyce. "I have felt certain always that she is with Richard Hare, and nothing can turn me from the belief. All West Lynne is convinced of it."

Mr. Carlyle did not attempt to "turn her from her belief." He dismissed her, and sat on, still revolving the case in all its bearings.

Richard Hare's short interview with his mother had soon terminated. It lasted but a quarter of an hour, both dreading interruptions from the servants; and with a hundred pounds in his pocket, and desolation at his heart, the ill-fated young man once more quitted his childhood's home. Mrs. Hare and Barbara watched him steal down the path in the tell-tale moonlight, and gain the road, both feeling that those farewell kisses they had pressed upon his lips would not be renewed for years, and might not be forever.

CHAPTER VII

EAST LYNNE'S GUEST

The church clocks at West Lynne struck eight one lovely morning in July, and then the bells chimed out, giving token that it was Sunday.

East Lynne had changed owners, and now it was the property of Mr. Carlyle. He had bought it as it stood, furniture and all; but the transfer had been conducted with secrecy, and was suspected by none save those engaged in the negotiations. Whether Lord Mount Severn thought it might prevent any one getting on the scent, or whether he wished to take farewell of a place he had formerly been fond of, certain it is that he craved a week or two's visit to it. Mr. Carlyle most readily and graciously acquiesced; and the earl, his daughter and retinue, had arrived the previous day.

West Lynne was in ecstasies. It called itself an aristocratic place, and it indulged hopes that the earl might be intending to confer permanently the light of his presence by taking up his residence again at East Lynne. The toilets prepared to meet his admiring eyes were prodigious, and pretty Barbara Hare was not the only young lady who had thereby to encounter the paternal storm.

Barbara was to sit in the Carlyle pew that day, for she thought the further she was off the justice the better; there was no knowing but he might take a sly, revengeful cut at the feather in the middle of service, and so dock its beauty. Scarcely were they seated when some strangers came quietly up the aisle—a gentleman who limped as he walked, with a furrowed brow and gray hair, and a young lady. Barbara looked round with eagerness, but looked away again; they could not be the expected strangers, the

young lady's dress was too plain—a clear-looking muslin dress with some lilac sprigs upon it, and a straw bonnet. Miss Corny might have dressed herself so on a week day, and not have found herself too smart; but it was a pleasant dress for a hot summer's day. But the old beadle, in his many-caped coat, was walking before them sideways with his marshaling baton, and he marshaled them into the East Lynne pew, unoccupied for so many years.

"Who in the world can they be?" whispered Barbara to Miss Carlyle. "That old stupid is always making a mistake and putting people into the wrong places."

"The earl and Lady Isabel."

The color flushed into Barbara's face, and she stared at Miss Corny. "Why, she has no silks and no feathers, and no anything!" cried Barbara. "She's plainer than anybody in the church!"

"Plainer than any of the fine ones—than you, for instance. The earl is much altered, but I should have known them both anywhere. I should have known her from her likeness to her poor mother—just the same eyes and sweet expression."

Ay, those brown eyes, so full of sweetness and melancholy; few who had once seen could mistake or forget them; and Barbara Hare, forgetting where she was, looked at them much that day.

"She is very lovely," thought Barbara, "and her dress is certainly that of a lady. I wish I had not had this streaming pink feather. What fine jackdaws she must deem us all!"

The earl's carriage, an open barouche, was waiting at the gate at the conclusion of the service. He handed his daughter in, and was putting his gouty foot upon the step to follow her, when he observed Mr. Carlyle. The earl turned and held out his hand. A man who could purchase East Lynne was worthy of being received as an equal, though he was but a country lawyer.

Mr. Carlyle shook hands with the earl, approached the carriage, and raised his hat to Lady Isabel. She

bent forward with her pleasant smile, and put her hand into his.

"I have many things to say to you," said the earl. "I wish you would go home with us. If you have nothing better to do, be East Lynne's guest for the remainder of the day."

He smiled peculiarly as he spoke, and Mr. Carlyle echoed it! East Lynne's guest! That is what the earl was at present. Mr. Carlyle turned aside to tell his sister: "Cornelia, I shall not be home to dinner; I am going with Lord Mount Severn. Good-day, Barbara."

Mr. Carlyle stepped into the carriage, was followed by the earl, and it drove away. The sun shone still, but the day's brightness had gone out for Barbara Hare.

"How does he know the earl so well? How does he know Lady Isabel?" she reiterated, in her astonishment.

"Archibald knows something of most people," replied Miss Corny. "He saw the earl frequently, when he was in town in the spring, and Lady Isabel once or twice. What a lovely face hers is!" Barbara made no reply. She returned home with Miss Carlyle, but her manner was as absent as her heart, and that had run away to East Lynne.

CHAPTER VIII

MR. KANE'S CONCERT

Before Lord Mount Severn had completed the fortnight of his proposed stay, the gout came on seriously. It was impossible for him to move away from East Lynne. Mr. Carlyle assured him he was only too pleased that he should remain as long as might be convenient, and the earl expressed his acknowledgments; he hoped soon to be re-established on his legs.

But he was not. The gout came and the gout went—not positively laying him up in bed, but rendering

him unable to leave his rooms; and this continued till October, when he grew much better.

The county families had been neighborly, calling on the invalid earl, and occasionally carrying off Lady Isabel, but his chief and constant visitor had been Mr. Carlyle. The earl had grown to like him in no common degree, and was disappointed if Mr. Carlyle spent an evening away from him, so that he became, as it were, quite domesticated with the earl and Isabel.

"I am not quite equal to general society," he observed to his daughter, "and it is considerate and kind of Carlyle to come here and cheer my loneliness."

"Extremely kind," said Isabel. "I like him very much, papa."

"I don't know anybody that I like half as well," was the rejoinder of the earl.

Mr. Carlyle went up, as usual, the same evening, and, in the course of it, the earl asked Isabel to sing. "I will if you wish, papa," was the reply, "but the piano is so much out of tune that it is not pleasant to sing to it. Is there any one in West Lynne who could come here and tune my piano, Mr. Carlyle?" she added, turning to him.

"Certainly there is. Kane would do it. Shall I send him to-morrow?"

"I should be glad, if it would not be giving you too much trouble. Not that tuning will benefit it greatly, old thing that it is. Were we to be much at East Lynne I should get papa to exchange it for a good one." Little thought Lady Isabel that that very piano was Mr. Carlyle's, and not hers. The earl coughed and exchanged a smile and a glance with his guest.

Mr. Kane was the organist of St. Jude's Church, a man of embarrassment and sorrow, who had long had a sore fight with the world. When he arrived at East Lynne, the following day, dispatched by Mr. Carlyle, Lady Isabel happened to be playing, and she stood by and watched him begin his work. She was courteous and affable—she was so to every one—and the poor music-master took courage to speak of his own affairs,

and to prefer a humble request—that she and Lord Mount Severn would patronize and personally attend a concert he was about to give the following week.

A scarlet blush came into his thin cheeks as he confessed that he was very poor, could scarcely live, and he was getting up this concert in his desperate need. If it succeeded well he could then go on again; if not, he should be turned out of his home, and his furniture sold for the two years' rent he owed—and he had seven children.

She agreed not only to be present, but to try to get others as well. Next day she was driving to West Lynne, when she overtook Mr. Carlyle. "I have been to Mr. Kane's myself for the tickets," said she, with a beaming look. "I came into West Lynne on purpose. I told the coachman to find out where he lived, and he did. I thought if the people saw me and the carriage there, they would guess what I wanted. I do hope he will have a full concert."

"I am sure he will," replied Mr. Carlyle, as he released her hand. And Lady Isabel signed to the carriage to drive on.

CHAPTER IX

THE SONG AND THE DIRGE

Lady Isabel went alone to the entertainment, decked out like a beauteous queen. During the concert a message came that the earl had grown alarmingly worse. She left the hall and hastened home in company with Mr. Carlyle.

The housekeeper, Mrs. Mason, waited at the hall door to receive Lady Isabel. Mr. Carlyle helped her out of the carriage, and gave her his arm up the steps. She scarcely dared to inquire.

"Is he better? May I go to his room?" she panted.

Yes, the earl was better—better in so far that he was quiet and senseless. She moved hastily toward the chamber. Mr. Carlyle drew the housekeeper aside.

“Is there any hope?”

“Not the slightest, sir—he is dying.”

The earl knew no one; pain was gone for the present, and he lay on his bed, calm; but his face, which had death in it all too plainly, startled Isabel. She did not scream or cry; she was perfectly quiet, save that she had a fit of shivering.

“Will he soon be better?” she whispered to Mr. Wainwright, who stood there.

The surgeon coughed. “Well, he—he—we must hope it, my lady.”

“But why does his face look like that? It is pale—gray; I never saw anybody else look so.”

“He has been in great pain, my lady; and pain leaves its traces on the countenance.”

Mr. Carlyle, who had come, and was standing by the surgeon, touched his arm to draw him from the room. He noticed the look on the earl's face, and did not like it; he wished to question the surgeon. Lady Isabel saw that Mr. Carlyle was about to quit the room, and beckoned to him.

“Do not leave the house, Mr. Carlyle. When he wakes up, it may cheer him to see you here; he liked you very much.”

“I will not leave it, Lady Isabel. I did not think of doing so.”

In time—it seemed an age—the medical men arrived from Lynneborough—three of them—the groom had thought he could not summon too many. It was a strange scene they entered upon; the ghastly peer, growing restless again now, battling with his departing spirit, and the gala robes, the sparkling gems adorning the young girl watching at his side. They comprehended the case without difficulty; that she had been suddenly called from some scene of gayety.

They stooped to look at the earl, and felt his pulse, and touched his heart, and exchanged a few murmured words with Mr. Wainwright. Isabel had stood back to give them place, but her anxious eyes followed

their every movement. They did not seem to notice her, and she stepped forward.

"Can you do anything for him? Will he recover?"

They all turned at the address, and looked at her. One spoke; it was an evasive answer. "Tell me the truth!" she implored, with feverish impatience; "you must not trifle with me. Do you not know me? I am his only child, and I am here alone."

The first thing was to get her away from the room, for the great change was approaching and the parting struggle between the body and the spirit might be one of warfare—no sight for her. But in answer to their suggestion that she should go, she only leaned her head upon the pillow by her father, and moaned in despair. "She must be got out of the room," said one of the physicians, in a low tone. Isabel heard the words, and, turning, asked:

"Is it really necessary that I should leave the room—necessary for him?"

"It is necessary, my lady—absolutely essential."

She broke into a passion of tears and sobs as Mr. Carlyle led her to another apartment. "He is my dear father; I have but him in the wide world!" she exclaimed.

"I know—I know; I feel for you all that you are feeling. Twenty times this night I have wished—forgive me the thought—that you were my sister, so that I might express my sympathy more freely and comfort you."

"Tell me the truth, then, why I am kept away. If you can show me a sufficient cause, I will be reasonable and obey; but do not say again I should be disturbing him, for it is not true."

"He is too ill for you to see him—his symptoms are too painful. In fact, it would not be proper; and were you to go in in defiance of advice, you would regret it all your after life."

"Is he dying?"

Mr. Carlyle hesitated. Ought he to dissemble with her as the doctors had done? A strong feeling was

upon him that he ought not. "I trust to you not to deceive me," she simply said. "I fear he is—I believe he is." She rose up—she grasped his arm in the sudden fear that flashed over her.

"You are deceiving me, and he is dead!"

"I am not deceiving you, Lady Isabel. He is not dead, but—it may be very near."

She laid her face down upon the soft pillow.

"Going forever from me—going forever! Oh, Mr. Carlyle, let me see him for a minute—just one farewell! Will you not try for me?" He knew how hopeless it was, but he turned to leave the room. "I will go and see. But you will remain here quietly—you will not come?"

She bowed her head in acquiescence, and he closed the door. Had she indeed been his sister, he would probably have turned the key upon her. He entered the earl's chamber, but not many seconds did he remain in it.

"It is over," he whispered to Mrs. Mason, whom he met in the corridor, "and Mr. Wainwright is asking for you."

"You are soon back," cried Isabel, lifting her head. "May I go?" He sat down and took her hand, shrinking from his task. "I wish I could comfort you!" he exclaimed, in a tone of deep emotion.

Her face turned a ghastly whiteness—as white as another's not far away. "Tell me the worst," she breathed. "I have nothing to tell you but the worst. May God support you, dear Lady Isabel!" She turned to hide her face and its misery from him, and a low wail of anguish broke from her, telling its own tale of despair.

The gray dawn of morning was breaking over the world, advent of another bustling day in life's history; but the spirit of William Vane, Earl of Mount Severn, had soared away from it forever.

CHAPTER X

THE KEEPERS OF THE DEAD

Events between the death of Lord Mount Severn and his interment occurred quickly; and to one of them the reader may feel inclined to demur, as believing that it could have no foundation in fact, in the actions of real life, but must be a wild creation of the author's brain. He would be wrong. The author is no more fond of wild creations than the reader. The circumstance did take place.

The earl died on Friday morning at daylight. The news spread rapidly—it generally does on the death of a peer, if he has been of note (whether good or bad), in the world—and was known in London before the day was over—the consequence of which was that by Saturday morning, early, a shoal of what the late peer would have called harpies, had arrived, to surround East Lynne. There were creditors of all sorts; for small sums and for great, for five or ten pounds up to five or ten thousand. Some were civil, some impatient, some loud and rough and angry; some came to put in executions on the effects, and some—to arrest the body!

This last act was accomplished cleverly. Two men, each with a remarkable hooked nose, stole away from the hubbub of the clamorous, and peering cunningly about, made their way to the side or tradesman's entrance. A kitchen-maid answered their gentle appeal at the bell.

"Is the coffin come yet?" said they.

"Coffin—no!" was the girl's reply. "The shell ain't here yet. Mr. Jones didn't promise that till nine o'clock, and it haven't gone eight."

"It won't be long," quoth they; "it's on the road."

We'll go up to his lordship's room, please, and be getting ready for it."

The girl called the butler. "Two men from Jones, the undertaker's, sir," announced she. "The shell's coming on, and they want to go up and make ready for it."

The butler marshaled them upstairs himself, and introduced them to the room. "That will do," said they, as he was about to enter with them, "we won't trouble you to wait." And closing the door upon the unsuspecting butler, they took up their station on either side of the dead, like a couple of ill-omened mutes. They had placed an arrest upon the corpse; it was theirs until their claim was satisfied, and they sat down to thus watch and secure it. Pleasant occupation!

The loud talking of a crowd of creditors reached Lady Isabel from the room below. Repressing her rebellious emotions, she glided partly down the staircase, and softly called to the butler. "What is all this?" she asked. "I must know."

"Oh, my lady, don't go amongst those rough men! You can't do any good; pray go back before they see you. I have sent for Mr. Carlyle, and expect him here momentarily."

"Did papa owe them all money?" she said, shivering. "I am afraid he did, my lady."

She went swiftly on; and passing through the few stragglers in the hall, entered the dining-room, where the chief mass had congregated, and the hubbub was loudest. All anger, at least external anger, was hushed at her sight. She looked so young, so innocent, so childlike in her pretty morning dress of peach-colored muslin, her fair face shaded by its falling curls, so little fit to combat with, or understand their business, that instead of pouring forth complaints, they hushed them in silence.

"I heard some one calling out that I ought to see you," she began, her agitation causing the words to come forth in a jerking manner. "What did you want with me?"

“The fact is, young lady,” spoke up one, “we should not have come down troubling you—at least, I can answer for myself—but his lordship’s men of business, Warburton & Ware, to whom many of us hastened last evening, told us there would not be a shilling for anybody unless it could be got from the furniture. When it comes to that, it is ‘first come, first served,’ and I got down by morning light, and levied an execution.”

“Which was levied before you came,” put in another. “But what’s such furniture as this to our claims—if you come to combine ’em? No more than a bucket of water is to the Thames.”

“What can I do?” shivered Lady Isabel. “What is it you wish me to do? I have no money to give you. I——”

But another person had entered the room—Mr. Carlyle. He caught sight of the white face and trembling hands of Isabel, and interrupted the last speaker with scant ceremony. “What is the meaning of this?” he demanded, in a tone of authority. “What do you want?”

“If you are a friend of the late peer’s you ought to know what we want,” was the response. “We want our debts paid.”

“But this is not the place to come to,” returned Mr. Carlyle; “your coming here, flocking in in this extraordinary manner, will do no good. You must go to Warburton & Ware.”

“We have been to them and received their answer—a cool assurance that there’ll be nothing for anybody.”

“At any rate, you’ll get nothing here,” observed Mr. Carlyle, to the assembly, collectively. “Allow me to request that you leave the house at once.” It was little likely that they would for him, and they said it.

“Then I warn you of the consequences of a refusal, quietly said Mr. Carlyle. “You are trespassing upon a stranger’s property. This house was not Lord

Mount Severn's; he sold it some time back." They knew better. Some laughed, and said these tricks were stale.

"Listen, gentlemen," rejoined Mr. Carlyle, in the plain, straightforward manner that carried its own truth. "To make an assertion that could be disproved when the earl's affairs came to be investigated, would be simply foolish. I give you my word of honor as a gentleman—nay, as a fellow man—that this estate, with the house and all it contains, passed legally months ago from the hands of Lord Mount Severn; and, during his recent sojourn here he was but a visitor in it. Go and ask his men of business."

"Who purchased it?" was the inquiry.

"Mr. Carlyle, of West Lynne. Some of you may possibly know him by reputation."

Some of them did.

"A cute young lawyer," observed a voice; "as his father was before him."

"I am he," proceeded Mr. Carlyle; "and being a 'cute lawyer,' as you do me the honor to decide, you cannot suppose I should risk my money upon any sale not perfectly safe and legal. I was not an agent in the affair; I employed agents; for it was my own money that I invested, and East Lynne is mine."

"Is the purchase money paid over?" inquired more than one.

"It was paid over at the time—last June."

"What did Lord Mount Severn do with the money?"

"I do not know," replied Mr. Carlyle. "I am not cognizant of Lord Mount Severn's private affairs." Significant murmurs arose. "Strange that the earl should stop two or three months at a place that wasn't his!"

"It may appear so to you; but allow me to explain," returned Mr. Carlyle. "The earl expressed a wish to pay East Lynne a few days' visit, by way of farewell, and I acceded. Before the few days were over he was taken ill, and remained, from that time, too ill to quit

it. This very day—this very day, gentlemen, as we stand here—was at length fixed for his departure.”

“I am so grieved, Lady Isabel,” he said, as he closed the door upon the noisy crowd. “Had I foreseen this annoyance, you should have been spared it. Can you go upstairs alone, or shall I call Mrs. Mason?”

“Oh, yes! I can go alone; I am not ill, only frightened and sick. This is not the worst,” she shivered. “There are two men up—up—with papa.

“Up with papa,” she repeated. Mr. Carlyle was puzzled. He saw that she was shaking from head to foot, as she stood before him. “I cannot understand it, and it terrifies me,” she continued, attempting an explanation. “They are sitting in the room, close to him; they have taken him, they say.”

A blank, thunderstruck pause. Mr. Carlyle looked at her—he did not speak; and then he turned and looked at the butler, who was standing near. But the man only responded by giving his head a half shake, and Mr. Carlyle saw that it was an ominous one.

“I will clear the house of these,” he said to Lady Isabel, pointing back to the dining-room, “and then join you upstairs.”

“Two ruffians, sir, and they have got possession of the body,” whispered the butler in Mr. Carlyle’s ear, as Lady Isabel departed. “They obtained entrance to the chamber by a sly, deceitful trick, saying they were the undertaker’s men, and that he can’t be buried unless their claims are paid, if it’s for a month to come. It has upset all our stomachs, sir; Mrs. Mason, while telling me—for she was the first one to know it—was as sick as she could be.”

Mr. Carlyle proceeded to the death chamber, and examined the authority of the custodians of the dead. A similar case had never occurred under his own observation, though it had under his father’s, and Mr. Carlyle remembered hearing of it.

The body of a church dignitary, who had died deeply in debt, was arrested as it was being carried through the cloisters to its grave in the cathedral. These men,

sitting over Lord Mount Severn, enforced heavy claims; and there they must sit until the arrival of Mr. Vane from Castle Marling—now the Earl of Mount Severn.

On the following morning, Sunday, Mr. Carlyle proceeded again to East Lynne, and found, to his surprise, that there was no arrival. Isabel sat in the breakfast room alone, the meal on the table untouched, and she shivering—as it seemed—on a low ottoman before the fire. She looked so ill that Mr. Carlyle could not forbear remarking upon it.

“I have not slept, and I am very cold,” she answered. “I did not close my eyes all night, I was so terrified.”

“Terrified at what?” he asked.

“At those men,” she whispered. “It is strange that Mr. Vane has not come.”

“Is the post in?”

“I don’t know,” she apathetically replied. “I have received nothing.”

She had scarcely spoken when the butler entered with his silver salver full of letters, most of them bearing condolence with Lady Isabel. She singled out one, and hastened to open it, for it bore the Castle Marling post-mark. “It is Mrs. Vane’s handwriting,” she remarked to Mr. Carlyle.

CASTLE MARLING, Saturday.

“MY DEAR ISABEL—I am dreadfully grieved and shocked at the news conveyed in Mr. Carlyle’s letter to my husband, for he has gone cruising in his yacht, and I opened it. Goodness knows where he may be, round the coast somewhere, but he said he should be home for Sunday, and as he is pretty punctual in keeping his word, I expect him. Be assured he will not lose a moment in hastening to East Lynne.

“I cannot express what I feel for you, and am too *bouleversee* to write more. Try and keep up your spirits, and believe me, dear Isabel, with sincere sympathy and regret, faithfully yours,

“EMMA MOUNT SEVERN.”

The color came to Isabel's pale cheek when she read the signature. She thought, had she been the writer, she would, in that first, early letter, have still signed herself Emma Vane. Isabel handed the note to Mr. Carlyle. "It is very unfortunate," she sighed.

Mr. Carlyle glanced over it as quickly as Mrs. Vane's illegible writing allowed him, and drew in his lips in a peculiar manner when he came to the signature. Perhaps at the same thought which had struck Isabel.

"Had Mrs. Vane been worth a rush, she would have come herself, knowing your lonely situation," he uttered, impulsively.

Isabel leaned her head upon her hand. All the difficulties and embarrassments of her position came crowding on her mind. No orders had been given in preparation for the funeral, and she felt that she had no right to give any. The earls of Mount Severn were buried at Mount Severn; but to take her father thither would involve great expense; would the present earl sanction that?

"Mr. Carlyle, how long has this house been yours?" she asked, breaking the silence.

"It was in June that the purchase was completed. Did Lord Mount Severn never tell you he had sold it to me?"

"No, never. All these things are yours?" glancing round the room.

"The furniture was sold with the house. Not these sort of things," he added, his eye falling on the silver on the breakfast table; "not the plate and linen."

"Not the plate and linen! Then these poor men who were here yesterday have a right to them," she quickly cried.

"I scarcely know. I believe the plate goes with the entail—and the jewels go also. The linen cannot be of consequence either way."

"Are my clothes my own?"

He smiled as he looked at her, smiled at her simplicity, and assured her that they were nobody's else. "I did not know," she replied; "I did not understand.

So many strange things have happened in the last day or two that I seem to understand nothing."

Indeed, she could not understand. She had no definite ideas on the subject of this transfer of East Lynne to Mr. Carlyle; plenty of indefinite ones, and they were haunting her. Fears of debt to him, and of the house and its contents being handed over to him in liquidation, perhaps only partial, were working in her brain.

"Does my father owe you any money?" she breathed, in a timid tone. "Not any," he replied. "Lord Mount Severn was never indebted to me in his life."

"Yet you purchased East Lynne!"

"As any one else might have done," he answered, discerning the drift of her thoughts. "I was in search of an eligible estate to invest money in, and East Lynne suited me."

"I feel my position, Mr. Carlyle," she resumed, the rebellious tears forcing themselves to her eyes; "thus to be intruding upon you for shelter. And I cannot help myself."

"You can help grieving me," he gently answered, "which you do much when you talk of obligation. The obligation is on my side, Lady Isabel; and when I express a hope that you will continue at East Lynne while it can be of service, however prolonged that period may be, I assure you, I say it in all sincerity."

"You are truly kind," she faltered; "and for a few days; until I can think; until—— Oh, Mr. Carlyle, are papa's affairs really so bad as they said yesterday?" She broke off, her perplexities recurring to her with vehement force. "Is there nothing left?"

"I fear things are not very bright," he answered. "That is, so far as we can see at present. But there may have been some settlement effected for you that you do not know of. Warburton & Ware——"

"No," she interrupted; "I never heard of a settlement, and I am sure there is none. I see the worst plainly. I have no home—no home and no money.

This house is yours; the town house and Mount Severn go to Mr. Vane; and I have nothing."

"But surely Mr. Vane will be delighted to welcome you to your old home. The houses pass to him—it almost seems as though you had the greater right in them than he or Mrs. Vane."

"My home with them!" she retorted, as if the words had stung her. "What are you saying, Mr. Carlyle?"

"I beg your pardon, Lady Isabel. I should not have presumed to touch upon these points myself, but——"

"Nay, I think I ought to beg yours," she interrupted, more calmly. "I am only grateful for the interest you take in them—the kindness you have shown. But I could not make my home with Mrs. Vane."

Mr. Carlyle rose. He could do no good by remaining, and did not think well to intrude longer. He suggested that it might be more pleasant if Isabel had a friend with her; Mrs. Ducie would no doubt be willing to come, and she was a kind, motherly woman.

Isabel shook her head with a passing shudder. "Have strangers here, with—all—that—in papa's chamber!" she uttered. "Mrs. Ducie drove over yesterday, perhaps to remain—I don't know; but I was afraid of questions, and would not see her. When I think of—that—I feel thankful that I am alone."

CHAPTER XI

THE NEW PEER—THE BANK-NOTE

A post-chaise was discerned thundering up the avenue that Sunday afternoon. It contained the new peer, Lord Mount Severn. The more direct line of rail from Castle Marling brought him only to within five miles of West Lynne, and thence he had traveled in a hired chaise. Mr. Carlyle soon joined him, and almost at the same time Mr. Warburton arrived from London. Absence from town at the period of the earl's death had prevented Mr. Warburton's earlier attendance. Business was entered upon immediately.

The present earl knew that his predecessor had been an embarrassed man, but he had no conception of the extent of the evil; they had not been intimate, and rarely came in contact. As the various items of news were now detailed to him—the wasteful expenditure, the disastrous ruin, the total absence of provision for Isabel—he stood petrified and aghast. He was a tall, stout man, of three-and-forty years, his nature honorable, his manners cold and his countenance severe.

“It is the most iniquitous piece of business I ever heard of!” he exclaimed to the two lawyers. “Of all reckless fools, Mount Severn must have been the worst!”

“Unpardonably improvident as regards his daughter,” was the assenting remark.

“Improvident! It must have been rank madness!” retorted the earl. “No man in his senses could leave a child to the mercy of the world, as he has left her. She has not a shilling—literally, not a shilling in her possession. I put the question to her, what money there was in the house when the earl died. Twenty or twenty-five pounds, she answered, which she had since given to Mason, who required it for housekeeping purposes. If the girl wants a yard of ribbon for herself she has not the pence to pay for it! Can you realize such a case to the mind?” continued the excited peer. “I will stake my veracity that such a one never occurred yet.”

“No money for her own personal wants!” exclaimed Mr. Carlyle. “Not a halfpenny in the world. And there are no funds, and will be none, that I can see, for her to draw upon.”

“Her case presents the worst feature of the whole,” remarked Mr. Carlyle. “What will she do for a home?”

“She must, of course, find it with me,” replied his lordship, “and I should hope, a better one than this. With all these debts and duns at his elbow, Mount Severn’s house could not have been a bower of roses.”

“I fancy she knew nothing of the state of affairs;

had seen little, if anything, of the circumstances," returned Mr. Carlyle.

Two mourners only attended the funeral—the earl and Mr. Carlyle. The latter was no relative of the deceased, and but a very recent friend; but the earl had invited him, probably not liking the parading, solus, his trappings of woe. Some of the county aristocracy were pall-bearers, and many private carriages followed.

All was bustle on the following morning. The earl was to depart, and Isabel was to depart, but not together. In the course of the day the domestics would disperse. The earl was speeding to London, and the chaise to convey him to the railway station at West Lynne was already at the door when Mr. Carlyle arrived.

"I was getting fidgety, fearing you would not be here, for I have barely five minutes to spare," observed the earl, as he shook hands. "You are sure you fully understood about the tombstone?"

"Perfectly," replied Mr. Carlyle. "How is Lady Isabel?"

"Very down-hearted, I fear, poor child, for she did not breakfast with me," replied the earl. "Mason privately told me that she was in a convulsion of grief. A bad man, a bad man, was Mount Severn," he emphatically added, as he rose and rang the bell.

"Let Lady Isabel be informed that I am ready to depart, and that I wait to see her," he said to the servant who answered it. "And while she is coming, Mr. Carlyle," he added, "allow me to express my obligations to you. How I should have got along in this worrying business without you, I cannot divine. You have promised, mind, to pay me a visit, and I shall expect it speedily."

"Promised conditionally—that I find myself in your neighborhood," smiled Mr. Carlyle. "Should——"

Isabel entered, dressed also, and ready, for she was to depart immediately after the earl. Her crape veil was over her face, but she threw it back.

"My time is up, Isabel, and I must go. Is there anything you wish to say to me?" She opened her lips to speak, but glanced at Mr. Carlyle, and hesitated. He was standing at the window, his back toward them.

"I suppose not," said the earl, answering himself, for he was in a fever of hurry to be off, like many others are when starting on a journey. "You will have no trouble whatever, my dear; only mind you get some refreshments in the middle of the day, for you won't be at Castle Marling before dinner time. Tell Mrs. Va—tell Lady Mount Severn that I had no time to write, but will do so from town."

Mr. Carlyle took her hand to conduct her to the carriage. The servants were gathered in the hall, waiting for her. Some had grown gray in her father's service. She put out her hand, she strove to say a word of thanks and farewell, and she thought she would choke at the effort of keeping down the sobs. At length it was over; a kind look around, a yearning wave of the hand, and she passed on with Mr. Carlyle.

Pound had ascended to his place by Marvel, and the postboys were waiting the signal to start, but Mr. Carlyle had the carriage door open again, and was bending in, holding her hand.

"I have not said a word of thanks to you for all your kindness, Mr. Carlyle," she cried, her breath very labored. "I am sure you have seen that I could not."

"I wish I could have done more; I wish I could have shielded you from the annoyances you have been obliged to endure!" he answered. "Should we never meet again——"

"Oh, but we shall meet again," she interrupted. "You promised Lord Mount Severn."

"True, we may so meet casually—once in a way; but our ordinary paths in life lie far and wide apart. God forever bless you, dear Lady Isabel!"

The postboys touched their horses, and the carriage sped on. She drew down the blinds, and leaned back in an agony of tears—tears for the house she was leaving, for the father she had lost. Her last thoughts had

been of gratitude to Mr. Carlyle; but she had more cause to be grateful to him than she yet knew of. Emotion soon spent itself, and, as her eyes cleared, she saw a bit of crumpled paper lying on her lap, which appeared to have fallen from her hand. Mechanically she took it up and opened it; it was a bank-note for one hundred pounds.

Ah, reader! you will say this is a romance of fiction, and a far-fetched one, but it is verily and indeed true: Mr. Carlyle had taken it with him to East Lynne, that morning, with its destined purpose.

Lady Isabel strained her eyes, and gazed at the note—gazed and gazed again. Where could it have come from? What brought it there? Suddenly the undoubted truth flashed upon her; Mr. Carlyle had left it in her hand. Her cheeks burnt, her fingers trembled, her angry spirit rose up in arms. In that first moment of discovery, she was ready to resent it as an insult; but when she came to remember the sober facts of the last few days, her anger subsided into admiration of his wondrous kindness. Did he not know that she was without a home to call her own, without money—absolutely without money, save what would be given her in charity?

There was an angry scene when the news was conveyed to Lady Severn that Isabel had gone to Castle Marling as her home. The earl, however, was firm, and she was obliged to give way.

CHAPTER XII

LIFE AT CASTLE MARLING

Isabel had been in her new home about ten days, when Lord and Lady Mount Severn arrived at Castle Marling; which was not a castle, you may as well be told, but only the name of a town, nearly contiguous to which was their residence, a small estate. Lord Mount Severn welcomed Isabel; Lady Mount Severn also, after a fashion; but her manner was so repellent, so insolently patronizing, that it brought the indignant crimson to the cheeks of Lady Isabel. And if this was the case at the first meeting, what do you suppose it must have been as time went on? Galling slights, petty vexations, chilling annoyances were put upon her, trying her powers of endurance to the very length of their tether; she would wring her hands when alone, and passionately wish that she could find another refuge.

The earl and countess had two children, both boys, and in February the younger one, always a delicate child, died. This somewhat altered their plans. Instead of proceeding to London after Easter, as had been decided upon, they would not go till May. The earl had passed part of the winter at Mount Severn looking after the repairs and renovations that were being made there. In March he went to Paris, full of grief for the loss of his boy—far greater grief than was experienced by Lady Mount Severn.

April approached, and with it Easter. To the unconcealed dismay of Lady Mount Severn, her grandmother, Mrs. Levison, wrote her word that she required change, and should pass Easter with her at Castle Marling. Lady Mount Severn would have given her diamonds to have got out of it, but there was no escape—diamonds that were once Isabel's—at least,

what Isabel had worn. On the Monday in Passion Week the old lady arrived, and with her Francis Levison. They had no other guests. Things went on pretty smoothly till Good Friday.

On Good Friday afternoon, Isabel strolled out with little William Vane; Captain Levison joined them, and they never came in till nearly dinner-time, when the three entered together, Lady Mount Severn doing penance all the time, and nursing her rage against Isabel, for Mrs. Levison kept her indoors. There was barely time to dress for dinner, and Isabel went straight to her room. Her dress was off, her dressing-gown on. Marvel was busy with her hair, and William chattering at her knee, when the door was flung open and my lady entered.

"Where have you been?" demanded she, shaking with passion. Isabel knew the signs. "Strolling about in the shrubberies and grounds," answered Isabel.

"How dare you so disgrace yourself?"

"I do not understand you," said Isabel, her heart beginning to beat unpleasantly. "Marvel, you are pulling my hair."

When women liable to intemperate fits of passion give the reins to it, they neither know nor care what they say. Lady Mount Severn broke into a torrent of reproach and abuse, most degrading and unjustifiable.

"Is it not sufficient that you are allowed an asylum in my house, but you must also disgrace it? Three hours have you been hiding yourself with Francis Levison! You have done nothing but flirt with him from the moment he came; you did nothing else at Christmas."

The attack was longer and broader, but that was the substance of it, and Isabel was goaded to resistance, to anger little less than that of the countess. This!—and before her attendant! She, an earl's daughter, so much better born than Emma Mount Severn, to be thus insultingly accused in the other's mad jealousy. Isabel tossed her hair from the hands

of Marvel, rose up and confronted the countess, constraining her voice to calmness

"I do not flirt," she said; "I have never flirted. I leave that"—and she could not wholly suppress in tone the scorn she felt—"to married women; though it seems to me that it is a fault less venal in them than in single ones. There is but one inmate of this house who flirts, so far as I have seen since I have lived in it; is it you or I, Lady Mount Severn?"

The home truth told on her ladyship. She turned white with rage, forgot her manners, and raising her right hand, struck Isabel a stinging blow upon the left cheek. Confused and terrified, Isabel stood in pain, and before she could speak or act, my lady's left hand was raised to the other cheek, and a blow left on that. Lady Isabel shivered as with a sudden chill, and cried out—a sharp, quick cry—covered her outraged face, and sank down upon the dressing chair. Marvel threw up her hands in dismay, and William Vane could not have burst into a louder roar had he been beaten himself. The boy—he was of a sensitive nature—was frightened.

Isabel Vane lay through the livelong night, weeping tears of anguish and indignation. She could not remain at Castle Marling—who would, after so great an outrage? Yet where was she to go? Fifty times in the course of the night did she wish she was laid beside her father, for her feelings obtained the mastery of her reason; in her calm moments she would have shrunk from the idea of death, as the young and healthy must do.

She rose on the Saturday morning weak and languid, the effects of the night of grief, and Marvel brought her breakfast up. William Vane stole into her room afterward; he was attached to her in a remarkable degree.

"Mamma is going out," he exclaimed in the course of the morning. "Look, Isabel."

Isabel went to the window. Lady Mount Severn was in the pony carriage, Francis Levison driving.

"We can go down now, Isabel, nobody will be there." She assented, and went down with William; but scarcely were they in the drawing-room when a servant entered with a card on a salver.

"A gentleman, my lady, wishes to see you."

"To see me?" returned Isabel, in surprise, "or Lady Mount Severn?"

"He asked for you, my lady." She took up the card. "Mr. Carlyle. Oh!" she uttered, in a tone of joyful surprise, "show him in."

It is curious, nay, appalling, to trace the thread of a human life; how the most trivial occurrences lead to the great events of existence, bringing forth happiness or misery, weal or woe. A client of Mr. Carlyle's, traveling from one part of England to the other, was arrested by illness at Castle Marling—grave illness, it appeared to be, inducing fears of death. He had not, as the phrase goes, settled his affairs; and Mr. Carlyle was telegraphed for in haste, to make his will, and for other private matters. A very simple occurrence it appeared to Mr. Carlyle, this journey, and yet it was destined to lead to events that would end only with his own life.

Mr. Carlyle entered, unaffected and gentlemanly as ever, with his noble form, his attractive face, and his drooping eyelids. She advanced to meet him, holding out her hand, her countenance betraying her pleasure. "This is indeed unexpected," she exclaimed. "How very pleased I am to see you."

"Business brought me yesterday to Castle Marling. I could not leave it again without calling on you. I hear that Lord Mount Severn is absent."

"He is in France," she replied. "I said we should be sure to meet again; do you remember, Mr. Carlyle? You——"

Isabel suddenly stopped, for with the word "remember" she also remembered something—the hundred pound note—and what she was saying faltered on her tongue. Confused, indeed, grew she; for, alas! she had changed and partly spent it. How was it possible

to ask Lady Mount Severn for money? and the earl was nearly always away. Mr. Carlyle saw her embarrassment, though he may not have detected its cause.

"What a fine boy!" exclaimed he, looking at the child.

"It is Lord Vane," said Isabel.

"A truthful, earnest spirit, I am sure," he continued, gazing at his open countenance. "How old are you, my little man?"

"I am six, sir; and my brother was four."

Isabel bent over the child—an excuse to cover her perplexity. "You do not know this gentleman, William. It is Mr. Carlyle, and he has been very kind to me."

The little lord turned his thoughtful eyes on Mr. Carlyle, apparently studying his countenance. "I shall like you, sir, if you are kind to Isabel. Are you kind to her?"

"Very, very kind," murmured Lady Isabel, leaving William, and turning to Mr. Carlyle, but not looking at him. "I don't know what to say; I ought to thank you. I did not intend to use the—to use it; but I—I——"

"Hush!" he interrupted, laughing at her confusion. "Let's talk of Castle Marling. I trust it is a happy home to you."

She glanced up at him a look that he would never forget; it certainly told of despair. "No," she said, shaking her head, "it is a miserable home, and I cannot remain in it. I have been awake all night, thinking where I can go, but I cannot tell; I have not a friend in the wide world."

Never let people talk secrets before children, for be assured that they comprehend a vast deal more than is expedient; the saying "that little pitchers have great ears" is wonderfully true. Lord Vane held up his head to Mr. Carlyle.

"Isabel told me this morning that she should go away from us. Shall I tell you why? Mamma beat her yesterday when she was angry."

"Be quiet, William," interrupted Lady Isabel, her face in a flame.

"Two great slaps upon her cheeks," continued the young viscount; "and Isabel cried so, and I screamed, and then mamma hit me. But boys are made to be hit; nurse says so. Marvel came into the nursery when we were at tea, and told nurse about it. She says Isabel's too good-looking, and that's why mamma——"

Isabel stopped the child's tongue, rang a peal of the bell, and marched him to the door, dispatching him to the nursery by the servant who answered it.

Mr. Carlyle's eyes were full of indignant sympathy. "Can this be true?" he asked, in a low tone when she returned to him. "You do, indeed, want a friend."

"I must bear my lot," she replied, obeying the impulse which prompted her to confide in Mr. Carlyle; "at least till Lord Mount Severn returns."

"And then?"

"I really do not know," she said, the rebellious tears rising faster than she could choke them down. "He has no other home to offer me; but with Lady Mount Severn I cannot and will not remain. She would break my heart, as she has already well-nigh broken my spirit. I have not deserved it of her, Mr. Carlyle."

"No, I am sure you have not," he warmly answered. "I wish I could help you! What can I do?"

"You can do nothing," she said. "What can any one do?"

"I wish, I wish I could help you!" he repeated. "East Lynne was not, take it for all in all, a pleasant home to you, but it seems you changed for the worse when you left."

"Not a pleasant home!" she echoed, its reminiscences appearing delightful in that moment, for it must be remembered that all things are estimated by comparison. "Indeed, it was; I may never have so pleasant a one again. Oh, Mr. Carlyle, do not disparage East Lynne to me! Would I could awake and find the last few months but a hideous dream!—that I could find

my dear father alive again!—that we were still living peacefully at East Lynne. It would be a very Eden to me now.”

What was Mr. Carlyle about to say? What emotion was it that agitated his countenance, impeded his breath, and dyed his face blood-red? His better genius was surely not watching over him, or those words had never been spoken.

“There is but one way,” he began, taking her hand and nervously playing with it, probably unconscious that he did so; “only one way in which you could return to East Lynne. And that way—I may not presume, perhaps, to point it out.”

She looked at him and waited for an explanation.

“If my words offend you, Lady Isabel, check them, as their presumption deserves, and pardon me. May I—dare I—offer you to return to East Lynne as its mistress?” She did not comprehend him in the slightest degree, the drift of his meaning never dawned upon her. “Return to East Lynne as its mistress?” she repeated, in bewilderment.

“And as my wife!”

No possibility of misunderstanding him now, and the shock and surprise were great. She had stood there by Mr. Carlyle’s side conversing confidently with him, esteeming him greatly, feeling as if he were her truest friend on earth, clinging to him in her heart as to a powerful haven of refuge, loving him almost as she would love a brother, suffering her hand to remain in his. But to be his wife! The idea had never presented itself to her in any shape until this moment, and her mind’s first emotion was one of entire opposition, her first movement to express it, as she essayed to withdraw herself and her hand away from him.

But not so; Mr. Carlyle did not suffer it. He not only retained that hand, but took the other also, and spoke, now the ice was broken, eloquent words of love. Not unmeaning phrases of rhapsody about hearts and darts and dying for her, such as somebody else might have given utterance to, but earnest-hearted words of

deep tenderness, calculated to win upon the mind's good sense, as well as upon the ear and heart; and it may be that, had her imagination not been filled up with that "somebody else," she would have said "Yes," there and then.

They were suddenly interrupted. Lady Mount Severn entered and took in the scene at a glance; Mr. Carlyle's bent attitude of devotion, his imprisonment of the hands, and Isabel's perplexed and blushing countenance. She threw up her head and her little inquisitive nose, and stopped short on the carpet; her freezing looks demanded an explanation, as plainly as looks can do it. Mr. Carlyle turned to her, and, by way of sparing Isabel, proceeded to introduce himself. Isabel had just presence of mind left to name her: "Lady Mount Severn."

"I am sorry that Lord Mount Severn should be absent, to whom I have the honor of being known," he said. "I am Mr. Carlyle."

"I have heard of you," replied her ladyship, scanning his good looks, and feeling cross that his homage should be given where she saw it was given, "but I had not heard that you and Lady Isabel Vane were on the extraordinary terms of intimacy that—that——"

"Madam," he interrupted, as he handed a chair to her ladyship and took another to himself, "we have never yet been on terms of extraordinary intimacy. I was begging the Lady Isabel to grant that we might be; I was asking her to become my wife."

The avowal was a shower of incense to the countess, and her ill-humor melted into sunshine. It was a solution to her great difficulty, a loophole by which she might get rid of her *bete noire*, the hated Isabel. A flush of gratification lighted her face, and she became full of graciousness to Mr. Carlyle.

"How very grateful Isabel must feel to you," quoth she. "I speak openly, because I know that you were cognizant of the unprotected state in which she was left by the earl's improvidence, putting marriage for her, at any rate, a high marriage, nearly out of the

question. East Lynne is a beautiful place, I have heard."

"For its size; it is not large," replied Mr. Carlyle, as he rose, for Isabel had also risen and was coming forward.

"And pray what is Lady Isabel's answer?" quickly asked the countess, turning to her.

Not to her did Isabel condescend to give an answer, but she approached Mr. Carlyle, and spoke in a low tone: "Will you give me a few hours for consideration?"

"I am only too happy that you should accord it consideration, for it speaks to me of hope," was the reply, as he opened the door for her to pass out. "I will be here again this afternoon."

It was a perplexing debate that Lady Isabel held with herself in the solitude of her chamber, whilst Mr. Carlyle touched upon ways and means to Lady Mount Severn.

Isabel was little more than a child, and as a child she reasoned, looking neither far nor deep; the shallow, palpable aspect of affairs alone presenting itself to her view. That Mr. Carlyle was not of equal rank to her own, she scarcely remembered; East Lynne seemed a very fair settlement in life, and in point of size, beauty and importance it was far superior to the house she was now in. She forgot that her position in East Lynne as Mr. Carlyle's wife would not be what it had been as Lord Mount Severn's daughter; she forgot that she would be tied to a quiet home, shut out from the great world, from the pomps and vanities to which she was born. She liked Mr. Carlyle; she experienced pleasure in conversing with him! she liked to be with him; in short, but for that other ill-omened fancy which had crept over her, there would have been a danger of her falling in love with Mr. Carlyle. And, oh! to be removed forever from the bitter dependences on Lady Mount Severn—East Lynne would, in truth, after that seem what she had called it, Eden.

"So far it looks favorable," mentally exclaimed poor

Isabel; "but there is the other side of the question. It is not only that I do not love Mr. Carlyle, but I fear I do love, or very nearly love, Francis Levison. I wish he would ask me to be his wife!—or that I had never seen him."

Isabel's soliloquy was interrupted by the entrance of Mrs. Levison and the countess. What the latter had said to the old lady to win her to the cause was best known to herself, but she was eloquent in it. They both used every possible argument to induce her to accept Mr. Carlyle, the old lady declaring she had never been introduced to any one she was so much taken with (and Mrs. Levison was incapable of asserting what was not true); that he was worth a dozen empty-headed men of the great world.

Isabel listened, now swayed one way, now the other, and when the afternoon came, her head was aching with perplexity. The stumbling-block that she could not get over was Francis Levison. She saw Mr. Carlyle's approach from her window, and went down to the drawing-room, not in the least knowing what her answer was to be; a shadowy idea was presenting itself, that she would ask him for longer time, and write her answer.

In the drawing-room was Francis Levison, and her heart beat wildly; which said beating might have convinced her that she ought not to marry another. "Where have you been hiding yourself?" cried he. "Did you hear of our mishap with the pony carriage?"

"No," was her answer.

"I was driving Emma into town. The pony took fright, kicked, plunged and went down upon his knees; she took fright in her turn, got out, and walked back. So I gave the brute some chastisement and a race, and brought him to the stables, getting home in time to be introduced to Mr. Carlyle. He seems an out-and-out good fellow, Isabel, and I congratulate you."

"What!" she uttered.

"Don't start. We are all in the family, and my lady told me; I don't betray it abroad. She says East

Lynne is a place to be coveted. I wish you happiness, Isabel."

"Thank you," she returned, in a sarcastic tone, though her heart beat and her lips quivered. "You are premature in your congratulations, Captain Levi-son."

"Am I? Keep my good wishes, then, till the right man comes. I am beyond the pale myself, and dare not think of entering the happy state," he added, in a pointed tone. "I have indulged dreams of it, like others, but I cannot afford to indulge them seriously; a poor man, with uncertain prospects, can only play the butterfly, perhaps, to his life's end."

He quitted the room as he spoke. It was impossible for Isabel to misunderstand him, but a feeling shot across her mind, for the first time, that he was false and heartless. One of the servants appeared, showing in Mr. Carlyle; nothing false or heartless about him. He closed the door, and approached her, but she did not speak, and her lips were white and trembling. Mr. Carlyle waited. "Well," he said at length, in a gentle tone, "have you decided to grant my prayer?"

"Yes. But——" She could not go on. What with one agitation and another, she had difficulty in conquering her emotion. "But—I was going to tell you——"

"Presently," he whispered, leading her to a sofa; "we can both afford to wait now. Oh, Isabel, you have made me very happy!"

"I ought to tell you, I must tell you," she began again, in the midst of hysterical tears. "Though I have said 'yes' to your proposal, I do not—yet—— It has come to me by surprise," she stammered. "I like you very much; I esteem and respect you; but I do not yet love you."

"I should wonder if you did. But you will let me earn your love, Isabel?"

"Oh, yes," she earnestly answered. "I hope so." He drew her closer to him, bent his face, and took from her lips his first kiss. Isabel was passive; she

supposed he had gained the right to do so. "My dearest! it is all I ask."

Mr. Carlyle stayed over the following day, and before he departed in the evening, arrangements had been discussed. The marriage was to take place immediately; all concerned had a motive for hurrying it on. Mr. Carlyle was anxious that the fair flower should be his; Isabel was sick of Castle Marling, sick of some of the people in it; my lady was sick of Isabel. In less than a month it was to be, and Francis Levison sneered over the "indecent haste." Mr. Carlyle wrote to the earl. Lady Mount Severn announced that she should present Isabel with the trousseau, and wrote to London to order it. It is a positive fact that when he was taking leave of Isabel she clung to him.

"I wish I could take you now, my darling!" he uttered. "I cannot bear to leave you here."

"I wish you could!" she sighed. "You have seen only the sunny side of Lady Mount Severn."

CHAPTER XIII

MR. DILL'S SHAKING

The sensations of Mr. Carlyle when he returned to West Lynne were very much like those of an Eton boy who knows he has been in mischief and dreads detection. Always open as to his own affairs, for he had nothing to conceal, he yet deemed it expedient to dissemble now. He felt that his sister would be bitter at the prospect of his marrying; instinct had taught him that, years past; and he believed that, of all women, the most objectionable to her would be Lady Isabel, for Miss Carlyle looked to the useful, and had neither sympathy nor admiration for the beautiful. He was not sure but she might be capable of endeavoring to frustrate the marriage, should news of it reach her ears, and her indomitable will had carried many strange things in her life; therefore you will not blame Mr. Carlyle for observing entire reticence as to his future plans.

A family by the name of Carew had been about taking East Lynne; they wished to rent it, furnished, for three years. Upon some of the minor arrangements they and Mr. Carlyle were opposed, but the latter declined to give way. During his absence at Castle Marling, news had arrived from them—that they acceded to all his terms, and would enter upon East Lynne as soon as was convenient. Miss Carlyle was full of congratulation; it was off their hands, she said; but the first letter Mr. Carlyle wrote was—to decline them. He did not tell this to Miss Carlyle. The final touches of the house were given, preparatory to the reception of its inhabitants, three maids and two men servants hired and sent there, upon board wages, until the family should arrive.

One evening, three weeks subsequent to Mr. Carlyle's visit to Castle Marling, Barbara Hare called at Miss Carlyle's, and found them going to tea, much earlier than usual.

"We dined earlier," said Miss Corny, "and I ordered tea in as soon as the dinner went away. Otherwise Archibald would have taken none."

"I am as well without tea," said he. "I have a mass of business to get through yet."

"You are not so well without it," cried Miss Corny, "and I don't choose that you should go without it. Take off your bonnet, Barbara. He does things like nobody else; he is off to Castle Marling to-morrow, and never could open his lips till just now that he was going."

"Is that invalid—Brewster, or whatever his name is—laid up at Castle Marling still?" asked Barbara.

"He is there still," said Mr. Carlyle.

Barbara sat down to the tea-table, though protesting that she ought not to remain, for she had told her mamma she should be home to make tea. Miss Carlyle interrupted what she was saying by telling her brother she should go presently and pack his things.

"Oh, no," returned he, with alarming quickness, "I will pack them myself, thank you. Peter, you can put the portemanteau in my room. The large one."

"The large one!" echoed Miss Corny, who never could let anything pass without her interference, "why, it's as big as a house. What in the world can you want, dragging that with you?"

"I have papers and things to take, besides clothes."

"I am sure I could pack all your things in a small one," persisted Miss Corny. "I'll try. You only tell me what you want put in. Take the small portemanteau to your master's room, Peter."

Mr. Carlyle glanced at Peter, and Peter glanced back again with an imperceptible nod. "I prefer to pack my things myself, Cornelia."

Barbara sprang up the moment the tea was over. "I don't know what mamma will say to me. And it is beginning to grow dusk! She will think it is late for me to be out alone."

"Archibald can walk with you," said Miss Carlyle.

"I don't know that," cried he, in his plain, open way. "Dill is waiting for me in the office, and I have some hours' work before me. However—I suppose you won't care to put up with Peter's attendance; so make haste with your bonnet, Barbara."

No need to tell Barbara that, when the choice between him and Peter depended on the speed she would make. She wished good-evening to Miss Carlyle, and went out with him, he taking her parasol from her hand. It was a calm, lovely night, very light yet, and they took the field way.

Barbara could not forget Isabel Vane. She never had forgotten her, or the jealous feeling that arose in her heart at Mr. Carlyle's constant visits to East Lynne when she inhabited it. She returned to the subject now. "Archibald, is Lady Isabel likely to marry?"

"My memory cannot carry all I hear."

"But is she?" persisted Barbara.

"You are persevering," he smiled. "I believe Lady Isabel is likely to marry."

Barbara drew a relieved sigh. "Whom?"

The same amused smile played on his lips. "Do you

suppose I could put premature questions? I may be able to tell you more about it after my next return from Castle Marling."

"Do try and find out," said she. "Perhaps it is Lord Vane. Who is it says that more marriages arise from habitual association than——"

She stopped, for Mr. Carlyle had turned his eyes upon her, and was laughing. "You are a clever guesser, Barbara. Lord Vane is a little fellow five or six years old."

"Oh," returned Barbara, considerably discomfited.

"And the nicest child," he warmly continued; "open-tempered, generous-hearted, earnest-spirited. Should I have children of my own," he added, switching the hedge with the parasol, and speaking in an abstracted manner, as if forgetful of his companion, "I could wish them to be like William Vane."

"A very important confession," gayly returned Barbara. "After contriving to impress West Lynne with the conviction that you would be an old bachelor."

"I don't know that I ever promised West Lynne anything of the sort," cried Carlyle.

Barbara laughed now. "I suppose West Lynne judges by appearances. When a man owns to thirty years——"

"Which I don't do," interrupted Mr. Carlyle, considerably damaging the hedge and the parasol. "I may be an old married man before I count thirty; the chances are that I shall be."

"Then you must have fixed upon your wife," she quickly cried.

"I do not say I have not, Barbara. All in good time to proclaim it, though." Barbara withdrew her arm from Mr. Carlyle's under pretense of repinning her shawl. Her heart was beating, her whole frame trembling, and she feared he might detect her emotions. She never thought he could allude to any one but herself. Poor Barbara!

"How flushed you look, Barbara!" he exclaimed. "Have I walked too fast?" She seemed not to hear,

intent upon her shawl. Then she took his arm again, and they walked on, Mr. Carlyle striking the hedge and the grass more industriously than ever. Another minute and—the handle was in two.

“I thought you would do it,” said Barbara, while he was regarding the parasol with ludicrous dismay. “Never mind; it is an old one.”

“I will bring you another to replace it. What is the color? Brown. I won’t forget. Hold the relics a minute, Barbara.”

He put the pieces in her hand, and taking out a note-case, made a note in pencil. “What’s that for?” she inquired. He held it close to her eyes, that she might discern what he had written: “Brown parasol. B. H.” “A reminder for me, Barbara, in case I forget.”

Barbara’s eye detected another item or two, already entered in the note-case: “Piano.” “Plate.” “I jot down the things as they occur to me, that I must get in London,” he explained. “Otherwise I should forget half.”

“In London! I thought you were going in an opposite direction; to Castle Marling.”

It was a slip of the tongue, but Mr. Carlyle repaired it. “I may probably have to visit London as well as Castle Marling. How bright the moon looks, rising there, Barbara!”

“So bright—that, or the sky—that I saw your secrets,” answered she. “Piano! Plate! What can you want with either, Archibald?”

“Oh, for the Carews.” And her interest in the items was gone.

“Archibald, I have long wished to ask you something,” said Barbara at the gate. “You will not deem me foolish?”

“What is it?”

“When you gave me the gold chain and locket a year ago—you remember?”

“Yes. Well?”

“I put some of that hair of Richard’s in it, and a bit

of Anne's, and of mamma's; a tiny little bit of each. And there is room for more, you see."

She held it out to him as she spoke, for she always wore it round her neck, attached to the chain.

"I cannot see well by this light, Barbara. If there is room for more, what of that?"

"I like to think that I possess a memento of my best friends, or of those who were dear to me. I wish you to give me a bit of your hair to put with the rest—as it was you who gave me the locket."

"My hair!" returned Mr. Carlyle, in a tone of as much astonishment as if she had asked for his head. "What good would that do you, Barbara, or the locket either?"

Her face flushed painfully; her heart beat. "I like to have a remembrance of the friends I—I care for," she stammered. "Nothing more, Archibald."

He detected neither the emotion nor the depth of feeling, the sort of feeling that had prompted the request, and he met it with good-natured ridicule. "What a pity you did not tell me yesterday, Barbara! I had my hair cut and might have sent you the snippings. Don't be a goose, child, and exalt me into a Wellington, to bestow hair and autographs. I can't stop a minute longer. Good-night."

He hastened away with quick strides, and Barbara covered her face with her hands. "What have I done? what have I done?" she reiterated aloud. "Is it in his nature to be thus indifferent—matter of fact? Has he no sentiment? But it will come. Oh, the bliss this night has brought forth! there was truth in his tone beneath its vein of mockery, when he spoke of his chosen wife. I need not go far to guess who it is—he has told no one else, and he pays attention to none but me. Archibald, when once I am your wife you shall know how fondly I love you; you cannot know till then."

She lifted her fair young face, beautiful in its radiance, and gazed at the deepening moonlight, then turned away and pursued her path up the garden-walk,

unconscious that something, wearing a bonnet, pushed its head beyond the trees to steal a look after her. Barbara would have said less had she divined there was a third party to the interview.

It was three mornings after the departure of Mr. Carlyle that Mr. Dill appeared before Miss Carlyle, bearing a letter. She was busy regarding the effect of some new muslin curtains, just put up, and did not pay attention to him.

"Will you please take the letter, Miss Cornelia? The postman left it in the office with ours. It is from Mr. Archibald."

"Why, what has he got to write to me about?" retorted Miss Corny. "Does he say when he is coming home?"

"You had better see, Miss Cornelia. He does not say anything about his return in mine."

She opened the letter, glanced at it, and sank down on a chair, more overcome, more stupefied than she had felt in her whole life.

CASTLE MARLING, May 1st.

"MY DEAR CORNELIA:—I was married this morning to Lady Isabel Vane, and hasten briefly to acquaint you with the fact. I will write you more fully to-morrow or the next day, and explain all things. Ever your affectionate brother,

"ARCHIBALD CARLYLE."

"It is a hoax," were the first guttural sounds that escaped from Miss Carlyle's throat, when speech came to her.

Mr. Dill only stood like a stone image.

"It is a hoax, I say," raved Miss Carlyle. "What are you standing there for, like a gander, on one leg?" she reiterated, venting her anger upon the unoffending man. "Is it a hoax, or not?"

"I am overdone with amazement, Miss Corny. It is not a hoax; I have had a letter, too."

"It can't be true; it can't be true. He had no more

thought of being married when he left here, three days ago, than I have."

"How can we tell that, Miss Corny? How are we to know he did not go to be married? I fancy he did."

"Go to be married!" shrieked Miss Corny, in a passion, "he would not be such a fool. And to that fine lady-child! No, no."

"He has sent this to be put in the county journals," said Mr. Dill, holding forth a scrap of paper. "They are married, sure enough."

Miss Carlyle took it and held it before her; her hand was cold as ice, and shook as if with palsy. "Married: On the 1st inst., at Castle Marling, by the chaplain to the Earl of Mount Severn, Archibald Carlyle, Esquire, of East Lynne, to the Lady Isabel Mary Vane, only child of William, late Earl of Mount Severn."

"I will never forgive him," she deliberately uttered, "and I will never forgive or tolerate her. The senseless idiot! to go and marry Mount Severn's expensive daughter! a thing who goes to court in feathers and a train—streaming out three yards behind her!"

"He is not an idiot, Miss Cornelia."

"He is worse; he is a wicked madman," she retorted, in a midway state between rage and tears. "He must have been stark, staring mad to go and do it; and had I gathered an inkling of the project I would have taken out a commission of lunacy against him. Ah, you may stare, old Dill, but I would, as truly as I hope to have my sins forgiven. Where are they to live?"

"I expect they will live at East Lynne."

"What?" screamed Miss Corny. "Live at East Lynne with the Carews! You are going mad, too, I think."

"The negotiation with the Carews is off, Miss Cornelia. When Mr. Archibald returned from Castle Marling, at Easter, he wrote to decline them. I saw the copy of the letter in the copying-book. I expected

he had settled matters then with Lady Isabel, and had decided to keep East Lynne for himself."

Miss Carlyle's mouth had opened with consternation. Recovering partially, she rose from her seat, and drawing herself to her full and majestic height, she advanced behind the astonished gentleman, seized the collar of his coat with both hands and shook him for several minutes. Poor old Dill, short and slight, was as a puppet in her hands, and thought his breath had gone forever.

"I would have had out a lunacy commission for you also, you sly villain! You are in the plot; you have been aiding and abetting him; you knew as much of it as he did."

"I declare solemnly, to the Goodness that made me, I did not," gasped the ill-tempered man, when he could gather speech. "I am as innocent as a baby, Miss Corny. When I got the letter just now in the office, you might have knocked me down with a feather."

She sat down as soon as she was alone, and her face assumed a stony, rigid look. Her hands fell upon her knees, and Mr. Carlyle's letter dropped to the ground. After a while her features began to work, and she nodded her head, and lifted, now one hand, now the other, apparently debating various points in her own mind. By-and-by she rose, attired herself in her bonnet and shawl, and took the way to Justice Hare's. She felt that the news which would be poured out to West Lynne before the day was over did reflect a slight upon herself her much-loved brother had forsaken her, to take to himself one, nearer and dearer, and had done it in dissimulation; therefore she herself would be the first to proclaim it far and wide.

Barbara was at the window in the usual sitting-room as Miss Corny entered the Grove. A grim smile, in spite of her outraged feelings, crossed that lady's lips, when she thought of the blow about to be dealt out to Barbara. Very clearly had she penetrated to the love of that young lady for Archibald; to her hopes of becoming his wife.

"What brings Cornelia here?" thought Barbara.

Miss Carlyle came in and emitted a few dismal groans, by way of preliminary.

Barbara turned to her quickly. "Are you ill? Has anything upset you?"

"Upset me! you may say that!" ejaculated Miss Corny, in wrath. "It has turned my heart and my feelings inside out. My wise brother Archibald has gone and made a fool of himself, Barbara, and now is coming home to live at East Lynne."

Though there was much that was unintelligible to Barbara in this, she could not suppress the flush of gratification that rose to her cheek and dyed it with blushes. "You are going to be taken down a notch or two, my lady," thought the clear-sighted Miss Carlyle. "The news fell upon me this morning like a thunderbolt," she said aloud. "Old Dill brought it to me. I shook him for his pains."

"Shook old Dill!" reiterated the wondering Barbara.

"I shook him till my arms ached. He won't forget it in a hurry. He has been abetting Archibald in his wickedness; concealing things from me that he ought to have come and declared; and I am not sure that I can't have the two indicted for conspiracy."

Barbara sat, all amazement, without the faintest idea of what Miss Corny could be driving at.

"You remember that child, Mount Severn's daughter? I think I see her now, coming into the concert-room in her white robes and her jewels and her flowing hair, looking like a young princess in a fairy-tale—all very well for her, for what she is, but not for us."

"What of her?" uttered Barbara.

"Archibald has married her!" In spite of Barbara's full consciousness that she was before the penetrating eyes of Miss Corny, and in spite of her own efforts for calmness, every feature in her face turned of a ghastly whiteness. But, like Miss Carlyle, she at first took refuge in disbelief.

"It is not true, Cornelia."

"It is quite true. They were married yesterday at Castle Marling, by Lord Mount Severn's chaplain. Had I known it then, and could I have got there, I might have contrived to part them, though the church ceremony had passed; I should have tried. But," added the plain-speaking Miss Corny, "yesterday was one thing and to-day's another; and of course nothing can be done now."

"Excuse me an instant," gasped Barbara, in a low tone, "I forgot to give an order mamma left for the servants."

An order for the servants! She swiftly passed upstairs to her own room, and flung herself down on the floor in utter anguish. The past had cleared itself of its mists; the scales that were before Barbara's eyes had fallen from them. She saw now that while she had cherished false and delusive hopes in her almost idolatrous passion for Archibald Carlyle, she had never been cared for by him. Even the previous night she had lain awake some of its hours, indulging dreams of the sweetest fantasy—and that was the night of his wedding-day! With a sharp wail of despair, Barbara flung her arms up and closed her aching eyes; she knew that from that hour her life's sunshine had departed.

CHAPTER XIV

THE EARL'S ASTONISHMENT

The announcement of the marriage in the newspapers was the first intimation of it Lord Mount Severn received. He was little less thunderstruck than Miss Corny, and came steaming to England the same day, thereby missing his wife's letter, which gave her version of the affair. He met Mr. Carlyle and Lady Isabel in London, where they were staying at one of the West End hotels for a day or two; they were going further. Isabel was alone when the earl was announced.

"What is the meaning of this, Isabel?" began he,

without circumlocution of greeting. "You are married?"

"Yes," she answered, with her pretty, innocent blush. "Some days ago."

"And to Carlyle, the lawyer! How did it come about?"

Isabel began to think how it had come about, sufficiently to give a clear answer. "He asked me," she said, "and I accepted him. He came to Castle Marling at Easter, and asked me then. I was very much surprised."

The earl looked at her attentively. "Why was I kept in ignorance of this, Isabel?"

"I did not know you were kept in ignorance of it. Mr. Carlyle wrote to you, as did Lady Mount Severn."

Lord Mount Severn was as a man in the dark, and looked like it. "I suppose this comes," soliloquized he aloud, "of your father's having allowed the gentleman to dance daily attendance at East Lynne. And so you fell in love with him?"

"Indeed, no," answered she, in an amused tone. "I never thought of such a thing as falling in love with Mr. Carlyle."

"Then don't you love him?" abruptly asked the earl.

"No!" she whispered, timidly. "But I like him much—oh, very much. And he is so good to me."

The earl stroked his chin and mused. Isabel had destroyed the only conclusion he had been able to come to as to the motives for the hasty marriage. "If you do not love Mr. Carlyle, how comes it that you are so wise in the distinction between 'liking' and 'love?' It cannot be that you love anybody else?"

The question told home, and Isabel turned crimson. "I shall love my husband in time," was all she answered, as she bent her head, and played nervously with her watch chain.

"My poor child!" involuntarily exclaimed the earl. But he was one who liked to fathom the depth of everything. "Who has been staying at Castle Marling since I left?" he asked, sharply.

"Mrs. Levison came down."

"I alluded to gentlemen—young men."

"Only Francis Levison," she replied.

"Francis Levison! You have never been so foolish as to fall in love with him?"

The question was so pointed, so abrupt, and Isabel's self-consciousness moreover so great, that she betrayed lamentable confusion; and the earl had no further need to ask. Pity stole into his hard eyes as they fixed themselves on her downcast, glowing face. "Isabel," he gravely began, "Captain Levison is not a good man; if ever you were inclined to think him one, dispossess your mind of that idea, and hold him at arm's distance. Drop his acquaintance, encourage no intimacy with him."

"I have already dropped it," said Isabel, "and I shall not take it up again. But Lady Mount Severn must think well of him, or she would not have him there."

"She thinks none too well of him; none can of Francis Levison," returned the earl, significantly. "He is her cousin, and is one of those idle, vain, empty-headed flatterers whom it is her pleasure to group about her. Do you be wiser, Isabel. But this does not solve the enigma of your marriage with Carlyle; on the contrary, it renders it the more unaccountable. He must have cajoled you into it."

Before Isabel could reply, Mr. Carlyle entered. He held out his hand to the earl; the earl did not appear to see it.

"Isabel" said he, "I am sorry to turn you out; I suppose you have only this one sitting-room. I wish to say a few words to Mr. Carlyle." She quitted them, and the earl wheeled round and faced Mr. Carlyle, speaking in a stern, haughty tone: "How came this marriage about, sir? Do you possess so little honor, that, taking advantage of my absence, you must intrude yourself into my family, and clandestinely espouse Lady Isabel Vane?"

"There has been nothing clandestine in my conduct

toward Lady Isabel Vane; there shall be nothing but honor in my conduct toward Lady Isabel Carlyle. Your lordship has been misinformed."

"I have not been informed at all," retorted the earl, "I was allowed to learn this from the public papers; I, the only relative of Lady Isabel."

"When I proposed for Lady Isabel——"

"But a month ago," sarcastically interrupted the earl.

"But a month ago," calmly repeated Mr. Carlyle, "my first action, after Isabel accepted me, was to write to you. Lady Mount Severn could not give me your address. She said if I would intrust the letter to her she would forward it, for she expected daily to hear from you. I did give her the letter, and I heard no more of the matter, except that her ladyship sent me a message, when Isabel was writing to me, that as you had returned no reply, you of course approved."

"Is this the fact?" cried the earl.

"My lord!" coldly replied Mr. Carlyle. "Whatever may be my defects in your eyes, I am at least a man of truth. Until this moment the suspicion that you were in ignorance of the contemplated marriage never occurred to me."

"So far, then, I beg your pardon, Mr. Carlyle. But how came the marriage about at all? how came it to be hurried over in this unseemly fashion? You made the offer at Easter, Isabel tells me, and you married her three weeks after it."

"And I would have married her and brought her away the day I made it, had it been practicable," returned Mr. Carlyle. "I have acted throughout for her comfort and happiness."

"Oh, indeed!" returned the earl, returning to his disagreeable tone. "Perhaps you will put me in possession of the facts, and of your motives."

"I warn you that the facts, to you, will not bear a pleasant sound, Lord Mount Severn." "Allow me to be the judge of that," said the earl.

"Business took me to Castle Marling on Good

Friday. On the following day I called at your house; after your own and Isabel's invitation, it was natural I should call; in fact, it would have been a breach of good feeling not to do so. I found Isabel ill-treated and miserable; far from enjoying a happy home in your house——"

"What, sir?" interrupted the earl. "Ill-treated and miserable?"

"Ill-treated, even to blows, my lord."

The earl stood as one petrified, staring at Mr. Carlyle.

"I learnt it, I must premise, through the chattering revelations of your little son; Isabel, of course, would not have mentioned it to me; but when the child had spoken she did not deny it. In short, she was too broken-hearted, too completely bowed in spirit, to deny it. It aroused all my feelings of indignation; it excited in me an irresistible desire to emancipate her from this cruel life, and take her where she would find affection and—I hope—happiness. There was only one way in which I could do this, and I risked it. I asked her to become my wife, and to return to her home at East Lynne."

The earl was slowly recovering from his petrification. "Then am I to understand that when you called that day at my house, you carried no intention with you of proposing to Isabel?"

"Not any. It was a sudden step, the circumstances under which I found her calling it forth."

The earl paced the room, perplexed still, and evidently disturbed. "May I inquire if you love her?" he abruptly said.

Mr. Carlyle paused ere he spoke, and a red flush dyed his face. "Those are feelings man rarely acknowledges to man, Lord Mount Severn, but I will answer you. I do love her, passionately and sincerely. I learnt to love her at East Lynne; but I could have carried my love silently within me to the end of my life, and never betrayed it, but for that unexpected visit to Castle Marling. If the idea of making her my

wife had not previously occurred to me as practicable, it was that I deemed her rank incompatible with my own."

"As it was," said the earl.

"Country solicitors have married peers' daughters before now," remarked Mr. Carlyle. "I only add another to the list."

"But you cannot keep her as a peer's daughter, I presume?"

"East Lynne will be her home. Our establishment will be small and quiet, as compared with her father's. I explained to Isabel how quiet at the first, and she might have retracted, had she wished; I explained also in full to Lady Mount Severn. East Lynne will descend to our eldest son, should we have children. My profession is most lucrative, my income good; were I to die to-morrow, Isabel would enjoy East Lynne, and about three thousand pounds per annum. I gave these details in the letter which appears to have miscarried."

The earl made no immediate reply; he was absorbed in thought.

"Your lordship perceives, I hope, that there has been nothing 'clandestine' in my conduct to Lady Isabel."

Lord Mount Severn held out his hand. "I refused my hand when you came in, Mr. Carlyle, as you may have observed; perhaps you will refuse yours now, though I should be proud to shake it. When I find myself in the wrong, I am not above acknowledging the fact; and I must state my opinion that you have behaved most kindly and honorably."

Mr. Carlyle smiled and put his hand into the earl's. The latter retained it, while he spoke in a whisper. "Of course I cannot be ignorant that, in speaking of Isabel's ill-treatment, you alluded to my wife. Has it transpired beyond yourselves?"

"You may be sure that neither Isabel nor myself would mention it; we shall dismiss it from among our reminiscences. Let it be as though you had never heard it; it is past and done with."

"Isabel," said the earl, as he was departing that evening, for he remained to spend the day with them, "I came here this morning almost prepared to strike your husband, and I go away honoring him. Be a good and faithful wife to him, for he deserves it."

"Of course, I shall," she answered in surprise.

Lord Mount Severn went on to Castle Marling, and there he had a stormy interview with his wife; so stormy that the sounds penetrated to the ears of the domestics. He left it again the same day, in anger, and proceeded to Mount Severn. "He will have time to cool down before we meet in London," was the comment of my lady.

CHAPTER XV

COMING HOME

Miss Carlyle quitted her own house, and removed to East Lynne with Peter and two of her hand-maidens. In spite of Mr. Dill's grieved remonstrances, she discharged the servants whom Mr. Carlyle had engaged, all save one man.

On a Friday night, about a month after the wedding, Mr. Carlyle and his wife came home. They were expected, and Miss Carlyle went through the hall to receive them, and stood on the upper steps, between the pillars of the portico.

"You here, Cornelia!" exclaimed Mr. Carlyle. "That is kind. How are you? Isabel, this is my sister." Lady Isabel put forth her hand, and Miss Carlyle condescended to touch the tips of her fingers. "I hope you are well, ma'am," she jerked out.

Mr. Carlyle left them together, and went back to search for some trifles which had been left in the carriage. Miss Carlyle led the way to a sitting-room, where the supper-tray was laid. "You would like to go upstairs and take your things off before supper, ma'am?" she said, in the same jerking tone, to Lady Isabel.

"Thank you. I will go to my rooms, but I do not require supper. We have dined."

"Then what would you like to take?" asked Miss Corny.

"Some tea, if you please. I am very thirsty."

"Tea!" ejaculated Miss Corny. "So late as this! I don't know that they have any boiling water. You'd never sleep a wink all night, ma'am, if you took tea at eleven o'clock."

"Oh—then never mind," replied Lady Isabel. "It is of no consequence. Do not let me give trouble."

Miss Carlyle whisked out of the room; upon what errand was best known to herself; and in the hall she and Marvel came to an encounter. No words passed, but each eyed the other grimly. Marvel was very stylish, with five flounces to her dress, a veil and a parasol. Meanwhile Lady Isabel sat down and burst into tears and sobs. A chill had come over her; it did not seem like coming home to East Lynne. Mr. Carlyle entered and witnessed the grief. "Isabel!" he uttered in amazement, as he hastened up to her. "My darling, what ails you?"

"I am tired, I think," she gently answered, "and coming into the house again made me think of papa. I should like to go to my rooms, Archibald, but I don't know which they are."

Neither did Mr. Carlyle know, but Miss Carlyle came whisking in again, and said, "the best rooms; those next the library. Should she go up with my lady?"

Mr. Carlyle preferred to go himself, and he held out his arm to Isabel. She drew her veil over her face as she passed Miss Carlyle.

The branches were not lighted, and the room looked cold and comfortless. "Things seem all at sixes and sevens in the house," remarked Mr. Carlyle. "I fancy the servants must have misunderstood my letter, and not have expected us until to-morrow night."

"Archibald," she said, taking off her bonnet, "I do feel very tired, and—and—low-spirited; may I undress at once, and not go down again to-night?"

He looked at her and smiled. "May you not go down again? Have you forgotten that you are at last in your own home? A happy home, I trust it will be, my darling; I will strive to render it so."

She leaned upon him and sobbed aloud. He tenderly bore with her mood, soothing her to composure, gently kissing the face she held to him, now and then. Oh, his was a true heart; he fervently intended to cherish this fair flower he had won; but alas! it was just possible he might miss the way, unless he could emancipate himself from his sister's thralldom. Isabel did not love him; of that she was conscious; but her deep and earnest hope by night and day was that she might learn to love him, for she knew that he deserved it.

Mr. Carlyle quitted the room and sought his sister, who, finding she was to be the only one to take supper, was then helping herself to the wing of a fowl. She had chosen, that day, to dine early. "Cornelia," he began, "I do not understand all this. I don't see my servants and I see yours. Where are mine?"

"Gone away," said Miss Carlyle, in her decisive, off-hand manner. "Gone away?" responded Mr. Carlyle. "What for? I believe they were excellent servants."

"Very excellent! Decking themselves out in buff *mousseline-de-laine* dresses on a Saturday morning, and fine caps garnished with peach. Never attempt to dabble in domestic matters again, Archibald, for you only get taken in. Cut me a slice of that tongue."

"But in what did they do wrong?" he repeated, as he obeyed her.

"Archibald Carlyle, how could you go and make a fool of yourself? If you must have married, were there not plenty of young ladies in your own sphere of society——"

"Stay," he interrupted. "I wrote you a full statement of my motives and actions, Cornelia; I concealed nothing that it was necessary you should know; I am not disposed to enter upon a further discussion of the

subject, and you must pardon my saying so. Let us return to the topic of the servants. Where are they?"

"I sent them away because they were superfluous incumbrances," she hastily added, as he would have interrupted her. "We have four in the house, and my lady has brought a fine maid, I see, making five. I have come up here to live."

Mr. Carlyle felt checkmated. He had always bowed to the will of Miss Corny, but he had an idea that he and his wife would be better without her. "And your own house?" he exclaimed. "I have let it furnished; the people entered to-day. You cannot turn me out of East Lynne, into the road, or to furnished lodgings, Archibald. There will be enough expense without our keeping on two houses; and most people, in your place, would jump at the prospect of my living here. Your wife will be mistress; I do not intend to take her honors from her; but I shall have a world of trouble in management, and be as useful to her as a housekeeper. She will be glad of that, inexperienced as she is. I dare say she never gave a domestic order in her life."

This was a view of the case to Mr. Carlyle, so plausibly put, that he began to think it might be all for the best. He had great reverence for his sister's judgment; force of habit is strong upon all of us. Still—he did not know.

"There is certainly room for you at East Lynne, Cornelia, but——"

"A little too much," put in Miss Corny. "I think a house half its size might content us all, and still have been grand enough for Lady Isabel."

"East Lynne is mine," said Mr. Carlyle.

"So is your folly," rejoined Miss Cornelia.

"And with regard to servants," proceeded Mr. Carlyle, passing over the remark, "I shall certainly keep as many as I deem necessary. I cannot give my wife splendor, but I will give her comfort. The horses and carriages will take one man's——"

Miss Corny turned faint all over. "What on earth are you talking of?"

"I bought a pretty open carriage in town, a pair of ponies for it. The carriage we came home in was Lord Mount Severn's present. Post-horses will do for that at present."

Miss Corny threw up her hands and eyes. At that moment Peter entered with some hot water which his master had rung for. Mr. Carlyle rose, and looked on the sideboard. "Where's the wine, Peter?" The servant put it out, port and sherry. Mr. Carlyle drank a glass, and then proceeded to mix some wine and water. "Shall I mix some for you, Cornelia?" he asked.

"I'll mix for myself if I want any. Who is that for?"

"Isabel."

He quitted the room, carrying the wine and water, and entered his wife's. She was sitting half buried it seemed in the armchair, her face muffled up. As she raised it he saw that it was flushed and agitated, that her eyes were bright and her frame was trembling. "What is the matter?" he hastily asked.

"I got nervous after Marvel went," she whispered, laying hold of him, as if for protection from terror. "I could not find the bell, and that made me worse; so I came back to the chair and covered my head over, hoping somebody would come up."

"I have been talking to Cornelia. But what made you nervous?"

"Oh, I was very foolish. I kept thinking of frightful things; they would come into my mind. Do not blame me, Archibald. This is the room papa died in."

"Blame you, my darling!" he muttered, with deep feeling.

"I thought of a dreadful story about the bats, that the servants told—I dare say you never heard it; and I kept thinking, 'Suppose they were at the windows now, behind the blinds?' and then I was afraid to look at the bed; I fancied I might see—— You are laughing!"

Yes, he was smiling, for he knew that these moments of nervous fear are best met jestingly. He made her drink the wine and water, and then he showed her where the bell was, ringing it as he did so. Its position had been moved in some late alterations to the house.

"Your rooms shall be changed to-morrow, Isabel."

"No, let us remain in these. I shall like to feel that papa was once their occupant. I won't get nervous again."

But, even as she spoke, her actions belied her words. Mr. Carlyle had gone to the door and opened it, and she flew close up to him, cowering behind him.

"Shall you be very long, Archibald?" she whispered.

"Not more than an hour," he answered. But he hastily put back one of his hands, and held her tightly in his protecting grasp; Marvel was coming along the corridor in answer to the bell. "Have the goodness to let Miss Carlyle know that I am not coming down again to-night," he said.

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Carlyle shut the door, and then looked at his wife and laughed. "He is very kind to me," thought Isabel.

With the morning began the perplexities of Lady Isabel Carlyle. But first of all, just fancy the group at breakfast. Miss Carlyle descended in the startling costume the reader has seen, took her seat at the breakfast table, and there sat bolt upright. Mr. Carlyle came down next; and then Lady Isabel entered, in an elegant half-mourning dress with flowing black ribbons.

"Good-morning, ma'am. I hope you slept well?" was Miss Carlyle's salutation. "Quite well, thank you," she answered, as she took her seat opposite Miss Carlyle. Miss Carlyle pointed to the top of the table. "That is your place, ma'am. But I will pour out the coffee, and save you the trouble, if you wish it."

"I should be glad if you would," answered Lady Isabel.

After breakfast Lady Isabel accompanied Mr. Carlye through the park. He thought it a good opportunity to speak about his sister. "She wishes to remain with us," he said. "I do not know what to decide. On the one hand, I think she might save you the worry of household management, on the other, I fancy we shall be happier by ourselves."

Isabel's heart sank within her at the idea of that stern Miss Corny mounted over her as a resident guard; but, refined and sensitive, almost painfully considerate of the feelings of others, she raised no word of objection. As he and Miss Carlye pleased, she answered.

"Isabel," he said, with grave earnestness, "I wish it to be as you please; that is, I wish matters to be arranged as may best please you; and I will have them so arranged. My chief object in life now is your happiness."

He spoke in all the sincerity of truth, and Isabel knew it; and the thought came across her that with him by her side, her loving protector, Miss Carlye could not mar her life's peace. "Let her stay, Archibald; she will not incommode us."

"At any rate, it can be tried for a month or two, and we shall see how it works," he musingly observed.

They reached the park gates. "I wish I could go with you and be your clerk," she cried, unwilling to release his hand. "I should not have all that long way to go back by myself." He laughed and shook his head, telling her that she wanted to bribe him into taking her back, but it could not be. And away he went after saying farewell.

Isabel wandered back, and then wandered through the rooms. They looked lonely, not as they had seemed to look in her father's time. In her dressing-room knelt Marvel, unpacking. She rose when Isabel entered.

"Can I speak to you a moment, if you please, my lady?"

"What is it?"

Then Marvel poured forth her tale—that she feared

so small an establishment would not suit her, and if my lady pleased she would like to leave at once, that day. Anticipating it, she had not unpacked her things.

"There has been some mistake about the servants, Marvel, but it will be remedied as soon as possible. And I told you, before I married, that Mr. Carlyle's establishment would be a limited one."

"My lady, perhaps I could put up with that; but I never could stop in the house with"—that female Guy, had been on the tip of Marvel's tongue; but she remembered in time of whom she was speaking—"with Miss Carlyle. I fear, my lady, we have both got tempers that would clash, and might be flying at each other; I could not stop, my lady, for untold gold. And if you please to make me forfeit my running quarter's salary, why, I must do it. So when I have set your ladyship's things to rights I hope you'll allow me to go."

Lady Isabel would not condescend to ask her to remain, but she wondered how she should manage without a maid. She drew her desk toward her. "What is the amount due to you?" she inquired, as she unlocked it.

"Up to the end of the quarter, my lady?" cried Marvel, in a brisk tone.

"No," coldly replied Lady Isabel. "Up to to-day."

"I have not had time to reckon, my lady."

Lady Isabel took a pencil and paper, made out the account, and laid it down in gold and silver on the table. "It is more than you deserve, Marvel," she remarked, "and more than you would get in most places. You ought to have given me proper notice."

So Marvel left. And when Lady Isabel went to her room to dress for dinner, Joyce entered it. "I am not much accustomed to a lady's maid's duties," said she. "but Miss Carlyle has sent me, my lady, to do what I can for you, if you will allow me."

Joyce did her best, and Lady Isabel went down. It was nearly six o'clock, the dinner hour, and she strolled to the park gates, hoping to meet Mr. Car-

lyle. Taking a few steps out, she looked down the road, but could not see him coming; so she turned in again, and sat down under a shady tree and out of view of the road. It was remarkably warm weather for the closing days of May.

Half an hour, and then Mr. Carlyle came pelting up, passed the gate, and turned on to the grass. There was his wife. She had fallen asleep, her head leaning against the trunk of a tree. Her bonnet and parasol lay at her feet, her scarf had dropped, and she looked like a lovely child, her lips partly open, her cheeks flushed, and her beautiful hair falling around. It was an exquisite picture, and his heart beat quicker within him as he felt it was his own. A smile stole over his lips as he stood looking at her. She opened her eyes, and for a moment could not remember where she was. Then she started up.

"Oh, Archibald! Have I been asleep?"

"Aye; and might have been stolen and carried off. I could not afford that, Isabel."

"I don't know how I came to fall asleep. I was listening for you."

"What have you been doing all day?" he asked, as he drew her arm within his, and they walked on.

"Oh, I hardly know," she sighed. "Trying the new piano, and looking at my watch, wishing the time would go quicker, that you might come home. The ponies and carriage have arrived, Archibald."

"I know they have, my dear. Have you been out of doors much?"

"No, I waited for you." And then she told him about Marvel. He felt vexed, saying she must replace her with all speed. Isabel said she knew of one—a young woman who had left Lady Mount Severn while she, Isabel, was at Castle Marling; her health was delicate, and Lady Mount Severn's place too hard for her.

"Write to her," said Mr. Carlyle.

"You have kept dinner waiting more than half an hour," began Miss Corny, in a loud tone of complaint.

to her brother, meeting them in the hall. "And I thought you must be lost, ma'am," she added, to Isabel.

Why in the world did she tack on that objectionable "ma'am" to every sentence? It was out of place in all respects to Isabel, more especially considering her own age and Isabel's youth. Mr. Carlyle knitted his brows whenever it came out, and Joyce felt sure that Miss Corny did it "in her temper." He hastily answered her that he could not get away from the office earlier, and went up to his dressing-room. Isabel hurried after him, probably dreading some outbreak of Miss Carlyle's displeasure; but the door was shut, and, scarcely at home yet as a wife, she did not like to open it. When he appeared, there she was, leaning against the door-post.

"Isabel! are you there?"

"I am waiting for you. Are you ready?"

"Nearly." He drew her inside, and held her against his heart.

* * * * *

Once more, as in the year gone by, St. Jude's Church was in a flutter of expectation. It expected to see a whole paraphernalia of bridal finery, and again it was doomed to disappointment, for Isabel had not put off her mourning for her father. She was in black, a thin gauze dress, and her white bonnet had small black flowers inside and out. For the first time in his life Mr. Carlyle took possession of the pew belonging to East Lynne, filling the place where the poor earl used to sit. Not so Miss Corny. She sat in her own.

Barbara was there with the Justice and Mrs. Hare. Her face wore a gray, dusky hue, of which she was only too conscious, but could not subdue. Her covetous eyes would wander to that other face with its singular loveliness and its sweetly earnest eyes, sheltered under the protection of him for whose sheltering protection she had so long yearned. Poor Barbara did not benefit much by the services that day.

Afterward they went across the churchyard to the

west corner, where stood the tomb of Lord Mount Severn. Isabel looked at the inscription, her veil shading her face.

"Not here, and now, my darling," he whispered, pressing her arm to his side, for he felt her silent sobs. "Strive for calmness."

"It seems but the other day he was at church with me, and now—here!"

Mr. Carlyle suddenly changed their places, so that they stood with their backs to the hedge, and to any staring stragglers who might be lingering in the road.

"There ought to be railings around the tomb," she presently said, after a successful battle with her emotion.

"I thought so, and I suggested it to Lord Mount Severn, but he appeared to think differently. I will have it done."

"I put you to great expense," she said.

Mr. Carlyle glanced quickly at her, a dim fear penetrating his mind that his sister might have been talking in her hearing. "An expense I would not be without for the whole world. You know it, Isabel."

"And I have nothing to repay you with," she sighed.

He looked excessively amused; and, gazing into her face, the expression of his eyes made her smile. "Here is John with the carriage," she exclaimed. "Let us go, Archibald."

Standing outside the gates, talking to the rector's family, were several ladies, one of them Barbara Hare. She watched Mr. Carlyle place his wife in the carriage, she watched him drive away. Barbara's very lips were white as she bowed in return to his greeting. "The heat is so great," murmured Barbara, when those around noticed her paleness.

"Ah! you ought to have gone home in the phaeton with Mr. and Mrs. Hare, as they desired you."

"I wished to walk," returned the unhappy Barbara.

"What a pretty girl!" said Lady Isabel to her husband. "What is her name?"

"Barbara Hare."

CHAPTER XVI

BARBARA HARE'S REVELATION

The county carriages began to arrive at East Lynne to pay the wedding visit to Mr. and Lady Isabel Carlyle. Some appeared with all the pomp of coronets and hammercloths, and bedizened footmen with calves and wigs and gold-headed canes; some came with four horses, and some even with outriders. It is the custom still in certain localities to be preceded by outriders when paying visits of ceremony, and there are people who like the dash. Mr. Carlyle might have taken up his abode at East Lynne without any such honors being paid him, but his marriage with Lady Isabel had sent him up in county estimation. Among the rest went Justice and Mrs. Hare and Barbara. The old-fashioned large yellow chariot was brought out, and the fat, sleek, long-tailed coach horses; only on state occasions was that chariot awakened out of its repose.

Isabel happened to be in her dressing-room talking to Joyce. She had grown to like Joyce very much, and was asking her whether she would continue to wait upon her, as the maid for whom she had written was not well enough to come.

Joyce's face lighted up with pleasure at the proposal. "Oh, my lady, you are very kind! I should so like it. I would serve you faithfully to the best of my ability." Just then a knock came to the dressing-room door. Joyce went to open it, and saw one of the housemaids recently engaged, a native of West Lynne. Isabel heard the colloquy:

"Is my lady there?"

"Yes."

"Some visitors. Peter ordered me to come and tell you. I say, Joyce, it's the Hares. And she's with them. Her bonnet's got blue convolvulums inside,

and a white feather on the out, as long as Martha's back'us hearth-broom. I watched her get out of the carriage."

"Who?"

"Why, Miss Barbara. Only fancy her coming to pay the wedding visit here! My lady had better take care that she don't get a bowl of poison mixed for her. Master's out, or else I'd have given a shilling to see the interview between the three."

Joyce sent the girl away, shut the door, and turned to her mistress, quite unconscious that the half-whispered conversation had been audible. "Some visitors in the drawing-room, my lady, Susan says—Mr. Justice Hare, and Mrs. Hare, and Miss Barbara."

Isabel descended, her mind full of the mysterious words spoken by Susan. The justice was in a new flaxen wig, obstinate-looking and pompous; Mrs. Hare, pale, delicate and ladylike; Barbara, beautiful—such was the impression they made upon Isabel.

They paid rather a long visit. Isabel quite fell in love with the gentle and suffering Mrs. Hare, who had risen to leave when Miss Carlyle entered. Miss Carlyle wished them to remain longer—had something, she said, to show Barbara. The justice declined; he had a brother justice coming to dine with him at five; it was then half-past four. Barbara might stay if she liked.

Barbara's face turned crimson; but, nevertheless, she accepted the invitation proffered her by Miss Carlyle to remain at East Lynne for the rest of the day.

Dinner-time approached, and Isabel went up to dress for it. Joyce was waiting, and entered upon the subject of the service.

"My lady, I have spoken to Miss Carlyle, and she is willing that I should be transferred to you; but she says I ought first of all to acquaint you with certain unpleasant facts in my history and the same thought had occurred to me. Miss Carlyle is not over-pleasant in manner, my lady, but she is very upright and just."

"What facts?" asked Lady Isabel, sitting down to have

her hair brushed. "My lady, I'll tell you as shortly as I can. My father was a clerk in Mr. Carlyle's office—of course, I mean the late Mr. Carlyle. My mother died when I was eight years old, and my father afterward married again—a sister of Mr. Kane's wife——"

"Mr. Kane, the music master?"

"Yes, my lady. She was a governess; she and Mrs. Kane had both been governesses; they were quite ladies, so far as education and manners went, and West Lynne said that in stooping to marry my father she lowered herself dreadfully. But he was a very handsome man, and a clever man also, though self-taught. Well, they married, and at the end of a year Afy was born——"

"Who?" interrupted Lady Isabel.

"My half-sister, Afy. In another year her mother died, and an aunt of her mother sent for the child, and said she would bring her up. I remained at home with my father, going to school by day, and when I grew up I went by day to learn millinery and dress-making. We lived in the prettiest cottage, my lady!—it was in the wood, and it was my father's own. After I was out of my time I used to go around to different ladies' houses to work, seeing to my father's comforts night and morning, for the woman who did the housework only came in for a few hours in the day. That went on for years, and then Afy came home. Her aunt had died, and her money died with her, so that, though she had brought up Afy well, she could leave her nothing. Afy quite frightened us. Her notions were fine, and her dress was fine; she was gay and giddy and very pretty, and would do nothing all day but read books, which she used to get at the West Lynne library. My father did not like it; we were only plain working people, and she wanted to set up for a lady—the effect of bringing her up above her station. The next thing she got acquainted with young Richard Hare."

Lady Isabel looked up quickly.

"Mr. Justice Hare's only son—own brother to Miss

Barbara," proceeded Joyce, dropping her voice, as though Barbara could hear her in the drawing-room. "Oh, she was very flighty! She encouraged Mr. Richard, and he soon grew to love her with quite a wild sort of love; he was rather simple, and Afy used to laugh at him behind his back. She encouraged others, too, and would have them there in an evening, when the house was free. My father was secretary to the literary institution, and had to be there two evenings in the week, after office hours at Mr. Carlyle's. He was fond of shooting, too, and, if home in time, would go out with his gun; and as I scarcely ever got home before nine o'clock, Afy was often alone, and she took the opportunity to have one or other of her admirers there."

"Had she many admirers?" asked Lady Isabel, who seemed inclined to treat the tale in a joking spirit.

"The chief one, my lady, was Richard Hare. She got acquainted with somebody else—a stranger—who used to ride over from a distance to see her, but I fancy there was nothing in it. Mr. Richard was the one. And it went on and on, till—till—he killed her father."

"Who?" uttered the startled Lady Isabel.

"Richard Hare, my lady. My father had told Afy that Mr. Richard should not come here any longer, for when gentlemen go in secret after poor girls it is well known that they have not marriage in their thoughts; my father would have interfered more than he did, but that he judged well of Mr. Richard, and did not think he was one to do Afy real harm—but he did not think how flighty she was. However, one day he heard people talking about it in West Lynne, coupling her name and Mr. Richard's offensively together; and at night he told Afy, before me, that it should not go on any longer, and she must not encourage him. My lady, the next night Richard Hare shot my father."

"How very dreadful!"

"Whether it was done on purpose, or whether the gun went off in a scuffle, I can't tell; people think it

was wilful murder. I never shall forget the scene, my lady, when I got home that night; it was at Justice Hare's that I had been working. My father was lying on the floor, dead, and the house was full of people. Afy could give no particulars; she had gone out to the wood path at the back, and never heard or saw anything amiss, but when she went in again, there lay father. Mr. Locksley was leaning over him; he told Afy that he had heard the shot, and came up in time to see Richard Hare fling the gun away, and fly from the house with his shoes stained with blood."

"Oh, Joyce! I do not like to hear this. What was done to Richard Hare?"

"He escaped, my lady. He went off that same night and has never been heard of since. There's a judgment of murder out against him, and his own father would be the first to deliver him up to justice. It is a dreadful thing to have befallen the Hare family, who are most high and respectable people; it is killing Mrs. Hare by inches. Afy——"

"What is it—that name, Joyce?"

"My lady, she was christened by a very fine name—Aphrodite; so I and my father never called her anything but Afy. But I have got the worst to tell you yet, my lady—the worst as regards her. As soon as the inquest was over she went off after Richard Hare."

Lady Isabel uttered an exclamation.

"She did, indeed, my lady," returned Joyce, turning away her moist eyelashes and her shamed cheeks from the gaze of her mistress.

"Nothing has been heard of either of them, and it is hardly likely but what they went out of England—perhaps to Australia, perhaps to America; nobody knows. What with the shame of that, and the shock of my poor father's murder, I had an attack of illness. It was a nervous fever, and it lasted long. Miss Carlyle had me at her house, and she and her servants nursed me through it. She's good at heart, my lady, is Miss Carlyle, only her manners are against her, and she will think herself better than most people. After

that illness I stayed with her as upper maid, and never went out to work again."

"How long is it since this happened?"

"It will be four years next September, my lady. The cottage has stood empty ever since, for nobody will live in it; they say it smells of murder. And I can't sell it, because Afy has a right in it as well as I. I go to it sometimes, and open the windows and air it. And this was what I had to tell you, my lady, before you decide to take me into your service; it is not every lady would like to engage one whose sister had turned out so badly."

Lady Isabel did not see that it ought to make any difference. She said so, and then leaned back in her chair and mused.

"Which dress, my lady?"

"Joyce, what was that I heard you and Susan gossiping over at the door?" Lady Isabel suddenly asked. "About Miss Hare giving me a bowl of poison. You should tell Susan not to whisper so loud." Joyce smiled, though she was rather confused. "It was only a bit of nonsense, of course, my lady. The fact is, that people think Miss Barbara was much attached to Mr. Carlyle—regularly in love with him—and many thought it would be a match. But I don't fancy she would have been the one to make him happy, with all her love."

A hot flush passed over the brow of Lady Isabel; a sensation very like jealousy flew to her heart. No woman likes to hear that another woman either is or has been attached to her husband; a doubt always arises whether the feeling may not have been reciprocated.

Lady Isabel descended. She wore a costly black lace dress, its low body and sleeves trimmed with white lace as costly, and ornaments of jet. She looked inexpressibly beautiful, and Barbara turned from her with a feeling of sickening jealousy; from her beauty, from her attire, even from the fine, soft handkerchief, which displayed the badge of her rank—the coronet of an earl's daughter. Barbara looked well, too; she was in

a light blue silk robe, and her pretty cheeks were damask with her mind's excitement. On her neck she wore the gold chain given to her by Mr. Carlyle—she had not discarded that.

They stood together at the window, looking at Mr. Carlyle as he came up the avenue. He saw them, and nodded. Lady Isabel watched the damask cheeks turn to crimson at sight of him.

"How do you do, Barbara?" he cried, as he shook hands. "Come to pay us a visit at last? You have been tardy over it. And how are you, my darling?" he whispered, bending over his wife; but she missed his kiss of greeting. Well, would she have had him give it her in public? No; but she was in the mood to notice the omission.

Dinner over, Miss Carlyle and Barbara went out of doors.

They came upon the gardener, and Miss Carlyle got into a discussion with him—a somewhat warm one. She insisted upon having certain work done in a certain way, he standing to it that Mr. Carlyle had ordered it done in another. Barbara grew tired, and returned to the house.

Isabel and her husband were in the adjoining room, at the piano, and Barbara had an opportunity of hearing that sweet voice. She did as Miss Carlyle confessed to have done—pushed open the door between the two rooms and looked in. It was the twilight hour, almost too dusk to see; but she could distinguish Isabel seated at the piano, and Mr. Carlyle standing behind her. She was singing one of the ballads from the opera of the "Bohemian Girl"—"When Other Lips."

"Why do you like the song so much, Archibald?" she asked, when she had finished it.

"I don't know. I never liked it so much until I heard it from you."

"I wonder if they are come in. Shall we go into the next room?"

"Just this one first—this translation from the Ger-

man, 'Twere vain to tell thee all I feel.' There's real music in that song."

"Yes, there is. Do you know, Archibald, your taste is just like papa's? He liked all these quiet, imaginative songs, and so do you. And so do I," she laughingly added, "if I must speak the truth. Mrs. Vane used to stop her ears and make a face when papa made me sing them. Papa returned the compliment, for he would walk out of the room if she began her loud Italian songs. I speak of the time when she was with us in London."

She ceased and began the song, singing it exquisitely, in a low, sweet, earnest tone, the chords of the accompaniment and its conclusion dying off gradually into silence.

"There, Archibald! I am sure I have sung you ten songs at least," she said, leaning her head back against him, and looking at him from her upturned face. "You ought to pay me."

He did pay her, holding her dear face to him, and taking from it some impassioned kisses. Barbara turned to the window, a low moan of pain escaping her as she pressed her forehead on one of its panes and looked forth at the dusky night. Isabel came in on her husband's arm.

"Are you here alone, Miss Hare? I really beg your pardon. I supposed you were with Miss Carlyle."

"Where is Cornelia, Barbara?"

"I have just come in," was Barbara's reply. "I dare say she is following me." So she was, for she came upon them as they were speaking, her voice raised to tones of anger.

"Archibald, what have you been telling Blair about that geranium bed? He says you have been ordering him to make it oval. We decided that it should be square."

"Isabel would prefer it oval," was his reply.

"But it will be best square," repeated Miss Carlyle.

"It is all right, Cornelia; Blair has his orders. I wish it to be oval."

"He is a regular muff, is that Blair, and as obstinate as a mule!" cried Miss Carlyle.

"Indeed, then, Cornelia, I think him a very civil, good servant."

"Oh, of course!" snapped Miss Carlyle. "You never can see faults in anybody. You always were a simpleton in some things, Archibald."

Mr. Carlyle laughed good-humoredly; he was of an even, calm temper, and he had, all his life, been subjected to the left-handed compliments of his sister. Isabel resented these speeches in her heart; she was growing more attached to her husband day by day. "It is well everybody does not think so," cried he, with a glance at his wife and Barbara, as they drew around the tea-table.

The evening went on to ten, and as the time-piece struck the hour, Barbara rose from her chair in amazement. "I did not think it was so late. Surely some one must have come for me."

"I will inquire," was Lady Isabel's answer; and Mr. Carlyle rang the bell. No one had come for Miss Hare.

"Then I fear I must trouble Peter," cried Barbara. "Mamma may have gone to rest, tired, and papa must have forgotten me. It would never do for me to get locked out," she gayly added.

"Like you were one night before," said Mr. Carlyle, significantly.

He alluded to the night when Barbara was in the grove of trees with her unfortunate brother, and Mr. Hare was on the point, unconsciously, of locking her out. She had given Mr. Carlyle the history; but its recollection now called up a smart pain and a change passed over her face.

"Oh, don't, Archibald!" she uttered, in the impulse of the moment; "don't recall it." Isabel wondered.

"Can Peter take me?" continued Barbara. "I had better take you," said Mr. Carlyle; "it is late."

Barbara's heart beat at the words; it beat as she put her things on; as she said good-night to Lady Isabel

and Miss Carlyle; it beat to throbbing as she went out with him and took his arm. All just as it used to be—only that he was now the husband of another. Only!

It was a warm, lovely June night—not moonlight, but bright with its summer's twilight. They went down the park into the road, which they crossed, and soon came to a stile. From that stile there led a path through the fields which would pass the back of Justice Hare's. Barbara stopped at it.

"Would you choose the field way to-night, Barbara? The grass will be damp. And this is the longest way."

"But we shall escape the dust of the road."

"Oh, very well, if you prefer it. It will not make three minutes' difference."

"He is very anxious to get home to her!" mentally exclaimed Barbara. "I shall fly out upon him presently, or my heart will burst."

Mr. Carlyle crossed the stile, helped over Barbara, and then gave her his arm again. He had taken her parasol—he had taken it the last night they had walked together. An elegant little parasol this was, of blue silk and white lace, and he did not switch the hedges with it. That night was present to Barbara now, with all its word and its delusive hopes; terribly present to her was their bitter ending.

"When does the justice begin haymaking, Barbara?"

There was no reply; Barbara was trying to keep down her emotions. Mr. Carlyle tried again. "Barbara, I asked you which day your papa cuts his hay?"

Still no reply. Barbara was literally incapable of making one. Her throat was working, the muscles of her mouth began to twitch, and a convulsive sob, or what sounded like it, broke from her. Mr. Carlyle turned his head hastily.

"Barbara! are you ill? What is it?"

On it came—passion, temper, wrongs and nervousness, all boiling over together. She was in strong hysterics. Mr. Carlyle half carried, half dragged her to the second stile, and placed her against it, his arm supporting her; and an old cow and two calves, won-

dering what the disturbance could mean at that sober time of night, walked up and stared at them.

"Are you better, Barbara? What can have caused all this?"

"What can have caused it?" she burst forth in passionate uncontrol. "You can ask me that?"

Mr. Carlyle was struck dumb; but by some inexplicable law of sympathy, a dim and very unpleasant consciousness of the truth began to steal over him.

"I don't understand you, Barbara. If I have offended you in any way I am truly sorry."

"Truly sorry, no doubt! What do you care for me? If I go under the sod to-morrow"—stamping it with her foot—"you have your wife to care for; what am I?"

"Hush!" he interposed, glancing around, more mindful for her than she was for herself.

"Hush, yes! What is my misery to you? I would rather be in my grave, Archibald Carlyle, than endure the life I lead. My pain is greater than I know how to bear."

"I cannot affect to misunderstand you," he said, feeling extremely annoyed and vexed. "But, my dear Barbara, I never gave you cause to think that I—that I—cared for you more than I did care."

"Never gave me cause!" she gasped. "When you have been coming to our house constantly, almost like my shadow; when you gave me this"—dashing open her mantle, and holding up the locket to his view; "when you have been more intimate with me than a brother!"

"Stay, Barbara! There it is—a brother. I have been nothing else; it never occurred to me to be anything else," he added, in his straightforward truth.

"Ay, as a brother—nothing else!" and her voice rose once more with her excitement; it seemed that she would not long control it. "What cared you for my feelings? What recked you that you gained my love?"

"Barbara, hush!" he implored. "Do be calm and reasonable. If I ever gave you cause to think I regarded you with deeper feeling, I can only express

to you my deep regret, and assure you it was done unconsciously."

She was growing calmer. The passion was fading, leaving her face still and white. She lifted it toward Mr. Carlyle. "If she had not come between us, should you have loved me?"

"I don't know. How can I know? Do I not say to you, Barbara, that I only thought of you as a friend, as a sister? I cannot tell what might have been."

"I could bear it better, but that it was known," she murmured. "All West Lynne had coupled us together in their prying gossip, and they have only pity to cast to me now. I would far rather you had killed me, Archibald."

"I can but express to you my deep regret," he repeated. "I can only hope you will soon forget it all. Let the remembrance of this conversation pass away with to-night; let us still be to each other as friends—as brother and sister. Believe me," he concluded, in a deeper tone, "the confession has not lessened you in my estimation."

He made a movement as though he would get over the stile, but Barbara did not stir; the tears were silently coursing down her pallid face. At that moment there was an interruption. "Is that you, Miss Barbara?"

Barbara started as if she had been shot. On the other side of the stile stood Wilson, their upper maid. How long might she have been there? She began to explain that Mr. Hare had sent Jasper out, and Mrs. Hare thought it better to wait no longer for the man's return, so had dispatched her, Wilson, for Miss Barbara. Mr. Carlyle got over the stile, and handed over Barbara.

"You need not come any further now," she said to him, in a low tone.

"I shall see you home," was his reply; and he held out his arm. Barbara took it.

They walked on in silence. Arrived at the back gate of the Grove, which gave entrance to the kitchen-

garden, Wilson went forward. Mr. Carlyle took both Barbara's hands in his.

"Good-night, Barbara. God bless you."

She had had time for reflection; and, the excitement gone, she saw her outbreak in all its shame and folly. Mr. Carlyle noticed how subdued and white she looked. "I think I have been mad," she groaned. "I must have been mad to say what I did. Forget that it was uttered."

"I told you I would."

"You will not betray me to—to—your wife?" she panted.

"Barbara!"

"Thank you. Good-night."

But he still retained her hands. "In a short time, Barbara, I trust you will find one more worthy to receive your love than I have been."

"Never," she impulsively answered. "I do not love and forget so lightly. In the years to come, in my old age, I shall still be nothing but Barbara Hare."

Mr. Carlyle walked away in a fit of musing. The revelation had given him pain (and possibly a little flattery), for he was fond of pretty Barbara. Fond in his way, not in hers—not with the sort of fondness he felt for his wife. He asked his conscience whether his manner to her in the past days had been a tinge warmer than he would bestow upon a sister, and he decided that it might have been, but that he most certainly had never cast a suspicion to the mischief it was doing.

"I heartily hope she will soon find somebody to her liking, and forget me," was his concluding thought. "As to living and dying Barbara Hare, that is all moonshine—the sentimental rubbish that girls like to——"

"Archibald!"

He was passing the very last tree in the park, the nearest to his house, and the interruption came from a dark form standing under it.

"Is it you, my dearest?"

"I came out to meet you. Have you not been very long?"

"I think I have," he answered, as he drew his wife to his side, and walked on with her. "We met one of the servants at the second stile, but I went all the way."

"You have been intimate with the Hares?"

"Quite so. Cornelia is related to them."

"Do you think Barbara pretty?"

"Very."

"Then—intimate as you were—I wonder you never fell in love with her."

Mr. Carlyle laughed—a very conscious laugh, considering the recent interview.

"Did you, Archibald?"

The words were spoken in a low tone, almost, or he fancied it, a tone of emotion, and he looked at her in amazement. "Did I what, Isabel?"

"You never loved Barbara Hare?"

"Loved her! What is your head running on, Isabel? I never loved but one woman—and that one I made my wife."

CHAPTER XVII

DEATH OR LIFE

Another year came in. Isabel would have been altogether happy but for Miss Carlyle; that lady still afflicted her presence upon East Lynne, and made the bane of its household. She deferred outwardly to Lady Isabel as the mistress; but the real mistress was herself, Isabel little more than an automaton. Her impulses were checked, her wishes frustrated, her actions tacitly condemned by the imperiously-willed Miss Carlyle.

One day—it was in the month of February—after a tolerably long explosion of wrath on Miss Corny's part, not directed against Isabel, but at something which had gone wrong amongst the servants, silence

supervened. Isabel, who was sitting listless and dispirited, suddenly broke it, speaking more to herself than to Miss Carlyle:

"I wish evening was come!"

"Why do you wish that?"

"Because Archibald would be home."

Miss Carlyle gave an unsatisfactory grunt. "You seem tired, Lady Isabel."

"I am very tired."

"I don't wonder at it. I should be tired to death if I sat doing nothing all day. Indeed, I think I should soon drop into my grave."

"There's nothing to do," returned Lady Isabel.

"There's always something to do when people like to look for it. You might help me with these napkins, rather than do nothing."

"I make napkins!" exclaimed Lady Isabel.

"You might do a worse thing, ma'am," snapped Miss Corny.

"I don't understand that sort of work," said Isabel, gently.

"Neither does anybody else till they try. For my part I'd rather sit down and make or mend shoes than I'd sit with my hands before me. It's a sinful waste of——" She stopped short. "Why, what on earth! Why, if I don't believe here's Archibald! What brings him home at this time of day?"

"Archibald!" Out she flew in her glad surprise, meeting him in the hall, and falling upon him in her delight. "Oh, Archibald! my darling, it is as if the sun had shone! What have you come home for?"

"To drive you out, love," he whispered, as he took her back with him and rang the bell.

"You never told me this morning."

"Because I was not sure of being able to come. Peter, let the pony-carriage be brought round without delay. I am waiting for it."

"Why, where are you going with the pony-carriage?" exclaimed Miss Carlyle as Isabel left the room to dress herself.

"Only for a drive."

"A drive!" repeated Miss Corny, looking at him in bewilderment. "To take Isabel for one, he said. I shall not trust her to John again yet a while."

"That's the way to get on with your business!" retorted Miss Corny, when she could find temper to speak, "Deserting the office in the middle of the day."

"Isabel's health is of more consequence, just now, than business," he returned, good-humoredly. "And you really speak, Cornelia, as if I had neither Dill to replace me, nor plenty of clerks under him."

"John is a better driver than you are."

"He is as good a one. But that is not the question."

Isabel came down, looking radiant, all her listlessness gone. Mr. Carlyle placed her in the carriage, and drove away, Miss Corny gazing after them with an expression of face enough to turn a whole dairy of milk sour.

There were many such little episodes as these, so you need not wonder that Isabel was not altogether happy. But never before Mr. Carlyle was the lady's temper vented upon her; plenty fell to his own share when he and his sister were alone; and he had been so accustomed to that sort of thing all his life, had got so used to it, that it made no impression. He never dreamed that Isabel also received her portion.

* * * * *

It was hard upon mid-day. A clergyman, Mr. Carlyle and Miss Carlyle were gathered in the dressing-room, around a table on which stood a rich china bowl, containing water for the baptism. Joyce, her pale face working with emotion, came into the room, carrying what looked like a bundle of flannel. Little cared Mr. Carlyle for that bundle, in comparison with his care for his wife.

"Joyce," he whispered, "is all well still?"

"I believe so, sir."

The service commenced. The clergyman took the child. "What name?" he asked. "Isabel Lucy," said Mr. Carlyle. Upon which a strange sort of

resentful sniff was heard from Miss Corny. She had probably thought to hear him mention her own, but he had named it after his wife and his mother.

Mr. Carlyle was not allowed to see his wife until the evening. His eyelashes glistened as he looked down at her. She detected his emotion, and a faint smile parted her lips.

"I never knew what thankfulness was until this day!" he murmured.

"That the baby is safe?"

"That you are safe, my darling—safe and spared to me, Isabel," he whispered, hiding his face upon hers, "I never until to-day knew what prayer was—the prayer of a heart in its sore need."

"Have you written to Lord Mount Severn?" she asked, after a while.

"This afternoon," he replied.

"Why did you give baby my name—Isabel?"

"Do you think I could have given it a prettier one? I don't."

"Why do you not bring a chair and sit down by me?"

He smiled and shook his head. "I wish I might. But they limited my stay with you to four minutes; and Wainwright has posted himself outside the door with his watch in his hand."

Quite true. There stood the careful surgeon; and the short interview was over almost as soon as it had begun.

CHAPTER XVIII

WILSON'S TONGUE

The baby lived, and appeared likely to live, and of course the next thing was to look out for a maid for it. Isabel did not get strong very quickly; fever and weakness had a struggle with each other and with her. One day when she was dressed and sitting in her easy-chair, Miss Carlyle entered.

"Of all the servants in the neighborhood, who should you suppose is come up after the place of nurse?" she said to Lady Isabel.

"Indeed, I cannot guess."

"Why, Wilson, Mrs. Hare's maid. Three years and five months she has been with them, and now leaves in consequence of a quarrel with Barbara. Will you see her?"

"Is she likely to suit? Is she a good servant?"

"She's not a bad servant, as servants go," responded Miss Carlyle. "She's steady and respectable; but she has got a tongue as long as from here to Lynneborough."

"That won't hurt the baby," said Lady Isabel. "But if she has lived as lady's maid, she probably does not understand the care of infants."

"Yes, she does. She was upper nurse at Squire Pinner's before going to Mrs. Hare. She lived there five years."

Wilson was ultimately engaged, and entered upon her new service the following morning.

In the afternoon succeeding to it, Isabel was lying on the sofa in her bedroom, asleep as was supposed. In point of fact, she was in that state, half asleep, half wakeful delirium, which those who suffer from weakness and fever know only too well. Suddenly she was aroused from it by hearing her own name mentioned in the adjoining room, where sat Joyce and Wilson, the latter holding the sleeping infant on her knee, the former sewing, the door between the rooms being ajar.

"How ill she looks!" observed Wilson.

"Who?" asked Joyce.

"Her ladyship. She looks as if she'd never get over it."

"She is getting over it quickly now," returned Joyce. "If you had seen her a week ago you would not say she was looking ill now, speaking in comparison."

"My goodness! would not somebody's hopes be up again if anything should happen?"

"Nonsense!" crossly returned Joyce.

"You may cry out 'nonsense' forever, Joyce; but they would," went on Wilson. "And she would snap him up, to a dead certainty; she'd never let him escape

her a second time. She is as much in love with him as she ever was."

"It was all talk and fancy," said Joyce. "West Lynne must be busy. Mr. Carlyle never cared for her."

"That's more than you know. I have seen a little, Joyce—I have seen him kiss her."

"A pack of rubbish!" remarked Joyce. "That tells nothing."

"I don't say it does. He gave her that locket and chain she wears."

"Who wears?" retorted Joyce, determined not graciously to countenance the subject. "I don't want to hear anything about it."

"'Who,' now? Why, Miss Barbara. She has hardly had it off her neck since; my belief is she wears it in her sleep."

"More simpleton she!" echoed Joyce.

"The night before he left West Lynne to marry Lady Isabel—and didn't the news come upon us like a thunderclap!—Miss Barbara had been at Miss Carlyle's, and he brought her home. A lovely night it was—the moon rising, and nearly as light as day. He somehow broke her parasol in coming home, and when they got to our gate there was a love scene."

"Were you a third in it?" sarcastically demanded Joyce.

"Yes—without meaning to be. That skinflint old justice won't allow followers indoors, and there's no seeing anybody on the sly in that conspicuous back kitchen-garden, where there's nothing higher than a cauliflower, so the only chance we have is to get half an hour's chat amidst the Grove trees in the front, if a friend comes up. I was expecting somebody that evening—a horrid, faithless fellow he turned out, and went, three months after, and married the barmaid at the Buck's Head!—and I was in the trees waiting for him. Up came Mr. Carlyle and Miss Barbara. She wanted him to go in, but he would not, and they stood there. Something was said about the locket, and

about his giving her a piece of his hair to put in it—I could not catch the words distinctly, and I did not dare to stir nearer, for fear of their hearing me. It was a regular love scene; I could hear enough for that. If ever anybody thought to be Mrs. Carlyle, Barbara Hare did that night.”

“Why, you great baby! you have just said it was the night before he went to be married!”

“I don’t care—she did. After he was gone I saw her lift up her hands and her face in ecstasy, and say he could never know how much she loved him until she was his wife. Be you very sure, Joyce, many a love passage has passed between them two; but I suppose when my lady was thrown in his way he couldn’t resist her rank and her beauty, and the old love was cast over. It is the nature of man to be fickle, especially those who can boast of their own good looks, like Mr. Carlyle.”

“Mr. Carlyle is not fickle.”

Then Wilson proceeded to describe how Barbara took the news of Mr. Carlyle’s marriage; and told of how afterward she had seen him take Barbara home, and of Barbara’s “sobbing fit to break her heart” by the stile.

“I assure you, Joyce,” she added, “in this past year she has so changed that she’s not like the same person. If Mr. Carlyle should ever get tired of my lady, and——”

“Wilson!” harshly interrupted Joyce. “Have the goodness to recollect yourself.”

“What have I said now? Nothing but the truth. Men are shamefully fickle; husbands worse than sweet-hearts; and I’m sure I’m not thinking of anything wrong. But to go back to the argument that we began with—I say that if anything happened to my lady, Miss Barbara, as sure as fate, would step into her shoes.”

Now just fancy this conversation penetrating to Lady Isabel. She heard it, every word. It is all very well to oppose the argument, “Who attends to the

gossip of servants?" Let me tell you it depends upon what the subject may be, whether the gossip is attended to or not. It might not, and, indeed, would not, have made so great an impression upon her had she been in strong health; but she was weak, feverish, in a state of partial delirium; and she hastily took up the idea that Archibald Carlyle had never loved her; that he had admired her and made her his wife in his ambition, but that his heart had been given Barbara Hare.

A pretty state of excitement she worked herself into as she lay there; jealousy and fever—aye, and love, too—playing pranks with her brain. It was near the dinner hour, and when Mr. Carlyle entered he was startled to see her; her pallid cheeks were burning with a red hectic, and her eyes glistened with fever.

"Isabel, you are worse!" he uttered, approaching her quickly.

She partially rose from the sofa, and clasped hold of him in her emotion. "Oh, Archibald! Archibald!" she uttered, "don't marry her! I could not rest in my grave!"

Mr. Carlyle, in his puzzled astonishment, believed her to be laboring under some temporary hallucination, the result of weakness. He set himself to soothe her, but it seemed that she could not be soothed. She burst into a storm of tears, and began again—wild words:

"She would ill-treat my child; she would draw your love from it, and from my memory. Archibald, you must not marry her!"

"You must be speaking from the influence of a dream, Isabel," he soothingly said; "you have been asleep, and are not yet awake. Be still, and recollection will return to you. There, love; rest upon me."

"To think of her as your wife brings pain enough to kill me," she continued to reiterate. "Promise me that you will not marry her—Archibald, promise it!"

"I will promise anything in reason," he replied, bewildered with her words; "but I do not know what

you mean. There is no possibility of my marrying any one, Isabel; you are my wife."

"But if I die? I may—you know I may; and many think I shall. Do not let her usurp my place."

"Indeed, she shall not—whoever you may be talking of. What have you been dreaming? Who is it that is troubling your mind?"

"Archibald, do you need to ask? Did you love no one before you married me? Perhaps you have loved her since—perhaps you love her still?"

Mr. Carlyle began to discern "method in her madness." He changed his cheering tone to one of grave earnestness. "Of whom do you speak, Isabel?"

"Of Barbara Hare."

He knitted his brow; he was both annoyed and vexed. Whatever had put this bygone business into his wife's head? He quitted the sofa, where he had been supporting her, and stood upright before her, calm, dignified, almost solemn in his seriousness.

"Isabel, what notion you can possibly have picked up about myself and Barbara Hare I am unable to conceive. I never loved Barbara Hare; I never entertained the faintest shadow of love for her, either before my marriage or since. You must tell me what has given rise to this idea in your mind."

"But she loved you."

A moment's hesitation; for, of course, Mr. Carlyle was conscious she had; but, taking all the circumstances into consideration, more especially how he learned the fact, he could not in honor acknowledge it even to his wife. "If it was so, Isabel, she was more reprehensibly foolish than I should have given Barbara's good sense credit for; a woman may almost as well lose herself as to suffer herself to love unsought. If she did give her love to me, I can only say I was entirely unconscious of it. Believe me, you have as much cause to be jealous of Cornelia as you have of Barbara Hare."

Isabel sighed. It was a sigh of relief, and her breath grew calmer. She felt inexpressibly reassured. Mr.

Carlyle bent his head and spoke in a tender, though pained tone. "I had not thought that the past year was quite thrown away. What proof can a man give of true and earnest love that I have not given you?"

She looked up, her eyelashes wet with contrition, took his hand and held it between hers. "Don't be angry with me, Archibald; the trouble and the doubt would not have arisen had I cared for you less."

He smiled again, his own fond smile, and bent lower. "And now tell me what put this into your brain?"

An impulse arose within her that she would tell him all—the few words dropped by Susan and Joyce twelve months before, the conversation she had just overheard; but, in that moment of renewed confidence it appeared to her that she must have been very foolish to attach any importance to it—that a sort of humiliation, in listening to the converse of servants, was reflected on her; and she remained silent.

"Has any one been striving to bias your mind against me?" he resumed.

"Archibald, no! Would any one dare to do it?"

"Then did you dream?—and could not forget it on waking?"

"I do sometimes dream strange things, especially in my feverish afternoon sleeps. I think I am a little delirious at times, Archibald, and do not know what is real and what is fancy."

The answer, while expressing correctly her physical state, was an evasive one, but not evasively did it fall upon the ear of Mr. Carlyle. It presented to him the only probable solution of the enigma, and he never questioned it.

"Don't have any more of these dreams, if you can help it," he said. "Regard them for what they are—illusions—neither pleasant for you nor fair to me. I am bound to you by fond ties as well as by legal ones, remember, Isabel, and it is out of Barbara Hare's power to step between us."

There never was a passion in this world, there never

will be one, so fantastic, so delusive, so powerful, as jealousy. Mr. Carlyle dismissed the episode from his thoughts; he believed his wife's emotion to have arisen simply from a feverish dream, and never supposed but that, with the dream, its recollection would pass away from her.

Not so. Implicitly relying upon her husband's words at the moment, feeling quite ashamed at her own suspicion, Lady Isabel afterward suffered the unhappy fear to regain its influence; the ill-starred revelations of Wilson reasserted their power, overmastering the denial of Mr. Carlyle. Shakespeare calls jealousy yellow and green; I think it may be called black and white, for it most assuredly views white as black, and black as white. The most fanciful surmises wear the aspect of truth, the greatest improbabilities appear as consistent realities. Isabel said not another word to her husband; and the feeling—you will understand this, if you have ever been foolish enough to sun yourself in its delights—only caused her to grow more attached to him, to be more eager for his love. But certain it is that Barbara Hare dwelt on her heart like an incubus.

CHAPTER XIX

CAPTAIN THORN AT WEST LYNNE

One afternoon found Barbara shopping in West Lynne. She had stopped outside one of the stores and was listlessly gazing down the street. The sun was shining brilliantly, and its rays fell upon the large cable chain of a gentleman who was sauntering idly up the pavement, making its gold links and its drooping seal and key glitter, as they crossed his waistcoat. It shone also on the enameled gold studs of his shirt front, making them glitter; and as he suddenly raised his ungloved hand, a white hand, to stroke his mustache—by which action you may know a vain man—a diamond ring gleamed with a light that was positively

dazzling. Involuntarily Barbara thought of the description her brother Richard had given of certain dazzling jewels worn by another.

She watched him advance. He was a handsome man, of perhaps seven or eight and twenty; tall, slender and well made; his eyes and hair black. A very pleasant expression sat upon his countenance, and on the left hand he wore a light buff kid glove, and was swinging its fellow by the fingers, apparently in deep thought, as he softly whistled to himself. But for the great light cast at that moment by the sun, Barbara might not have noticed the jewelry, or connected it in her mind with the other jewelry in that unhappy secret.

"Halloa! Thorn, is that you? Just step over here!"

The speaker was Otway Bethel, who was on the opposite side of the street; the spoken-to, the gentleman with the jewelry. But the latter was in a brown study, and did not hear. Bethel called out again, louder: "Captain Thorn!"

That was heard. Captain Thorn nodded, and turned short across the street. Barbara stood like one in a dream, her brain, her mind, her fancy all a confused mass together. Just then she caught sight of Mr. Wainwright, the surgeon, at a little distance, and sped toward him. "Mr. Wainwright," began she, forgetting ceremony in her agitation, "you see that gentleman talking to Otway Bethel. Who is he?"

Mr. Wainwright had to put his glasses across the bridge of his nose before he could answer, for he was short-sighted. "That? Oh, it is Captain Thorn. He is visiting the Herberts, I believe."

"Where does he come from? Where does he live?" reiterated Barbara, in her eagerness.

"I don't know anything about him. I saw him this morning with young Smith and he told me he was a friend of the Herberts. You are not looking well, Miss Barbara."

She made no answer. Captain Thorn and Mr. Bethel came walking down the street, and the latter saluted her; but she was too much confused to respond

to it. Mr. Wainwright then wished her good-day, and Barbara walked slowly back.

Barbara was five minutes alone in her chamber before the dinner was on the table. All the conclusion she could come to was that she could do nothing save tell the facts to Archibald Carlyle.

How could she contrive to see him? The business might admit of no delay. She supposed she must go to East Lynne that evening; but where would be her excuse for it at home? Puzzling over it, she went down to dinner. During the meal Mrs. Hare began to talk of some silk she had purchased for a mantle. She should like to have it made like Miss Carlyle's new one. When Miss Carlyle was at the Grove the other day about Wilson's character, she had offered her the pattern, and she, Mrs. Hare, would send one of the servants up for it after dinner.

"Oh, mamma, let me go!" burst forth Barbara. She spoke so vehemently that the justice paused in his carving, and demanded what ailed her. Barbara made some timid excuse.

"Her eagerness is natural, Richard," smiled Mrs. Hare. "Barbara thinks she shall get a peep at the baby, I expect. All young folks are fond of babies."

Barbara's face flushed crimson; but she did not contradict the opinion. She could not eat her dinner; she was too full of poor Richard; she played with it, and then sent away her plate, nearly untouched.

"That's through the finery she has been buying," pronounced Justice Hare. "Her head is stuffed up with it."

No opposition was offered to Barbara's going to East Lynne. She reached it just as their dinner was over. It was for Miss Carlyle she asked. "Miss Carlyle is not at home, miss. She is spending the day out; and my lady does not receive visitors yet." It was a sort of checkmate. Barbara was compelled to say she would see Mr. Carlyle. Peter ushered her into the drawing-room, and Mr. Carlyle came to her.

"I am so sorry to disturb you; to have asked for

you," began Barbara, with a burning face, for a certain evening interview of hers with him, twelve months before, was disagreeably presented to her. Never, since that evening of agitation, had Barbara suffered herself to betray emotion to Mr. Carlyle; her manners to him had been calm, courteous, and indifferent. And she now more frequently called him "Mr. Carlyle" than "Archibald."

"Take a seat, take a seat, Barbara."

"I asked for Miss Carlyle," she continued, "for mamma is in want of a pattern that she promised to lend her; but, in point of fact, it was you I wished to see. You remember the Lieutenant Thorn, whom Richard spoke of as being the real criminal?"

"Yes."

"I think he is at West Lynne."

Mr. Carlyle was aroused to eager interest. "He! That same Thorn?"

"It can be no other. Mamma and I were shopping to-day, and I went out for her bag, which she had left in the carriage. While Benjamin was getting it, I saw a stranger coming up the street; a tall, good-looking, dark-haired man, with a conspicuous gold chain and studs. The sun was full upon him, causing the ornaments to shine, especially a diamond ring which he wore, for he had one hand raised to his face. The thought flashed over me: 'That is like the description Richard gave me of the man Thorn.' Why the idea should have occurred to me in that strange manner, I do not know, but it most assuredly did occur; though I did not really suppose him to be the same. Just then I heard him spoken to by some one on the other side of the street, it was Otway Bethel, and he called him Captain Thorn."

"That is curious indeed, Barbara. I did not know any stranger was at West Lynne."

"I saw Mr. Wainwright, and asked him who it was. He said a Captain Thorn, a friend of the Herberts. A Lieutenant Thorn four or five years ago would probably be Captain Thorn now."

Mr. Carlyle nodded, and there was a pause.

"What can be done?" asked Barbara.

Mr. Carlyle was passing one hand over his brow; it was a habit of his when deep in thought. "It is hard to say what is to be done, Barbara. The description you give of this man certainly tallies with that given by Richard. Did he look like a gentleman?"

"Very much so. A remarkably aristocratic-looking man, as it struck me."

Mr. Carlyle again nodded assentingly. He remembered Richard's words when describing the other—"and an out-and-out aristocrat." "Of course, Barbara, the first thing must be to try and ascertain whether it is the same," he observed. "If we find that it is, then we must deliberate upon future movements. I will see what I can ascertain and let you know."

Barbara rose. Mr. Carlyle escorted her across the hall, and then strolled down the park by her side, deep in the subject; and quite unconscious that Lady Isabel's jealous eyes were watching them from her dressing-room window.

"You say he seemed intimate with Otway Bethel?"

"As to being intimate, I do not know. Otway Bethel spoke as though he knew him."

"This must have caused excitement to Mrs. Hare."

"You forget that mamma was not told anything about Thorn," was the answer of Barbara. "The uncertainty would have worried her to death. All Richard said to her was that he was innocent, that it was a stranger who did the deed, and she asked for no particulars; she has implicit faith in Richard's truth."

"True; I did forget," replied Mr. Carlyle. "I wish we could find out some one who knew the other Thorn; to ascertain that they were the same would be a great point gained." He went as far as the park gates with Barbara, shook hands, and wished her good-evening.

CHAPTER XX

PUZZLED

Scarcely had she departed, when Mr. Carlyle saw two gentlemen advancing from the opposite direction, in one of whom he recognized Tom Herbert, and the other—instinct told him—was Captain Thorn. He waited till they came up."

"If this isn't lucky, seeing you!" cried Mr. Tom Herbert, who was a free-and-easy sort of gentleman, the second son of a brother justice of Mr. Hare's. "I wish to goodness you'd give us a draught of your cider, Carlyle. We went to Beauchamp's for a stroll, but found them all out; and I'm awfully thirsty. Captain Thorn, Carlyle."

Mr. Carlyle invited them to his house and ordered in refreshments. Young Herbert coolly threw himself into an arm-chair and lit a cigar. "Come, Thorn!" cried he, "here's a weed for you."

Captain Thorn glanced toward Mr. Carlyle. He appeared of a far more gentlemanly nature than Tom Herbert.

"You'll have one, too, Carlyle," said Herbert, holding out his cigar case. "Oh! I forgot. You are a muff; don't smoke one twice a year. I say, how's Lady Isabel?"

"Very ill still."

"By Jove! is she, though? Tell her I'm sorry to hear it, will you, Carlyle? But—I say! will she smell the smoke?" asked he, with a mixture of alarm and concern in his face.

Mr. Carlyle reassured him upon that point, and turned to Captain Thorn.

"Are you acquainted with this neighborhood?"

Captain Thorn smiled. "I only reached West Lynne yesterday."

"You were never here before, then?" continued Mr. Carlyle, setting down the last as a probably evasive answer.

"No."

"He and my brother Jack, you know, are in the same regiment," put in Tom Herbert, with scant ceremony. "Jack had invited him down for some fishing, and Thorn arrives. But he never sent a word he was coming. Jack had given him up, and is off on some Irish expedition, the deuce knows where. Precious unlucky that it should have happened so. Thorn says that he shall cut short his stay, and go again."

The conversation turned upon fishing, and in the heat of argument the stranger mentioned a certain pond, and its famous eels—"the Low Pond." Mr. Carlyle looked at him, speaking, however, in a careless manner.

"Which do you mean? We have two ponds not far apart, each called the 'Low Pond.'"

"I mean the one on an estate about three miles from here; 'Squire Thorpe's, unless I am mistaken."

Mr. Carlyle smiled. "I think you must have been in the neighborhood before, Captain Thorn. 'Squire Thorpe is dead, and the property has passed to his daughter's husband, and that Low Pond was filled up three years ago."

"I have heard a friend mention it," was Captain Thorn's reply, spoken in an indifferent tone, though he evidently wished not to pursue the subject.

Mr. Carlyle by very easy degrees, turned the conversation to Swainson, the place whence Richard Hare's Captain Thorn was suspected to have come. The present Captain Thorn said he knew it "a little," he had once been "staying there for a short time." Mr. Carlyle became nearly convinced that Barbara's suspicions were correct. The descriptions certainly agreed, as far as he could judge, in the most minute particulars. The man before him wore two rings, a diamond—and a very beautiful diamond, too—on the one hand; a seal ring on the other; his hands were

delicate to a degree, and his handkerchief, a cambric one of unusually fine texture, was not entirely guiltless of scent, a mark of dandyism which, in the other Captain Thorn, used considerably to annoy Richard. Mr. Carlyle quitted the room for a moment, and summoned Joyce to him.

"My lady has been asking for you, sir," said Joyce.

"Tell her I will be up the moment these gentlemen leave. Joyce," he added, "find an excuse to come into the room presently, you can bring something or other in; I want you to look at this stranger who is with young Mr. Herbert. Notice him well; I fancy you may have seen him before."

Mr. Carlyle returned to the room, leaving Joyce surprised. However, she presently followed, taking in some water, and lingered a few minutes, apparently placing the things on the table in order.

When the two departed, Mr. Carlyle called Joyce, before proceeding to his wife's room. "Well?" he questioned, "did you recognize him?"

"Not at all, sir. He seemed quite strange to me."

"Cast your thoughts back, Joyce. Did you never see him in years gone by?"

Joyce looked puzzled, but she replied in the negative.

"Is he the man, think you, who used to ride over from Swainson to see Afy?"

Joyce's face flushed crimson. "Oh, sir!" was all she uttered.

"The name is the same—Thorn; I thought it possible the man might be," observed Mr. Carlyle.

"Sir, I cannot say. I never saw that Captain Thorn but once, and I don't know—I don't know"—Joyce spoke slowly and with consideration—"that I should at all know him again. I did not think of him when I looked at this gentleman; but, at any rate, no appearance in this one struck upon my memory as being familiar."

So, from Joyce, Mr. Carlyle obtained no clew one way or the other. The following day he sought out Otway Bethel. "Are you intimate with that Captain

Thorn who is staying with the Herberts?" asked he. "Yes," answered Bethel, derisively, "if passing a couple of hours in his company can constitute intimacy. That's all I have seen of Thorn."

"Are you sure?" pursued Mr. Carlyle.

"Sure!" returned Bethel; "why, what are you driving at now? I called in at Herberts' the night before last, and Tom asked me to stay the evening. Thorn had just come. A jolly bout we had; cigars and cold punch."

"Bethel," said Mr. Carlyle, dashing to the point, "is it the Thorn who used to go after Afy Hallijohn? Come, you can tell if you like." Bethel remained dumb for a moment, apparently with amazement.

"What a confounded lie!" uttered he at length. "Why, it's no more than Thorn—— What Thorn?" he broke off, abruptly.

"You are equivocating, Bethel. The Thorn who was mixed up—or said to be—in the Hallijohn affair. Is this the same man?"

"You are a fool, Carlyle; which is what I never took you to be yet," was Mr. Bethel's rejoinder, spoken in a savage tone. "I have told you that I never knew there was any Thorn mixed up with Afy, and I should like to know why my word is not to be believed? I never saw Thorn in my life till I saw him the other night at the Herberts', and that I would take an oath to, if put to it."

Bethel quitted Mr. Carlyle with the last word, and the latter gazed after him, revolving points in his brain. The mention of Thorn's name (the one spoken of by Richard Hare) appeared to excite some sore feeling in Bethel's mind, arousing it to irritation. Mr. Carlyle remembered that it had done so previously, and now it had done so again; and yet, Bethel was an easy-natured man in general, far better tempered than principled. That there was something hidden, some mystery connected with the affair, Mr. Carlyle felt sure, but he could not attempt so much as a guess at what it might be. And his interview with Bethel

brought him no nearer the point he wished to find out—whether this Thorn was the same man. In walking back to his office he met Mr. Tom Herbert.

“Does Captain Thorn purpose making a long stay with you?” he stopped him to inquire.

“He’s gone; I have just seen him off by the train,” was the reply. “It seemed rather slow work for him without Jack, so he shortened his visit, and says he will pay us one when Jack’s to the fore.”

As Mr. Carlyle went home to dinner that evening, he entered the Grove, ostensibly to make a short call on Mrs. Hare. Barbara, on the tenterhooks of impatience, accompanied him outside when he departed, and walked down the path.

“What have you learnt?” she eagerly asked. “Nothing satisfactory,” was the reply of Mr. Carlyle. “The man is gone.”

“Gone!” said Barbara.

Mr. Carlyle explained. He told her how they had come to his house the previous evening after Barbara’s departure, and his encounter with Tom Herbert that day; he mentioned, also, his interview with Bethel.

“Can he have gone on purpose, fearing consequences?” wondered Barbara.

“Scarcely, or why should he have come?”

“You did not suffer any word to escape you last night causing him to suspect that he was doubted?”

“Not any. You would make a bad lawyer, Barbara.”

“Who or what is he?”

“An officer in her Majesty’s service, in John Herbert’s regiment. I ascertained no more. Tom said he was of good family. But I cannot help suspecting it is the same man.”

“Can nothing more be done?”

“Nothing in the present state of the affair,” concluded Mr. Carlyle, as he passed through the gate to continue his way. “We can only wait on again with what patience we may, hoping that time will bring about its own elucidation.”

Barbara pressed her forehead down on the cold iron

of the gate as his footsteps died away. "Ay, to wait on," she murmured, "to wait on in dreary pain; to wait on, perhaps for years, perhaps forever! And poor Richard—wearing out his days in poverty and exile!"

Lady Isabel recovered and grew strong. And a few years passed smoothly on, no particular event occurring to note them.

CHAPTER XXI

FRANCIS LEVISON

Then the doctor insisted upon a change of scene, and suggested Boulogne. So to Boulogne, after much persuasion, Lady Isabel was sent.

One day, when sitting on the pier, a tall, gentlemanly figure approached. Her eyes fell upon him; and—what was it that caused every nerve in her frame to vibrate, every pulse to quicken? Whose form was it that was thus advancing, and changing the monotony of her mind into a tumult? It was that of one whom she was soon to find had never been entirely forgotten.

Captain Levison came slowly on, approaching the part of the pier where she sat. He glanced at her, not with the hardihood displayed by the two young men, but with quite sufficiently evident admiration.

"What a lovely girl!" he thought to himself. "What can she be, sitting there alone?" All at once a recollection flashed into his mind; he raised his hat and extended his hand, his fascinating smile in full play.

"I certainly cannot be mistaken. Have I not the honor of once more meeting Lady Isabel Vane?" She allowed him to take her hand, answering a few words at random, for her wits seemed to have gone wool-gathering.

"I beg your pardon—I should have said Lady Isabel Carlyle. Time has elapsed since we parted, and, in the pleasure of seeing you again so unexpectedly, I thought of you as you were then."

She sat down again, the brilliant flush of emotion

dying away on her cheeks. It was the loveliest face Francis Levison had seen since he had last seen hers, and he thought so as he gazed at it.

"What can have brought you to this place?" he inquired, taking a seat by her.

"I have been ill," she explained, "and am ordered to the seaside. We should not have come here but for Mrs. Ducie; we expected to meet her. Mr. Carlyle only left me this morning."

"Mrs. Ducie is off to Ems. I see them occasionally. They have been fixtures in Paris for some time. You do indeed look ill!" he abruptly added, in a tone of sympathy; "alarmingly ill. Is there anything I can do for you?"

She was aware that she looked unusually ill at that moment, for the agitation and surprise of meeting him were fading away, leaving her face of an ashy whiteness. She was exceedingly vexed and angry with herself that the meeting him should have had power to call forth emotion. Until that moment she was unconscious that she retained any sort of feeling for Captain Levison.

"Perhaps I have ventured out too early," she said, in a tone that would seem to apologize for her looks; "I think I will return. I shall meet my servant, no doubt. Good-morning, Captain Levison."

"But indeed you do not appear fit to walk alone," he remonstrated. "You must allow me to see you safely home."

Drawing her hand within his arm quite as a matter of course, as he had done many a time in days gone by, he proceeded to assist her down the pier. Lady Isabel, conscious of her own feelings, felt that it was not quite the thing to walk thus familiarly with him, but he was a sort of relation of the family—a connection, at any rate, and she could find no ready excuse for declining.

"Have you seen Lady Mount Severn lately?" he inquired.

"I saw her when I was in London this spring with

Mr. Carlyle. The first time we have met since my marriage; we do not correspond. Lord Mount Severn has paid us some visits at East Lynne. They are in town yet, I believe."

"For all I know. I have not seen them, or England either, for ten months. I have been staying in Paris, and got here yesterday."

"A long leave of absence," she observed.

"Oh, I have left the army. I sold out. The truth is, Lady Isabel—for I don't mind telling you—things are rather down with me at present. My uncle has behaved shamefully; he has married again."

"I heard that Sir Peter had married."

"He is seventy-three—the old simpleton! Of course this materially alters my prospects, for it is just possible he may have a son of his own now; and my creditors all came down upon me. They allowed me to run in debt with complacency when I was heir to the title and estates, but as soon as Sir Peter's marriage appeared in the papers, myself and my consequence dropped a hundred per cent; credit was stopped, and I was dunned for payment. So I sold out and came abroad."

"Leaving your creditors?"

"What else could I do? My uncle would not pay them, or increase my allowance."

"What are your prospects, then?" resumed Lady Isabel.

"Prospects? Do you see that little ragged boy throwing stones into the harbor?—it is well if the police don't drop upon him. Ask him what his prospects are, and he would stare in your face and say, 'None.' Mine are on a par."

"You may succeed Sir Peter yet."

"I may; but I may not. When these old idiots get a young wife——"

"Have you quarreled with Sir Peter?" interrupted Lady Isabel.

"I should quarrel with him as he deserves, if it would do any good; but I might get my allowance

stopped. Self-interest, you see, Lady Isabel, is the order of the day with most of us."

"Do you purpose staying in Boulogne long?"

"I don't know. As I may find amusement. Paris is a fast capital, with its heated rooms and its late hours, and I came down for the refreshment of a few sea dips. Am I walking too fast for you?"

"You increased your pace alarmingly when you spoke of Sir Peter's marriage. And I am not sorry for it," she added, good-naturedly, "for it has proved to me how strong I am getting. A week ago I could not have walked half so fast."

He interrupted with eager apologies, and soon they reached her home. Captain Levison entered with her—uninvited. He probably deemed that between connections great ceremony might be dispensed with, and he sat a quarter of an hour chatting to amuse her. When he arose, he inquired what she meant to do with herself in the afternoon.

"I lie down," replied Lady Isabel. "I am not strong enough to sit up all day."

"Should you be going out again afterward, you must allow me to take care of you," he observed. "I am glad that I happen to be here, for I am sure you are not fit to wander out only followed by a servant. When Mr. Carlyle comes he will thank me for my pains."

What was she to urge in objection? Simply nothing. He spoke, let us not doubt, from a genuine wish to serve her, in a plain, easy tone, as any acquaintance might speak. Lady Isabel schooled herself severely; if those old feelings were not quite dead within her, why, she must smother them down again as effectually as if they were; the very fact of recognizing such to her own heart brought its glow of shame to her brow. She would meet Captain Levison and suffer his companionship as she would that of the most indifferent stranger.

It was just the wrong way for her to go to work.

As the days passed on, Lady Isabel improved won-

derfully. She was soon able to go to the sands in a morning and sit there to enjoy the sea air, watching the waves come up or recede with the tide. She made no acquaintance whatever in the place, and when she had a companion it was Captain Levison. He would frequently join her there, sometimes take her, almost always give her his arm home. She disliked having to take his arm; her conscience whispered it might be better if she did not. One day she said, in a joking sort of manner—she would not say it in any other way—that now she was strong, she had no need of his arm and his escort. He demanded, in evident astonishment, what had arisen that he might not still afford it, as her husband was not with her to give her his. She had no answer to reply to this, no excuse to urge, and, in default of one, took his arm as usual. In the evening he was always ready to take her to the pier, but they sat apart, mixing not with the bustling crowd, he lending to his manner, as he conversed with her, all that it could call up of fascination—and fascination such as Francis Levison's might be dangerous to any ear in the sweet evening twilight. The walk over, he left her at her own door; in the evening she never asked him in, and he did not intrude without, as he sometimes would do of a morning.

In a fortnight from the period of his departure, Mr. Carlyle was expected in Boulogne. But what a marvelous change had this fortnight wrought in Lady Isabel! She did not dare to analyze her feelings, but she was conscious that all the fresh emotions of her youth had come again. The blue sky seemed as of the sweetest sapphire, the green fields and the waving trees were of an emerald brightness, the perfume of the flowers was more fragrant than any perfume had yet seemed. She knew that the sky, that the grassy plains, the leafy trees, the brilliant flowers, were but as they ever had been; she knew that the sunny atmosphere possessed no more of loveliness, or power of imparting delight, than of old; and she knew that the change, the sensation of ecstasy, was in her own

heart. No wonder that she shrank from self-examination.

The change from listless languor to her present feelings brought the hue and contour of health to her face far sooner than anything else could have done. She went down with Captain Levison to meet Mr. Carlyle the evening he came in, and when Mr. Carlyle saw her behind the cords as he was going to the custom-house, he scarcely knew her. Her features had lost their sharpness, her cheeks wore a rosy flush, and the light of pleasure at meeting him again shone in her eyes.

"What can you have been doing to yourself, my darling?" he uttered in delight, as he emerged from the custom-house and took her hands in his. "You look almost well."

"Yes, I am much better, Archibald, but I am warm now and flushed. We have waited here some time; and the setting sun was full upon us. How long the boat was coming in."

"The wind was dead against us," replied Mr. Carlyle, wondering who the exquisite was at his wife's side. He thought he remembered his face. "Captain Levison," said Lady Isabel. "I wrote you word in one of my letters that he was here. Have you forgotten it?"

Yes, it had slipped from his memory.

"And I am pleased that it happened to be so," said that gentleman, interposing, "for it has enabled me to attend Lady Isabel in some of her walks. She is stronger now, but at first she was unfit to venture alone."

"I feel much indebted to you," said Mr. Carlyle, warmly.

The following day was Sunday, and Francis Levison was asked to dine with them; the first meal he had been invited to in the house. After dinner, when Lady Isabel left them, he grew confidential with Mr. Carlyle; laying open all his cargo of troubles.

"This compulsory exile abroad is becoming intolerable," he concluded; "and a Paris life plays the very

deuce with one. Do you see any chance of my getting back to England?"

"Not the least," was the candid answer, "unless you can manage to satisfy, or partially satisfy, these claims you have been telling me of. Will not Sir Peter assist you?"

"I believe he would, were the case fairly represented to him; but how am I to get over to do it? I have written several letters to him lately, and for some time I got no reply. Then came an epistle from Lady Levison, not short and sweet, but short and sour. It was to the effect that Sir Peter was ill, and could not at present be troubled with business matters."

"He cannot be very ill," remarked Mr. Carlyle; "he passed through West Lynne in his open carriage a week ago."

"He ought to help me," grumbled Captain Levison. "I am his heir, so long as Lady Levison does not give him one. I do not hear that she has expectations."

"You should contrive to see him."

"I know I should; but it is not possible, under present circumstances. With these thunder-clouds hanging over me, I dare not set foot in England and run the risk of being dropped upon. I can stand a few things, but I shudder at the bare idea of a prison. Something peculiar in my idiosyncrasy I take it, for those who have tried it say that it's nothing when you're used to it."

"Some one might see him for you."

"Some one!—who? I have quarreled with my lawyers, Sharp & Steel, of Lincoln's Inn."

"Keen practitioners," put in Mr. Carlyle.

"Too keen for me. I'd send them over the herring-pond if I could. They have used me shamefully since my uncle's marriage. If ever I do come into the Levison estates, they'll be ready to eat their heads off; they would like a finger in the pie with such a property as that."

"Shall I see Sir Peter Levison for you?"

"Will you?" returned Captain Levison, his dark eyes lighting up.

"If you like; as your friend, you understand; not as your solicitor; that I should decline. I have a slight knowledge of Sir Peter; my father was well acquainted with him; and if I can render you any little service I shall be happy, in return for your kind attention to my wife. I cannot promise to see him for these two or three weeks," resumed Mr. Carlyle, "for we are terribly busy. Otherwise I should be staying here with my wife."

Lady Isabel felt that her old feeling of attraction towards this man was creeping over her, and she resolved to put him out of her life forever.

"Archibald, I have a favor to ask of you," she timidly began, as they sat together after Captain Levison's departure. "You must promise to grant it to me."

"What is it?"

"But that is not promising."

"I will grant it, Isabel, if it be in my power."

"I want you to remain with me for the rest of the time that I must stay here."

Mr. Carlyle looked at her in surprise. "My dear, how could you think of wishing anything so unlikely? It is circuit time."

"Oh, Archibald, you must remain!"

"I wish I could; but it is impossible; you must know it to be so, Isabel. A few weeks later in the year, and I could have stayed the whole of the time with you. As it is, I did not know how to get away for these two or three days."

"And you go back to-morrow?"

"Necessity has no law, my darling."

"Then take me with you."

Mr. Carlyle smiled. "No, Isabel; not while I find the change is doing you so much good. I took these rooms for six weeks; you must remain certainly to the end of the term, if not longer." The color came flowing painfully into her cheek. "I cannot stay without you, Archibald."

"Tell me why," smiled Mr. Carlyle.

Tell him why! "I am so dull without you," was

the best argument she could offer, but her voice faltered, for she felt that it would not be listened to.

Neither was it. Mr. Carlyle left the following day, and when he was departing, commended his wife to the further attention of Captain Levison. Not the faintest suspicion that it might be unwise to do so ever crossed his mind. How should it? Perfectly correct and honorable in himself, it never occurred to him that Captain Levison might be less so; and, as to his wife—he would fearlessly have left her alone with him, or with any one else, on a desert island, so entire was his confidence in her.

CHAPTER XXII

QUITTING THE DANGER

Lady Isabel was seated on one of the benches of the Petit Camp, as it is called, underneath the ramparts of the upper town. A week or ten days had passed away since the departure of Mr. Carlyle, and in her health there was a further visible improvement. In her strength the change was almost beyond belief. She had walked from her home to the cemetery, had lingered there, reading the inscriptions on the English graves, and now on her departure sat down to rest. Tired, it must be owned, but not much more so than many a lady would be, rejoicing in rude health. Captain Levison was her companion, as he mostly was in her walks; shake him off she could not.

“Do you remember the evening, Lady Isabel, just such a one as this, that we all passed at Richmond?” he suddenly asked. “Your father, Mrs. Vane, you and I and others.”

“Yes, I remember it. We had spent a pleasant day; the two Miss Challoners were with us. You drove Mrs. Vane home, and I went with papa. You drove recklessly, I recollect, and Mrs. Vane said when we got home that you should never drive her again.”

"Which meant not till the next time. Of all capricious, vain, exacting women, Emma Vane was the worst; and Emma Mount Severn is no improvement upon it; she's a systematic flirt. I drove recklessly on purpose to put her in a fright, and pay her off."

"What had she done to you?"

"Put me in a rage. She had saddled herself upon me, when I wanted—I wished for another to be my companion."

"Blanche Challoner."

"Blanche Challoner!" echoed Captain Levison, in a mocking tone; "what did I care for Blanche Challoner?"

Isabel remembered that he had been supposed in those days to care a great deal for Miss Blanche Challoner—a most lovely girl of seventeen. "Mrs. Vane tried to accuse you of caring too much for her," she said, aloud.

"She accused me of caring for some one else more than for Blanche Challoner," he significantly returned, "and for once her jealous surmises were not misplaced. No, Lady Isabel, it was not Blanche Challoner I wished to drive home. Could you not have given a better guess than that, at the time?" he added, turning to her. There was no mistaking the tone of his voice or the glance of his eye. Lady Isabel felt a crimson flush rising, and she turned her face away.

"The past is gone, and cannot be recalled," he continued, "but we both played our parts like simpletons. If ever two beings were formed to love each other, you and I were. I sometimes thought you read my feelings——"

Surprise had kept her silent, but she interrupted him now, haughtily enough. "I must speak, Lady Isabel; a few words, and then I am silent forever. I would have declared myself had I dared, but my uncertain position, my debts, my inability to keep a wife, weighed me down; and, instead of appealing to Sir Peter, as I hoped to have done, for the means to assume a position that would justify me in asking for

Lord Mount Severn's daughter, I crushed my hopes within me, and suffered you to escape——”

“I will not hear this, Captain Levison,” she cried, rising from her seat in anger. He touched her arm to place her on it again. “One single moment yet, I pray you. I have for years wished that you should know why I lost you—a loss that tells upon me yet. I have bitterly worked out my own folly since. I knew not how passionately I loved you until you became the wife of another. Isabel, I love you passionately still.”

“How dare you to presume so to address me?”

She spoke in a cold, dignified tone of hauteur, as it was her bounden duty to speak. But, nevertheless, she was conscious of an undercurrent of feeling, whispering that under other auspices the avowal would have brought to her heart the most intense bliss.

“What I have said can do no harm now,” resumed Captain Levison; “the time has gone by for it; for neither you nor I are likely to forget that you are a wife. We have each chosen our path in life and must abide by it; the gulf between us is impassable; but the fault was mine. I ought to have avowed my affection, and not have suffered you to throw yourself away upon Mr. Carlyle.”

“Throw myself away!” she indignantly uttered, roused to the retort. “Mr. Carlyle is my dear husband, esteemed, respected, beloved. I married him of my own free choice, and I have never repented it. I have grown more attached to him day by day. Look at his noble nature, his noble form; what are you by his side? You forget yourself, Francis Levison!”

He bit his lips.

“No, I do not.”

“You are talking to me as you have no right to talk,” she exclaimed, in her agitation. “Who, but you, would so insult me, or take advantage of my unprotected condition? Would you dare to do it were Mr. Carlyle within reach? I wish you good-evening, sir.” She walked away as quickly as her tired frame would permit. Captain Levison strode after her. He

took forcible possession of her hand and placed it within his arm.

"I pray you forgive and forget what has escaped me, Lady Isabel. Suffer me to be, as before, the kind friend, the anxious brother, endeavoring to be of service to you in the absence of Mr. Carlyle."

"It is what I have suffered you to be, looking upon you as, I may say, a relative," she coldly rejoined, withdrawing her hand from his contact. "Not else should I have permitted your incessant companionship, and this is how you have repaid it. My husband thanked you for your attention to me; could he have read what was in your false heart he had offered you a different sort of thanks, I fancy."

"I ask you for pardon, Lady Isabel; I have acknowledged my fault; but I can do no more. I will not so offend again; but there are moments when our dearest feelings break through the rules of life and betray themselves, in spite of our sober judgment. Suffer me to support you down this steep hill," he added, for they were then going over the sharp stones of the Grande Rue; "you are not strong enough to proceed alone, after this evening's long walk."

"You should have thought of that before," she said, some sarcasm in her tone. "No, I have declined."

So he had to put his arm back, which he was holding out, and she walked on unsupported with what strength she had, he continuing to walk by her side. Arrived at her own door, she wished him a cold good-evening, and he turned away in the direction of his hotel.

Lady Isabel brushed past Peter, and flew upstairs, startling Wilson, who had taken possession of the drawing-room to air her smart cap at its windows in the absence of her lady.

"My desk, Wilson, immediately," cried she, tearing off her gloves, her bonnet and her shawl. "Tell Peter to be in readiness to take a letter to the post; and he must walk fast, or he will not catch it before the English mail is closed."

The symptoms of sinful happiness throbbing at her heart while Francis Levison told her of his love, spoke plainly to Lady Isabel of the expediency of withdrawing entirely from his society and his dangerous sophistries; she would be away from the very place that contained him; put the sea between them. So she dashed off a letter to her husband; an urgent summons that he should come for her without delay, for remain longer she would not. It is probable she would have started alone, not waiting for Mr. Carlyle, but for fear of not having sufficient funds for the journey, after the rent and the other things were paid.

Mr. Carlyle, when he received the letter and marked its earnest tone, wondered much. In reply he stated he would be with her on the following Saturday, and then her returning or not with him would be settled. Fully determined not to meet Captain Levison, Isabel, in the intervening days, only went out in a carriage. He called once and was shown into the drawing-room; but Lady Isabel, who happened to be in her own chamber, sent out a message, which was delivered by Peter. "My lady's compliments, but she must decline receiving visitors."

Sunday morning—it had been impossible for him to get away before—brought Mr. Carlyle. He strongly combatted her wish to return home until the six weeks should have expired; he nearly said he would not take her, and she grew earnest over it, almost to agitation. "Isabel," he said, "let me know your motive, for it appears to me that you have one. The sojourn here is evidently doing you a vast deal of good, and what you urge about 'being dull' sounds very like nonsense. Tell me what it is."

A sudden impulse flashed over her that she would tell him the truth. Not tell him that she loved Francis Levison, or that he had spoken to her as he did; she valued her husband too greatly to draw him into any unpleasantness whose end could not be seen; but own to him that she had once felt a passing fancy for Francis Levison, and preferred not to be subjected to

his companionship now. Oh, that she had done so! her kind, her noble, her judicious husband! Why did she not? The whole truth as to her present feelings it was not expedient that she should tell, but she might have confided to him quite sufficient. He would only have cherished her the more deeply, and sheltered her under his fostering care, safe from harm.

Why did she not? In the impulse of the moment she was about to do so, when Mr. Carlyle, who had been taking a letter from his pocketbook, put it into her hand. Upon what slight threads do the events of life turn! Her thoughts diverted, she remained silent while she opened the letter. It was from Miss Carlyle, who handed it to her brother in the moment of his departure, to carry to Lady Isabel and save postage. Mr. Carlyle had nearly dropped it into the Folkestone postoffice.

A letter as stiff as Miss Corny herself. The children were well and the house was going on well, and she hoped Lady Isabel was better. It filled three sides of note-paper, but that was all the news it contained, and it wound up with the following sentence: "I would continue my epistle, but Barbara Hare, who is to spend the day with us, has just arrived."

Barbara Hare spending the day at East Lynne! That item was quite enough for Lady Isabel; and her heart and her confidence closed to her husband. She must go home to her children, she urged; she could not remain longer away from them; and she urged it at length with tears.

"Nay, Isabel," said Mr. Carlyle, "if you are so much in earnest as this, you shall certainly go back with me." Then she was like a child let loose from school. She laughed; she danced in her excess of content; she showered kisses on her husband, thanking him in her gleeful gratitude. Mr. Carlyle set it down to her love for him; he arrived at the conclusion that, in reiterating that she could not bear to be away from him, she spoke the fond truth.

"Isabel," he said, smiling tenderly upon her, "do

you remember, in the first days of our marriage, you told me you did not love me, but that the love would come? I think this is it." Her face flushed nearly to tears at the word; a bright, glowing, all too conscious flush. Mr. Carlyle mistook its source, and caught her to his heart.

One day more, and then they—she and that man—should be separated by the broad sea! The thought caused her to lift up her heart in thankfulness. She knew that to leave him would be as though she left the sun behind her, that the other side might for a time be somewhat dreary; nevertheless, she fervently thanked Heaven. Oh, reader! never doubt the principles of poor Lady Isabel; her reticence of mind, her wish and endeavor to do right, her abhorrence of wrong. Her spirit was earnest and true, her intentions were pure.

Captain Levison paid a visit to Mr. Carlyle, and inquired if he had had time to see Sir Peter. Not yet; Mr. Carlyle had been too busy to think of it; but he should soon have more leisure on his hands, and would not fail him. Such was the reply—the reply of an honorable man to a man of dishonor; but of the dishonor Mr. Carlyle suspected nothing. It is a pity but what bad men could be turned inside out sometimes to put others on their guard.

It was high water in the afternoon, and the Folkestone boat announced to start at one. The Carlyles and their servants went on board in good time, and Captain Levison greeted them and said farewell as they stepped on the steamer. Lady Isabel took her seat on the deck, her husband standing by her; the cords were unloosened, and the boat moved slowly down the harbor. On the shore stood Francis Levison, watching its progress, watching her. He was a bold, unscrupulous man; and there was little doubt that the more refined feelings, both of the past and present, he had thought fit to avow for Lady Isabel, were all put on, meant to serve a purpose. However, he had received his checkmate.

As he receded from Isabel's view, a sensation of relief thrilled through her whole frame, causing it to shudder, and involuntarily she clasped the hand of Mr. Carlyle.

"You are not cold, Isabel?" he said, bending over her. "Oh, no; I am very comfortable; very happy."

"But you were surely shivering?"

"At the thought of what I could have done with myself had you come away and left me there still, all alone. Archibald," she continued, in an impassioned whisper, "never let me go from you again; keep me by you always." He smiled, as he looked down into her pleading eyes, and a whole world of tender response and love might be detected in his earnest tone. "Always and always, Isabel. It is greater pain to me than to you, to have you away from me."

How could she ever doubt him?

CHAPTER XXIII

THE FRACTURED ANKLE

Lady Isabel had returned home to bodily health, to the delight of meeting her children, to the glad sensation of security. But, as the days went on, a miserable feeling of apathy stole over her—a feeling as if all whom she had loved in the world had died, leaving her living and alone. It was a painful depression, the vacuum in her heart which was making itself felt in its keen intensity. She strove to drive that bad man from her thoughts; but, even while she so strove, he was again in them. Too frequently she caught herself thinking that if she could but see him once again, for ever so short a period, one hour, one day, she could compose her spirit afterward to rest. She did not encourage these reflections, but they thrust themselves continually forward. The form of Francis Levison was ever present to her; not a minute of the day but it gave the coloring to her thoughts, and at night it made the subject of her dreams. Oh, those

dreams! they were painful to wake from; painful from the contrast they presented to reality; and equally painful to her conscience, in its strife after what was right. She would have given much not to have these dreams; never to see or think of him in her sleep. But how prevent it? There was no prevention; for when the mind (or the imagination, if you like the word better) is thoroughly imbued with a subject of this nature, especially if unhappiness mingles with it, then the dreams follow necessarily the bent of the waking thoughts. Poor Lady Isabel would awake to self-reproach, restless and feverish, wishing that this terrible disease could be driven away, root and branch; but Time, the great healer, must, she knew, pass over her, before that could be.

Mr. Carlyle mounted his horse one morning and rode over to Levison Park. He asked for Sir Peter, but was shown into the presence of Lady Levison, a young and pretty woman, dressed showily. She inquired his business.

“My business, madame, is with Sir Peter.”

“But Sir Peter is not well enough to attend to business. It upsets him; worries him.”

“Nevertheless, I am here by his own appointment. Twelve o’clock he mentioned, and the hour has barely struck.”

Lady Levison bit her lip and bowed coldly; and at that moment a servant appeared to conduct Mr. Carlyle to Sir Peter. The matter which had taken Mr. Carlyle there was entered upon immediately—Francis Levison, his debts and his gracelessness. Sir Peter, an old gentleman in a velvet skull-cap, particularly enlarged upon the latter.

“I would pay his debts to-day and set him upon his legs again, but that I know I should have to do the same thing over and over again to the end of the chapter—as I have done before,” cried Sir Peter. “His grandfather was my only brother, his father my dutiful and beloved nephew; but he is just as bad as they

were estimable. He is a worthless fellow, and nothing else, Mr. Carlyle."

As Mr. Carlyle left Sir Peter's presence, he encountered Lady Levison. "I can scarcely be ignorant that your conference with my husband has reference to his grand-nephew," she observed.

"It has," replied Mr. Carlyle.

"I have a very bad opinion of him, Mr. Carlyle; at the same time I do not wish you to carry away a wrong impression of me. Francis Levison is my husband's nephew, his presumptive heir; it may therefore appear strange that I set my face so determinedly against him. Two or three years ago, previous to my marriage with Sir Peter—in fact, before I knew Sir Peter—I was brought into contact with Francis Levison. He was acquainted with some friends of mine, and at their house I met him. He behaved shamefully ill; he repaid their hospitality with gross ingratitude. Other details and facts regarding his conduct also became known to me. Altogether, I believe him to be a base and despicable man, both by nature and inclination, and that he will remain such to the end of time."

"I know very little indeed of him," observed Mr. Carlyle. "May I inquire the nature of his ill conduct in the instance you mention?"

"He ruined them—he ruined them, Mr. Carlyle. They were simple, unsuspecting country people, understanding neither fraud nor vice, nor the ways of an evil world. Francis Levison got them to put their names to bills, 'as a simple matter of form, to accommodate him for a month or so,' he stated, and so they believed. They were not wealthy; they lived upon their own small estate in comfort, but with no superfluous money to spare, and when the time came for them to pay—as come it did—it brought ruin, and they had to leave their home. He deliberately did it; I am certain that Francis Levison deliberately did it, knowing what would be the end. And I could tell you of other things. Sir Peter may have informed you

that I object to receive him here. I do. My objection is to the man, to his character; not owing, as I hear it has been said, to any jealous, paltry feeling touching his being the heir. I must lose my own self-respect before I admit Francis Levison to my house as an inmate. Sir Peter may assist him, may pay his debts and get him out of his scrapes as often as he pleases; but I will not have him here."

"Sir Peter said you declined to receive him. But it is necessary he should come to England if his affairs are to be set straight, and also that he should see Sir Peter."

"Come to England?" interrupted Lady Levison. "How can he come to England under the present circumstances, unless, indeed, he comes *en cachette*."

"*En cachette*, of course," replied Mr. Carlyle. "There is no other way. I have offered to let him stay at East Lynne; he is, you may be aware, a connection of Lady Isabel's."

"Take care that he does not repay your hospitality with ingratitude," warmly returned Lady Levison. "It would only be in accordance with his practice."

Mr. Carlyle laughed. "I do not well see what harm he could do me, allowing that he had the inclination. He would not scare my clients from me, nor beat my children, and I can take care of my pocket. A few days, no doubt, will be the extent of his sojourn."

Lady Levison smiled, too, and shook hands with Mr. Carlyle. "In your house perhaps there may be no field for his vagaries; but rely upon it, where there is one he is sure to be at some mischief or other."

The visit of Mr. Carlyle to Levison Park took place on a Friday morning, and on his return to his office he dispatched an account of it to Captain Levison at Boulogne, telling him to come over. But Mr. Carlyle, like many another man whose brain has its share of work, was sometimes forgetful of trifles, and it entirely slipped his memory to mention the expected arrival at home. The following evening, Saturday, he and Lady Isabel were dining in the neighborhood, when

the conversation at table turned upon the Ducies and their embarrassments. The association of ideas led Mr. Carlyle's thoughts to Boulogne, to Captain Levison and his embarrassments, and it immediately occurred to him that he had not told his wife of the anticipated visit. He kept it in his mind, and spoke as soon as they were in the chariot returning home.

"Isabel," he began, "I suppose we have always rooms ready for visitors, because I am expecting one?"

"Oh, yes. Or, if not, they are soon made ready."

"Ay, but to-morrow is Sunday, and I have no doubt that it is the day he will take advantage of to come. I am sorry I forgot to mention it yesterday."

"Who is coming?"

"Captain Levison."

"Who?" repeated Lady Isabel, in a sharp tone of consternation.

"Captain Levison. Sir Peter consents to see him, with a view to the settlement of his liabilities, but Lady Levison declines to receive him at the Park. So I offered to give him house room at East Lynne for a few days."

There is an old saying—the heart leaped into the mouth; and Lady Isabel's heart leaped into hers. She grew dizzy at the words; her senses seemed for the moment to desert her; her first sensation was as if the dull earth had opened and shown her a way into Paradise; her second was a lively consciousness that Francis Levison ought not to be suffered to come again into companionship with her.

Mr. Carlyle continued to converse of the man's embarrassments, of his own interview with Sir Peter, of Lady Levison; but Isabel was as one who heard not. She was debating the question, how could she prevent his coming? "Archibald," she presently said, "I do not wish Francis Levison to stay at East Lynne."

"It will only be for a few days; perhaps but a day or two. Sir Peter is in the humor to discharge the claims; and the moment his resolve is known the ex-

captain can walk on her Majesty's dominions, an unmolested man; free to go where he will."

"That may be," interrupted Lady Isabel, in an accent of impatience, "but why should he come to our house?"

"I proposed it myself. I had no idea you would dislike his coming. Why should you?"

"I don't like Francis Levison," she murmured. "That is, I don't care to have him at East Lynne."

"My dear, I feel there is no help for it now; he is most likely on his road, and will arrive to-morrow; I cannot turn him out again, after my own voluntary invitation. Had I known it would be disagreeable to you, I should not have proposed it."

"To-morrow!" she exclaimed, all of the words that caught her ear; "is he coming to-morrow?"

"Being Sunday, a free day, he will be sure to take advantage of it. What has he done that you should object to his coming? You did not say in Boulogne that you disliked him."

"He has done nothing," was her faltering answer, feeling that her grounds of opposition must melt under her, one by one.

"Lady Levison appears to possess a very ill opinion of him," resumed Mr. Carlyle. "She says she knew him in years gone by. She mentioned one or two things which, if true, were bad enough; but possibly she may be prejudiced."

"She is prejudiced," said Isabel. "At least, so Francis Levison told me in Boulogne. There appeared to be no love lost between them."

"At any rate, his ill doings or well doings cannot affect us for the short period he is likely to remain. You have taken a prejudice against him also, I suppose, Isabel."

She suffered Mr. Carlyle to remain in the belief, and sat with clasped hands and a despairing spirit, feeling that fate was against her. How could she accomplish her task of forgetting this man, if he was thus to be thrown into her home and her companion-

ship? Suddenly she turned to her husband, and laid her cheek upon his shoulder.

He thought she was tired. He passed his arm round her waist, drew her face to a more comfortable position, and bent his own lovingly upon it. It came into her mind as she lay there to tell him a portion of the truth, like it had done once before. It was a strong arm of shelter round her; a powerful pillar of protection, him upon whom she leaned; why did she not confide herself to him as trustingly as a little child? Simply because her courage failed. Once, twice, the opening words were upon her lips, but come forth they did not; and then the carriage stopped at East Lynne, and the opportunity was over. Oh, how many a time, in her after years, did Lady Isabel recall that midnight drive with her husband and wish, in her vain repentance, that she had opened his eyes to that dangerous man!

The following morning they were driving home from church, when sounds of distress were heard, and they saw little Isabel flying toward them from the slopes, crying and sobbing in the greatest agitation. Mr. Carlyle jumped out and met the child.

“Oh, papa, papa! oh, come, pray come! I think she is dead.”

He took the child in his arms to soothe her. “Hush, my little darling, you will alarm mamma. Don’t tremble so. Tell me what it is.” Isabel told her tale. She had been a naughty child, she freely confessed, and had run out in the rain for fun because Joyce told her not; she had run amidst the wet grass of the park, down the slopes, Joyce after her. And Joyce had slipped and was lying at the foot of the slopes with a white face, never moving.

“Take care of her, Isabel,” said Mr. Carlyle, placing the agitated and repentant child by his wife’s side. “She says Joyce has fallen by the slopes. No, do not come; I will go first and see what is amiss.” Joyce was lying just as she fell, at the foot of the slopes. But her eyes were open now, and if she had fainted—as

might be inferred from the little girl's words—she had recovered consciousness.

“Oh, master, don't try to move me! I fear my leg is broken.”

He did, however, essay gently to raise her, but she screamed with the pain, and he found he must wait for assistance. “I trust you are not much hurt,” he kindly said. “How did it happen?”

“Miss Isabel ran out, sir, in all the rain and wet, and I went after her to bring her back again. But the slopes are slippery, and down I went, and just at first I remembered nothing more.”

Mr. Carlyle dispatched John and the pony carriage back for Mr. Wainwright, and with the aid of the servants, who were soon up from church, Joyce was carried in and laid on a bed, dressed as she was.

Little Isabel stole in, and drew her mother aside.

“Mamma,” she whispered, “there is a strange gentleman downstairs. He came in a chaise. He has got a portemanteau, and he is asking for you and papa.”

Lady Isabel turned sick with apprehension. Was he really come? “Who is it, Isabel?” she said, by way of making some answer; she guessed but too well.

“I don't know. I don't like him, mamma. He laid hold of me and held me tight, and there was an ugly look in his eyes.” The stranger was, of course, Captain Levison. Mr. Carlyle went down to receive and entertain him. Lady Isabel did not; the accident to her maid being put forth as an excuse.

Mr. Wainwright pronounced the injury to be a simple fracture of the ankle bone. It might have been much worse, he observed; but Joyce would be confined to her bed for three or four weeks.

CHAPTER XXIV

MRS. HARE'S DREAM

The next day rose bright, warm and cloudless, and the morning sun streamed into the bedroom of Mrs. Hare. That lady lay in bed, a flush on her delicate cheeks, and her soft eyes rather glistening, as if with a touch of fever.

The justice rubbed his face to a shiny brilliancy, settled on his morning wig and his dressing-gown, and then turned to the bed.

"What will you have for breakfast?"

"Thank you, Richard, I do not think that I can eat anything. I shall be glad of my tea; I am very thirsty."

"All nonsense," responded the justice, alluding to the intimation of not eating. "Have a poached egg."

Mrs. Hare smiled at him and gently shook her head. "You are very kind, Richard, but I could not eat it this morning. Would you please to throw this window open before you go down? I should like to feel the air."

"You will get the air too near from this window," replied Mr. Justice Hare, opening the further one. Had his wife requested that further one to be opened, he would have opened the other—his own will and opinions were ever paramount. Then he descended. A minute or two, and up ran Barbara, looking bright and fair as the morning, her pink muslin dress with its ribbons and its open white lace sleeves as pretty as she was. She leaned over to kiss her mother. Barbara had grown more gentle and tender of late years; the bitterness of her pain had passed away, leaving all that had been good in her love to mellow and fertilize her nature. Her character had been greatly improved by sorrow.

"Mamma, are you ill? And you have been so well lately; you went to bed so well last night! Papa says——"

"Barbara, dear," interrupted Mrs. Hare, glancing round the room with dread, and speaking in a deep whisper, "I have had one of those dreadful dreams again."

"Oh, mamma, how can you?" exclaimed Barbara, starting up in vexation. "How can you suffer a foolish dream so to overcome you as to make you ill? You have good sense in other matters; but in this you seem to put all sense away from you."

"Child, will you tell me how I am to help it?" returned Mrs. Hare, taking Barbara's hand and drawing her to her again. "I do not give myself the dreams; I cannot prevent their making me sick, prostrate and feverish. I was as well yesterday as I could be; I went to bed quite comfortable, in excellent spirits; I do not know that I had even once thought of poor Richard during the day. And yet the dream came. There were no circumstances to lead to or induce it either in my thoughts or in outward facts; but come it did. How can I help these things, I ask?"

"And it is so long since you had one of these disagreeable dreams! Why, how long is it, mamma?"

"So long, Barbara, that the dread of them had nearly left me. I scarcely think I have had one since that stolen visit of Richard's years ago."

"Was it a very bad dream, mamma?"

"Oh, child, yes. I dreamt that the real murderer came to West Lynne! that he was with us here, and we——"

At this moment the bedroom door was flung open, and the face of the justice, especially stern and cross then, was pushed in. So startled was Mrs. Hare that she shook till she shook the pillow, and Barbara sprang away from the bed. Surely he had not distinguished their topic of conversation!

"Are you coming to make the breakfast to-day or not, Barbara? Do you expect me to make it?" Bar-

bara flew after Mr. Hare, poured out his coffee, saw him settled at his breakfast, with a plateful of grouse-pie before him, and then returned upstairs with her mamma's tea and dry toast.

CHAPTER XXV

A VISIT

The dinner hour of the Hares, when they were alone, was four o'clock, and it arrived that day as usual, and they sat down to table. Mrs. Hare was better then; the sunshine and the business of stirring life had in some measure effaced the visions of the night, and restored her to her wonted frame of mind. The justice mentioned the accident to Joyce; they had not heard of it; but they had not been out during the day, and had received no visitors. Mrs. Hare was full of concern; Joyce was a universal favorite.

The cloth was removed, the justice sat but a little while over his port wine, for he was engaged to smoke an after-dinner pipe with a brother magistrate, Mr. Justice Herbert.

"Shall you be home to tea, papa?" inquired Barbara. "Is it any business of yours, young lady?" "Oh, not in the least," answered Miss Barbara. "Only, if you had been coming home to tea, I suppose we must have waited for you."

"I thought you said, Richard, that you were going to stay the evening with Mr. Herbert," observed Mrs. Hare.

"So I am," responded the justice. "But Barbara has a great liking for the sound of her own tongue."

The justice departed, striding pompously down the gravel walk.

Barbara waltzed round the large room to a gleeful song, as if she felt his absence a relief. Perhaps she did. "You can have tea, now, mamma, at any time you please, if you are thirsty, without waiting till seven," said she.

"Yes, dear. Barbara!"

"What, mamma?"

"I am sorry to hear of this calamity which has fallen upon Joyce. I should like to walk to East Lynne this evening and inquire after her, and see her, if I may. It would be but neighborly."

Barbara's heart beat quicker. Hers was indeed a true and lasting love, one that defied time and change. She having to bury it wholly within her, had perhaps but added to its force and depth. Who could suspect, under Barbara's sometimes cold, sometimes playful exterior, that one was hidden in her heart, filling up its every crevice—one who had no right there? The intimation that she might soon possibly be in his presence sent every pulse throbbing.

"Walk, did you say, mamma? Should you do right to walk?"

"I feel quite equal to it. Since I have accustomed myself to take more exercise I feel better for it, and we have not been out to-day. Poor Joyce! What time shall we go, Barbara?"

"If we were to get up there by—by seven, I should think their dinner will be over then."

"Yes," answered Mrs. Hare, with alacrity, who was always pleased when somebody else decided for her. "But I should like some tea before we start, Barbara."

Barbara took care that her mamma should have some tea, and then they proceeded toward East Lynne. It was a lovely evening. The air was warm, and the humming gnats sported in it, as if anxious to make the most of the waning summer. Mrs. Hare enjoyed it at first, but ere she reached East Lynne she became aware that the walk was too much for her. She did not usually venture upon so long a one; and probably the fever and agitation of the morning had somewhat impaired her day's strength. She laid her hand upon the iron gate as they were turning into the park and stood still.

"I did wrong to come, Barbara."

"Lean on me, mamma. When you reach those

benches, you can rest before proceeding to the house. It is very warm, and that may have fatigued you."

They gained the benches, which were placed under some of the dark trees, in view of the gates and the road, but not of the house; and Mrs. Hare sat down. Another minute, and they were surrounded. Mr. Carlyle, his wife and sister, who were taking an after-dinner stroll amidst the flowers with their guest, Francis Levison, discerned them and came up. The children, except the youngest, were of the party. Lady Isabel warmly welcomed Mrs. Hare; she had become quite attached to the delicate and suffering woman.

"I am a pretty one, am I not, Archibald, to come inquiring after an invalid, when I am so much an invalid myself that I have to stop half way!" exclaimed Mrs. Hare, as Mr. Carlyle took her hand. "I am greatly concerned to hear of poor Joyce."

"You must stay the evening, now you are here," cried Lady Isabel. "It will afford you a rest, and tea will refresh you."

"Oh, thank you, but we have taken tea," said Mrs. Hare.

"That is no reason why you should not take some more," she laughed. "Indeed, you seem too fatigued to be anything but a prisoner with us for the next hour or two."

"I fear I am," answered Mrs. Hare.

"Who are they?" Captain Levison was muttering to himself, as he contemplated the guests from a distance. "It's a deuced lovely girl, whoever she may be. I think I'll approach; they don't look formidable."

He did approach, and the introduction was made. "Captain Levison; Mrs. Hare and Miss Hare." A few formal words, and Captain Levison disappeared again, challenging little Willie Carlyle to a foot-race.

"How very poorly your mamma looks," Mr. Carlyle exclaimed to Barbara, when they were beyond the hearing of Mrs. Hare, who was busy talking with Lady Isabel and Miss Carlyle. "She has appeared so much stronger lately; altogether better."

"The walk here has fatigued her; I feared it would be too long; so that she looks unusually pale," replied Barbara. "But what do you think it is that has upset her again, Mr. Carlyle?"

He turned his inquiring eyes on Barbara.

She explained that Mrs. Hare had had one of her terrible dreams, in which the murderer seemed to be at West Lynne.

"Were it in my power," she added, earnestly, "to do anything to elucidate the mystery, I would spare no pains, no toil; I would walk barefoot to the end of the earth to bring the truth to light. If ever that Thorn should come to West Lynne again, I will hope and pray, and strive to be able to bring it home to him."

"That Thorn does not appear in a hurry again to favor West Lynne with him——"

Mr. Carlyle paused, for Barbara had hurriedly laid her hand upon his arm, with a warning gesture. In talking, they had wandered across the park to its ornamental grounds, and were now in a quiet path, overshadowed on either side by a chain of imitation rocks. Seated astride on the summit of these rocks, right above where Mr. Carlyle and Barbara were standing, was Francis Levison. His face was turned from them, and he appeared intent upon a child's whip, winding leather round its handle. Whether he heard their footsteps or not, he did not turn. They quickened their pace and quitted the walk, bending their steps backward toward the group of ladies. "Could he have heard what we were saying?" ejaculated Barbara, below her breath.

Mr. Carlyle looked down on the concerned, flushed cheeks, with a smile. Barbara was evidently perturbed. But for a certain episode of their lives, some years ago, he might have soothed her. "I think he must have heard a little, Barbara, unless his own wits were wool-gathering; he might not be attending. What if he did hear? It is of no consequence."

"I was speaking, you know, of Captain Thorn—of his being the murderer."

"You were not speaking of Richard or his movements, so never mind. Levison is a stranger to the whole; it is nothing to him; if he heard the name of Thorn mentioned, or could even have distinguished the subject, it would bear for him no interest; would go, as the saying runs, in at one ear and out at the other. Be at rest, Barbara."

He really did look somewhat tenderly upon her as he spoke—and they were near enough to Lady Isabel for her to note the glance. She need not have been jealous; it bore no treachery to her. But she did note it; she had noted also their wandering away together, and she jumped to the conclusion that it was premeditated—that they had gone beyond her sight to enjoy each other's society for a few stolen moments. Wonderfully attractive looked Barbara that evening, for Mr. Carlyle or any one else to steal away with. Her elegant, airy summer attire, her bright blue eyes, her charming features and her lovely complexion. She had untied the strings to her pretty white bonnet, and was restlessly playing with them, more in thought than nervousness.

"Barbara, love, how are we to get home?" asked Mrs. Hare. "I fear I shall never be able to walk. I wish I had told Benjamin to bring the phaeton."

"I can send to him," said Mr. Carlyle.

"But it is too bad of me, Archibald, to take you and Lady Isabel by storm in this unceremonious manner, and to give your servants trouble besides."

"A great deal too bad, I think," returned Mr. Carlyle, with mock gravity. "As to the servants, the one who has to go will never recover from the trouble, depend upon it. You always were more concerned for others than for yourself, dear Mrs. Hare."

"And you are always kind, Archibald, smoothing difficulties for all, and making a trouble of nothing. Ah, Lady Isabel, were I a young woman, I should be envying you your good husband. There are not many like him."

Possibly the sentence reminded Lady Isabel that

another, who was young, might be envying her. Isabel's cheeks flushed crimson. Mr. Carlyle held out his strong arm of help to Mrs. Hare.

"If sufficiently rested, I fancy you would be more comfortable on a sofa indoors. Allow me to support you thither."

"And you can take my arm on the other side," cried Miss Carlyle, placing her tall form by Mrs. Hare. "Between us both we will pull you bravely along. Your feet need scarcely touch the ground."

Mrs. Hare laughed, but said she thought Mr. Carlyle's arm would be sufficient. She took it, and they were turning toward the house, when her eye caught the form of a gentleman passing along the road by the park gates.

"Barbara, run," she hurriedly exclaimed. "There's Tom Herbert going toward our house. He will call in and tell them to send the phaeton if you ask him."

When Barbara had given the order for the phaeton she became conscious of other footsteps, and moved her head hastily round. Two gentlemen, walking arm-in-arm, were close upon her, in one of whom she recognized "Jack," otherwise Major Herbert. He stopped and held out his hand.

"It is some years since we met, but I have not forgotten the pretty face of Miss Barbara," he cried. "A young girl's face it was then, but it is a stately young lady's now."

Barbara laughed. "Your brother told me you had arrived at West Lynne; but I did not know you were——"

Barbara's voice faltered, and the rushing crimson of emotion dyed her face. Whose face was that, who was he standing opposite to her, side by side with John Herbert? She had seen the face but once, yet it had planted itself upon her memory in characters of fire. Major Herbert continued to talk, but Barbara for once lost her self-possession; she could not listen; she could not answer; she could only stare at that face as if fascinated to the gaze, looking herself something

like a simpleton, her shy blue eyes anxious and restless, and her lips turning to an ashy whiteness. A strange feeling of wonder, of superstition, was creeping over Barbara. Was that man before her in sober, veritable reality, or was it but a phantom, called up in her mind by the associations arising from her mamma's dream, or by the conversation held not many moments ago with Mr. Carlyle?

Major Herbert may have deemed that Barbara, who was not attending to him, but to his companion, wished for an introduction, and he accordingly made it. "Captain Thorn; Miss Hare."

Then Barbara roused herself; her senses were partially coming to her, and she became alive to the fact that they must deem her behavior unorthodox for a young lady.

"I—I—looked at Captain Thorn, for I thought I remembered his face," she stammered.

"I was in West Lynne for a day or two some five years ago," he observed.

"Ah—yes," returned Barbara. "Are you going to make a long stay now?"

"We have several weeks' leave of absence. Whether we shall remain here all the time, I cannot say."

Barbara parted from them. Thought upon thought crowded upon her brain as she flew back to East Lynne. She ran up the steps to the hall, gliding toward a group which stood near its further end—her mother, Miss Carlyle, Mr. Carlyle and little Isabel; Lady Isabel she did not see. Mrs. Hare was then going up to see Joyce. In the agitation of the moment, she stealthily touched Mr. Carlyle, and he stepped away from the rest to speak to her, she drawing back toward the door of one of the reception rooms and motioning him to approach. "Oh, Archibald, I must speak to you alone. Could you not come out again for a little while?"

He nodded, and walked out openly by her side. Why should he not? What had he to conceal? But, unfortunately, Lady Isabel, who had gone out into

that same room for a minute and was coming out again to join Mrs. Hare, both saw Barbara's touch upon her husband's arm, marked her agitation, and heard her words. She went to one of the hall windows and watched them saunter toward the more private parts of the grounds; she saw her husband send back Isabel. Never, since their marriage, had Lady Isabel's jealousy been excited as it was excited that evening.

"I—I—feel—I scarcely know whether I am awake or dreaming," began Barbara, putting up her hand to her brow, and speaking in a dreamy tone. "Pardon me for bringing you out in this unceremonious fashion."

"What state secrets have you to disclose?" asked Mr. Carlyle, in a jesting manner.

"We were speaking of mamma's dream. She said the impression it left upon her mind—that the murderer was at West Lynne—was so vivid, that, in spite of common sense, she could not persuade herself that he was not. Well—just—now——"

"Barbara, what can be the matter?" said Mr. Carlyle, perceiving that her agitation was so great as to impede her words.

"I have just seen him!" she rejoined.

"Seen him!" echoed Mr. Carlyle, looking at her fixedly, a doubt crossing his mind whether Barbara's mind might be as uncollected as her manner.

"What were nearly my last words to you? That if ever that Thorn did come to West Lynne again I would leave no stone unturned to bring it home to him. He is here, Archibald. When I went to the gates to speak to Tom Herbert, his brother, Major Herbert, was also there, and with him Captain Thorn. Bethel also. Do you wonder, I say, that I know not whether I am awake or dreaming? They have some weeks' holidays, and are here to spend it."

"It is a singular coincidence," exclaimed Mr. Carlyle.

"Had anything been wanting to convince me that

Thorn is the guilty man, this would have done it," went on Barbara, in her excitement. "Mamma's dream, with the steadfast impression it left upon her that Hallijohn's murderer was now at West Lynne——"

In turning the sharp corner of the covered walk, they came in contact with Captain Levison, who appeared to be either standing or sauntering there, his hands underneath his coat-tails. Again Barbara felt vexed, wondering how much he had heard, and beginning in her heart to dislike the man. He accosted them familiarly, and appeared as if he would have turned with them; but none could put down presumption more effectually than Mr. Carlyle, calm and gentlemanly though he always was.

"I will join you presently, Captain Levison," he said, with a wave of the hand. And he turned back with Barbara toward the open parts of the park.

"Do you like that Captain Levison?" she abruptly inquired, when they were beyond hearing.

"I cannot say that I do," was Mr. Carlyle's reply. "He is one who does not improve upon acquaintance."

"To me it looks as though he had placed himself in our way to hear what we were saying."

"No, no, Barbara. What interest could it bear for him?"

Barbara did not contest the point; she turned to the one nearer at heart. "What must be our course in regard to Thorn?"

"It is more than I can tell you," replied Mr. Carlyle. "I cannot go up to the man and unceremoniously accuse him of being Hallijohn's murderer. In the first place, Barbara, we are not positively sure that he is the same man spoken of by Richard."

"Oh, Archibald, how can you doubt? The extraordinary fact of his appearing here at this moment, coupled with mamma's dream, might assure us of it."

"Not quite," smiled Mr. Carlyle. "All we can do is to go cautiously to work, and endeavor to ascertain whether he is the same."

"And there is no one but you to do it!" wailed Bar-

bara. "How vain and foolish are our boastings? I said I would not cease striving to bring it home to him, did he come again to West Lynne; and now he is here, even as the words were in my mouth, and what can I do? Nothing."

They took their way to the house, for there was nothing further to discuss. Captain Levison had entered it before them, and saw Lady Isabel stand at the hall window. Yes, she was standing and looking; brooding over her fancied wrongs.

"Who is that Miss Hare?" he demanded, in a cynical tone. "They appear to have a pretty good understanding together; twice this evening I have met them in secret conversation."

"Did you speak to me, sir?" sharply and haughtily returned Lady Isabel.

"I did not mean to offend you; I spoke of Mr. Carlyle and Miss Hare," he replied, in a gentle voice. He knew she had distinctly heard his first speech, in spite of her question.

CHAPTER XXVI

CAPTAIN THORN IN TROUBLE ABOUT "A BILL"

Mr. Carlyle was sitting one morning in his private room at his office, when his head clerk, Mr. Dill, came in. "A gentleman is asking to see you, Mr. Archibald."

"I am too busy to see anybody for this hour to come. You know that, Dill."

"So I told him, sir, and he says he will wait. It is that Captain Thorn, who is staying here with John Herbert." Mr. Carlyle raised his eyes, and they encountered those of the old man; a peculiar expression was in the face of both. Mr. Carlyle glanced down at the parchment he was perusing, as if calculating his time. Then he looked up again and spoke.

"I will see him, Dill. Send him in."

The business leading to the visit was quite simple.

Captain Frederick Thorn had got himself into some trouble and vexation about "a bill"—like too many other captains do, on occasions—and he had come to crave advice of Mr. Carlyle.

Mr. Carlyle felt dubious as to giving it. This Captain Thorn was a pleasant, attractive man, who won much on acquaintance; one whom Mr. Carlyle would have been pleased, in a friendly point of view, and setting professional interests apart, to help out of his difficulties; but if he were the villain they suspected him to be, the man with crime upon his hand, then Mr. Carlyle would have ordered his office door held wide open for him to slink out of it.

"Cannot you advise me what my course ought to be?" he inquired, detecting Mr. Carlyle's hesitation. "I could advise you, certainly. But—you must excuse my being plain, Captain Thorn—I like to know who my clients are before I take up their cause or accept them as clients."

"Well, how can I convince you that I am respectable? I have served my country ever since I was sixteen, and my brother officers have found no cause of complaint. My position as an officer and a gentleman would be generally deemed a sufficient guarantee. Inquire of John Herbert. The Herberts, too, are friends of yours, and they have not disdained to give me house-room amidst their family."

"True," returned Mr. Carlyle, feeling that he could not well object further; and also that all men should be deemed innocent until proved guilty. "At any rate, I will advise you what must be done at present," he added, "though if the affair must go on, I do not promise that I can continue to act for you. I am very busy just now."

Captain Thorn explained his dilemma, and Mr. Carlyle told him what to do in it. "Were you not at West Lynne some ten years ago?" he suddenly inquired at the close of the conversation. "You denied it to me once at my house; but I concluded from an observation that you let fall, that you had been here."

"Yes, I was," replied Captain Thorn, in a confidential tone. "I don't mind owning it to you in confidence, but I do not wish it to get abroad. I was not at West Lynne, but in its neighborhood. The fact is, when I was a careless young fellow, I was stopping a few miles from here, and got into a scrape, through a—a—in short, it was an affair of gallantry. I did not show out very well at the time, and I don't care that it should be known I am in the country again."

Mr. Carlyle's pulses—for Richard Hare's sake—beat a shade quicker. The avowal "an affair of gallantry" was almost a confirmation of his suspicions. "Yes," he pointedly said. "The girl was Afy Hallijohn."

"Afy—who?" repeated Captain Thorn, opening his eyes, and fixing them on Mr. Carlyle.

"Afy Hallijohn."

Captain Thorn continued to look at Mr. Carlyle, an amused expression, rather than any other, predominant on his features. "You are mistaken," he observed. "Afy Hallijohn? I never heard the name before in my life."

"Did you never hear, or know that a dreadful tragedy was enacted in this place about that period?" returned Mr. Carlyle, in a low, meaning tone. "That Afy Hallijohn's father——"

"Oh, stay, stay, stay," hastily interrupted Captain Thorn. "I am telling a story in saying I never heard the name. Afy Hallijohn? Why, that's the girl Tom Herbert was telling me about. Who—what was it?—disappeared after her father was murdered——"

"Murdered in his own cottage, almost in Afy's presence—murdered by—by——" Mr. Carlyle recollected himself; he had spoken more impulsively than was his custom. "Hallijohn was my father's faithful clerk for many years," he more calmly concluded.

"And he who committed the murder was young Hare, son of Justice Hare, and brother of that attractive girl, Barbara. Your speaking of this has recalled what they told me to my recollection. The first evening I was at the Herberts', Justice Hare and others

were smoking—half a dozen pipes were going at once; I also saw Miss Barbara that evening at your park gates; and Tom told me of the murder. An awful calamity for the Hares. I suppose that is the reason the young lady is Miss Hare still; one with her good fortune and good looks ought to have changed her name ere this."

"No, it is not the reason," resumed Mr. Carlyle.

"What is the reason, then?"

A faint flush tinged the brow of Mr. Carlyle. "I know more than one who would be glad to get Barbara, in spite of the murder. Do not depreciate Miss Hare."

"Not I, indeed; I like the young lady too well," replied Captain Thorn. "The girl, Afy, has never been heard of since, has she?"

"Never," said Mr. Carlyle. "Did you know her well?" he deliberately added. "I never knew her at all, if you mean Afy Hallijohn. Why should you think I did? I never heard of her till Tom Herbert amused me with the history."

Mr. Carlyle devoutly wished he could tell whether the man before him was speaking truth or falsehood. He continued: "Afy's favors—I mean her smiles and her chatter—were pretty freely dispensed, for she was heedless and vain. Amidst others who got the credit for occasionally basking in her rays, was a gentleman of the name of Thorn. Was it not yourself?"

Captain Thorn stroked his mustache with an air that seemed to say he could boast of his share of such basking; in short, as if he felt half inclined to do it. "Upon my word," he simpered, "you do me too much honor; I cannot confess to having been favored by Miss Afy."

"Then she was not the—the damsel you speak of, who drove you—if I understood aright—from the locality?" resumed Mr. Carlyle, fixing his eyes upon him, so as to take in every tone of the answer, and shade of the countenance, as he gave it.

"I should think not, indeed. It was a married lady,

more's the pity; young, pretty, vain and heedless, as you represent this Afy. Things went along smother after a time, and she and her husband—a stupid country yeoman—became reconciled; but I have been ashamed of the affair ever since;—doubly ashamed of it since I have grown wiser—and I do not care ever to be recognized as the actor in it, or to have it raked up against me.”

Captain Thorn rose, and took a somewhat hasty leave. Was he or was he not the man? Mr. Carlyle could not solve the doubt. Mr. Dill came in as he disappeared, closed the door and advanced to his master, speaking in an under-tone. “Mr. Archibald, has it struck you that the gentleman just gone out may be the Lieutenant Thorn you once spoke to me about?—he who had used to gallop over from Swainson to court—Afy Hallijohn?”

“It has struck me so most forcibly,” replied Mr. Carlyle. “Dill, I would give five hundred pounds out of my pocket this moment to be assured of the fact—if he is the same.”

“I have seen him several times since he has been staying with the Herberts,” pursued the old gentleman, “and my doubts have naturally been excited as to whether it could be the man in question. Curious enough, Bezant, the doctor, was over here yesterday from Swainson; and, as I was walking with him, arm-in-arm, we met Captain Thorn. The two recognized each other and bowed, but merely as distant acquaintances. ‘Do you know that gentleman?’ said I to Bezant. ‘Yes,’ he answered, ‘it is Mr. Frederick.’ ‘Mr. Frederick with something added to it,’ said I; ‘his name is Thorn.’ ‘I know that,’ returned Bezant; ‘but when he was in Swainson some years ago, he chose to drop the Thorn, and the town in general knew him only as Mr. Frederick.’ ‘What was he doing there, Bezant?’ I asked. ‘Amusing himself and getting into mischief,’ was the answer; ‘nothing very bad, only the random scrapes of young men.’ ‘Was he often on horseback, riding to a distance?’ was my

next question. 'Yes, that he was,' replied Bezant, 'none more fond of galloping across the country than he; I used to tell him he'd ride his horse's tail off.' Now, Mr. Archibald, what do you think?" concluded the old clerk; "and so far as I could make out, this was about the very time of the tragedy at Hallijohn's."

"Think?" replied Mr. Carlyle; "what can I think but that it is the same man? I am convinced of it now." And, leaning back in his chair, he fell into a deep revery, regardless of the parchments that lay before him.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE TEMPTATION

Bright was the moon one genial Monday night, bright was the evening star, as they shone upon a solitary wayfarer who walked on the shady side of the road, with his head down, as though he did not care to court observation. A laborer apparently, for he wore a smock-frock and had hobnails in his shoes; but his whiskers were large and black, quite hiding the lower part of his face, and his broad-brimmed "wide-awake" came far over his brows. He drew near the dwelling of Richard Hare, Esquire, plunged rapidly over some palings (after looking well to the right and left) into a field, and thence over the side wall into Mr. Hare's garden.

It was none other than Richard, and Barbara, ever on the lookout, noticed his figure among the trees, and at once stole out. "Oh, Richard, darling, I may not stop and talk to you!" she wailed, in a deep whisper. "Papa is at home, you see, of all nights in the world."

"Can't I see my mother?"

"How can you? You must wait till to-morrow night."

"I don't like waiting a second night, Barbara. There's danger in every inch of ground that this neighborhood contains."

"But you must wait, Richard, for reasons. That man who caused all the mischief, Thorn——"

"Hang him!" gloomily interrupted Richard.

"He is at West Lynne. At least, there is a Thorn here whom we, I and Mr. Carlyle, believe to be the same, and we want you to see him."

"Let me see him," panted Richard, whom the news appeared to agitate, "let me see him! Barbara—I say——"

Barbara had passed on again, returning presently. "You know, Richard, I must keep moving, with papa's eyes there. He is a tall man, very good-looking, very fond of dress and ornaments, especially of diamonds."

"That's he," cried Richard, eagerly.

"Mr. Carlyle will contrive that you shall see him," she continued, stooping down as if to tie her shoes. "Should it prove to be the same, perhaps nothing can be immediately done toward clearing you, but it will be a great point ascertained. Are you sure you would know him again?"

"Sure! that I would know him!" uttered Richard Hare. "Should I know my own father? Should I know you? And you are not engraven on my heart in letters of blood, as he is. How and when am I to see him, Barbara?"

"I can tell you nothing till I have consulted Mr. Carlyle. Be here to-morrow as soon as ever the dusk will permit you; perhaps Mr. Carlyle will contrive to bring him here."

There must be no delay now, and the next day Barbara, braving comments, appeared once more at the office of Mr. Carlyle. Terribly did the rules of contrary seem in action just then. Mr. Carlyle was not in, and the clerks did not know when to expect him. He was gone out for some hours, they believed.

"Mr. Dill," urged Barbara, as the old gentleman came to the door to greet her, "I must see him."

"He will not be in till late in the afternoon, Miss Barbara. I expect him then. Is it anything I can do?"

"No—no," sighed Barbara.

At that moment Lady Isabel and her little girl passed in the chariot. She saw Barbara at her husband's door; what should she be doing there, unless paying him a visit? A slight, haughty bow to Barbara, a pleasant nod and a smile to Mr. Dill, and the carriage bowled on.

It was four o'clock before Barbara could see Mr. Carlyle. She communicated her tidings, that Richard had arrived. Mr. Carlyle held deceit and all underhanded doings in especial abhorrence; yet he deemed that he was acting right, under the circumstances, in allowing Captain Thorn to be secretly seen by Richard Hare.

In haste he arranged his plans. It was the evening of his own dinner engagement at Mrs. Jeafferson's; but that he must give up. Telling Barbara to dispatch Richard to his office as soon as he should make his appearance in the Grove, and to urge him to come boldly, for that none would know him in his disguise, he wrote a hurried note to Thorn, requesting him also to be at his office at eight o'clock that evening, as he had something to communicate to him.

The latter plea was no fiction, for he had received an important communication that morning relative to the business on which Captain Thorn had consulted him, and his own absence from the office had alone prevented his sending for him earlier.

Other matters were calling the attention of Mr. Carlyle, and it was five o'clock ere he departed for East Lynne; he would not have gone so early, but that he must inform his wife of his inability to keep the dinner engagement. Mr. Carlyle was one who never hesitated to sacrifice personal gratification to friendship or to business.

The chariot was at the door, and Lady Isabel was dressed and waiting for him in her dressing-room. "Did you forget that the Jeaffersons dine at six?" was her greeting.

"No, Isabel; but it was impossible for me to get

here before. And I should not have come so soon but to tell you that I cannot accompany you. You must make my excuses to Mrs. Jeafferson."

A pause. Strange thoughts were running through Lady Isabel's mind. "Why so?" she inquired. "Some business has arisen which I am compelled to attend to this evening. As soon as I have snatched my dinner at home I must hasten back to the office."

Was he making this excuse to spend the hours of her absence with Barbara Hare? The idea that it was so took firm possession of her mind, and remained there. Her face expressed a variety of feelings, the most prominent that of resentment. Mr. Carlyle saw it.

"You must not be vexed, Isabel. I assure you it is no fault of mine. It is important private business that cannot be put off, and which I cannot delegate to Dill. I am sorry it should so have happened."

"You never return to the office in an evening," she remarked, with pale lips. "No, because, if anything arises to take us there after hours, Dill officiates. But the business to-night must be done by myself." Another pause. Lady Isabel suddenly broke it. "Shall you join us later in the evening?"

"I believe I shall not be able to do so."

She drew her light shawl round her shoulders, and swept down the staircase. Mr. Carlyle followed to place her in the carriage. When he said farewell she never answered, but looked straight out before her with a stony look.

"What time, my lady?" inquired the footman, as she alighted at Mrs. Jeafferson's.

"Early. Half-past nine."

A little before eight o'clock Richard Hare, in his smock-frock, his slouching hat, and his false whiskers, rang dubiously at the outer door of Mr. Carlyle's office. That gentleman instantly opened it. He was quite alone.

"Come in, Richard," said he, grasping his hand. "What has brought you to West Lynne again—any particular object?"

"Chiefly a hankering within me that I could not get rid of," replied Richard. "It was not so much to see my mother and Barbara—though I have longed to see them since my illness—but a feeling was within me that I could not rest away from it. So I said I'd risk it again, just for a day."

"That's lucky. This Captain Thorn will be here to-night. You can go into the next room, and take a good look at him. And—there he is!" said Mr. Carlyle, as a ring was heard at the bell. "Come this way. Bring your hat."

"Well, Richard, is it the same man?" asked Mr. Carlyle, when he had completed the business of Captain Thorn and shown him out.

"No, sir. Not in the least like him."

Mr. Carlyle felt a strange relief; relief for Captain Thorn's sake. He had rarely seen one whom he could so little associate with the notion of a murderer as Captain Thorn, and he was a man who exceedingly won upon his regard. He could heartily help him out of his dilemma now.

"Excepting that they are both tall, with nearly the same colored hair, there is no resemblance whatever between them," proceeded Richard. "Their faces, their figures, are as opposite as light is from dark. That other, in spite of his handsome features, has the expression at times of a demon; but the expression of this one is the best part of his face. Hallijohn's murderer had a curious look here, sir."

"Where?" questioned Mr. Carlyle, for Richard had only pointed to his face generally.

"Well—I cannot say precisely where it lay, whether in the eyebrows or the eye; I could not tell when I used to have him before me; but it was in one of them. Ah, Mr. Carlyle, I thought when Barbara told me Thorn was here, it was too good news to be true; depend on't he won't venture to West Lynne again. This man is no more like that other villain than you are like him."

Mr. Carlyle went home with Richard, and finding Mr. Hare out, they both went in.

"You have been very kind," said Mrs. Hare; "I don't know whatever we should do without you. And I want to tax your kindness yet further. Mr. Hare is not well, and we terribly fear he will be home early, in consequence; otherwise we should have been quite safe until ten, for he is gone to the Buck's Head, and they never leave, you know, till that hour has struck. Should he come in and see Richard—the very thought sends me into a shiver. Barbara and I have been discussing it all the evening, and we can only think of one plan. It is that you will kindly stay in the garden near the gate; and, should he come in, stop him and keep him in conversation. Barbara will be with you, and will run in with the warning, and Richard can go inside the closet in the hall, till Mr. Hare has entered and is safe in his room, and then he can make his escape. Will you do this, Archibald?"

"Certainly I will."

"I cannot part with him before ten o'clock, unless I am obliged," she whispered, pressing Mr. Carlyle's hand in her earnest gratitude. "You don't know what it is, Archibald, to have a lost son home for an hour but once in seven years. At ten o'clock we will part."

Mr. Carlyle and Barbara began to pace the path, in compliance with the wishes of Mrs. Hare, keeping near the entrance gate. When they were turning the second time, Mr. Carlyle offered her his arm; it was an act of mere politeness. Barbara took it. And there they waited and waited, but the justice did not come.

Punctually to the minute, half after nine, Lady Isabel's carriage arrived at Mrs. Jeafferson's, and she came out immediately, a headache being the plea for her early departure. She had not far to go to reach East Lynne, about two miles. It was a by-road nearly all the way. They could emerge into the open road if they pleased, but it was a trifle further. Suddenly a gentleman approached the carriage as it was bowling along, and waved his hand to the coachman to pull up. In spite of the glowing moonlight, Lady Isabel did not

at first recognize him, for he wore a disfiguring fur cap, the ears of which were tied over his ears and cheeks. It was Francis Levison. She put down the window.

"I thought it must be your carriage. How early you are returning! Were you tired of your entertainers?"

"Why, he knew what time my lady was returning," thought John to himself; "he asked me. A false sort of chap, that, I've a notion."

"I came out for a stroll, and have tired myself," he proceeded. "Will you take compassion on me and give me a seat home?"

She acquiesced. She could not well do otherwise. The footman sprang from behind to open the door, and Francis Levison took his place beside Lady Isabel. "Take the high road," he put out his head to say to the coachman, and the man touched his hat. Which high road would cause them to pass Mr. Hare's.

"I did not know you," she began, gathering herself into her own corner. "What ugly thing is that you have on? It is like a disguise."

He was taking off the "ugly thing" as she spoke, and began to twirl it round on his hand. "Disguise? Oh, no; I have no creditors in the immediate neighborhood of East Lynne."

False as ever. It was worn as a disguise, and he knew it.

"Is Mr. Carlyle at home?" she inquired.

"No." Then, after a pause—"I expect he is more agreeably engaged."

The tone brought the tingling blood to the cheeks of Lady Isabel. She wished to preserve a dignified silence, and did so for a few moments. But the jealous question broke out.

"Engaged in what manner?"

"As I came by Hare's house just now, I saw two people, a gentleman and a young lady, coupled lovingly together, enjoying a *tete-a-tete* by moonlight. They were your husband and Miss Hare."

Lady Isabel almost gnashed her teeth; the jealous doubts which had been tormenting her all the evening were confirmed. That the man whom she hated—yes, in her blind anger she hated him then—should so impose upon her, should excuse himself by lies, lies base and false, from accompanying her, on purpose to pass the hours with Barbara Hare. Had she been alone in the carriage, a torrent of passion had probably escaped her.

She leaned back, panting in her emotion, but concealed it from Captain Levison. As they came opposite to Justice Hare's, she deliberately bent forward and scanned the garden with eager eyes. There, in the bright moonlight, all too bright and clear, slowly paced, arm in arm, and drawn close to each other, her husband and Barbara. With a choking sob that could no longer be controlled or hidden, Lady Isabel sank back again.

He, that bold, bad man, dared to put his arm round her, to draw her to his side; to whisper that his love was left to her, if another's was withdrawn. She was most assuredly out of her senses that night, or she never would have listened.

A jealous woman is mad; an outraged woman is doubly mad; and the ill-fated Lady Isabel truly believed that every sacred feeling which ought to exist between man and wife was betrayed by Mr. Carlyle.

"Be avenged on that false hound, Isabel. He was never worthy of you. Leave your life of misery, and come to happiness."

In her bitter distress and wrath, she broke into a storm of sobs. Were they caused by passion against her husband, or by those bold and shameless words? Alas! alas! Francis Levison applied himself to soothe her with all the sweet and dangerous sophistry of his crafty nature.

CHAPTER XXVIII

GOOD-BY

The minutes flew on. A quarter to ten; a quarter past ten; and still Richard Hare lingered on with his mother, and still Mr. Carlyle and Barbara paced patiently the garden path. At half past ten Richard came forth, having taken his last farewell. Then came Barbara's tearful farewell, which Mr. Carlyle witnessed; then a hard grasp of that gentleman's hand and Richard plunged amidst the trees to depart the way he came.

"Good-night, Barbara," said Mr. Carlyle.

"Will you not come in and say good-night to mamma?"

"Not now; it is late. Tell her how glad I am things have gone off so well."

He set off at a rapid pace toward his home, and Barbara leaned on the gate to indulge her tears. Her heart was aching for Richard; it was aching for the disappointment the night had brought forth respecting Captain Thorn. Still nobody passed; still the steps of her father were not heard, and Barbara stayed on. But—what was that figure, cowering under the shade of the hedge at a distance, and, seemingly, watching her? Barbara strained her eyes, while her heart beat as if it would burst its bounds. Surely, surely, it was her brother! What had he ventured back for?

Richard Hare it was. When fully assured that Barbara was standing there, he knew the justice was still absent, and ventured to advance. He appeared to be in a strange state of emotion, his breath labored, his whole frame trembling.

"Barbara! Barbara!" he ejaculated, "I have seen Thorn."

Barbara thought him demented. "I know you saw him," she slowly said; "but it was not the right Thorn."

"Not he," breathed Richard; "not the gentleman I saw to-night in Carlyle's office. I have seen the fellow himself. Why do you stare at me, Barbara?"

Barbara was in truth scanning his face keenly. It appeared to her a strange tale that he was telling.

"When I left here I cut across into Beam lane, which is more private for me than this road," proceeded Richard. "Just as I got to that clump of trees—you know it, Barbara—I saw somebody coming toward me from a distance. I stepped back behind the trunks of the trees, into the shade of the hedge, for I don't care to be met, though I am disguised. He came along the middle of the lane, going toward East Lynne, and I looked out upon him. I knew him long before he was abreast of me; it was Thorn."

Barbara made no comment; she was digesting the news.

"Every drop of blood within me began to tingle, and an impulse came upon me to spring upon him and accuse him of the murder of Hallijohn," went on Richard, in the same excited manner. "But I restrained it; or, perhaps, my courage failed. One of the reproaches against me used to be that I was a physical coward, you know, Barbara," he added, his tone changing to bitterness. "In a struggle, Thorn would have had the best of it; he is taller and more powerful than I, and might have battered me to death. A man who can commit one murder won't hesitate at a second."

"Richard, do you think you could have been deceived?" she urged. "You had been talking of Thorn, and your thoughts were, naturally, bearing upon him. Imagination——"

"Be still, Barbara!" he interrupted, in a tone of pain. "Imagination, indeed; did I not tell you he was stamped here?" touching his breast. "Do you take me for a child, or an imbecile, that I should fancy I

see Thorn in every shadow, or meet people where I do not? He had his hat off as if he had been walking fast and had got hot. He was walking fast, and he carried the hat in one hand, and what looked like a small parcel. With the other hand he was pushing his hair from his brow—in this way, a peculiar way," added Richard, slightly lifting his own hat, and pushing back his hair. "By that action alone I should have known him, for he was always doing it in the old days. And there was his white hand, adorned with the diamond ring! Barbara, the diamond glittered in the moonlight."

Richard's voice and manner were singularly earnest, and a conviction of the truth of his assertion flashed over his sister. "I saw his face as plainly as I ever saw it, every feature; he is scarcely altered, save for a haggardness in his cheeks now. Barbara, you need not doubt me; I swear it was Thorn." She grew excited as he was; now that she believed the news, it was telling upon her; reason left its place, and impulse succeeded; Barbara did not wait to weigh her actions.

"Richard, Mr. Carlyle ought to know this. He has but just gone; we may overtake him if we try."

Forgetting the strange appearance it would have, at that hour of the night, should she meet any one who knew her, forgetting what the consequences might be did Justice Hare return and find her absent, Barbara set off with a fleet foot, Richard more stealthily following her, his eyes cast in all directions. Fortunately Barbara wore a bonnet and mantle, which she had put on to pace the garden with Mr. Carlyle; fortunately, also, they met no one. She succeeded in reaching Mr. Carlyle before he turned into East Lynne gates.

"Barbara!" he exclaimed, in the extreme of astonishment. "Barbara!"

"Archibald! Archibald!" she panted, gasping for breath. "I am not out of my mind; but do come and speak to Richard! He has just seen the real Thorn."

Mr. Carlyle, amazed and wondering, turned back. They got over the field stile nearly opposite the gate,

drew behind the hedge, and there Richard told his tale. Mr. Carlyle did not appear to doubt it, as Barbara had done; perhaps he could not, in the face of Richard's agitated and intense earnestness.

"I am sure there is no one named Thorn in the neighborhood, save the gentleman you saw in my office to-night, Richard," observed Mr. Carlyle, after some deliberation. "It is very strange."

"He may be staying here under a feigned name," replied Richard. "There can be no mistake that it is Thorn whom I have just met."

"How was he dressed? As a gentleman?"

"Catch him dressing as anything else," returned Richard. "He was in an evening suit of black, with a sort of thin overcoat thrown on, but it was flung back at the shoulders, and I distinctly saw his clothes. A gray alpaca it looked like. As I have told Barbara, I should have known him by this action of the hand," imitating it, "as he pushed his hair off his forehead; it was the delicate white hand of the days gone by, Mr. Carlyle; it was the flashing diamond ring."

Mr. Carlyle was silent; Barbara also; but the thoughts of both were busy. "Richard," observed the former, "I should advise you to remain a day or two in the neighborhood and look out for this man." You may see him again, and may track him home; it is very desirable to find out who he really is, if practicable."

"But the danger?" urged Richard.

"Your fears magnify that. I am quite certain that nobody would know you in broad daylight, disguised as you are now. So many years have flown since that people have forgotten to think about you, Richard."

But Richard could not be persuaded; he was full of fears. He described the man as accurately as he could to Mr. Carlyle and Barbara, and told them they must look out. With some trouble, Mr. Carlyle got from him an address in London to which he might write, in case anything turned up, and Richard's presence should be necessary. He then once more said farewell, and quitted them, his way lying past East Lynne.

"And now to see you back, Barbara," said Mr. Carlyle.

"Indeed, you shall not do it, late as it is, and tired as you must be. I came here alone; Richard did not keep near me."

"I cannot help your having come here alone, but you may rely upon it I do not suffer you to go back so. Nonsense, Barbara! Allow you to go along the high road by yourself at eleven o'clock at night! What are you thinking of?"

He gave Barbara his arm, and they pursued their way. "How late Lady Isabel will think you!" observed Barbara.

"I do not know that Lady Isabel has returned home yet. My being late once in a way is of no consequence."

Not another word was spoken, save by Barbara. "Whatever excuse can I make, should papa be come home?" Both were buried in their own reflections. "Thank you very greatly," she said, as they reached the gate, and Mr. Carlyle finally turned away. Barbara stole in, and found the coast clear. Her papa had not arrived.

Lady Isabel was in her dressing-room when Mr. Carlyle entered; she was seated at a table, writing. A few questions as to her evening's visit, which she answered in the briefest manner possible, and then he asked her if she was not going to bed.

"By-and-by. I am not sleepy."

"I must go at once, Isabel, for I am dead tired."

"You can go," was her answer.

He bent down to kiss her, but she dexterously turned her face away. He supposed she felt hurt that he had not gone with her to the party, and placed his hand on her shoulder with a smile. "You foolish child, to be aggrieved at that. It was no fault of mine, Isabel; I could not help myself. I will talk to you in the morning; I am too tired to-night. I suppose you will not be long?"

Her head was bent over her writing again, and she

made no reply. Mr. Carlyle went into the bedroom and shut the door. Some time after, Lady Isabel went softly upstairs to Joyce's room. Joyce, in her first sleep, was suddenly aroused from it. There stood her mistress, a wax light in her hand. Joyce rubbed her eyes and collected her senses, and finally sat up in bed.

"My lady, are you ill?"

"Ill? Yes; ill and wretched," answered Lady Isabel; and ill she looked, for she was perfectly white. "Joyce, I want a promise from you. If anything should happen to me, stay at East Lynne with my children."

Joyce stared in amazement, too astonished to make any reply.

"Joyce, you promised it once before; promise it again. Whatever betide, you will stay with my children when I am gone?"

"I will stay with them. But oh, my lady, what can be the matter with you? Are you taken suddenly ill?"

"Good-by, Joyce," murmured Lady Isabel, gliding from the chamber as softly as she had entered it. And Joyce, after an hour of perplexity, dropped asleep again.

CHAPTER XXIX

NEVER TO BE REDEEMED

Joyce was not the only one whose rest was disturbed that eventful night. Mr. Carlyle himself awoke, and to his surprise found that his wife had not come to bed. He wondered what the time was, and struck his repeater. A quarter past three!

Rising, he made his way to the door of his wife's dressing-room. It was in darkness, and, so far as he could judge by absence of sound, unoccupied.

"Isabel."

No reply. Nothing but the echo of his own voice in the silence of the night. He struck a match and

lighted a taper, partially dressed himself, and went out to look for her. He feared she might have been taken ill, or else that she had fallen asleep in one of the rooms. But nowhere could he find her, and, feeling perplexed, proceeded to his sister's chamber-door, and knocked.

Miss Carlyle was a light sleeper, and rose up in bed at once. "Who's that?" called out she. "It is only I, Cornelia," said Mr. Carlyle.

"You!" ejaculated Miss Corny. "What in the name of fortune do you want? You can come in."

Mr. Carlyle opened the door, and met the keen eyes of his sister, bent on him from the bed. Her head was surmounted by a remarkable nightcap, at least a foot high.

"Is anybody ill?" she demanded.

"I think Isabel must be. I cannot find her."

"Not find her!" echoed Miss Corny. "Why, what's the time? Is she not in bed?"

"It is three o'clock. She has not been to bed. I cannot find her in the sitting-room, neither is she in the children's room."

"Then I'll tell you what it is, Archibald; she's gone worrying after Joyce. Perhaps the girl may be in pain to-night."

Mr. Carlyle was in full retreat toward Joyce's room, at this suggestion, when his sister called to him.

"If anything is amiss with Joyce, you come and tell me, Archibald, for I shall get up and see after her. The girl was my servant before she was your wife's."

He reached Joyce's room, and softly unlatched the door, fully expecting to find a light there, and his wife sitting by the bedside. There was no light, however, save that which came from the taper he held, and he saw no signs of his wife. Where was she? Was it probable that Joyce could tell him? He stepped inside the room and called to her.

Joyce started up in a fright, which changed to astonishment when she recognized her master. He inquired whether Lady Isabel had been there, and for a few

moments Joyce did not answer. She had been dreaming of Lady Isabel, and could not at first detach the dream from the visit which had probably given rise to it.

"What did you say, sir? Is my lady worse?"

"I ask if she has been here. I cannot find her."

"Why, yes," said Joyce, now fully aroused. "She came here and woke me. That was just before twelve, for I heard the clock strike. She did not stay here a minute, sir."

"Woke you!" repeated Mr. Carlyle. "What did she want? What did she come here for?"

Thoughts are quick; imagination is quicker; and Joyce was giving the reins to both. Her mistress' gloomy and ambiguous words were crowding on her brain. Three o'clock! and she had not been in bed, and was not to be found in the house! A nameless horror struggled to Joyce's face, her eyes dilating with it; she seized and threw on a large flannel gown which lay on a chair by the bed, and forgetful of her master who stood there, out she sprang to the floor. All minor considerations faded to insignificance beside the terrible dread which had taken possession of her. Claspings the flannel gown tight round her with one hand, she laid the other on the arm of Mr. Carlyle.

"Oh, master! oh, master! she has destroyed herself! I see it all now."

"Joyce!" sternly interrupted Mr. Carlyle.

"She has destroyed herself, as true as that we two are living here!" persisted Joyce, her own face livid with emotion. "I can understand her words now; I could not before. She came here—and her face was like a corpse as the light fell upon it—saying she had come to get a promise from me to stay with her children when she was gone. I asked whether she was ill, and she answered, 'Yes, ill and wretched.' Oh, sir, may Heaven support you under this dreadful trial!"

Mr. Carlyle felt bewildered; perplexed. Not a syllable did he believe. He was not angry with Joyce, for he thought she had lost her reason.

"It is so, sir, incredible as you may deem my words," pursued Joyce, wringing her hands. "My lady has been miserably unhappy; and that has driven her to it."

"Joyce, are you in your senses or out of them?" demanded Mr. Carlyle, a certain sternness in his tone. "Your lady miserably unhappy! What do you mean by such an assertion?"

Before Joyce could answer, an addition was received to the company in the person of Miss Carlyle, who appeared in black stockings and a shawl, and the lofty nightcap. Hearing voices in Joyce's room, which was above her own, and full of curiosity, she ascended, not choosing to be shut out from the conference.

"Whatever's up?" cried she. "Is Lady Isabel found?"

"She is not found, and she never will be found but in her winding-sheet," returned Joyce, whose lamentable and unusual state of excitement completely overpowered her customary quiet respect and plain good-sense. "And, ma'am, I am glad that you have come up; for what I was about to say to my master I would prefer to say in your presence. When my lady is brought into this house, and laid down before us, dead, what will your feelings be? My master has done his duty by her in love; but you—you have made her life a misery. Yes, ma'am, you have."

"Highly-tighty!" uttered Miss Carlyle, staring at Joyce, in consternation. "What is all this? Where's my lady?"

"She has gone and taken the life that was not hers to take," sobbed Joyce, "and I say she has been driven to it. She has not been allowed to indulge a will of her own, poor thing, since she came to East Lynne; in her own house she has been less free than any one of her servants. You have curbed her, ma'am, and snapped at her, and made her feel that she was but a slave to your caprices and temper. All these years she has been crossed and put upon; everything, in short, but beaten—ma'am, you know she has; and she has borne

it all in silence, like a patient angel, never, as I believe, complaining to master. He can say whether she has or not. We all loved her, we felt for her; and my master's heart would have bled, had he suspected what she had to put up with day after day and year after year."

Miss Carlyle's tongue was glued to her mouth. Her brother, confounded at the rapid words, could scarcely gather in their sense. "What is it that you are saying, Joyce?" he asked in a low tone. "I do not understand."

"I have longed to say it to you many a hundred times, sir, but it is right that you should hear it, now things have come to this dreadful ending. Since the very night Lady Isabel came home here, your wife, she has been taunted with the cost she has brought to East Lynne and to you. If she wanted but the simplest thing, she was forbidden to have it, and told that she was bringing her husband to poverty. For this very dinner party that she went to to-night, she wished for a new dress, and your cruel words, ma'am, forbade her having it. She ordered a new frock for Miss Isabel, and you countermanded it. You have told her that master worked like a dog to support her extravagances, when you know that she never was extravagant; that none were less inclined to go beyond proper limits than she. I have seen her, ma'am, come away from your reproaches with the tears in her eyes, and her hands meekly clasped upon her bosom, as though life was heavy to bear. A gentle-spirited, high-born lady, as she was, could not fail to be driven to desperation; and I know that she has been."

Mr. Carlyle turned to his sister. "Can this be true?" he inquired, in a tone of deep agitation.

She did not answer. Whether it was the shade cast by the nightcap or the reflection of the wax taper, her face looked of a green cast; and for the first time probably in Miss Carlyle's life, her words failed.

"May God forgive you, Cornelia!" he murmured, as he went out of the chamber

He descended to his own. That his wife had laid

violent hands upon herself, his reason utterly repudiated; she was one of the least likely to commit so great a sin. He believed that, in her happiness, she might have wandered out in the grounds, and was lingering there. By this time the house was aroused and the servants were astir. Joyce—surely a supernatural strength was given her, for, though she had been able to put her foot on the ground, she had not yet walked upon it—crept downstairs, and went into Lady Isabel's dressing-room. Mr. Carlyle was hastily assuming the articles of attire he had not yet put on, to go out and search the grounds, when Joyce limped in, holding out a note. Joyce did not stand on ceremony that night.

"I found this in the dressing-glass drawer, sir. It is my lady's writing." He took it in his hand and looked at the address: "Archibald Carlyle." Though a calm man, one who had his emotions under his own control, he was no stoic, and his fingers shook as he broke the seal. "When years go on, and my children ask where their mother is and why she left them, tell them that you, their father, goaded her to it. If they inquire what she is, tell them also, if you so will; but tell them, at the same time, that you outraged and betrayed her—driving her to the very depth of desperation—ere she quitted them in her despair."

The handwriting, his wife's, swam before the eyes of Mr. Carlyle. All, save the disgraceful fact that she had flown—and a horrible suspicion began to dawn upon him with whom—was totally incomprehensible. How had he outraged her? In what manner had he goaded her to it? The discomforts alluded to by Joyce, as the work of his sister, had evidently no part in this; yet, what had he done? He read the letter, again more slowly. No, he could not comprehend it; he had not the clew.

At that moment the voices of the servants in the corridor outside penetrated to his ears. Of course they were peering about, and making their own comments, Wilson, with her long tongue, the busiest. They were

saying that Captain Levison was not in his room, that his bed had not been slept in.

Joyce sat on the edge of a chair—she could not stand—watching her master with a blanched face. Never had she seen him betray agitation so powerful. Not the faintest suspicion of the dreadful truth had yet dawned upon her. He walked to the door, the open note in his hand, then turned, and wavered, and stood still—as if he did not know what he was doing. Probably he did not. Then he took out his pocketbook, put the note inside it, and returned it to his pocket, his hands trembling equally with his livid lips.

“You need not mention this,” he said to Joyce, indicating the note. “It concerns myself alone.”

“Sir, does it say she’s dead?”

“She is not dead,” he answered. “Worse than that,” he added in his heart.

“Why—who is this?” uttered Joyce.

It was little Isabel, stealing in with a frightened face, in her white nightgown. The commotion had aroused her.

“What is the matter?” she asked. “Where’s mamma?”

“Child, you’ll catch your death of cold,” said Joyce. “Go back to bed.”

“But I want mamma.”

“In the morning, dear,” evasively returned Joyce. “Sir, please, must not Miss Isabel go back to bed?”

Mr. Carlyle made no reply to the question; most likely he never heard its import. But he touched Isabel’s shoulder to draw Joyce’s attention to the child.

“Joyce—Miss Lucy, in future.”

He left the room, and Joyce remained silent from amazement. She heard him go out at the hall door and bang it after him. Isabel—nay, we must say “Lucy” also, went and stood outside the chamber door; the servants, gathered in a group near, did not observe her. Presently she came running back, and disturbed Joyce from her reverie.

“Joyce, is it true?”

"Is what true, my dear?"

"They are saying that Captain Levison has taken away mamma."

Joyce fell back in her chair, with a scream. It changed to a long, low moan of anguish.

"What has he taken her for?—to kill her? I thought it was only kidnappers who took people."

"Child, child, go to bed!"

"Oh, Joyce, I want mamma! When will she come back?"

Joyce hid her face in her hands to conceal its emotion from the motherless child. And just then Miss Carlyle entered on tiptoe and humbly sat down on a low chair, her green face—green that night—in its grief, its remorse, and its horror, looking nearly as dark as her stockings.

She broke out in a subdued wail.

"God be merciful to this dishonored house!"

Mr. Justice Hare turned into his gate between twelve and one; turned in with a jaunty air; for the justice was in spirits, he having won nine sixpences, and his friend's tap of ale having been usually good. When he reached his bedroom he told Mrs. Hare of a chaise and four which had gone tearing past at a furious pace as he was closing the gate, coming from the direction of East Lynne. He wondered where it could be going at the midnight hour, and whom it contained.

CHAPTER XXX

TERRIBLE RESULTS

Nearly a year went by.

Lady Isabel Carlyle had spent it on the Continent— that refuge for such fugitives—now removing about from place to place with her companion, now stationary and alone. Half the time—taking one absence with another—he had been away from her, chiefly in Paris, pursuing his own course and his own pleasure. How fared it with Lady Isabel? Just as it must be

expected to fare, and does fare, when a high-principled gentlewoman falls from her pedestal. Never had she experienced a moment's calm, or peace, or happiness, since the fatal night of quitting her home. She had taken a blind leap in a moment of wild passion, when, instead of the garden of roses it had been her persuader's pleasure to promise her (but which, in truth, she had barely glanced at, for that had not been her moving motive), she had found herself plunged into an abyss of horror, from which there was never more any escape; never more, never more. The very hour of her departure she awoke to what she had done. The guilt, whose aspect had been shunned in the prospective, assumed at once its true, frightful color, the blackness of darkness; and a lively remorse, a never-dying anguish, took possession of her soul forever. Oh, reader, believe me! Lady—wife—mother! should you ever be tempted to abandon your home, so will you awake. Whatever trials may be the lot of your married life, though they may magnify themselves to your crushed spirits as beyond the endurance of woman to bear, resolve to bear them; fall down upon your knees and pray to be enabled to bear them; pray for patience; pray for strength to resist the demon that would urge you to escape; bear unto death, rather than forfeit your fair name and your good conscience; for be assured that the alternative, if you rush on to it, will be found far worse than death.

Nearly a year went by, save some six or eight weeks; when, one morning in July, Lady Isabel made her appearance in the breakfast-room. They were staying now at Grenoble. Taking that town on their way from Switzerland, through Savoy, it had been Captain Levison's pleasure to halt in it. He engaged apartments, furnished, in the vicinity of the Place Grennette; it was a windy old house, full of doors and windows, chimneys and cupboards, and he said he should remain there. Lady Isabel remonstrated; she wished to go further on, where they might get quicker news from England, but her will now was as nothing. She

was looking like the ghost of her former self. Talk of her having looked ill when she took that voyage over the water with Mr. Carlyle—you should have seen her now; misery marks the countenance worse than sickness. Her face was white and worn, her hands were thin, her eyes were sunken and surrounded by a dark circle; care was digging caves for them. A stranger might have attributed these signs to her state of health; she knew they were the effects of her wretched mind and heart.

It was very late for breakfast; but why should she rise early, only to drag through another endless day? Languidly she took her seat at the table, just as Captain Levison's servant, a Frenchman, whom he had engaged in Paris, entered the room with two letters.

"*Point de gazette*, Pierre?" she asked.

"*Non, miladi.*"

And all the while the sly fox had got the *Times* in his coat pocket. But he was only obeying the orders of his master. It had been Captain Levison's recent pleasure that the newspapers should not be seen by Lady Isabel until he had overlooked them. You will speedily gather his motive.

Pierre departed toward Captain Levison's room, and Lady Isabel took up the letters and examined their superscriptions with interest. It was known to her that Mr. Carlyle had not lost a moment in seeking a divorce, and the announcement that it was granted was now daily expected. She was anxious for it; anxious that Captain Levison should render her the only reparation in his power, before the birth of her child; she little knew that there was not the least intention on his part to make her reparation—any more than he had made it to others who had gone before her. She had become painfully aware of the fact that the man for whom she had sacrificed herself was bad; but she had not learnt all his badness yet.

Captain Levison, unwashed, unshaven, with a dressing-gown loosely flung on, lounged in to breakfast; the decked-out dandies before the world are frequently

the greatest slovens in domestic privacy. He wished her good-morning in a careless tone of apathy, and she as apathetically answered to it.

"Pierre says there are some letters," he began. "What a precious hot day it is!"

"Two," was her short reply, her tone sullen as his. For if you think, my good reader, that the flattering words, the ardent expressions which usually attended the beginning of these promising unions last out a whole ten months, you are in egregious error. Compliments, the very opposite to honey and sweetness, have generally supervened long before. Try it, if you don't believe me.

"Two letters," she continued, "and they are both in the same handwriting; your solicitor's, I believe."

Up went his head at the last word, and he made a snatch at the letters; stalked to the farthest window, opened one, and glanced over its contents.

"SIR:—We beg to inform you that the suit, *Carlyle v. Carlyle*, is at an end; the divorce was pronounced without opposition. According to your request, we hasten to forward you the earliest information of the fact.

"We are, sir, faithfully yours,

"MOSS & GRAB.

"F. LEVISON, ESQ."

It was over, then. And all claim to the name of Carlyle was declared to have been forfeited by the Lady Isabel forever. Captain Levison folded up the letter, and placed it securely in an inner pocket.

"Is there any news?" she asked.

"News!"

"Of the divorce, I mean."

"Tush!" was the response of Captain Levison, as if wishing to imply that the divorce was yet a far-off affair; and he proceeded to open the other letter.

"SIR:—After sending off our last, dated to-day, we received tidings of the demise of Sir Peter Levison,

your great uncle. He expired this afternoon in town, where he had come for the benefit of medical advice. We have much pleasure in congratulating you upon your accession to the title and estates, and beg to state that, should it not be convenient to you to visit England at present, we will be happy to transact all necessary matters for you, on your favoring us with instructions.

"And we remain, sir, most faithfully yours,

"MOSS & GRAB.

"SIR FRANCIS LEVISON, BART."

The outside of this letter was superscribed as the other, "F. Levison, Esquire," no doubt with a view to its more certain delivery.

"At last! thank the pigs!" was the gentleman's euphonious expression, as he tossed the letter open upon the breakfast table.

"The divorce is granted!" feverishly uttered Lady Isabel.

He made no reply, but seated himself at breakfast.

"May I read the letter? Is it for me to read?"

"For what else should I have thrown it there?"

"A few days ago you put a letter, open, on the table, I thought for me; but when I took it up you swore at me. Do you remember it, Captain Levison?"

"You may drop that odious title, Isabel, which has stuck to me too long. I own a better now."

"What is it, pray?"

"You can look, and see."

Lady Isabel took up the letter and read it. Sir Francis swallowed his coffee, and rang the table hand-bell—the only bell you generally meet with in France. Pierre answered it.

"Put up a change of things," said he, in French. "I start for England in an hour."

"It is very well," Pierre responded, and departed to do it. Lady Isabel waited till the man was gone, and then spoke, a faint flush of emotion appearing in her cheeks.

"You do not mean what you say? You will not leave me yet?"

"I cannot do otherwise," he answered. "There's a mountain of business to be attended to, now that I am come into power."

"Moss & Grab say they will act for you. Had there been a necessity for your going, they would not have offered that."

"Ay, they say so—with a nice eye to the feathering of their pockets! Go to England I must; it is absolutely essential. Besides, I should not choose the old man's funeral to take place without me."

"Then I must accompany you," she urged.

"I wish you would not talk nonsense, Isabel. Are you in a state to travel night and day? Neither would England be agreeable to you at present."

She felt the force of his objections. Resuming, after a moment's pause: "Were you to go to England, you might not be back in time."

"In time for what?"

"Oh, how can you ask?" she rejoined, in a sharp tone of reproach; "you know too well. In time to make me your wife when the divorce shall appear."

"I must chance it," coolly observed Sir Francis.

"Chance it! chance the legitimacy of the child? You must assure that, before all things. More terrible to me than all the rest would it be—if——"

"Now don't put yourself in a fever, Isabel. How many times am I to be compelled to beg that of you? It does no good. Is it my fault, if I am called suddenly to England?"

"Have you no pity for your child?" she urged, in agitation. "Nothing can repair the injury, if you once suffer it to come upon him. He will be a byword amidst men throughout his life."

"You had better have written to the law lords to urge on the divorce," he retorted. "I cannot help the delay."

"There has been no delay; quite the contrary. But it may be expected hourly now."

"You are worrying yourself for nothing, Isabel. I shall be back in time."

He quitted the room as he spoke, and Lady Isabel remained in it, the image of despair. Nearly an hour passed, when she remembered the breakfast things, and rang for them to be removed. A maid-servant entered to do it, and she thought how ill miladi looked.

"Where was Pierre?" miladi asked.

"Pierre was making himself ready to attend monsieur to England."

Scarcely had she closed the door upon herself and her tray when Sir Francis Levison appeared, equipped for traveling. "Good-by, Isabel," said he, without further circumlocution or ceremony.

Lady Isabel, excited beyond all self-control, slipped the bolt of the door, and, half leaning against it, half kneeling at his feet, help up her hands in supplication. "Francis, have you any consideration left for me—any in the world?"

"How can you be so absurd, Isabel? Of course I have," he continued, in a peevish though kind tone, as he took hold of her hands to raise her.

"No, not yet. I will remain here until you say you will wait another day or two. You know that the French Protestant minister is prepared to marry us the instant news of the divorce shall arrive; if you do care for me still you will wait."

"I cannot wait," he replied, his tone changing to one of determination. "It is useless to urge it."

"Say that you will not."

"Well, then, I will not; if you prefer to have it; anything to please you. Isabel, you are like a child. I shall be back in time."

"Do not think I am urging it for my sake," she panted, growing more agitated with every fleeting moment. "You know that I am not. I do not care what becomes of me. No; you shall not go till you hear me! Oh, Francis, by all I have forfeited for your sake—— For the child's sake! for the child's sake! A whole long life before it; never to hold up its head,

of right; the reproach everlastingly upon it that it was born in sin! Francis! Francis! if you have no pity for me, have pity upon it!"

"I think you are losing your senses, Isabel. There's a month yet, and I promise you to be back ere it shall have elapsed. Nay, one-half of it shall have elapsed; a week will accomplish all I want to do in London. Let me pass; you have my promise, and I will keep it."

She never moved. Only stood where she was, raising her supplicating hands. He grew impatient, and by some dextrous sleight of hand got the door open. She seized his arm.

"Not for my sake," she panted, her dry lips drawn and livid.

"Nonsense about 'not for your sake.' It is for your sake that I will keep my promise. I must go. There; good-by, Isabel, and take care of yourself."

He broke from her and left the room, and in another minute had left the house, Pierre attending him. A feeling amounting to a conviction rushed over the unhappy lady, that she had seen him for the last time, until it should be too late.

She was right. It was too late by weeks and months.

CHAPTER XXXI

MUTUAL COMPLIMENTS

December came in. The Alps were covered with snow; Grenoble borrowed the shade, and looked cold, and white, and sleety, and sloppy; the wide gutters which run through the middle of the streets were unusually black, and the people crept along, looking very dismal. Close to the fire, in the barn of a French bedroom, full of windows, and doors, and draughts, with its wide hearth, and its wide chimney, into which we could put four or five of our English ones, shivered Lady Isabel Vane. She wore an invalid cap, and a thick woolen invalid shawl, and she shook and shivered

perpetually; though she had drawn so close to the wood fire that there was a danger of her petticoats igniting, and the attendant had frequently to spring up and interpose between them and the crackling logs. Little did it seem to matter to Lady Isabel; she sat in one position, her countenance the picture of stony despair.

So had she sat, so looked, since she began to get better. She had had a long illness, terminating in low fever; but the attendants whispered amongst themselves that miladi would soon get about if she would only rouse herself. She had so far got about as to sit up in the windy chamber, and it seemed to her to be a matter of perfect indifference whether she ever got out of it.

This day she had partaken of her early dinner—such as it was, for appetite failed—and had dozed asleep in the arm-chair, when a noise arose from below, like a carriage driving into the court-yard through the *porte cochere*. It instantly aroused her. Had he come?

“Who is it?” she asked of the nurse.

“Miladi, it is monsieur; and Pierre is with him. I have begged miladi often and often not to fret, for that monsieur would surely come; and miladi sees I am right.”

A strangely firm expression, speaking of severe resolution, overspread the face of Lady Isabel. It would appear to say that she had not “fretted” much after him who had now arrived—or, at any rate, that she was not fretting after him now. “Patience and calmness,” she murmured to herself. “Oh, may they not desert me, now the time has come!”

“Monsieur looks so well!” proclaimed the maid, who had taken up her station at a window that overlooked the court-yard. “He has got out of the carriage; he is shaking himself and stamping his feet.”

“You may leave the room, Susanne,” said Lady Isabel.

“But if the baby wakes, miladi?”

“I will ring.”

The girl departed, closing the door, and Lady Isabel sat looking at it, schooling herself into patience. Another moment and it was flung open.

Sir Francis Levison approached to greet her as he came in. She waved him off, begging him, in a subdued, quiet tone, not to draw too near, as any little excitement made her faint now. He took a seat opposite to her, and began pushing the logs together with his boot, as he explained that he really could not get away from town before.

"Why did you come now?" she quietly rejoined.

"Why did I come?" repeated he. "Are these all the thanks a fellow gets for traveling in this inclement weather? I thought you would at least have been glad to welcome me, Isabel."

"Sir Francis," she rejoined, speaking still with almost unnatural calmness, as she continued to do throughout the interview—though the frequent changes in her countenance, and the movement of her hands, when she laid them from time to time on her chest to keep down its beating, told what an effort the struggle cost her—"Sir Francis, I am glad, for one reason, to welcome you; we must come to an understanding, one with the other; and, so far, I am pleased that you are here. It was my intention to have communicated with you by letter as soon as I found myself capable of the necessary exertion, but your visit has removed the necessity. I wish to deal with you quite unreservedly, without concealment or deceit; I must request you so to deal with me."

"What do you mean by 'deal?'" he asked, settling the logs to his apparent satisfaction.

"To speak and act. Let there be plain truth between us at this interview, if there never has been before."

"I don't understand you."

"Naked truth, unglossed over," she pursued, bending her eyes determinedly upon him. "It must be."

"With all my heart," returned Sir Francis. "It is you who have thrown out the challenge, mind."

"When you left in July you gave me a sacred prom-

ise to come back in time for our marriage; you know what I mean when I say 'in time;' but——"

"Of course I meant to do so when I gave the promise," he interrupted. "But no sooner had I set foot in London than I found myself overwhelmed with business, and away from it I could not get. Even now I can only remain with you a couple of days, for I must hasten back to town."

"You are breaking faith already," she said, after hearing him calmly to the end. "Your words are not words of truth, but of deceit. You did not intend to be back in time for the marriage; or, otherwise, you would have caused it to take place ere you went at all."

"What fancies you take up!" interrupted Francis Levison.

"Some time subsequent to your departure," she quietly went on, "one of the maids was setting to rights the clothes in your dressing-closet, and she brought me a letter she found in one of the pockets. I saw, by the date, that it was one of those two which you received on the morning of your departure. It contained the information that the divorce was pronounced."

She spoke so quietly, so apparently without feeling or passion, that Sir Francis was agreeably astonished. He should have less trouble in throwing off the mask. But he was an ill-tempered man; and, to hear that the letter had been found, to have the falseness of his fine protestations and promises so effectually laid bare, did not improve his temper now. Lady Isabel continued:

"It had been better to have undeceived me then; to have told me that the hopes I was cherishing, for the sake of the unborn child, were worse than vain."

"I did not judge so," he replied. "The excited state you then appeared to be in would have precluded your listening to any sort of reason."

Her heart beat a little quicker, but she stilled it. "You deemed that it was not in reason I should aspire to be made the wife of Sir Francis Levison."

He rose and began kicking at the logs; with the heel of his boot this time. "Well, Isabel—you must be aware that it is an awful sacrifice for a man in my position to marry a divorced woman."

The hectic flushed into her thin cheeks, but her voice sounded calm as before. "When I expected, or wished, for the 'sacrifice,' it was not for my own sake; I told you so then. But it was not made; and the child's inheritance is that of sin and shame. There he lies."

Sir Francis half turned to where she pointed, and saw an infant's cradle by the side of the bed. He did not take the trouble to go to look at it.

"I am the representative now of an ancient and respected baronetcy," he resumed, in a tone as of apology for his previously heartless words, "and to make you my wife would so offend all my family, that——"

"Stay," interrupted Lady Isabel; "you need not trouble yourself to find needless excuses. Had you taken this journey for the purpose of making me your wife, were you to propose to do so this day, and bring a clergyman into the room to perform the ceremony, it would be futile. The injury to the child can never be repaired; and, for myself, I cannot imagine any fate in life worse than the being compelled to pass it with you."

"If you have taken this aversion to me, it cannot be helped," he coolly said, inwardly congratulating himself at being spared the trouble he had anticipated. "You made commotion enough once, about my making you 'reparation.'"

She shook her head. "All the reparation in your power to make, all the reparation that the whole world can invent, could not undo my sin. It, and its effects, must lie upon me forever."

"Oh—sin!" was the derisive exclamation. "You ladies should think of that beforehand."

"Yes," she sadly answered. "May Heaven help all to do so, who may be tempted as I was."

"If you mean that as a reproach to me, it's rather out of place," chafed Sir Francis, whose fits of ill-temper were under no control, and who never, when in them, cared what he said to outrage the feelings of another.

"The temptation to sin, as you call it, lay not in my persuasions, half as much as in your jealous anger toward your husband."

"Quite true," was her reply.

"And I believe you were on the wrong scent, Isabel—if it will be any satisfaction to you to hear it. Since we are mutually on this complimentary discourse, it is of no consequence to smooth over facts."

"I do not understand what you would imply," she said, drawing her shawl round her with a fresh shiver. "How 'on the wrong scent?'"

"With regard to your husband and that Hare girl. You were blindly, outrageously jealous of him."

"Go on."

"And I say I think you were on the wrong scent. I do not believe Carlyle ever thought of the girl—in that way."

"What do you mean?" she gasped.

"They had a secret between them. Not of love. A secret of business; and those interviews they had together, her dancing attendance upon him perpetually, related to that and to that alone."

Her face was more flushed than it had been throughout the interview. He spoke quietly now, quite in an equable tone of reasoning; it was his way when his ill-temper was upon him; and the calmer he spoke, the more cutting were his words. He need not have told her this.

"What was the secret?" she inquired, in a low tone.

"Nay, I can't explain all; they did not take me into their confidence. They did not even take you; better, perhaps, that they had, though, as things have turned out—or seem to be turning. There's some disreputable secret attaching to the Hare family, and Carlyle was acting in it for Mrs. Hare. She could not seek

out Carlyle herself so she sent the young lady. That's all I know."

"How did you know it?"

"I had reason to think so."

"What reason? I must request you to tell me."

"I overheard scraps of their conversation now and then in those meetings, and so gathered my conclusions."

"You told a different tale to me, Sir Francis," was her remark, as she lifted her indignant eyes toward him.

Sir Francis laughed. "All stratagems are fair in love and war."

She dared not immediately trust herself to reply, and a silence ensued. Sir Francis broke it, pointing with his left thumb over his shoulder in the direction of the cradle.

"What have you named that young article there?"

"The name which ought to have been his by inheritance: 'Francis Levison,'" was her icy answer.

"Let's see—how old is he now?"

"He was born the last day of August."

Sir Francis threw up his arms and stretched himself, as if a fit of idleness had overtaken him; then advanced to the cradle and pulled down the clothes.

"Who is he like, Isabel? My handsome self?"

"Were he like you—in spirit—I would pray that he might die ere he could speak or think," she burst forth. And then, remembering the resolution she had marked out for herself, subsided outwardly into calmness again.

"What else?" retorted Sir Francis. "You know my disposition pretty well by this time, Isabel, and may be sure that if you deal out small change to me, you will get it back again with interest."

She made no reply. Sir Francis put the clothes back over the sleeping child, returned to the fire and stood a few moments with his back to it. "Is my room prepared for me, do you know?" he presently asked.

"No, it is not," she quietly rejoined. "These apartments are mine now; they have been transferred into my name, and they can never again afford you accommodation. Will you be so obliging—I am not strong—as to hand me that writing case?"

Sir Francis walked to the table she indicated, which was at the far end of the great barn of a room, and, taking the writing-case from it, gave it to her. She reached her keys from the stand at her elbow, unlocked the case, and took from it some bank-notes. "I received these from you a month ago," she said. "They came by post."

"And you never had the grace to acknowledge them," he returned, in a sort of mock-reproachful tone.

"Forty pounds. That was the amount, was it not?"

"I believe so."

"Allow me to return them to you. Count them."

"Return them to me? Why?" inquired Sir Francis, in amazement. "I have no longer anything whatever to do with you, in any way. Do not make my arm ache, holding out the notes to you so long! Take them." Sir Francis took the notes from her hand and placed them on the stand near to her.

"If it be your wish that all relations should end between us, why, let it be so," he said. "I must confess I think it may be the wisest course, as things have come to pass, for the cat-and-dog life which would seemingly be ours, is not agreeable. Remember that it is your doing, not mine. But you cannot think I am going to see you starve, Isabel. A sum—we will fix upon its amount amicably—shall be placed to your credit half-yearly, and——"

"I beg of you to cease!" she passionately interrupted. "What do you take me for?"

"Take you for! Why, how can you live? You have no fortune; you must receive assistance from some one."

"I will not receive it from you. If the whole world denied me, and I could find no help from strangers,

or means of earning my own bread, and it was necessary that I should still exist, I would apply to my husband for means, rather than to you. This ought to convince you that the topic may cease."

"Your husband?" sarcastically rejoined Sir Francis. "Generous man!"

A flush, deep and painful, dyed her cheeks. "I should have said my late husband. You need not have reminded me of the mistake."

"If you will accept nothing for yourself, you must for the child. He, at any rate, falls to my share. I shall give you a few hundreds a year for him."

She beat her hands before her, as if beating off the man and his words. "Not a farthing, now or ever; were you to attempt to send money for him, I would throw it into the nearest river. Whom do you take me for?—what do you take me for?" she repeated, rising in her bitter mortification; "if you have put me beyond the pale of the world, I am still Lord Mount Severn's daughter."

"You did as much toward putting yourself beyond its pale as——"

"Don't I know it? Have I not said so?" she sharply interrupted. And then she sat, striving to calm herself, clasping together her shaking hands.

"Well, if you will persist in this perverse resolution, I cannot mend it," resumed Sir Francis. "In a little time you may probably wish to recall it; in which case, a line, addressed me at my bankers, will——"

Lady Isabel drew herself up. "Put away those notes, if you please," she interrupted, not allowing him to finish the sentence.

He took out his pocketbook and placed the bank-notes within it.

"Your clothes—those you left here when you went to England—you will have the goodness to order Pierre to take away this afternoon. And now, Sir Francis, I believe that is all; we will part."

"To remain mortal enemies from henceforth?" he rejoined. "Is that to be it?"

"To be strangers," she replied, correcting him. "I wish you a good-day."

"So you will not even shake hands with me, Isabel?"

"I would prefer not."

And thus they parted. Sir Francis left the room, but not immediately the house. He went into a distant apartment, and, calling the servants before him—there were but two—gave them each a year's wages in advance. "That they might not have to trouble miladi for money," he said to them. Then he paid a visit to the landlord, and handed him likewise a year's rent in advance, making the same remark. After that he ordered dinner at an hotel, and the same night he and Pierre departed on their journey home again, Sir Francis thanking his lucky stars that he had so easily got rid of a vexatious annoyance.

When Lady Isabel lay down to rest, she sank into somewhat calmer sleep than she had known of late; also into a dream. She thought she was back at East Lynne—not back in one sense, but that she seemed never to have gone away from it—walking in the flower garden with Mr. Carlyle, while the three children played on the lawn. Her arm was within her husband's, and he was relating something to her; what the news was she could not remember afterward, excepting that it was connected with the office and old Mr. Dill, and that Mr. Carlyle laughed when he told it. They appeared to be interrupted by the crying of Archibald; and in turning to the lawn to ask what was the matter, she awoke. Alas! it was the actual crying of her own child which awoke her; this last child; the ill-fated little being in the cradle beside her. But, for a single instant, she forgot recent events and doings; she believed she was indeed in her happy home at East Lynne, a proud mother, an honored wife. As recollection flashed across her with its piercing stings, she gave vent to a sharp cry of agony, of unavailing despair.

CHAPTER XXXII

ALONE FOR EVERMORE

A surprise awaited Lady Isabel Vane. It was on a windy day in the following March that a traveler arrived at Grenoble.

It was Lord Mount Severn.

"How did you find out where I was?" she gasped, when some painful words had been uttered on both sides.

"I went to Sir Francis Levison and demanded your address. Certain recent events implied that he and you must have parted, and I therefore deemed it time to inquire what he had done with you."

"Since last July," she interrupted, lifting her wan face, now colorless again. "Do not think worse of me than I am. He was here in December for an hour's recriminating interview, and we then parted for life."

"What have you heard of him lately?"

"Not anything. I never know what is passing in the world at home; I have no newspaper, no correspondence; and he would scarcely be so bold as to write to me again."

"I shall not shock you, then, by some tidings I bring you regarding him," returned Lord Mount Severn.

"The greatest shock to me would be to hear that I should ever again be subjected to see him," she answered.

"He is married."

"Heaven have pity on his poor wife!" was all the comment of Lady Isabel.

"He has married Alice Challoner."

She lifted her head then, in simple surprise. "Alice? Not Blanche?"

"The story runs that he has played Blanche very

false. That he had been with her much, leading on her expectations; and then he suddenly proposed for her younger sister. I know nothing of the details myself—it is not likely; and I had heard nothing, until one evening at the club I saw the announcement of the marriage for the following day at St. George's. I was at the church the next morning before he was."

"Not to stop it! not to intercept the marriage!" breathlessly uttered Lady Isabel.

"Certainly not. I had no power to attempt anything of the sort. I went to demand an answer to my question—what he had done with you, and where you were? He gave me this address, but said he knew nothing of your movements since December."

There was a long silence. The earl appeared to be alternately ruminating and taking a survey of the room. Isabel sat with her head hanging down. "Why did you seek me out?" she presently broke forth. "I am not worthy of it. I have brought enough disgrace upon your name."

"And upon your husband's, and upon your children's," he rejoined, in his most severe manner, for it was not in the nature of the Earl of Mount Severn to gloss over guilt. "Nevertheless, it is incumbent upon me, as your nearest blood relative, to see after you, now that you are alone again, and to take care—so far as I can—that you do not lapse dower."

He might have spared her that stab. But she scarcely understood him. She looked at him, wondering whether she did understand. "You have not a shilling in the world," he resumed. "How do you propose to live?"

"I have some money yet. When——"

"His money?" sharply and haughtily interposed the earl.

"No," she indignantly replied. "I am selling my trinkets. Before they are all gone, I shall try to earn a livelihood in some way."

"Trinkets!" repeated Lord Mount Severn. "Mr. Car-

lyle told me that you carried nothing away with you from East Lynne."

"Nothing that he had given me. These were mine before I married. You have seen Mr. Carlyle, then?" she faltered.

"Seen him!" echoed the indignant earl. "When such a blow was dealt him by a member of my own family, could I do less than hasten to East Lynne to tender my sympathies? I went with another object also—to try to discover what could have been moving the springs of your conduct; for I protest, when the black tidings reached me, I believed that you must have gone mad. You were one of the last whom I should have feared to trust. But I learned nothing, and Carlyle was ignorant as I. How could you strike him such a blow?"

Lower and lower drooped her head, brighter shone the shame on her hectic cheek. An awful blow to Mr. Carlyle it must indeed have been; she was feeling it in all its bitter intensity. Lord Mount Severn read her repentant looks.

"Isabel," he said, in a tone which had lost something of its harshness—and it was the first time he had called her by her Christian name, "I see you are reaping the fruits. Tell me how it happened. What demand prompted you to sell yourself to that bad man?"

"He is a bad man," she exclaimed. "A base, heartless, bad man."

"I warned you at the commencement of your married life to avoid him; to shun all association with him; not to admit him to your house."

"His coming to East Lynne was not my doing," she whispered. "Mr. Carlyle invited him."

"I know he did. Invited him in his unsuspecting confidence, believing his wife to be his wife, a trustworthy woman of honor," was the severe remark.

She did not reply; she could not gainsay it; she only sat with her meek face of shame and her eyelids drooping.

"If ever a woman had a good husband, in every sense of the word, you had in Carlyle; if ever man loved his wife, he loved you. How could you so requite him?"

She rolled, in a confused manner, the corners of her shawl over her unconscious fingers.

"I read the note you left for your husband. He showed it to me; the only one, I believe, to whom he did show it. It was to him entirely inexplicable; it was so to me. A notion had been suggested to him, after your departure, that his sister had somewhat marred your peace at East Lynne; and he blamed you much—if it were so—for not giving him your full confidence on the point, that he might have set matters on the right footing. But it was impossible (and there was the evidence in the note besides) that the presence of Miss Carlyle at East Lynne could be any excuse for your disgracing us all and ruining yourself."

"Do not let me speak of these things," said Lady Isabel, faintly. "It cannot redeem the past."

"But I must speak of them; I am come to speak of them," persisted the earl; "I could not do so whilst that man was here. When these inexplicable events take place in the career of a woman, it is a father's duty to look into motives and causes and actions; although the events in themselves may be, as in this case, irreparable. Your father is gone, but I stand in his place; there is no one else to stand in it."

Her tears began to fall. And she let them fall—in silence. The earl resumed.

"But for the extraordinary letter, I should have supposed you had been solely actuated by a mad infatuation for the cur, Levison; its tenor gave the affair a different aspect. To what did you allude when you asserted that your husband had driven you to it?"

"He knew," she answered, scarcely above her breath.

"He did not know," sternly replied the earl. "A more truthful, honorable man than Carlyle does not exist on the face of the earth. When he told me then,

in his agony of grief, that he was unable to form even a suspicion of your meaning, I could have staked my earldom on his veracity. I would stake it still."

"I believed," she began, in a low, nervous voice, for she knew that there was no evading the questions of Lord Mount Severn, when he was resolved to have an answer, and, indeed, she was too weak, both in body and spirit, to resist—"I believed that his love was no longer mine; that he had deserted me for another."

The earl stared at her. "What can you mean by 'deserted?' He was with you."

"There is a desertion of the heart," was her murmured answer.

"Desertion of a fiddlestick!" retorted his lordship. "The interpretation we gave to the note, I and Carlyle, was that you had been actuated by motives of jealousy—had penned it in a jealous mood. I put the question to Carlyle—as between man and man—do you listen, Isabel?—whether he had given you cause; and he answered me, as with God over us, he had never given you cause—he had been faithful to you in thought, word and deed—he had never, so far as he could call to mind, even looked upon another woman with covetous feelings since the hour that he made you his wife; his whole thoughts had been of you alone. It is more than many a husband can say," significantly coughed Lord Mount Severn.

Her pulses were beating wildly. A powerful conviction that the words were true; that her own blind jealousy had been utterly mistaken and unfounded was forcing its way to her brain.

"After that I could only set your letter down as a subterfuge," resumed the earl; "a false, barefaced plea, put forth to conceal your real motive; and I told Carlyle so. I inquired how it was he had never detected any secret understanding between you and that—that beast; located, as the fellow was, in the house. He replied that no such suspicion had ever occurred to him. He placed the most implicit confidence in you,

and would have trusted you with the man round the world; or with any one else."

She entwined her hands, one within the other, pressing them to pain. It could not deaden the pain at her heart.

"Carlyle told me he had been unusually occupied during the stay of that man. Besides his customary office work, his time was taken up with some secret business for a family in the neighborhood, and he had repeatedly to see them after office hours—very old acquaintances of his, he said, relatives of the Carlyle family, and he was as anxious about his secret as they were. This, I observed to him, may have rendered him unobservant to what was passing at home. He told me, I remember, that on the evening of the—the catastrophe, he ought to have gone with you to a dinner party, but most important circumstances arose in connection with the affair, which obliged him to meet two gentlemen at his office, and to receive them in secret, unknown to his clerks."

"Did he—mention the name of the family?" inquired Lady Isabel, with white lips.

"Yes, he did; I forgot it, though. Rabbit? Rabbit? Some such name as that."

"Was it Hare?"

"That was it. Hare. He said you appeared vexed that he did not accompany you to the dinner; perceiving this, he intended to go in afterward, but was prevented. When the interview was over in his office, he was again detained at Mrs. Hare's house, and by business as impossible to avoid as the other."

"Important business!" she echoed, giving way for a moment to the bitterness of former feelings. "He was promenading in their garden by moonlight with Barbara—Miss Hare. I saw them as my carriage passed."

"And you were jealous!" exclaimed Lord Mount Severn, with mocking reproach, as he detected her mood. "Listen!" he whispered, bending his head toward her. "Whilst you thought, as your present

tone would seem to intimate, that they were pacing there to enjoy each other's society, know that they—Carlyle, at any rate—was pacing the walk to keep guard. There was one within that house, for a short interview with his poor mother—one who lives in danger of the scaffold; to which his own father would be the first to deliver him up. They were keeping the path against that father, Carlyle and the young lady. Of all the nights in the previous seven years, that one only saw the unhappy son at home, for a half-hour's meeting with his mother and sister. Carlyle, in the grief and excitement caused by your conduct, confided so much to me, when mentioning what kept him from the dinner party."

Her face had become crimson—crimson at her past lamentable folly. And there was no redemption! "But he was always with Barbara Hare!" she murmured, by way of some faint excuse.

"She had to see him upon this affair; her mother could not, for it was obliged to be kept from the father. And you construed business interviews with assignations!" continued Lord Mount Severn, with cutting derision. "I had given you credit for better sense. But was this enough to hurl you on to the step you took? Surely not! You must have yielded to the persuasion of that wicked man."

"It is all over now," she wailed.

"Carlyle was true and faithful to you, and to you alone. Few women have the chance of happiness in their married life in the degree that you had. He is an upright and good man; one of Nature's gentlemen; one that England may be proud of, as having grown upon her soil. The more I see of him the greater becomes my admiration of him, and of his thorough honor. Do you know what he did in the matter of the damages?"

She shook her head.

"He did not wish to proceed for damages, or only for the trifling sum demanded by law; but the jury, feeling for his wrongs, gave unprecedentedly heavy

ones. Since the fellow came into his baronetcy they have been paid; Carlyle immediately handed them over to the county hospital. He holds the apparently obsolete opinion that money cannot wipe out a wife's dishonor."

"Let us close these topics," implored the poor invalid. "I acted wickedly and madly; and I have the consequence to bear forever. More I cannot say."

"Where do you intend to fix your future residence?" inquired the earl.

"I am unable to tell. I shall leave this town as soon as I am well enough."

"Ay. It cannot be pleasant for you to remain under the eyes of its inhabitants."

"They think I am his wife," she murmured. "The servants think it."

"That's well, so far. How many servants have you?"

"Two. I am not strong enough yet to do much myself, so am obliged to keep two," she continued, as if in apology for the extravagance under her reduced circumstances. "As soon as ever the baby can walk I shall manage to do with one."

The earl looked confounded. "The baby!" he uttered, in a tone of astonishment and grief. "Isabel, is there a child?"

Not less painful was her own emotion as she hid her face. Lord Mount Severn rose and paced the room with striding steps.

"I did not know it! I did not know it! Wicked, heartless villain! He ought to have married you before its birth. Was the divorce out previously?" he added, stopping short in his strides to ask it.

"Yes."

"Coward! sneak! May good men shun him from henceforth! May his queen refuse to receive him! You, an earl's daughter! Oh, Isabel! How utterly you have lost yourself!"

Lady Isabel started from her chair in a burst of hysterical sobs, her hands extended beseechingly toward

the earl. "Spare me! spare me! You have been rending my heart ever since you came; indeed, I am too weak to bear it."

The earl, in truth, had been betrayed into showing more of his sentiments than he intended. He recalled his recollection. "Well, well; sit down again, Isabel," he said, putting her into a chair. "We will go to the point I chiefly came here to settle. What sum will it take you to live upon? Quietly—as, of course, you would now wish to live—but comfortably."

"I will not accept anything," she replied. "I will get my own living;" and the earl's irascibility again rose at the speech. He spoke in a sharp tone:

"Absurd, Isabel! Do not add romantic folly to your other mistakes. Get your own living, indeed! As much as is necessary for you to live upon I shall supply. No remonstrance; I tell you I am acting for your father. Do you suppose he would have abandoned you to starve or to work?"

The allusion touched every chord within her bosom, and the tears fell fast. "I thought I could get my living by teaching," she sobbed.

"And how much did you anticipate the teaching would bring you in?"

"Not very much," she listlessly said. "A hundred a year, perhaps; I am very clever at music and singing. That sum might keep us, I fancy, even if I only went out by day."

"And a fine 'keep' it would be! You shall have that sum every quarter!"

"No, no! oh, no! I do not deserve it; I could not accept it. I have forfeited all claim to assistance."

"Not to mine. Now, it is of no use to excite yourself, for my mind is made up. I never willingly forego a duty, and I look upon this not only as a duty, but an imperative one. Upon my return I shall immediately settle four hundred a year upon you, and you can draw it quarterly."

"Then half the sum," she reiterated, knowing how useless it was to contend with Lord Mount Severn

when he got upon the stilts of "duty." "Indeed, two hundred a year will be ample; it will seem like riches to me."

"I have named the sum, Isabel, and I shall not make it less. A hundred pounds every three months shall be paid to you, dating from this day. This does not count," he continued, laying down some notes upon the table.

"Indeed, I have some ready money by me," she urged, her cheeks flushed at what she looked upon as unmerited kindness; for none could think worse of her than she did of herself. "Pray take it back; you are too good to me."

"I don't know what you call 'ready money,'" returned the earl, "but you have just informed me that you were selling your trinkets to live upon. Put up the notes, Isabel; they are only a small amount, just to go on with. Are you in debt?"

"Oh, no."

"And mind you don't get into it," advised the earl, as he rose to depart. "You can let me hear of you from time to time, Isabel."

"What does the world say of me?" she took courage to whisper. It was a question often in her own mind. Lord Mount Severn paused before he replied, marveling, probably, that she could ask it.

"Just what you may have said in the days now over at any who had gone the way you have done. What did you expect that it would say?"

What, indeed! She stood there with her humble face and her beating heart. The earl took her hand within his, in token of farewell; turned, and was gone.

Lord Mount Severn, stern and uncompromising as he was, had yet a large share of kindness and conscientiousness. From the moment he heard of the false step taken by Lady Isabel, and that it was with Francis Levison she had flown, he cast more blame than he had ever done upon the conduct of his wife, in having forced her—so he regarded it—upon Mr. Carlyle. In short, he considered his wife as the primary,

though remote, cause of the present ill; not that he in the slightest degree underrated Lady Isabel's own share in it; quite the contrary. From this motive, no less than that he was her blood relative, he deemed it his duty to see after her in her shame and sadness.

Susanne attended Lord Mount Severn to the door and watched him down the street, thinking what a "brave *Monsieur Anglais*" he was, and how delighted miladi must be at seeing a friend to break the monotony of her sick and lonely existence. Susanne made no doubt that the visit must so far have aroused miladi as to set her thinking about getting out her smart dresses once more, and that the first words she should hear on entering miladi's presence would touch on that attractive point.

The Earl of Mount Severn returned to the Hotel des Ambassadeurs, dined, and slept there, and the following morning quitted it on his return to the pleasures and bustle of civilized life. And Lady Isabel remained on in her chamber, alone.

Alone—alone! Alone for evermore!

CHAPTER XXXIII

AN ACCIDENT

As the year advanced Lady Isabel grew stronger, and in the latter part of the summer made preparations for quitting Grenoble. Where she would fix her residence or what she would do she knew not. She was miserable and restless and cared little what became of her. The remotest spot on earth, one unpenetrated by the steps of civilized man, appeared the most desirable to her. Where was she to find this?

She set out on her search—she, the child and a young peasant woman, whom she had engaged as *bonne*, for Susanne, having a lover at Grenoble, entirely declined to leave the place. All her luggage, except the things absolutely requisite, Lady Isabel had forwarded to Paris, there to be warehoused until

she sent further directions. It was a lovely day when she quitted Grenoble. The train traveled safely until in the dusk of the evening they approached a place called Cammere, where Lady Isabel proposed to rest for a day or two. Railway accidents are less frequent in France than they are with us, but when they do occur they are wholesale catastrophes, the memory of which lasts for a lifetime. The train was within a short distance of the station when there came a sudden shock and crash as of the day of doom; and engine, carriages and passengers lay in one confused mass at the foot of a steep embankment. The gathering darkness added to the awful confusion.

The carriage in which Lady Isabel with her child and *bonne* traveled lay beneath a superincumbent mass of ruins; they were among the last passengers to be extricated. The *bonne* and the poor baby were quite dead. Lady Isabel was alive and conscious, but so severely injured that the medical men, who had been brought to the spot in all haste, turned from her to give their attention to other sufferers whose case seemed less desperate—she heard them say that she would not survive amputation, and that nothing else could be done; that she must die whether there was an operation or not. The injuries lay in one leg and the lower part of her face. She had not counted upon dying in this manner, and death in the guise of horrible suffering was not the abstract thing of release and escape which it had seemed when she had wished for it as the end of all her wretchedness. She was unable to move, but the shock had deadened sensation; she was not yet in pain, and her mind was for a short interval preternaturally clear and lucid. A Sister of Charity approached the stretcher on which she had been laid, and offered her some water. Isabel drank eagerly.

“Is there aught else I can do?” asked the Sister.

“My baby and its nurse were with me in the carriage—tell me, have they been found? Is my child killed?” asked Isabel.

The Sister turned to gain intelligence if she could, but the confusion and noise were so great that she could scarcely hope to ascertain anything with certainty. A poor little child, quite dead, but not much disfigured, had been carried into the railway shed and laid down not far from Lady Isabel. The Sister took it tenderly up. "Was this your child?" said she, turning to Lady Isabel. "It is a little angel, and is beholding the face of its Father in Heaven."

It was the ill-starred child of Lady Isabel; she pressed its little face to her bosom, and her first feeling was a deep thankfulness that it had been so soon taken away from the evil to come. She believed she was to die also in the space of a few hours, or less; and the dull, apathetic indifference to all belonging to this life, which generally sets in with the approach of death, was stealing over her. She motioned to the Sister to remove it, saying softly:

"It is thus I would have wished it to be."

"Have you no message or instructions for your friends? If you will trust me I will fulfill your wishes. Whilst your mind is preserved clear it will be well to settle your duties toward those you are leaving behind." The Sister had heard what the doctor said of Lady Isabel's condition.

"All who ever knew me will rejoice to hear that I am no more," said Isabel. "My death will be the only reparation I can offer for the grief and shame my life has brought on all who had the evil fortune to belong to me. You understand, I have been a great sinner."

"Try to accept death as a just recompense for your sins—make in this last moment an act of faith and obedience by uniting your own will with His who sends this suffering; it is then changed from the nature of punishment into a blessing. Our sorrows are the gifts of the Almighty, no less than our joys."

"I will; I have taken up my cross," said Lady Isabel, faintly, for the pain of her injuries was beginning to make itself felt.

"Can I write to any one for you?" asked the Sister. "Tell me now, whilst you can think of it."

"Have you paper and writing things at hand? Write then—direct the letter first, to the Earl of Mount—stay!" she interrupted, feeling how undesirable it was to make known her private affairs, even in that strange place. Besides, from the injury to her face, she could only speak with the greatest difficulty. "Could I not write a line myself. I think I could, if you will hold the paper before me; my hands are not injured; my intellect is clear."

The compassionate Sister complied, and Lady Isabel contrived to scrawl a few words as she lay, first directing the letter to the earl's town house. They were to the effect that she was dying from the fatal injuries of the railway accident; that her baby was killed, and its nurse. She thanked Lord Mount Severn for all his goodness to her; she said she was glad to die, to deliver him and all who belonged to her from the disgrace and shame she had been to them. "Go to Mr. Carlyle," she continued, "say that I humbly beg him to forgive me; that I also beg the forgiveness of his children when they shall be old enough to know the crime I have committed against them; tell him I repent, and I have repented bitterly—there are no words to express that bitterness." She had written so far, when the torture of pain, which had begun to make itself more and more felt, was becoming intolerable. Gathering her strength for a last effort, she wrote in characters like those that one on the rack might have signed his confession, "Forgive; Isabel," and whispered: "Send it when I am dead—not before; and add a few words of confirmation."

When at length the surgeon came up to Lady Isabel, to examine more minutely the injuries she had sustained, she was quite insensible, and they thought she was dead. They said so to the Sister, who was then kneeling beside her, repeating the prayers appointed for the passing soul. She finished them and retired to a distance, other sufferers claiming her services.

She did not return to Lady Isabel, whom she fully believed to be dead; and she dispatched the letter, writing in it, as requested, some words of confirmation. The dead were buried and a special mass was said for them. The survivors were sent to the hospital; all that could be done for them was done; neither skill nor kindness being wanting.

Lady Isabel recovered her consciousness, and found herself lying on a pallet in a ward in the hospital. It was long before she could recall what had happened, or understood that she had not died. The surgeons, on further inspection, had found life still lingering in her shattered frame. The injuries were terrible enough, but not of necessity fatal, though the prospect of recovery was faint. It would have been cruel to resort to an operation with such slender chances of success, and they tried other means, which, to the honor and glory of their skill, promised to succeed. Lady Isabel was still fluctuating between life and death; but the tide began at length slowly to set in toward life. She remained three months in the hospital before she could be removed. The change that had passed over her in those three months was little less than death itself; no one could have recognized in the pale, thin, shattered, crippled invalid, she who had been known as Lady Isabel Vane.

The letter was duly delivered at the town house for Lord Mount Severn, as addressed. The countess was sojourning there for a few days; she had quitted it after the season, but some business, or pleasure, had called her again to town. Lord Vane was with her, but the earl was in Scotland. They were at breakfast, she and her son, when the letter was brought in; eightpence to pay. Its strangely written address, its foreign aspect, its appearance altogether, strangely excited her curiosity; in her own mind she believed she had dropped upon a nice little conjugal mare's nest.

"I shall open this," cried she.

"Why, it is addressed to papa!" exclaimed Lord Vane, who possessed all his father's notions of honor.

"But such an odd letter! It may require an immediate answer; or is some begging petition, perhaps. Go on with your breakfast."

Lady Mount Severn opened the letter, and with some difficulty spelt through its contents. They shocked even her.

"How dreadful!" she uttered, in the impulse of the moment.

"What is dreadful?" asked Lord Vane.

"Lady Isabel—Isabel Vane—you have not forgotten her?"

"Forgotten her!" he echoed. "Why, mamma, I must possess a funny memory to have forgotten her already."

"She is dead. She has been killed in a railway accident in France."

His large eyes, honest and true as they had been in childhood, filled and his face flushed. He said nothing, for emotion was strong within him. "But, shocking as it is, it is better for her," went on the countess; "for, poor creature, what could her future life have been?"

"Oh, don't say it!" impetuously broke out the young viscount. "Killed in a railway accident, and for you to say that it is better for her!"

"So it is better," said the countess. "Don't go into heroics, William. You are quite old enough to know that she had brought misery upon herself and disgrace upon all connected with her. No one could ever have taken notice of her again."

"I would," said the boy, stoutly.

Lady Mount Severn smiled derisively.

"I would. I never liked anybody in the world half so much as I liked Isabel."

"That's past and gone. You could not have continued to like her after the disgrace she wrought."

"Somebody else wrought more of the disgrace than she did; and, had I been a man, I would have shot him dead," flashed the viscount.

"You don't know anything about it."

"Don't I!" he returned, not over-dutifully. But Lady Mount Severn had not brought him up to be dutiful.

"May I read the letter, mamma?" he demanded, after a pause.

"If you can read it," she replied, tossing it to him. "She dictated it when she was dying."

Lord Vane took the letter to a window and stayed looking over it for some time; the countess eat an egg and a plate of ham meanwhile. Presently he came back with it, folded, and laid it on the table.

"You will forward it to papa to-day?" he observed.

"I shall forward it to him. But there's no hurry; and I don't exactly know where your papa may be. I shall send the notice of her death to the papers; and am glad to do it; it is a blight removed from the family."

"Mamma, I do think you are the unkindest woman that ever breathed!"

"I'll give you something to call me unkind for, if you don't mind," retorted the countess, her color rising. "Dock you of your holiday and pack you back to school to-day."

A few mornings after this Mr. Carlyle left East Lynne and proceeded to his office, as usual. Scarcely was he seated when Mr. Dill entered, and Mr. Carlyle looked at him inquiringly, for it was not Mr. Carlyle's custom to be intruded upon by any person until he had opened his letters; then he would ring for Mr. Dill. The letters and the *Times* newspaper lay on the table before him. The old gentleman came up in a covert, timid sort of way, which made Mr. Carlyle look all the more.

"I beg your pardon, sir; will you let me ask if you have heard any particular news?"

Old Dill laid his hand upon the *Times* newspaper. "It's here, Mr. Archibald, in the column of the deaths; the first on the list. Please prepare yourself a little before you look at it."

He shuffled out quickly, and Mr. Carlyle as quickly unfolded the paper. It was, as old Dill said, the first on the list of deaths.

“At Cammere, in France, on the 18th inst., Isabel Mary, only child of William, late Earl of Mount Severn.”

Clients called; Mr. Carlyle's bell did not ring; an hour or two passed, and old Dill protested that Mr. Carlyle was engaged until he could protest no longer. He went in deprecatingly. Mr. Carlyle sat yet with the newspaper before him, and the letters unopened at his elbow.

“There's one or two who will come in, Mr. Archibald, who will see you; what am I to say?”

Mr. Carlyle stared at him for a moment as if his wits had been in the next world. Then he swept the newspaper from before him, and was the calm, collected man of business again.

As the news of Lady Isabel's marriage had first come to the knowledge of Lord Mount Severn through the newspapers, so, singular to say, did the tidings of her death. The next post brought him the letter, which his wife had tardily forwarded. But, unlike Lady Mount Severn, he did not take her death so entirely upon trust; he knew that mistakes are often made in these reports from a distance, and he deemed it incumbent on him to make inquiries. He wrote immediately to the authorities of the town asking for particulars, and whether she was really dead.

He received, in due course, a satisfactory answer; satisfactory in so far as that it set his doubts entirely at rest. He had inquired after her by her proper name and title, “La Dame Isabelle Vane,” and as the authorities could find none of the survivors owning that name, they took it for granted she was dead. They wrote him word that the child and nurse whom he mentioned were killed on the spot; two ladies who had occupied the same compartment of the carriage had since died, one of whom was no doubt the mother, the lady for whom he inquired. She was dead and buried,

sufficient money having been found upon her person to defray the few necessary expenses. It will easily be comprehended that the lady of whom they spoke was one of those who had been in the same carriage as Lady Isabel, and who had died.

Thus, through no intention of Lady Isabel, news of her death went forth to Lord Mount Severn and to the world. Her first intimation that she was regarded as dead was through a copy of that very day's *Times* seen by Mr. Carlyle, seen by Lord Mount Severn. An English traveler who had been amongst the sufferers and lay in the hospital received the English newspapers, and sometimes lent them to her to read. She was not traveling under her own name; she left that behind her when she left Grenoble; she had rendered her own too notorious to risk the chance recognition of travelers; and the authorities did not suspect that the quiet, unobtrusive Madame Vine, slowly recovering at the hospital, was the true Dame Isabelle Vane, respecting whom the grand English Comte wrote.

Lady Isabel understood it at once; that the dispatching her letter had been the foundation of the misapprehension; and she began to ask herself now why she should undeceive Lord Mount Severn and the world. She longed, none knew with what intense longing, to be unknown, obscure, totally unrecognized by all; none can know it till they have put a barrier between themselves and the world, as she had done. She had no longer the child to support, she had only herself; and surely she could with ease earn enough for that; or she could starve; it mattered little which. No, there was no necessity for her continuing to accept the bounty of Lord Mount Severn, and she would let him and everybody else continue to believe she was dead and be henceforth only Madame Vine. A resolution she adhered to.

Thus the unhappy Lady Isabel's career was looked upon as run. Lord Mount Severn forwarded her letter to Mr. Carlyle, with the confirmation of her death, which he had obtained from the French authorities.

It was a nine days' wonder: "That poor, erring Lady Isabel was dead"—people did not call her names in the very teeth of her fate—and then it was over.

It was over. Lady Isabel Vane was as one forgotten.

CHAPTER XXXIV

AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR AT EAST LYNNE

There went, sailing up the avenue to East Lynne, a lady, one windy afternoon. If not a lady, she was attired as one; a flounced dress, and a stylish looking shawl, and a white veil. A very pretty woman, tall and slender, was she, and she minced as she walked, and coquetted with her head, and altogether contrived to show that she had quite as much vanity as brains. She went boldly up to the front entrance of the house, and boldly rang at it, drawing her white veil over her face as she did so.

One of the men servants answered it, not Peter; and, seeing somebody very smart before him, bowed deferentially.

"Miss Hallijohn is residing her, I believe. Is she within?"

"Who, ma'am?"

"Miss Hallijohn; Miss Joyce Hallijohn," somewhat sharply repeated the lady, as if impatient of any delay. "I wish to see her."

The man was rather taken aback. He had deemed it a visitor to the house, and was prepared to usher her to the drawing-room, at least; but it seemed it was only a visitor to Joyce. He showed her into a small parlor and went upstairs to the nursery, where Joyce was sitting with Wilson—for there had been no change in the domestic department of East Lynne. Joyce remained as upper maid, partially superintending the servants, attending upon Lucy, and making Miss Carlyle's dresses as usual. Wilson was nurse still. Miss Carlyle had once or twice begun upon the point of the

extravagance of keeping both Wilson and Joyce; but Mr. Carlyle had wholly declined discussion upon the subject; and somehow Miss Carlyle did not find him bend to her will as he once had done.

"Mrs. Joyce, there's a lady asking for you," said the man. "I have shown her into the gray parlor."

"A lady for me?" repeated Joyce. "Who is it? Some one to see the children, perhaps?"

"It's for yourself, I think. She asked for Miss Hallijohn."

Joyce looked at the man; but she put down her work and proceeded to the gray parlor. A pretty woman, vain and dashing, threw up her white veil at her entrance.

"Well, Joyce, how are you?"

Joyce, always pale, turned paler still as she gazed in blank consternation. Was it really Afy who stood before her—Afy the erring?

Afy it was. And she stood there, holding out her hand to Joyce with what Wilson would have called all the brass in the world. Joyce could not reconcile her mind to link her own with it. "Excuse me, Afy, but I cannot take your hand. I cannot welcome you here. What could have induced you to come?"

"If you are going to be upon the high ropes, it seems I might as well have stayed away," was Afy's reply, given in the pert but good-humored manner she had ever used to Joyce. "My hand won't damage yours. I am not poison!"

"You are looked upon in the neighborhood as worse than poison, Afy," returned Joyce, in a tone not of anger, but of sorrow. "Where's Richard Hare?"

Afy tossed her head. "Where's who?" asked she.

"Richard Hare. My question was plain enough."

"How should I know where he is? It's like your impudence to mention him to me. Why don't you ask me where Old Nick is, and how he does? I'd rather own acquaintance with him than with Richard Hare. If I'd only my choice between the two."

"Then you have left Richard Hare! How long since?"

"I have left—what do you say?" broke off Afy, whose lips were quivering ominously with suppressed passion. "Perhaps you'll condescend to explain. I don't understand."

"When you left here, Afy, did you not go after Richard Hare?—did you not join him?"

"I'll tell you what it is, Joyce," flashed Afy, her face indignant and her voice passionate, "I have put up with some things from you in my time, but human nature has its limits of endurance, and I won't bear that. I have never set eyes on Richard Hare since that night of horror. I wish I could, I'd help to hang him."

Joyce paused. The belief that Afy was with him had been long and deeply imbued within her; it was the long-continued and firm conviction of all West Lynne, and a settled belief such as that is not easily shaken. Was Afy telling her the truth? She knew her propensity for making false statements, when they served to excuse herself.

"Afy," she said at length, "let me understand you. When you left this place, was it not to share Richard Hare's flight? Have you not been living with him?"

"No," burst forth Afy, with kindling eyes. "Living with him! with our father's murderer! Shame upon you, Joyce Hallijohn! you must be precious wicked yourself to suppose it."

"If I have judged you wrongly, Afy, I sincerely beg your pardon. Not only myself, but the whole of West Lynne believed you were with him; and the thought has caused me pain night and day."

"What a cannibal-minded set you must all be, then!" was Afy's indignant rejoinder.

"Not one in the place but thought so, with the exception of Mr. Carlyle," proceeded Joyce. "He has said two or three times to me that he should not think you went to Richard Hare, or were living with him."

"Mr. Carlyle has more sense than all the rest of West Lynne put together," complacently observed Afy. "Living with Richard Hare! Why, I'd rather

go and live with a scalping red Indian, who goes about with his body tattooed in place of clothes, and keeps sixteen wives. But let's talk of something else; the subject invariably gives me the shivers. Who is mistress here?"

"Miss Carlyle."

"Oh! I might have guessed that. Is she as fierce as ever?"

"There is little alteration in her."

"And there won't be on this side the grave. I say, Joyce, I don't want to encounter her; she might set on at me like she has done many a time in the old days. Little love was there lost between me and Corny Carlyle."

"You need not fear meeting her. She is away; gone to Lynneborough for a week's visit."

"That's good news for a rainy day! Then who acts as mistress while she's absent?"

"I give the orders," said Joyce. "Master interferes very little."

"Will he marry again?" went on Afy.

"How can I tell? There appears no probability of it at present. A few weeks or months ago a rumor arose that he was to marry Miss Louisa Dobede, but it died away again."

"Louisa Dobede! one of that ugly old baronet's daughters?"

"Yes. But Sir John Dobede is not ugly."

"Not ugly! Why, he has got a nose as long as a foundry chimney. Well, one would think Mr. Carlyle had had enough of marrying."

"Lady Isabel is dead," interrupted Joyce, hastily.

"So is Queen Anne. What's the good of telling me news that all the world knows?"

"I reminded you that she was dead that you might not speak against her," said Joyce. "Whatever may have been Lady Isabel's failings, they are buried in her grave."

"Buried or not, their remembrance lasts," cried Afy, "and you may as well try to stop the sun's shining as

to stop folks giving their opinions. East Lynne must have been well rid of her—such a canker as that!”

“Afy,” said Joyce, “I loved my mistress and I love her memory still, in spite of what has taken place. If you are to speak against her it must be in some other house.”

“Have it your own way,” rejoined Afy, and they fell to talking of other matters.

When Mr. Carlyle returned home Joyce sought him, and acquainted him with what had happened; that Afy was come; was maid to Lady Mount Severn; and, above all, that she had never been with Richard Hare.

Later in the evening, after Mr. Carlyle's dinner, a message came that Afy was to go to him. Accordingly she proceeded to his presence. “So, Afy, you have returned to let West Lynne know that you are alive. Sit down.”

“West Lynne may go a-walking in future, sir, for all the heed I shall take of it,” retorted Afy. “A set of wicked-minded scandalmongers to take and say I had gone off after Richard Hare!”

“You should not have gone off at all, Afy.”

“Well, sir, that was my business, and I chose to go. I could not stop in the cottage after that night's work.”

“There is a mystery attaching to that night's work, Afy,” observed Mr. Carlyle; “a mystery that I cannot fathom. Perhaps you can help me out.”

“What mystery, sir?” returned Afy.

Mr. Carlyle leaned forward, his arms on the table; Afy had taken a chair at the other end of it. “Who was it that committed the murder?” he demanded, in a grave and somewhat imperative tone. Afy stared some moments before she replied, evidently astonished at the question. “Who committed the murder, sir?” she uttered at length. “Richard Hare committed it. Everybody knows that.”

“Did you see it done?”

“No,” replied Afy. “If I had seen it, the fright and horror would have killed me. Richard Hare quar-

reled with my father, and drew the gun upon him in his passion."

"You assume this to have been the case, Afy, as others have assumed it. I do not think it was Richard Hare who killed your father."

"Not Richard Hare!" exclaimed Afy, after a pause. "Then who do you think did it, sir? I?"

"Nonsense, Afy."

"I know he did it," proceeded Afy. "It is true that I did not see it done, but I know it for all that. I know it, sir."

"You cannot know it, Afy."

"I do know it, sir; I would not assert it to you if I did not. If Richard Hare were here present before us and swore till he was black in the face that it was not he, I could convict him."

"By what means?"

"I had rather not say, sir. But you may believe me, for I am speaking truth."

"There was another friend of yours present that evening, Afy, Lieutenant Thorn."

Afy's face turned crimson; she was evidently confused. But Mr. Carlyle's speech and manner were authoritative, and she saw that it would be useless to attempt to trifle with him.

"I know he was, sir. A young chap, who used to ride over some evenings to see me. He had nothing to do with what occurred."

"Where did he ride from?"

"He was stopping with some friends at Swainson. He was nobody, sir."

"What was his name?" questioned Mr. Carlyle.

"Thorn," said Afy.

"I mean his real name. Thorn was an assumed name."

"Oh, dear no," returned Afy. "Thorn was his name."

Mr. Carlyle paused and looked at her.

"Afy, I have reason to believe that Thorn was only an assumed name. Now, I have a motive for wishing

to know his real one, and you would very much oblige me by confiding it to me. What was it?"

"I don't know that he had any other name, sir; I am sure he had no other," persisted Afy. "He was Lieutenant Thorn then, and he was Captain Thorn afterward."

"You have seen him since?"

"Once in a way we have met."

"Where is he now?"

"Now! Oh, my goodness, I don't know anything about him now!" said Afy. "I have not heard of him or seen him for a long while. I think I heard something about his going to India with his regiment."

"What regiment is he in?"

"I'm sure I don't know about that," said Afy. "Is not one regiment the same as another? They're all in the army, aren't they, sir?"

"Afy, I must find this Captain Thorn. Do you know anything of his family?" Afy shook her head. "I don't think he had any. I never heard him mention so much as a brother or a sister."

"And you persist in saying his name was Thorn?"

"I persist in it because it was his name. I am positive it was his name."

"Afy, shall I tell you why I want to find him? I believe that it was he who murdered your father; not Richard Hare."

Afy's mouth and eyes gradually opened, and her face turned hot and cold alternately. Then passion mastered her, and she burst forth:

"It's a lie! I beg your pardon, sir; but whoever told you that told you a lie. Thorn had no more to do with it than I had. I'll swear to it."

"I tell you, Afy, I believe Thorn to have been the man. You were not present; you cannot know who actually did it."

"Yes, I can and do know," said Afy, bursting into tears of hysterical passion. "Thorn was with me when it happened; so it could not have been him. It was

that wicked Richard Hare. Sir! have I not said that I'll swear to it?"

"Thorn was with you!—at the moment of the murder?" repeated Mr. Carlyle.

"Yes, he was," shrieked Afy, nearly beside herself with emotion. "Whoever has been trying to put it off Richard Hare and on to him is a wicked, false-hearted wretch! It was Richard Hare, and nobody else, and I hope he'll be hung for it yet."

"You are telling me truth, Afy?" gravely spoke Mr. Carlyle.

"Truth!" echoed Afy, flinging up her hands. "Would I tell a lie over my poor father's death? If Thorn had done it, would I screen him, or shuffle it off to Richard Hare? No, no."

Mr. Carlyle felt uncertain and bewildered. That Afy was sincere in what she said was but too apparent. He spoke again, but Afy had risen from her chair to leave.

"Locksley was in the wood that evening; Otway Bethel was in it. Could either of them have been the culprit?"

"No, sir," firmly retorted Afy, "the culprit was Richard Hare; and I'd say it with my last breath. I'd say it because I know it; though I don't choose to say how I know it; time enough when he gets taken."

She quitted the room, leaving Mr. Carlyle in a state of puzzled bewilderment. Was he to believe Afy? or was he to believe the bygone assertion of Richard Hare?

CHAPTER XXXV

A NIGHT INVASION OF EAST LYNNE

In one of the comfortable sitting-rooms of East Lynne sat Mr. Carlyle and his sister one inclement January night. The contrast within and without was great. The warm, blazing fire, the handsome carpet on which it flickered, the exceedingly comfortable arrangement of the furniture, of the room altogether, and the light of the chandelier which fell on all, presented a picture of home peace, though it may not have deserved the name of luxury.

Mr. Carlyle stirred the fire into a brighter blaze, and stood on the hearth rug. "I wonder if it snows still?" he exclaimed to himself.

Proceeding to the window, one of those opening to the ground, he drew aside the half of the warm crimson curtain. It all looked dull and dark outside. Mr. Carlyle could see little what the weather was, and he opened the window and stepped half out.

The snow was falling faster and thicker than ever. Not at that did Mr. Carlyle start with surprise, if not with a more unpleasant sensation; but at feeling a man's hand touch his, and finding a man's face nearly in contact with his own.

"Let me come in, Mr. Carlyle, for the love of life! I see you are alone. I'm dead beat, and I don't know but I'm dodged also."

The tone struck familiarly on Mr. Carlyle's ear. He drew back mechanically; a thousand perplexing sensations overwhelmed him, and the man followed him into the room. A white man, as Lucy had called to her father. Ay, for he had been hours and hours on foot in the snow; his hat, his clothes, his eyebrows, his large whiskers, all were white. "Lock the door.

sir," were his first words. Need you be told that it was Richard Hare?

Mr. Carlyle fastened the window, drew the heavy curtains across it, and turned rapidly to lock the two doors. For there were two to the room, one of them leading into the adjoining one. Richard, meanwhile, took off his wet smock-frock—the old smock-frock of former memory—his hat, and his false black whiskers, wiping the snow from the latter with his hand.

"Richard," uttered Mr. Carlyle, "I am thunder-struck. I fear you have done wrong to come here."

"I cut off from London at a moment's notice," replied Richard, who was literally shivering with the cold. "I'm dodged, Mr. Carlyle; the police are after me, set on by that wretch, Thorn."

Mr. Carlyle turned to the sideboard and poured out a wine glass of brandy. "Drink it, Richard. It will warm you."

"I'd rather have it in some hot water, sir."

"But how am I to get the hot water brought in? Drink this for now. Why, how you tremble!"

"Ah, a few hours outside in that cold snow is enough to make the strongest man tremble, sir. And it lies so deep in some places that you have to come along at a snail's pace. But I'll tell you about this business. A fortnight ago I was at a cab-stand at the West-end, talking to a cab-driver, when some drops of rain came down. A gentleman and lady were passing at the time, but I had not paid any attention to them. 'By Jove!' I heard him exclaim to her, 'I think we are going to have a pepper. We had better take a cab, my dear.' With that, the man I was talking to swung open the door of his cab, and she got in—such a fair young girl! I turned to look at him, and you might just have knocked me down with astonishment, Mr. Carlyle, it was the man Thorn."

"Indeed!"

"You thought I might be mistaken in him that moonlight night; but there was no mistaking him in broad daylight. I looked him full in the face, and he

looked at me. He turned as white as a cloth: perhaps I did; I don't know."

"Was he well dressed?"

"Very. Oh, there's no mistaking his position. That he moves in the higher circles, there's no doubt. The cab drove away and I got up behind it. The driver thought boys were there, and turned his head and his whip, but I made him a sign. We didn't go much more than the length of a street. I was on the pavement before Thorn was, and looked at him again; and again he went white. I marked the house, thinking it was where he lived, and, and——"

"Why did you not give him into custody, Richard?"

Richard shook his head. "And my proofs of his guilt, Mr. Carlyle? I could bring none against him; no positive ones. No, I must wait till I can get proofs to do that."

"Is this all, Richard?"

"All! I wish it had been all. In a week's time I came upon him again. It was at night. He was coming out of one of the theatres, and I went up and stood before him. 'What do you want, fellow?' he asked. 'I have seen you watching me before this.' 'I want to know your name,' I said; 'that's enough for me at present.' He flew into a fierce passion, and swore that if he ever caught sight of me near him again he would hand me over into custody. 'And, remember, men are not given into custody for watching others,' he significantly added. 'I know you, and if you have any regard for yourself, you'll keep out of my way.' He got into a private carriage as he spoke, and it drove away; I could see that it had a great coat-of-arms upon it."

"When do you say this happened?"

"A week ago. Well, I could not rest; I was half mad, I say, and I went about still, trying if I could not discover his name and who he was. I did come upon him once; but he was walking quickly, arm in arm—with another gentleman. Again I saw him, standing at the entrance to Tattersalls, talking to the

same gentleman; and his face turned savage—I believe with fear as much as anger—when he saw me. He seemed to hesitate, and then, as if he acted in a passion, suddenly beckoned to a policeman, pointed me out and said something to him in a fast tone. That frightened me, and I slipped away. Two hours later, when I was in quite a different part of the town, in turning my head, I saw the same policeman following me. I bolted under the horses of a passing vehicle, cut into some turnings and passages, through into another street, and got up beside a cabman who was on his box, driving a fare past. I reached my lodgings in safety, as I thought, but, happening to glance into the street, there I saw the man again, standing opposite and reconnoitering the house. I had gone home hungry, but this took all my hunger away from me. I opened the box where I keep my disguise, put it on, and got out by back way. I have been pretty nearly ever since on my feet coming here; I only got a lift now and then.”

“But, Richard, do you know that East Lynne is the very worst place you could have flown to? It has come to light that you were here before, disguised as a farm laborer.”

“Who the deuce betrayed that?” ejaculated Richard.

“I am unable to tell; I cannot even imagine. The rumor was rife in the place, and it reached your father’s ears. That rumor may make people’s wits sharper to know you in your disguise than they otherwise might have been.”

“But what was I to do? I was forced to come here first, to get a little money. I shall fix myself in some other big town, far away from London; Liverpool, or Manchester, perhaps, and see what employment I can get into, but I must have something to live upon until I get it. I don’t possess a penny piece,” he added, drawing out his trousers’ pockets for the inspection of Mr. Carlyle. “The last coppers I had, threepence, I spent in bread and cheese and half a pint of beer at

midday. I have been outside that window for more than an hour, sir."

"Indeed!"

"As I neared West Lynne I began to think what I should do. It was of no use trying to catch Barbara's attention on such a night as this; I had no money to pay for a lodging; so I turned off here, hoping that I might by good luck drop upon you. There was a little partition in this window curtain; it had not been drawn close; and through it I could see you and Miss Carlyle. I saw her leave the room; I saw you come to the window and open it, and then I spoke. Mr. Carlyle," he added, after a pause, "is this sort of life to go on with me forever?"

"I am deeply sorry for you, Richard," was the sympathizing answer. "I wish I could remedy it."

CHAPTER XXXVI

BARBARA'S HEART AT REST

Barbara was sent for, and anxiously they consulted together, Miss Carlyle of course putting in her word. Over and over again did Barbara ask the particulars of the slight interviews Richard had had with Thorn; over and over again did she openly speculate upon what his name really was. "If you could but discover some one whom he knows, and inquire it!" she exclaimed.

"I have seen him with one person, but I can't inquire of him. They are too thick together, he and Thorn, and are birds of a feather also, I suspect. Great swells, both."

"Oh, Richard, don't use those expressions. They are unsuited to a gentleman."

Richard laughed bitterly. "A gentleman!"

"Who is it you have seen Thorn with?" inquired Barbara.

"Sir Francis Levison," replied Richard, glancing at Miss Carlyle, who drew in her lips ominously.

"With whom?" uttered Barbara, betraying complete astonishment. "Do you know Sir Francis Levison?"

"Oh, yes, I know him. Nearly the only man about town that I do know."

Barbara seemed lost in a puzzled reverie, and it was some time before she roused herself from it. "Are they at all alike?" she asked. "Very much so, I suspect. Both bad men."

"But I meant in person."

"Not in the least. Except that they are both tall."

Again Barbara sank in thought. Richard's words had surprised her. She was aroused from it by hearing a child's voice in the next room. She ran into it, and Miss Carlyle immediately fastened the intervening door.

It was little Archibald Carlyle. Joyce had come in with the tray to lay the luncheon, and before she could lock the door Archibald ran in after her. Barbara lifted him in her arms to carry him back to the nursery. "Oh, you heavy boy!" she exclaimed. Archie laughed. "Wilson says that," he lisped, "if ever she has to carry me."

"I have brought you a truant, Wilson!" cried Barbara.

"Oh, is it you, Miss Barbara? How are you, miss? Naughty boy—yes; he ran away without my noticing him—he can open the door now."

"You must be so kind as to keep him strictly in for to-day," continued Barbara, authoritatively. "Miss Carlyle is not well, and cannot be subjected to the annoyance of his running into her room."

Evening came, and the time of Richard's departure. It was again snowing heavily, though it had ceased in the middle of the day. Money for the present had been given to him; arrangements had been discussed. Mr. Carlyle insisted upon Richard's sending him his address as soon as he should own one to send, and Richard faithfully promised. He was in very low spirits, almost as low as Barbara, who could not conceal her tears; they dropped in silence on her pretty

silky dress. He was smuggled down the stairs, a large cloak of Miss Carlyle's enveloping him, into the room he had entered by storm on the previous night. Mr. Carlyle held the window open.

"Good-by, Barbara, dear. If ever you should be able to tell my mother of this day, say that my chief sorrow was not to see her."

"Oh, Richard!" she sobbed, broken-hearted, "good-by. May God be with you and bless you!"

"Farewell, Richard," said Miss Carlyle; "don't you be fool enough to get into any more scrapes."

Last of all, he wrung the hand of Mr. Carlyle. The latter went outside with him for an instant, and their leave-taking was alone. Barbara returned to the chamber she had quitted. She felt that she must indulge in a few moments' sobbing; Joyce was there, but Barbara was sobbing when she entered it.

"It is hard for him, Miss Barbara; if he is really innocent."

Barbara turned her streaming eyes upon her. "'If!' Joyce, do you doubt that he is innocent?"

"I quite believe him to be so now, miss. Nobody could so solemnly assert what was not true. The thing at present will be to find that Captain Thorn."

"Joyce," exclaimed Barbara, in excitement, seizing hold of Joyce's hands, "I thought I had found him; I believed in my own mind that I knew who he was. I don't mind telling you, though I have never before spoken of it; and with one thing or other this night, I feel just as if I should die; as if I must speak. I thought it was Sir Francis Levison!"

Joyce stared with all her eyes. "Miss Barbara!"

"I did. I have thought it ever since the night that Lady Isabel went away. My poor brother was at West Lynne then; he had come for a few hours, and he met the man Thorn walking in Bean Lane. He was in evening dress, and Richard described a peculiar motion of his, the throwing off his hair from his brow; he said his white hand and his diamond ring glittered in the moonlight. The white hand, the ring, the motion—

for he was always doing it—all reminded me of Captain Levison; and from that hour until to-day I did believe him to be the man Richard saw. To-day Richard tells me that he knows Sir Francis Levison, and that he and Thorn are intimate. What I think now is that this Thorn must have paid a flying visit to the neighborhood that night to assist Captain Levison in the wicked work he had on hand."

"How strange it all sounds!" uttered Joyce.

"And I never could tell my suspicions to Mr. Carlyle! I did not like to mention Francis Levison's name to him."

Barbara returned downstairs. "I must be going home," she said to Mr. Carlyle. "It is half-past seven and mamma will be uneasy."

"Whenever you like, Barbara."

"But can I not walk? I am so sorry to take out your ponies again, and in this storm."

Mr. Carlyle laughed. "Which would feel the storm worst—you or the ponies?"

But when Barbara got outside, she saw that it was not the pony carriage, but the chariot that was in waiting for her. She turned inquiringly to Mr. Carlyle.

"Did you think I should allow you to go home in an open carriage to-night, Barbara?"

"Are you coming also?"

"I suppose I had better," he smiled; "to see that you and the carriage do not come to harm."

Barbara withdrew to her corner of the chariot and cried silently. Very, very deeply did she mourn the unhappy situation—the privations of her brother. And she knew that he was one to feel them deeply. He could not battle with the world's hardships so bravely as many could have done. Mr. Carlyle only detected her emotion as they were nearing the Grove. He leaned forward, took her hand and held it between his.

"Don't grieve, Barbara. Bright days may be in store for Richard yet." The carriage stopped.

"You may go back," he said to the servants when he alighted. "I shall walk home."

"Oh!" exclaimed Barbara. "I do think you intend to spend the evening with us! Mamma will be so glad!"

Her voice showed that she was glad also. Mr. Carlyle drew her hand within his arm as they walked up the path. But Barbara had reckoned without her host. Mrs. Hare was in bed, consequently could not be pleased at the visit of Mr. Carlyle. The justice had gone out, and she, feeling tired and not well, thought she would retire to rest. Barbara stole into her room, but found her asleep; so that it fell to Barbara to entertain Mr. Carlyle.

They stood together before the large pier-glass, in front of the blazing fire. Barbara was thinking over the events of the day. What Mr. Carlyle was thinking of was best known to himself; his eyes, covered with their drooping eyelids, were cast upon Barbara. There was a long silence. At length Barbara seemed to feel that his gaze was on her, and she looked up at him.

"Will you marry me, Barbara?"

The words were spoken in the quietest, most matter-of-fact tone, just as if he had said, "Shall I give you a chair, Barbara?" But, oh! the change that passed over her countenance! the sudden light of joy; the scarlet flush of emotion and happiness. Then it all faded down to paleness and sadness.

She shook her head in the negative. "But you are very kind to ask me," she added in words.

"What is the impediment, Barbara?"

Another rush of color, as before, and a deep silence. Mr. Carlyle put his arm round her, and bent his face on a level with hers. "Whisper it to me, Barbara." She burst into a flood of tears. "Is it because I once married another?"

"No, no. It is the remembrance of that night—you cannot have forgotten it; and it is stamped on my brain in letters of fire. I never thought so to betray myself. But for what passed that night you would not have asked me now."

"Barbara!"

She glanced up at him; the tone was so painful. "Do you know that I love you? that there is none other in the world whom I would care to marry but you? Nay, Barbara, when happiness is within our reach, let us not throw it away upon a chimera."

She cried more softly, leaning upon his arm. "Happiness? Would it be happiness for you?"

"Great and deep happiness," he whispered.

She read truth in his countenance, and a sweet smile illumined her sunny features. Mr. Carlyle read its signs. "You love me as much as ever, Barbara?"

"Far more; far more," was the murmured answer, and Mr. Carlyle held her closer, and drew her face fondly to his. Barbara's heart was at length at rest; and she had been content to remain where she was forever.

And Richard? Had he got clear off? Richard was stealing along the road, plunging into the snow by the hedge because it was more sheltered there than in the beaten path, when his umbrella came in contact with another umbrella. Miss Carlyle had furnished it to him; not to protect his battered hat, but to protect his face from being seen by the passers-by. The umbrella he encountered was an aristocratic silk one, with an ivory handle; Dick's was a democratic cotton, with hardly any handle at all; and the respective owners had been bearing on, heads down and umbrellas out, till they, the umbrellas, met smash, right underneath a gas lamp. Aside went each umbrella, and the antagonists stared at each other. "How dare you, fellow? Can't you see where you are going to?"

Dick thought he should have dropped. He would have given all the money his pockets held, if the friendly earth had but opened and swallowed him in. For now, peering into his face, was his own father. Uttering an exclamation of dismay, which broke from him involuntarily, Richard sped away with the swiftness of an arrow. Did Justice Hare recognize the tones? It cannot be said. He saw a rough, strange-looking man with bushy black whiskers, who was evi-

dently scared at the sight of him. That was nothing; for the justice, being a justice and a strict one, was regarded with considerable awe in the parish by those of Dick's apparent caliber. Nevertheless, he stood still and gazed in the direction, until all sound of Richard's footsteps had died away in the distance.

CHAPTER XXXVII

FOR THE SECOND TIME

Tears were streaming down the face of Mrs. Hare. It was a bright morning after the snow-storm, so bright that the sky was blue and the sun was shining, but the snow lay deeply upon the ground. Mrs. Hare sat in her chair, enjoying the brightness, and Mr. Carlyle stood near her. The tears were of joy and of grief mingled; of grief at hearing that she should at last have to part with Barbara; of joy that she was going to one so entirely worthy of her as was Mr. Carlyle.

"Archibald, she has had a happy home here; you will render yours as much so?"

"To the very utmost of my power."

"You will ever be kind to her, ever cherish her?"

"With my whole heart and strength. Dear Mrs. Hare, I thought you knew me too well to doubt me."

"Doubt you? I do not doubt you; I trust you implicitly, Archibald. Had the whole world laid themselves at Barbara's feet, I should have prayed that she might choose you."

A smile flitted over Mr. Carlyle's lips. He knew it was what Barbara would have done.

"But Archibald, what about Cornelia?" resumed Mrs. Hare. "I would not for a moment interfere in your affairs, or in the arrangements you and Barbara may agree upon; but I cannot help thinking that married people are better alone."

"Cornelia will quit East Lynne," said Mr. Carlyle. "I have not spoken to her yet, but I shall do so now. I have long made my mind up to that; that if ever I

married again, I and my wife would live alone. It is said she interfered too much with my former wife; had I suspected it, Cornelia should not have remained in the house a day. Rest assured that Barbara shall not be subjected to the chance."

"How did you come over her?" demanded the justice, who had already given his gratified consent, and who now entered, in his dressing-gown and morning wig. "Others have tried it on, and Barbara would not listen to any of them."

"I suppose I must have cast a spell upon her," answered Mr. Carlyle, breaking into a smile.

Miss Carlyle's cold was better that evening; in fact, she seemed quite herself again, and Mr. Carlyle introduced the subject of his marriage. It was after dinner that he began upon it.

"Cornelia, when I married Lady Isabel Vane, you reproached me severely with having kept you in the dark——"

"If you had not kept me in the dark, but consulted me, as any other Christian would, the course of events might have been wholly changed, and the wretchedness and disgrace that fell on this house been spared to it," fiercely interrupted Miss Carlyle.

"We will leave the past," he said, "and consider the future. I was about to remark that I do not intend to fall under your displeasure for the like offense. I believe you have never wholly forgiven it."

"And never shall," cried she, impetuously. "I did not deserve the slight."

"Therefore, almost as soon as I know it myself, I acquaint you. I am about to marry a second time, Cornelia."

Miss Carlyle started up. Her spectacles dropped off her nose, and a knitting-box, which she happened to have on her knee, clattered to the ground. "What did you say?" she uttered, aghast.

"I am about to marry."

"You?"

"I. Is there anything so very astonishing in it?"

"For the love of common sense, don't go and make such a fool of yourself! You have done it once; was that not enough for you, but you must run your head into the noose again."

"Now, Cornelia, can you wonder that I do not speak to you of such things when you meet me in this way? You treat me just as you did when I was a child. It is very foolish."

"When folks act childishly, they must be treated as children. I always thought you were mad when you married before, but I shall think you doubly mad now."

"Because you have preferred to remain single and solitary yourself, is it any reason why you should condemn me to do the same? You are happy alone; I should be happier with a wife."

"That she may go and disgrace you, as the last one did!" intemperately spoke Miss Carlyle, caring not a rush what she said in her anger. Mr. Carlyle's brow flushed, but he controlled his temper.

"No," he calmly replied. "I am not afraid of that, in the one I have now chosen."

Miss Corny gathered her knitting together; he had picked up her box. Her hands trembled, and the lines of her face were working. It was a blow to her as keen as the other had been.

"Pray, who is it that you have chosen?" she jerked forth. "The whole neighborhood has been after you."

"Let it be who it will, Cornelia, you will be sure to grumble. Were I to say that it was a royal princess or a peasant's daughter, you would see grounds for finding fault."

"Of course I should. I know who it is—that stuck-up Louisa Dobede."

"No, it is not. I never had the slightest intention of choosing Louisa Dobede; nor she of choosing me. I am marrying to please myself, and, for a wife, Louisa Dobede would not please me."

"As you did before," sarcastically put in Miss Corny.

"Yes; as I did before."

"Well, can't you open your mouth, and say who it is?" was the exasperating rejoinder.

"It is Barbara Hare."

"Who?" shrieked Miss Carlyle.

"You are not deaf, Cornelia."

"Well, you are an idiot!" she exclaimed, lifting up her hands and eyes.

"Thank you," he said, but without any signs of irritation.

"And so you are; you are, Archibald. To suffer that girl, who has been angling after you so long, to catch you at last."

"She has not angled after me; had she done so, she would probably never have been Mrs. Carlyle. Whatever passing fancy she may have entertained for me in earlier days, she has shown no symptoms of it of late years; and I am certain that she had no more thought, or idea, that I should choose her for my second, than you had that I should choose you. Others may have angled after me too palpably, but Barbara has not."

"She is a little conceited minx; as vain as she is high."

"What else have you to urge against her?"

"I would have married a girl without a slur—if I must have married," aggravatingly returned Miss Corny.

"Slur?"

"Slur, yes! Dear me, is it an honor to possess such a brother?"

"There is no slur upon Barbara. And the time may come when it will be taken off Richard." Miss Corny sniffed. "Pigs may fly; but I never saw them try at it."

"The next consideration, Cornelia, is about your residence. You will go back, I presume, to your own home."

Miss Corny did not believe her own ears. "Go back to my own home?" she exclaimed. "I shall do nothing of the sort. I shall stop at East Lynne. What's to hinder me?"

Mr. Carlyle shook his head. "It cannot be," he said, in a low, decisive tone. "Who says so?" she sharply asked. "I do. Have you forgotten that night—when she went away—the words spoken by Joyce! Cornelia, whether they were true or false, I will not subject another to the chance."

She did not answer. Her lips only parted and closed again. Somehow Miss Carlyle could not bear to be reminded of that revelation of Joyce's; it subdued even her.

At this moment the summons of a visitor was heard. Even that excited the ire of Miss Carlyle. "I wonder who's come bothering to-night?" she uttered. Peter entered. "It is Major Thorn, sir. I have shown him into the drawing-room."

Mr. Carlyle was surprised. He proceeded to the drawing-room, and Miss Carlyle rang for Joyce. Strange to say, she had no thought of rebelling against the decree. An innate consciousness had long been hers, that, should Mr. Carlyle marry again, her sojourn in the house would terminate. East Lynne was Mr. Carlyle's; she had learned that he could be firm upon occasions, and the tone of his voice had told that this was one of them.

"Joyce," began she, after her own unceremonious fashion, "your master is going to make a simpleton of himself a second time, so I shall leave him and East Lynne to it. Will you go with me, and be my upper maid again?"

"What, ma'am?" exclaimed Joyce, in bewilderment; "what did you say master was going to do?"

"To make a simpleton of himself," irascibly repeated Miss Carlyle. "He is going to tie himself up again with a wife; that's what he's going to do. Now, do you stop here, or will you go with me?"

"I would go with you, ma'am, but—but for one thing."

"What's that?"

"The promise I gave to Lady Isabel. She exacted it from me when she thought she was about to die—a

promise that I would remain with her children. She did not leave them by death after all; but it comes to the same thing."

"Not exactly," sarcastically spoke Miss Carlyle. "But there's another side of the question, Joyce, which you may not have looked at. When there shall be another mistress at East Lynne, will you be permitted to remain here?"

Joyce considered; she could not see her way altogether clear. "Allow me to give you my answer a little later," she said to Miss Carlyle.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

ALL FATE

"Such a journey!" Major Thorn was saying, meanwhile, to Mr. Carlyle. "It is my general luck to get ill weather when I travel. Rain and hail, thunder and heat, nothing bad comes amiss, when I am out. The snow lay on the rails I don't know how thick; at one station we were detained two hours."

"Are you proposing to make any stay at West Lynne?"

"Off again to-morrow. My leave, this time, is to be spent at my mother's. I may bestow a week of it, or so, on West Lynne, but am not sure. I must be back in Ireland in a month. Such a horrid bog-hole we are quartered in just now! The truth is, Carlyle, a lady has brought me here."

"Indeed!"

"I am in love with Barbara Hare. The little jade has said No to me by letter; but, as Herbert says, there's nothing like urging your suit in person. And I have come to do so."

Mr. Carlyle took an instant's counsel with himself, and decided it would be a kind thing to tell the major the state of the case; far more kind than to subject him to another rejection from Barbara, and to suffer the facts to reach him by common report.

"Will you shoot me, major, if I venture to tell you that any second application to Barbara would be futile?"

"She is not appropriated, is she?" hurriedly cried Mr. Thorn. "She's not married?"

"She is not married. She is going to be."

"Oh, that's just like my unlucky fate. And who is the happy man?"

"You must promise not to call me out, if I disclose his name."

"Carlyle! It is not yourself?"

"You have said it."

There was a brief silence. It was Mr. Carlyle who broke it.

"It need not make us the less good friends, Thorn. Do not allow it to do so."

The major put out his hand, and grasped Mr. Carlyle's. "No, by Jove, it sha'n't! It's all fate. And if she must go to any other besides me, I'd rather see her yours than any man's upon earth. Were you engaged when I asked Barbara to be my wife, some months ago?"

"No. We have been engaged but very recently."

"Did Barbara betray to you that I asked her?" proceeded Major Thorn, a shade of mortification rising to his face.

"Certainly not; you do not know Barbara, if you fancy she could be guilty of it. The justice managed to let it out to me during an explosion of wrath."

"Wrath because I asked for his daughter?"

"Wrath against Barbara for refusing. Not particularly at her refusing you," added Mr. Carlyle, correcting himself; "but she was in the habit of refusing all who asked her, and thereby fell under displeasure."

"Did she refuse you?"

"No," smiled Mr. Carlyle, "she accepted me."

"Ah, well; it's all fate, I say. But she is an uncommon nice girl, and I wish it had been my luck to get her."

"To go from one subject to another," resumed Mr.

Carlyle, "there is a question I have long thought to put to you, Thorn, if we ever met again. Which year was it that you were staying at Swainson?"

Major Thorn mentioned it. It was the year of Halli-john's murder.

"As I thought—in fact, knew," said Mr. Carlyle. "Did you, while you were stopping there, ever come across a namesake of yours, one Thorn?"

"I believe I did. But I don't know the man of my own knowledge, and I saw him but once only. I don't think he was living in Swainson. I never observed him in the town."

"Where did you meet with him?"

"At a roadside beer-shop, about two miles from Swainson. I was riding one day when a fearful storm came on, and I took shelter there. Scarcely had I entered when another horseman rode up, and he likewise took shelter—a tall, dandified man, aristocratic and exclusive. When he departed—for he quitted first, the storm being over—I asked the people who he was. They said they did not know, though they often saw him ride by; but a man who was in there, drinking, said he was a Captain Thorn. The same man, by the way, volunteered the information that he came from a distance, somewhere near West Lynne; I remember that."

"That Captain Thorn did?"

"No; that he himself did. He appeared to know nothing of Captain Thorn beyond the name."

It seemed to be ever so! Scraps of information, but nothing tangible—nothing to lay hold of, or to know the man by. Would it be thus always?

"Should you recognize him again, were you to see him?" resumed Mr. Carlyle, awaking from his reverie.

"I think I should. There is something peculiar in his countenance, and I remember it well yet."

"Were you by chance to meet him, and discover his real name—for I have reason to believe that Thorn, the one he went by then, was an assumed one—will you oblige me by letting me know it?"

"With all the pleasure in life," replied the major. "The chances are against it, though, confined as I am to that confounded sister country. Other regiments get the luck of being quartered in the metropolis, or near it; ours doesn't."

When Major Thorn had departed, and Mr. Carlyle was about to return to the room where he left his sister, he was interrupted by Joyce.

"Sir," she began, "Miss Carlyle tells me that there is going to be a change at East Lynne."

The words took Mr. Carlyle by surprise. "Miss Carlyle has been in a hurry to tell you!" he remarked, a certain haughty displeasure in his tone.

"She did not speak for the sake of telling me, sir; but I fancy she was thinking about her own plans. She inquired whether I would go with her when she left, or whether I meant to remain at East Lynne. I could not answer her, sir, until I had spoken to you."

"Well?" said Mr. Carlyle.

"I gave a promise, sir, to—to—my late lady, that I would remain with her children so long as I was permitted; she asked it of me when she was ill; when she thought she was going to die. What I would inquire of you, sir, is, whether the changes will make any difference to my staying?"

"No," he decisively replied. "I also, Joyce, wish you to remain with the children."

"It is well, sir," Joyce answered; and her face looked bright as she quitted the room.

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE SAME, YET NOT

More than a year has gone by.

To a family by the name of Crosby, stopping at Stalkenberg, in Germany, Lady Isabel is governess. But look at her, reader, for she is so altered as to be well-nigh unrecognizable. Yes; the railway accident did that for her; and what the accident left undone, grief and remorse accomplished.

She limps slightly as she walks, and stoops, which takes from her former height. A scar extends from her chin above her mouth, completely changing the character of the lower part of her face; some of her teeth are missing, so that she speaks with a lisp; and the sober bands of her gray hair—it is nearly silver—are confined under a large and close cap. She herself tries to make the change greater, that the chance of being recognized may be at an end, for which reason she wears disfiguring green spectacles—or, as they are called, preservers—going round the eyes; and a broad band of gray velvet coming down low upon her forehead.

Her dress, too, is equally disfiguring. Never is she seen in one that fits her person, but in those frightful "loose jackets," which must surely have been invented by somebody envious of a pretty shape. As to her bonnet, it would put to shame those masquerade things tilted on to the back of the head, for it actually shaded her face; and she was never seen out-of-doors without a thick veil. She was pretty easy upon the score of being recognized now, for Mrs. Ducie and her daughter had been sojourning at Stalkenberg, and they did not know her in the least. Who could know her? What resemblance was there between that gray, broken-down woman, with her disfiguring marks, and

the once lovely Lady Isabel, with her bright color, her beauty, her dark, flowing curls, and her agile figure? Mr. Carlyle himself would not have known her. But she was good-looking still, in spite of it all, gentle and interesting; and people wondered to see that gray hair on one yet young.

She had been with the Crosbys nearly two years. After her recovery from the railway accident, she removed to a quiet town in its vicinity, where they were living, and she became daily governess to Helena. The Crosbys were given to understand she was English, but the widow of a Frenchman—she was obliged to offer some plausible account. There were no references; but she so won upon their esteem as the daily governess that they soon took her into the house. Had Lady Isabel surmised that they would be traveling to so conspicuous a spot as an English-frequented German watering-place, she might have hesitated to accept the engagement. However, it had been of service to her, the meeting with Mrs. Ducie proving that she was altered beyond chance of recognition. She could go anywhere now.

But how about her state of mind? I do not know how to describe the vain yearning, the inward fever, the restless longing for what might not be. Longing for what? For her children.

It happened that Mrs. Latimer, a lady living at West Lynne, betook herself about that time to Stalkenberg, and with her, three parts maid and one part companion, went Afy Hallijohn. Not that Afy was admitted to the society of Mrs. Latimer, to sit with her or dine with her—nothing of that; but she did enjoy more privileges than most ladies'-maids; and Afy, who was never backward at setting off her own consequence, gave out that she was "companion." Mrs. Latimer was an easy woman, fond of Afy; and Afy had made her own tale good to her respecting the ill-natured reports at the time of the murder, so that Mrs. Latimer looked upon her as one to be compassionated.

On the evening of the day Helena Crosby communicated her future prospects to Lady Isabel, the latter strolled out in the twilight and took her seat on a bench in an unfrequented part of the gardens, where she was fond of sitting. Now it came to pass that Afy, some few minutes afterward, found herself in the same walk—and a very dull one, too, she was thinking.

“Who’s that?” quoth Afy to herself, her eyes falling upon Lady Isabel. “Oh, it’s that governess of the Crosbys. She may be known a mile off by her grandmother’s bonnet. I’ll go and have a chat with her.” Accordingly Afy, who was never troubled with bashfulness, went up and seated herself beside Lady Isabel. “Good-evening, Madame Vine,” cried she.

“Good-evening,” replied Lady Isabel, courteously, not having the least idea of whom Afy might be. “You don’t know me, I fancy,” pursued Afy, so gathering from Lady Isabel’s looks. “I am companion to Mrs. Latimer; and she is spending the evening with Mrs. Crosby. Precious dull, this Stalkenberg!”

“Do you think so?”

“It is for me. I can’t speak German or French, and the upper attendants of families here can’t, most of them, speak English. I’m sure I go about like an owl, able to do nothing but stare. I was sick enough to come here, but I’d rather be back at West Lynne, quiet as it is.”

Lady Isabel had not been encouraging her companion, either by words or manner, but the last sentence caused her heart to bound within her. Control herself as she would, she could not quite hide her feverish interest.

“Do you come from West Lynne?”

“Yes. Horrid place! Mrs. Latimer took a house there soon after I went to live with her. I’d rather she had taken it at Botany Bay.”

“Why do you not like it?”

“Because I don’t,” was Afy’s satisfactory answer.

“Do you know East Lynne?” resumed Lady Isabel, her heart beating and her brain whirling, as she delib-

erated how she could put all the questions she wished to ask.

"I ought to know it," returned Afy. "My own sister, Miss Hallijohn, is head maid there. Why? Do you know it, Madame Vine?"

Lady Isabel hesitated; she was deliberating upon her answer. "Some years ago I was staying in the neighborhood for a little time," she said. "I should like to hear of the Carlyles again; they were a nice family."

Afy tossed her head. "Ah! but there have been changes since that. I dare say you knew them in the time of Lady Isabel?"

Another pause. "Lady Isabel? Yes. She was Mr. Carlyle's wife."

"And a nice wife she made him!" ironically rejoined Afy. "You must have heard of it, Madame Vine, unless you have lived in a wood. She eloped; abandoned him and her children."

"Are the children living?"

"Yes, poor things. But the one's on its road to consumption, if ever I saw consumption yet. Joyce—that's my sister—is in a flaring temper with me when I say it. She thinks it will get strong again."

Lady Isabel passed her handkerchief across her moist brow.

"Which of the children is it?" she faintly asked. "Isabel?"

"Isabel?" retorted Afy. "Who's Isabel?"

"The eldest child, I mean; Miss Isabel Carlyle."

"There's no Isabel. There's Lucy. She's the only daughter."

"When—when—I knew them, there was only one daughter; the other two were boys; I remember quite well that she was called Isabel."

"Stay," said Afy; "now you speak of it, what was it that I heard? It was Wilson told me, I recollect—she's the nurse. Why, the very night that his wife went away, Mr. Carlyle gave orders that the child in future should be called Lucy—her second name. No wonder," added Afy, violently indignant, "that he

could no longer endure the sound of her mother's, or suffer the child to bear it."

"No wonder," murmured Lady Isabel. "Which child is it that is ill?"

"It's William, the eldest boy. He is not, to say, ill; but he is as thin as a herring, with an unnaturally bright look on his cheeks, and a glaze upon his eyes. Joyce says his cheeks are no brighter than his mother's used to be, but I know better. Folks in health don't have those brilliant colors."

"Did you ever see Lady Isabel?" she asked, in a low tone.

"Not I," returned Afy; "I should have thought it demeaning. One does not care to be brought into contact with that sort of misdoing lot, you know, Madame Vine."

"There was another one, a little boy—Archibald, I think his name was. Is he well?"

"Oh, the troublesome youngster! he is as sturdy as a Turk. No fear of his going into a consumption. He is the very image of Mr. Carlyle, is that child. I say, though, madame," continued Afy, changing the subject unceremoniously, "if you were stopping at West Lynne, perhaps you heard some wicked, mischief-making stories concerning me?"

"I believe I did hear your name mentioned. I cannot charge my memory now with the particulars."

"My father was murdered—you must have heard of that?"

"Yes, I recollect so far."

"He was murdered by a chap called Richard Hare, who decamped instanter. Perhaps you knew the Hares also? Well, directly after the funeral I left West Lynne; I could not bear the place; and I stopped away. And what do you suppose they said of me? That I had gone after Richard Hare. Not that I knew they were saying it, or I should pretty soon have been back and given them the length of my tongue. But now I just ask you, as a lady, Madame Vine, whether a more infamous accusation was ever pitched upon?"

"And you had not gone after him?"

"No; that I swear," passionately returned Afy. "Make myself a companion of my father's murderer! If Mr. Calcraft, the hangman, finished off a few of those West Lynne scandal mongers, it might be a warning to others. I said so to Mr. Carlyle."

"To Mr. Carlyle," repeated Lady Isabel, hardly conscious that she did repeat it.

"He laughed, I remember, and said that would not stop the scandal. The only one who did not misjudge me was himself; he did not believe that I was with Richard Hare. But he was ever noble-judging; was Mr. Carlyle."

"I suppose you were in a situation?"

Afy coughed. "To be sure. More than once. I lived as companion with an old lady, who so valued me that she left me a handsome legacy in her will. I lived two years with the Countess Mount Severn."

"With the Countess of Mount Severn!" echoed Lady Isabel, surprised into the remark. "Why, she—she—was related to Mr. Carlyle's wife. At least, Lord Mount Severn was."

"Of course. Everybody knows that. I was living there at the time the business happened. Didn't the countess pull Lady Isabel to pieces! She and Miss Levison used to sit, cant, cant, all day over it. Oh! I assure you I know all about it. Have you got the headache, that you are leaning on your hand?"

"Headache and heartache both," she might have answered. Miss Afy resumed:

"So, after the flattering compliment West Lynne had paid me, you may judge I was in no hurry to go back to it, Madame Vine. And if I had not found that Mrs. Latimer's promised to be an excellent place, I should have left it rather than be marshaled there. But I have lived it down. I should like to hear any of them fibbing against me now. Do you know that blessed Miss Corny?"

"I have seen her."

"She shakes her head and makes eyes at me still.

But so she would at an angel—a cross-grained old cock-
atoo!”

“Is she still at East Lynne?”

“Not she, indeed. There would be drawn battles
between her and Mrs. Carlyle, if she were.”

A dart, as of an ice bolt, seemed to arrest the blood
of Lady Isabel’s veins. “Mrs. Carlyle?” she faltered.
“Who is Mrs. Carlyle?”

“Mr. Carlyle’s wife. Who should she be?”

The rushing blood leaped on now, fast and fiery.
“I did not know he had married again.”

“He has been married now, getting on for fifteen
months; a twelvemonth last June. I went to the
church to see them married. Wasn’t there a cram!
She looked beautiful that day.”

Lady Isabel laid her hand upon her beating heart.
But for that delectable “loose jacket,” Afy might have
detected her bosom’s rise and fall. She steadied her
voice sufficiently to speak:

“Did he marry Barbara Hare?”

“You may take your oath of that,” said Afy. “If
folks tell true, there were love scenes between them
before he ever thought of Lady Isabel. I had that
from Wilson, and she ought to know, for she lived at
the Hares’. Another thing is said—only you must
just believe one word of West Lynne talk and disbe-
lieve ten—that Lady Isabel had not died, Mr. Carlyle
never would have married again; he had scruples.
Half a dozen were given to him by report; Louisa
Dobede for one, and Mary Pinner for another. Such
nonsense! folks might have made sure it would be
Barbara Hare. There’s a baby now.”

“Is there?” was the faint answer.

“A beautiful boy, three or four months old. Mrs.
Carlyle is not a little proud of him. She worships her
husband.”

“Is she kind to the first children?”

“For all I know. I don’t think she has much to do
with them. Archibald is in the nursery, and the other
two are mostly with the governess. Nearly the first

thing that Mr. Carlyle did after his wife's moonlight flitting, was to seek a governess, and she has been there ever since. She is going to leave now; to be married, Joyce told me."

"Are you much at East Lynne?"

Afy shook her head. "I am not going much, I can tell you, where I am looked down upon. Mrs. Carlyle does not favor me. She knew that her brother Richard would have given his head to marry me, and she resents it. No such great catch, I'm sure, that Dick Hare, even if he had gone on right," continued Afy, somewhat after the example of the fox looking at the unattainable grapes. "He had no brains to speak of; and what he had were the color of a peacock's tail—green. Ah, me! the changes that take place in this world! But for that Lady Isabel's mad folly in quitting him, and leaving the field open, Miss Barbara would never have had the chance of being Mrs. Carlyle."

Lady Isabel groaned in spirit.

"There's one person who will never hear a word breathed against her, and that's Joyce," went on Afy. "She was as fond of Lady Isabel, nearly, as Mr. Carlyle was."

"Was he so fond of her?"

"He worshiped the very ground she trod upon. Ay, up to the hour of her departure; Joyce says she knows he did; and that's how she repaid him. But it's sure to be the way in this world; let a man or woman make an idol of another, and see if they don't get served out. The night that Mr. Carlyle brought his new wife home, Joyce, who was attending on her, went into the dressing-room, leaving Mrs. Carlyle in the bed-chamber. 'Joyce,' she called out. 'My lady?' answered Joyce—proving who was filling up her thoughts. I don't know how Mrs. Carlyle liked it. Joyce said she felt as mad as could be with herself."

"I wonder," cried Lady Isabel, in a low tone, "how the tidings of her death were received at East Lynne?"

"I don't know anything about that. They held it

as a jubilee, I should say, and set all the bells in the town to ring, and feasted the men upon legs of mutton and onion sauce afterward. I should, I know. A brute animal, deaf and dumb, clings to its offspring; but she abandoned hers. Are you going in, Madame Vine?"

"I must go in now. Good-evening to you."

She had sat till she could sit no longer; her very heart-strings were wrung. And she might not rise up in defense of herself. Defense? Did she not deserve more, ten thousand times more reproach than had met her ears now? This girl did not say of her half what the world must say.

To bed at the usual time, but not to sleep. What she had heard only increased her vain, incessant longing. A stepmother at East Lynne, and one of her children gliding on to death! Oh, to be with them! to see them once again! To purchase that boon, she would willingly forfeit all the rest of her existence.

Her frame was fevered; the bed was fevered; and she rose and paced the room. This state of mind would inevitably bring on bodily illness, possibly an attack of the brain. She dreaded that; for there was no telling what she might reveal in her delirium. Her temples were throbbing, her heart was beating; and she once more threw herself upon the bed, and pressed the pillow down upon her forehead. There is no doubt that the news of Mr. Carlyle's marriage helped greatly the excitement. She did not pray to die; but she did wish that death might come to her.

What would have been the ending it is impossible to say, but a strange turn in affairs came; one of those wonderful coincidences which are sometimes, but not often, to be met with. Mrs. Crosby appeared in Madame Vine's room after breakfast, and gave her an account of Helena's projected marriage. She then apologized (the real object of her visit) for dispensing so summarily with madame's services, but she had reason to hope that she could introduce her to another situation. Would madame have any objection to take

one in England? Madame was upon the point of replying that she did not choose to enter one in England, when Mrs. Crosby stopped her, saying she would call in Mrs. Latimer, who could tell her about it better than she could.

Mrs. Latimer came in all eagerness and volubility. "Ah, my dear madame," she exclaimed, "you would be fortunate, indeed, if you were to get into this family. They are the nicest people, he so liked and respected; she so pretty and engaging. A most desirable situation. You will be treated as a lady, and have all things comfortable. There is only one pupil, a girl; one of the little boys, I believe, goes in for an hour or two, but that is not much; and the salary is seventy guineas. The Carlyles are friends of mine; they live at a beautiful place, East Lynne."

The Carlyles! East Lynne! Go governess there! Lady Isabel's breath was taken away.

"They are parting with their governess," continued Mrs. Latimer, "and, when I was there, a day or two before I started on my tour to Germany, Mrs. Carlyle said to me: 'I suppose you could not pick us up a desirable governess for Lucy; one who is mistress of French and German.' She spoke in a half-joking tone, but I feel sure that, were I to write word that I had found one, it would give her pleasure. Now, Mrs. Crosby tells me your French is quite that of a native, Madame Vine, that you read and speak German well, and that your musical abilities are excellent. I think you would be just the one to suit; and I have no doubt I could get you the situation. What do you say?"

What could she say? Her brain was in a whirl.

The outcome was that Mrs. Latimer wrote to Mrs. Carlyle and she was engaged.

CHAPTER XL

CHANGE AND CHANGE

It was a foggy afternoon, gray with the coming twilight, when they arrived at West Lynne. Mrs. Latimer, believing the governess was a novice in England, kindly put her into a fly, and told the driver his destination. "*Au revoir*, madame," she said, "and good luck to you."

Once more she was whirling along the familiar road. She saw Justice Hare's house, she saw other marks which she knew well. And once more she saw East Lynne, the dear old house, for the fly had turned into the avenue. Lights were moving in the windows, it looked gay and cheerful, a contrast to her. Her heart was sick with expectation, her throat was beating; and as the man thundered up with all the force of his one horse, and halted at the steps, her sight momentarily left her. Would Mr. Carlyle come to the fly to hand her out? She wished she had never undertaken the project, now, in the depth of her fear and agitation.

The hall doors of East Lynne were thrown open, and a flood of golden light streamed out upon the steps. Two men-servants stood there. One remained in the hall, the other advanced to the chaise. He assisted Lady Isabel to alight, and then busied himself with the luggage. As she ascended to the hall she recognized old Peter; strange, indeed, did it seem, not to say, "How are you, Peter?" but to meet him as a stranger. For a moment she was at a loss for words; what should she say, or ask, coming to her own home? Her manner was embarrassed, her voice low.

'Is Mrs. Carlyle within?'

"Yes, ma'am."

At that moment Joyce came forward to receive her.

"It is Madame Vine, I believe?" she respectfully said.
"Please to step this way, madame."

But Lady Isabel lingered in the hall, ostensibly to see that her boxes came in right—Stephen was bringing them up then—in reality, to gather a short respite, for Joyce might be about to usher her into the presence of Mr. and Mrs. Carlyle.

Joyce, however, did nothing of the sort. She merely conducted her to the gray parlor; a fire was burning in the grate, looking cheerful on the autumn night.

"This is your sitting-room, madame. What will you please to take? I will order it while I show you your bed-chamber."

"A cup of tea," answered Lady Isabel.

"Tea and some cold meat with it?" suggested Joyce. But Lady Isabel interrupted her.

"Nothing but tea, and a little cold toast."

Joyce rang the bell, ordered the refreshment to be made ready, and then preceded Lady Isabel upstairs. On she followed, her heart palpitating; past the rooms that used to be hers, along the corridor, toward the second staircase. The doors of her old bed and dressing-rooms stood open, and she glanced in with a yearning look. No, never more, never more could they be hers; she had put them from her by her own free act and deed. Not less comfortable did they look now, than in former days; but they had passed into another's occupancy. The fire threw its blaze on the furniture; there were the little ornaments on the large dressing table, as they used to be in her time, and the cut glass of the crystal essence bottles was glittering in the firelight. On the sofa lay a shawl and a book, and on the bed a silk dress, as if thrown there after being taken off. No, these rooms were not for her now; and she followed Joyce up the other staircase. The bedroom to which she was shown was commodious and well furnished. It was the one Miss Carlyle had occupied when she, Isabel, had been taken, a bride, to East Lynne, though that lady had subsequently quitted

it for one on the lower floor. Joyce put down the wax light she carried and looked round.

"Would you like a fire lighted here, madame, for tonight? Perhaps it will feel welcome, after traveling."

"Oh, no, thank you," was the answer.

Stephen, with somebody to help him, was bringing up the luggage. Joyce directed him where to place it, telling him to uncord the boxes. That done, the man left the room, and Joyce turned to Lady Isabel, who had stood like a statue, never so much as attempting to remove her bonnet.

"Can I do anything for you, madame?" she asked.

Lady Isabel declined. In these, her first moments of arrival, she was dreading detection—how was it possible that she should not?—and feared Joyce's keen eyes more, perhaps, than she feared any others. She was only wishing that the girl would go down.

"Should you want any one, please to ring, and Hannah will come up," said Joyce, preparing to retire. "She is the maid who waits upon the gray parlor, and will do anything you like up here."

Joyce had quitted the room, and Lady Isabel had got her bonnet off, when the door opened again. She hastily thrust it on—somewhat after the fashion of Richard Hare's rushing on his hat and his false whiskers. It was Joyce.

"Do you think you shall find your way down alone, madame?"

"Yes, I can do that," she answered. Find her way!—in that house!

Lady Isabel slowly took her things off. Where was the use of lingering?—she must meet their eye sooner or later. Though in truth, there was little, if any, fear of her detection, so effectually was she disguised, by nature's altering hand, or by art's. It was with the utmost difficulty she kept tranquil; had the tears once burst forth, they would have gone on to hysterics, without the possibility of control. The coming home again to East Lynne! Oh, it was indeed a time of agitation; terrible, painful agitation; and none can

wonder at it. Shall I tell you what she did? Yes, I will. She knelt down by the bed, and prayed for courage to go through the task she had undertaken, prayed for self-control; even she, the sinful, who had quitted that house under circumstances so notorious. But I am not sure that this mode of return to it was an expedition precisely calculated to call down a blessing.

There was no excuse for lingering longer, and she descended, the wax light in her hand. Everything was ready in the gray parlor; the tea-tray on the table, the small urn hissing away, the tea-caddy in proximity to it. A silver rack of dry toast, butter, and a hot muffin covered with a small silver cover. The things were to her sight as old faces; the rack, the small cover, the butter-dish, the tea-service; she remembered them all. Not the urn, a copper one; she had no recollection of that. It had possibly been bought for the use of the governess, when a governess came into use at East Lynne. If she had reflected on the matter, she might have known, by the signs observable in the short period she had been in the house, that governesses at East Lynne were regarded as gentlewomen; treated well and liberally. Yes; for East Lynne owned Mr. Carlyle for its master.

She made the tea, and sat down with what appetite she might. Her brain, her thoughts, all in a chaos together. She wondered whether Mr. and Mrs. Carlyle were at dinner; she wondered in what part of the house were the children; she heard bells ring now and then; she heard servants cross and recross the hall. Her meal over, she rang her own.

A neat-looking, good-tempered maid answered it—Hannah, who—as Joyce had informed her—waited upon the gray parlor, and was at her, the governess', especial command. She took away the things, and then Lady Isabel sat on alone—for how long she scarcely knew—when a sound caused her heart to beat as if it would burst its bounds, and she started from her chair like one who has received an electric shock.

It was nothing to be startled at—for ordinary people;

it was but the sound of children's voices. Her children! were they being brought in to her? She pressed her hand upon her heaving bosom.

No; they were but traversing the hall, and the voices faded away up the wide staircase. Perhaps they had been in to dessert, as in the old times, and were now going up to bed. She looked at her new watch; half-past seven.

Her new watch. The old one had been changed away for it. All her trinkets had been likewise parted with, sold or exchanged away, lest they should be recognized at East Lynne. Nothing whatever had she kept, except her mother's miniature and the small golden cross set with its seven emeralds. Have you forgotten that cross? Francis Levison accidentally broke it for her the first time they ever met. If she had looked upon the breaking of that cross, which her mother had enjoined her to set such store by, as an evil omen at the time of the accident, how awfully had the subsequent events seemed to bear her fancy out! These two articles, the miniature and the cross, she could not bring her mind to part with; she had sealed them up, and placed them in the remotest spot of her dressing-case, away from all chance of public view. Peter entered.

"My mistress says, ma'am, she would be glad to see you, if you are not too tired. Will you please to walk into the drawing-room?"

A mist swam before her eyes. Was she about to enter the presence of Mr. Carlyle? had the moment really come? She moved to the door, which Peter held open. She turned her head from the man, for she could feel how ashy white were her face and lips. "Is Mrs. Carlyle alone?" she asked, in a subdued voice. The most indirect way she could put the question as to whether Mr. Carlyle was there.

"Quite alone, ma'am. My master is dining out to-day. Madame Vine, I think?" he added, waiting to announce her, as, the hall traversed, he laid his hand on the drawing-room door.

"Madame Vine," she said, correcting him. For Peter had spoken the name, Vine, broadly, according to our English habitude; she set him right, and pronounced it *a la mode Francaise*.

"Madame Veen, ma'am," quoth Peter to his mistress as he ushered in Lady Isabel.

The old familiar drawing-room; its large, handsome proportions, its well-arranged furniture, its bright chandelier! It all came back to her with a heart-sickness. No longer her drawing-room, that she should take pride in it; she had flung it away from her when she flung away the rest.

Seated under the blaze of the chandelier was Barbara. Not a day older did she look than when Lady Isabel had first seen her at the churchyard gates, when she had inquired of her husband who was that pretty girl. "Barbara Hare," he had answered. Ay! She was Barbara Hare then, but now she was Barbara Carlyle; and she—she, who had been Isabel Carlyle—was Isabel Vane again! Oh, woe! woe!

Inexpressibly more beautiful looked Barbara than Lady Isabel had ever seen her—or else she fancied it. Her evening dress was of pale sky blue—no other color suited Barbara so well, and there was no other she was so fond of—and on her fair neck was a gold chain, and on her arms were gold bracelets. Her pretty features were attractive as ever, her cheeks were flushed; her blue eyes sparkled, and her light hair was rich and abundant. A contrast, her hair, to that of the worn woman opposite to her.

Barbara came forward, her hand stretched out with a kindly greeting. "I hope you are not very much tired after your journey?" Lady Isabel murmured something, she did not know what, and pushed the chair set for her as much as possible in the shade.

"You are not ill, are you?" asked Barbara, noting the intensely pale face—as much as could be seen of it for the cap and the spectacles.

"Not ill," was the low answer, "only a little fatigued."

"Would you prefer that I should speak with you in the morning? You would like, possibly, to retire to bed at once." But this Lady Isabel declined. Better get the first interview over by candlelight than by daylight.

"You looked so very pale. I feared you might be ill."

"I am generally pale; sometimes remarkably so; but my health is good."

"Mrs. Latimer wrote us word that you would be quite sure to suit us," freely said Barbara. "I hope you will; and I hope you may find your residence here agreeable. Have you lived much in England?"

"In the early portion of my life."

"And you have lost your husband and children? Stay. I beg your pardon if I am making a mistake; I think Mrs. Latimer did mention children."

"I have lost them," was the faint, quiet response.

"Oh, but it must be terrible grief when children die!" exclaimed Barbara, clasping her hands in emotion. "I would not lose my baby for the world. I could not part with him."

"Terrible grief, and hard to bear," outwardly assented Lady Isabel. But in her heart she was thinking that death was not the worst kind of parting. There was another, far more dreadful. Mrs. Carlyle began to speak of the children about to be placed under her charge. "You are no doubt aware that they are not mine! Mrs. Latimer would tell you. They are the children of Mr. Carlyle's first wife."

"And Mr. Carlyle's," interrupted Lady Isabel. What in the world made her say that? She wondered, herself, the moment the words were out of her mouth. A scarlet streak flushed her cheeks, and she remembered that there must be no speaking upon impulse at East Lynne.

"Mr. Carlyle's, of course," said Barbara, believing Madame Vine had but asked the question. "Their position—the girl's in particular—is a sad one, for their mother left them. Oh, it was a shocking business."

"She is dead, I hear," said Lady Isabel, hoping to turn the immediate point of conversation. Mrs. Carlyle, however, continued, as though she had not heard her.

"Mr. Carlyle married Lady Isabel Vane, the late Lord Mount Severn's daughter. She was attractive and beautiful, but I do not fancy she cared very much for her husband. However that may have been, she ran away from him."

"It was very sad," observed Lady Isabel, feeling that she was expected to say something. Besides she had her role to play.

"Sad? It was wicked; it was infamous," returned Mrs. Carlyle, giving way to some excitement. "Of all men living, of all husbands, Mr. Carlyle least deserved such a requital. You will say so when you come to know him. And the affair altogether was a mystery, for it never was observed or suspected by any one that Lady Isabel entertained a liking for another. She eloped with Francis Levison—Sir Francis, he is now. He had been staying at East Lynne, but no one had detected any undue intimacy between them, not even Mr. Carlyle. To him, as to others, her conduct must always remain a mystery."

Madame Vine appeared to be occupied with her spectacles, setting them straight. Barbara continued. "Of course the disgrace is reflected on the children, and always will be; the shame of having a divorced mother——"

"Is she not dead?" interrupted Lady Isabel.

"She is dead. Oh, yes! But they will not be the less pointed at, the girl especially, as I say. They allude to their mother now and then, in conversation, Wilson tells me; but I would recommend you, Madame Vine, not to encourage them in that. They had better forget her."

"Mr. Carlyle would naturally wish them to do so."

"Most certainly. There is little doubt that Mr. Carlyle would blot out all recollection of her, were it possible. But, unfortunately, she was the children's

mother, and for that there is no help. I trust you will be able to instill principles into the little girl which will keep her from a like fate."

"I will try," answered Lady Isabel, with more fervor than she had yet spoken. "Are the children much with you, may I inquire?"

"No; I never was fond of being troubled with children. When my own grow up into childhood I shall deem the nursery and the school-room the best places for them. I hold an opinion, Madame Vine, that too many mothers pursue a mistaken system in the management of their family. There are some, we know, who, lost in the pleasures of the world, in frivolity, wholly neglect them. Of these I do not speak; nothing can be more thoughtless, more reprehensible. But there are others who err on the opposite side. They are never happy but when with their children; they must be in the nursery or the children in the drawing-room. They wash them, dress them, feed them—rendering themselves slaves and the nurse's office a sinecure. The children are noisy, troublesome, cross—all children will be so—and the mother's temper gets soured, and she gives slaps where, when they were babies, she gave kisses. She has no leisure, no spirits for any higher training; and as they grow old she loses her authority. One who is wearied, tired out with her children—cross when they play or make a little extra noise which jars on her unstrung nerves—who says, 'You sha'n't do this; you shall be still,' and that perpetually, is sure to be rebelled against at last. It cannot be otherwise. Have you never observed this?"

"I have."

"The discipline of that house soon becomes broken; the children run wild; the husband is sick of it, and seeks peace and solace elsewhere. I could mention instances in this neighborhood," continued Mrs. Carlyle, "where things are managed precisely as I have described, even in our own class of life. I consider it a most mistaken and pernicious system."

"It undoubtedly is," answered Lady Isabel, feeling a sort of thankfulness, poor thing, that the system had not been hers when she had a home and children.

"Now what I trust I shall never give up to another will be the training of my children," pursued Barbara. "Let the offices properly pertaining to a nurse be performed by the nurse—of course, taking care that she is thoroughly to be depended on. Let her have the trouble of the children, their noise, their romping—in short, let the nursery be her place and the children's place. But I hope I shall never fail to gather my children round me daily, at stated and convenient periods, for higher purposes: to instill into them Christian and moral duties; to strive to teach them how best to fulfill the obligations of life. This is a mother's task—as I understand the question; let her do this work well, and the nurse can attend to the rest. A child should never hear aught from its mother's lips but persuasive gentleness; and this becomes impossible if she is very much with her children." Lady Isabel silently assented. Mrs. Carlyle's views were correct.

"When I first came to East Lynne I found Miss Manning, the governess, was doing everything necessary for Mr. Carlyle's children in the way of the training that I speak of," resumed Barbara. "She had them with her for a short period every morning, even the little one; I saw it was all right, therefore did not interfere. Since she left—it is nearly a month now—I have taken them myself. We were sorry to part with Miss Manning; she suited very well. But she has long been engaged to an officer in the army, and now they are to be married. You will have the entire charge of the little girl; she will be your companion out of school hours; did you understand that?"

"I am quite ready and willing to undertake it," said Lady Isabel, her heart fluttering. "Are the children well? Do they enjoy good health?"

"Quite so. They had the measles in the spring, and the illness left a cough upon William, the eldest boy. Mr. Wainwright says he will outgrow it."

"He has it still, then?"

"At night and morning. They went last week to spend the day with Miss Carlyle, and were a little late in returning home. It was foggy, and the boy coughed dreadfully after he came in. Mr. Carlyle was so concerned, that he left the dinner-table and went up to the nursery; he gave Joyce strict orders that the child should never again be out in the evening air, so long as the cough was upon him. We had never heard him cough like that."

"Do you fear consumption?" asked Lady Isabel, in a low tone.

"I do not fear that, or any other incurable disease for them," answered Barbara. "I think, with Mr. Wainwright, that time will remove the cough. The children came of a healthy stock on their father's side, and I have no reason to think they do not on their mother's. She died young, you will say. Ay, but she did not die of disease; her death was the result of accident. How many children had you?" pursued Mrs. Carlyle abruptly.

At least the question fell with abruptness upon the ear of Lady Isabel, for she was not prepared for it. What should she answer? In her perplexity she stammered forth the actual truth.

"Three. And—and a baby. That died. Died an infant, I mean."

"To lose four dear children!" uttered Barbara, with sympathizing pity. "What did they die of?"

A hesitating pause. "Some of one thing, some of another," was the answer, given in an almost inaudible tone.

"Did they die before your husband? Otherwise the grief must have been worse to bear."

"The—baby—died after him," stammered Lady Isabel, as she wiped the drops from her pale forehead. Barbara detected her emotion, and felt sorry to have made the inquiries; she judged it was caused by the recollection of her children.

"Mrs. Latimer wrote us word you were of gentle

birth and breeding," she resumed, presently. "I am sure you will excuse my asking these particular questions," Barbara added in a tone of apology, "but this is our first interview—our preliminary interview, it may in a measure be called, for we could not say much by letter."

"I was born and reared a gentlewoman," answered Lady Isabel.

"Yes, I am sure of it; there is no mistaking the tone of a gentlewoman," said Barbara. "How sad it is when pecuniary reverses fall upon us! I dare say you never thought to go out as governess."

A half smile positively crossed her lips. She thought to go out as a governess!—the Earl of Mount Severn's only child? "Oh, no! never," she said, in reply.

"Your husband, I fear, did not leave you well off. Mrs. Latimer said something to that effect."

"When I lost him I lost all," was the answer. And Mrs. Carlyle was struck with the wailing pain betrayed in the tone. At that moment a maid entered.

"Nurse says the baby is undressed, and quite ready for you, ma'am," she said, addressing her mistress.

Mrs. Carlyle rose, but hesitated as she was moving away.

"I will have the baby here to-night," she said to the girl. "Tell the nurse to put a shawl round him and bring him down. It is the hour for my baby's supper," she smiled, turning to Lady Isabel. "I may as well have him here for once, as Mr. Carlyle is out. Sometimes I go out myself, and then he has to be fed."

"You do not stay indoors for the baby, then?"

"Certainly not. If I and Mr. Carlyle have to be out in the evening, baby gives way. I should never give up my husband for my baby—never, dearly as I love him."

The nurse came in—Wilson. She unfolded a shawl, and placed the baby on Mrs. Carlyle's lap—a proud, fine, fair young baby, who reared his head, and opened wide his great blue eyes, and beat his arms at the lights of the chandelier, as no baby of nearly six

months old ever did yet. So thought Barbara. He was in his clean white night-gown, and night-cap, with their pretty crimped frills and border—together a pleasant sight to look upon. She had once sat in that very chair, with a baby as fair upon her knee; but all that was past and gone. She leaned her hot head upon her hand, and a rebellious sigh of envy went forth from her aching heart.

Wilson, the curious, was devouring her with her eyes. Wilson was thinking she never saw such a mortal fright as the new governess. Them blue spectacles capped everything, she decided. And what on earth made her tie up her throat in that fashion for? As well wear a man's collar and stock at once! If her teaching was no better than her looks, Miss Lucy might as well go to the parish charity school!

"Shall I wait, ma'am?" demurely asked Wilson, her investigations being concluded.

"No," said Mrs. Carlyle. "I will ring."

Baby was exceedingly busy taking his supper. And, of course, according to all baby precedent, he ought to have gone off into a sound sleep over it. But the supper concluded, and the gentleman seemed to have no more sleep in his eyes than he had before he began. He sat up, crowed at the lights, stretched out his hands for them, and set his mother at defiance, absolutely refusing to be hushed up.

"Do you wish to keep awake all night, you rebel?" cried Barbara, fondly looking on him. A loud crow by way of answer. Perhaps it was intended to intimate that he did. She clasped him to her with a sudden gesture of rapture, a sound of love, and devoured his pretty face with kisses. Then she took him in her arms, putting him to sit upright, and approached Madame Vine.

"Did you ever see a more lovely child?"

"A fine baby, indeed," she constrained herself to answer; and she could have fancied it her own little Archibald over again when he was a baby. "But he is not much like you."

"He is the very image of my darling husband. When you see Mr. Carlyle—"

Barbara stopped, and bent her ear, as if listening.

"Mr. Carlyle is probably a handsome man," said poor Lady Isabel, believing that the pause was made to give her an opportunity of putting in an observation.

"He is handsome; but that is the least good about him. He is the most noble man! revered, respected by every one; I may say, loved. The only one who could not appreciate him was his wife. However she could leave him—how she could even look at another, after calling Mr. Carlyle husband, will always be a marvel to those who know him."

A bitter groan—and it nearly escaped her lips.

"That certainly is the pony-carriage," cried Barbara, bending her ear again. "If so, how very early Mr. Carlyle is home! Yes, I am sure it is the sound of the wheels."

How Lady Isabel sat, she scarcely knew; how she concealed her trepidation, she never would know. A pause; an entrance to the hall; Barbara, baby in arms, advanced to the drawing-room door, and a tall form entered. Once more Lady Isabel was in the presence of her sometime husband.

He did not perceive that any one was present, and he bent his head and fondly kissed his wife. Isabel's jealous eyes were turned upon them. She saw Barbara's passionate, lingering kiss in return, she heard her fervent, whispered greeting, "My darling!" and she watched him turn to press the same fond kisses on the rosy, open lips of his child. Isabel flung her hands over her face. Had she bargained for this? It was part of the cross she had undertaken to carry, and she must bear it.

Mr. Carlyle came forward and saw her. He looked somewhat surprised. "Madame Vine," said Barbara; and he held out his hand and welcomed her in the same cordial, pleasant manner that his wife had done. She put her shaking hand in his. There was no help for it. Little thought Mr. Carlyle that that hand had

been tenderly clasped in his a thousand times; that it was the one pledged to him at the altar at Castle Marling.

She sat down on the chair again, unable to stand, feeling as though every drop of blood within her had left her body. It had certainly left her face. Mr. Carlyle made a few civil inquiries as to her journey, but she did not dare to raise her eyes to him, as she breathed forth the answers.

"You are at home soon, Archibald," Barbara exclaimed. "I did not expect you so early. I did not think you could get away. I know what the justices' annual dinner at the Buck's Head is; they always make it late."

"As they will to-night," laughed Mr. Carlyle. "I watched my opportunity, and got away when the pipes were brought in; I had determined to do so, if possible. Dill—who means to stick it out with the best of them—has his tale ready when they miss me. 'Suddenly called away; important business; could not be helped.'"

Barbara laughed also. "Was papa there?"

"Of course. He took the table's head. What would the dinner be without the chairman of the bench, Barbara?"

"Nothing at all, in papa's opinion," merrily said Barbara. "Did you ask him how mamma was?"

"I asked him," said Mr. Carlyle. And there he stopped.

"Well," cried Barbara. "What did he say?"

"'Full of nervous fidgets,' was the answer he made me," returned Mr. Carlyle, with an arch look at his wife. "It was all I could get out of him."

"That is just like papa. Archibald, do you know what I have been thinking to-day?"

"A great many foolish things, I dare say," he answered; but his tone was a fond one; all too palpably so for one ear.

"No, but listen. You know papa is going to London with Squire Pinner, to see those new agricultural

implements—or whatever it is. They are sure to be away three days. Don't you think so?"

"And three to the back of it," said Mr. Carlyle, with a wicked smile upon his lips. "When old gentlemen get plunged into the attractions of London, there's no answering for them getting out of them in a hurry, country justices especially. Well, Barbara?"

"I was thinking if we could but persuade mamma to come to us for the time he is away! It would be a delightful little change for her, a break in her monotonous life."

"I wish you could," warmly spoke Mr Carlyle. "Her life, since you left, is a monotonous one; though, in her gentle patience, she will not say so. It is a happy thought, Barbara, and I only hope it may be carried out. Mrs. Carlyle's mother is an invalid, and lonely, for she has no child at home with her now," he added, in a spirit of politeness, addressing himself to Madame Vine.

She simply bowed her head; she did not trust herself to speak. Mr. Carlyle scanned her face attentively, as she sat, her head bent downward. She did not appear inclined to be sociable, and he turned to the baby, who was wider awake than ever.

"Young sir, I should like to know what brings you up, and here, at this hour?"

"You may well ask," said Barbara. "I had him brought down, as you were not here, thinking he would be asleep directly. And only look at him! no more sleep in his eyes than in mine!"

She would have hushed him to her as she spoke, but the young gentleman stoutly repudiated it. He set up a half cry, and struggled his arms and head free again, crowing the next moment most impudently. Mr. Carlyle took him.

"It is of no use, Barbara; he is beyond your coaxing this evening," and he tossed the child in his strong arms, held him up to the chandelier, made him bob at the baby in the pier-glass, until the baby was in an ecstasy of delight. Finally he smothered his face

with kisses, as Barbara had done. Barbara rang the bell.

Oh! can you imagine what it was for Lady Isabel? So had he tossed, so had he kissed her children, she standing by, the fond, proud, happy mother, as Barbara was standing now. Mr. Carlyle came up to her.

"Are you fond of these little troubles, Madame Vine? This one is a fine fellow, they say."

"Very fine. What is his name?" she replied by way of saying something.

"Arthur."

"Arthur Archibald," put in Barbara to Madame Vine. "I was vexed that his name could not be entirely Archibald, but that was already monopolized. Is it you, Wilson? I don't know what you'll do with him, but he looks as if he would not be asleep by twelve o'clock."

Wilson satisfied her curiosity by taking another prolonged stare at Madame Vine, received the baby from Mrs. Carlyle, and departed with him.

Madame Vine rose. Would they excuse her? she asked in a low tone; she was tired, and would be glad to retire to rest.

Of course. And would she ring for anything she might wish in the way of refreshments? Barbara shook hands with her, in her friendly way; and Mr. Carlyle crossed the room to open the door for her, and bowed her out with a courtly smile.

She went up to her chamber at once. To rest? Well, what think you? She strove to say to her lacerated and remorseful heart that the cross—far heavier though it was proving than anything she had imagined or pictured—was only what she had brought upon herself, and must bear. Very true; but none of us would like such a cross to be upon our shoulders.

"Is she not droll-looking?" cried Barbara, when she was alone with Mr. Carlyle. "I can't think why she wears those blue spectacles; it cannot be for her sight, and they are very disfiguring."

She puts me in mind of—of——” began Mr. Carlyle, in a dreamy tone.

“Of whom?”

“Her face, I mean,” he said, still dreaming.

“So little can be seen of it,” returned Mrs. Carlyle.

“Of whom does she put you in mind?”

“I don’t know. Nobody in particular,” returned he, rousing himself. “Let us have tea in, Barbara.”

CHAPTER XLI

THE YEARNING OF A BREAKING HEART

At her bed-room door, the next morning, stood Lady Isabel, listening whether the coast was clear, ere she descended to the gray parlor, for she had a shrinking dread of encountering Mr. Carlyle. When he was glancing narrowly at her face the previous evening, she had felt the gaze, and it impressed upon her a dread of his recognition. Not only that; he was the husband of another; therefore it was not expedient that she should see too much of him, for he was far dearer to her heart than he had ever been.

Almost at the same moment there burst out of a remote room—the nursery—an upright, fair, noble boy, of some five years old, who began careening along the corridor, astride upon a hearth-broom. She did not need to be told that it was her boy, Archibald; his likeness to Mr. Carlyle would have proclaimed it, even if her heart had not. In an impulse of unrestrainable tenderness, she seized the child as he was galloping past her, and carried him into her room, broom and all.

“You must let me make acquaintance with you,” said she to him, by way of excuse. “I love little boys.”

Love! Down she sat upon a low chair, the child held upon her lap, kissing him passionately, and the tears raining from her eyes. She could not have helped the tears, had it been to save her life; she could

as little have helped the kisses. Lifting her eyes, there stood Wilson, who had entered without ceremony. A sick feeling came over Lady Isabel; she felt as if she had betrayed herself. All that could be done now to make the best of it—to offer some lame excuse. What possessed her thus to forget herself?

“He put me in remembrance of my own children,” she said to Wilson, gulping down her emotion, and hiding her tears in the best manner she could; while the astonished Archibald, now released, stood with his finger in his mouth and stared at her spectacles, his great blue eyes opened to their utmost width. “When we have lost children of our own, we are apt to love fondly all we come near.”

Wilson, who stared only in a less degree than Archie, for she deemed the new governess had gone suddenly mad, gave some voluble assent, and turned her attention upon Archie. “You naughty young monkey, how dared you rush out in that way with Sarah’s hearth-broom? I’ll tell you what it is, sir; you are getting too owdacious and rumbustical for the nursery; I shall speak to your mamma about it.” She seized hold of the child and shook him. Lady Isabel started forward, her hands up, her voice one of painful entreaty: “Oh, don’t, don’t beat him! I cannot see him beaten.”

“Beaten!” echoed Wilson; “if he got a good beating it would be all the better for him; but it’s what he never does get. A little shake, or a tap, is all I must give; and it’s not half enough. You wouldn’t believe the sturdy impudence of that boy, madame; he runs riot, he does. The other two never gave a quarter of the trouble. Come along, you figure! I’ll have a bolt put up at the top of the nursery door. And if I did, he’d be for climbing up the doorpost to get at it.”

The last sentence Wilson delivered to the governess, as she jerked Archie out of the room, along the passage and into the nursery. Lady Isabel sat down with a wrung heart, a chafed spirit. Her own child! and she might not say to the servant, You shall not beat

him! She descended to the gray parlor. The two elder children, and breakfast, were waiting; Joyce quitted the room when she entered it.

A graceful girl of eight years old, a fragile boy a year younger, both bearing her own once lovely features, her once bright and delicate complexion, her large, soft, brown eyes. How utterly her heart yearned to them! but there must be no scene like there had just been above. Nevertheless, she stooped and kissed them both; one kiss each of impassioned fervor. Lucy was naturally silent, William somewhat talkative.

"You are our new governess," said he.

"Yes. We must be good friends."

"Why not?" said the boy. "We were good friends with Miss Manning. I am to go into Latin soon, as soon as my cough's gone. Do you know Latin?"

"No. Not to teach it," she said, studiously avoiding all endearing epithets.

"Papa said you would be almost sure not to know Latin, for that ladies rarely did. He said he should send up Mr. Kane to teach me."

"Mr. Kane!" repeated Lady Isabel, the name striking upon her memory. "Mr. Kane, the music-master?"

"How did you know he was a music-master?" cried shrewd William. And Lady Isabel felt the red blood flush to her face at the unlucky admission she had made. It flushed deeper at her own falsehood as she muttered some evasive words about hearing of him from Mrs. Latimer.

"Yes, he is a music-master; but he does not get much money by it, as he teaches the classics as well. He has come to teach us music since Miss Manning left; mamma said that we ought not to lose our lessons."

Mamma! How the word, applied to Barbara, grated on her ear.

"Whom does he teach?" she asked.

"Us two," replied William, pointing to his sister and himself.

"Do you always take bread and milk for breakfast?" she inquired, perceiving that to be what they were eating.

"We get tired of it sometimes, and then we have milk and water and bread and butter, or honey; and then we take to bread and milk again. It's Aunt Cornelia who thinks we should eat bread and milk for breakfast; she says papa never had anything else when he was a boy."

Lucy looked up. "Papa would give me an egg when I breakfasted with him," she cried, "and Aunt Cornelia said it was not good for me, but papa gave it to me all the same. I always had breakfast with him then."

"And why do you not now?" asked Lady Isabel.

"I don't know. I have not since mamma came."

The word "stepmother" rose up rebelliously in the heart of Lady Isabel. Was Mrs. Carlyle putting away the children from their father?

Breakfast over, she gathered them to her, asking them various questions about their studies, their hours of recreation, the daily routine of their lives.

"This is not the school-room, you know," cried William, when she made some inquiries as to their books.

"No?"

"The school-room is upstairs. This is for our meals, and for you in the evening."

The voice of Mr. Carlyle was heard at this juncture in the hall, and Lucy was springing toward the sound. Lady Isabel, fearful lest he might enter if the child showed herself, stopped her with a hurried hand.

"Stay her, Isabel."

"Her name's Lucy," said William, looking quickly up. "Why do you call her Isabel?"

"I thought—I thought I heard her called Isabel," stammered the unfortunate lady, feeling quite confused with the errors she was committing. "My name is Isabel Lucy," said the child, "but I don't know who could have told you, for I am never called Isabel. I

have not been, since—since—shall I tell you?—since mamma went away,” she concluded, dropping her voice. “Mamma that was, you know.”

“Did she go?” cried Lady Isabel, full of emotion and possessing a very faint idea of what she was saying.

“She was kidnapped,” whispered Lucy.

“Kidnapped!” was the surprised answer.

“Yes, or she would not have gone. There was a wicked man on a visit to papa, and he stole her. Wilson said she knew he was a kidnapper before he took mamma. Papa said I was never to be called Isabel again, but Lucy. Isabel was mamma’s name.”

“How do you know your papa said it?” dreamily returned Lady Isabel.

“I heard him. He said it to Joyce, and Joyce told the servants. I put only Lucy to my copies. I did put Isabel Lucy, but papa saw it one day, and he drew his pencil through Isabel, and told me to show it to Miss Manning. After that, Miss Manning let me put nothing but Lucy. I asked her why, and she told me papa preferred the name, and that I was not to ask questions.”

She could not well stop the child, but every word was rending her heart. “Lady Isabel was our very own mamma,” pursued Lucy. “This mamma is not.”

“Do you love this one as you did the other?” breathed Lady Isabel. “Oh, I loved mamma! I loved mamma!” uttered Lucy, clasping her hands. “But it’s all over. Wilson said we must not love her any longer, and Aunt Cornelia said it. Wilson said if she had loved us she would not have gone away from us.”

“Wilson said so?” resentfully spoke Lady Isabel.

“She said she need not have let that man kidnap her. I am afraid he beat her, for she died. I lie in my bed at night and wonder whether he did beat her, and what made her die. It was after she died that our new mamma came home. Papa said she was come

to be our mamma in place of Lady Isabel, and we were to love her dearly."

"Do you love her?" almost passionately asked Lady Isabel. Lucy shook her head. "Not as I loved mamma."

CHAPTER XLII

THE GREATEST OF THESE IS LOVE

They were at tea in the gray parlor, Lady Isabel and the two children, when William was seized with a fit of coughing. It was long and violent. Lady Isabel left her seat; she had drawn him to her, and was hanging over him with unguarded tenderness, when, happening to lift her eyes, they fell upon Mr. Carlyle. He had been descending the stairs, on his way from his dressing-room, heard the cough, and came in. Had Lady Isabel been killing the boy she could not have dropped him more suddenly.

"You possess a natural love for children, I perceive," he said, looking at her with his sweet smile.

She did not know what she answered; some confused, murmured words. If Mr. Carlyle made sense of them, he was clever. Into the darkest corner of the room retreated she.

"What is the matter?" interrupted Mrs. Carlyle, looking in. She also had been descending, and was in her dinner dress. Mr. Carlyle had the boy on his own knee then.

"William's cough is troublesome. I don't like it, Barbara. I shall have Wainwright up again."

"It's nothing," said Barbara. "He was at his tea; perhaps a crumb went the wrong way. Dinner is waiting, Archibald."

Mr. Carlyle put the boy down, but stood for a minute looking at him. The cough over, he was pale and exhausted, all his brilliant color gone; it was too brilliant, as Afy had said. Mrs. Carlyle entwined her arm within her husband's, but turned her head to speak as they were walking away.

"You will come into the drawing-room by-and-by with Miss Lucy, Madame Vine. We wish to hear you play."

Miss Lucy! And it was spoken in the light of a command. Well? Barbara was Mrs. Carlyle, and she was—what she was. Once more she drew to her her first-born son, and laid her aching forehead upon him.

"Do you cough at night, my darling child?"

"Not much," he answered. "Joyce puts me some jam by the bed-side, and if I have a fit of coughing I eat that. It's black currant."

"He means jelly," interposed Lucy, her mouth full of bread and butter. "It is black currant jelly."

"Yes, jelly," said William. "It's all the same."

"Does any one sleep in your room?" she inquired of him.

"No. I have a room to myself."

She fell into deep thought, wondering whether they would let a little bed be put up in her room for him, wondering whether she might dare to ask it. Who could watch over him and attend to him as she would? In this one day's intercourse with William she had become aware that he was possessed of that precocious intellect which too frequently attends weakness of body. He had the sense of a boy of fourteen, instead of one of seven; his conversation betrayed it. "Knowing," "understands more than's good for a child," say old wives, as they look and listen, coupling their remark with another, "he'll never live."

"Should you like to sleep in my room?" asked Lady Isabel.

"I don't know. Why should I sleep in your room?"

"I could attend to you; could give you jelly, or anything else you might require, if you were to cough in the night. I would love you, I would be tender with you as your own mamma could have been."

"Mamma did not love us!" cried he. "Had she loved us she would not have left us."

"She did love us!" exclaimed Lucy, somewhat

fiercely. "Joyce says she did, and I remember it. It wasn't her fault that she was kidnapped."

"You be quiet, Lucy; girls know nothing about things. Mamma——"

"Child, child," interposed Lady Isabel, the scalding tears filling her eyes, "your mamma did love you—loved you dearly—loved you as she could never love anything again."

"You can't tell that, Madame Vine," persisted William, disposed to be resolute. "You were not here; you did not know mamma."

"I am sure she must have loved you," was all Madame Vine dared to answer. "I have been here but a day, and I have learned to love you. I love you already, very, very much."

She pressed her lips to his hot cheeks as she spoke, and the rebellious tears would not be restrained, but fell on it also.

"Why do you cry?" asked William.

"I once," she answered, in a low tone, "lost a dear little boy like you, and I am so glad to have you to replace him. I have had nothing to love since."

"What was his name?" cried curious William.

"William." But the word was scarcely out of her lips before she thought how foolish she was to say it.

"William Vine," cogitated the boy. "Did he speak French or English? His papa was French, was he not?"

"He spoke English. But you have not finished your tea," she added, finding the questions were becoming close.

It was Barbara's custom, when they were at home, to leave Mr. Carlyle at the dessert-table, and to go up for a few minutes to her baby before entering the drawing-room. As she was descending on this evening, she saw Lucy, who was peeping out of the gray parlor.

"May we come in now, mamma?"

"Yes. Ask Madame Vine to bring in some music."

Madame Vine, delaying as long as she dared, arrived at the drawing-room door at an inopportune moment,

for Mr. Carlyle was just coming from the dining-room. She paused when she saw him; her first impulse was to retreat; but he looked round and appeared to wait for her. Lucy had already gone in.

"Madame Vine," he began, his hand upon the door-handle, and his tone suppressed, "have you had much experience in the ailments of children?"

She was about to answer "No;" for her own children, so long as she had been with them, were remarkably healthy. But she remembered that she was supposed to have lost four by death, and must speak accordingly.

"Not a very great deal, sir. Somewhat, of course."

"Does it strike you that this is an ugly cough of William's?"

"I think that he wants care; that he should be continually watched, especially at night. I was wishing that he might be allowed to sleep in my room," she added, some strong impulse prompting her to prefer this request to Mr. Carlyle, trembling inwardly and outwardly as she did so. "His bed could be readily moved in, and I would attend to him, sir, as—as—I would attend more cautiously than any servant would be likely to do."

"By no means," warmly responded Mr. Carlyle. "We would not think of giving you the trouble. He is not ill to require night-nursing; and, if he were, our servants are to be depended on."

"I am so fond of children," she ventured to plead. "I have already taken a great liking for this one, and would wish to make his health my care by night and by day. It would be a pleasure to me."

"You are truly kind. But I am sure Mrs. Carlyle would not hear of it; it would be taxing you unreasonably."

His tone was one of decision, and he opened the door for her to pass in.

An evening to herself in the gray parlor. A terrible evening; one made up of remorse, grief, rebellion, and bitter repentance; repentance of the wretched past,

rebellion at existing things. Between nine and ten she dragged herself upstairs, purposing to retire to rest.

As she was about to enter her chamber, Sarah, Wilson's assistant in the nursery, was passing, and a sudden thought occurred to Lady Isabel. "In which room does Master Carlyle sleep?" she asked. "Is it on this floor?"

The girl pointed to a near door. "In there, ma'am."

Lady Isabel watched her downstairs and then entered the room softly. A little white bed, and William's beautiful face lying on it. His cheeks were flushed, his hands were thrown out, as if with inward fever; but he was sleeping quietly. By the bedside stood a saucer, some currant jelly in it, and a teaspoon; there was also a glass of water.

She glided down upon her knees and let her face rest on the bolster beside him, her breath in contact with his. Her eyes were wet; but that she might wake him, she would have taken the sleeper on to her bosom, and caressed him there. Death for him? She could hardly think it.

"My gracious heart alive! Seeing a light here, if I didn't think the room was on fire. It did give me a turn."

The speaker was Wilson, who had discerned the light in passing the door. Lady Isabel sprang up as though she had been shot. She feared the detection of Wilson and Joyce more than she feared that of Mrs. Carlyle.

"I am looking at Master William," she said, as calmly as she could speak. "Mr. Carlyle appears somewhat uneasy respecting his cough. He has a flushed, delicate look."

"It is nothing," returned Wilson. "It's just the look that his mother had. The first time I saw her, nothing would convince me but what she had got paint on."

"Good-night," was all the reply made by Lady Isabel, as she retreated to her own room.

“Good-night, madame,” replied Wilson, returning toward the nursery. “I’ll be blest if I know what to think of that French governess!” she mentally continued. “I hope it may turn out that she’s not deranged, that’s all ”

CHAPTER XLIII

AN M. P. FOR WEST LYNNE

“Barbara,” said Mr. Carlyle one day, “what should you say to living in London for a few months out of the twelve?”

“London? I am very happy where I am. Why should you ask me that? You are not going to live in London.”

“I am not sure of that. I think I am, for a portion of the year. I have had an offer made me this afternoon, Barbara.”

She looked at him, wondering what he meant; wondering whether he was serious. An offer to him? What sort of an offer? Of what nature could it be?

He smiled at her perplexity. “Should you like to see M. P. attached to my name? West Lynne wants me to become its member.”

A pause to take in the news, a sudden rush of color, and then she gleefully clasped her hands round his arm, her eyes sparkling with pleasure.

“Oh, Archibald, how glad I am! I knew you were appreciated; and you will be appreciated more and more. This is right; it was not well for you to remain for life a private individual, a country lawyer.”

“I am perfectly contented with my lot, Barbara,” he said, seriously. “I am too busy to be otherwise.”

“I know that were you but a laboring man, toiling daily for the bread you eat, you would be contented, feeling that you were fulfilling your appointed duty to the utmost; but, Archibald, could you not be still a busy man at West Lynne, although you should become its representative?”

"If I could not, I would not accept the honor, Barbara. For some few months of the year I must of necessity be in town, but Dill is an efficient substitute; and I can run down for a week or so between times. Part of Saturday, Sunday, and part of Monday I can always pass here, if I please. Of course these changes have their drawbacks, as well as their advantages."

"Where would be the drawbacks in this?" she interrupted.

"Well," smiled Mr. Carlyle, "in the first place, I suppose you could not always be with me."

Her hands fell; her color faded. "Oh, Archibald!"

"If I do become their member I must go up to town as soon as elected; and I don't think it will do for my little wife to be quitting her home to travel about just now."

Barbara's face wore a very blank look. She could not dissent from Mr. Carlyle's reasoning.

"And you must remain in London to the end of the session, while I am here! Separated! Archibald," she passionately added, while the tears gushed into her eyes, "I could not live without you."

"Then what is to be done? Must I decline it?"

"Decline it! Oh, of course not. I know we are looking on the dark side of things. I can go very well with you for a month, perhaps two."

"You think so?"

"I am sure so. And mind, you must not encourage mamma to talk me out of it, Archibald," she continued, resting her head upon his breast, her sweet face turned up beseechingly to his, "you would rather have me with you, would you not?"

He bent his own down upon it. "What do you think about it, my darling?"

Once more—an inopportune moment for her to enter—Lady Isabel. Barbara heard her this time, and sprang away from her husband. Mr. Carlyle turned round at the movement, and saw Madame Vine. She came forward; her lips ashy, her voice subdued.

She had now been six months at East Lynne, and had hitherto escaped detection. Time and familiarity render us accustomed to most things, to danger amongst the rest; and she had almost ceased to fear recognition. She and the children were upon the best terms; she had greatly endeared herself to them, and they loved her; perhaps nature was asserting her own hidden claims.

What of William? William had been better through the winter, but with the first blush of spring he had begun to fade again. He was constantly weary, had frequent pain in his side, and his appetite failed. Mr. Wainwright attended him daily now. In the day he looked tolerably well, for the exceeding beauty and brightness of his complexion disarmed suspicion; but toward evening, as soon as twilight came on, his illness showed itself outwardly. His face would be of a pallid whiteness, he could scarcely speak for weakness, and his favorite resting-place was the hearth-rug in the gray parlor. There he would lie down at full length, a cushion under his head, and his eyes closed.

"My child," Madame Vine would say to him, "you would be better on the sofa."

"No. I like this."

"But if I draw it quite close to the fire for you? Try it, William."

He did, one or two evenings, and then the old place was resumed, and he would not quit it. He was lying there, as usual, on this evening, when Hannah came in with the tea-things. She gazed down for a minute or two at the boy, whom she supposed to be sleeping, so still and full of repose did he look, and then turned to Madame Vine:

"Poor child! he's one that's going fast on to his grave."

The words utterly startled her. Daily familiarity with illness sometimes renders us partially blind to its worst features, and thus it had been with Lady Isabel. Upon her arrival at East Lynne, she had been, if not alarmed, much concerned at the appearance of

William; the winter improvement had dispelled that concern; while the spring change had come on so gradually that her fears had not taken alarm. She judged him to be a delicate boy, one who required care.

"Hannah!" she uttered, in a tone of reproof, to the servant.

"Why, ma'am, I wonder that you can't see it yourself!" returned Hannah. "It's plain, poor lad, that he has no mother, or there would have been an outcry over him long ago. Of course Mrs. Carlyle can't be expected to have the feelings of one for him; and as to old Wainwright, he's as blind as any bat."

She took the reproach to herself, and it smote upon her heart; had she been blind—she, his mother?

"There is nothing particular the matter with him, Hannah. He is only weakly." But she spoke these words in braving defiance of her thoughts; anxious, if we may so say it, to deceive herself. Even as she gave expression to them, her pulses were going pit-a-pat with the fear, the next to certainty, that there was worse the matter with him.

CHAPTER XLIV

SIR FRANCIS LEVISON AT HOME

Wonders never cease. Surprises are the lot of man. But perhaps a greater surprise had never been experienced by those who knew him, than when it went forth to the world that Sir Francis Levison had converted himself from—from what he was, into a red-hot politician.

Had he been offered the post of prime minister? Or did his conscience smite him?—as was the case with a certain gallant captain renowned in song. Neither the one nor the other. The simple fact was that Sir Francis Levison was in a state of pecuniary embarrassment, and required something to prop him up—some snug sinecure; plenty to get and nothing to do.

"He in pecuniary embarrassment!" cries the reader.

“How could that be?” No easier thing “to be” in this world, if a man plunges into the amusements favored by Francis Levison. When he came into his fortune there was a weighty amount to pay for debts and damages, a far larger amount than he had believed. Not a farthing, beyond what was obliged to come to him by entail, did Sir Peter leave him; but of that which remained he was no sooner in possession than he began to squander right and left.

In a handsome drawing-room in Eaton Square, one sunny afternoon, sat a lady, young and handsome. Her eyes were of a violet blue, her hair was auburn, her complexion delicate. But there was a stern look of anger, amounting to sullenness, on her well-formed features, and her pretty foot was beating the carpet in passionate impatience. It was Lady Levison.

The doings of the past had been coming home to her for some time now; past doings, be they good or be they ill, are sure to come home one day or another, and to bring their fruits with them. If you sow wheat it will come up wheat, gladdening you with its good; if you sow noxious weeds, noxious weeds spring forth, and you must do battle with them as you best can. It is the inevitable law of nature, and none can flee from it.

In the years past, many years past now, Francis Levison had lost his heart—or whatever the thing might be that, with him, did duty for one—to Blanche Challoner. He had despised her once to Lady Isabel—but that was done to suit his own purpose, for he had never, at any period, cared for Lady Isabel as he had cared for Blanche. He gained her affections in secret, and in secret they engaged themselves to each other. Blanche’s sister, Lydia Challoner, two years older than himself, suspected it, and taxed Blanche with it. Blanche, true to her compact of keeping it a secret, denied it with many protestations. “She did not care for Captain Levison; rather disliked him, in fact.” “So much the better,” was Miss Challoner’s reply; for she had no respect for Captain Levison, and deemed him an unlikely man to marry.

He played fast and loose with her, professing attachment for her in secret, and visiting at the house. Perhaps he feared an outbreak from her, an exposure that might prove anything but pleasant, did he throw off all relations between them. Blanche summoned up her courage and spoke to him, urging the marriage. She had not yet glanced at the fear of his intention of marrying her (had he ever possessed such) was over. Bad men are always cowards. Sir Francis shrank from an explanation, and so far forgot honor as to murmur some indistinct promise that the wedding should be speedy.

Lydia Challoner had married, and been left a well-jointured widow. She was Mrs. Waring, and at her house resided Blanche; for the girls were orphans. Blanche was beginning to show symptoms of her nearly thirty years—not the years, but the long-continued disappointment, the heart-burnings, were telling upon her. Her hair was thin, her face was pinched, her form had lost its roundness. "Marry her, indeed!" scoffed Sir Francis Levison to himself.

There came to Mrs. Waring's, upon a Christmas visit, a younger sister, Alice Challoner, a fair girl of twenty years. She resided generally with an aunt in the country. Far more beautiful was she than Blanche had ever been. And Francis Levison, who had not seen her since she was a child, fell—as he would have called it—in love with her. Love! He became her shadow; he whispered sweet words in her ear; he turned her head giddy with his own vanity; and he offered her marriage. She accepted him, and preparations for the ceremony immediately began. Sir Francis urged speed, and Alice was nothing loth.

And what of Blanche? Blanche was stunned. A despairing stupor took possession of her; and when she awoke from it desperation set in. She insisted upon an interview with Sir Francis; and evade it he could not, though he tried hard.

Will it be believed that he denied the past—that he met with mocking suavity her indignant reminders of

what had been between them? "Love? Marriage? Nonsense! Her fancy had been too much at work." Finally he defied her to prove that he had regarded her with more than ordinary friendship, or had ever hinted at such a thing as a union.

She determined to appeal to Alice, but her only answer was: "I know! He told me I might expect something of this; that you had fancied him in love with you, and were angry because he had chosen me."

Blanche turned upon her with streaming eyes; she could no longer control her emotion. "Alice, my sister, all the pride is gone out of me, all the reticence that woman loves to observe as to her wrongs and to her inward feelings, I have broken through for you this night. As sure as that there is a heaven above us, I have told you but the truth. Until you came I was engaged to Francis Levison."

An unnatural scene ensued. Blanche, provoked at Alice's rejection of her words, told all the ill she knew or had heard of the man; she dwelt upon his conduct with regard to Lady Isabel Carlyle, his heartless after-treatment of that unhappy lady. Alice was passionate and fiery. She professed not to believe a word of her sister's wrongs, and, as to the other stories, they were no affairs of her, she said; what had she to do with his past life?

But Alice Challoner did believe; her sister's earnestness and distress, as she told the tale, carried conviction with them. She did not care very much for Sir Francis; he was not entwined round her heart as he was round that of Blanche; but she was dazzled with the prospect of so good a settlement in life, and she would not give him up. If Blanche broke her heart—why, she must break it. But she need not have mixed taunts and jeers with her refusal to believe; she need not have triumphed openly over Blanche. Was it well done? As we sow, so I tell you, we shall reap. She married Sir Francis Levison, leaving Blanche to her broken heart, or to any other calamity that might grow out of the injustice. And there sat Lady Levi-

son now, her three years of marriage having served to turn her love for Sir Francis into contempt and hate.

A little boy, two years old, the only child of the marriage, was playing about the room. His mother took no notice of him; she was buried in all-absorbing thought; thought that caused her lips to contract and her brow to scowl. Sir Francis entered, his attitude lounging, his air listless. Lady Levison roused herself, but no pleasant manner or tone was hers, as she addressed him. "I want some money," she said.

"So do I," he answered.

An impatient stamp of the foot, and a haughty toss. "And I must have it. I must. I told you yesterday that I must. Do you suppose I can go on, without a sixpence of ready money, day after day?"

"Do you suppose it is of any use to put yourself in this fury?" retorted Sir Francis. "A dozen times a week do you bother me for money, and a dozen times do I tell you I have got none. I have got none for myself. You might as well ask that baby for money as ask me."

"I wish he had never been born!" passionately said Lady Levison. "Unless he had had a different father."

That the last sentence, and the bitter scorn of its tone, would have provoked a reprisal from Sir Francis, his flashing countenance betrayed. But at that moment a servant entered the room.

"I beg your pardon, sir. That man, Brown, forced his way into the hall, and——"

"I can't see him, I won't see him!" interrupted Sir Francis, backing to the furthest corner of the room, in what looked very like abject terror, as if he had completely lost his presence of mind. Lady Levison's lips curled.

'We got rid of him, sir, after a dreadful deal of trouble, but while the door was open in the dispute, Mr. Meredith entered. He has gone on into the library, sir, and he vows he won't stir till he sees you, whether you are sick or well.'

A moment's pause, a half-muttered oath, and then

Sir Francis quitted the room. The servant retired, and Lady Levison caught up her child. "Oh, Franky, dear," she wailed forth, burying her face in his warm neck, "I would leave him for good and all, if I dared; but I fear he might keep you."

Now, the secret was, that for the last three days, Sir Francis Levison had been desperately ill, obliged to keep his bed, and could see nobody—his life depending upon quiet. Such was the report, or something equivalent to it, which had gone in to Lord Headthelot (or, rather, to the official office, for that renowned chief was, himself, out of town); it had also been delivered to all callers at Sir Francis Levison's house. The real truth being that Sir Francis was as well in health as you or I, but from something which had transpired, touching one of his numerous debts, did not dare to show. That morning the matter had been arranged; patched up for a time.

"My stars, Levison!" began Mr. Meredith, who was a whipper-in of the ministry, "what a row there is about you! Why, you look as well as ever you were."

"A great deal better to-day," coughed Sir Francis.

"To think that you should have chosen the present moment for skulking! Here have I been, dancing in attendance at your door day after day, in a state of incipient fever, enough to put me into a real one, and could neither get admitted nor a letter taken up. I should have blown the houses up to-day and got in amidst the flying debris. By the way, are you and my lady two, just now?"

"Two?" growled Sir Francis.

"She was stepping into her carriage yesterday when they turned me from the door, and I made inquiry of her. Her ladyship's answer was that she knew nothing either of Sir Francis or his illness."

"Her ladyship is subject to flights of temper," chafed Sir Francis. "What desperate need have you of me, just now? Headthelot's away, and there's nothing doing."

"Nothing doing up here; a deal too much doing somewhere else. Attley's seat is in the market."

"Well?"

"And you ought to have been down there about it three or four days ago. Of course you must step into it."

"Of course I shan't," returned Sir Francis. "To represent West Lynne would not suit me."

"Not suit you? West Lynne! Why, of all places, it is the most suitable. It's close to your own property."

"If you call ten miles close. I shall not put up for West Lynne, Meredith."

"Headthelot came up this morning," said Mr. Meredith.

The information somewhat aroused Sir Francis. "Headthelot! What brings him back?"

"You. I tell you, Levison, there's a hot row. Headthelot expected you would be at West Lynne days past, and he has come up in an awful rage. Every additional vote we can count in the House is worth its weight in gold; and you, as he says, are allowing West Lynne to slip through our fingers! You must start for it at once."

"No."

"Then you lose your post. Thornton goes in for West Lynne, and takes your place with Headthelot."

"Did Headthelot send you here to say this?" asked Sir Francis.

"He did. And he means it, mind; that's more. I never saw a man more thoroughly in earnest."

Sir Francis mused. Had the alternative been given him, he would have preferred to represent a certain warm place underground, rather than West Lynne. But, to quit Headthelot, and the snug post he anticipated, would be ruin irretrievable; nothing short of outlawry, or the queen's prison. It was awfully necessary to get his threatened person into parliament, and he began to turn over in his mind whether he could bring himself to make further acquaintance with West Lynne. "The thing must have blown over for good

by this time," was the result of his cogitations, unconsciously speaking aloud.

"I can understand your reluctance to appear at West Lynne," cried Mr. Meredith; "the scene, unless I mistake, of that notorious affair of yours. But private feelings must give way to public interests; and the best thing you can do is to start. Headthelot is angry enough, as it is. He says, had you been down at first, as you ought to have been, you would have slipped in without opposition; but now there will be a contest."

Sir Francis looked up sharply. "A contest? Who is going to stand the funds?"

"Pshaw! As if we should let funds be any barrier! Have you heard who is in the field?"

"No," was the apathetic answer.

"Carlyle."

"Carlyle!" shouted Sir Francis. "Oh, by George! I can't stand against him."

"Well, there's the alternative. If you can't, Thornton will."

"I should run no chance. West Lynne would not elect me if he is a candidate. I'm not sure, indeed, West Lynne would have me in any case."

"Nonsense! you know our interests there. Government put in Attley, and it can put in you. Yes, or no, Levison?"

"Yes," replied Sir Francis.

An hour's time, and Sir Francis Levison went forth. On his way to be conveyed to West Lynne? Not yet. He turned his steps to Scotland Yard. In considerably less than another hour, the following telegram, marked "secret," went down from the head office to the superintendent of police at West Lynne:

"Is Otway Bethel at West Lynne? If not, where is he? and when will he be returning to it?"

It elicited a prompt answer. "Otway Bethel is not at West Lynne. Supposed to be in Norway. Movements uncertain."

Lady Levison heard of the scheme that was in the wind. When Sir Francis went to tell her (as a matter

of the merest courtesy) that he was about to go into the country for a few days, she turned upon him fiercely.

"If you have any sense of shame in you, you would shoot yourself rather than go where you are going, to do what you are about to do."

That ill feeling had come to an extreme pitch between her and her husband, and that he had not been long in giving her ample cause of resentment, you may be sure; otherwise she could not so have spoken. He bent his dark looks upon her. "I know the errand you are bent upon. You are going forth to enter yourself in opposition to Mr. Carlyle. You must possess a front of brass, a recollection seared to shame, or you could not do it. Any one but you would sink into the earth with humiliation at sight of a man so injured."

"Hold your tongue!" said Sir Francis.

"I held it for months and months; held it because you were my husband—though I was nearly mad. I shall never hold it again. Night and morning one prayer goes up from me—that I may find a way of being legally separated from you. I will find it."

"You had better have left me to Blanche," sneered Sir Francis. "The taking of me was a dead robbery on her, you know. You knew it then."

She sat beating her foot on the carpet, really striving to calm down her irritability. "Allow me to recommend you to pause and consider, ere you enter this insult to Mr. Carlyle," she resumed.

"What is Carlyle to you? You don't know him."

"I know him by reputation; know him to be a noble, honorable man, beloved by his friends, respected by all. If ever two men presented a contrast, it is you and he. Ask your uncle's widow what the world thinks of Mr. Carlyle."

"Had another been my adversary, I should not have cared to stand the contest," maliciously returned Sir Francis. "The thought that it is he who is my opponent spurs me on. I'll oppose and crush him."

"Take care that you do not get crushed yourself," retorted Alice Levison. "Luck does not always attend the bad."

"I'll take my chance," sneered Sir Francis.

CHAPTER XLV

ANOTHER CANDIDATE

Mr. Carlyle and Barbara were seated at breakfast, when, somewhat to their surprise, Mr. Dill was shown in. Following close upon his heels came Justice Hare; close upon his heels came Squire Pinner; while bringing up the rear was Colonel Bethel. All the four had come up separately, not together, and all four were out of breath, as if it had been a race which should arrive soonest.

Quite impossible was it for Mr. Carlyle, at first, to understand the news they brought. All were talking at once, in the utmost excitement, and the fury of Justice Hare alone was sufficient to produce temporary deafness. Mr. Carlyle caught a word of the case presently.

"A second man! Opposition? Well, let him come on," he good-humoredly cried. "We shall have the satisfaction of ascertaining who wins in the end."

"But you have not heard who it is, Mr. Archibald," cried old Dill. "It——"

"Stand a contest with him," raved Justice Hare. "He——"

"The fellow wants hanging," interjected Colonel Bethel.

"Couldn't he be ducked?" suggested Squire Pinner.

Now all these sentences were ranted out together, and their respective utterers were fain to stop till the noises subsided a little. Barbara could only look from one to the other in astonishment.

"Who is the formidable opponent?" asked Carlyle.

There was a pause. Not one of them but had the delicacy to shrink from naming the man to Carlyle.

The information came at last from old Dill, who dropped his voice while he spoke it:

"Mr. Archibald, the candidate who has come forward is that man, Levison."

A scarlet flush dyed the brow of Mr. Carlyle. Barbara bent down her face, but her eyes flashed with anger.

"Benjamin went through the town early this morning, exercising his horses," stuttered Justice Hare. "He came back, telling me that the walls were placarded with 'Levison forever!' 'Vote for Sir Francis Levison!' I nearly knocked him down. 'It's true, master,' says he, 'as I'm a living sinner. And some folks I spoke to told me that he came down last evening.' There was news for a respectable man to hear before breakfast."

"He got here by the last train," said Mr. Dill, "and has put up at the Buck's Head. The printers must have sat up all night to get the placards ready. He has got an agent, or something of that sort, with him, and some other chap, said to be a member of the government."

"Boasting that the field is theirs at the onset, and that the canvass will be a mere matter of form!" added Colonel Bethel, bringing down his cane vehemently. "He is mad to offer himself as a candidate here."

"It's done purposely to insult Mr. Carlyle," said the meek voice of Squire Pinner.

"To insult us all, you mean, squire," retorted Colonel Bethel. "I don't think he will go off quite so glibly as he has come."

"Of course, Carlyle, you will go into it now, neck and crop," cried Justice Hare.

Mr. Carlyle was silent.

"You won't let the beast frighten you from the contest!" uttered Colonel Bethel, in a loud tone.

"There's a meeting at the Buck's Head at ten," said Mr. Carlyle, not replying to the immediate question. "I will be with you there."

"Did you say he is at the Buck's Head?" asked Squire Pinner. "I had not heard that."

"That he was," corrected Mr. Dill. "I expect he is ousted by this time. I asked the landlord what he thought of himself for taking in such a character, and what he supposed the justices would say to him. He vowed with tears in his eyes that the fellow should not be there another hour, and that he never should have entered the house had he known who he was."

A little more conversation and the visitors filed off. Mr. Carlyle sat down calmly to finish his breakfast. Barbara approached him. "Archibald, you will not suffer this man's insolent doing to deter you from your plans; you will not withdraw?" she whispered. "I think not, Barbara. He has thrust himself offensively upon me in this measure; I believe my better plan will be to take no more heed of him than I should of the dirt under my feet."

"Right, right," she answered, a proud flash deepening the rose on her cheeks.

And now the contest began in earnest—that is, the canvass. Sir Francis Levison, his agent, and the friend from town, who, as it turned out, instead of being some great gun of the government, was a private chum of the baronet's, by name Drake, sneaked about the town like dogs with their tails burnt, for they were entirely alive to the odor in which they were held; their only attendants being a few young gentlemen and ladies in rags, who commonly brought up the rear. The other party presented a stately crowd—country gentry, magistrates, Lord Mount Severn. Sometimes Mr. Carlyle would be with them, arm-in-arm with the latter. If the contesting groups came within view of each other, and were likely to meet, the brave Sir Francis would disappear down an entry: behind a hedge; anywhere. With all his "face of brass," he could not meet Mr. Carlyle and that condemning jury around him.

One afternoon it pleased Mrs. Carlyle to summon Lucy and the governess to accompany her into West Lynne. She was going shopping. Lady Isabel had a dread and horror of appearing there whilst that man

was in the town, but she could not help herself. There was no pleading illness, for she was quite well; there must be no saying "I will not go," for she was only a dependent. They set off, and had walked as far as Mrs. Hare's gate, when Miss Carlyle turned out of it.

"Your mamma is not well, Barbara."

"Is she not?" cried Barbara, with a quick concern. "I must go in and see her."

"She has had one of those ridiculous dreams again," pursued Miss Carlyle, ignoring the presence of the governess and Lucy. "I was sure of it by her very look when I got in; shivering and shaking and glancing fearfully around, as if she feared a dozen specters were about to burst out of the walls. So I taxed her with it, and she could make no denial. Richard is in some jeopardy, she protests, or will be. And there she is, shaking still, although I told her that people who put faith in dreams were only fit for a lunatic asylum."

Barbara looked distressed. She did not believe in dreams, any more than Miss Carlyle; but she could not forget how strangely peril to Richard had supervened upon some of these dreams. "I will go in now and see mamma," she said. "If you are returning home, Cornelia, Madame Vine can walk with you, and wait for me there."

"Let me go in with you, mamma," pleaded Lucy.

Barbara mechanically took the child's hand. The gate closed on them, and Miss Carlyle and Lady Isabel proceeded in the direction of the town. But not far had they gone when, in turning a corner, the wind, which was high, flew away with the veil of Lady Isabel; and, in raising her hands in trepidation to save it before it was finally gone, she contrived to knock off her blue spectacles. They fell to the ground and were broken.

"However did you manage that?" uttered Miss Carlyle.

How, indeed? She bent her face on the ground, looking at the damage. What should she do? The

veil was over the hedge, the spectacles were broken; how could she dare to show her unshaded face? That face as rosy, just then, as in former days the eyes were bright, and Miss Carlyle caught their expression, and stared in very amazement.

“Good Heaven above!” she muttered, “what an extraordinary likeness!”

CHAPTER XLVI

HER BOY'S LIFE AT STAKE

That evening after dinner Miss Carlyle and Lady Mount Severn sat side by side on the same sofa, coffee cups in hand. Sir John Dobede and one or two more gentlemen were of the party. Young Vane, Lucy and Mrs. Carlyle were laughing together, and there was considerable noise and talking in the room. Under cover of it, Miss Carlyle turned to the earl.

“Was it a positively ascertained fact that Lady Isabel died?”

The earl stared with all his might; he thought it the strangest question that was ever asked him. “I scarcely understand you, Miss Carlyle. Died Certainly she died.”

“When the result of the accident was communicated to you, you made inquiry, yourself, into its truth, its details, I believe?”

“It was my duty to do so. There was no one else to undertake it.”

“Did you ascertain positively, beyond all doubt, that she did die?”

“Of a surety I did. She died in the course of the same night. She was terribly injured.”

A pause. Miss Carlyle was ruminating. But she returned to the charge, as if difficult to be convinced.

“You deem that there could be no possibility of an error? You are sure that she is dead?”

“I am as sure that she is dead as that we are living,” decisively replied the earl; and spoke but

according to his belief. "Wherefore should you be inquiring this?"

"A thought came over me—only to-day—to wonder whether she was really dead."

"Had any error occurred at the time, any false report of her death, I should soon have found it out by her drawing the annuity I settled upon her. It has never been drawn since. Besides, she would have written to me, as was agreed upon. No, poor thing! she is gone, beyond all doubt, and has taken her sins with her."

Convincing proofs. And Miss Carlyle lent her ear to them.

The following morning Lord Vane, Lucy and William were running races on the lawn, the viscount having joined Madame Vine's breakfast-table without the ceremony of asking. William's racing, indeed, was more pretense than work; he and his breath were soon tired; and Lord Vane gave Lucy "half" and beat her then, the forfeit, if she lost, being five kisses. Lucy told him one was enough, but he battled it out and got five. Lady Isabel had made prisoner of Archibald, and was holding him on her knee in the gray parlor, clasped to her in the impassioned manner that few, save a mother, can clasp a child, when Mr. Carlyle entered.

"Do you admit intruders here, Madame Vine?" cried he, with a sweet smile and his attractive manner. She let the boy slip to the ground and rose, her face burning, her heart throbbing. Archie ran off to his elders on the grass. "Keep your seat, pray," said Mr. Carlyle, taking one opposite to her, and admiring, no doubt, her tortoise-shell spectacles. "How does William seem? for that is what I have come to ask you."

She laid her hand upon her bosom, striving to make it still; she essayed to control her voice to calmness. Alone with him! "There was no difference," she murmured; and then she took courage, and spoke more openly. "I understood you to say the other night, sir, that he should have further advice."

"Ay. I intended to take him over to Lynneborough, to Dr. Martin, and the drive would have done him good; but I have been so much engaged, there has been no time to think of it. Neither do I know when I shall be at liberty."

"Let me take him, sir," she cried, yearningly. "Indeed, I think no time should be lost. We could go by train. What objection have you?" she quickly added. "Surely you can trust him with me!"

Mr. Carlyle smiled. "I can trust him and you too," cried he, "and I think the plan would be a good one, if you do not mind the trouble."

Mind the trouble! when her boy's life was at stake. "Let us go to-day, sir," she said, with feverish impatience.

"I will ascertain whether Mrs. Carlyle wants the pony carriage," said he. "It will be better to go in that than boxed up in the railway train."

Her heart rose rebelliously as he quitted the room. Were Mrs. Carlyle's capricious "wants" to be studied before her child's life? A moment's battle, and she clasped her hands meekly on her knee. Was that the spirit in which she had promised to take up her daily cross? She had put the same question to herself many times lately.

Mr. Carlyle returned. "The pony carriage will be at your service, Madame Vine. John will drive you to the Royal, the hotel I use in Lynneborough, and Dr. Martin lives within a few doors of it. Order any refreshments you please at the hotel—it will be put down to my account. Perhaps you had better dine there; it may not be well for William to wait."

"Very well, sir. Thank you. What time can we start?"

"Any time you like. Ten o'clock. Will that suit?"

"Oh, quite well, sir. Thank you, very much."

"Thank me for what?" laughed Mr. Carlyle; "for giving you a troublesome journey? Let me see—the doctor's fee will be a guinea," he said, taking out his purse.

"Oh, that is nothing," she hastily interrupted. "I will pay for him myself; I would rather."

Mr. Carlyle looked surprised. He said nothing; simply laid down the sovereign and shilling on the table. Madame Vine blushed vividly. How could she, the governess, so have forgotten herself?

Poor, unhappy Lady Isabel! A recollection flashed over her of that morning, years ago, when Lord Mount Severn had handed out to her some gold—three sovereigns—and of the hundred-pound note so generously left in her hands afterward by another. Then she was his chosen love—ay, she was; though it had not been declared.

Now? A pang as of death shot through her bitter heart.

"You can remind Dr. Martin that the child's constitution is precisely what his mother's was," continued Mr. Carlyle, a tinge lighting his face. "It may be a guide to his treatment. He said himself it was, when he attended him for an illness a year or two ago."

"Yes, sir."

He crossed the hall on his entrance to the breakfast-room. She tore upstairs to her chamber, and sank down in an agony of tears and despair. Oh, to love him as she did now! to yearn after his affection with this passionate, jealous longing, and to know that they were separated forever and forever—that she was worse to him than nothing!

Softly, my lady! This is not bearing your cross.

CHAPTER XLVII

A RUSSIAN BEAR AT WEST LYNNE

Among the crowd listening to one of Sir Francis Levison's outdoor campaign speeches were Mr. Dill and Mr. Ebenezer James. The latter was one who, for the last twelve or fifteen years, had been trying his hand at many trades, and had not come out particularly well at any. A rolling stone gathers no moss. First he had been clerk to Mr. Carlyle; next he had been seduced into joining the corps of the Theatre Royal at Lynneborough; then he turned auctioneer; then traveler in the oil and color line; then a parson, the urgent pastor of some sect; then omnibus driver; then collector of the water rate; and now he was clerk again; not in Mr. Carlyle's office, but in that of Bell & Treadman, other solicitors of West Lynne.

"I'll—be—blest," uttered Mr. Ebenezer James, after a prolonged pause of staring consternation, "if I don't believe there's Bethel!"

"Bethel!" repeated old Dill, gazing at an approaching figure, which resembled rather a Russian bear than a man. "What has he been doing to himself?"

Mr. Otway Bethel it was, just arrived from foreign parts in his traveling costume, something shaggy, terminating all over with tails. A shaggy cap surmounted his head, and the hair on his face would have set up Mr. Justice Hare in wigs for his life. A wild object he looked, and Mr. Dill rather backed as he drew near, as if fearing he were a real animal which might bite him.

"What's your name?" cried he.

"It used to be Mr. Bethel," replied the wild man, holding out his hand to Mr. Dill. "So you are in the world, James, and kicking yet!"

"And hope to kick in it for some time to come,"

replied Mr. James. "Where did you hail from last? A settlement at the North Pole?"

"Didn't get quite so far. What's the row here?"

"When did you arrive, Mr. Otway?" inquired old Dill.

"Now. Four o'clock train. I say, what's up?"

"An election; that's all," said Mr. Ebenezer. "Attley went and kicked the bucket."

"I don't ask about the election; I heard all that at the railway station," returned Otway Bethel, impatiently. "What's this?" waving his hand at the crowd.

"One of the candidates wasting his breath and words—Levison."

"I say," repeated Otway Bethel, looking at Mr. Dill, "wasn't it rather—rather of the ratherest, for him to oppose Carlyle?"

"Infamous! contemptible!" was the old gentleman's excited answer. "But he'll get his deserts yet, Mr. Otway; they have already begun. He was treated to a ducking yesterday in Justice Hare's green pond."

"And he did look a miserable devil when he came out trailing through the streets," added Mr. Ebenezer, while Otway Bethel burst into a laugh. "He was smothered into some hot blankets at the Raven and a pint of burnt brandy put into him. He seems all right to-day."

"Will he go in and win?"

"Chut! Win against Carlyle! He has not the ghost of a chance; and government—if it is the government who put him on it—must be a pack of fools; they can't know the influence of Carlyle. Bethel, is that style of costume the fashion where you come from?"

"For cold weather and slender pockets. I'll sell 'em to you now, James, at half price. Let's get a look at this Levison, though I have never seen the fellow."

Another interruption to the crowd, even as he spoke, caused by the railway van bringing up some luggage. They contrived, in the confusion, to push themselves

to the front, not far from Sir Francis. Otway Bethel stared at him in unqualified amazement.

"Why—what brings him here? What is he doing?"

"Who?"

He pointed with his finger. "The one with the white handkerchief in his hand."

"That is Sir Francis."

"No!" uttered Bethel, a whole world of astounded meaning in his tone. "By Jove! He Sir Francis Levison?"

At that moment their eyes met—Francis Levison's and Otway Bethel's. Otway Bethel raised his shaggy cap in salutation, and Sir Francis appeared completely scared. Only for an instant did he lose his presence of mind. The next his eye-glass was stuck in his eye and turned on Mr. Bethel with a hard, haughty stare, as much as to say, Who are you, fellow, that you should take such a liberty? But his cheeks and lips were growing as white as marble.

"Do you know Levison, Mr. Otway?" inquired old Dill.

"A little. Once."

"When he was not Levison, but somebody else," laughed Mr. Ebenezer James. "Eh, Bethel?"

Bethel turned as reproving a stare on Mr. Ebenezer as the baronet had just turned on him. "What do you mean, pray? Mind your own business."

A nod to old Dill, and he turned off and disappeared, taking no further notice of James. The old gentleman questioned the latter. "What was that little bit of by-play, Mr. Ebenezer?"

"Nothing much," laughed Mr. Ebenezer. "Only he," nodding toward Sir Francis, "was not always the great man that he now is."

"Ah!"

"I have held my tongue about it, for it's no affair of mine, but I don't mind letting you into the secret. Would you believe that that grand baronet there, would-be member for West Lynne, used, years ago,

to dodge about Abbey Wood, mad after Afy Hallijohn? He didn't call himself Levison then."

Mr. Dill felt as if a hundred pins and needles were pricking at his memory, for there rose up in it certain doubts and troubles, touching Richard Hare and one Thorn. He laid his eager hand upon the other's arm. "Ebenezer James, what did he call himself?"

"Thorn. A dandy then, as he is now. He used to come galloping down the Swainson road at dusk, tie his horse in the wood and monopolize Miss Afy."

"How do you know this?"

"Because I have seen it a dozen times. I was spoony after Afy myself in those days, and went down there a good deal in an evening. If it hadn't been for him, and—perhaps that murdering villain, Dick Hare, Afy would have listened to me. Not that she cared for Dick; but you see, they were gentlemen. I am thankful to the stars, now, for my luck in escaping her. With her for a wife I should have been in a pickle always; as it is, I do get out of it once in a way."

"Did you know then that he was Francis Levison?"

"Not I. He called himself Thorn, I tell you. When he came down to offer himself for member and oppose Carlyle, I was thunderstruck, like Bethel was a minute ago. Ho, ho, said I, so Thorn's defunct and Levison has arisen."

"What had Otway Bethel to do with him?"

"Nothing—that I know of. Only Bethel was fond of the wood also—after other game than Afy, though—and must have seen Thorn often. You saw that he recognized him."

"Thorn—Levison, I mean—did not appear to like the recognition," said Mr. Dill.

"Who would, in his position?" laughed Ebenezer James. "I don't like to be reminded of many a wild scrape of my past life, in my poor station; and what would it be for Levison, were it to come out that he once called himself Thorn, and came running after Miss Afy Hallijohn?"

“Why did he call himself Thorn? Why disguise his own name?”

“Not knowing, can't say. Is his name Levison—or is it Thorn?”

“Nonsense, Mr. Ebenezer!”

Mr. Dill, bursting with the strange news he had heard, endeavored to force his way through the crowd, that he might communicate it to Mr. Carlyle. The crowd was, however, too dense for him, and he had to wait the opportunity of escape with what patience he might. When it came he made the best of his way to the office, and entered Mr. Carlyle's private room. That gentleman was seated at his desk signing letters.

“Why, Dill, you are out of breath!”

“Well I may be! Mr. Archibald, I have been listening to the most extraordinary statement. I have found out about Thorn. Who do you think he is?”

Mr. Carlyle laid down his pen and looked full in the old man's face. He had never seen him so excited.

“It's that man Levison.”

“I do not understand you,” said Mr. Carlyle. He did not. It was Hebrew to him.

“The Levison of to-day, your opponent, is the Thorn who went after Afy Hallijohn. It is so, Mr. Archibald.”

“It cannot be!” slowly uttered Mr. Carlyle, thought upon thought working through his brain. “Where did you hear this?”

Mr. Dill told his tale. Otway Bethel's recognition of him; Sir Francis Levison's scared paleness—for he had noticed that; Mr. Ebenezer's revelation.

“Bethel has denied to me more than once that he knew Thorn, or was aware of such a man being in existence,” observed Mr. Carlyle.

“He must have had a purpose in it,” returned Mr. Dill. “They knew each other to-day. Levison recognized him, for certain; although he carried it off with a high hand, pretending that he did not.”

“And it was not as Levison, but as Thorn, that Bethel recognized him?”

"There's little doubt about that. He did not mention the name Thorn; but he was evidently struck with astonishment at hearing that it was Levison. If they have not some secret between them, Mr. Archibald, I'll never believe my own eyes again."

"Mrs. Hare's opinion is that Bethel had to do with the murder," said Mr. Carlyle in a low tone.

"If the murder is their secret, rely upon it Bethel had," was the answer. "Mr. Archibald, it seems to me that now or never is the time to clear up Richard."

"Ay. But how set about it?" responded Mr. Carlyle.

Mr. Carlyle was somewhat surprised when Barbara came to him that evening, and with a serious face said:

"Archibald, I do fear I have done a foolish thing."

He laughed. "I fear we all do that at times, Barbara. What is it?"

He had seated himself in one of Barbara's favorite low chairs, and she stood before him, leaning on his shoulder, her face a little behind, so that he could not see it. In her delicacy she would not look at him while she spoke what she was going to speak.

"It is something that I have had upon my mind for years, and I did not like to tell it to you."

"For years?"

"You remember that night, years ago, when Richard was at the Grove in disguise? He——"

"Which night, Barbara? He came more than once."

"The night—the night that Lady Isabel quitted East Lynne," she answered, not knowing how better to bring it to his recollection—and she stole her hand lovingly into his as she said it. "Richard came back after his departure, saying that he had met Thorn in Bean Lane. He described the peculiar motion of his hand as he threw back his hair from his brow; he spoke of the white hand and the diamond ring, how it glittered in the moonlight. Do you remember?"

"I do."

"The motion appeared perfectly familiar to me, for

I have seen it repeatedly used by one then staying at East Lynne. I wondered you did not recognize it. From that night I had little doubt as to the identity of Thorn. I believed that he and Captain Levison were one."

A pause. "Why did you not tell me so, Barbara?"

"How could I speak of that man to you?—at that time? Afterward, when Richard was here, that snowy winter's day, he asserted that he knew Sir Francis Levison; that he had seen him and Thorn together, and that put me off the scent. But to-day, as I was passing the Raven in a carriage, going very slow on account of the crowd, he was perched out there addressing the people, and I saw the very same action, the old action that I remember so well."

Barbara paused. Mr. Carlyle did not interrupt her.

"I feel a conviction that they are the same; that Richard must have been under some unaccountable mistake in saying he knew Francis Levison. Besides, who but he, in evening dress, would have been likely to go through Bean Lane that night? It leads to no houses; but one who wished to avoid the high road could get into it from these grounds, and so on to West Lynne. It was proved, you know, that he met—met the carriage coming from Mrs. Jeafferson's, and returned with it to East Lynne. He must have gone back directly on foot to West Lynne to get the post-chaise, as was proved; and he would naturally go through Bean Lane. Forgive me, Archibald, for recalling these things to you, but I feel so sure that Levison and Thorn are one."

"I know they are," he quietly said.

Barbara, in her astonishment, drew back and stared him in the face. A face of severe dignity it was just then.

"Oh, Archibald! did you know it at that time?"

"I did not know it until this afternoon. I never suspected it."

"I wonder you did not. I have wondered often."

"So do I—now. Dill, Ebenezer James and Otway

Bethel—who came home to-day—were standing before the Raven, listening to his speech, when Bethel recognized him—not as Levison—he was infinitely astonished to find he was Levison. Levison, they say, was scared at the recognition, and changed color. Bethel would give no explanation, and moved away, but James told Dill that Levison was the man Thorn, who used to be after Afy Hallijohn."

"How did he know?" breathlessly asked Barbara.

"Because Mr. Ebenezer was after Afy himself, and repeatedly saw Thorn in the wood. Barbara, I believe now that it was Levison who killed Hallijohn, but I should like to know what Bethel had to do with it."

Barbara clasped her hands. "How strange it is!" she exclaimed, in some excitement. "Mamma told me yesterday that she was convinced some discovery was impending relative to the murder. She had had a most distressing dream, she said, connected with Richard and Bethel, and somebody else whom she appeared to know in the dream, but could not recognize or remember when she awoke. She was very ill; she puts so much faith in those wretched dreams."

"One would think you did also, Barbara, by your vehemence."

"No, no; you know better. But it is strange—you must acknowledge that it is—that so sure as anything fresh happens touching the subject of the murder, so sure is a troubled dream the forerunner of it. Mamma does not dream at other times. Bethel denied to you that he knew Thorn."

"I know he did."

"And now it turns out that he does know him; and he is always in mamma's dreams—none more prominent in them than Bethel. But, Archibald, I am not telling you—I have sent for Richard."

"You have?"

"I felt sure that Levison was Thorn; I did not expect that others would recognize him, and I acted on the impulse of the moment and wrote to Richard,

telling him to be here on Saturday evening. The letter is gone."

"Well, we must shelter him as best we can."

"Archibald, dear Archibald, what can be done to clear him?" she asked, the tears rising to her eyes.

"I cannot act against Levison."

"Not act? not act for Richard?"

He bent his clear, truthful eyes upon her. "My dearest, how can I?" She looked a little rebellious, and the tears fell. "You have not considered, Barbara. It would look like my own revenge."

"Forgive me," she softly whispered. "You are always right. I did not think of it in that light. But what steps can be taken?"

"It is a case encompassed with difficulties," mused Mr. Carlyle. "Let us wait till Richard comes."

"Do you happen to have a five-pound note in your pocket, Archibald? I had not one to send him, and borrowed it from Madame Vine." He took out his pocketbook and gave her the money.

CHAPTER XLVIII

A FADING CHILD

In the gray parlor, in the dark twilight of the April evening, for it was getting on into the night, were William Carlyle and Lady Isabel. It had been a warm day, but the spring evenings were still chilly, and a fire burned in the grate. There was no blaze, the red embers were smoldering and half dead, but Madame Vine did not heed the fire. William lay on the sofa, and she sat by, looking at him. Her glasses were off, for the tears wetted them continually; and it was not the recognition of the children that she feared. He was tired with the drive to Lynneborough and back, and lay with his eyes shut; she thought asleep. Presently he opened them.

"How long will it be before I die?"

The words took her utterly by surprise, and her

heart went round in a whirl. "What do you mean, William? Who said anything about your dying?"

"Oh, I know. I know by the fuss there is over me. You heard what Hannah said the other night?"

"What? When?"

"When she brought in the tea, and I was lying on the rug. I was not asleep, though you thought I was. You told her she ought to be more cautious, for that I might not have been asleep."

"I don't remember much about it," said Lady Isabel, at her wits' end how to remove the impression that Hannah's words must have created. "Hannah talks great nonsense sometimes."

"She said 'I was going on fast to the grave.'"

"Did she? Nobody attends to Hannah. She is only a foolish girl. We shall soon have you well, when the warm weather comes."

"Madame Vine."

"Well, my darling?"

"Where's the use of your trying to deceive me? Do you think I don't see that you are doing it? I am not a baby; you might if it were Archibald. What is the matter with me?"

"Nothing. Only you are not strong. When you get strong again you will be as well as ever."

William shook his head in disbelief. He was precisely that sort of child from whom it is next to impossible to disguise facts; quick, thoughtful, observant, and advanced beyond his years. Had no words been dropped in his hearing, he would have suspected the evil by the care evinced for him, but plenty of words had been dropped; hints by which he had gathered suspicions; broad assertions, like Hannah's, which had too fully supplied it; and the boy, in his inmost heart, knew as well that death was coming for him as that death itself did.

"Then, if there's nothing the matter with me, why could not Dr. Martin speak to you before me to-day? Why did he send me into the other room while he told

you what he thought? Ah, Madame Vine, I am as wise as you."

"A wise little boy, but mistaken sometimes," she said, from her aching heart.

"It's nothing to die, when God loves us. Lord Vane says so. He had a little brother who died."

"A sickly child who was never likely to live; he had been pale and ailing from a baby," said Lady Isabel.

"Why! did you know him?"

"I—I heard so," she replied, turning off her thoughtless avowal in the best manner she could.

"Don't you know that I am going to die?"

"No."

"Then why have you been grieving since we left Dr. Martin's? And why do you grieve at all for me? I am not your child."

The words, the scene altogether, overcame her. She knelt down by the sofa, and her tears burst forth freely. "There! you see," cried William.

"Oh, William, I—I had a little boy of my own once, and when I look at you I think of him, and that is why I cry."

"I know. You have told us of him before. His name was William, too."

She leaned over him, her breath mingling with his. She took his little hand in hers. "William, do you know that those whom God loves best He takes the first? Were you to die, you would go to Heaven, leaving all the cares and sorrows of the world behind you. It would have been happier for many of us had we died in infancy."

"Would it have been happier for you?"

"Yes," she faintly said. "I have had more than my share of sorrow. Sometimes I think that I cannot support it."

"Is it not past, then? Have you sorrow now?"

"I have it always. I shall have it till I die. Had I died a child, William, I should have escaped it. Oh! the world is full of it! full and full."

"What sort of sorrow?"

"Pain, sickness, care, trouble, sin, remorse, weariness," she wailed out. "I cannot enumerate the half that the world brings upon us. When you are very, very tired, William, does it not seem a luxury, a sweet happiness, to lie down at night in bed, waiting for sleep?"

"Yes. And I am often tired; as tired as that."

"Then just so do we, who are tired out with the world's cares, long for the grave in which we shall lie down to rest. We covet it, William; long for it; almost pray for it; but you cannot understand that."

"We don't lie in the grave, Madame Vine."

"No, no, child. Our bodies lie there, to be raised again in beauty at the last day. We go into a blessed place of rest, where sorrow and pain cannot come. I wish—I wish," she added, with a bursting heart, "that you and I were both there!"

"Who says the world is so sorrowful, Madame Vine? I think it is lovely, especially when the sun's shining on a hot day, and the butterflies come out. You should see East Lynne on a summer's morning, when you are running up and down the slopes, and the trees are wavering overhead, and the sky's blue, and the roses and the flowers are all out. You would not call it a sad world."

"A pleasant world; one we might regret to leave, if we were not wearied by pain and care. But what is this world, take it at its best, in comparison with the other world, Heaven? I have heard of some people who are afraid of death; they fear they shall not go to it; but when God takes a little child there it is because He loves him. 'It is a land,' as Mrs. Barbauld says, 'where the roses are without thorns, where the flowers are not mixed with brambles——'"

"I have seen the flowers," interrupted William, rising in his earnestness. "They are ten times brighter than our flowers are here."

"Seen the flowers! The flowers we shall see in Heaven?" she echoed. "I have seen a picture of them. We went to Lynneborough to see Martin's picture of

the Last Judgment. I don't mean Dr. Martin," said William, interrupting himself.

"I know."

"There were three large pictures. One was called the 'Plains of Heaven,' and I liked that best; and so we all did. Oh, you should have seen it! Did you ever see them, Madame Vine?"

"No. I have heard of them."

"There was a river, you know, and boats, beautiful gondolas they looked, taking the redeemed to the shores of Heaven. They were shadowy figures in white robes, myriads and myriads of them, for they reached all up in the air to the holy city; it seemed to be in the clouds, coming down from God. The flowers grew on the banks of the river—pink and blue and violet, all colors they were, but so bright and beautiful; brighter than our flowers are."

"Who took you to see the pictures?"

"Papa. He took me and Lucy; and Mrs. Hare went with us, and Barbara—she was not our mamma then. But, madame"—dropping his voice—"what do you think Lucy asked papa?"

"What did she ask him?"

"She asked whether mamma was amongst that crowd in the white robes, whether she was gone up to Heaven? Our mamma that was, you know—Lady Isabel. We were in front of the picture at the time, and lots of people heard what she said."

Lady Isabel dropped her face upon her hands. "What did your papa answer?" she breathed.

"I don't know. Nothing, I think. He was talking to Barbara. But it was very stupid of Lucy, because Wilson has told her over and over again that she must never talk of Lady Isabel to papa. Miss Manning has told her so, too. When we got home, and Wilson heard of it, she said Lucy deserved a good shaking."

"Why must Lady Isabel not be talked of to him?" A moment after the question had left her lips she wondered what possessed her to give utterance to it.

"I'll tell you," said William, in a whisper; "she ran

away from papa. Lucy talks nonsense about her having been kidnapped, but she knows nothing. I do, though they don't think it, perhaps."

"She may be among the redeemed some time, William, and you with her."

He fell back on the sofa pillow with a weary sigh and lay in silence. Lady Isabel shaded her face and remained in silence also. Soon she was aroused from it; William was in a fit of loud, sobbing tears. "Oh, I don't want to die! I don't want to die! Why should I go and leave papa and Lucy?"

She hung over him; she clasped her arms around him; her tears, her sobs, mingled with his. She whispered to him sweet and soothing words; she placed him so that he might sob out his grief upon her bosom; and in a little while the paroxysm had passed.

"Hark!" exclaimed William. "What's that?"

A sound of talking and laughter in the hall. Mr. Carlyle, Lord Mount Severn and his son were leaving the dining-room. They had some committee appointment that evening at West Lynne, and were departing to keep it. As the hall door closed upon them, Barbara came into the gray parlor. Up rose Madame Vine, hastily assuming her spectacles, and took her seat soberly upon her chair.

"All in the dark! And your fire going out!" exclaimed Barbara, as she hastened to stir the latter and send it into a blaze. "Who is that on the sofa? William, you ought to be in bed."

"Not yet, mamma. I don't want to go yet."

"But it is quite time that you should," she returned, ringing the bell. "To sit up at night is not the way to make you strong."

William was dismissed. And then she turned to Madame Vine and inquired what Dr. Martin had said.

"He said the lungs were undoubtedly affected; but, like all doctors, he would give no decisive opinion. I could see that he had formed one."

Mrs. Carlyle looked at her. The firelight played

upon her face, played especially upon the spectacles, and she moved her chair into the shade.

"Dr. Martin will see him again next week; he is coming to West Lynne. I am sure, by the tone of his voice, by his evasive manner, that he anticipates the worst, although he would not say so in words."

"I will take William into West Lynne myself," said Barbara. "The doctor will, of course, tell me. I came in to pay my debts," she added, dismissing the subject of the child, and holding out a five-pound note.

Lady Isabel mechanically stretched out her hand for it.

"Whilst we are upon the money topic," resumed Barbara, in a gay tone, "will you allow me to intimate that both myself and Mr. Carlyle very much disapprove of your making presents to the children? I was calculating, at a rough guess, the cost of the toys and things you have bought for them, and I think it must amount to a very large portion of the salary you have received."

"I have no one else to spend my money on; I love the children," was madame's answer, somewhat sharply given, as if she were jealous of the interference between her and the children, and would resent it.

"Nay, you have yourself. And if you do not require much outlay, you have, I should suppose, a reserve fund to which to put your money. Be so kind as to take the hint, madame; otherwise I shall be compelled more peremptorily to forbid your generosity. It is very good of you, very kind; but if you do not think of yourself, we must for you."

"I will buy them less," was the murmured answer. "I must give them a little token of love now and then."

"That you are welcome to do; a 'little token' once in a way; but not the costly toys you have been purchasing."

CHAPTER XLIX

MR. CARLYLE INVITED TO SOME PATE DE FOIE GRAS

A sighing, moaning wind swept round the domains of East Lynne. Bending the tall poplar trees, in the distance, swaying the oaks and elms nearer, rustling the fine old chestnuts in the park; a melancholy, sweeping, fitful wind. The weather had changed, gathering clouds seemed to be threatening rain; so, at least, deemed one wayfarer who was journeying on a solitary road that Saturday night.

He was on foot. A man in the garb of a sailor, with black, curling ringlets of hair, and black, curling whiskers; a prodigious pair of whiskers, hiding his neck above his blue turned collar, hiding partially his face. The glazed hat, brought low upon the brows, concealed it still more; and he wore a loose, rough pea-jacket, and wide, rough trousers, hitched up with a belt. Bearing steadily on, he struck into Bean Lane, a by-way already mentioned in this history, and from thence, passing through a small, unfrequented gate, he found himself in the grounds of East Lynne.

"Let's see," mused he, as he closed the gate behind him, and slipped its bolt. "The covered walk? That must be near the acacia trees. Then I must wind round to the right. I wonder if either of them will be there, waiting for me?"

Yes. Pacing the covered walk in her bonnet and mantle, as if taking an evening stroll—had any one encountered her, which was very unlikely, seeing that it was the most retired spot on the grounds—was Mrs. Carlyle.

"Oh, Richard, my poor brother!"

Locked in a yearning embrace, emotion overpowered both. Barbara sobbed like a child. A little while, and then he put her from him to look at her.

"So, Barbara, you are a wife now!"

"Oh, the happiest wife! Richard, sometimes I ask myself what I have done that God should have showered down blessings so great upon me. But for the sad trouble when I think of you, my life would be as one long summer's day. I have the sweetest baby; he is now nearly a year old. I shall have another soon, God willing. And Archibald—oh, I am so happy!"

She broke suddenly off with the name "Archibald"—not even to Richard could she speak of her intense love for her husband.

"How is it at the Grove?" he asked.

"Quite well; quite as usual. Mamma has been in better health lately. She does not know of this visit; but——"

"I must see her," interrupted Richard. "I did not see her last time, you remember."

"All in good time to talk of that. How are you getting on in Liverpool? What are you doing?"

"Don't inquire too closely, Barbara. I have no regular work, but I get a job at the docks now and then, and rub on. It is seasonable help, that which comes to me from you. Is it from you or Carlyle?"

Barbara laughed. "How are we to distinguish? His money is mine now, and mine is his. We have not separate purses, Richard; we send it to you jointly."

"Sometimes I have fancied it came from my mother."

Barbara shook her head. "We have never allowed mamma to know that you left London, or that we hold an address where we can write to you. It would not have done."

"Why have you summoned me here, Barbara? What has turned up?"

"Thorn has—I think. You would know him again, Richard?"

"Know him!" passionately echoed Richard Hare.

"Were you aware that a contest for the membership is now going on at West Lynne?"

"I saw it in the newspapers. Carlyle against Sir Francis Levison. I say, Barbara, how could he think of coming here to oppose Carlyle?"

"I don't know. I wonder that he should come here for other reasons also. First of all, Richard, tell me how you came to know Sir Francis Levison. You said you knew him, and that you had seen him with Thorn."

"So I do know him," answered Richard. "And I saw him with Thorn twice."

"Know him by sight only, I presume. Let me hear how you came to know him."

"He was pointed out to me. I saw Thorn walking arm-in-arm with a gentleman, and I showed them to the waterman at the cab-stand hard by. 'Do you know that fellow?' I asked him, indicating Thorn—for I wanted to come at who he really is. 'I don't know that one,' the old chap answered, 'but the one with him is Levison, the baronet. They are often together, a couple of swells both.' And a couple of swells they looked."

"And that was how you got to know Levison?"

"That was it," said Richard Hare.

"Then, Richard, you and the waterman made a mistake between you. He pointed out the wrong, or you did not look at the right. Thorn is Sir Francis Levison."

Richard stared at her with all his eyes. "Nonsense, Barbara!"

"He is. I have suspected it ever since the night you saw him in Bean Lane. The action you described of his pushing back his hair, his white hands, his sparkling diamond ring, could only apply to one person—Francis Levison. On Thursday I drove by the Raven when he was addressing the people, and I noticed the self-same action. On the impulse of the moment I wrote off for you, that you might come and set the doubt at rest. I need not have done so; for when Mr. Carlyle returned home that evening and I acquainted him with what I had done, he told me that

Thorn and Francis Levison are one and the same. Otway Bethel recognized him that same afternoon; and so did Ebenezer James."

"They would both know him," cried Richard, eagerly, "James I am positive would, for he was skulking down to Hallijohn's often then, and saw Thorn a dozen times. Otway Bethel must have seen him also—though he protested he had not. Barbara!"

The name was uttered in affright, and Richard plunged amidst the trees, for somebody was in sight. A tall, dark form, advancing from the end of the walk. Barbara smiled; it was only Mr. Carlyle, and Richard emerged again.

"Fears still, Richard!" Mr. Carlyle exclaimed, as he shook Richard cordially by the hand. "So you have changed your traveling costume!"

"I couldn't venture here again in the old suit; it had been seen, you said," returned Richard. "I bought this rig-out yesterday, second-hand. Two pounds for the lot; I think they shaved me."

"Ringlets and all?" laughed Mr. Carlyle.

"It's the old hair, oiled and curled," cried Dick. "The barber charged a shilling for doing it, and cut my hair into the bargain. I told him not to spare grease, for I liked the curls to shine; sailors always do. Mr. Carlyle, Barbara says that Levison and that brute Thorn have turned out to be the same."

"They have, Richard, as it appears. Nevertheless, it may be as well for you to take a private view of Levison before anything is done—as you once did of the other Thorn. It would not do to make a stir, and then discover that there was a mistake—that he was not Thorn."

"When can I see him?" asked Richard eagerly.

"It must be contrived somehow. Were you to hang about the door of the Raven—this evening—you'd be sure to get the opportunity, for he is always passing in and out. No one will know you."

"I shall look odd to people's eyes. You don't see many sailors in West Lynne."

"Not odd at all. We have a Russian bear here at present; and you'll be nobody beside him."

"A Russian bear!" repeated Richard, while Barbara laughed.

"Mr. Otway Bethel has returned in what is popularly supposed to be a bear's hide; hence the new name he is greeted with. Will it turn out, Richard, that he had anything to do with the murder?"

Richard shook his head. "It was not possible, Mr. Carlyle; I have said so all along. But about Levison? If I find him to be the man Thorn—what steps can then be taken?"

"That's the difficulty," said Mr. Carlyle.

"Who will set it going? Who will move on it?"

"You must, Richard."

"I?" uttered Richard Hare, in consternation. "I move in it?"

"You yourself. Who else is there? I have been thinking it well over."

"Will you not take it upon yourself, Mr. Carlyle?"

"No—being Levison," was the quiet answer.

"Curse him!" impetuously retorted Richard. "But why should you scruple, Mr. Carlyle? Most men, wronged as you have been, would leap at the opportunity for revenge."

"For the crime perpetrated upon Hallijohn I would pursue him to the scaffold. For my own wrong, no. But the remaining negative has cost me something. Many a time, since this appearance of his at West Lynne, have I been obliged to exercise violent control upon myself, or I should have horsewhipped him within an ace of his life."

"If you horsewhipped him to death he would only meet his deserts."

"What I advise is to apply to Ball & Treadman and get them to take up the case."

Ball & Treadman—as the brass plate on their office doors intimated—were conveyancers and attorneys-at-law.

Lawyer Ball was at breakfast when Mr. Carlyle was shown in.

"Hallo, Carlyle! You are here betimes."

"Sit still; don't disturb yourself. Don't ring; I have breakfasted."

"The most delicious *pate de foie*," urged Lawyer Ball, who was a regular gourmand. "I get 'em direct from Strasburg."

Mr. Carlyle resisted the offered dainty with a smile. "I have come on business," said he, "not to feast. Before I enter upon it, you will give me your word, Ball, that my communication shall be held sacred, in the event of your not consenting to pursue it further?"

"Certainly I will. What business is it? Some that offends the delicacy of the Carlyle office?" he added, with a laugh. "A would-be client, whom you turn over to me, in your exclusiveness?"

"It is a client for whom I cannot act. But not from the motives you assume. It concerns that affair of Hallijohn's," Mr. Carlyle continued, bending forward and somewhat dropping his voice—"the murder."

Lawyer Ball, who had just taken in a delicious *bonne bouchee* of the *foie gras*, bolted it whole in his surprise. "Why, that was enacted ages and ages ago; it is past and done with," he exclaimed.

"Not done with," said Mr. Carlyle. "Circumstances have come to light which tend to indicate that Richard Hare was innocent; that it was another who committed the murder."

"In conjunction with him?" interrupted the attorney.

"No; alone. Richard Hare had nothing whatever to do with it. He was not present at the time."

"Do you believe that?" asked Lawyer Ball.

"I have believed it for years."

"Then who did commit that murder?"

"Richard accuses one of the name of Thorn. Several years back I had a meeting with Richard Hare and he disclosed certain facts to me which, if correct, could not fail to prove that he was innocent. Since that period this impression has been gradually confirmed

little by little, trifle upon trifle, and I would now stake my life upon his innocence. I should long ago have moved in the matter, hit or miss, could I have lighted upon Thorn; but he was not to be found, nor any clew to him, and we now know that this name Thorn was an assumed one."

"Is he to be found?"

"He is found. He is at West Lynne. Mark you, I don't accuse him; I do not offer an opinion upon his guilt; I only state my belief in Richard's innocence; it may have been another who did it, neither Richard nor Thorn. It was my firm intention to take up Richard's cause the instant I saw my way clearly in it; and now that that time has come I am debarred from doing so."

"What debars you?" asked Lawyer Ball.

"Hence I come to you," continued Mr. Carlyle, disregarding the question. "I come to you on the part of Richrd Hare. I have seen him lately and conversed with him. I gave him my reasons for not personally acting, advised him to apply to you, and promised to come here and open the matter. Will you see Richard, in good faith, and hear his story—giving the understanding that he shall depart in secret and unmo- lested, as he came, if you do not desire to undertake the business?"

"I'll give it with all the pleasure in life," freely returned the attorney. "I'm sure I don't want to harm poor Dick Hare. And if he can convince me of his innocence, I'll do my best to establish it."

"Of his own tale you must be the judge. I do not wish to bias you. I have stated my belief in his innocence; but I repeat that I give no opinion myself as to who else may be guilty. Hear his account, and then take up the affair, or not, as you think fit. He would not come to you without your previous promise to hold him harmless—to be his friend, in short, for the time being. When I bear this promise to him from you, my part is done."

CHAPTER L

AN INTERVIEW

An evening or two later the interview between Lawyer Ball and Richard Hare took place. With some difficulty would the lawyer believe his tale; not as to its broad details—he saw that he might give credit to them; but as to the accusation against Sir Francis Levison. Richard persisted, mentioning every minute particular he could think of; his meeting him the night of the elopement in Bean Lane; his meetings with him again in London, and Sir Francis' evident fear of him; and the previous Saturday night's recognition at the door of the Raven. Not forgetting to tell of the anonymous letter received by Justice Hare the morning that Richard was in hiding at Mr. Carlyle's. There was no doubt in the world it had been sent by Francis Levison to frighten Mr. Hare into dispatching him out of West Lynne, had Richard taken refuge in his father's house. None had more cause to keep Dick from falling into the hands of justice than Francis Levison.

"I believe what you say, I believe all you say, Mr. Richard, touching Thorn," debated the attorney; "but it's next to impossible to take in so astounding a fact as that he is Sir Francis Levison."

"You can satisfy yourself of the fact from other lips than mine," said Richard. "Otway Bethel could testify to it if he would, though I doubt his willingness. But there's Ebenezer James."

"What does he know about it?" asked the attorney, in surprise. "Ebenezer James is in our office at present."

"He saw Thorn often enough in those days, and has, I hear, recognized him as Levison. You had better

inquire of him. Should you object to take a case against Levison?"

"Not a bit of it. Let me be assured that I am upon safe grounds as to the identity of the man, and I'll proceed in it forthwith. Levison is an out-and-out scoundrel, as Levison, and deserves hanging. I will send for James at once, and hear what he says," he concluded, after a pause of consideration.

Richard Hare started wildly up. "Not while I am here; he must not see me. For Heaven's sake, consider the peril to me, Mr. Ball!"

"Pooh, pooh!" laughed the attorney. "Do you suppose I have but this one reception-room? We don't let cats into cages where canary birds are kept."

Ebenezer James returned with the messenger dispatched after him. "You'll be sure to find him at the singing saloon," Mr. Ball had said; and there the gentleman was found.

"Is it any copying, sir, wanted to be done in a hurry?" cried James as he came in.

"No," replied the attorney. "I wish a question or two answered; that's all. Did you ever know Sir Francis Levison to go by any name but his own?"

"Yes, sir; he has gone by the name of Thorn."

A pause. "When was this?"

"It was the autumn when Hallijohn was killed. Thorn used to be prowling about there in the evening—in the wood and at the cottage, I mean."

"What did he prowl for?"

Ebenezer James laughed. "For the same reason that several more did—I for one. He was sweet upon Afy Hallijohn."

"Where was he living at that time? I never remember him in West Lynne."

"He was not at West Lynne, sir. On the contrary, he seemed to take precious good care that West Lynne and he kept separate. A splendid horse he rode, thoroughbred, and he used to come galloping into the woods at dusk, get over and chat with Miss Afy, mount and gallop away again."

"Where to? Where did he come from?"

"From somewhere near Swainson; a ten miles' ride Afy used to say he had. Now that he has appeared here in his own plumage, of course I can put two and two together, and not be much at fault for the exact spot."

"And where is that?" asked the lawyer.

"Levison Park," said Mr. Ebenezer. "There's little doubt he was stopping at his uncle's, and you know that is close to Swainson."

Lawyer Ball thought things were becoming clearer—or darker, whichever you may please to call it. He paused again, and then put a question impressibly. "James, have you any doubt whatever, or shadow of doubt, that Sir Francis Levison is the same man you knew as Thorn?"

"Sir, have I any doubt that you are Mr. Ball, or that I am Eb James?" retorted Mr. Ebenezer. "I am as certain of that man's identity as I am of yours."

"Are you ready to swear to the fact in a court of justice?"

"Ready and willing, in any court in the world. To-morrow, if I am called upon."

"Very well. You may go back to your singing club now. Keep a silent tongue in your head."

"All close, sir," answered Mr. Ebenezer James.

Far into the middle of the night saw Lawyer Ball and Richard Hare, the former chiefly occupied in taking notes of Richard's statement. "It's half a crotchet, this objection of Carlyle's to interfere with Levison!" said Richard suddenly, in the midst of some desultory conversation. "Don't you think so, Mr. Ball?"

The lawyer pursed up his lips. "Um—a delicate point. Carlyle was always fastidiously honorable. I should go at him, thunder and fury, in his place; but I and Carlyle are different."

CHAPTER LI

THE WORLD TURNED UPSIDE DOWN

One afternoon Madame Vine brought William up to Mr. Carlyle's office for examination by Dr. Martin. "What is your opinion?" asked Carlyle, as the doctor was leaving.

"Well," began the doctor, in a very professional tone, "the boy is certainly delicate. But——"

"Stay, Dr. Martin," was the interruption, spoken in a low, impressive voice, "you will deal candidly with me. I must know the truth, without disguise. Tell it me freely." Dr. Martin paused. "The truth is not always palatable, Mr. Carlyle."

"True. But for that very reason all the more necessary. Let me hear the worst. And the child has no mother, you know, to be shocked with it."

"I fear that it will be the worst."

"Death?"

"Ay. The seeds of consumption must have been inherent in him. They are showing themselves all too plainly."

What Mr. Carlyle felt was not suffered to appear; his feelings were entirely under his own control. That he was tenderly and sincerely attached to his children there was no doubt. He remained quite still, his eyes shaded by their drooping lids. A few minutes and he broke the silence.

"How can consumption have come to him? It is not in the family; on my side, or—or on his mother's."

"Pardon me," said the doctor. "The child's grandmother died of consumption—the Countess of Mount Severn."

"They did not call it consumption," said Mr. Carlyle.

"I don't care what they called it. It was consump-

tion. Very slow and lingering—mild, too; I grant you that.”

“Is there no hope for the child?”

Dr. Martin looked at him. “You bade me give you the truth.”

“Nothing else! nothing but the truth,” returned Mr. Carlyle, his tone one of mingled pain and command.

“Then there is none—no hope whatever. The lungs are extensively diseased.”

“And how long——”

“That I cannot say,” interrupted the doctor, divining what the next question was to be. “He may linger on for months—for a year, it may even be—or a very short period may see the termination. Don’t worry him with any more lessons and stuff of learning; he’ll never want it.”

The doctor cast his eyes upon the governess as he spoke; the injunction concerning her as much as it did Mr. Carlyle. And the doctor started, for he thought she was fainting; her face had become so ghastly white; he could see it through her veil.

“You are ill, madame! you are ill! *Trouve malade!* don’t you?”

She opened her lips to speak; her trembling lips, that would not obey her. Dr. Martin, in his concern, pulled off the blue spectacles. She caught them from him with one hand, sat down on the nearest chair and hid her face with the other.

Mr. Carlyle, scarcely understanding the scuffle, came forward. “Are you ill, Madame Vine?”

She was putting on her spectacles under her veil, her face whiter than ever. “Pray do not interrupt your conversation to pay attention to me. I thank you; I thank you both. I am subject to—slight spasms, and they make me look ill for the moment. It has passed now.”

The doctor turned from her; Mr. Carlyle resumed his place by the window. “What should be the treatment?” asked the latter.

"Almost anything you please—that the boy himself likes. Let him play or rest, ride or walk, eat and drink, or let it alone; it cannot make much difference."

"Doctor, you yield to it, as a last hope, very lightly."

Dr. Martin shook his head. "I speak as I know. You insisted on having my true opinion."

"A warmer climate?" suggested Mr. Carlyle, eagerly, the idea crossing his mind.

"It might prolong the end for a very little while—a few weeks, perhaps—avert it, it could not. And who could take him? You could not go; and he has no mother. No, I should not advise it."

"I wish you had seen Wainwright—with reference to William."

"I have seen him. I met him this afternoon, by chance, and told him my opinion. How is Mrs. Carlyle?"

"Pretty well. She is not in robust health, you are aware, just now."

Dr. Martin smiled. "These things will happen. Mrs. Carlyle has a thoroughly good constitution; a far stronger one than—than——"

"Than what?" said Mr. Carlyle, wondering why he hesitated.

"You must grant me pardon. I may as well finish, now I have begun; but I was not thinking when I spoke. She is stronger than was Lady Isabel. I must be off to catch the six train."

"You will come over from time to time to East Lynne to see William."

"If you wish it. It may be a satisfaction perhaps. *Bon jour, madame.*"

Lady Isabel bowed to him as he left the room with Mr. Carlyle. "How fond that French governess of yours is of the boy," the doctor whispered, as they crossed the hall. "I detected it when she brought him to Lynneborough. And you saw her just now! that emotion was all because I said he could not live. Good-by."

Mr. Carlyle grasped his hand. "Doctor, I wish you

could save him," he passionately uttered. "Ah, Carlyle! if we humble mites of human doctors could but keep those whom it is the Great Physician's good pleasure to take, how we should be run after! There's hidden mercy, remember, in the darkest cloud. Farewell, my friend."

Mr. Carlyle returned to the room. He approached Lady Isabel, looking down upon her as she sat; not that he could see much of her face. "These are grievous tidings. But you were more prepared for them, I fancy, than I was."

She started suddenly up, approached the window, and looked out, as if she saw somebody passing whom she would gaze at. All of emotion was stirred up within her; her temples throbbed; her heart beat; her breath became hysterical. Could she bear thus to hold confidential converse with him over the state of their child? She pulled off her gloves for coolness to her burning hands, she wiped the moisture from her pale forehead, she struggled for calmness. What excuse could she offer to Mr. Carlyle.

"I love the boy so very much, sir," she said, half turning round. "And the doctor's fiat, too plainly pronounced, has given me pain, pain to agitation."

Again Mr. Carlyle approached her, following close up to where she stood. "You are very kind, thus to feel an interest in my child."

She did not answer.

"Do not acquaint Mrs. Carlyle," he resumed. "I would prefer to tell her myself. She must not be suddenly grieved or alarmed just now."

"Why should she be either grieved or alarmed? She is not his mother." Passionately, fiercely, resentfully were the words spoken, as if she would cast contempt on Barbara. But recollection returned to her before they had all left her lips, and the concluding sentence was wonderfully toned down. Mr. Carlyle raised his eyelids, and the tones of his voice rang haughtily on her ear:

"You speak hastily, madame."

William, who had fled from the room with the avowed purpose of getting something nice from the cook, here pushed his head in at the door to reconnoiter.

"He's gone, isn't he? I would not come back while he was here, for fear he should give me some cod-liver oil now."

Mr. Carlyle sat down and lifted William on his knees, his forehead pressed lovingly against the boy's silky hair. "My darling child, the cod-liver oil is to do you good, you know; to make you strong."

"But I don't think it does make me strong, papa. Does Mr. Martin say I shall die?"

"Who told you anything about dying?"

"Oh—some of them talk of it."

"We must see what we can do toward curing you, instead of letting you die," responded Mr. Carlyle, almost at a loss what answer to make, and suppressing the emotion of his own aching heart. "But, whether we live or die, we are in the hands of God, you know, William, and whatever God wills is always for the best." ✓

"Yes, I know that, papa."

Mr. Carlyle rose and lifted the boy toward Madame Vine. "Take care of him, madame," he said, and passed into the hall.

"Here, papa, papa! I want you," cried William, breaking from Madame Vine's hands and running after him. "Let me walk home with you? Are you going to walk?"

How could he find it in his heart to deny anything to the child then? "Very well," he said. "Stay here till I come for you."

"We are going home with papa," proclaimed William to Madame Vine.

Madame Vine did not relish the news, but there was no help for it. In a very short time Mr. Carlyle appeared, and they set off, he holding William's hand, Madame Vine walking alone, on the other side of the child.

"Where's William Vane, papa?" asked the boy.

"He has gone on with Lord Mount Severn."

Scarcely had the words been spoken when some one came bolting out of the post-office and met them face to face—almost ran against them, in fact, creating some hindrance. The man looked confused, and slunk off into the gutter. And you will not wonder that he did, when you hear that it was Francis Levison. William, childlike, turned his head to gaze at the intruder.

"I would not be an ugly, bad man, like him, for the world," quoth he, as he turned it back again. "Would you, papa?"

Mr. Carlyle did not answer, and Madame Vine cast an involuntary glance upon him from her white face. His was impassive, save that a curl of ineffable scorn was upon his lips.

At Mr. Justice Hare's gate they encountered that gentleman, who appeared to be standing there to give himself an airing. William caught sight of Mrs. Hare seated on the garden bench, outside the window, and ran to kiss her. All children loved Mrs. Hare. The justice was looking—not pale, that would not be a term half strong enough—but yellow. The curls of his best wig were limp, and all his pomposity appeared to have gone out of him.

"I say, Carlyle, what on earth is this?" cried he, in a tone that, for him, was wonderfully subdued and meek. "I was not on the bench this afternoon, but Pinner has been telling me of—of—an application that was made to them in private. It's not true, you know; it can't be; it's too far-fetched a tale. What do you know about it?"

"Nothing," said Mr. Carlyle. "I have been privy to no application."

"It seems they want to make out that Dick never murdered Hallijohn," proceeded the justice in a half whisper, glancing around, as if to be sure there were no eavesdroppers amidst the trees.

"Oh!" said Mr. Carlyle.

"But that Levison did. Levison!"

Mr. Carlyle made no reply, save by gesture, his face more impassive than before. Not so another face beside him.

"But it can't be, you know. It can't, I say."

"So far as Richard's innocence goes, of that I have long been convinced," spoke Mr. Carlyle.

"And that Levison's guilty?" returned the justice, opening his eyes in puzzled wonderment.

"I give no opinion upon that point," was the cold rejoinder.

"It's impossible, I say. Dick can't be innocent. You may as well tell me the world's turned upside down."

"It is sometimes, I think. That Richard was not the guilty man will be proved yet, justice, in the broad face of day."

"If—if—that other did do it, I should think you'd take the warrant out of the hands of the police and capture him yourself."

"I would not touch him with a pair of tongs," spoke Mr. Carlyle, his lip curling again. "If the man goes to his punishment, he goes; but I do not help him on his road thither."

"Can Dick be innocent?" mused the justice, returning to the thought which so troubled his mind. "Then why has he kept away?"

"That you might not deliver him up, justice. You know you took an oath to do it."

The justice looked remarkably humble.

"Oh, but, Carlyle," impulsively said he, the thought occurring to him, "what an awful revenge this would have been for you on—somebody—had she lived. How her false step would have come home to her now!"

"False steps come home to most people," responded Mr. Carlyle, as he took William by the hand, who then ran up. And, lifting his hat to Mrs. Hare in the distance, he walked on.

She, Lady Isabel, walked on too, by the side of the child, as before—walked on with a shivering frame

and a heart sickened unto death. The justice looked after them, his mind preoccupied. He was a maze of bewilderment. Richard innocent! Richard whom he had striven to pursue to a shameful end! And that other the guilty one? The world was turning upside down.

CHAPTER LII

THE ARREST

On the day of nomination West Lynne was in a fever of excitement. Sir Francis and Mr. Drake were conversing together, when suddenly Sir Francis felt his arm gripped by a policeman and a voice rang out: "Sir Francis Levison, you are my prisoner." Nothing worse than debt occurred at the moment to the mind of Sir Francis. But that was quite enough, and he turned purple with rage.

"Your hands off, vermin! How dare you?"

A quick movement, a slight click, a hustle from the wondering crowd more immediately around, and the handcuffs were on. Utter amazement alone prevented Mr. Drake from knocking down the policeman. A dozen vituperating tongues assailed him. "I'm sorry to do it in this public place and manner," said the officer, partly to Sir Francis, partly to the gentlemen around; "but I couldn't come across him last night, do as I would. And the warrant has been in my hands since five o'clock yesterday afternoon. Sir Francis Levison, I arrest you for the wilful murder of George Hallijohn."

The crowd fell back, paralyzed with consternation; the word was passed from one extreme of it to the other, back and across again, and the excitement grew high. The ladies looking from Miss Carlyle's window saw what had happened, though they could not divine the cause. Some of them turned pale at the sight of the handcuffs, and Mary Pinner, an excitable girl, screamed.

Pale? What was their gentle paleness, compared

with the frightfully livid hue that disfigured the features of Francis Levison? His agitation was pitiable to witness, his face a terror to look upon. Once or twice he gasped as if in agony; and then his eyes happened to fall on Otway Bethel, who stood near. Shorn of its adornments—which might not be thought adornments on paper—the following was the sentence that burst involuntarily from his lips:

“You hound! It is you who have done this!”

“No! by——” Whether Mr. Otway Bethel was about to swear by Jupiter or Juno never was decided, the sentence being cut ignominiously short at the above two words. Another policeman, in the summary manner exercised toward Sir Francis, had clapped a pair of handcuffs upon him.

“Mr. Otway Bethel, I arrest you as an accomplice in the murder of George Hallijohn.”

You may be sure the whole assembly was arrested too—figuratively—and stood with eager gaze and open ears. Colonel Bethel, quitting the scarlet-and-purple ranks, flashed into those of the yellows. He knew his nephew was graceless enough; but—to see him with a pair of handcuffs on!

“What does all this mean?” he demanded of the officers.

“It’s no fault of ours, colonel; we have but executed the warrant,” answered one of them. “The magistrates issued it yesterday against these two gentlemen on suspicion of their being concerned in the murder of Hallijohn.”

“In conjunction with Richard Hare?” cried the astounded colonel, gazing from one to the other, prisoners and officers, in scared bewilderment.

“It’s alleged now that Richard Hare didn’t have nothing to do with it,” returned the man. “It’s said he is innocent. I’m sure I don’t know.”

“I swear that I am innocent!” passionately uttered Otway Bethel.

“Well, sir, you have only got to prove it,” civilly rejoined the policeman.

CHAPTER LIII

THE JUSTICE-ROOM

The magistrates took their seats on the bench. The bench would not hold them; all in the Commission of the Peace flocked in. Any other day they would not have been at West Lynne. As to the room, the wonder was how it ever got emptied again, so densely was it packed. Sir Francis Levison's friends were there in a body. They did not believe a word of the accusation. A scandalous affair, cried they, got up, probably, by some of the scarlet-and-purple party. Lord Mount Severn, who chose to be present, had a place assigned him on the bench. Lord Vane got the best place he could fight for amidst the crowd. Mr. Justice Hare sat as chairman, unusually stern, unbending and grim. No favor would he show, but no unfairness. Had it been to save his son from hanging, he would not adjudge guilt to Francis Levison against his conscience. Colonel Bethel was likewise on the bench, stern also.

* In that primitive place—primitive in what related to the justice-room and the justices—things were not conducted with the regularity of the law. The law there was often a dead letter. No very grave cases were decided there—they went to Lynneborough. A month at the treadmill, or a week's imprisonment, or a bout of whipping for juveniles, were pretty nearly the harshest sentences pronounced. In this examination, as in others, evidence was advanced that was inadmissible—at least, that would have been inadmissible in a more orthodox court; hearsay testimony and irregularities of that nature. Mr. Rubiny watched the case on behalf of Sir Francis Levison.

Mr. Ball opened the proceedings, giving the account which had been imparted to him by Richard Hare, but

not mentioning Richard as his informant. He was questioned as to whence he obtained his information, but replied that it was not convenient, at present, to disclose the source. The stumbling-block to the magistrates appeared to be the identifying Levison with Thorn. Ebenezer James came forward to prove it.

"What do you know of the prisoner, Sir Francis Levison?" questioned Justice Herbert.

"Not much," responded Mr. Ebenezer. "I used to know him as Captain Thorn."

"Captain Thorn?"

"Afy Hallijohn called him captain; but I understood he was but a lieutenant."

"From whom did you understand that?"

"From Afy. She was the only person I heard speak of him."

"And you say you were in the habit of seeing him in the place mentioned, the Abbey Wood?"

"I saw him there repeatedly; also at Hallijohn's cottage."

"Did you speak with him—as Thorn?"

"Two or three times. I addressed him as Thorn, and he answered to the name. I had no suspicion but what it was his name. Otway Bethel"—casting his eyes on Mr. Otway, who stood in his shaggy attire—"also knew him as Thorn; and so, I make no doubt, did Locksley, for he was always in the wood."

"Anybody else?"

"Poor Hallijohn himself knew him as Thorn. He said to Afy one day, in my presence, that he would not have that confounded dandy, Thorn, coming there."

"Were those the words he used?"

"They were. 'That confounded dandy, Thorn!' I remember Afy's reply; it was rather insolent. She said Thorn was as free to come there as anybody else; and she would not be found fault with, as though she was not fit to take care of herself."

"That is nothing to the purpose. Were any others acquainted with this Thorn?"

"I should imagine the elder sister, Joyce, was. And the one who knew him best of all was young Richard Hare."

Old Richard Hare, from his place on the bench, frowned menacingly at an imaginary Richard.

"What took Thorn into the woods so often?"

"He was courting Afy?"

"With an intention of marrying her?"

"Well—no," cried Mr. Ebenezer, with a twist of the mouth; "I should not suppose he entertained any intention of that sort. He used to come over from Swainson, or its neighborhood, riding a splendid horse."

"Whom did you suppose him to be?"

"I supposed him to be moving in the upper ranks of life. There was no doubt of it. His dress, his manners, his tone, all proclaimed it. He appeared to wish to shun observation, and evidently did not care to be seen. He rarely arrived until twilight."

"Did you see him there on the night of Hallijohn's murder?"

"No. I was not there myself that evening, so could not have seen him."

"Did a suspicion cross your mind at any time that he may have been guilty of the murder?"

"Never. Richard Hare was accused of it, and it never occurred to me to suppose that he had not done it."

"Pray, how many years is this ago?" sharply interrupted Mr. Rubiny, perceiving that the witness was done with.

"Let's see!" responded Mr. Ebenezer. "I can't be sure as to a year without reckoning up. A dozen, if not more."

"And you mean to say that you can swear to Sir Francis Levison being that man—with all those years intervening?"

"I swear that he is the same man. I am as positive of his identity as I am of my own."

"Without having seen him from that time to this?"

derisively returned the lawyer. "Nonsense, witness!"

"I did not say that," returned Mr. Ebenezer.

The court pricked up its ears. "Have you seen him between then and now?" asked one of them.

"Once."

"Where, and when?"

"It was in London. About eighteen months after the period of the murder."

"What communication had you with him?"

"None at all. I only saw him. Quite by chance."

"And whom did you suppose him to be—Thorn—or Levison?"

"Thorn, certainly. I never dreamt of his being Levison until he appeared here now to oppose Mr. Carlyle."

A wild, savage curse shot through Sir Francis' heart as he heard the words. What demon had possessed him to venture his neck into the lion's den? There had been a strong, hidden power holding him back from it, independent of his dislike to face Mr. Carlyle. How could he have been so mad as to disregard it? How?

"You may have been mistaken, witness, as to the identity of the man you saw in London. It may not have been the Thorn you had known here." Mr. Ebenezer James smiled a peculiar smile. "I was not mistaken," he said, his tone sounding remarkably significant. "I am upon my oath."

"Call Aphrodite Hallijohn."

The lady appeared, supported by her friend the policeman, and Mr. Ebenezer James was desired by Mr. Ball to leave the court while she gave her evidence. Doubtless he had his reasons.

"What is your name?"

"Afy," replied she, looking daggers at everybody and sedulously keeping her back turned upon Francis Levison and Otway Bethel.

"Your name in full, if you please. You were not christened 'Afy'?"

"Aphrodite Hallijohn. You all know my name as well as I do. Where's the use of asking useless questions?"

"Swear the witness," said Mr. Justice Hare.

"I won't be sworn," said Afy.

"You must be sworn," said Mr. Justice Herbert.

"But I say I won't," repeated Afy.

"Then we must commit you to prison for contempt of court."

There was no mercy in his tone, and Afy turned white. Sir John Dobede interposed. "Young woman, had you a hand in the murder of your father?"

"I?" returned Afy, struggling with passion, temper and excitement. "How dare you ask me so unnatural a question, sir? He was the kindest father!" she added, battling with her tears. "And I loved him dearly. I would have saved his life with mine."

"And yet you refuse to give evidence that may assist in bringing his destroyer to justice!"

"No; I don't refuse on that score. I should like his destroyer to be hanged, and I'd go to see it. But who knows what other questions you may be asking me—about things that concern neither you nor anybody else? That's why I object."

"We have only to deal with what bears upon the murder. The questions put to you will relate to that."

Afy considered. "Well, you may swear me, then," she said. Little notion had she of the broad gauge those questions would run upon. And she was sworn accordingly. Very unwillingly yet. For Afy, who would have told lies by the bushel unsworn, did look upon an oath as a serious matter, and felt herself compelled to speak the truth when examined under it.

"How did you become acquainted with a gentleman you often saw in those days—Captain Thorn?"

"There!" uttered the dismayed Afy. "You are beginning already. He had nothing to do with it. He did not do the murder."

"You have sworn to answer the question put," was

the uncompromising rejoinder. "How did you become acquainted with Captain Thorn?"

"I met him at Swainson," doggedly answered Afy. "I went over there one day just for a spree, and I met him at the pastry-cook's."

"And he fell in love with your pretty face?" said Lawyer Ball, taking up the examination.

In the incense to her vanity, Afy forgot her scruples.

"Yes, he did," she answered, casting a smile of general fascination round upon the court.

"And got out of you where you lived and entered upon his courting; riding over nearly every evening to see you?"

"Well," acknowledged Afy, "there was no harm in it."

"Oh, certainly not," acquiesced the lawyer, in a pleasant, free tone, to put the witness at her ease. "Rather good, I should say; I wish I had had the like luck. Did you know him at that time by the name of Levison?"

"No. He said he was Captain Thorn, and I thought he was."

"Did you know where he lived?"

"No. He never said that. I thought he was stopping temporarily at Swainson."

"And—dear me, what a sweet bonnet that is you have on!"

Afy—whose egregious vanity was her besetting sin, who possessed enough of it for any ten pretty women going—cast a glance out of the corners of her eyes at the admired bonnet, and became Mr. Ball's entirely.

"And how long was it, after your first meeting with him, before you discovered his real name?"

"Not for a long time. Several months."

"Subsequently to the murder, I presume?"

"Oh, yes."

Mr. Ball's eyes gave a twinkle, and the unconscious Afy surreptitiously smoothed, with one finger, the glossy parting of her hair.

"Besides Captain Thorn, what gentlemen were in the wood the night of the murder?"

"Richard Hare was there. Otway Bethel and Locksley also. Those were all I saw—until the crowd came."

"Were Locksley and Mr. Otway Bethel martyrs to your charms—as the other two were?"

"No, indeed!" was the witness' answer, with an indignant toss of the head. "A couple of poaching fellows like them! They had better have tried it on!"

"Which of the two, Hare or Thorn, was inside the cottage with you that evening?"

Afy came out of her vanity and hesitated. She was beginning to wonder where the questions would get to.

"You are upon your oath, witness!" thundered Mr. Justice Hare. "If it was my—if it was Richard Hare who was with you, say so. But there must be no equivocation here."

Afy was startled. "It was Thorn," she answered to Mr. Ball.

"And where was Richard Hare?"

"I don't know. He came down, but I sent him away; I would not admit him. I dare say he lingered in the wood."

"Did he leave a gun with you?"

"Yes. It was one he had promised to lend my father. I put it down just inside the door; he told me it was loaded."

"How long after this was it before your father interrupted you?"

"He didn't interrupt us at all," returned Afy. "I never saw my father until I saw him dead."

"Were you not in the cottage all the time?"

"No. We went out for a stroll at the back. Captain Thorn wished me good-by there, and I stayed out."

"Did you hear the gun go off?"

"I heard a shot as I was sitting on the stump of a tree and thinking. But I attached no importance to it, never supposing it was in the cottage."

“What was it that Captain Thorn had to get from the cottage after he quitted you? What had he left there?”

Now this was a random shaft. Lawyer Ball, a keen man, who had well weighed all points in the tale imparted to him by Richard Hare, as well as other points, had made his own deductions, and spoke accordingly. Afy was taken in.

“He had left his hat there; nothing else. It was a warm evening, and he had gone out without it.”

“He told you, I believe, sufficient to convince you of the guilt of Richard Hare?” Another shaft at random.

“I did not want convincing. I knew it without. Everybody else knew it.”

“To be sure,” equably returned Lawyer Ball. “Did Captain Thorn see it done?—did he tell you that?”

“He had got his hat and was away down the wood some little distance when he heard voices in dispute in the cottage, and recognized one of them to be that of my father. The shot followed close upon it, and he guessed some mischief had been done, though he did not suspect its extent.”

“Thorn told you this! When?”

“The same night; much later.”

“How came you to see him?”

Afy hesitated. But she was sternly told to answer the question.

“A boy came up to the cottage and called me out, and said a strange gentleman wanted to see me in the wood, and had given him sixpence to come for me. I went out, and found Captain Thorn. He asked what the commotion was about, and I told him Richard Hare had killed my father. He said that, now I spoke of him, he could recognize Richard Hare's as having been the other voice in the dispute.”

“What boy was that—the one who came for you?”

“It was Mother Whiteman's little son.”

“And Captain Thorn then gave you this version of the tragedy?”

"It was the right version," resentfully spoke Afy.

"How do you know that?"

"Oh, because I'm sure it was. Who else would kill him but Richard Hare? It is a scandalous shame, your wanting to put it upon Thorn."

"Look at the prisoner, Sir Francis Levison. Is it he whom you knew as Thorn?"

"Yes. But that does not make him guilty of the murder."

"Of course it does not," complacently assented Lawyer Ball. "How long did you remain with Captain Thorn in London—upon that little visit, you know?"

Afy stared like anybody moonstruck.

"When you quitted this place after the tragedy it was to join Captain Thorn in London. How long, I ask, did you remain with him?" Entirely a random shaft, this.

"Who says I was with him? Who says I went after him?" flashed Afy, with scarlet cheeks.

"I do," replied Lawyer Ball, taking notes of her confusion. "Come, it's over and done with; it's no use to deny it now. We all go upon visits to friends sometimes."

"I never heard anything so bold!" cried Afy. "Where will you tell me I went next?"

"You are upon your oath, woman!" again interposed Justice Hare, and a trembling, as of agitation, might be detected in his voice, in spite of its ringing severity. "Were you with the prisoner, Levison, or were you with Richard Hare?"

"I with Richard Hare!" cried Afy, agitated in her turn, and shaking like an aspen leaf, partly with discomfiture, partly with an unknown dread. "How dare that cruel falsehood be brought up again to my face? I never saw Richard Hare after the night of the murder. I swear it. I swear that I have never seen him since. Visit him! I'd sooner visit Calcraft, the hangman."

There was truth in the words, in the tone. The

chairman let fall the hand which had been raised to his face, holding on his eye-glasses, and a sort of self-condemning fear arose, confusing his brain. His son proved innocent of one part might be proved innocent of the other, and then how would his own harsh conduct show out? West Lynne, in its charity, the justice, in his, had cast more odium to Richard with regard to his after conduct touching this girl, than it had on the score of the murder.

"Come," said Lawyer Ball, in a coaxing tone, "let us be pleasant. Of course you were not with Richard Hare; West Lynne is always ill-natured; you were only on a visit to Captain Thorn, as—as any other young lady might be?"

Afy hung her head, cowed down to abject meekness.

"Answer the question," came forth the chairman's voice again.

"Were you with Thorn?"

"Yes." Though the answer was feeble enough.

Mr. Ball coughed an insinuating cough. "Did you remain with him—say, two or three years?"

"Not three."

"A little over two, perhaps?"

"There was no harm in it!" shrieked Afy, with a catching sob of temper. "If I chose to live in London, and he chose to make a morning call upon me now and then, as an old friend, what's that to anybody? Where was the harm, I ask?"

"Certainly—where was the harm? I am not insinuating any," returned Lawyer Ball, with a wink of the eye furthest from the witness and the bench. "And, during the time that—that he was making these little morning calls upon you, did you know him to be Levison?"

"Yes. I knew him to be Captain Levison, then."

"Did he ever tell you why he had assumed the name of Thorn?"

"Only for a whim, he said. The day he spoke to me in the pastry-cook's shop at Swainson, something came over him, in the spur of the moment, not to give

his right name, so he gave the first that came into his head. He never thought to retain it, or that other people would hear of him by it."

"I dare say not," said Lawyer Ball, dryly. "Well, Miss Afy, I believe that is all for the present. I want Ebenezer James in again," he whispered to an officer of the justice-room, as the witness retired.

CHAPTER LIV

COMMITTED

Ebenezer James reappeared and took Afy's place. "You informed their worships just now that you had met Thorn in London, some eighteen months subsequent to the murder," began Lawyer Ball, launching another of his shafts. "This must have been during Afy Hallijohn's sojourn with him. Did you also see her?"

Mr. Ebenezer opened his eyes. He knew nothing of the evidence just given by Afy, and wondered how on earth it had come out—that she had been with Thorn at all. He had never betrayed it. "Afy?" stammered he.

"Yes, Afy," sharply returned the lawyer. "Their worships know that when she left West Lynne it was to join Thorn, not Richard Hare—though the latter has borne the credit of it. I ask you, did you see her? for she was then still connected with him."

"Well—yes, I did," replied Mr. Ebenezer, his own scruples removed, but wondering still how it had been discovered, unless Afy had, as he had half prophesied she would—let it out in her "tantrums." "In fact, it was Afy whom I first saw."

"State the circumstances."

"I was up Paddington way one afternoon, and saw a lady going into a house. It was Afy Hallijohn. She lived there, I found—had the drawing-room apartments. She invited me to stay to tea with her, and I did."

"Did you see Captain Levison there?"

"I saw Thorn—as I thought him to be. Afy told me I must be away by eight o'clock, for she was expecting a friend, who sometimes came to sit with her for an hour's chat. But, in talking over old times—not that I could tell her much about West Lynne, for I had left it almost as long as she had—the time slipped on, past the hour. When Afy found that out, she hurried me off, and I had barely got outside the gate when a cab drove up and Thorn alighted from it, and let himself in with a latch-key. That is all I know."

"When you knew that the scandal of Afy's absence rested on Richard Hare, why could you not have said this, and cleared him on your return to West Lynne?"

"It was no affair of mine, that I should make it public. Afy asked me not to say I had seen her, and I promised her I would not. As to Richard Hare—a little extra scandal on his back was nothing, while there remained on it the worse scandal of the murder."

"Stop a bit," interposed Mr. Rubiny, as the witness was about to retire. "You speak of the time being eight o'clock in the evening, sir. Was it dark?"

"Yes."

"Then how could you be certain it was Thorn who got out of the cab and entered?"

"I am quite certain. There was a gas lamp right at the spot, and I saw him as well as I should have seen him in daylight. I knew his voice, too; could have sworn to it anywhere; and I could almost have sworn to him by his splendid diamond ring. It flashed in the lamplight."

"His voice! Did he speak to you?"

"No. But he spoke to the cabman. There was a half dispute between them. The man said Thorn had not paid him enough; that he had not allowed for the having kept him waiting twenty minutes on the road. Thorn swore at him a bit, and then flung him an extra shilling."

The next witness was a man who had been groom

to the late Sir Peter Levison. He testified that the prisoner, Francis Levison, had been on a visit to his master late in the summer and part of the autumn the year that Hallijohn was killed. That he frequently rode out in the direction of West Lynne, especially toward evening; would be away for three or four hours, and come home with the horse in a foam. Also that he picked up two letters at different times, which Mr. Levison had carelessly let fall from his pocket, and returned them to him. Both the notes were addressed "Captain Thorn." But they had not been through the post, for there was no further superscription on them, and the writing looked like a lady's. He remembered quite well hearing of the murder of Hallijohn, the witness added, in answer to a question; it made a great stir throughout the country. It was just at that same time that Mr. Levison concluded his visit and returned to London.

"A wonderful memory!" Mr. Rubiny sarcastically remarked.

The witness, a quiet, respectable man, replied that he had a good memory, but that circumstances had impressed upon it particularly the fact that Mr. Levison's departure followed close upon the murder of Hallijohn.

"What circumstances?" demanded the bench.

"One day, when Sir Peter was round at the stables, gentlemen, he was urging his nephew to prolong his visit, and asked what sudden freak was taking him off. Mr. Levison replied that unexpected business called him to London. While they were talking the coachman came up, all in a heat, telling that Hallijohn, of West Lynne, had been murdered by young Mr. Hare. I remember Sir Peter said he could not believe it, and that it must have been an accident, not murder."

"Is this all?"

"There was more said. Mr. Levison, in a shame-faced sort of manner, asked his uncle would he let him have five or ten pounds? Sir Peter seemed angry, and asked what had he done with the fifty-pound note he

had made him a present of only the previous morning! Mr. Levison replied that he had sent that away in a letter to a brother officer to whom he was in debt. Sir Peter refused to believe it, and said he was more likely to have squandered it upon some disgraceful folly. Mr. Levison denied that he had, but he looked confused; indeed, his manner was altogether confused that morning."

"Did he get the five or ten pounds?"

"I don't know, gentlemen. I dare say he did, for my master was as persuadable as a woman, though he'd fly out a bit sometimes at first. Mr. Levison departed for London that same night."

The last witness called was Mr. Dill. On the previous Tuesday evening he had been returning home from spending an hour at Mr. Beauchamp's, when, in the field opposite to Mr. Justice Hare's, he suddenly heard a commotion. It arose from the meeting of Sir Francis Levison and Otway Bethel. The former appeared to have been enjoying a solitary moonlight ramble, and the latter to have encountered him unexpectedly. Words ensued. Bethel accused Sir Francis of "shirking" him; Sir Francis answered angrily—that he knew nothing of him, and nothing he wanted to know.

"You were glad enough to know something of me the night of Hallijohn's murder," retorted Bethel to this. "Do you remember that I could hang you? One little word from me, and you would stand in Dick Hare's place."

"You fool!" passionately cried Sir Francis. "You could not hang me without putting your own head in the noose. Had you not your hush-money? Are you wanting to do me out of more?"

"A cursed paltry note of fifty pounds!" foamed Otway Bethel, "which, many a time since, I have wished my fingers had been blown off before they touched. I never should have touched it, but that I was altogether overwhelmed with the moment's confusion. I have not been able to look Mrs. Hare in the

face since—knowing I hold the secret that would save her son from the hangman.”

“And put yourself in his place,” sneered Sir Francis.

“No. Put you.”

“That’s as it might be. But if I went to the hangman you would go with me. There would be no excuse or escape for you. You know it.”

The warfare continued longer, but this was the cream of it. Mr. Dill heard the whole, and repeated it now to the magistrates. Mr. Rubiny protested that it was “inadmissible;” “hearsay evidence;” “contrary to law;” but the bench oracularly put Mr. Rubiny down, and told him they did not require any stranger to come there and teach them their business.

Colonel Bethel had leaned forward at the conclusion of Mr. Dill’s evidence, dismay on his face, agitation in his voice. “Are you sure that you made no mistake?—that the other in this interview was Otway Bethel?”

Mr. Dill sadly shook his head. “Am I one to swear to a wrong man, colonel? I wish I had not heard it—save that it may be the means of clearing Richard Hare.”

* Sir Francis Levison had braved out the proceedings with a haughty, cavalier air, his delicate hands and his diamond ring remarkably conspicuous. Was that stone the real thing, or a false one substituted for the real? Hard up as he had long been for money, the suspicion might arise. A derisive smile crossed his features at parts of the evidence, as much as to say, you may convict me as to Mademoiselle Afy; but you cannot as to the murder. When, however, Mr. Dill’s testimony was given, what a change was there! His mood tamed down to what looked like abject fear.

“Of course your worship will take bail for Sir Francis,” said Mr. Rubiny, at the close of the proceedings.

Bail! The bench looked at one another.

“Your worship will not refuse it—a gentleman in Sir Francis Levison’s position!” The bench thought they had never had so insolent an application made to

them. Bail for him!—on this charge! No; not if the lord chancellor himself came down to offer it.

Mr. Otway Bethel, conscious, probably, that nobody would offer bail for him, not even the colonel, did not ask the bench to take it. So the two were fully committed to take their trial for the “wilful murder, otherwise the killing and slaying, of George Halli-john.”

CHAPTER LV

THE TRIAL

At the assizes the same evidence was taken. Then the counsel for the prosecution rose and said: “Call Richard Hare.”

Those present who knew Mr. Justice Hare looked up at him, wondering why he did not stir in answer to his name; wondering at the pallid hue which overspread his face. Not he, but another man, came forward; a fair, placid young man, with blue eyes, fair hair and a pleasant countenance. It was Richard Hare, the younger. He had resumed his original position in life, so far as attire went, and in that, at least, was a gentleman again; in speech also. With his working dress Richard had thrown off his working manners.

A strange hubbub arose in court. Richard Hare the exile! the reported dead; the man whose life was still in jeopardy! The spectators rose with one accord to get a better view; they stood on tiptoe; they pushed forth their necks; they strained their eyesight; and amidst all the noisy hum, the groan, bursting from the lips of Justice Hare, was unnoticed. Whilst order was called for, and the judge threatened to clear the court, two officers moved quietly up and stood behind the witness. Richard Hare was in custody, though he might know it not. The witness was sworn.

“What is your name?”

"Richard Hare."

"Son of Mr. Justice Hare, I believe, of the Grove, West Lynne?"

"His only son."

"The same against whom a verdict of wilful murder is out?" interposed the judge.

"The same, my lord," replied Richard Hare, who appeared, strange as it may seem, to have cast away all his old fearfulness.

"Then, witness, let me warn you that you are not obliged to answer any question that might tend to criminate yourself."

"My lord," answered Richard Hare, with some emotion, "I wish to answer any and every question put to me. I have but one hope; that the full truth of all pertaining to that fatal evening may be made manifest this day."

"Look round at the prisoner," said the examining counsel. "Do you know him?"

"I know him now as Sir Francis Levison. Up to April last I believed his name to be Thorn."

"State what occurred on the evening of that murder—so far as your knowledge goes."

"I had an appointment that evening with Afy Hallijohn, and went down to their cottage to keep it——"

"A moment," interrupted the counsel. "Was your visit that evening made in secret?"

"Partially so. My father and mother were displeased at my intimacy with Afy Hallijohn; therefore I did not care that they should be cognizant of my visits there. I am ashamed to confess that I told my father a lie over it that evening. He saw me leave the dinner-table to go out with my gun, and inquired where I was off to. I answered that I was going out with young Beauchamp."

"When, in point of fact, you were not?"

"No. I took my gun, for I had promised to lend it to Hallijohn while his own was being repaired. When I reached the cottage Afy refused to admit me; she was busy, she said. I felt sure she had Thorn with

ner. She had, more than once before, refused to admit me when I had gone there by her own appointment, and I always found that Thorn's presence in the cottage was the obstacle."

"I suppose you and Thorn were jealous of each other?"

"I was jealous of him; I freely admit it. I don't know whether he was of me."

"May I inquire what was the nature of your friendship for Miss Afy Hallijohn?"

"I loved her with an honorable love; as I might have loved any young lady in my own station of life. I would not have married her in opposition to my father and mother, but I told Afy that if she was content to wait for me, until I was my own master, I would then make her my wife."

"You had no views toward her of a different nature?"

"None. I cared for her too much for that. And I respected her father. Afy's mother had been a lady, too, although she had married Hallijohn, who was but clerk to Mr. Carlyle. No, I never had a thought of wrong toward Afy."

"Now relate the occurrences of the evening."

"Afy would not admit me, and we had a few words over it. But at length I went away, first giving her the gun and telling her it was loaded. She lodged it against the wall, just inside the door, and I went into the wood and waited, determined to see whether or not Thorn was with her, for she had denied that he was. Locksley saw me there, and asked why I was hiding. I did not answer; but I went further off, quite out of view of the cottage. Some time afterward, less than half an hour, I heard a shot in the direction of the cottage. Somebody was having a late shot at the partridges, I thought. Just then I saw Otway Bethel emerge from the trees not far from me, and run toward the cottage. My lord," added Richard Hare, looking at the judge, "that was the shot that killed Hallijohn."

"Could the shot," asked the counsel, "have been fired by Otway Bethel?"

"It could not. It was much further off. Bethel disappeared, and in another minute there came one flying down the path leading from the cottage. It was Thorn, in a state of intense terror. His face was livid, his eyes staring, and he panted and shook like one in the ague. Past me he tore, on the down path, and I afterward heard the sound of his horse galloping away. It had been tied in the wood."

"Did you follow him?"

"No. I wondered what had happened to put him in that state; but I made haste to the cottage, intending to reproach Afy with her duplicity. I leaped up the two steps, and fell over the prostrate body of Hallijohn. He was lying dead, within the door. My gun, just discharged, was flung on the floor, its contents in Hallijohn's side."

You might have heard a pin drop in court, so intense was the interest.

"There appeared to be no one in the cottage, upstairs or down. I called to Afy, but she did not answer. I caught up the gun, and was running from the cottage, when Locksley came out of the wood, and looked at me. I grew confused, fearful, and I threw the gun back again and made off."

"What were your motives for acting that way?"

"A panic had come over me; and in that moment I must have lost the use of my reason, otherwise I never should have acted as I did. Thoughts, especially of fear, pass through our minds with astonishing swiftness, and I feared lest the crime should be fastened upon me. It was fear that made me snatch up my gun, lest it should be found near the body; it was fear that made me throw it back again when Locksley appeared in view, a fear from which all judgment, all reason, had departed. But for my own conduct, the charge never would have been laid to me."

"Go on."

"In my flight I came upon Bethel. I knew that if

he had gone toward the cottage, after the shot was fired, he must have encountered Thorn, flying from it. He denied that he had. He said he had only gone along the path for a few paces, and had then plunged into the wood again. I believed him, and departed."

"Departed from West Lynne?"

"That night I did. It was a foolish, fatal step, the result of cowardice. I found the charge was laid to me, and I thought I would absent myself for a day or two, to see how things turned out. Next came the inquest and the verdict against me, and I left for good."

"This is the truth, so far as you are cognizant of it?"

"I swear that it is the truth and the whole truth, so far as I am cognizant of it," replied Richard Hare, with emotion. "I could not assert it more solemnly were I before God."

He was subjected to a rigid cross-examination, but his testimony was not shaken in the least. Perhaps not one present but was impressed with its truth.

Afy Hallijohn was recalled, and questioned as to Richard's presence at her father's house that night. It tallied with the account given by Richard; but it had to be drawn from her.

"Why did you decline to receive Richard Hare into the cottage, after appointing him to come?"

"Because I chose," returned Afy.

"Tell the jury why you chose."

"Well, I had got a friend with me. It was Captain Thorn," she added, feeling that she should only be questioned on the point, so might as well acknowledge it. "I did not admit Richard Hare, for I fancied they might get up a quarrel if they were together."

"For what purpose did Richard Hare bring down his gun? Do you know?"

"It was to lend to my father. My father's gun had something the matter with it and was at the smith's. I had heard him, the previous day, ask Mr. Richard to lend him one of his, and Mr. Richard said he would bring one, as he did."

"You lodged the gun against the wall. Safely?"

"Quite safely."

"Was it touched by you after placing it there, or by the prisoner?"

"I did not touch it. Neither did he, that I saw. It was the same gun, which was afterward found near my father, and had been discharged."

The next witness called was Otway Bethel. He held share also in the curiosity of the public, but not in an equal degree with Afy, still less with Richard Hare. The substance of his testimony was as follows:

"On the evening that Hallijohn was killed I was in Abbey Wood, and I saw Richard Hare come down the path with a gun, as if he had come from his own home."

"Did Richard Hare see you?"

"No, he could not see me; I was right in the thicket. He went to the cottage door, and was about to enter, when Afy Hallijohn came hastily out of it, pulling the door to behind her, and holding it in her hand, as if afraid he would go in. Some colloquy ensued, but I was too far off to hear it, and then she took the gun from him and went in-doors. Some time after that I saw Richard Hare amid the trees at a distance, further off the cottage than I was, and apparently watching the path. I was wondering what he was up to, hiding there, when I heard a shot fired, close, as it seemed, to the cottage, and——"

"Stop a bit, witness. Could that shot have been fired by Richard Hare?"

"It could not. He was a quarter of a mile, nearly, away from it. I was much nearer the cottage than he."

"Go on."

"I could not imagine what that shot meant, or who could have fired it. Not that I suspected mischief; and I knew that poachers did not congregate so near Hallijohn's cottage. I set off to reconnoitre, and as I turned the corner, which brought the house within my view, I saw Captain Thorn—as he was called—come

leaping out of it. His face was white with terror, his breath was gone—in short, I never saw any living man betray so much agitation. I caught his arm as he would have passed me. ‘What have you been about?’ I asked. ‘Was it you who fired?’ He——”

“Stop. Why did you suspect him?”

“From his state of excitement; from the terror he was in. That some ill had happened I felt sure—and so would you, had you seen him as I did. My arresting him increased his agitation; he tried to throw me off, but I am a strong man, and I suppose he thought it best to temporize. ‘Keep dark upon it, Bethel,’ he said. ‘I will make it worth your while. The thing was not premeditated, it was done in the heat of passion. What business had the fellow to abuse me? I have done no harm to the girl.’ As he thus spoke, he took out a pocket-book with the hand that was at liberty; I held the other——”

“As the prisoner thus spoke, you mean?”

“The prisoner. He took a bank-note from his pocket-book, and thrust it into my hands. It was a note for fifty pounds. ‘What’s done can’t be undone, Bethel,’ he said, ‘and your saying that you saw me here can serve no good turn. Shall it be silence?’ I took the note, and answered that it should be silence. I had not the least idea that anybody was killed.”

“What did you suppose had happened, then?”

“I could not suppose; I could not think; it all passed in the haste and confusion of a moment, and no definite ideas occurred to me. Thorn flew on down the path, and I stood looking after him. The next was, I heard footsteps, and I slipped within the trees. They were those of Richard Hare, who took the path to the cottage. Presently he returned, little less agitated than Thorn had been. I had gone into an open space then, and he accosted me, asking me if I had seen ‘that hound’ fly from the cottage? ‘What hound?’ I asked him. ‘That fine fellow, that Thorn, who comes after Afy,’ he answered; but I stoutly denied that I had seen

any one. Richard Hare continued his way, and I afterward found that Hallijohn was killed."

"And so you took a bribe to conceal one of the foulest crimes that ever man committed, Mr. Otway Bethel?"

"I took the money, and am ashamed to confess to it. But it was done without reflection. I swear that had I known what crime it was intended to hush up, I never would have touched it. I was hard up for funds, and the amount tempted me. When I discovered what had really happened, and that Richard Hare was accused, I was thunderstruck at my own deed. Many a hundred times since have I cursed the money, and the fate of Richard has been as a heavy weight upon my conscience."

"You might have lifted the weight by confessing."

"To what end? It was too late. Thorn had disappeared. I never heard of him, or saw him, until he came to West Lynne this last spring, as Sir Francis Levison, to oppose Mr. Carlyle. Richard Hare had also disappeared, had never been seen or heard of, and most people supposed he was dead. To what end, then, should I confess? Perhaps only to be suspected myself. Besides, I had taken the money upon a certain understanding, and it was only fair that I should keep to it."

If Richard Hare was subjected to a severe cross-examination, a far more severe one awaited Otway Bethel. The judge spoke to him only once, his tone ringing with reproach.

"It appears then, witness, that you have retained within you, all these years, the proofs of Richard Hare's innocence?"

"I can only acknowledge it with contrition, my lord."

"What did you know of Thorn in those days?" asked the counsel.

"Nothing, save that he frequented the Abbey Wood, his object being Afy Hallijohn. I had never exchanged a word with him until this night; but I knew his

name—Thorn—at least the one he went by. And by his calling me Bethel, it appeared that he knew mine.”

The case for the prosecution closed. An able and ingenious speech was made for the defense, the learned counsel who offered it contending that there was still no proof of Sir Francis Levison having been the guilty man. Neither was there any proof that the catastrophe was not the result of pure accident. A loaded gun, standing against the wall in a small room, was not a safe weapon; and he called upon the jury not rashly to convict in the uncertainty, but to give the prisoner the benefit of the doubt. He should call no witnesses, he observed, not even as to character. Character! for Sir Francis Levison! The court burst into a grin, the only sober face in it being that of the judge.

The judge summed up. Certainly not in the prisoner's favor, but—to use the expression of some amongst the audience—dead against him. Otway Bethel came in for a side shaft or two from his lordship; Richard Hare for sympathy. The jury retired about four o'clock, and the judge quitted the bench.

A very short time they were absent. Scarcely a quarter of an hour. His lordship turned into court, and the prisoner was again placed in the dock. He was the hue of marble, and, in his nervous agitation, kept incessantly throwing back his hair from his forehead—the action so often spoken of. Silence was proclaimed.

“How say you, gentlemen of the jury? Guilty or not guilty?”

“Guilty!” It was a silence to be felt, and the prisoner gasped once or twice convulsively. “But,” added the foreman, “we wish to recommend him to mercy.”

“On what grounds?” inquired the judge.

“Because, my lord, we believe that it was not a crime planned by the prisoner beforehand, but arose from the bad passions of the moment, and was so committed.”

The judge paused, and drew something black from

the receptacle of his pocket, buried deep in his robes.

"Prisoner at the bar! Have you anything to urge why the sentence of death should not be passed upon you?"

The prisoner clutched the front of the dock. He threw up his head, as if shaking off the dread fear which had oppressed him, and the marble of his face changed to scarlet.

"Only this, my lord. The jury, in giving their reason for recommending me to your lordship's mercy, have adopted the right view of the case, as it actually occurred. That the man, Hallijohn's, life was taken by me, it will be useless for me to deny, in the face of the evidence given this day. But it was not taken in malice. When I quitted the girl, Afy, and went to the cottage for my hat, I no more contemplated injuring mortal man than I contemplate it at this moment. He was there—the father—and in the dispute that ensued the catastrophe occurred. My lord, it was not wilful murder."

The prisoner ceased. And the judge, the black cap upon his head, crossed his hands one upon the other.

"Prisoner at the bar! You have been convicted, by clear and undoubted evidence, of the crime of wilful murder. The jury have pronounced you guilty, and in their verdict I entirely coincide. That you took the life of that ill-fated and unoffending man there is no doubt; you have yourself confessed it. It was a foul, a barbarous, a wicked act. I care not what may have been the particular circumstances attending it; he may have provoked by words, but no provocation of that nature could justify your drawing the gun upon him. Your counsel urged that you were a gentleman, a member of the British aristocracy, and therefore deserved consideration. I confess that I was very much surprised to hear such a doctrine fall from his lips. In my opinion, your position in life makes your crime the worse; and I have always maintained that when a man possessed of advantages falls into sin, he

deserves less consideration than does one who is poor, simple and uneducated. Certain proportions of the evidence given to-day (and I do not allude to the actual crime) tell very greatly against you. You were pursuing the daughter of this man with no honorable purpose—and in this point your conduct contrasts badly with that of Richard Hare, equally a gentleman with yourself. In this pursuit you killed her father; and, not content with that, you still pursued the girl—and pursued her to her ruin—basely deceiving her as to the actual facts, and laying the crime upon another. I cannot trust myself to speak further upon this point, nor is it necessary that I should. It is not to answer for that, that you stand before me. Uncalled, unprepared, and by you unpitied, you hurried that unfortunate man into eternity, and you must now expiate the crime with your own life. The jury have recommended you to mercy, and the recommendation will be forwarded in due course to the proper quarter; but you must be aware how frequently this clause is appended to a verdict, and how very rarely it is attended to, just cause being wanting. I can but enjoin you, and I do so most earnestly, to pass the little time that probably remains to you on earth in seeking repentance and forgiveness. You are best aware yourself, what your past life has been—the world knows somewhat of it—but there is pardon above for the most guilty, when it is earnestly sought. It now only remains for me to pass upon you the dread sentence of the law. It is that you, Francis Levison, be taken back to the place whence you came, and thence to the place of execution, and that you be there hanged by the neck until you are dead. And may the Lord God Almighty have mercy upon your immortal soul. Amen.”

The court was cleared. The day's excitement was over, and the next case was inquired for. Not quite over yet, however, the excitement, and the audience crowded in again. For the next case proved to be the arraignment of Richard Hare the younger. A formal

proceeding, merely, in pursuance of the verdict of the coroner's inquest. No evidence was offered against him, and the judge ordered him to be discharged. Richard—poor, ill-used, baited Richard—was a free man again.

Then ensued the scene of all scenes. Half, at least, of those present were residents of, or from near West Lynne. They had known Richard Hare from infancy; they had admired the boy in pretty childhood; they had liked him in his unoffending boyhood; but they had been none the less ready to cast their harsh stones at him, and to thunder down their denunciations, when the time came. In proportion to their fierceness then, was their contrition now. Richard had been innocent all the while—they had been more guilty than he. An English mob, gentle or simple, never gets up its excitement by halves. Whether its demonstration be of a laudatory or a condemnatory nature, the steam is sure to be put on to bursting point. With one universal shout, with one bound, they rallied round Richard. They congratulated him, they overwhelmed him with good wishes, they expressed with shame their repentance, they said that the future should atone for the past. Had he possessed a hundred hands they would have been shaken off. And when Richard extricated himself, and turned, in his pleasant, forgiving, loving nature, to his father, the stern old justice, forgetting his pride and his pomposity, burst into tears and sobbed like a child, as he murmured something about he, also, wanting forgiveness.

"Dear father," cried Richard, his own eyes wet, "it is forgiven and forgotten already. Think how happy we shall be again together—you and I, and my mother!"

The justice's hands, which had been wound round his son, relaxed their hold. They were twitching curiously, the face was twitching curiously; the body also began to twitch; and he fell upon the shoulder of Colonel Bethel, in a second stroke of paralysis.

CHAPTER LVI

THE DEATH CHAMBER

By the side of William Carlyle's dying bed knelt the Lady Isabel. The time was at hand, and the boy was quite reconciled to his fate. Merciful indeed is God to dying children! It is astonishing how very readily, where the right means are taken, they may be made to look with pleasure, rather than fear, upon their unknown journey.

The brilliant, hectic type of the disease had gone from his cheeks, his features were white and wasted, and his eyes large and bright. His silky brown hair was pushed off his temples, and his little hot hands were thrown outside the bed.

"It won't be so very long to wait, you know, will it, Madame Vine?"

"For what, darling?"

"Before they all come. Papa and mamma, and Lucy, and all of them."

A jealous feeling shot across her wearied heart. Was she nothing to him? "Do you care that I should come to you, William?"

"Yes, I hope you will. But do you think we shall know everybody in Heaven? Or will it be only our own relations?"

"Oh, child, I think there will be no relations, as you call them, up there. We can trust all to God—however it may be."

William lay looking upward at the sky, apparently in thought. A dark-blue, serene sky, from which shone the hot July sun. His bed had been moved near the window, for he liked to sit up in it and look at the landscape. The window was open now, and the butterflies and bees sported in the summer air.

"I wonder how it will be?" pondered he, aloud.

* "There will be the beautiful city, with its gates of pearl, and its shining precious stone, and its streets of gold; and there will be the clear river, and the trees with their fruits and their healing leaves and the lovely flowers; and there will be the harps and music and singing; and what else will there be?"

"Everything that is desirable and beautiful, William."

Another pause. "Madame Vine, will Jesus come for me, do you think, or will he send an angel?"

"Jesus has promised to come for His own redeemed; for those who love Him and wait for Him."

"Yes, yes. And then I shall be happy forever. It will be so pleasant to be there! never to be tired or ill again."

"Pleasant? Ay! Oh, William, would that the time were come!" She was thinking of herself; her freedom; though the boy knew it not. She buried her face in her hands and continued speaking. William had to bend his ear to catch the faint whisper.

"And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away."

"Madame Vine, do you think mamma will be there?" he presently asked. "I mean mamma that was."

"Ay! Ere long."

"But how shall I know her? You see I have nearly forgotten what she was like."

She leaned over him, laying her forehead upon his wasted arm; she burst into a flood of impassioned tears. "You will know her, never fear, William; she has not forgotten you."

"But how can we be sure that she will be there?" debated William, after a pause of thought. "You know"—sinking his voice, and speaking with hesitation—"she was not quite good. She was not good to papa or to us. Sometimes I think, suppose she did not grow good, and did not ask God to forgive her?"

"Oh, William," sobbed the unhappy lady, "her

whole life, after she left you, was one long scene of repentance, of seeking forgiveness. Her repentance, her sorrow, was greater than she could bear, and——”

“And what?” asked William, for there was a pause.

“Her heart broke in it; yearning after you and your father.”

“What makes you think it?”

“Child, I know it.”

William considered. Then—had he been strong enough—he would have started up with energy. “Madame Vine, you could only know that by mamma’s telling you! Did you ever see her? Did you know her abroad?”

Lady Isabel’s thoughts were far away; up in the clouds, perhaps. She reflected not on the possible consequences of her answer, or she had never given it.

“Yes, I knew her abroad.”

“Oh!” said the boy. “Why did you never tell us? What did she say? What was she like?”

“She said”—sobbing wildly—“that she was parted from her children here. But she should meet them in Heaven and be with them forever. William, darling! all the awful pain and sadness of guilt of this world will be washed out, and God will wipe our tears away.”

“What was her face like?” he questioned, softly.

“Like yours. Very much like Lucy’s.”

“Was she pretty?”

A momentary pause. “Yes.”

“Oh, dear! I am ill! Hold me!” cried out William, as his head sank to one side, and great drops, as large as peas, broke forth upon his clammy face. It appeared to be one of the temporary faint attacks that had overpowered him at times lately, and Lady Isabel rang the bell hastily.

Wilson came in, in answer. Joyce was the usual attendant upon the sick-room, but Mrs. Carlyle, with her infant, was passing the day at the Grove, unconscious of the critical state of William, and she had taken Joyce with her. It was the day following the trial. Mr. Justice Hare had been brought to West

Lynne in his second attack, and Barbara had gone to see him, to console her mother, and to welcome Richard to his home again. If one carriage drove that day to the Grove with cards and inquiries, fifty did, not to speak of the foot callers.

"It is all meant by way of attention to you, Richard," said gentle Mrs. Hare, smiling through her loving tears at her restored son. Lucy and Archie were dining at Miss Carlyle's, and Sarah attended little Arthur, leaving Wilson free. She came in, in answer to Madame Vine's ring.

"Is he off in another faint?" unceremoniously cried she, hastening to the bed.

"I think so. Help me to raise him."

William did not faint. No, the attack was quite different from those he was subject to. Instead of losing consciousness and power, as was customary, he shook as if he had the ague, and laid hold both of Madame Vine and Wilson, grasping them convulsively.

"Don't let me fall! don't let me fall!" he gasped.

"My dear, you cannot fall," responded Madame Vine. "You forget that you are on the bed."

He clasped them yet, and trembled still, as from fear. "Don't let me fall! don't let me fall!" the incessant burden of his cry.

The paroxysm passed. They wiped his brow, and stood looking at him—Wilson with a pursed-up mouth, and a peculiar expression of face. She put a spoonful of restorative jelly between his lips, and he swallowed it, but shook his head when she would have given him another. Turning his face to the pillow, in a few minutes he was in a doze.

"What could it have been?" exclaimed Lady Isabel, in an undertone to Wilson.

"I know," was the oracular answer. "I saw this same sort of attack once before, madame."

"And what caused it?"

"'Twasn't in a child, though," went on Wilson.

"'Twas in a grown-up person. But that's nothing."

't comes for the same thing in all. I think he was aken for death."

"Who?" uttered Lady Isabel, startled.

Wilson made no reply in words, but she pointed with her finger to the bed.

"Oh, Wilson! He is not so ill as that. Mr. Wainwright said this morning that he might last a week or two."

Wilson composedly sat down in the easiest chair. She was not wont to put herself out of the way for the governess, and that governess was too much afraid of her, in one sense, to let her know her place.

"As to Wainwright, he's nobody," quoth she. "And if he saw the child's breath going out before his face, and knew that the next moment would be his last, he'd vow to us all that he was good for twelve hours to come. You don't know Wainwright as I do, madame. He was our doctor at mother's, and he has attended in all the places I have lived in since I went out to service. Five years I was head nurse at Squire Pinner's; going on for four I was lady's-maid at Mrs. Hare's; I came here when Miss Lucy was a baby, and in all my places has he attended, like one's shadow. My Lady Isabel thought great guns of old Wainwright, I remember. It was more than I did."

My Lady Isabel made no response to this. She took a seat, and watched William. His breathing was more labored than usual.

"That idiot, Sarah, says to me to-day, says she, 'Which of his two grandpas will they bury him by—old Mr. Carlyle or Lord Mount Severn?' 'Don't be a calf!' I answered her. 'D'ye think they'll stick him out in the corner with my lord? He'll be put in the Carlyle vault, of course.' It would have been different, you see, Madame Vine, if my lady had died at home, all proper, Mr. Carlyle's wife. They'd have buried her, no doubt, by her father, and the boy would have been laid with her. But she did not."

No reply was made by Madame Vine, and a silence ensued. Nothing to be heard but that fleeting breath.

"I wonder how that beauty feels?" suddenly broke forth Wilson again, her tone of scornful irony.

Lady Isabel, her eyes and her thoughts absorbed by William, positively thought Wilson's words must relate to him. She turned to her in surprise.

"That bright gem in the prison at Lynneborough," explained Wilson. "I hope he may have found himself pretty well since yesterday! I wonder how many trainfuls from West Lynne will go to his hanging?"

Her face turned crimson; her heart sick. She had not dared to inquire how the trial terminated. The subject altogether was too dreadful, and nobody had happened to mention it in her hearing.

"Is he condemned?" she asked, in a low tone.

"He is condemned; and good luck to him! and Mr. Otway Bethel's let loose again; and good luck to him. A nice pair they are! Nobody went from this house to hear the trial—it might not have been pleasant, you know, madame, to Mr. Carlyle; but people came in last night and told us all about it. Young Richard Hare chiefly convicted him. He is back again, and so nice-looking, they say—ten times more so than he was when quite a young man. You should have heard, they say, the cheerings and shouts which greeted Mr. Richard when his innocence came out; it pretty near rose off the roof of the court; and the judge didn't stop it."

Wilson paused, but there was no answering comment. On she went again.

"When Mr. Carlyle brought the news home last evening, and broke it to his wife—telling her how Mr. Richard had been received with acclamations, she nearly fainted; for she's not strong yet. Mr. Carlyle called out to me to bring some water—I was in the next room with the baby—and there she was, the tears raining from her eyes, and he holding her to him. I always said there was a whole world of love between those two, though he did go and marry another. Mr. Carlyle ordered me to put the water down, and sent

me away again. But I don't fancy he told her of Hare's attack until this morning."

Lady Isabel lifted her aching forehead. "What attack?"

"Why, madame, don't you know? I declare, you box yourself up in the house, keeping from everybody, till you hear nothing. You might as well be living at the bottom of a coal-pit. Old Hare had another stroke in the court at Lynneborough, and that's why my mistress is gone to the Grove to-day."

"Who says Richard Hare's coming home, Wilson?"

The question, the weak, scarcely audible question, had come from the dying boy. Wilson threw up her hands, and made a bound to the bed. "The like of that!" she uttered, aside to Madame Vine. "One never knows when to take these sick ones. Master William, you hold your tongue, and drop off to sleep again. Your papa will be home soon from Lynneborough, and if you talk and get tired he'll say it's my fault. Will you have a bit more jelly?"

William, making no reply to the offer of jelly, buried his face again on the pillow. But he was grievously restless. The nearly worn-out spirit was ebbing and flowing. ✓

Mr. Carlyle was at Lynneborough. He always had much business there at assize time, in the Nisi Prius court. But the previous day he had not gone himself; Mr. Dill had been dispatched to represent him. Between seven and eight he returned home, and came into William's chamber. The boy brightened up at the well-known presence.

"Papa!"

Mr. Carlyle sat down on the bed and kissed him. The passing beams of the sun, slanting from the horizon, shone into the room, and Mr. Carlyle could view well the dying face. The gray hue of death was certainly on it.

"Is he worse?" he exclaimed, hastily, to Madame Vine.

"He appears to be worse this evening, sir More weak."

"Papa," panted William, "is the trial over?"

"What trial, my boy?"

"Sir Francis Levison's."

"It was over yesterday. Never trouble your head about him, my brave boy. He is not worth it."

"But I want to know. Will they hang him?"

"He is sentenced to it."

"Did he kill Hallijohn?"

"Yes. Who has been talking to him upon the subject?" Mr. Carlyle continued to Madame Vine, marked displeasure in his tone.

"Wilson mentioned it, sir," was the low answer.

"Oh, papa, what will he do? Will Jesus forgive him?"

"We must hope it."

"Do you hope it, papa?"

"Yes. I wish that all the world may be forgiven, William, whatever may have been their sins. My child, how restless you seem!"

"I can't keep in one place. The bed gets wrong Pull me up on the pillow, will you, Madame Vine?"

Mr. Carlyle gently lifted the boy himself. "Madame Vine is an untiring nurse to you, William," he observed, gratefully casting a glance toward her in the distance, where she had retreated, and was shaded by the window curtain.

William made no reply. He seemed to be trying to recall something "I forget; I forget."

"Forget what?" asked Mr. Carlyle.

"It was something I wanted to ask you; or to tell you. Isn't Lucy come home?"

"I suppose not."

"Papa, I want Joyce."

"I will send her home to you. I am going for your mamma after dinner."

"For mamma?—oh, I remember now. Papa, how shall I know mamma in Heaven? Not this mamma."

Mr. Carlyle did not immediately reply. The question

may have puzzled him. William continued hastily; possibly mistaking the motive of the silence.

"She will be in Heaven, you know."

"Yes, yes, child," speaking hurriedly.

"Madame Vine knows she will. She saw her abroad, and mamma told her that—what was it, madame?"

Madame Vine grew sick with alarm. Mr. Carlyle turned his eyes upon her scarlet face—as much as he could get to see of it. She would have escaped from the room if she could.

"Mamma was more sorry than she could bear," went on William, finding he was not helped. "She wanted you, papa, and she wanted us, and her heart broke, and she died."

A flush rose to Mr. Carlyle's brow. He turned inquiringly to Madame Vine. "Oh, I beg your pardon, sir," she murmured, with desperate energy. "I ought not so to have spoken; I ought not to have interfered in your family affairs. I spoke only as I thought it must be, sir. The boy seemed troubled about his mother."

Mr. Carlyle was at sea. "Did you meet his mother abroad? I scarcely understand." She lifted her hand and covered her glowing face. "No, sir." Surely the recording angel blotted out the words! If ever a prayer for forgiveness went up from an aching heart, it must have gone up then, for the equivocation uttered over her child's death-bed!

Mr. Carlyle went toward her. "Do you perceive the change in his countenance?" he whispered.

"Yes, sir, yes. He has looked like this since a strange fit of trembling that came on in the afternoon. Wilson thought he might be taken for death. I fear some four-and-twenty hours will end it."

Mr. Carlyle rested his elbow on the window-frame, and his hand upon his brow, his drooping eyelids falling over his eyes. "It is hard to lose him."

"Oh, sir, he will be better off!" she wailed, choking down the sobs and the emotion that arose threaten-

ingly. "We can bear death; it is not the worst parting that the earth knows. He will be quit of this cruel world—sheltered in Heaven. I wish we were all there!"

A servant came to say that Mr. Carlyle's dinner was served, and he proceeded to it with what appetite he had. When he returned to the sick-room the daylight had faded, and a solitary candle was placed where its rays could not fall upon the child's face. Mr. Carlyle took the light in his hand to scan that face again. He was lying sideways on the pillow, his hollow breath echoing through the room. The light caused him to open his eyes. "Don't papa, please. I like it dark."

"Only for one moment, my precious boy." And not for more than a moment did Mr. Carlyle hold it. The blue, pinched, ghastly look was there yet. Death was certainly coming on quick.

At that moment, Lucy and Archibald came in, on their return from their visit to Miss Carlyle. The dying boy looked up eagerly. "Good-by, Lucy," he said, putting out his cold, damp hand.

"I am not going out," replied Lucy. "We have just come home."

"Good-by, Lucy," repeated he.

She laid hold of the little hand then, leaned over, and kissed him. "Good-by, William; but indeed I am not going out anywhere."

"I am," said he. "I am going to Heaven. Where's Archie?"

Mr. Carlyle lifted Archie on to the bed. Lucy looked frightened; Archie surprised.

"Archie, good-by; good-by, dear. I am going to Heaven; to that bright blue sky, you know. I shall see mamma there, and I'll tell her that you and Lucy are coming soon."

Lucy, a sensitive child, broke into a loud storm of sobs, enough to disturb the equanimity of any sober sick-room. Wilson hastened in at the sound, and Mr. Carlyle sent the two children away, with soothing

promises that they should see William in the morning, if he continued well enough.

Down on her knees, her face buried in the counterpane, a corner of it stuffed into her mouth that it might help to stifle her agony, knelt Lady Isabel. The moment's excitement was well-nigh beyond her strength of endurance. Her own child; his child; they alone around its death-bed, and she might not ask or receive from him a word of comfort, of consolation.

Mr. Carlyle glanced at her as he caught her choking sobs—just as he would have glanced at any other attentive governess—feeling her sympathy, doubtless, but nothing more; she was not heart and part with him and his departing boy. Lower and lower bent he over that boy, for his eyes were wet.

"Don't cry, papa," whispered William, raising his feeble hand caressingly to his father's cheek. "I am not afraid to go. Jesus is coming for me."

"Afraid to go! Indeed I hope not, my gentle boy. You are going to God; to happiness. A few years, we know not how few, and we shall all come to you."

"Yes, you will be sure to come; I know that. I will tell mamma so. I dare say she is looking out for me now. Perhaps she's standing on the banks of the river, watching the boats."

He had evidently got that picture of Martin's in his mind, the Plains of Heaven. Mr. Carlyle turned to the table. He saw some strawberry juice, pressed from the fresh fruit, and moistened with it the boy's fevered lips.

"Papa, I can't think how Jesus can be in all the boats! Perhaps they don't go quite at the same time? He must be, you know, because he comes to fetch us."

"He will be in yours, darling," was the whispered, fervent answer.

"Oh, yes. He will take me all the way up to God, and say, 'Here's a poor little boy come, and you must please to forgive him and let him go in to Heaven,

because I died for him.' Papa, did you know that mamma's heart broke?"

A caress was all the reply Mr. Carlyle returned. William's restlessness of body appeared to be extending to his mind. He would not be put off.

"Papa! did you know that mamma's heart broke?"

"William, I think it likely that your poor mamma's heart did break ere death came. But let us talk of you; not of her. Are you in pain?"

"I can't breathe; I can't swallow. I wish Joyce was here."

"She will not be long."

The boy nestled himself in his father's arms, and in a few minutes appeared to be asleep. Mr. Carlyle, after a while, gently laid him on his pillow, watched him, and then turned to depart.

"Oh, papa, papa!" he cried out, in a tone of painful entreaty, opening wide his yearning eyes, "say good-by to me!"

Mr. Carlyle's tears fell upon the little upturned face, as he once more caught it to his breast.

"My darling, papa will soon be back. He was not going to leave you for more than an hour. He is going to bring mamma to see you."

"And pretty little baby Anna?"

"And baby Anna, if you would like her to come in. I will not leave you again to-night, William, when once I am back."

"Then put me down, and go, papa."

A lingering embrace—a fond, lingering, tearful embrace, Mr. Carlyle holding him to his beating heart. Then he laid him comfortably on his pillow, gave him a teaspoonful of strawberry juice, and hastened away.

"Good-by, papa," came forth the little feeble cry.

It was not heard. Mr. Carlyle was gone. Gone from his living child—forever. Up rose Lady Isabel, and flung her arms aloft in a storm of sobs. "Oh, William, darling, in this dying moment let me be to you as your mother?"

Again he unclosed his weary eyelids. It is probable that he only partially understood.

"Papa's gone for her."

"Not her. I—I—" Lady Isabel checked herself, and fell sobbing on the bed. No; not even at that last hour, when the world was closing on him, dared she say, I am your mother.

Wilson re-entered. "He looks as if he were dropping off to sleep," quoth she.

"Yes," said Lady Isabel. "You need not wait, Wilson. I will ring if he requires anything."

Wilson, though withal not a bad-hearted woman, was no one to remain for pleasure in a sick-room, if told she might leave it. Lady Isabel remained alone. She fell on her knees again, this time in prayer—in prayer for the departing spirit on its wing, and that God would mercifully vouchsafe herself a resting-place with it in Heaven.

A review of the past then rose up before her—from the time of her first entering that house, the bride of Mr. Carlyle, to her present sojourn in it. The old scenes passed through her mind like the changing pictures in a phantasmagoria. Why should they have come, there and then? She knew not.

William slept on silently; she thought of the past. The dreadful reflection, "If I had not—done as I did—how different would it have been now!" had been sounding its knell in her heart so often that she had almost ceased to shudder at it. The very nails of her hands had, before now, entered the palms with the sharp pain it brought. Stealing over her more especially this night as she knelt there, her head lying on the counterpane, came the recollection of that first illness of hers. How she had lain, and, in her unfounded jealousy, imagined Barbara the house's mistress. She, dead; Barbara exalted to her place, Mr. Carlyle's wife, her child's stepmother! She recalled the day when, her mind excited by certain gossip of Wilson's—it was previously in a state of fever bordering on delirium—she had prayed her husband, in terror and anguish,

not to marry Barbara. "How could he marry her?" he had replied, in his soothing pity. "She, Isabel, was his wife—who was Barbara? Nothing to them." But it had all come to pass. She had brought it forth. Not Mr. Carlyle; not Barbara; she alone. Oh, the dreadful misery of the retrospect.

Lost in thought, in anguish past and present, in self-condemning repentance, the time passed on. Nearly an hour must have elapsed since Mr. Carlyle's departure, and William had not disturbed her. But—who was this coming into the room? Joyce.

She hastily rose up, as Joyce, advancing with a quiet step, drew aside the clothes to look at William. "Master says he has been wanting me," she observed. "Why—oh!"

It was a sharp, momentary cry, subdued as soon as uttered. Madame Vine sprang forward to Joyce's side, looking also. The pale, young face lay calm in its utter stillness; the busy little heart had ceased to beat. Jesus Christ had indeed taken the fleeting spirit.

Then she lost all self-control. She believed that she had reconciled herself to the child's death, that she could part with him without too great emotion. But she had not anticipated it would be quite so soon; she had deemed that some hours more would at least be given him, and now the storm overwhelmed her. Crying, sobbing, calling, she flung herself upon him; she clasped him to her; she dashed off her disguising glasses; she laid her face upon his, beseeching him to come back to her that she might say farewell; to her, his mother; her darling child, her lost William.

Joyce was terrified; terrified for consequences. With her full strength she pulled her from her boy, praying her to consider; to be still. "Do not, do not, for the love of Heaven! My lady! my lady!" It was the old familiar title that struck upon her fears and induced calmness. She stared at Joyce, and retreated backward, after the manner of one receding from some hideous vision.

"My lady, let me take you into your room. Mr. Carlyle is come; he is just bringing up his wife. Only think if you should give way before him! Pray, come away!"

"How did you know me?" she asked, in a hollow voice.

"My lady, it was that night when there was an alarm of fire. I went close up to you to take Master Archibald from your arms; and, as sure as I am standing here, I believe that for the moment my senses left me. I thought I saw a specter; the specter of my dead lady. I forgot the present; I forgot that all were standing round me; that you, Madame Vine, were still before me. Your face was not disguised then; the moonlight shone full upon it, and I knew it, after the first few moments of terror, to be, in dreadful truth, the living one of Lady Isabel. My lady, come away! we shall have Mr. Carlyle here."

Poor thing! She sank upon her knees, in her humility, her dread. "Oh, Joyce, have pity on me! don't betray me! I will leave the house; indeed I will. Don't betray me while I am in it."

"My lady, you have nothing to fear from me. I have kept the secret buried within my breast since then. Last April! It has nearly been too much for me. By night and by day I have had no peace, dreading what might come out. Think of the awful confusion, the consequences, should it come to the knowledge of Mr. and Mrs. Carlyle. Indeed, my lady, you never ought to have come."

"Joyce," she said hollowly, lifting her haggard face, "I could not keep away from my unhappy children. Is it no punishment to me, think you, the being here?" she added, vehemently. "To see him—my husband—the husband of another! It is killing me."

"Oh, my lady, come away! I hear him; I hear him!"

Partly coaxing, partly dragging her, Joyce took her into her own room, and left her there. Mr. Carlyle was at that moment at the door of the sick one. Joyce sprang forward. Her face, in her emotion and fear,

was of one livid whiteness, and she shook as William had shaken, poor child, in the afternoon. It was only too apparent in the well-lighted corridor.

"Joyce," he exclaimed in amazement, "what ails you?"

"Sir! master!" she panted, "be prepared. Master William—Master William——"

"Joyce! Not dead?"

"Alas, yes, sir!"

Mr. Carlyle strode into the chamber. But, ere he was well across it, turned back to slip the bolt of the door. On the pillow lay the white, thin face, at rest now.

"My boy! my boy! Oh God!" he murmured, in bowed reverence, "mayst Thou have received this child to his rest in Jesus! Even as, I trust, Thou hadst already received his unhappy mother!"

CHAPTER LVII

LORD VANE DATING FORWARD

To the funeral of William Carlyle came Lord Mount Severn and his son. Wilson had been right in her surmises as to the resting-place. The Carlyle vault was opened for him, and an order went forth to the sculptor for an inscription to be added to their marble tablet in the church: "William Vane Carlyle, eldest son of Archibald Carlyle, of East Lynne." Amongst those who attended the funeral as mourners, went one more notable in the eyes of the gazers than the rest—Richard Hare the younger.

Lady Isabel was ill. Ill in mind, and ominously ill in body. She kept her room, and Joyce attended on her. The household set down madame's illness to the fatigue of having attended upon Master William; it was not thought of seriously by any one, especially as she declined to see a doctor.

She was nearer to death than she imagined. She

knew—judging by her declining strength and inner feelings—that it could not be far off; but she did not deem that it was coming so very soon. Her mother had died in a similar way. Some said of consumption—Dr. Martin said so, you may remember; some said of “waste;” the earl, her husband, said of a broken heart—you heard him say so to Mr. Carlyle in the first chapter of this history. The earl was the one who might be supposed to know best. Whatever may have been Lady Mount Severn’s malady, she—to give you the phrase that was in people’s mouths at the time—“went out like the snuff of a candle.” It was now the turn of Lady Isabel. She had no decided disorder, yet Death had marked her. She felt that it was so; and in the approach of death she dreaded not, as she had once done, the consequences that must ensue, did discovery come. Which brings us back to the point whence ensued this long digression. I dare say you are chafing at it, but it is not often I trouble you with one.

But she would not willingly let discovery come; neither had she the least intention of remaining at East Lynne to die. Where she should take refuge was quite a secondary consideration; only let her get smoothly and plausibly away. Joyce, in her dread, was forever urging it. Of course the preliminary step was, to arrange matters with Mrs. Carlyle, and in the afternoon of the day following the funeral, Lady Isabel proceeded to her dressing-room, and craved an interview.

Mr. Carlyle quitted the room as she entered it. Barbara, fatigued with a recent drive, was lying on the sofa.

“We shall be sorry to lose you, Madame Vine! You are all we could wish for Lucy; and Mr. Carlyle feels truly grateful for your love and attention to his poor boy. Would you like to go to the sea-side? I am going there on Monday next; Mr. Carlyle insists upon it that I try a little change. I had intended only to take my baby, but we can make different arrangements and

take you and Lucy. It might do you good, Madame Vine."

She shook her head. "No, it would make me worse. All that I want is perfect quiet. I must beg you to understand that I shall leave. And I should be glad if you could allow the customary notice to be dispensed with, so that I may be at liberty to depart within a few days."

"Look here, then," said Barbara, after a pause of consideration; "you remain at East Lynne until my return—which will be in a fortnight. Mr. Carlyle cannot stay with me, so I know I shall be tired in less time than that. Upon my return, if you still wish to leave, you shall then be at liberty to do so. What do you say?"

Madame Vine said "Yes." Said it eagerly. To have another fortnight with her children, Lucy and Archibald, was very like a reprieve, and she embraced it. Although she knew, as I have said, that grim Death was on his way, she did not think he had drawn so near the end of his journey. Her thoughts went back to the time when she had been ordered to the seaside after an illness. It had been a marvel if they had not. She remembered how her husband had urged the change upon her; how he had taken her traveling carefully; how tenderly anxious he had been in the arrangements for her comfort when settling her in the lodgings; how, when he came again to see her, he had met her in his passionate fondness, thanking God for the visible improvement in her looks. That one injunction, which she had called him back to give him, as he was departing for the boat, was bitterly present to her now: "Do not get making love to Barbara Hare." All this care and love and tenderness belonged now of right to Barbara, and were given to her.

"I intend Lucy Carlyle to be my wife, papa," said young Vane one day. "I mean in earnest—when we shall both be grown up. If you will approve, and Mr. Carlyle will give her to me."

The earl looked grave; Mr. Carlyle amused. "Suppose," said the latter, "we adjourn the discussion to this day ten years."

"But that Lucy is so very young a child, I should reprove you seriously, sir," said the earl. "You have no right to bring Lucy's name into any such absurdity."

"I mean it, papa; you'll all see. And I intend to keep out of scrapes—that is, of nasty, dishonorable scrapes—on purpose that Mr. Carlyle shall find no excuse against me. I have made up my mind to be what he is—a man of honor. I am right glad you know about it, sir. And I shall let mamma know it, before long."

The last sentence tickled the earl's fancy, and a grim smile passed over his lips. "It will be war to the knife, if you do."

"I know that," laughed the viscount. "But I am getting a better match for mamma in our battles than I used to be."

Madame Vine, when the corridor became empty again, laid her hand upon the boy's arm, as he was moving away, and drew him to the window.

"In speaking, as you do, of Lucy Carlyle, do you forget the disgrace reflected on her through the conduct of her mother?"

"Her mother is not Lucy."

"It might prove an impediment with Lord and Lady Mount Severn."

"Not with his lordship. And I must do—as you heard me say—battle with my mother. Conciliatory battle, you understand, madame; bringing the enemy to reason."

Madame Vine was agitated. She held her handkerchief to her mouth, and the boy noticed how her hands trembled.

"I have learned to love Lucy," said she. "It has appeared to me, in these few months' sojourn with her, that I have stood to her in the light of a mother. William Vane," she solemnly added, keeping her hold upon him, "I shall soon be where earthly distinctions

are no more; where sin and sorrow are wiped away. Should Lucy Carlyle indeed become your wife in after years, never, never, cast upon her, by so much as the slightest word of reproach, the sin of Lady Isabel."

Lord Vane threw back his head, his honest eyes flashing in their indignant earnestness.

"What do you take me for?"

"It would be a cruel wrong upon Lucy. She does not deserve it. That unhappy lady's sin was all her own; let it die with her. Never speak to Lucy of her mother."

The lad dashed his hand across his eyes, for they were filling. "I shall. I shall speak to her often of her mother—that is, you know, after she's my wife, I shall tell how I loved Lady Isabel—that there's nobody I ever loved so much in the world, but Lucy herself. I cast a reproach to Lucy on the score of her mother!" he hotly added. "It is through her mother that I love her. You don't understand, madame."

"Cherish and love her forever, should she become yours," said Lady Isabel, wringing his hand. "I ask this as one who is dying."

"I will, I promise it. But, I say, madame," he continued, dropping his fervent tone, "to what do you allude? Are you worse?"

Madame Vine did not answer. She glided away without speaking. When she was sitting that evening by twilight in the gray parlor, cold and shivering, and wrapped up in a shawl, though it was hot summer weather, somebody knocked at the door.

"Come in," cried she, apathetically.

It was Mr. Carlyle who entered. She rose up, her pulses quickening, her heart throbbing against her side. In her wild confusion she was drawing forward a chair for him. He laid his hand upon it, and motioned her to her own.

"Mrs. Carlyle tells me that you have been speaking to her of leaving—that you find yourself too much out of health to continue with us."

"Yes, sir," she faintly replied, having a most imperfect notion of what she did say.

"What is it that you find to be the matter with you?"

"I—think—it is chiefly weakness," she stammered.

Her face had grown as gray as the walls. A dusky, livid sort of hue, not unlike that which William's had worn the night of his death, and her voice sounded strangely hollow. The voice struck Mr. Carlyle, and awoke his fears.

"You cannot—you never can have caught William's complaint, in your close attendance on him!" he exclaimed, speaking in the impulse of the moment, as the idea flashed across him. "I have heard of such things."

"Caught it from him!" she rejoined, carried away also by impulse. "It is more likely that he——"

She stopped herself just in time. "Inherited it from me," had been the destined conclusion. In her alarm, she went off volubly, something to the effect that "it was no wonder she was ill; illness was natural to her family."

"At any rate, you have become ill at East Lynne, in attendance on my children," rejoined Mr. Carlyle, decisively, when her voice died away; "you must therefore allow me to insist that you permit East Lynne to do what it can toward renovating you. What is your objection to see a doctor?"

"A doctor could do me no good," she faintly answered.

"Certainly not—so long as you will not consult one."

"Indeed, sir, doctors could not cure me. Nor—as I believe—prolong my life."

Mr. Carlyle paused. "Do you believe yourself to be in danger?"

"Not in immediate danger, sir. Only in so far that I know I shall not live long."

"And yet you will not see a doctor? Madame Vine, you must be aware that I could not permit such a thing to go on in my house. Dangerous illness and no advice!"

She could not say to him "My malady is on the mind; it is a breaking heart, and therefore no doctor of physic could serve me." That would never do. She had sat with her hand across her face, between her spectacles and her wrapped-up chin. Had Mr. Carlyle possessed the eyes of Argus, he could not have made anything of her features in the broad light of day. But she did not feel so sure of it. There was always an undefined terror of discovery when in his presence, and she wished the interview at an end.

"I will see Mr. Wainwright, if it will be any satisfaction to you, sir."

"Madame Vine, I have intruded upon you here, to say that you must see him. And, should he deem it necessary, Dr. Martin also."

"Oh, sir," she rejoined, with a curious smile, "Mr. Wainwright will be quite sufficient. There will be no need of another. I will write him a note to-morrow."

"Spare yourself the trouble. I am going into West Lynne, and will send him up. You will permit me to urge that you spare no pains or care—that you suffer my servants to spare no pains or care to re-establish your health. Mrs. Carlyle tells me that the question of your leaving remains in abeyance until her return——"

"Pardon me, sir. The understanding with Mrs. Carlyle was, that I should remain here until her return, and should then be at liberty at once to leave."

"Exactly. That is what Mrs. Carlyle said. But I must express a hope that by that time you may be feeling so much better as to reconsider your decision, and continue with us. For my daughter's sake, Madame Vine, I trust that it will be so."

He rose as he spoke, and held out his hand. What could she do but to rise also, drop hers from her face, and give it him in answer? He retained it, clasping it warmly.

"How shall I repay you—how thank you for your love to my poor, lost boy?"

His earnest, tender eyes were on her double spectacles; a sad smile mingled with the sweet expression of his lips, as he bent toward her—lips that had once been hers! A faint exclamation of despair; a vivid glow of hot crimson; and she caught up her new black silk apron, so deeply bordered with crape, in her disengaged hand, and flung it up to her face. He mistook the sound; mistook the action.

“Do not grieve for him. He is at rest. Thank you, thank you greatly for all your sympathy.” Another wring of her hand, and Mr. Carlyle had quitted the room. She laid her head upon the table, and thought how merciful would be Death when he should come.

CHAPTER LVIII

UNTIL ETERNITY

Barbara was at the sea-side; and Lady Isabel was in her bed, dying. You remember the old French saying, “*L’homme propose, et Dieu dispose.*” An exemplification of it was here.

She, Lady Isabel, had consented to remain at East Lynne during Mrs. Carlyle’s absence on purpose that she might be with her children. But the object was frustrated, for Lucy and Archibald had been removed to Miss Carlyle’s. It was Mr. Carlyle’s arrangement. He thought the governess dared not say, Let them stay with me. Lady Isabel had also purposed to be safely away from East Lynne before the time came for her to die; but that time had advanced with giant strides, and the period for removal was past. She was going out as her mother had gone, rapidly, unexpectedly, “like the snuff of a candle.” Wilson was in attendance on her mistress; Joyce remained at home.

Barbara had chosen a watering-place near, not thirty miles off, so that Mr. Carlyle went there most evenings, returning to his office in the mornings. Thus he saw little of East Lynne, paying it only one or two flying visits. From the Saturday to the Wednesday

in the second week he did not come home at all; and it was in those few days that Lady Isabel had changed for the worse. On the Wednesday he was expected home to dinner and to sleep.

Joyce was in a state of frenzy—or next door to it. Lady Isabel was dying, and what could become of the ominous secret? A conviction, born of her fears, was on the girl's mind, that, with death, the whole must become known; and who was to foresee what blame might not be cast upon her by her master and mistress for not having disclosed it? She might be accused of having been an abettor in the plot from the first! Fifty times it was in Joyce's mind to send for Miss Carlyle and tell her all.

The afternoon was fast waning, and the spirit of Lady Isabel seemed to be waning with it. Joyce was in the room, in attendance upon her. She had been in a fainting state all day, but felt better now. She was partially raised in bed by pillows, a white cashmere shawl over her shoulders, her night-cap off, to allow as much air as possible to come to her, and the windows stood open.

Footsteps sounded on the gravel in the quiet stillness of the summer air. They penetrated even to her ear, for all her faculties were keen yet. Beloved footsteps; and a tinge of hectic rose to her cheeks. Joyce, who stood at the window, glanced out. It was Mr. Carlyle.

"Joyce!" came forth a cry from the bed, sharp and eager.

Joyce turned round. "My lady?"

"I should die happier if I might see him."

"See him!" uttered Joyce, doubting her own ears.

"My lady! See him? Mr. Carlyle?"

"What can it signify? I am already as one dead. Should I ask it, or wish it, think you, in rude life? The yearning has been upon me for days, Joyce; it is keeping death away."

"It could not be, my lady," was the decisive answer.

"It must not be. It is as a thing impossible."

Lady Isabel burst into tears. "I can't die for the trouble," she wailed. "You keep my children from me. They must not come, you say, lest I betray myself. Now you would keep my husband. Joyce, Joyce, let me see him."

Her husband! Poor thing! Joyce was in a maze of distress, though not the less firm. Her eyes were wet with tears; but she believed she should be infringing her allegiance to her mistress, did she bring Mr. Carlyle to the presence of his former wife; altogether it might be productive of nothing but confusion.

A knock at the chamber door. Joyce called out, "Come in." The two maids, Hannah and Sarah, were alone in the habit of coming into the room, and neither of them had ever known Madame Vine as Lady Isabel. Sarah put in her head.

"Master wants you, Mrs. Joyce."

"I'll come."

"He is in the dining-room. I have just taken down Master Arthur to him."

Mr. Carlyle had got "Master Arthur" on his shoulder when Joyce entered. Master Arthur was decidedly given to noise and rebellion, and was already, as Wilson expressed it, "sturdy upon his pins."

"How is Madame Vine, Joyce?"

Joyce scarcely knew how to answer. But she did not dare equivocate as to her precarious state. And where the use, when a few hours would probably see the end of it?

"She is very ill indeed, sir."

"Worse?"

"Sir, I fear she is dying."

Mr. Carlyle, in his consternation, put down Arthur. "Dying?"

"I hardly think she will last till morning, sir."

"Why, what has killed her?" he uttered in amazement.

Joyce did not answer. She looked pale and confused.

"Have you had Dr. Martin?"

"Oh, no, sir. It would be of no use."

"No use!" repeated Mr. Carlyle, in a sharp accent. "Is that the way to treat dying people? Assume it is of no use to send for advice, and so quietly let them die! If Madame Vine is as ill as you say, a telegraphic message must be sent off at once. I had better see her," he said, moving to the door.

Joyce, in her perplexity, dared to place her back against it, preventing his egress. "Oh, master!—I beg your pardon, but—but—it would not be right. Please, sir, do not think of going into her room!"

Mr. Carlyle thought that Joyce had taken a fit of prudery. "Why can't I go in?" he asked. "Mrs. Carlyle would not like it, sir," stammered Joyce, her cheeks scarlet now. Mr. Carlyle stared at her. "Some of you take up odd ideas," he cried. "In Mrs. Carlyle's absence it is necessary that some one should see her. Let a lady die in my house, and never see after her? You are out of your senses, Joyce. I shall go in after dinner; so prepare Madame Vine."

The dinner was being brought in then. Joyce, feeling like one in a nervous attack, picked up Arthur and carried him to Sarah, in the nursery. What on earth was she to do?

Scarcely had Mr. Carlyle begun his dinner, when his sister entered. Some grievance had arisen between her and the tenants of certain houses of hers, and she was bringing the dispute to him. Before he would hear it, he begged her to go up to Madame Vine, telling her what Joyce had said of her state.

"Dying!" ejaculated Miss Corny, in disbelieving derision. "That Joyce has been more like a simpleton lately than like herself. I can't think what has come to the woman."

She took off her bonnet and mantle, and laid them on a chair, gave a twitch or two to her cap, as she surveyed it in the pier-glass, and went upstairs. Joyce answered her knock at the invalid's door; and Joyce, when she saw who it was, turned as white as any sheet.

"Oh, ma'am! you must not come in!" she blundered out, in her confusion and fear, as she put herself right in the doorway.

"Who is to keep me out?" demanded Miss Carlyle, after a pause of surprise, her tone one of quiet power. "Move away, girl. Joyce, I think your brain must be softening. What will you try at next?"

Joyce was powerless, both in right and strength, and she knew it. She knew there was no help, that Miss Carlyle would and must enter. She stood aside, shivering, and passed out of the room as soon as Miss Carlyle was within it.

Ah! there could no longer be concealment now! There she was, her pale face lying against the pillow, free from its disguising trappings. The band of gray velvet, the spectacles, the wraps for the throat and chin, the huge cap, all were gone. It was the face of Lady Isabel—changed, certainly, very, very much; but still hers. The silvered hair fell on either side of her face, as the silky curls had once fallen; the sweet, sad eyes were the eyes of yore.

"Mercy be good to us!" uttered Miss Carlyle.

They remained gazing at each other, both panting with emotion—yes, even Miss Carlyle. Though a wild suspicion had once crossed her mind that Madame Vine might be Lady Isabel, it had died away again, from the sheer improbability of the thing, as much as from the convincing proofs offered by Lord Mount Severn. Not but what Miss Carlyle had borne in mind the suspicion, and had been fond of tracing the likeness in Madame Vine's face.

"How could you dare come back here?" she asked, her tone one of sad, soft wailing; not of reproach. Lady Isabel humbly crossed her attenuated hands upon her chest. "My children," she whispered; "how could I stay away from them? Have pity, Miss Carlyle! Don't reproach me! I am on my way to God, to answer for all my sins and sorrows."

"I do not reproach you," said Miss Carlyle.

"I am so glad to go," she continued to murmur, her

eyes full of tears. "Jesus did not come, you know, to save the good, like you; He came for the sake of us poor sinners. I tried to take up my cross, as He bade us, and bear it bravely for His sake, but its weight has killed me."

The good, like you! Humbly, meekly, deferentially, was it expressed, in all good faith and trust, as though Miss Corny were a sort of upper angel. Somehow the words grated on Miss Corny's ear; grated fiercely on her conscience. It came into her mind, then, as she stood there, that the hard religion she had through life professed was not the religion that would best bring peace to her dying bed.

"Child," she said, drawing near to and leaning over Lady Isabel, "had I anything to do with sending you from East Lynne?"

Lady Isabel shook her head and cast down her gaze, as she whispered: "You did not send me; you did not help to send me. I was not very happy with you, but that was not the cause of—of my going away. Forgive me, Miss Carlyle, forgive me!"

"Thank God!" inwardly breathed Miss Corny. "Forgive me," she said, aloud, and in agitation, touching her hand. "I could have made your home happier, and I wish I had done it. I have wished it ever since you left it."

Lady Isabel drew the hand in hers. "I want to see Archibald," she whispered, going back, in thought, to the old time and the old name. "I have prayed Joyce to bring him to me, and she will not. Only for a minute! just to hear him say he forgives me! What can it matter, now that I am as one lost to this world? I should die easier."

Upon what impulse or grounds Miss Carlyle saw fit to accede to the request, cannot be told. Possibly she did not choose to refuse a death-bed prayer, possibly she reasoned as did Lady Isabel—what could it matter? She went to the door. Joyce was in the corridor, leaning against the wall, her apron up to her eyes.

"How long have you known of this?"

"Since that night in the spring, when there was an alarm of fire. I saw her then with nothing on her face, and knew her, though, at the first moment, I thought it was a ghost. Ma'am, I have just gone about since like a ghost myself, from the fear."

"Go and request your master to come up to me."

"Oh, ma'am! Will it be well to tell him?" remonstrated Joyce. "Well that he should see her?"

"Go and request your master to come to me," unequivocally repeated Miss Carlyle. "Are you mistress, Joyce, or am I?"

Joyce went down and brought Mr. Carlyle up from the dinner-table. "Is Madame Vine worse, Cornelia? Will she see me?"

"She wishes to see you."

Miss Carlyle opened the door as she spoke. He motioned to her to pass in first. "No," she said, "you had better see her alone." He was going in, when Joyce caught his arm. "Master! master! you ought to be prepared. Ma'am, won't you tell him?"

He looked at them, thinking they must be moon-struck, for their conduct seemed inexplicable. Both were in evident agitation—an emotion Miss Carlyle was not given to. Her face and lips were twitching, but she kept a studied silence. Mr. Carlyle knitted his brow, and went into the chamber. They shut him in.

He walked gently at once to the bed, in his straightforward manner. "I am grieved, Madame Vine——"

The words failed on his tongue. Did he think, as Joyce had once done, that it was a ghost he saw? Certain it is that his face and lips turned the hue of death, and he backed a few steps from the bed, though he was as little given to show emotion as man can well be. The falling hair, the sweet, mournful eyes, the hectic which his presence brought to her cheeks, told too plainly of the Lady Isabel.

"Archibald!"

She put out her trembling hand. She caught him

ere he had drawn quite beyond her reach. He looked at her, he looked round the room, as does one awaking from a dream! "I could not die without your forgiveness," she murmured, her eyes falling before him as she thought of her past sin. "Do not turn from me! bear with me a little minute! Only say you forgive me, and I shall die in peace."

"Isabel! Are you—are you—were you Madame Vine?" he cried, scarcely conscious of what he said.

"Oh, forgive me, forgive me! I did not die. I got well from that accident, but it changed me dreadfully; nobody knew me, and I came here as Madame Vine. I could not stay away. Archibald, forgive me!"

His mind was in a whirl, his wits were scared away. The first clear thought that came thumping through his brain was that he was a man of two wives. She noticed his perplexed silence.

"I could not stay away from you and from my children. The longing for you was killing me," she reiterated, wildly, like one talking in a fever. "I never knew a moment's peace after the mad act I was guilty of, quitting you. Not an hour had I departed, when my repentance set in; and even then I would have retracted and come back, but I did not know how. See what it has done for me!" tossing up her gray hair, holding out her attenuated wrists. "Oh, forgive, forgive me! My sin was great, but my punishment was greater. It has been as one long scene of mortal agony."

"Why did you go?" asked Mr. Carlyle.

"Did you not know?"

"No. It has always been a mystery to me."

"I went out of love for you."

A shade of disdain crossed his lips. Was she equivocating to him on her death-bed?

"Do not look in that way," she panted. "My strength is nearly gone; you must perceive that it is; and I do not, perhaps, express myself clearly. I loved you dearly, and I grew suspicious of you. I thought you were false and deceitful to me; that your love was

all given to another; and, in my sore jealousy, I listened to the temptings of that bad man, who whispered to me of revenge. It was not so, was it?"

Mr. Carlyle had regained his calmness; outwardly, at any rate. He stood by the side of the bed, looking down upon her, his arms crossed upon his chest, and his noble form raised to its full height.

"Was it so?" she feverishly repeated.

"Can you ask it?—knowing me as you did then, as you must have known me since? I never was false to you in thought, in word, or in deed."

"Oh, Archibald, I was mad, I was mad! I could not have done it in anything but madness. Surely you will forget and forgive!"

"I cannot forget. I have already forgiven."

"Try and forget the dreadful time that has passed since that night!" she continued, the tears falling on her cheeks, as she held up to him one of her poor hot hands. "Let your thoughts go back to the days when you first knew me; when I was here, Isabel Vane, a happy girl, with my father. At times I have lost myself in a moment's happiness thinking of it. Do you remember how you grew to love me, though you thought you might not tell it me?—and how gentle you were with me when papa died?—and the hundred-pound note? Do you remember coming to Castle Marling, and my promising to be your wife?—and the first kiss you left upon my lips? And oh, Archibald! do you remember the loving days after I was your wife?—how happy we were with each other? Do you remember, when Lucy was born, we thought I should have died; and your joy, your thankfulness that God restored me? Do you remember all this?"

Ay. He did remember it. He took that poor hand into his, retaining there its wasted fingers. "Have you any reproach to cast to me?" he gently said, bending his head a little.

"Reproach to you! To you who must be almost without reproach in the sight of Heaven! you, who were ever loving to me, ever anxious for my welfare!

When I think of what you were and are, and how I requitted you, I could sink into the earth with remorse and shame. My own sin I have surely expiated; I cannot expiate the shame I entailed upon you and upon our children."

Never. He felt it as keenly now as he had felt it then.

"Think what it has been for me!" she resumed; and he was obliged to bend his ear to catch her gradually weakening tones. "To live in this house with your wife; to see your love for her; to watch the envied caresses that once were mine! I never loved you so passionately as I have done since I lost you. Think what it was, to watch William's decaying strength; to be alone with you in his dying hour and not be able to say he is my child as well as yours. When he lay dead, and the news went forth to the household, it was her pretty grief you soothed, not mine; mine, his mother. God alone knows how I have lived through it; it has been to me as the bitterness of death."

"Why did you come back?" was the response of Mr. Carlyle.

"I have told you. I could not live away from you and my children."

"It was wrong—wrong in all ways."

"Wickedly wrong. You cannot think worse of it than I have done. But the consequences and the punishment would be mine alone, so long as I guarded against discovery. I never thought to stop here to die; but death seems to have come upon me with a leap, as it came to my mother."

A pause of labored breathing. Mr. Carlyle did not interrupt it.

"All wrong, all wrong," she resumed; "this interview with you amongst the rest. And yet—I hardly know. It cannot hurt the new ties you have formed, for I am as one dead now to this world, hovering on the brink of the next. But you were my husband, Archibald; and the last few days I have longed for your forgiveness with a fevered longing. Oh, that the

past could be blotted out! that I could wake up and find it but a hideous dream; that I were here, as in the old days, in health and happiness, your ever-loving wife! Do you wish it—that the dark past had never had place?”

She put the question in a sharp, eager tone, gazing up to him with an anxious gaze, as though the answer must be one of life or death. “For your sake I wish it.” Calm enough were the words spoken; and her eyes fell again, and a deep sigh came forth.

“I am going to William. But Lucy and Archibald will be left. Oh, be ever kind to them, I pray you! Visit not their mother’s sin upon their heads! Do not, in your love for your later children, lose your love for them!”

“Have you seen anything in my conduct that could give rise to fears of this?” he returned, reproach mingling in his sad tone. “The children are dear to me as you once were.”

“As I once was. Ay! And I might have been now.”

“Indeed you might,” he answered, with emotion.

“Archibald, I am on the very threshold of the next world. Will you not bless me? Will you not say a word of love to me before I pass it? Let what I am be blotted for the moment from your memory; think of me as the innocent, timid child, whom you made your wife. Only a word of love—my heart is breaking for it!”

He leaned over her, he pushed aside the hair from her brow with his gentle hand, his tears dropping on her face. “You nearly broke mine when you left me, Isabel,” he whispered. “May God bless you and take you to His rest in Heaven! May He so deal with me, as I now fully and freely forgive you!”

Lower and lower he bent his head, until his breath nearly mingled with hers. But suddenly his face grew red with a scarlet flush, and he lifted it again. Did the form of one, then in a felon’s cell at Lynneborough, thrust itself before him—or that of his absent and unconscious wife?

"To His rest in Heaven," she murmured, in the hollow tones of the departing. "Yes, yes; I know that God has forgiven me. Oh, what a struggle it has been! Nothing but bad feelings—rebellion, and sorrow, and repining—for a long while after I came back here; but Jesus prayed for me and helped me; and you know how merciful He is to the weary and heavy-laden. We shall meet again, Archibald, and live together forever and forever. But for that great hope I could hardly die. William said mamma would be on the banks of the river, looking out for him; but it is William who is looking for me."

Mr. Carlyle released one of his hands; she had taken them both; and, with his own handkerchief, wiped the death dew from her forehead.

"It is no sin to anticipate it, Archibald. For there will be no marrying or giving in marriage in Heaven; Christ has said so. Though we do not know it will be. My sin will be remembered no more there, and we shall be together with our children forever and forever. Keep a little corner in your heart for your poor lost Isabel."

"Yes, yes," he whispered.

"Are you leaving me?" she uttered, in a wild tone of pain.

"You are growing faint, I perceive. I must call assistance."

"Farewell, then; farewell, until eternity," she sighed, the tears raining from her eyes. "It is death, I think; not faintness. Oh, but it is hard to part! Farewell, farewell, my once dear husband!"

She raised her head from the pillow, excitement giving her strength; she clung to his arm; she lifted her face in its sad yearning. Mr. Carlyle laid her tenderly down again, and suffered his lips to rest upon hers. "Until eternity," he whispered. She followed him with her eyes as he retreated, and watched him from the room; then turned her face to the wall. "It is over. Only God now."

Mr. Carlyle took an instant's counsel with himself,

stopping at the head of the stairs to do it. Joyce, in obedience to a sign from him, had already gone into the sick-chamber; his sister was standing at its door.

"Cornelia."

She followed him down into the dining-room.

"You will remain here to-night? With her."

"Do you suppose I shouldn't?" crossly responded Miss Corny. "Where are you off to now?"

"To the telegraph office, at present. To send for Lord Mount Severn."

"What good can he do?"

"None. But I shall send for him."

"Can't one of the servants go just as well as you? You have not finished your dinner; hardly begun yet."

He turned his eyes on the dinner-table in a mechanical sort of way, his mind wholly preoccupied, made some remark in answer, which Miss Corny did not catch, and went out.

On his return his sister met him in the hall, drew him inside the nearest room, and closed the door. Lady Isabel was dead. Had been dead about ten minutes.

"She never spoke after you left her, Archibald. There was a slight struggle at the last, a fighting for breath, otherwise she went off quite peacefully. I felt sure, when I first saw her this afternoon, that she could not last till midnight."

One word touching that wretched prisoner in the condemned cell at Lynneborough. As you may have anticipated, the extreme sentence was not carried out. And—little favorite as Sir Francis is with you and with me—we can but admit that justice did not demand that it should be. That he had wilfully killed Hallijohn was certain; but the act was committed in a moment of wild rage; it had not been premeditated. The sentence was commuted to penal servitude for life. A far more disgraceful one in the estimation of Sir Francis—a far more unwelcome one in the eyes of his wife. It is of no use to mince the truth. One little grain of comfort had penetrated to Lady Levison; the anticipation of the time when she and her ill-fated

child should be alone, and could hide themselves in some hidden nook of the wide world, he and his crime and his end, gone—forgotten. But it seems he was not to go and be forgotten; she and the boy must be tied to him still; and she was lost in horror and rebellion.

That man envied the dead Hallijohn, as he looked forth on the future. A cheering prospect, truly! The gay Sir Francis Levison working in chains with his gang! Where would his diamonds and his perfumed handkerchiefs and his white hands be then? After a time he might get a ticket of leave. He groaned in agony as the turnkey suggested it to him. A ticket of leave for him! Oh, why did they not hang him? he wailed forth, as he closed his eyes to the dim light—to the light of the cell, you understand; he could not close them to the light of the future. No, never again; it shone out all too plainly, dazzling his brain as with a flame of living fire.

CHAPTER LIX

I. M. V.

Lord Mount Severn, wondering greatly what the urgent summons could mean, lost no time in obeying it, and was at East Lynne the following morning, early. Mr. Carlyle was in his carriage at the station; his close carriage; and, shut up in that, he made the communication to the earl as they drove to East Lynne.

The earl could with difficulty believe it. Never had he been so utterly astonished. At first he really could not understand the tale.

“Did she—did she—come back to your house to die?” he blundered. “You never took her in? I don’t comprehend.”

Mr. Carlyle explained further. And the earl at length understood. But he could not recover his perplexed astonishment.

"What a mad act!—to come back here! Madame Vine! How on earth did she escape detection?"

"She did escape it," said Mr. Carlyle. "The strange likeness Madame Vine possessed to my first wife often struck me as being marvelous, but I never suspected the truth. It was a likeness, and not a likeness; for every part of her face and form was changed. Except her eyes, and those I never saw but through disguising glasses."

The earl wiped his hot face. The news had ruffled him in no measured degree. He felt angry with Isabel, dead though she was, and thankful that Mrs. Carlyle was away.

"Will you see her?" whispered Mr. Carlyle, as they entered the house.

"Yes."

They went up to the death-chamber, Mr. Carlyle procuring the key. Very peaceful she looked now, her pale features composed under her white cap and bands. Miss Carlyle and Joyce had done all that was necessary; nobody else had been suffered to approach her. Lord Mount Severn leaned over her, tracing the former looks of Isabel; and the likeness grew upon him in a wonderful degree.

"What did she die of?" he asked.

"She said a broken heart."

"Ah!" said the earl. "The wonder is that it did not break before. Poor thing; poor Isabel!" he added, touching her hand, "how she marred her own happiness! Carlyle, I suppose this is your wedding ring?"

Mr. Carlyle cast his eyes upon the ring. "Very probable."

"To think of her never having discarded it!" remarked the earl, releasing the cold hand. "Well, I can hardly believe the tale now." He turned and quitted the room as he spoke. Mr. Carlyle looked steadfastly at the dead face for a minute or two, his fingers touching the forehead; but what his thoughts or feelings may have been none can tell. Then he replaced the sheet over the face, and followed the earl.

They descended in silence, to the breakfast-room. Miss Carlyle was seated at the table waiting for them. "Where could all your eyes have been?" exclaimed the earl to her, after a few sentences referring to the event had passed.

"Just where yours would have been," retorted Miss Corny, with a touch of her old temper. "You saw Madame Vine as well as we did."

"But not continuously. Only two or three times in all. And I do not remember ever to have seen her without her bonnet and veil. That Carlyle should not have recognized her is almost beyond belief."

"It seems so, to speak of it," said Miss Corny; "but facts are facts. She was young, gay, active, when she left here, upright as a dart, her dark hair drawn from her open brow and flowing on her neck, her cheeks like crimson paint, her face altogether beautiful. Madame Vine arrived here a pale, stooping woman, lame of one leg, shorter than Lady Isabel—and her figure stuffed out under those sacks of jackets. Not a bit, scarcely, of her forehead to be seen, for gray velvet and gray bands of hair; her head smothered under a close cap, large blue double spectacles hiding the eyes and their sides, and the throat tied up—the chin partially. The mouth was entirely altered in character, and that upward scar, always so conspicuous, made it almost ugly. Then she had lost some of her front teeth, you know, and she lisped when she spoke. Take her for all in all," summed up Miss Carlyle, "she looked no more like the Isabel who went away from here than I do like Adam. Just get your dearest friend damaged and disguised as she was, my lord, and see if you'd recognize him."

The observation came home to Lord Mount Severn. A gentleman whom he knew well had been so altered by a fearful accident that little resemblance could be traced to his former self. In fact, his own family could not recognize him; and he used no artificial disguises. It was a case in point, and, reader, I assure you that it is a true one.

"It was the disguise that we ought to have suspected," quietly observed Mr. Carlyle. "The likeness was not sufficiently striking to cause suspicion."

"But she turned the house from that scent as soon as she came into it," struck in Miss Corny. "Telling of the 'neuralgic pains' that afflicted her head and face, rendering the guarding them from exposure necessary. Remember, Lord Mount Severn, that the Ducies had been with her in Germany, and had never suspected her. Remember, also, another thing; that, however great a likeness we may have detected, we could not and did not speak of it one to another. Lady Isabel's name is never so much as whispered amongst us."

"True; all true," said the earl.

On the Friday the following letter was dispatched to Mrs. Carlyle:

"MY DEAREST:—I find I shall not be able to get to you on Saturday afternoon as I promised, but will leave here by the late train that night. Mind you don't sit up for me. Lord Mount Severn is here for a few days; he sends his regards to you.

"And now, Barbara, prepare for news that will prove a shock. Madame Vine is dead. She grew rapidly worse, they tell me, after our departure, and died on Wednesday night. I am glad you were away.

"Love from the children. Lucy and Archie are still at Cornelia's; Arthur wearing out Sarah's legs in the nursery.

Ever yours, my dearest,

"ARCHIBALD CARLYLE."

Of course, as Madame Vine, the governess, died at Mr. Carlyle's house, he could not in courtesy do less than follow her to the grave. So decided West Lynne, when they found which way the wind was going to blow. Lord Mount Severn followed also, to keep him company, being on a visit to him. And very polite, indeed, of his lordship to do it! Condescending also! West Lynne remembered another funeral at which

these two had been the only mourners—that of the late earl. By some curious coincidence, the French governess was buried close to the earl's grave. As good there as anywhere else, quoth West Lynne; there happened to be a vacant spot of ground.

The funeral took place on the Saturday morning. A plain, respectable funeral. A hearse and pair, and mourning coach and pair, with a chariot for the Rev. Mr. Little. No pall-bearers, or mutes, or anything of that show-off kind, and no plumes on the horses, only on the hearse. West Lynne looked on with approbation, and conjectured that the governess had left sufficient money to bury herself; but of course that was Mr. Carlyle's affair, not West Lynne's. Quiet enough lay she in her last resting-place.

They left her in it, the earl and Mr. Carlyle, and entered the mourning-coach to be conveyed back again to East Lynne.

“Just a little upright stone of white marble, two feet high by a foot and a half broad,” remarked the earl, on the road, pursuing a topic they were speaking upon. “With the initials I. V. and the date of the year. Nothing more. What do you think?”

“I. M. V.,” corrected Mr. Carlyle. “Yes.”

At that moment the bells of another church, not St. Jude's, broke out in a joyous peal, and the earl inclined his ear to listen. “What can they be ringing for?” he cried. They were ringing for a wedding. Afy Halli-john, by the help of two clergymen and six bridesmaids (of whom you may be sure Joyce was not one), had just been converted into Mrs. Joe Jiffin. When Afy took a thing in her head, she somehow contrived to carry it through, and to bend even clergymen and bridesmaids to her will. Mr. Jiffin was blessed at last.

In the afternoon the earl left East Lynne, and somewhat later Barbara arrived. Wilson scarcely gave her mistress time to step into the house before her, and she very nearly left the baby in the fly. Curiously anxious was Wilson to hear all particulars, as to what

could have taken off that French governess. Mr. Carlyle was much surprised at their arrival.

"How could I stay away, Archibald, even until Monday, after the news you sent me?" said Barbara. "What did she die of? It must have been awfully sudden."

"I suppose so," was his hungry answer. He was debating a question with himself, one he had thought over a great deal since Wednesday night. Should he, or should he not, tell his wife? He would have preferred not to tell her, and, had the secret been confined to his own breast, he would decidedly not have done so. But it was known to three others; to Miss Carlyle, to Lord Mount Severn, and to Joyce. All trustworthy and of good intention; but it was impossible for Mr. Carlyle to make sure that not one of them would ever, through any chance unpremeditated word, let the secret come to the knowledge of Mrs. Carlyle. That would not do; if she must hear it at all, she must hear it from him, and at once.

"Are you ill, Archibald?" she asked, noting his face. It wore a pale, worn look. "I have something to tell you, Barbara," he answered, drawing her hand into his as they stood together. They were in her dressing-room, where she was taking off her things. "On Wednesday evening, when I got home to dinner, Joyce told me that she feared Madame Vine was dying, and I thought it right to see her."

"Certainly," returned Barbara. "Quite right."

"I went into her room, and I found that she was dying. But I found something else, Barbara. She was not Madame Vine."

"Not Madame Vine!" echoed Barbara.

"It was my former wife, Isabel Vane."

Barbara's face flushed crimson, and then grew white as marble, and she drew her hand from Mr. Carlyle's. He did not appear to notice the movement, but stood with his elbow on the mantelpiece, while he talked, giving her a rapid summary of the interview; not its details.

"She could not stay away from her children, she said, and came back as Madame Vine. What with the effects of the railway accident in France, and those spectacles she wore, and her style of dress, and her gray hair, she felt secure in not being recognized. I am astonished now that she was not discovered. Were such a thing related to me I should refuse credence to it."

Barbara's heart felt faint with its utter sickness, and she turned her face from the view of her husband. Her first confused thoughts were as Mr. Carlyle's had been—that she had been living in his house with another wife. "Did you suspect her?" she breathed, in a low tone. "Barbara! Had I suspected it, should I have allowed it to go on? She implored my forgiveness for the past, and for having returned here; and I forgave her fully. I went to West Lynne to telegraph for Mount Severn. She was dead when I came back. She said her heart was broken. Barbara, we cannot wonder at it."

There was a pause. Mr. Carlyle began to perceive that his wife's face was hidden from him. Still there was no reply. Mr. Carlyle took his arm from the mantelpiece, and moved so that he could see her countenance; a wan countenance then telling of pain.

He laid his hand upon her shoulder and made her look at him. "My dearest, what is this?"

"Oh, Archibald!" she uttered, clasping her hands together, all her pent-up feelings bursting forth, and the tears streaming from her eyes, "has this taken your love from me?" He took both her hands in one of his, he put the other around her waist and held her there before him, never speaking, only looking gravely into her face. Who could look at its sincere truthfulness, at the sweet expression of his lips, and doubt him? Not Barbara.

"I had thought my wife possessed entire trust in me."

"Oh, I do, I do; you know I do. Forgive me, Archibald," she softly whispered. "I deemed it better to

impart this to you, Barbara. My darling, I have told it you in love." She was leaning on his breast, sobbing gently, her repentant face turned toward him. He held her there in his strong protection, his enduring tenderness.

"My wife! my darling! now, and always."

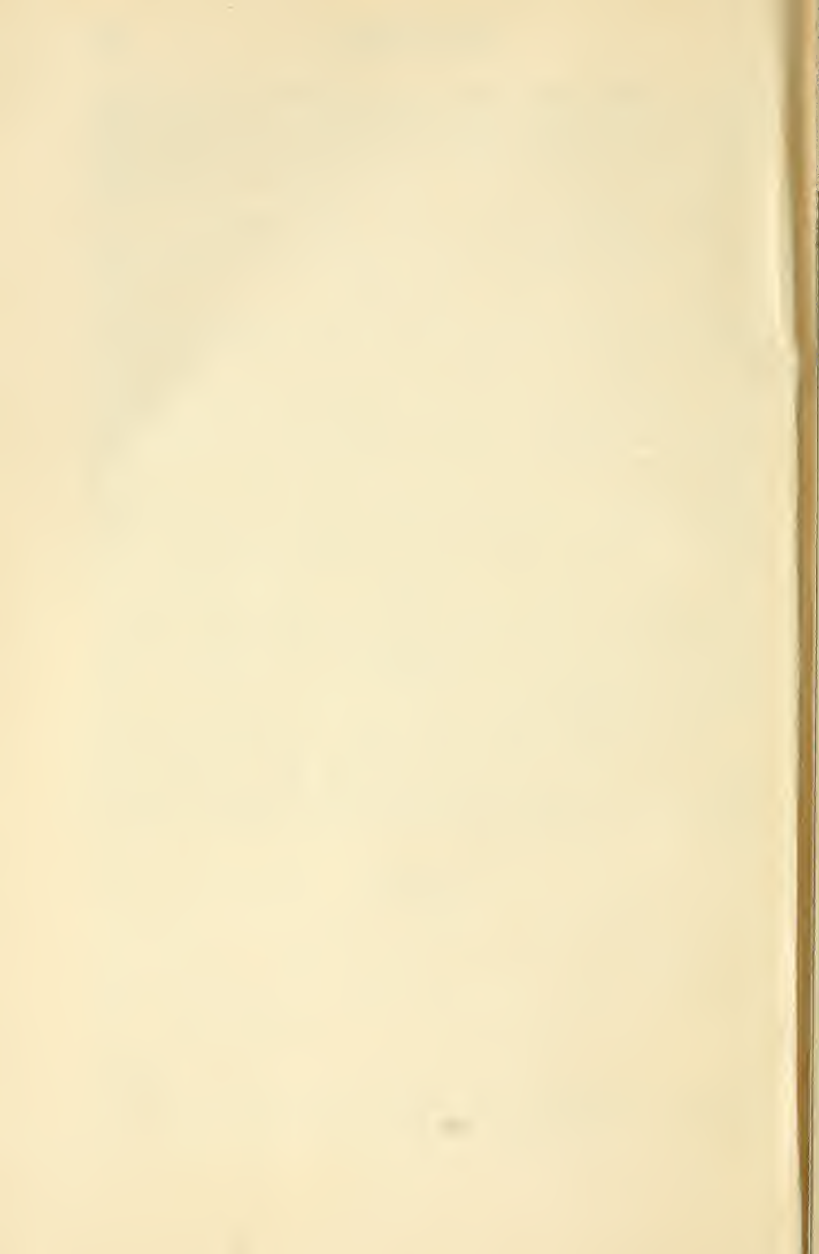
"It was a foolish feeling to cross my heart, Archibald. It is done with, and gone."

"Never let it come back again, Barbara. Neither need her name be mentioned again between us. A barred name it has hitherto been; let it so continue."

"Anything you will. My earnest wish is to please you; to be worthy of your esteem and love, Archibald," she timidly added, her eyelids drooping as she made the confession, while the color rose in her fair face; "there has been a feeling in my heart against your children, a sort of jealous feeling—can you understand?—because they were hers; because she had once been your wife. I knew how wrong it was, and I have tried earnestly to subdue it. I have, indeed, and I think it is nearly gone. I"—her voice sunk lower—"constantly pray to be helped to do it; to love them and care for them, as if they were my own. It will come with time."

"Every good thing will come with time that we earnestly seek," said Mr. Carlyle. "Oh, Barbara, never forget—never forget that the only way to insure peace in the end, is to strive always to be doing right, unselfishly, under God." *

THE END



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