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JEANIE'S QUIET LIFE.

VOL. III.



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JEANIE'S QUIET LIFE.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

“ST. OLAVE'S,” “JANITA'S CROSS,”

“ALEC'S BRIDE,”

&c. &c.

“'Tis only noble to be good.”

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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JEANIE'S QUIET LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

SOME men, when trouble or disappointment crosses their path, battle with it in brave silence, asking no help, save from above; and when the strife is over, the enemy beneath their feet, they go on calmly as before, none ever knowing how fierce that strife has been, none seeing the wounds which they hide so quietly, and bear so patiently.

Others make a very bitter outcry when the world goes wrong with them. They call together their friends and neighbours, asking

for help and sympathy, unveiling their sharp particular grief to anyone who will cast a pitying eye upon it, murmuring like a hurt child for the pain which they have not pride enough to conceal. And some, again, cruelly wounded, fight on more madly than before, thinking by dealing heavier blows on every side to deaden the smart of their own, which, however, refuses so to be healed.

Of this last sort was Hugh Deeping. He asked no sympathy from anyone in his great trouble. He did not strive with it for a season, gravely, earnestly, until it lay beneath his feet, conquered, as all sorrow may be conquered by him who battles with it right nobly. But having received the dart into his breast, he hurried away with it, thinking in a wild, desperate life, to stifle its pain, and by-and-by forget it.

He was of a hasty, impulsive nature, open alike to good and evil influences. A year ago, that heavy sorrow of his father's death, bringing as it did a cloud over all his future life, had well-nigh crushed the spring out of him. But readily as he had been wounded, so readily did he receive the balm which should heal that wound. He had none of the lofty pride which refuses to be comforted. His was not that stern, strong nature which makes a companion of its woe, taking counsel with it as a man with his friend. If he was easily cast down by difficulties which a cooler temperament would have met with quiet disdain, he never put away from him the outstretched hand of relief, or nursed his disappointment in secret, when, by casting it from him he might travel more quickly on.

That Sunday morning in Lyneton Abbots church had put new life into him. Coming home again through the sweet October sunshine, he felt as if nothing could ever conquer him again; as if that divine and human love which together seemed to have sprung up within his heart, would sustain him through any trial, and give him patience for any waiting. Everything wore a brighter aspect for him after that. Even his daily task-work, which the day before had vexed him so with its poor worthlessness, had now a new meaning in it. It was no longer to be scorned, or only done with mechanical patience. It was God's message to him, and rightly read would teach him a lesson all divine. He felt such new spring and energy within him, the dawning of a bright day into whose hours he would

crowd so much of noble toil and lofty endeavour.

For awhile after that, life went on very smoothly with him. He knew that he was growing towards the light. Daily he was laying the strong hand of self-restraint on all of his nature that was not pure and good. With reverent care he was tending in his heart the seeds of holy purpose and effort, that in days to come, when they had taken root and grown up, he might rest thankfully beneath their shadow. And through all the toil and labour of the lot which had been appointed him, there flowed like some quiet stream, ever refreshing and enriching it, his love for Jeanie Lyneton; that sweet human love, which, almost like God's own, raises and ennobles and purifies wherever it comes.

Now a change had passed over his life. "Good for nothing" was the conclusion which Hugh Deeping wrote on all his fair resolves. He had done his best, and it had failed. He had tried to be good, and the effort had landed him in a worse estate than that from which he had set out. He had worked well, and won nothing but injustice. He had trusted, and been deceived. Life, love, providence, all seemed one great mockery, just an array of hollow words that had no meaning in them. He could but laugh when he thought of his patience, his trust, his hope, wherewith he was to have done so much. And when he looked for pity, there was none; and for help, it was far from him.

So, as we have seen, he tried what thoughtless merriment would do. He began to make a fast thing of life, and, as his fellow-clerks

said, "went at it" with a perilous eagerness which was certain, sooner or later, to work its own check. For the over-taxed brain will surely turn and demand a heavy price for the work which has been cruelly forced from it; and the man's energies, goaded on either for pleasure or toil, will one day pay back with terrible earnestness every blow which has urged them forward beyond their strength.

Hugh lived at this fiery speed for a month or two, following up his long days of toil at the Bellona works with evenings of roisterous mirth amongst his fellow-clerks, and a set of like-minded young men to whom they introduced him. And on Saturday afternoons there were hotel dinners, which the six months' salary overpaid by Mr. Lyneton was quite sufficient to meet handsomely; first-rate hotel

dinners, where the best of wine was drunk, and the best of jokes made, and the raciest of stories told, and where Hugh was always leader of the fun; none so bright and merry as he. Indeed, his fellow-clerks said it was a shame he had kept himself shut up so for six months, and never let them see what stuff he was made of, and what a jolly companion he could be. No more quiet evening hours in Mrs. Mallinson's sitting-room, with the old Greek and Latin authors for his companions; no more walks home from Lyneton Abbots in the winter starlight, or dusk of early spring, with sweet memories and sweeter hopes thronging round him; no more pauses for thought and reflection, pauses in which, taken apart for a little season from the din and confusion of busy working life, his soul might speak with God, and in that speech win

strength. Indeed, no more thought of anything now, than how he might forget the past, and hurry madly on through the present.

But this only lasted for a month or two, and then the overstrain began to tell. Those evenings of noisy merriment exacted their payment in days of headache and prostration, followed by nights of sleeplessness or dreams more gruesome than any waking could be. Coming to his work again after nights like these, the long columns of figures would quiver and tremble before his eyes. Sometimes for a few moments his memory failed, the strained cord gave way, and let the thoughts which it had held together fall apart in scattered confusion. Or, writing for an hour together at what he thought was a succinct statement of the number of "pigs"

of iron taken in, and the number of boiler plates sent out, he found, on looking it over, that he had been stringing together the merest nonsense, a set of unconnected sentences, the bubbling remnants of some after-dinner story, or wine-inspired jest. And then, with fierce impatience, he would tear up the paper, and long to rush out into the air, over the moors and mountains, anywhere out of this close, stifling atmosphere, out of reach of this incessant din, this beating of hammers and clanking of iron-shod feet, which seemed sometimes as if it must goad him almost to madness.

Grave warnings these, that he was working too hard both with hand and brain. But Hugh took no heed of them. Only they soured his temper, and put an angry irritability into his manner, and made Mrs. Mal-

linson think that surely things were going altogether wrong with him. And when one of the members of Grosmont Road chapel, who also had a son in the Bellona works, called at Canton House, and retailed a few of the remarks which were freely enough circulated amongst the clerks, touching Mr. Deeping's recklessness and wild goings on, she was quite prepared for the scandal, and determined to keep a sharp look out over the young man for the future. Perhaps it might be better to give him warning at once, and have him off the premises. When once young men took to giving wine-parties, and having Sunday excursions up the river to the Castle Gardens, there was no knowing how far they might go, nor how inadequate the most liberal salary might be to meet the quarterly payment of rent and extras. Mrs. Mallinson

would speak to her husband about it that very night, and she was much obliged to the member of Grosmont Road for telling her in such a friendly way what was said about the young man; though indeed it was no more than she had expected from his manner of conducting himself for some time past. For there had been a marked change in his behaviour ever since he gave up going to Lyneton Abbots, and she could not account for it, but it was very strongly impressed on her own mind that things were not quite straight there; some little disagreeableness in the accounts, most likely, which had caused him to be dismissed in such a hurry, Mr. Lyneton not liking to proceed to extremes, for fear of injuring the young man's prospects at the Bellona works. Very kind of him; but she thought that sort of thing might be carried

too far, and if matters *had* got wrong, they ought to be looked into, and sifted to the very bottom, and the parties who had made them wrong punished, as a warning to others. At any rate, that was what *she* should feel it her duty to do, under similar circumstances.

Then Mr. Feverige found mistakes in the accounts, and hinted at want of punctuality and accuracy in his once promising young clerk. Hints which Hugh repelled angrily enough, for he was in no mood to bear reproof now. And instead of meekly resolving to amend his ways, he put on Betsy's attitude of indignant defiance, and told his employer that if he was not satisfied he might look out for someone else to fill the post of counting-house clerk, for there were many other offices better than that, open to young men of education and ability. To which Mr. Feverige, with

his usual cast-iron immovability, had replied, very well, then he *should* look out for someone else, and Mr. Deeping might consider himself at liberty when his nine months of service expired on the first of July.

And still those roisterous merrymakings went on, and still the long columns of figures kept dancing and fluttering before Hugh's eyes, and his memory gave those treacherous fatal starts, and still he worked on, keeping up a brave face amongst his fellow-clerks, treating them to hotel dinners, which he enlivened with jest, and song, and story; and after them came sleepless nights, and days of weariness and oppression, until, at last, the tired brain would bear no longer tyranny. Coming home one evening from the works, weak, and thoroughly worn out, the street-lamps dazzling before his eyes, the green and crimson jars in the

chemist's window just one confused mass of colour, and passing, as usual, through Mr. Mallinson's shop on his way to his own room, he staggered and fell down there.

Drunk! So Mr. Mallinson, who had seen him come home once or twice lately in a very shaky manner, said, as he and the apprentice boy dragged poor Hugh upstairs, and laid him on his bed. He had noticed something not quite right about the young man for some weeks past. He had taken a wrong turning, the provision-dealer said, and would find himself tripped up by-and-by. It was an awkward thing taking the wrong turning, especially so early in life, for there was no knowing how far it might lead. Mr. Deeping had better have stopped at home in the evenings, and made himself comfortable with Mrs. Mallinson and Sarah Matilda in the back

parlour, than come to such a pass as this. Of course Mr. Feverige must be told of it. It would never do for him to be employing a young man in his counting-house who was given to anything of that sort. It would be no real kindness, either to employer or employed, to cover up such a glaring delinquency, and let him go to his work again just as if nothing had been the matter. Mr. Mallinson would write to Mr. Feverige that very night and inform him of the circumstance. Then, of course, he might do as he liked about taking the young man back again, though Mr. Mallinson knew what he should do if it was his case.

And Mrs. Mallinson, when she came downstairs again, after going into Hugh's room and seeing him lie there, breathing so heavily, with flushed face, too, and red, half-closed

eyelids, said the same thing, only she said it with more asperity than her husband.

“A nice thing to take place in a respectable family,” she remarked, after a sniff of portentous significance, “and treated with such attention as he’s been ever since he came into the house, and the opportunity given him of attending the outward means regular, and identifying himself with the cause, and supporting it at the monthly collections if he had the proper sentiments of a professing person. And a minister’s son, too, as he represented himself to be,—such audacious wickedness! No, Sarah Matilda, I beg you won’t express yourself in that way,” continued Mrs. Mallinson, when her daughter, being cast in a somewhat softer mould, put in a mildly deprecatory remark about young men away from home being liable to temptations in a

place like Oresbridge. "How often have I impressed upon you that you never ought to look upon sin with anything but abhorrence; and I hope you never will, especially when it's committed against light and privilege, as I may say, and the best of examples in the bosom of a respectable family. But I always mistrusted him from the very beginning—yes, from the very beginning; and if it hadn't been for him paying the rent regular, which I'll do him the justice to say he always did, and for the way you've been called upon, Mr. Mallinson, to support the cause among us, as I'm sure you've been a stay to it when there was no one else willing to come forward with gold upon the plate when it was a public occasion, I wouldn't have encouraged his being in the family—no, that I wouldn't; and it's a providential escape for you, Sarah Matilda,

as I hope you'll be drawn out in thankfulness for, that you've the prospect of being settled with a party as will be a better protection to you, even if he hasn't such a fine voice for joining in with a bass as Mr. Deeping."

Sarah Matilda blushed and said no more. Mr. Reynolds was a very eligible young man, with admirable prospects in the confectionery line, and a much finer talent for making himself agreeable in the back parlour than ever Mr. Deeping possessed.

"Yes, and with no proper respect for his privileges either," continued Mrs. Mallinson, "asking him down as we did night after night, with a view to his making himself at home with us, and being, as I may say, an addition to the family, which of course it is an addition to a family having anyone

that's willing to make himself agreeable and join in where there's music going on, or anything of that sort, instead of shutting himself up there in the front sitting-room, just as if nobody was good enough for him. Fine sort of goodness indeed, and him in the condition he is now, a reproach to his parents, if it *was* the ministry that he was connected with, which I've my doubts upon, and always had from the very beginning."

And Mrs. Mallinson sniffed again more vigorously than ever.

But she and her husband wished it had been only a case of drink, when next morning Hugh Deeping, instead of getting up and going to his work as usual, lay tossing about and moaning so heavily. And still more they wished it so, when the slow hours passed on and that stupor did not clear

away, except for the raving of delirium. He was going to have an illness now; that was what he was going to have, Mrs. Mallinson said. He had been overworking himself for the sake of getting more salary, or over-drinking at those wine-parties that Mrs. Grater had told her about, and this was the consequence of it; and they should have all the trouble, which people never seemed to think of when they went and exposed themselves to anything of that sort. A serious illness, too, most likely; perhaps weeks and months of it. Things that began in that strange way, never passed off like ordinary cases. She shouldn't wonder a bit if it wasn't going to turn out brain fever.

In which supposition Mrs. Mallinson was perfectly correct. For when the doctor came

next day, he said it *was* a case of brain fever, and a serious case, too. There was no telling how it might end. And if the young man had any friends, they had better be sent for, and the road in front of the house must be littered with bark, and all noise kept as far away as possible, for his life depended upon quiet. And then he asked about the patient's previous habit of living; had he been much given to exciting amusements, company, drinking, or anything of that sort?

To which Mrs. Mallinson answered that she could not say for certain, for he was a young man that never made himself at home with them; but he had been a very changed character of late, and had spent all his evenings out somewhere; but where, she could not take upon herself to tell, for she was

not a person who cared to speak evil of others, unless she knew it to be correct, and she certainly had seen him the worse for company, and she didn't doubt but what he'd brought the present visitation upon himself in consequence of something of that sort. But she didn't wish to bring forward his failings, though nobody had more reason to complain of them than herself, only he was a very changed character, a very changed character indeed, within the last few weeks.

And Mrs. Mallinson said that with an accent which spoke volumes.

The doctor shook his head, and said there was but small chance for the young man if his previous life had been of such a nature as to quicken the natural activity of the brain ; together with a great many more ob-

servations, which Mrs. Mallinson, not being versed in medical science, could not very well understand. Only she gathered from them that Mr. Deeping's illness was likely to be a very troublesome one, requiring much care and attention, and that it had been aggravated by his previous mode of life, if not entirely induced by it; and that his mother was to be sent for, because he would need very much more watching than Mrs. Mallinson, with all her household duties, could possibly give him.

So there poor Hugh lies, helplessly enough, and there we may leave him to struggle as best he can through the miserable tangle into which Rose Beresford's foolish talk and Lyneton Abbots pride and his own folly have brought him. Mrs. Mallinson frets and fumes, and talks much about getting him

removed across the road to Mrs. Green's, for she can't do with illness in the house; it is a thing she has never been accustomed to, and it fidgets her sadly. She can't see any danger in wrapping him well up in plenty of blankets, and having him carried across on a mattress to the meek-faced widow, who would be glad enough to wait upon him for a consideration, and give him as much attention as even the most exacting of invalids could demand. But the doctor is very firm, and says it would be nothing short of murder to remove him in his present condition, so Mrs. Mallinson has to submit. And Sarah Matilda does not care very much to wait upon him, for Mr. Reynolds is delightfully assiduous in his attentions after business hours, and she likes better to chat with him in the back parlour than to

bathe Hugh Deeping's hot forehead, or cool his parched lips with drops of water.

So he lies there day after day, and before the week is over his mother comes to nurse him. Which she does with sad, patient tenderness, praying through many a midnight vigil, that God would be merciful to her boy, and raise him up again that he may repent of the error of his ways. For Mrs. Mallinson had not failed to tell her of the young man's reckless life, and how she and her husband have been greatly exercised on account of his viciousness and irregularity. No money, Mrs. Mallinson says, could ever recompense her and her husband for the anxiety they have had about him. Indeed, the doctor says the present affliction is quite brought on by his own wilfulness; providential, as Mrs. Mallinson thinks, and as she

hopes the young man will think so, too, if he should be raised up again, which is very unlikely, though she wouldn't have Mrs. Deeping distress herself about that, because whatever happens is sure to be for the best. It isn't for us poor weak creatures, says she, to decide who shall live and who shall die, and if providence has arranged that he shall be taken, there will be a way made for Mrs. Deeping to bear it.

But Hugh knows nothing of this. He lies there, sometimes still and quiet enough, sometimes raving so wildly that his poor mother cannot hold him, but has to send for Mr. Mallinson and the apprentice boy to help her. And Mr. Feverige, learning that he is in a very precarious state, engages another clerk, not without some little regret, for the young man has done his work very

well until the last few weeks, has been a most efficient "hand" in the counting-house. And the prudent haberdasher dies, leaving his brother's children five hundred pounds each, to be paid down when Mary Deeping comes of age next summer. And Martin Allington goes very often to that stately old house in Eaton Square; but Miss Hildegard Lyneton regrets to say that Jeanie does not behave to him in such a way as to encourage much hope of a prosperous termination of his suit. Which untoward conduct of Jeanie's causes her Aunt Gwendoline some little uneasiness, an uneasiness which might deepen into actual anxiety, but that another cloud is creeping slowly, surely towards the old house at Lyneton Abbots; a cloud which by-and-by will not let her see much beyond it.

CHAPTER II.

MAURICE DEMERON came home sooner than he expected, in consequence of some changes in the company to which he belonged. Early in the year, just after he had written to his friends to tell them that he expected to come home about August or September, he got leave of absence for six months, with instructions that he was to start at once. It was of no use writing home again, as in that case he and his letter would reach England together; so without any further notice he left Bombay, intending to take the overland route, and get home some time in March.

Which he did, as we have already seen, and was on his way down to Lyneton Abbots, whilst poor Hugh Deeping, hot and angry enough, was laying out for himself a new scheme of life, sweeping away the old landmarks, and hurrying forwards in a wild, reckless course which should ere long work its own bitter, painful cure.

That Maurice Demeron, nearing the home of Gwendoline Lyneton after an absence of nearly six years, nearing it too with such memories and such hopes, could have been completely absorbed in the leading article of the *Times*, able and vigorous though that leading article undoubtedly was, might prove him to be a man of not very intense feeling. Or that perfect ease and composure of manner might cover a depth of abiding steadfastness, which, being so changeless, could

well be calm too. Gwendoline Lyneton herself, under those same circumstances, would have been just as quiet. Not a quiver of restlessness or agitation would have had leave to break the girded peace of her grave, pale face. No stranger would have intermeddled with her joy; and if a touch of anxiety had marred it, that too would have been as proudly hidden. For what had strangers to do with that supreme moment of her life?—and why should word or sign of hers invite them to pry curiously into that coming future which was so grand and sacred?

Yet Maurice Demeron's composure was scarcely that of intense and controlled emotion. His face was not the face of a man whose strongest hope or passion lies too deep for outward show. It told rather of a sensitive and mobile nature, one that would feel keenly, but

not very deeply; a nature not strong enough for impulse, swayed instead by the lighter breeze of fancy. He was evidently a gentleman, in the highest social sense of the word. His accent and all the trifling belongings of his travelling costume, bore abundant witness to that fact, even if his finely-chiselled features and a certain easy grace of mien and gesture had not told their own story of gentle breeding. Centuries of careful culture had been at work to mould that graceful contour. That lordly bearing, so independent and yet so infinitely courteous, was the splendid flower which only blooms on an old ancestral stock; which no amount of careful training and fostering can produce from the thin soil of modern gentility, or cause to spring forth even from the granite rock of self-made respectability. That fine, lofty ease of manner,

that indescribable courtliness of mien, had come to Maurice Demeron through a whole long line of pure descent, and it could have come to him in no other way. If a true spirit, a faithful, noble, lofty soul could likewise so descend, if a man could take his ancestors' strength of purpose and fineness of nature along with their physical endowments, then Major Demeron might have a splendid heritage.

After a while he laid down his paper, and changed his seat into the corner of the carriage, not that he might be further away from the careless chat of his travelling companions, but that he might better note the distinctive features of the landscape through which they were passing. They had reached the famous iron district now, which people came from far and near to see. Upon the

gathering darkness of the night, scarcely broken as yet by the glimmer of the rising moon, the flames from many a seething furnace tossed forth their fiery spray, dimly lighting up hugh sheds, in which half-clad men were flitting to and fro like imps in some pandemonium, dragging after them long wriggling bars of red-hot iron. And far off in the dim, vapoury gloom, other imps could be seen standing before the huge puddling furnaces, heaving into them masses of unpurified ore, which, with no very great stretch of imagination, one might conceive to be human beings re-acting the terrible tragedy of Nebuchadnezzar. And even beyond the noise of the London express, clearing its way with shriek and whistle past undermined houses and ruins of broken-down cottages and shafts of coal pits, could be heard the heavy beat

of those great hammers, the roar of flames from the furnace-mouths, the tramp of sandalled feet upon the echoing floors.

It was no new sight to Maurice Demeron. Just so angrily those huge furnaces had spouted out their blazing surf five years ago, when he took the night mail to London, after saying good-bye to Gwendoline Lyneton under the stone gateway of Lyneton Abbots. With just such spirit-like rapidity those black shadowy figures had darted hither and thither in the warm gloom of the summer twilight, only the tread of their iron-clad feet telling that they were no spirits, but toiling men—men of the same passions with himself, separated from him only by a less noble parentage, and perhaps a less spotless life.

But then Maurice Demeron's thoughts were

sad. His heart was heavy with pain of parting. A long, weary stretch of years lay before him, with only Gwendoline's truth to brighten it. He had neither name, nor fame, nor right to claim for his own that which he had already won. He must needs wait until he had proved himself worthy. He must needs earn for himself a place in the world. And not until he had earned that, and perhaps lost in earning it some of the young glow and freshness which makes life so sweet, might he stretch forth his hand and take the prize. Five years! It seemed so long to wait, and yet for the joy that was set before him he thought he could wait so patiently.

Now the toil was over, right earned to claim his own. Perhaps, also, some of the freshness gone, which seldom stays beyond

those first sweet years of youth. A long experience of life among his fellow officers in mess-rooms and barracks, and of gaiety amongst the upper-class society of the Bombay Presidency, had worn away many of those longing, lingering thoughts with which at first he used to turn towards the old house at Lyneton Abbots. Not all of them, though. Those five years of hard work, which, besides introducing him to Indian gaiety, and giving him glimpses of fast life in the mess-room, had made a man of him, and got him to a first-class position in the service, had not taken away the sweet memory of Gwendoline Lyneton, or shaken, except now and then, the love he had for her. True, there had been one or two little flirtations, trifling episodes of love-making, more for the sake of passing time than

anything else, which had never found their way into his home letters. Sometimes he had chafed against the tie which bound so slightly, and yet so strongly by that very slightness. But on the whole, Maurice Demeron had kept his trust very honourably—more honourably than many men would have kept it.

And now he was coming to Lyneton Abbots again. He was going to take up the old life just where he left it five years ago. He was going to hold in his own again that hand, which had been so truly given him there. He would look upon that calm, beautiful face once more. How well he remembered it!—how faithfully its impress had staid upon his heart through all those years, always shining out again, gentle as ever, when the passing clouds had cleared

away, and the shadowy image of some other beauty, which overlaid it just for a little season, had faded. Gwendoline's face, so fair and perfect, so rounded with the soft curves of youth, a tint of rose flushing its clear paleness sometimes, such a bright, hopeful light shining out from beneath the shadow of those pencilled brows. It was a beautiful face. He had seen none so beautiful in all their long years of parting.

Slowly the London express trailed its winding length of carriages into the Oresbridge station. No one was there to meet Maurice Demeron. None of his friends knew as yet that he had even set sail for England. Gathering up his railway rug and valise, he jumped into a fly, and was soon rattling along the quiet Lyneton Abbots road, whose gnarled oak-trees, gleaming now in the March

moonlight, had bent over him with all their wealth of summer greenery, when, a strip-ling, downcast and sad-hearted, he had last trodden that road.

When he reached the village he dismissed the man, for he wanted to reach the Manor-house unnoticed. He could do that easily enough. Now, at ten o'clock in the evening, scarce a footfall was to be heard in the quiet little spot. Even the lights in the upper windows were extinguished, except in the lawyer's and doctor's houses, for the inhabitants of Lyneton Abbots observed the old adage, "Early to bed and early to rise," with a pious exactitude, which made them, if not remarkably wealthy, at least healthy and wise to a most enviable extent. Indeed, both the lawyer and doctor might perhaps have welcomed a change for the worse in the

habits of the village people, since their almost primitive condition of health sadly cramped Mr. Lucombe's practice, and their wisdom confined Mr. Jacques' professional engagements entirely to the more quarrelsome inhabitants of the neighbouring town of Oresbridge.

Crossing the village green, and going through the churchyard, whose yew-trees cast such a black shadow now upon the gleaming grave-stones, Maurice Demeron reached the bridle-path, and stood once more within the griffin-guarded stone gateway, where, five years ago, Gwendoline Lyneton had said good-bye to him.

There was a leafy rustle in the elm-trees then, a scent of roses and clove-pinks from the over-grown flower-beds; the soft July wind stirring amongst the sweet-brier, made

it send out many a waft of perfume, and the white acacia-blossoms fluttered silently down one by one, and strewed the grass around that old sun-dial. Now those elm-trees only showed thousands of tiny buds, close folded up against the frosty winds, and here and there a pale primrose struggled up on the sheltered bed by the vine-wall, and the sweet-brier gave neither perfume nor rosy falling blossom to any breeze that stirred it. But not a change had passed over the old mansion. Greyly as ever those balustrades stretched along the terrace walk, with here and there a tuft of moss within their iron mouldings. The ivy seemed neither to have grown nor faded over the tall gables, beneath which the latticed window now caught the moonlight in many a pearly flicker. And the old Abbot over the doorway, with cowed brow and

girded robe, looked down gravely as ever, telling no tales of anything that he might see when evening dusk had crept up over the quiet garden. Cautious old Abbot Siward. It was not he who told of Hugh Deeping and Jeanie, standing so near him. They might have looked into each other's faces long enough before any word of his would have disturbed them. Perhaps, by-and-by, another couple might stand where they had stood, hand-in-hand too, and still he would be just as silent.

Gwendoline Lyneton's home. She was there now, in that oriel room perhaps—Maurice remembered it well—through whose crimson curtains such a warm glow was pouring out into the garden. Perhaps her footstep was the last that trod where he stood now. Perhaps that rusty old gate had not been opened

since she passed through it, stately, beautiful, as he remembered her of old.

For Gwendoline used to be so beautiful. Again he recalled her, just as she was when they rambled among the flower-beds so long ago; her light step, her graceful yet lofty bearing, her look, very proud and fearless, save when it met his—and then so changed! The picture was very dear still. Those five years had not dimmed it. And he was so near her now! Almost a step would bring him to her again.

But he would not take that step just yet. He would linger for a little while in the old garden, thinking over again the memories that belonged to it. His courage almost failed him now that the meeting was so near. He felt a strange shrinking even from that very joy towards which he had

been reaching so long. Not that he feared her look would be less trustful now; not that he feared any change had come over her in all those years. She would be faithful enough to what he had given her, he knew that full well. But he wanted to bring himself nearer in thought and feeling to the past time, before he actually came face to face with it again. He wanted to feel more vividly than he felt it just now, that he was really the same Maurice Demeron who had stood in that old gateway beneath the rustling July leaves, and said—

“We can trust each other, Greta.”

Because, after all, five years was a long time, and an effort seemed needed to bring back just the old emotion—the sweet, tender longing with which, when a youth of three-

and-twenty, he used to wander with Gwendoline through the Lyneton Abbots garden. And perhaps he need not be surprised if the effort when made did not quite bring back the old emotion. For he was so very young then, and young people are more quickly brought under the influence of any kind of feeling. It was scarcely to be expected that at eight-and-twenty he could have all the freshness and eagerness of a youth. Some allowance must certainly be made for those years of toil and experience, and he need not surely chide himself so very much if, standing on the ground that Gwendoline Lyneton trod, and looking upon the home which even now sheltered her, he was conscious of no very rapturous thrill; nay, if even it needed a long process of thought to bring back anything like the

emotion which had once stirred him so profoundly.

So he lingered yet in the shadow of the moonlight. Presently he heard music—the sound of a sweet, rich voice. Was it Gwendoline's voice? She used to sing to him in those long-ago days. He would go nearer and listen. It might be one of the old songs which he loved so well, and listening to it would recall the old sweetness.

He knew the house well enough, with all its quaint twists and turns. There was a side window in that oriel room, opening into another part of the garden; a very small window, tangled round with ivy; left uncurtained sometimes, for it only looked out into a quiet recess where no one ever came. He had gone in at that window sometimes, when Gwendoline was alone with her work

in the oriel room—gone in very silently, and watched her when she never knew he was near. It would be pleasant to do so again; at least to stand by it, and see the singer as he listened to the song.

So he stole quietly round to the little casement, and there through the clasping ivy branches he saw Gwendoline Lyneton sitting by the fire, her cheek resting on her hand, those braids of pale yellow hair folded round a face which was as sweet—

Nay, *was* it quite so sweet as when he remembered it five years ago?

CHAPTER III.

FOR Gwendoline was thinking of the letter, Hugh's letter, which Miss Hildegard Lyneton had very prudently sent down that morning from Eaton Square, and which the liveried Lyneton Abbots footman had just taken to the provision-dealer's shop in Gros-mont Road.

That letter was not likely to produce very pleasant thoughts in her mind. The writer of it, not content with loitering about uninvited in the garden of Lyneton Abbots, seeking stolen interviews with Jeanie, whilst all the time he was pledged to someone in

his own station of life, had followed her with his dishonourable attentions even to Aunt Hildegard's home in London, whither she had gone on purpose to be free from those attentions. He had presumed to write to her; he, the low-born counting-house clerk, who, even if his intentions had been honest and manly, might have had natural instinct enough to have known that they were completely out of place when thrust upon one whose position was so infinitely beyond his own. But they were not honest and manly. He was playing a double game. He was daring to amuse himself at the expense of another's happiness; and that other one of their own Lyneton line. And anyone who dared so to amuse himself would bitterly repent it.

Scorn and contempt were written plainly

enough in her face as she pondered such thoughts as these. Pride, too; not the grand unconscious Lyneton pride, which brooded so finely over those pale features, sometimes, but angry, vexed pride, tightening the level brows, and bending the red lips into lines that had no sweetness in them any more, only firm resolve and conquering will. That he, obscurely born and lowly bred, should dare to mate with one of her line; should dare to dream of touching, save with humble respect, a hand in whose blue veins the blood of a long, noble race of ancestry flowed unmixed and pure! And to dare to touch it, too, for simple selfishness and mockery! Was this, then, what came of courtesy to those so far beneath them? Was this the way in which he would repay that kindness, which, stooping so low to reach out a

helping hand to him, had only lifted him to a position in which he could presume upon it by insult and deceit?

All the indignation of the old Lynetons glowed in Gwendoline's heart, as she thought of Hugh Deeping, now for the first time showed to her in his true colours. Its calm, placid restfulness was swept away by scorn for one who could act so basely. Those great, quiet grey eyes shone with a light of wounded pride, and over her face, so still at times, and almost meek in its quiet peace, there gathered a look of angry contempt for one who could so basely wrong the kindness given him from those who pitied his loneliness, and would fain have helped it away if they could.

That was not the face which had been in Maurice Demeron's thoughts for five years;

that was not the face which had brought back his truant heart again and again when some Southern beauty had beguiled it for a time, and almost won forgetfulness of those parting words—

“We can *trust* each other, Greta.”

The eyes that he remembered so well were always kind and loving. He had seen them light up sometimes with pride, but never with contempt. The lips which had moved in answer to his farewell five years ago, seemed only made for smiles, not for the curl of scorn which marred them now. And then for the first time there came into Maurice Demeron's heart a vague feeling of regret for the promise which had bound him through all those years. He had often doubted. He had often swerved from his allegiance to this, the first and worthiest queen of his heart;

but the doubts had always passed away; and the allegiance, given to another for a little season, had been given back again more faithfully than before. Now, with no distance between them to make room for doubt, and with no other sweet face at hand to win from him the homage which was already claimed, there came instead a half acknowledged shrinking from the unspoken promise, and then, more fatal still, a feeling of relief that it *was* unspoken.

Still he lingered in that little ivied recess by the window, looking into the oriel room, every nook and corner of which was so familiar to him; listening to the voice which still kept singing on in rich, sweet tones, sometimes snatches of Italian music, sometimes a merry lilting tune, sometimes a simple English ballad, such as Gwendoline used

to sing to him six years ago, but such as she could scarcely sing now, if that moody expression always brooded upon her pale, marble-like face.

The singer he could not see. The piano had been removed from its accustomed place. As he stood there hiding by the ivy branches, he could only distinguish Gwendoline sitting by the table, with cheek resting on her hand, and Mr. Lyneton in his accustomed seat by the fire, in just the old position, with the old fold of the finely-moulded hands, and the old bend of the stately head, silvered now with age as well as sadness.

Jeanie Lyneton must be singing, then. Little Jeanie, flaxen-haired, blue-eyed Jeanie, who used to romp with him in the garden, and coax him to swing her when old Grey was too busy, and give him kisses in return

for sugar-plums and *bon-bons*, and climb on his knee to listen to fairy-tales. Jeanie must be eighteen now, nearly as old as Gwendoline was when he went away. Just eighteen, and he was a man of eight-and-twenty. Well, that was not so very old. A man at eight-and-twenty was in the very prime and glory of his strength.

Then followed a long pause of thought, whilst Maurice Demeron leaned back in that little ivied recess. And still those rich tones kept pouring forth, sometimes merry, sometimes passionate. It must be a sweet soul that sang through so sweet a voice. Was Jeanie's face as beautiful as her voice? Had those years given to her what they had taken from Miss Lyneton? She used to be a bright, merry little creature, full of fun and liveliness, with no very great promise of

beauty, but very warm-hearted and affectionate; much more impulsive than her young aunt, with little of the Lyneton pride and self-control about her. But then, when Gwendoline *did* smile upon him she looked so gloriously beautiful. When those calm, grey eyes of hers lighted up, as they could light up sometimes, with passion or enthusiasm, and the statue like beauty of her features glowed for a moment or two into rosy life, she was such a splendid creature. What a pity her face should have cooled down so!—that she should have taken on that look of calm resistance in place of the gentle, placid, yet lofty sweetness of the old time. What a pity that women should ever lose the glow and glory of those years when girlhood is quivering into womanhood, and the sweet dawn and freshness of the morning time is warmed

by the golden beauty of the coming noon. He wished Gwendoline could have staid just where he left her five years ago; where Jeanie was now.

Maurice Demeron sauntered round to the front of the house again. He wanted a little more time for preparation. He could not quite brace himself up to that meeting. He did not quite know how he should get over it. He could scarcely believe, even yet, that he was the same Maurice Demeron who had stood under the old stone griffins that warm dusky July night, and whispered those words about trusting each other.

But it was scarcely gentlemanly to be prowling about in Mr. Lyneton's garden at that time of night, playing the listener in that secret, unobserved manner. It did not look honourable, and Maurice Demeron, brave

officer as he was, would not have done a dishonourable thing for the world. He must go in and make himself known, and get over the first awkwardness of meeting.

The grey-haired serving-man, who had performed the same kind office for Hugh Deeping a few days before, showed Mr. Demeron into the library, and then went to tell Miss Lyneton that a gentleman, who declined giving his name, wished to speak with her there.

Was it Hugh Deeping, the counting-house clerk, intruding himself again with some explanation or apology about the letter which would have reached him by this time? And had he charged the servant not to give his name, because, remembering the reception he had met with on the previous Saturday, he thought, correctly enough, too, that the

announcement of it would secure his instant and unceremonious dismissal? And why should he seek an interview with her, instead of offering any craven apology which he might have to make to her brother, who was certainly the most suitable person to receive it?

With a very queenly step, and a face not brightened by any cordial welcome for the visitor she expected to meet, Miss Lyneton entered the library.

Certainly not to find Hugh Deeping, with his student-like abstraction of manner, and somewhat unconventional garb, which nevertheless could not quite hide the true gentlemanhood of him. This stranger, though on travel, as she saw at once, from the rug and valise which lay on the floor beside him, had the bearing and aspect of quite a

different class of society from that to which Mr. Deeping belonged. He had the easy, self-possessed manner of a person accustomed to rule and to be obeyed, together with the graceful courtesy due from stranger to stranger everywhere. But the bearded face and the darkened skin and the added portliness which five years of foreign life had given him, quite hid from her recognition the slight fair-haired Maurice Demeron of her girlhood, the brave soldier laddie, to whom, after it had long been sought, she had given her trust, and would hold it, as the Lynetons always did, even unto death.

The look of scorn with which she had entered the room gave place to one of courteous inquiry, and that again to reserved surprise, as this stranger, with never a word of greeting or introduction, kept his place

there by her brother's empty chair, leaning his arm on the mantel-piece, looking so quietly down upon her; yes, even down upon Gwendoline Lyneton; for he was of Saul-like stature, this sunburnt soldier from the far East, this man who could command a troop, and lead them fearlessly to battle, to danger and death, if need be, but could not command his own heart to be true, could not hold that faithful to the trust which he had once taken, and promised to keep for ever.

Yet, as she looked at him, the truth slowly dawned upon her. A glint of the old smile gradually sunning over his face, the smile she remembered so well, something in look and manner kept still through all these years told her at last that Maurice Demeron had indeed come back. Come back to say all that had

been left unsaid between them—come back to end that bitter waiting and suspense. The future had glided into the past now. There would be no more weariness and anxiety. Maurice had come home! And the full-hearted quietness of her content only those can know who have loved so long and trusted so faithfully as Gwendoline Lyneton had.

It was all there in her heart—the love which would have given him so warm a greeting; which would fain have rested itself, weary with so long parting, in the shelter of his, and been at peace for ever. Then the light would have come back to her eyes, and the flush of hope to her cheek, and all the pride and scorn would have died away which sometimes brooded now upon her face. And loving and beloved, she would have won

more than the glorious beauty of her youth again, because upon it there would have shone the crown of tried and noble womanhood. Seeing her thus, Maurice Demeron's weak heart would have taken strength again. His wavering faith would have steadied itself. She might still have been his queen—his only one. And, each remembering the other in the far-off sunny years of youth-time, and each having that sweet memory of early love to bind them closer together, they might have gone the rest of their way hand in hand; her stronger soul staying his by its calm steadfastness which never failed; his sunnier nature warming and cherishing hers, so silent and reserved. Each giving what the other lacked, though giving as man and woman seldom give, she the strength, he the sunshine, their lives would have made sweet music at last, and they

need never have repented those long years of trust and waiting.

But the Lyneton people were so quiet and self-controlled. It was not their way to let the strong tenderness within them speak out in over-joyful word or look. It was all there, but quietly there and for ever there. Those brave knights and ladies fair, sleeping so calmly now under their stone canopies in St. Hilda's church, with folded hands and fast-shut eyes, had never spoken greatly of their love. They had held it fast through doubt and danger and fear. They had been true to it, when to be true needed warfare sharper than sword or spear could wage. They had suffered for it, fought for it—some of them—died for it; but they had never spoken greatly of it.

Neither would Gwendoline Lyneton. Though, like May flowers when there comes a sudden burst of sunshine after rain, her whole soul glowed and glistened with the sudden joy his coming back had brought, she could find no words to tell him so. Nor, had they come, would she have been quick to speak them. That she had waited so long and so patiently, that through all those years no thought untrue to him had been bidden to tarry in her heart, told more than any joyous overflow of words all that she had to give him. And so, when she knew that it was indeed Maurice Demeron, she only went up to him, and taking both his hands in hers, said—

“I am very, *very* glad you have come home again.”

He might have heard the rich tumult of

her voice, which even Lyneton pride could not wholly calm. He might have read the sweet content which had already smoothed out the scornful lines from her face, and made it grand with the beauty of hope fulfilled. He might surely have told from the trembling clasp of her hands that it was only outward quietness, that far away down beneath it all there stirred the true heart's gladness, only so still because it could not speak.

But Maurice Demeron wanted other greeting than that. He wanted an April shower of tears and smiles. He wanted words and caresses, and the joyous flowing forth of affection that sought no restraint. He could not read that finer language which the true soul speaks in its very silence, where words are idle, and

tears and smiles alike vain to tell its vast content. He wanted some passionate outbreak, which should float them both over the vexing shoals of reserve and uncertainty. He had so often pictured this meeting, and pictured it so differently. There was a common-placeness about it which jarred upon him, how or why he could not tell.

And then again that vague feeling of regret came over him, mingled, as before, with the other and more fatal feeling of relief that Gwendoline did not seem to take for granted what he more than ever doubted his willingness to remind her of.

Too cold, too reserved, too silent, she would never content him now, he thought. Better, perhaps, that the hands so long unclasped should never clasp again, except in friendly greeting. Better the trust of which

they had both spoken five years ago, should be the trust of pleasant friendship—nothing more than that.

CHAPTER IV.

“SHALL we go, then, to Mr. Lyneton? I suppose he will be very much surprised too.”

It was Maurice Demeron who said that, when he and Gwendoline had not been standing so very long in the old wainscotted library, where Hugh Deeping and Jeanie met for the first time six months ago. The words fell with a sort of chill upon her ear, like the first drops of a thunder-shower, while the sky is still blue and clear. But she said, quietly enough,

“Yes, we will go. Graham will indeed be

very much surprised, for we none of us expected that you would leave Bombay until the summer. You have so much to tell us, too."

"And so have you, Greta. Five years is a long time."

It is, indeed, for those who have to pass it in the dim cloud-land of uncertainty. And it had written its story in Gwendoline's face, taking away the girlish freshness which Maurice Demeron loved so well, to put there instead the quiet steadfastness of the woman, which he did not love so well, because it told of a nature with whose faithfulness he could not measure his, and before whose truth his own must needs fail.

So they went, both of them, into the oriel room, where Mr. Lyneton sat reading by the fire, and Rose Beresford was singing one of those plaintive Irish songs of hers, putting

into it so much tenderness, such a great deep of truth and beauty; one might have thought, to hear her sing it, that her heart was as full of feeling as the words.

“Graham, you will be surprised to see Mr. Demeron. He has come back sooner than he expected. He only landed yesterday, and he has come to see us on his way north.”

Then the other and rather more formal ceremony took place of introducing the soldier stranger to Miss Beresford.

But Rose, with genuine Irish frankness, made no ceremony of it. She had none of the Lyneton staidness and reserve about her. She did indeed return Mr. Demeron's courteous bow with one of exceeding grace and elegance, but there was little of the icy chill of aristocratic composure about her as she said,

“Ah! I know your name very well. I have so often heard Jeanie speak about you. You used to swing her in the garden, and give her *bon-bons* when she was a very little girl.”

There was an arch playfulness in Rose's face, and a sparkling brightness in her eyes, contrasted with which Gwendoline Lyneton's pale composure seemed like the frosty perfection of a steel engraving set against the rich glow and colour of a tinted lithograph. Major Demeron liked that pleasant freedom of hers. She reminded him of some of the young ladies he had met in India, so different to the high-born English maidens, who seemed to brood so defiantly, like the mountain eagle on his crag, from that Norman altitude of theirs. He felt himself drawn to her at once, as, indeed, most peo-

ple did who came within the reach of that fascinating influence. Unless some secret spring of discontent or anxiety kept them from yielding to the magic of her power, Rose Beresford seemed to exert that spell over everyone around her which May exerts over the flowers. They seemed brighter and happier when she was there, and when she went away it seemed as though the sunshine had gone too.

And in the presence of this stranger, this brave soldier gentleman from the far East, Rose's powers of fascination seemed to increase. She dearly loved admiration, and unconsciously, when she felt that she was exciting it, her eyes would sparkle, and her face glow with a richer beauty. And there was a sort of innate coquetry about her, not open enough to displease, only just giv-

ing piquancy to all her ways when those came in her way whom she could conquer or impress. Not that she ever meant mischief any more than when she was drawn out to imitate the little peculiarities of people that she happened to meet. It was just a sort of instinct in her. She could not help it, and she was scarcely more to be blamed for it than the humming-bird is to be blamed for flashing its gay plumage in the sun, or the sea anemonies for unfolding with tempting curve and swell their many-coloured translucent petals.

“And where is Jeanie?” asked Maurice Demeron, when the first surprised greetings were over, and the little party were all seated round the fire, just as they might have been seated had Hugh Deeping, and not this sun-burnt stranger from India, been

the guest. "Did I not hear her voice just now, as I came up the garden?"

"Jeanie is not at home now," said Gwendoline, and a little touch of coldness might have been heard in her accents. "She is staying in London with Aunt Hildegarde, and we do not expect her home again for some time; so Miss Beresford has been kind enough to promise to stay with me until she returns."

Maurice turned with a bow of playful gallantry to Rose, whose bright eyes looked brighter than ever to-night for the passing excitement of the stranger's presence.

"Then you were the songstress to whom I listened outside in the moonlight? You must pardon me, Miss Beresford, for acting such a dishonourable part, but we poor fellows abroad do not have the opportunity of

hearing anything so charming. Barrack life out in Bombay is a dull portion, I can assure you, for anyone who has much taste for the concord of sweet sounds."

It might be so, perhaps it was, but Major Demeron did not appear to have suffered very seriously from the dulness of the portion which had been assigned to him. Those five years had passed more lightly over him than they had passed over Gwendoline. Indeed, Maurice Demeron was a man upon whom nothing would lie with very crushing weight. Be his position what it might, he would contrive to get something pleasant out of it. There was a fine elasticity about him, which might bend for a time, but would not easily give way. Maurice had found it a useful quality whilst knocking about in India. He would find it no less so in England.

He wanted Rose to sing to them again, but with that exquisite tact which characterized her, she declined. Fond as she was of being the centre of attraction, natural as that position was to her, she felt it would be uncourteous to Mr. and Miss Lyneton, if on this, the first night of Major Demeron's return after five years of absence, when both he and they must have so much to talk of, she was to draw his attention exclusively upon herself. With as much grace as though she had been granting a favour, instead of declining it, she put aside his proposal that she should repeat the little song to which he had listened an hour or two before, whilst standing in that ivied recess outside the uncurtained window. And with a playful remonstrance against being compelled to do double duty, she turned the conversation aside

to Major Demeron's Indian life, and listened with interest more animated and certainly more vividly expressed than Gwendoline's to his stories of peril and adventure: of tiger hunts and hair-breadth escapes from wild beasts in the jungle: of expeditions across untracked plains and up rocky mountains, and along rivers whose rugged banks, fringed with such glorious tropic foliage, no European eye had ever looked upon before. And then he told them of gorgeous heathen processions, of white-robed Brahmins chanting the worship of their gods in vast temples, before which the stateliest that English hands ever reared seemed only as children's toys. For he had travelled far and seen much of life, and his was a mind that quickly took in new impressions, and could as readily give them to others. A most entertaining companion, as Rose thought

to herself, so brilliant and intelligent; strange contrast, indeed, to the very flat society amongst which they moved in that stupid little country town of Grantford, elderly ladies, who seemed to have remembered nothing of their past life but its troubles, and valetudinarians, whose whole talk was of vapour baths and new modes of treatment for nervous affections. It was a most successful move, Rose thought, that coming to the county ball, involving as it did this visit to Lyneton Abbots, which promised so much interest and excitement.

And as they sat by the fire listening to these strange stories of foreign travel until the small morning hours crept unawares upon them, Maurice Demeron could scarcely tell whether it was to Miss Lyneton or to Rose that he looked for answering glance of pride and triumph in all his perils overpast. He

did know though whose smile was the brightest, and who seemed most breathless with eager excitement to hear how he conquered all and came home safe again.

The grey dawn of twilight had almost risen when Gwendoline sat once more in her own room, looking over those letters which she would not need to cherish any more, for the actual reality of which they had been but the feeble type, was hers now.

Maurice Demeron had come home again. That which had been a hope so long, was now a memory. Last night she had thought of him as far off across the sea, parted from her by a distance which it would take many weeks to traverse. To-night she had clasped his hand, and listened to his voice, and looked full steadily into his face; changed, yet keeping still a dim, pleasant

remembrance of that which had looked down upon her five years ago, in the dusky July twilight. He had said before he went away, that when he came back nothing need part them any more. He had come back. And yet; and yet.

For there was no deep fulness of content within her now. That upspringing burst of joy, held so tightly down, lest he, seeing it should chide her in his heart for too eager gladness at his return, had never come again. Was he changed? She could not tell. Had she changed to him? Never, no Lyneton had ever done that yet. They lived faithfully and they loved truly; so had she.

Then why was she not content? Why did she think upon the almost dream-like past of these few hours with a tinge of sadness? It would all be right. She had

never doubted, she had never wavered. All those years she had been true to him.

“True as the dial to the sun,
Although it be not shone upon.”

Not once had she swerved from her trust, or given to others, even in thought, that which belonged to Maurice Demeron alone. And the same measure she had meted to others, should be meted to her again. She would wait patiently, and all would be well. For it was only this great light, which, coming so suddenly, had dazzled her with its brightness. Out of the gloom she had come too quickly into the sunshine; was it strange, then, that all should seem so dim and indistinct?

The same measure which she had meted to others, should be meted to her again. And poor Hugh Deeping's feet were stumbling

on the dark mountains now, and the light that was in him had become darkness. And many a day of reckless folly would have to be lived by him, and many a bitter lesson learned, and many a tear shed for him by those who loved him, lowly-born as he was, and many a stinging memory rooted in his heart, never to be plucked thence again, before he would come out into the light, and walk once more in a plain path. All through pride of hers; all because the proud Lynetons of Lyneton Abbots had determined that never one of their line should join hand with any of less noble name, or less lofty descent.

Gwendoline never thought of that when she meted out her deservings for all those years of truth.

CHAPTER V.

AFTER that followed a very brilliant week for Lyneton Abbots. Brilliant at least so far as much sweet music and merry chat and many a ramble through the budding woods, and many a tale of Eastern adventure and daring told by Maurice Demeron, could make it brilliant. But for Miss Lyneton that week passed in a slow, sad weariness, which she was too proud to own to herself, far less to betray to others, save in a certain coldness and reserve, which made Rose Beresford's winning playfulness and arch merry ways seem more fascinating by contrast.

It had been hard to trust, sometimes, when the deep sea lay between them, and when, for many a long month, no word of remembrance came to tell that the past was held by Maurice Demeron as sacredly as Gwendoline kept it in her own heart. But it was harder still to trust now that no distance parted them, save that which was slowly growing wider and wider day by day; a distance more hopeless than any which land or sea can make between those whose faith is fast.

She rarely saw Maurice Demeron alone. Rose was always with them, bright, merry, nonsense-loving Rose, the warm sweetness of whose smile no coldness or reserve ever chilled. Rose, who never turned away with grave, quiet face, when Major Demcron's glance sought hers, but gave it back with sparkling frankness, so different from Gwen-

doline's half-questioning look. And in those quiet March evenings, when Mr. Lyneton was busy in the library,—for he had his own affairs to manage now that Hugh was sent away, and hard work he found it sometimes,—in those quiet March evenings, when, had not Rose been a guest in the house, Miss Lyneton and Maurice Demeron might perhaps have been talking of the past, and strengthening by remembrance of it the links which bound them together, Rose would amuse them by her perpetual overflow of humour and merriment, her laughable imitations of odd people, the valetudinarians of Grantford, who were always talking about their nerves, and discussing vapour baths; or the elderly widow ladies, who called life a vale of tears, and yet were so very fond of card-parties, and all the small gaieties that could be got together in that

dullest of dull towns. Or she would sing the simple ballads of her own country in such a sweet, tender voice, that Major Demeron could but leave Gwendoline's side to listen.

It was easy to do that now. For Gwendoline had become so very silent and reserved. She never, of her own accord, mentioned the old times, five years ago, when they used to be so happy together. Never a chance word or look told that she remembered them at all. As for Maurice, an uncomfortable reserve, fast passing into actual dislike for the subject, kept him from recalling, when he and Gwendoline chanced to be left alone, the memories of his former visit. He felt that the glamour was fading away which lay around him then, and yet to feel it so was a stain upon his honour, which chafed and annoyed him. Since Gwendoline never mentioned the subject her-

self, it was best left unmentioned. Possibly she, too, might have changed.

Maurice found himself catching eagerly, with a feeling of intense relief, at that thought. He wished that it might be a true thought, and yet the better self of him knew that it never could be true. Still, something in Miss Lyneton's manner gave colour to the suspicion. If, when Rose was by, he alluded, in a merry, jesting manner, to his former visit, Gwendoline's face clouded over, and with a certain grave rebuke in her expression, she would turn the conversation into some less personal channel. Would she have done so, Maurice thought, if those memories had been precious memories to her? Would she not have smiled to hear them brought back again? Would not some bright glance or tender tone have told that she held them still dear as ever in

her true and faithful heart? Surely she must have forgotten. Surely they were precious no longer. He almost hoped it was so.

But Gwendoline only turned upon him that glance of grave rebuke, because the things of which he spoke were too precious to be so lightly handled, so carelessly bandied about in the pleasant freedom of fireside talk. She remembered them as she remembered holy things, quietly and alone.

Rose Beresford knew nothing about all this. Perhaps if she had, it would not have made much difference to her. Hers was not that fine, keen sense of honour which shrinks from appropriating what belongs to another. In this case, however, her ignorance saved her from meanness. She only knew that Major Demeron was very handsome and very fasci-

nating, and that if he proposed to her, she would not say him nay.

He was beginning to admire her. Many a bright quick glance had told her that, when Gwendoline was not by to note it. And at night, sitting up in her own room, she would gaze, by the hour together, upon the fair face reflected in the old-fashioned pier-glass over the mantelpiece; that very old fashioned pier-glass, not new a hundred years ago, which had reflected many a noble Lynton face in its time, but none so bright and sparkling as her own, none so richly shadowed with dark glossy curls rippling away over forehead and cheek in such silken tendrils. For the Lyntons were all fair-haired, pale of face; their only beauty that of perfect form and expression, the chiselled beauty which grows out of centuries of cultivation. And the spirit which

lighted up those calm, grand features of theirs was more proud than changeful; it shone out clearly and steadily, but with no sparkle.

That sort of beauty was very well in its way, Rose said, as she meditated before the old-fashioned pier-glass; but the vivid charm of complexion and colour was much more fascinating. Many people preferred that to even the most faultlessly-chiselled contour. She thought Major Demeron did, from something he had once said about those old family portraits in the oriel room, whose colourless Greek profiles looked so very stately against the backgrounds of dark drapery. No rosy cheeks and laughing dark eyes there, only straight, pale brown hair, folded over faces so calm and still.

Major Demeron said he liked colour and animation; the marble beauty of a statue

wearied him, he said. And Rose Beresford was not vexed to hear him say it.

Once only during that week, in one of their rides to Oresbridge, they met Hugh Deeping, met him on the Lyneton Abbots road with a lot of loose-looking, would-be-fashionable young men. And he had passed them with a very careless defiant air, almost insolent in its independence. Gwendoline scarcely thought he could be the same young man who used to behave, spite of his lowly birth and commonplace companionship, with such almost chivalrous gentleness in the oriel room at Lyneton Abbots. There was a sort of nobleness about him then, joined with a fine humility, which made her willing to forget for a time how far they stood apart. Now he was so changed. The true nature of the man, she said to herself, com-

ing up through the thin outer crust of polish. And then she glanced at Maurice Demeron, whose refinement was ingrained, a heritage which no change of circumstance could alienate; whose honour and chivalry came to him with the name he bore. He would never stoop to anything mean. He would never tarnish, by spoken or acted falsehood, that fine gentlemanhood of his. And though there was a little sadness in her look, and though she turned her face gravely away when their eyes met, yet she trusted him still.

Yes; the real plebeian nature had worked its way up again in Hugh Deeping as soon as he was left to himself. And during that same afternoon drive, Rose Beresford called in at Mrs. Mallinson's to inquire for some trifle which she had forgotten to bring away with

her when she came to Lyneton Abbots; and then, staying for a little while to ask with characteristic kindness after the welfare of all the good people at Canton House—for, indeed, both she and Mrs. Beresford had been very comfortable, on the whole—she was treated to a lengthy account of the young man's desperate ways, how he used to be met constantly on Saturday afternoons with a set of disreputable young fellows, such as he would have been ashamed to have spoken to a month ago, and how he was heard of at the Castle Gardens on Sundays, which, as everybody in Oresbridge knew, was the very last place where anyone who cared a straw for his own respectability would let himself be seen, and on Sundays of all days, too. Everyone knew what to think of a young man when once he had been seen at the Castle

Gardens. And people coming to his lodgings, too, with bills for wines and spirits, and shabby, slouching men leaving dirty little notes for him; to say nothing of his bringing in such a smell of cigar smoke, and whistling low tunes as he went upstairs to his rooms, a thing that Mrs. Mallinson detested, for it gave such a gin-shop sort of air to a house when people went whistling upstairs, and carrying about the smell of smoke with them.

“Quite a changed character, Miss Beresford,” observed Mrs. Mallinson, who was in an unwonted state of bustle and flurry, partly by reason of the honour Miss Beresford had done her in inquiring about the family, and partly by reason of some cakes which wanted looking after just then in the oven. “Quite a changed character, as much so as

ever I saw in all my life; to that extent that you wouldn't believe him to be the same. And so very modest and unassuming as he used to conduct himself when first he come! Indeed, it was all I could do of a night to get him down here into the back parlour, just for the sake of a bit of company for Sarah Matilda, which was an advantage, one may say, having such a fine bass voice."

"Not that she wants it now, though," and Mrs. Mallinson bridled up, "for I'm happy to say she's settled with a young man as me and my husband couldn't wish anything more suitable for her, being well established in the confectionery line, and with the best of prospects, and everything as she's likely to be comfortable with, and intends to take his country house, if trade keeps up, which

I don't suppose Mr. Deeping will have the means of doing, if he don't intend to mend his ways. But he never seemed to have an idea of anything of the sort, nor took advantage of it when it was put in his way. Indeed, me and my husband both said it was plain his affections was took in some other direction, and perhaps it had gone wrong with him, which it sometimes has an effect in that way."

"But I ask your pardon, Miss, I'm sure I do, for making free with so many remarks; only you was so very agreeable when you and your ma had the apartments, a great deal more so than Mr. Deeping, and never held yourself up from anything like a little bit of chat, which there's no harm in, whatever station folks belongs to. But so long as he pays his rent regular,

and doesn't bring no improper company to the house, it isn't my business to make any remarks, and I don't mean to, because I never was a woman that went out of my way to interfere with other people; it's a thing I don't approve of, and never encourages it in my family. And the carriage waiting, too, I declare, just in front of the shop, with such a beautiful pair of horses! Dear me! they *are* beautiful horses! I always say I never see such beautiful horses anywhere as Mr. Lyneton's."

And Mrs. Mallinson conducted her visitor out of the front door, and then stationed herself behind the tea-canisters in the shop window, to see the carriage start, wondering, meanwhile, what Mrs. Green, the meek-faced widow, a little further down the road on the opposite side, would think about it. For Mrs.

Green would be sure to be standing behind the counter, waiting for customers, and she would see the carriage stop, and perhaps send the boy out to ask whose it was. It gave such an air to a shop when a carriage stood before it, especially a carriage like the Lyneton Abbots carriage, which looked as if it belonged to an old family.

Rose Beresford did not fail to repeat the detail of poor Hugh's misdemeanours and impending downfall, as they all rode home to Lyneton Abbots. Also, she imitated, with laughable exactness, Mrs. Mallinson's provincial accent, and the vigorous sniffs which had accompanied the recital; not forgetting, either, the episode of Sarah Matilda's prospects, upon which her "ma" had dwelt with such complete satisfaction.

"And so you see, Miss Lyneton, I was mis-

taken, after all, in my belief that this redoubtable Mr. Deeping was trying to produce an impression in that quarter. I rather fancy, now, that Sarah Matilda had taken the aggressive side herself, and was intent upon storming the citadel of the poor young man's affections, when I chanced to behold her looking up into his face with such sweet affectionateness. What a pity, now, is it not, that my darling little fabric of romance should come to the ground in that way? I could have been so sure that there was an understanding between them; and then to find it all end in smoke; nothing of the kind, but indeed quite the reverse, as Mr. Deeping seems, from Mrs. Mallinson's account now, to have been rather reserved than otherwise in his connection with the family. But never mind. If I *was* mistaken, it made a little bit of

nonsense for us, just the same as it had been true. And nonsense is such a delightful thing. It's the delightfulest thing in the world is nonsense."

And again Rose did that distinctive Malinsson sniff, with its lateral twist of face and shoulder, to Major Demeron's infinite amusement. Rose's arch playfulness was becoming very attractive to him, and the more so from its contrast with Gwendoline's controlled gravity. This pretty young Irish girl really was such a bewitching mixture of raillery and playfulness, so very different from the high-born English ladies, who never seemed to lose sight of their pedigrees.

When they reached the avenue which led into the village of Lyneton Abbots, he proposed that they should walk the remainder of the way; so the carriage was sent forward,

and together they sauntered on, plucking the violets and primroses as they went. Spring was just touching the trees with her young loveliness. Upon the hedgerows and the distant woods there bloomed already the manifold soft tints of myriads of tiny buds, russet, olive, brown, and purple, which only waited for a few days of sunshine to break forth into living green. And in every little cottage-garden the crocuses made a golden glow, and pale snowdrops trembled for joy at their own loveliness, and the delicate periwinkle looked out, with eyes of Rose Beresford's colour, from cool dark-green leaves. Sweet English flowers, which Maurice Demeron had missed so long, fairer in their gentle beauty than all the brilliant purple blossoms of India. Maurice Demeron loved the spring time, loved it in other things than flowers.

As they passed the gateway, he paused for a moment with Gwendoline Lyneton under the old stone griffins. They looked so grim and defiant there, with the long beards of moss hanging from their open jaws, and brown lichens filling up the crevices of their hollow eyes. Not changed at all since five years ago, except that the moss was richer and greener, and those brown lichens had not such a golden flush as the July sun put there, then.

With a light smile and a lighter tone, Maurice Demeron said, as he glanced up at them,

“Time has dealt gently with them, Greta!”

She turned quickly and looked him in the face. Could he speak so carelessly of what had been so sacred to them both? Could he stain with a meaningless laugh

the sweet memory of that July night? Or did he not care to treasure it any more now, and would he so let her see that it had lost its worth? Perhaps there was more coldness in her voice than she meant to put there, as she replied—

“Yes. I wish he had dealt as gently with others.”

“And changed them as little,” said Maurice Demeron.

“And changed them as little,” returned Gwendoline, walking proudly on.

Maurice Demeron looked after her as she turned away from him. And then, half unconsciously, his glance wandered towards Rose Beresford, who, standing over the old stone dial, was trying to make out its legend. Her bending figure was full of ease and grace. The frosty March air had kindled a rosy

glow in her cheeks, and a deeper light in the sparkling eyes, which, even as he looked, were turned upon him with such an arch, merry glance.

Maurice Demeron thought there was nothing like the beauty and freshness of Spring.

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN they reached the house, Gwendoline went into her own room, and wrote to Aunt Hildegarde, giving her the information which Mrs. Mallinson had given to Rose Beresford, with instructions that Jeanie should also be informed of it, and so any lingering tenderness, or even respect which she might have for Hugh Deeping, might die out, as indeed there was abundant reason that it should die out, now.

For though he had not been false in the way that Gwendoline thought at first; though she dwelt with a faint touch of regret now, on the harsh judgment which she and her

brother had formed of him after hearing those idle words of Rose Beresford's, words which it seemed had no foundation of truth, still he had done enough to forfeit their confidence. He had very grossly presumed upon their kindness to him. He was allowing himself now to be led into wrong and vicious courses, proving that the refinement for which they had once given him credit, was but an outside garb, worn for convenience, and easily cast off when the need for keeping it had gone. He had altogether shown himself unworthy of the kindness which the Lyneton Abbots people, pitying his loneliness, had reached out to him. And Jeanie ought to be told of this.

It was a long letter, and of weighty import, needing to be carefully worded, too, lest it should seem to exalt into overmuch

importance what after all was only to be referred to by Aunt Hildegarde as a piece of passing information, just one item amongst many others, of home news which might serve to interest Jeanie so far away. That was all. That was just how Aunt Hildegarde was to put it; a fragment of Oresbridge gossip, nothing more than that.

Gwendoline was a long time writing it, yet perhaps Maurice Demeron and Rose Beresford, singing duets together in the oriel room, did not think the time overlong. For Rose could sing so sweetly, and Maurice loved so well to listen. It was long since he had heard a voice like that. It seemed to tell out so much of love and tenderness. He liked those warm, frank natures, that did not care to hide themselves behind a vexing mantle of reserve. He loved to look

through Rose's glowing face as she sang, and read, as he thought, the story of the glowing heart within. Better that than to be for ever waiting at the closed doors of coldness and self-control. Miss Lyneton might have written for hours, and neither Rose nor Maurice would have wearied.

So Aunt Hildegarde told Jeanie, amongst other equally unimportant little items of home intelligence, that Mr. Deeping was becoming very unsteady, and that he caused his friends a great deal of anxiety; that he was forming loose companionships, and that Mr. Lyneton had discontinued his assistance in the management of the estate, as it was now in a condition not to require so much supervision.

And then the letter proceeded to a description of the last full-dress concert at

Oresbridge, to which the Lyneton Abbots party had gone. A very gay affair, though, of course, not nearly so brilliant as those which Jeanie would have the opportunity of attending in town. But Major Demeron was very fond of music, and having been for so many years unable to indulge his taste for it, he seemed to enjoy even the very limited advantages which Oresbridge could afford. And an evening of that kind was a pleasant change, too, for Rose Beresford, who was not accustomed to such a very secluded life as they lived at the Manor-house. Though really she seemed very bright and happy, and never complained of dulness, though they did see so very little company. But she was one of those bright, buoyant-spirited girls, who could make themselves happy almost anywhere.

Jeanie listened quietly, making no remark about that part of the letter which related to Hugh Deeping. She had always taken things very quietly since she came up to town. Aunt Hildegarde thought she was scarcely so bright as she used to be, but then girls rarely keep that gay, flashing liveliness after seventeen or eighteen. And the Lynetons were always sedate—at least, most of them. It ran in the family, like the pale brown hair and faultlessly-chiselled features, which made the women of the race so distinguished-looking. But still Gwendoline must not think that Jeanie was getting into low spirits; nothing of the sort. She was quite contented and happy, and entered into society with as much animation as could be expected from a young girl who had been brought up in such strict retirement. And

they were going down to Barton Firs next week for a few days. Sir William had taken a wonderful fancy to the child ever since he had been introduced to her at the county ball. Indeed, it was quite evident what his heart was set upon. Nothing would please him so much, Aunt Hildegard knew, as a match between his nephew and Jeanie. And such a match would be very suitable too, in every respect; for though not of quite so good extraction as the Lynetons, yet Sir William belonged to a thoroughly respectable family, and Martin Allington's prospects were such as very few young men could look forward to. He was so very steady, too, and promising, and Aunt Hildegard only wished that Jeanie would receive his attentions rather more kindly, or, at any rate, that she appeared more conscious of them. She really

almost lost patience with her sometimes, she seemed so very blind to her own interests, and treated as a matter of perfect indifference what most girls would have been so proud of. But then again, as Aunt Hildegarde said, that might only be her natural disposition, or perhaps girlish shyness and reserve, not liking to show all she felt; which was certainly the best extreme of the two, if there must be an extreme in one direction or the other.

But Jeanie lived on her own quiet life all the time,—a life far enough removed from the amusements which they heaped upon her; a life which neither Sir William, nor Barton Firs, nor young Martin Allington, nor all the pomp and splendour of London society could move from its firm anchorage of faith and trust. They might say what they liked,

they might take her where they chose, they might fill up her days with one brilliant round of visiting and sight-seeing—it was of very little consequence. If she lacked some of the Lyneton pride, she did not lack any of the Lyneton steadfastness. And as the traveller, coming home from foreign lands, takes up his own country language again, and falls at once into its sweet familiar accents, no space of time or distance making them strange to him, so when they left her to herself, Jeanie came back again to her own sweet haven of thought, and took up the speech of the olden time, and gathered round her the old memories, and rested there and was at peace.

So the days passed on, until Maurice Demeron's week was over, and courtesy and respect alike behoved that he should present

himself to his relations in the north, whom as yet he had not seen since his return from India.

Besides, as matters still were, he felt there was an awkwardness in his staying at Lyneton Abbots; though he could willingly have lengthened out the days—each one widening the distance between himself and Gwendoline—which Rose's sweet voice and pleasant winning ways made to pass so quickly. Rose, whose smile never failed, who never wearied of listening to his stories of peril and adventure in the far East; who would sing to him for the whole long evening, whilst Gwendoline sat apart, grave, silent, reserved.

He was more than ever bewildered by Miss Lyneton's manner. She never seemed to care now to speak of those old days; and yet that she had not forgotten them, he

felt sure by the conscious restraint of her ways if ever she chanced to be alone with him. Did she, then, repent of that unspoken promise which they both understood so well,—given perhaps before they truly knew each other, before they were old enough to enter into all its meaning? No, something told him she had not changed. It was a rash promise, maybe. And yet he did love her very much. Those were such pleasant days when they two had strayed together up and down the old garden, and Jeanie, a laughing, sunny-faced child, had chased butterflies across the flower-beds, or caught the great red and black ladybirds that crept so lazily over the currant-bushes. Yes, those were pleasant days. Gwendoline was quiet and thoughtful even then, but there was a gentleness in her ways, and

when they looked into each other's faces, there was the sweet happy consciousness of trust between them which needed no words to make it faster.

Maurice Demeron dared not look steadily into Gwendoline's eyes now. If he had read unwavering faith there, it would have grieved him that his own should swerve so far aside. If he had read rebuke and questioning, it would have humbled him. If he could but have read change there!

Maurice was half angry with himself at first, when he felt what a relief that would have been. True, he was not bound to Gwendoline by any actual obligation. What promise existed was between themselves alone. No one knew of it. He could put it aside, and society would call him as fine a gentleman as before. And he knew Gwendoline

Lyneton well enough to be sure that she would rather die than betray the slight which he had thus put upon her. Her pride would shield him from dishonour better far than it could shield herself from pain. Should he then go free himself?

These thoughts came, and Maurice Demeron did not hate himself for them. He let them creep into his heart, and brood and strengthen there. Sometimes his better nature stirred within him, and he resolved, since he could be true no longer, to tell her boldly so, and bear his humiliation like a man. Then his courage failed, he could not bring himself to acknowledge that he was less strong, less faithful than this woman whose love he had once prized so well. It might be cowardly, but it would be more comfortable, to let Gwendoline learn by his silence, what to tell

her in any other way would have been too great a shame.

And besides, he was not quite sure yet, that he *did* want her to know this at all. He had not altogether ceased to remember the past with something like reverence and longing. There were times when Gwendoline almost had her old power over him. He could not let her go. He could not bring himself to think that the past was all a mistake on his part, or that he could be just so happy with anyone else as with her. There was something in her that he could rest upon; and though he did not always need that rest, yet it would be pleasant to feel it always there.

Once, coming unawares into the room whilst Miss Lyneton, thinking herself alone, was singing some of the songs she used to sing five

years ago, all the sweetness and truth of that beautiful life seemed to come back upon him. As through a rift in clouds one sees far off the clear shining of stars, he felt again the glow of the old love. The faith and honour that had well-nigh died out in his heart, struggled up once more. He felt that that life was indeed his best, his purest; that he could give no love to anyone else so unselfish as that which Gwendoline once held. Nor would he ever win a gift so sweet, so precious, as this which he was suffering to fall from him now. He would come back to the old allegiance. He would be true to honour and to her.

But just then Rose Beresford came in, bright, gay, smiling, and all his high resolves melted away like the changeful pictures of a dissolving view. Fancy's bright colours qui-

vered upon the fading tints of Honour, which slowly died away and left Fancy's picture undimmed. Once suffered to die out, they never came again.

Slowly those days had passed away for Gwendoline. This home-coming of Maurice Demeron had brought her no peace as yet. She had looked to it as travellers in the desert look to the palm-trees' cool shadow, and when they near it, all is gone; nothing round about them but the desert still, over which they must toil patiently on through so many, many leagues. Yet she never doubted him even now. Hers was a faith that could bear very much. Too proud, too noble to dream of change herself, she did not fear it from those she trusted. All would yet be well. And that coldness and restraint which sometimes she showed before him, was not

so much for inconstancy that she feared in him, as to hide the fulness of her own great heart.

And so that week passed until Sunday came, and on the morrow Major Demeron was to go to his friends in Scotland. Once more they had sat together in the old church at Lyneton Abbots, beneath their feet the dust of the old knights who lived so purely and loved so truly; all around them, with clasped hands and calm faces, the effigies of those same Lyneton knights, fast crumbling to decay, like the fortunes of their race. Once more Maurice Demeron had looked at the graven figure of the Lady Gwendoline de Lyneton, whose straight, level brows and placid features used to seem so like those of his own Gwendoline, when six years ago he glanced from one to the other. He did not

so much care to mark the likeness now, for Rose Beresford was sitting just before him in the corner of the pew, where Jeanie used to sit; and who, looking upon her rich young face with all its warm glow of life and loveliness, could care to turn from that to the grave features of the Lady Gwendoline, dead five centuries ago?

Rose, the rosebud; sweetest, brightest. When should he see her again, when should she sing to him any more those tender songs of hers, which had already told so much? Fancy's picture had the canvas all her own now. Truth, honour, faithfulness, no longer dimmed her fair colours with any fading tints of theirs. It was no thought of Gwendoline which strayed so sweetly through his heart that night; it was no regret for leaving her which saddened him as he knelt for

the last time in the old church of Lyneton Abbots.

Evening service was over. They came out into the narrow grassy road which lay between the churchyard yew-trees and the Manor-house. Had she cared for him less, Miss Lyneton might have kept by Maurice Demeron's side for the little space they had to go; but with the old proud reserve which would never let her give much outward show of regard, she took her brother's arm, leaving Maurice and Rose behind in the gathering gloom of the evening.

Half an hour later, she came down from that old dormer-windowed room, her prayer-book in her hand, ready to join Mr. Lyneton in the library, where they always had prayers on Sunday night. The hall door was open, the light from the purple-shaded lamp

pouring out into the garden. With just so warm a glow, scarce more than a few days since, it had fallen upon the balustraded terrace in front of the doorway, as she came downstairs dressed for the county ball.

Gwendoline might be thinking of that night, a fateful one for poor Hugh Deeping, standing out there in the track of the lamplight.

As someone else stood now. Not poor Hugh Deeping, though. That tall figure and fair curling hair belong to Maurice Demeron. And by him stood Rose Beresford, her bright face flushed and smiling. They did not see her. Rose was looking down too earnestly for seeing, and Maurice Demeron's face was towards the gloom. But Gwendoline could hear his low tones. She had heard him speak like that long ago, five years ago.

His voice had a sound like that when he said good-bye to her under the old gateway before he went away to India.

For one little moment she stood there, fixed, motionless. Just long enough to understand it all. Then she turned and went quietly back to her own room.

For truly they were a silent, self-controlled people, these Lynetons of Lyneton Abbots.

CHAPTER VII.

NEXT morning Maurice Demeron went away to visit his friends in the North.

Went away quite brightly and cheerfully, with only that little tinge of courteous regret in voice and manner, which seemed suitable in parting from people who had been so kind to him; whom he had known so long, and who, when he was scarcely more than a boy, had shown him much friendly attention.

He said he was very sorry to go away from Lyneton Abbots, but as he had so short a leave of absence, only little more

than six months altogether, he must make the best use of his time. And he really had so many people to see in London, and so much business to attend to, and so many commissions to look after for his friends out there in India, who seemed to think that when a fellow came home for a few weeks he had nothing to do but run up and down the country and do errands for them. But if possible he would look in at Lyneton Abbots again, just to say good-bye before he sailed, in the later part of the autumn. He should have to pass Oresbridge on his way up to town, and it would be such a great pleasure to him to have another day with Mr. Lyneton. And they were to give his kindest remembrances to Jeanie. He was sorry not to have seen her, but as soon as he got to town he meant to find his way to

Eaton Square, and send them word how she was looking, and whether she seemed to be pining after home. Though he did not think that would be the case, for London was such a charming place for a young lady to visit, especially if she had an Aunt Hildegarde to take her all over, and go with her to those delicious operas. And Miss Lyneton was to be sure to remember him very kindly when she wrote, and say that he did not forget what good friends they used to be, and what delightful games they used to have in that old garden five years ago. She must have forgotten them herself, though, for five years was such a long time. So many changes happened in five years, and people learned to think so differently about things.

To all which pleasant farewells and messages, Gwendoline listened very courteously,

and when she replied to them there was not a touch of cold rebuke in her voice. Neither was there any need now for the half-averted look of reserve or constraint. She could meet his glance very fearlessly, her own having nothing to conceal any longer; nothing either to seek in his but mere pleasant friendship. She said they had all been very pleased to see Mr. Demeron, and to hear how successful he had been, and what good prospects he had out in India. And he must remember them also very kindly to his friends in the North, and if he could spare another day for Lynton Abbots before he sailed, they would be very happy to see him, though, of course, he must have many things to occupy his time, and many people to see, and much business of various kinds to transact. Still, old friends had a claim, and he must not

quite forget it. And they were sure Aunt Hildegard would be most happy to see him in Eaton Square, and he must send them word how Jeanie was looking, although she always wrote in such very even spirits, and seemed so contented and happy, that they had no anxiety about her. Still, it would be satisfactory to hear from one who had really seen her.

And then Mr. Lyneton said it was a thousand pities that Major Demeron should just set off to India when the shooting season was commencing, and if he *could* manage to snatch a day or two in October, they must try to get an excursion over the moors, though, of course, the bringing down of grouse and partridges must be a very tame affair to him after those brilliant adventures amongst lions and tigers in the

Indian jungles. But, at any rate, a day on the moors would serve to bring back the old times, when the Major, quite a stripling, came to Lyneton Abbots for the first time, and seemed to enjoy it. Mr. Lyneton had not forgotten what a pleasant visit that was for all of them, and how sorry they felt when his regiment was ordered abroad. He certainly must try and come over, just for one day's shooting in October.

Altogether a bright and satisfactory leave-taking, perhaps more overflowing on Maurice Demeron's part with expressions of good-will because he felt that he had not quite acted the part of a gentleman, and so he would cover his unconfessed delinquences with a gayer, more abundant courtesy. But whatever any of them might feel, only smiles were to be seen, and wavings of hands, as

Major Demeron and Mr. Lyneton drove away to the Oresbridge station, leaving Gwendoline and Rose Beresford standing in the gateway looking after them.

The old griffin-guarded stone gateway.

Rose did not stay quite so long at Lyneton Abbots as they expected. Not many days after Maurice Demeron went away, there came a letter from Mrs. Beresford, requesting her return to Grantford, regretting that she could not be spared for a longer time, and thanking Miss Lyneton for all the kindness which had made her visit already so pleasant.

So there was another leave-taking at the old gateway, quite as full of regrets and expressions of good-will as that which had taken place when Mr. Lyneton conveyed his Indian guest away. Rose was so very much obliged to her dear Miss Lyneton for having been

so good to her, and she should have been so delighted to have stayed longer, only Grantford was such a wretchedly stupid little place, and poor mamma was so bored there; she was afraid it would have quite a serious effect upon her health if she was left alone much longer. So she was sure dear Miss Lyneton would not think her ungrateful in running away so soon, when she had promised to stay with them until Jeanie's return. But although her visit had been unexpectedly curtailed, yet it had been quite long enough to leave a most delightful impression upon her memory. She should never be able to forget all Miss Lyneton's kindness to her, and the very, *very* happy days she had spent in the old house at Lyneton Abbots. Even though, as dear Miss Lyneton said, it *had* been a very quiet visit, yet she had not enjoyed it the less on that

account, for there was always a charm in the country, go to it when you would, and she did not think that even Dublin, with all its gaiety, had ever delighted her so much as the elegant quietness and seclusion of Lyneton Abbots. Miss Lyneton must receive her warmest thanks, and she should never forget all the kindness that had been shown to her.

To which also Gwendoline listened with grave, quiet courtesy, as it was her way to listen to most things. In due time Miss Beresford wrote from Grantford to inform Miss Lyneton of her engagement to Major Demeron. It was a very long letter, crossed and crossed again, full of pretty little confidences, and warm expressions of attachment. She was sure that dear Miss Lyneton would rejoice with her in the future which had so very unexpectedly opened before her. So very

unexpectedly, for she never had the least idea, when she came to Lyneton Abbots, that her visit would have produced such important results. And, indeed, she could scarcely bring herself to believe that she was really going to be married so soon, in less than six¹/₄ months, to a person who as many weeks ago had been a complete stranger to her. Not half a year to bring her mind to it, and get her outfit ready, and do everything that was necessary; and pay her farewell visits, which of course she must do to all her friends, as she was going to leave the country, and would, perhaps, not return for many years. And she hoped Miss Lyneton would not think she had been too hasty, but these things, when they did come, often came so very unexpectedly, people were taken quite by surprise, and had scarcely time to con-

sider what they were doing until it was done. And really it would have seemed so much more likely if Miss Lyneton herself had gone out to India as Major Demeron's bride, having known him so long, indeed ever since he was quite a young man; and such respect, too, between the families, it was quite delightful to hear him speak of his old friend Gwendoline, he had such an unbounded regard for her, and she should almost feel inclined to be jealous of her sometimes, if Maurice did not assure her that he had never really cared for anyone as he cared for herself. Strange, was it not, when he had been so much about in the world, and had had so many opportunities of mixing with the best society? She must say that she could not return the compliment, for she had met with many people since she came

out who had made quite as deep an impression upon her as Maurice. But then she was such a very impressible girl, so easily wrought upon by a little kindness; she felt quite angry with herself sometimes for being so easily led away.

And would dear Miss Lyneton and Jeanie be her bridesmaids? She should so like her marriage-day to be associated with thoughts of the dear friends at Lyneton Abbots; and since it was there she had first seen Maurice, it would seem so pleasant to have someone belonging to the place about her then. But she hoped she should see Miss Lyneton again before Autumn, when the wedding was to take place; for she and her mamma had received invitations to the hunt ball at Oresbridge in May, and of course Miss Lyneton would be there. It would not be such an unexpected

meeting this time, and would not lead to such unexpected results either, as had been produced by their meeting at that other ball last March. What a strange thing that was. After the hunt ball she was going into Ireland, to pay some visits to her friends there, who would most likely keep her with them all the summer, as she should perhaps never have the opportunity of seeing them again.

And she had one other request to make. Would dear Miss Lyneton write to her very soon, and give her a great deal of good advice, for she felt herself so young and inexperienced, and going out to India was such a serious undertaking; she almost felt sometimes as if she had been too rash in promising so much upon such a short acquaintance. And on that account she should so prize a letter from Miss Lyneton, who was

so very matured and thoughtful, and always seemed to know exactly what to do and say and think about everything; so different to her own poor little thoughtless, mischievous self. Yes, dear Miss Lyneton must write to her very soon, and tell her all that she thought about it.

Gwendoline did write. Her letter was not quite so long as Rose's, and doubtless did not contain all that the writer thought. But it was a very kind letter, containing suitable good wishes and congratulations on the very unexpected change in Rose's prospects. Miss Lyneton sincerely hoped she would never have cause to regret the very important step she had taken, and that the engagement would be productive of lasting happiness, both to herself and Major Demeron. Mr. Lyneton had known him for many years, indeed, ever

since he was quite a young man, and he believed him to be very upright and gentlemanly, so that she thought Rose need not fear; though, as she said, it *was* a very important step to take, important under any circumstances, but still more so when it involved the giving up of home and country and friends to go so far away. Miss Lyneton was afraid she could not oblige Miss Beresford by acting as her bridesmaid, for she never left her brother alone now, but she thought Jeanie would be very glad to have that opportunity of showing her attachment to an old friend. Indeed, if she remembered rightly, it was one of their childish compacts in the merry days when they used to play together in the garden at Lyneton Abbots, that whoever married first should

have the other for bridesmaid. And she enclosed Jeanie's address, in order that Miss Beresford might, if she chose, renew the invitation herself.

When all this had been written, Gwendoline thought she had said enough, and she read the letter carefully over, to be sure that not one little tinge of bitterness had crept up unawares, and coloured the quiet friendliness of it. But it was all right. If it did not overflow with felicitations, that was only because she was a person who seldom gave them. She could not deal in the empty compliments which come so naturally to some letter-writers. She always meant what she said, and when she could not truly rejoice with those that rejoiced, she was wisely silent. It had been rather difficult to write that letter at all, so

that Maurice Demeron, reading it over as he most likely would, should not be able to lay his finger upon a single sentence which had any undermeaning of sadness in it. She had succeeded, though perhaps Rose might call her rather cold and unsympathetic. Better so; better the reserved cordiality which she could honestly give for Rose's sake, than any parade of congratulations whose assumed gaiety would only make him guess more truly the sad heart out of which she had written them.

And then she went downstairs to accompany her brother in his daily walk, chatting to him the while in her usual pleasant, intelligent manner. Those mediæval Alices and Lady Gwendolines, sleeping their last sleep under the Manor-house pew, were scarcely less silent touching any of their joys and sorrows than this living woman who bore their name, and

who hoped ere long to lie quietly beside them.

It could not be too soon now, she thought.

CHAPTER VIII.

NO one belonging to the old house at Lyneton Abbots marked any change in Miss Lyneton after that eventful Sunday evening which ended five years of trust and waiting. She read to her brother, wrote his letters for him, helped him in business matters connected with the estate, and did her best to make his life pass easily along, just as she had done when her own had still hope and brightness left in it. Nay, she even gave herself more entirely to him, for now that both Rose and Jeanie were away, he was so very dependent upon her. She must try to be all to him

that they had been. Which was no easy task, for Rose was so very merry and companionable. She had such an unfailing store of mirthfulness. The old house scarcely knew itself for the same during the three weeks that she stayed there, for she filled it from morning till night with the music of her voice. She would sing to them, or tell them stories, or amuse them with her quizzical imitations of Irish oddities, until even the grave Mr. Lyneton forgot his dignity, and laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks.

Of course such a visitor would be very much missed, and Gwendoline had need to rouse herself and fill the vacant place, if not with equal store of wit and mirth, at least with such resources as she could command; a daily call upon her which left but little time for idle regrets or any bitter

musings over the past. When the day was done, and no one needed any care of hers, she might perhaps sit alone, hour after hour, in that dormer-windowed room where the first Mrs. Lyneton had died. She might think her own thoughts there, and ungird for a little season that chain-mail of forced cheerfulness which pressed so tightly sometimes. But if so, it was girded on again safely as ever before the daily task returned; none knowing that it was heavy to bear, or even that she bore it at all. And so long as she was kind and courteous to the people who looked to her for daily help, it was no concern of theirs what thoughts she had when that help was no longer needed.

The upper-class gossips of the village had their own speculations about Major Demeron's visit to the Manor-house. It was not likely

that a noble-looking man of military garb and aspect should have been there for a week, without any theory being set afloat, concerning his probable wishes and intentions. It was the last thing the lawyer's wife and the doctor's wife, and the aristocratic widows and maiden ladies would have done, to allow such a visitor as that to come and go with never a definite understanding of what he came for.

If Mrs. Lucombe was not very much mistaken, she remembered a gentleman of that name, though he was not a major then, but only a young ensign, coming to Lyneton Abbots five or six years ago, when Miss Lyneton was younger and brighter, and more blooming than at the present time. Mrs. Lucombe had lived in the village two and twenty years, in fact ever since the mar-

riage of the first Mrs. Lyneton, and she knew everything that had gone on in that house, and the name of everyone who had come to it, and she certainly *did* remember a Mr. Demeron visiting there, two or three years in succession, always during the shooting season. Indeed her husband, being a good sportsman, and very fond of it, had once or twice joined Mr. Lyneton and the young ensign in their excursions over the moors. A capital shot he was, too, Mr. Lucombe said, just the man for a soldier, no fear of his bringing down his game, be it man or bird. Only so rash with his gun, so very imprudent and daring. He would pitch it about like a conjurer's rod, without even giving himself the trouble to find out whether both the barrels had been discharged or not. She would have been in terror the

whole time her husband was with them, only he was so very cautious, and always took care to keep at a safe distance. And he had often warned Mr. Demeron about it, but young men were so careless, they seemed to have a sort of pride in putting their lives in peril, to say nothing of the anxiety it caused to others.

A very fine-looking young man, Mrs. Lucombe said, if she remembered rightly; tall, well made, aristocratic in his appearance. Everyone said what a handsome couple they would be if they *did* make a match of it. And indeed that seemed a very likely termination of his visit, for there was nothing else to attract him in that direction, except the shooting; and they were continually seen together in the garden, or strolling about the Lyneton Abbots woods, in company with Mr.

Lyneton. And then his regiment was appointed to foreign service, a disappointment doubtless to the young people, though fortunate, looked in a worldly point of view, because the officers in India got such good pay and quick promotion. After that, everyone noticed that Miss Lyneton withdrew very much from society, rarely attended balls or anything of that sort; indeed lived almost entirely at home, and Mrs. Lucombe believed that young Demeron's departure had something to do with the fact of her being Miss Lyneton still.

But Mrs. Jacques, who had come to call upon Mrs. Lucombe, and to whom the doctor's wife unfolded these little personal matters connected with the Lyneton Abbots family, did not look upon the matter in the same light. Mrs. Jacques had not lived so long in the

village as Mrs. Lucombe. It was only little more than four years since her husband took the legal practice of Mr. Langley, deceased; and therefore she had but comparatively limited opportunities for studying the aspects of life at the Manor-house. But if there was one thing Mrs. Jacques disliked more than another, it was these long engagements. She had never allowed any of her daughters to get entangled in them, for they were the most unsatisfactory things in the world. They invariably ended in smoke, and then where were a girl's prospects, and what was to become of her, unless she took to a vocation, or something of that sort; which, though aristocratic and distinguished, was not at all to be compared to a good establishment and a comfortable home. Her daughter Selina had once been in danger of getting entangled in a long

engagement with a young man who was going out to seek his fortunes in India, but she nipped it in the bud, put a stop to it at once, took Selina away to one of the fashionable watering-places, and had the satisfaction of seeing her married before the year was out to a wealthy Oresbridge merchant, who kept his carriage, and lived in one of the handsome villas in the suburbs. Very much better that, and so Selina admitted herself now, than waiting five years, and then perhaps being left behind, after all.

Not that she meant to intimate anything of that kind in Miss Lyneton's case. Mrs. Lucombe must not think that she intended to cast the slightest reflection upon Major Demeron's position, which was no doubt quite equal to a wife and an establishment now; but from what she had seen during

the last few days, she was not disposed to think that he had any serious thoughts in *that* direction. If there was any sort of understanding between them, it was the very last thing in the world that Miss Lyneton ought to have done, to have invited a fascinating, elegant girl like Rose Beresford at the time when Major Demeron was expected home; a girl whose peculiar style of beauty was just the kind to eclipse her own, for everyone knew what a pale, washed-out sort of thing a fair-haired, colourless woman, however perfect her features might be, looked when contrasted with a brilliant, animated face like Miss Beresford's. And then that young lady's manners, too, were so fascinating, such an inexpressible charm about her voice and smile, so very winning and agreeable, even apart from her uncommon

beauty, that no one of any taste in such matters could help being attracted by her. Really, for her own part, Mrs. Jacques could not imagine whatever Miss Lyneton could have been thinking about to do such an imprudent thing. And if she had any discernment at all in such matters—and she flattered herself upon the possession of as much as most people, if not a little more—she must say that she thought Major Demeron's intentions, if he had any at all, were in the direction of the younger lady.

Mrs. Lucombe could not believe that Major Demeron was a perfect gentleman, as her husband said, and he had been brought into contact with him several times before he went out to India, five years ago. Everyone suspected then what his intentions were, even though there might not be a definite

understanding, on account of both parties being so young. Mrs. Lucombe could not think it of any man that he could behave in that way, and mean nothing by it.

“Not even an ordinary person, my dear Mrs. Jacques,” said the doctor’s wife, with an unusual degree of animation; because, being on calling terms at the Manor-house, which Mrs. Jacques was not, she felt it her duty to defend the honour of the aristocracy. “Not even an ordinary person, still less a man of family and breeding, like the Major, who knows what honour is, and has always acted up to it. No, it will certainly come to a wedding before Major Demeron goes back to India.”

But Mrs. Jacques held fast to her own opinion. She asserted that the charm of a beautiful face, like Rose Beresford’s, was

enough to make a man forget honour and high-breeding and everything else, except the desire to win it for himself. Miss Lyneton had stood in her own light as completely as it was possible for any woman to do by having such a guest under such circumstances. She could only say that, though her own girls had as little need as most to fear the comparison of superior beauty, yet it was the very last thing in the world she should ever think of doing, to place them in immediate contact with a style like Miss Beresford's. It was not beauty alone, it was that indefinable charm of voice and aspect and manner, which, joined with pretty features and a brilliant complexion, and such rare accomplishments as the young Irish lady was said to possess, rendered their owner perfectly irresistible.

“No, take my word for it, Mrs. Lumcombe, Miss Lyneton will *never* be Mrs. Demeron.”

And if Mrs. Jacques had had a sniff like Mrs. Mallinson's, she would have made use of it then by way of emphasis. But Mrs. Jacques was of course far too much of a lady to have any such distinctive peculiarities. She only inclined her head decidedly enough to make the bird of Paradise in her Genoa velvet bonnet wave its plume in a very effective manner, as she repeated her assertion—“Miss Lyneton will *never* be Mrs. Demeron.”

“And I say she *will*,” returned the valiant little doctor's wife, in no wise daunted either by Mrs. Jacques or the bird of Paradise.

“Will you hazard a bet upon it, then?” said Mrs. Jacques.

“Certainly,” said the doctor’s wife.

“A pair of the best French kid, any colour you please,” said Mrs. Jacques.

“Any colour you please,” replied the doctor’s wife, who felt confident that if there was any honour at all in the aristocracy, her glove-box would receive an accession to its contents.

Mrs. Jacques took out her ivory tablets.

“If Miss Lyneton marries Major Demeron before he goes out to India in the autumn, I give you, what colour?”

“Steel grey, stitched with black. I shall only be in slight mourning by that time. And if he marries Rose Beresford”—the doctor’s wife took out her tablets too—“what is your size?”

Mrs. Jacques looked at her dainty demi-longs of Paris make.

“Six and a quarter. People always say my hand is so uselessly small; a child’s size fits me. And a nice pale tint, dear Mrs. Lecombe.”

“Certainly, I always pay my debts of honour in the most delicate colours,” replied the doctor’s wife, making a note in her tablets; “but I am quite sure it will be the steel greys this time.”

“And I am convinced it will not, if you will pardon me for being so positive.”

And with that remark Mrs. Jacques concluded one of the pleasantest morning calls she had made for a long time. She was quite sure she should get the gloves, though, and she hoped, as she looked out the next name on the list of calls, that they might be of the new season colour, to match the trimmings on her last walking costume. She

wished she had thought to mention it to Mrs. Lucombe when they arranged the bet.

For Mrs. Jacques had come down that grassy path on her way home from church the Sunday night before, and she had seen a graceful, elegant girl, certainly not Miss Lyneton, standing by Major Demeron's side in the track of light which poured out from the old doorway of Lyneton Abbots.

Mrs. Jacques thought she knew what that meant.

CHAPTER IX.

THEN came sweet spring days, when the olive-brown and russet tints on the Lyneton woods brightened into living green, and every orchard bloomed with rosy flush of apple-blossom, tinted here and there with pearly tint of cherry and sloe; and a bridal veil of white covered the young sprays of hawthorn that peered out from copse and dingle, or nestled coyly beneath the shadow of the great oak-trees on the Lyneton Abbots road. And one looked no more for snowdrops upon the woodland paths, for all May's perfumed flowers had rushed together into bloom,

and the glades were blue with hyacinths, and sweet woodruff scented all the air, and many a tangled growth of eglantine clambered amongst blackberry and briony over the untrimmed hedges, falling over sometimes to make a leafy bower, where the little children sat and wove their daisy chains, or tied up the cowslips which they had gathered in the meadows. Sweet spring days, when the lark began his carolling song, and the blackbird piped from the dewy shelter of the woods; and from the shadow of the fir-tree planting near by the old home at Lyneton Abbots, dark even at noonday, the low sweet tones of the cushat dove told how patiently she waited for her mate.

Sweet spring days, whose sweetness poor Hugh Deeping never felt; for all through that bright May month he lay within the

valley of the shadow of death, where no sunshine could reach him any more, nor song of merry birds, nor scent of flowers from woods where the young year's life was pulsing loud and strong. It mattered little to Hugh, with Death's black wing brooding over him, what brightness might be beyond it. Within that shadow he lay at rest, alike from pain or joy, knowing no present, remembering no past, looking forward to no future.

Day by day, night by night, his sad-hearted mother watched over him in that little room at Canton House; Betsy's heavy footfall tramping about overhead, Mrs. Mallinson's loud harsh voice sounding up the stairs, sometimes calling to Sarah Matilda, sometimes scolding the servant, sometimes uplifted in vehement expositions for the benefit of Mr. Barton, who still came in on a Saturday evening as

heretofore, though Mrs. Mallinson was more and more impressed with the advisability of a change in the Grosmont Road ministry; he being quite too much given to the practical enforcements for her views.

And there was a great soreness at Mrs. Deeping's heart, for she feared lest the lad should die, and give no sign of repentance for all the wild, reckless days he had spent. Mrs. Mallinson had told her all about them, softening down with no touch of motherly kindness the pain they caused; never cheering her by saying how steady he had been before that fatal change came over him, nor even how, when his folly was at its height, some little touch of goodness mingled with it. For Hugh had never been wholly bad. God had never let him quite forget the passing gleam of brightness which had once hallowed

all his life. She only knew that he had been very wild, that he had sadly broken away from the old paths, that deep stains of guilt lay upon the heart which was once so trusting and innocent.

How she waited day after day for that returning gleam of consciousness which would not come! How she prayed that some word of pardon might reach him before he went away; that the good Shepherd, whose love never wearies, whose patience never fails, would seek this poor wandering soul, and lead it back again to the fold! Or, if he should die,—and, indeed, as the doctor said, that seemed the most likely ending of all,—if he should die before that closed gate of reason opened again, she hoped God would be merciful to him, and not reckon too harshly with him for a past in which, perhaps, there

was more to pity than to blame. For the poor lad had been sorely tried. Not without temptation, whose force has many a time mastered older and stouter hearts than his, had he been driven out of the right path, and then—ah! the history of many a blasted life might tell how hard, once driven out of that path, it is to find the way home again. Surely God would be merciful to him and take into account, not only the evil he had fallen into, but that which he had struggled with, and perhaps tried so hard to conquer.

For Mrs. Deeping thought she understood now why he had been so wild. Hugh's delirium told her what he had very carefully concealed in all his letters home—how he had hoped and been disappointed, how he had trusted and been deceived, how he had tried to do his best and found himself doubted.

The pride of those Lyneton people had spoiled his life. It was their doing that he lay so crushed and broken now. In his brave trustfulness, seeking for the love which he gave so freely, he had climbed too high, and this was his fall. She could understand now, how, ever impulsive and hasty, he had let himself drift away to ruin. He had his father's nature, quick and affectionate, but his father had never been tempted so. He had never been allured and then betrayed. The world had been kinder to him, it had not vexed and wounded him, nor given him half so bitter a cup as poor Hugh had been forced to drink.

And with all a mother's fondness she tried to excuse his reckless ways, even while she mourned over them; and with all a mother's faithful love, she prayed for light and life

to come back. And with a bitterness which only that love could measure, she thought of the woman whose pride had wrought such mischief, whose cold, white hand it was that had thrust her poor boy down into this dark pitfall. Cruel hand, though the blood that flowed in its blue veins was so noble; cruel pride, though worn with such a queenly grace. Quiet-tempered, Christian woman though she was, Mrs. Deeping felt that if ever Gwendoline Lyneton crossed her path, no thought of forbearance and professing duty, no remembrance of the charity which suffereth long and is kind, or even of that divine love which would teach those whom it has forgiven, to forgive also, could keep her from pouring out all the pent-up bitterness of her soul.

And as it chanced, that meeting was not far off. For the hunt ball was to take place

in a fortnight, and Rose Beresford had written to her friend Miss Lyneton to ask if she would engage Mrs. Mallinson's rooms for one night. The woman, though commonplace to a distressing degree, and rather given to familiarity in her manners, had yet made them tolerably comfortable when they came to Oresbridge in March, and perhaps the young man who lodged with her permanently would not object to giving up his sitting-room for a few hours, as he had done before. Of course Mrs. Beresford would be very glad to make it up to him in some way, though really the inconvenience to himself was so very trifling, that it scarcely seemed worth while mentioning it at all. And perhaps Miss Lyneton would be kind enough to call as soon as she could, for the time was drawing near now, and if Mrs. Mallinson's

rooms were engaged, there would be a difficulty in procuring others, the hunt ball being so numerously attended by people from the county residences.

So one bright May morning Mrs. Mallinson's heart was gladdened, not certainly by the sight of the Lyneton Abbots family carriage, which had once before stopped at Canton House, but by an elegant pony-phaeton, almost as imposing as any family-carriage could be, drawn by a pair of spirited little steeds in silver-mounted harness, and attended by a footboy with no end of buttons all over his jacket; a general effect quite brilliant enough to make Mrs. Green's pale face grow paler still with envy, if she chanced to behold it from behind her coffee canisters, where she was generally standing on the look-out for customers, and also to notice

the class of customers who came to Mrs. Mallinson's shop. Such mean curiosity, Mrs. Mallinson said, and a thing she should never condescend to, for she never troubled herself about Mrs. Green's customers, poor thing! and never made it her business to find out what class they belonged to. And it was only by the merest chance that she had heard that the Lyneton Abbots people sent there for their tea, out of pity, no doubt, for everybody knew that a better article could be got from parties who had an extensive business—her husband, for instance—and could afford to give large orders to the travellers. But Mrs. Green had such very mean ways. Mrs. Mallinson didn't think there was another person in the street that had such mean ways as Mrs. Green.

Noiselessly enough the little ponies, Skip

and Sam, sped over the littering of bark which had been laid for some distance in front of Canton House. Gwendoline never saw anything of that kind without feeling saddened. It seemed to tell so silently of suffering—perhaps of death just passed, or very near at hand. But it was a sight painfully common in Oresbridge, where people were always falling ill, and where the race for riches, and all the tumult and excitement of competition, and the energy which must needs be put forth to secure any sort of standing-place, issued frequently enough in these nervous illnesses, where the patient had to be kept so very quiet. A hard thing to be gained, anything like quiet, in Oresbridge, Gwendoline thought; for the stone pavement was so terribly noisy. It must be painfully trying, especially for sick people,

to be so close upon it, and to hear continually the jar of those immense drays, rattling along with their burden of railway lines or iron bars, dashing against each other at every turn of the wheel. And she wondered what story that littered bark had to tell of anxiety and pain; what poor sufferer was lying near, needing to be so carefully guarded from the great town's noise and din.

Mrs. Mallinson, who had heard the muffled sound of wheels, followed by the little foot-boy's double knock, rushed to the door, and with a brisk succession of sniffs, and bows, and curtseys, ushered her visitor into the back parlour behind the shop, where a quantity of snippings on the carpet, and a smart red petticoat, half finished, hastily stuffed behind one of Sarah Matilda's anti-

macassars, betrayed that that young lady had been surprised in the midst of a diet of dress-making. And as ill-luck would have it, the front sitting-room was undergoing a process of cleaning, which rendered it unfit just then for the reception of so distinguished a visitor. So very unfortunate, as Mrs. Mallinson said when she heard the double knock, and caught sight of the silver-mounted harness, shining through the pickle-jars in the shop window. But things always had happened unfortunately of late, she thought. And she apologised profusely to Miss Lyneton for having to bring her into the back parlour, where things were not so genteel as upstairs.

“So much extra work, you see, ma’am, when there’s sickness in a house, and his mother come to nurse him, and the servant

almost run off her feet with extra fires and bits and sups to be got ready at all times, just when he's a mind to have them. I'm sure such a thing as I've never had to do with since I was married, and if it wasn't for the good of the cause as me and my husband is looked up to to keep it going on prosperous, I wouldn't have been bothered with it, no, that I wouldn't."

And Mrs. Mallinson sniffed, and threw up the window to air the room.

"But nothing catching, ma'am, so you needn't be afraid. I would have told you if it had been aught of that sort, before you'd come into the house, for I'm not one that would deceive people, nor ever was, I'm thankful to say. It's something in his head, ma'am, that's what it is, nothing no more than that; but he takes an awful deal of

nursing, and so we had his mother sent for, as I might be free to attend to the family and outward calls of usefulness, which it isn't nobody's duty to neglect, unless Providence sees fit to indicate otherways."

Miss Lyneton expressed her regret that there should be illness in the house. Certainly it always *did* cause a great amount of extra anxiety, and she trusted that Mrs. Mallinson would soon be relieved from hers by the recovery of the patient. But there was not the least occasion for apology. She had merely called, by Mrs. Beresford's request, upon an errand which she now feared would be useless. Could that lady engage the rooms which she had for the county ball in March? If so, Mrs. Mallinson might consider them as taken, and upon the same terms as before, for the hunt ball, which

was expected to take place at the end of May.

Mrs. Mallinson's regrets were loudly expressed. It was bad enough to have a sickness in the house, involving, as it did, extra fires, and all sorts of small disagreeablenesses; but for that sickness to be the means of depriving her of such a remunerative let as Mrs. Beresford's had been, was worse still. Ball company always paid so well. You might almost charge what you liked to ball company, and they never seemed to think of making any complaint. It was grievous, it was provoking, it was to be looked upon in the light of a heavy Providential dispensation. Not a judgment, nothing of that sort. Mrs. Mallinson was quite sure that neither she nor her husband had done anything to call for a judgment,

since they were using their best endeavours to uphold the cause, and Mr. Mallinson was coming forward with gold on every public occasion to an extent which certainly ought to place him beyond the reach of anything but gracious dealings on the part of Providence. It was a dispensation; that was what it was, and a very unfortunate one, and Hugh's mother must be given to understand that it had prevented the rooms from being let to Mrs. Beresford for the Hunt ball. Then Mrs. Mallinson went into particulars, for Miss Lyneton did not seem to understand as yet the precise aspect of the case; only that her errand was unsuccessful, on account of sickness in the house.

“It's Mr. Deeping, ma'am, the young man we've had to lodge with us since last October, as has been took with brain fever, or

something of that kind, and laid at death's door this month past. And I'm sure I wish it would either open and let him in, and have done with it, or send a message out as he needn't to wait there any longer; for it's more than me and my husband ever looked for, is a visitation like this, and us not conducting ourselves in any shape or way whatever as seemed to need it; and his mother, too, to wait upon him, and extra fires, and no sort of certainty as to when he's going to have his food, or what he'll take a fancy to, and wasted as likely as not when it's been took up to him, which I always say is a shame, and the price food is now, to have it sent out again that way. I thought you might have heard of it, ma'am, and him engaged at Lyneton Abbots, and it seemed to make a wonderful differ-

ence to him when he gived over coming of a Saturday afternoon. I always said to my husband it was the beginning of his ruin, his having them Saturday afternoons loose."

"Not but what Mr. Lyneton did perfectly right, ma'am," continued Mrs. Mallinson, thinking that perhaps this latter clause might be construed into a reflection upon Miss Lyneton's brother, which reflection was the very last thing she wished to make when that lady had come about the taking of the apartments. "Not but what Mr. Lyneton did perfectly right in not having him come no more, for he'd got that wild and reckless before he was took ill, as I don't believe he cared what he did, nor where he went; and I don't misdoubt but what it's for his good as this affliction has come upon him, though it goes hard as me and

my husband should be saddled with it, that wasn't to blame for his going off that way. Because you see, ma'am, one can't make a charge for illness. It isn't a thing one can put down in the bill, along with coals, and gas, and extras, and so I say it will be a dead loss to us, which was what we hadn't looked for, and laying ourselves out as we did to support the cause, and be burning and shining lights in the congregation, which isn't done for nothing, as I'm sure me and my husband can both of us bear witness to; especially when a body hasn't got itself established, as one may say like the present instance, and wants so much keeping up with bazaars, and teas, and public social means, as we're always looked to, to set an example with."

And Mrs. Mallinson, who, during the

whole of this lengthy exposition of the state of affairs at Canton House, had been bustling round the back parlour, trying to touch it up into something like respectability, came to a pause now, as though expecting that Miss Lyneton should make some sort of reply.

CHAPTER X.

BUT Miss Lyneton made no sort of reply. She just stood there by the seat Mrs. Mallinson had placed for her, stately, quiet as was her wont. Perhaps a few bitter thoughts were working their way into her heart. Perhaps she was wondering if those weary weeks of pain and anxiety which Hugh Deeping and his mother were measuring out would be laid to her charge, and ask their heavy price from her. Had she not had something to do with the shadow which lay upon him now? shadow which might

be that of death. Her face was very pale ; there was a look of fear in it.

Mrs. Mallinson thought it was because she had come unawares into a house where there was illness, and so she made haste to reassure her.

“ But it's nothing, ma'am, as I said before, that you need be afraid about, nothing catching, or aught of that sort, as I would have told you before ever you came in, if it had been, for I'm not a person that would take advantage of anybody's ignorance, and bring them into danger. But you wouldn't believe me, ma'am, how he talks. He'll set on and keep at it for an hour together, all about Lyneton Abbots, and Miss Jeanie, as I say he would be downright ashamed of himself, if he had only sense enough to know what he was saying, and Mr. Lyneton the gentle-

man that he is, and a position that Mr. Deeping has no sort of right to aspire to. Not but what he always had a notion of holding himself very stiff, and never seemed to have any desire to be one of the family, as I'm sure I tried to make him, and always used to have him down here of a night for a bit of company for Sarah Matilda; as I say a gentleman *is* a bit of company of a night, if he tries to make himself agreeable, which Mr Deeping never did."

Again Mrs. Mallinson paused for reply. Again she got none. Only Miss Lyneton inclined her head slightly, as though quite assenting to the truth of what was said. And so the good lady continued—

"No, never since the very first night he come to the apartments. Just as if we wasn't good enough for him, and my husband doing

as respectable a business as any in all Ores-bridge, and keeping the best of articles, too, ma'am, best superfine flour, from two shillings a stone, if you should wish a sample, ma'am, and the other qualities in proportion, markets being a little up now; and Westphalia hams cut at tenpence half-penny, and ninepence if you take them entire. And if his father was a minister among the Independents, and him sent to college before his mother was left a widow, why, that needn't make him hold himself up in that way, and refuse the friendship of the family of a night in the back parlour; for I always said, and always shall do, that the provision business is a long way before the ministry for laying by something comfortable against a person gets into years. And, besides, folks had ought to bring their minds to their circumstances, and if it's

the will of Providence they're to go for clerks, they must act conformable to it, for it's again' the Scriptures entirely that a man should think of himself more highly than he ought to think; and me and my husband has always gone by the Scriptures, and always mean to, for there isn't nothing else to be depended on, only a person understands them proper, which I've a gift for, and always had. Nothing comes amiss to me about doctrines. I can see 'em as clear as clear. My husband says it's a loss to the ministry I wasn't a man; and I don't know but what he's right, for I'm sure I could set out the views of the body to more advantage than what Mr. Barton does, who leans a great deal too much to practical enforcements, and that sort of thing, which isn't according to the feeling of the congregation."

“And you’ll please to make my duty to the ladies, ma’am,” continued Mrs. Mallinson, seeing that Miss Lyneton was moving towards the door, “and say as I would have done my best to have made them comfortable if we hadn’t been exercised with affliction. And I hope they’ll get suited somewhere else, but I wouldn’t advise them going to Mrs. Green yonder on the other side the road, number ten, small grocer’s shop, name over the door, cheap teas in the window, not to be depended on; because she isn’t a person, poor thing! that knows how to do for ball company. Not that I would go to say anything against her, for I’m not a person of that sort; but you see, ma’am, she hasn’t accommodation proper for the quality, and without being accustomed to them, she don’t know how to make herself agreeable, as them

does that takes ball company regular. And I hope and trust, ma'am, as I shall be more fortunately situated another time, and perhaps you'll say as much to the ladies, and tell them the apartments will be quite at their service for the county ball another year."

"Here, Sarah Matilda!" and Mrs. Mallinson called to that young lady, who was peeping through the kitchen-door, "come and show Miss Lyneton out at the front. I declare this gown of mine isn't decent to go to the door. You see, ma'am, where there's sickness, and a cleaning going on too, things has to be let to go a little more than usual."

"Is that Miss Lyneton?" said a low, quiet voice.

And Gwendoline, turning, found herself

face to face with a pale, thin, worn-looking woman in widow's weeds. A very worn-looking woman, and haggard too, as if with long watching and distress.

“You must come with me. I want you. I am Hugh Deeping's mother.”

And she laid her hand upon Gwendoline's arm. Something in that touch, something in the woman's voice and manner, told the calm, stately lady of Lyneton that she must obey.

Mrs. Deeping led her upstairs into the shabby-fine, cheaply-furnished room, where Hugh had been lying for more than a month, fighting hard with death; not conquered yet, though how the dear life kept itself in that poor wasted form, even his mother could scarcely tell. She pushed Gwendoline forward to the foot of the bed, still keeping

hold of her arm, and said in a hoarse whisper,

“There, that is your work! I thought you had better see how well you have done it. He would not have lain there but for you.”

Since Jeanie's mother died, many years ago, Miss Lyneton had never stood so near to death. But Jeanie's mother had never looked like this. She kept her own sweet smile to the last, and when they laid the shroud upon her, it covered a face that did but seem to sleep, so calm it was, so quiet and at rest. But that which Gwendoline looked on now, was drawn with pain, and the wide open eyes had a listless, vacant stare, as though the soul that should have looked through them was far away.

She drew back. She would have gone out of the room, but for the grasp laid so tightly

upon her. Could it be the same Hugh Deeping that once sat with Jeanie and her father in the oriel room, and read to them with such student ardour and delight, those old poems which they loved so well? Had those poor hands, so wan and helpless now, worked for her father, worked faithfully for him too? Had that overwrought brain spent any of its strength for them? Had he done the best for them that he could, and had they rewarded him thus? For, strive against it as she would, she felt now that she had wronged him. Her own great grief had taught her to feel a little for his, even before she knew that he was suffering thus.

Mrs. Deeping let her look at him for a while in silence. If the proud Miss Lyneton had a heart at all, it might feel a sight like that.

But Gwendoline did not tremble, she did not weep, and Hugh's mother thought she did not feel. For she stood there with bowed head, speaking not a word; with level lids drooping over the great grey eyes to which the dew of tears so seldom came.

"Yes," Mrs. Deeping said, "that is your work. He left me eight little months ago, my darling and my pride, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. Now he is dying, and you have killed him. He toiled very hard for you, and this is his reward! What was this beautiful niece of yours, that an honest man might not dare to love her? Is an ancient name and a high descent better than a willing heart and a strong right hand? Did your noble blood give you any right to trample on my boy, and crush the life out of him, and leave

him there, a poor pale thing, for me to bury out of my sight, because your niece's dainty hand must not be soiled by touch of his? Speak, if you have a heart at all, and say if this is well!"

But Gwendoline Lyneton never spoke. Her strength was to be silent then; silent whilst Hugh's mother heaped more and bitter words upon her.

"Tell that fair niece of yours that he will never trouble her again. Tell her, when he lies in his grave, that her false smile drove him there; and then let her go and smile upon others, to curse them too. And some day you may love, and the man you love may despise you as you have despised my boy; and when you sit alone, weeping in your pain, you may remember that the measure you once meted out to others has

been meted to you again, pressed down and crushed together, and running over. And none will comfort you then, and none will pray for you when you mourn over your dying hope, as I mourn over him. There, go! If you had any tears you might weep them now. But you are hard, you cannot feel!"

Mrs. Deeping released her hold, and Gwendoline Lyneton, pale, quiet as ever, went downstairs, bowing with lofty courtesy to Sarah Matilda, who held the door open for her, and stood there looking on whilst the little footboy arranged his lady's dress, and covered her with the costly tiger-skin rug, whose golden streaks shone so brightly against the silver-mounted harness.

Mrs. Mallinson, who was also looking on from one of the top windows, hoped Mrs.

Green was at her shop-door to see the sight. For a carriage gave such an air to a place. She never felt prouder of her position as mistress of Canton House, than when the carriage from Lyneton Abbots stopped there, even though it was not with a view to custom. And she was very glad that she had thought to mention about Mrs. Green not being a suitable person to take in ball company; for if she had not brought it forward, most likely Miss Lyneton would have gone there at once, seeing a paper in the shop-window of "Apartments to Let." And if one thing could vex her more than another, it would be that meek-faced widow woman getting Mrs. Beresford away from her.

Noiselessly again the little ponies sped over that littered bark, and then into the

quiet Lyneton Abbots road, where the hawthorn was blooming so sweetly under the shelter of the great oak-trees, and white wind-flowers trembled with every touch of the May breeze, and the blackbirds were whistling in those maple bushes as merrily as though no sad heart could ever be mocked by song of theirs. When they reached the Manor-house Miss Lyneton went into her own room and wrote to her niece; and this was all she said—

“Jeanie, come home.”

CHAPTER XI.

BUT Jeanie was not at the grand house in Eaton Square when that letter of Gwendoline's reached it. Aunt Hildegarde had taken her, with a party of friends, Sir William and young Martin Allington among the number, for a trip to Paris, and thence up the Rhine, and the next intelligence that Miss Lyneton heard of her niece was that she had been exploring the beauties of Versailles in company with Martin and Miss Allington.

Aunt Hildegarde wrote a long letter from Paris, explaining the suddenness of their departure. Jeanie was not quite the thing,

she said, a little too silent and quiet, though quite happy. Gwendoline must not think for a moment that the child was depressed or discontented, or anything of that sort; on the contrary, she was perfectly sweet tempered and gentle, and always acquiesced in any schemes of amusement that might be proposed, and occupied her spare time with books and work, and that sort of thing; but still Aunt Hidegarde must say that she should feel better satisfied if she could see her niece a shade more animated, just a shade more, that would have been quite enough. And so, under these circumstances, she thought a trip to Paris, and up the Rhine, would be beneficial to her, especially with such company as Sir William and his nephew, and Miss Allington, who was a charming girl, so bright and affectionate, and so de-

voted to Jeanie, whom she seemed already to look upon quite in the light of a sister. And Sir William had seemed so anxious for them to go, and really it was so seldom that one had the opportunity of making an excursion of that sort in such pleasant company, that she was sure Mr. Lyneton would not think she had done wrong in taking Jeanie away without writing to ask his formal permission.

Furthermore, Aunt Hildegarde said that as they were only going to be away a fortnight—Jeanie might perhaps go up the Rhine under even more favourable auspices before long—they had given directions that their letters were not to be sent forward. They were going to Cologne next day, and thence to other places of interest in the neighbourhood; they hoped, also, to visit Rheims,

and some of the more famous Continental cathedrals, before their return; for Sir William was such an intelligent guide, and knew all about the symbolism of church architecture, and could explain everything so beautifully, that it seemed a pity not to take full advantage of his society. And she thought that after their return Jeanie might come home with perfect safety. It was her opinion that Gwendoline's fears were quite groundless now. For Jeanie never mentioned Mr. Deeping's name, and if it was accidentally brought up in her hearing, she did not take any particular interest in it, or ask any questions about him. Aunt Hildegarde thought that, so far as that affair was concerned, her niece's visit had been perfectly successful. She only wished that the child would be a little more cordial in her manner to Mr. Allington, who was

so very polite and attentive, so evidently wishful to secure a place in her affections, if she would but give him the opportunity of doing so. That, however, as she had said before, might be only shyness and girlish reserve, which was so very much better than a too eager acceptance of marked attentions, or a manifested preference, given before it had been formally demanded.

So they did go to Cologne, and various places of interest in the neighbourhood, according to Aunt Hildegarde's programme, and then to Rheims, and some of the grand old Norman cathedrals, and home through the Isle of Wight, in one of whose sequestered dells young Martin took the opportunity of laying his heart and fortunes at Jeanie's feet, with what success need not here be chronicled. After which, unforeseen circumstances com-

pelled his return to Barton Firs somewhat sooner than was expected, and the three Allingtons, Baronet, niece, and nephew, parted company from their friends at Southampton, leaving Aunt Hildegarde, not in the best of tempers, to chaperon Jeanie back to London. Where they arrived at the end of May, a whole long fortnight after Miss Lyneton's brief recall had been sent to her niece.

Life had gone on quietly as usual at Lyneton Abbots, during that time. The chief event which varied its even current was a letter from Major Demeron to Mr. Lyneton. He hoped to come over and spend a day or two with them during the shooting season. His leave of absence had been unexpectedly lengthened out until November, in consequence of some alterations that were being made in the barracks where his regiment was

stationed, and he felt that he could not remain so much longer in the country without calling once more to see his old friends at the Manor-house. He did not write very brightly. There was nothing in his letter of that gay nonchalance which he had worn so gracefully when he took his leave of them three months ago. Instead, there was a perceptible tone of sadness, almost discontent, which even Mr. Lyneton perceived. But then, as he said, after he had read the letter, a man can scarcely re-visit his native land, the home of his early memories, after five years' absence, without finding much to sadden and depress him. Many a name which was once dear to him would be graven on marble headstone now; many a fireside place vacant which once a cherished friend had filled. Mr. Lyneton could quite undersand how Ma-

for Demeron, writing from his childhood's home after so many years of parting from it, should feel a shadow almost like the shadow of death resting upon him.

There was no need for Gwendoline to take care of that letter, as she had done of the last that Maurice Demeron sent, more than a year ago; no need to search in it for any sweet under-meaning, hidden from all eyes but her own. This was a letter of friendship, nothing more. And he was to come to them again in October, on his way to London, where Rose Beresford and her mother would be staying then. October, the month when he was expected to land in England. How, through all the dreary winter days she had looked forward to that month. How joyfully she had watched the little buds come out upon the elm-trees, knowing that before the

autumn sunlight tipped them with gold, Maurice would be home. Well, they *had* unfolded all their green beauty now, and the autumn sunlight would gild them by-and-by, and Maurice Demeron would come when they began to fall. Only the coming would be different.

There need be no constraint between them this time, no half unacknowledged doubt, no weary waiting for the words that had been left unsaid so long. No need for maidenly reserve, lest any chance allusion should bring back the memories of the old days, and call up within his heart associations of which it was not her place to remind him. She had been very silent before. Almost as friends shrink from speaking the name of the newly dead to one who mourns his loss, she had shrunk from the lightest word which

might win his thoughts to a past so sacred. Now, there was no need for fear. No reserve of hers need vex him any more. The old bright friendliness might be bidden back again, if it would come; the free unrestrained intercourse of those first few days, when as yet they had never looked into each other's eyes with that strange conscious glance in which soul touches soul, or clasped each other's hands for more than courteous meeting and farewell.

Instead of dying, as everyone expected he would, Hugh Deeping "took a turn," as Mrs. Mallinson expressed it, and began to recover. Then the worthy doctor talked about tonics, and plenty of support, and keeping up the tone, and bracing the system; with other professional phrases which have such a pleasant sound in them, telling as they do of danger

overpast, and hand to hand strife with death changed for the sweet cherishing of life. After that he recommended his patient to be taken into the country for change of air, and Mrs. Mallinson briskly seconded the motion. It was a long time since she had given so hearty a sniff of approbation to any proposal that did not originate with herself. For really, as she said, she was quite tired of having an affliction in the house, and extra fires, and perpetual cooking of bits and sups without any regard to regular meal times; and Mrs. Deeping, too, moving about the place just like a ghost, with such a set, desperate look upon her face, just such as she might have had if someone had been doing her a deadly injury. Though why she should feel herself called upon to look in that way, Mrs. Mallinson could not imagine,

for she was sure she and her husband had done all that professing persons could be expected to do, in the way of being resigned to the affliction, and the first time Mr. Deeping thought he could fancy a cup of tea, Mr. Mallinson had let his mother have a quarter of a pound of the very best quality in the shop at trade price, and the same with the biscuits when he thought he could eat a few, so that there was no reason for a look of that kind on their account. And for her part she thought Mrs. Deeping ought to feel herself drawn out in humble thankfulness for the unexpected change in her son's condition, being brought up, as she might say, from the very jaws of death, instead of flying in the face of Providence with a look like that, so ungrateful for benefits received. But some people *were* ungrateful.

That was just what some people were; even people from whom, on account of their connection with the church, and their deceased husbands having been ministers, and all that sort of thing, you might have expected better behaviour.

Then Mrs. Mallinson said her prayers and thanked Providence that she was not as other women were.

So that it was a wonderful relief to her when the doctor gave it as his opinion that Mr. Deeping might be moved. And she had herself taken the trouble to go all the way to the village of Lyneton Abbots, that being the nearest country place, and well situated for healthfulness, and had hunted up a pleasant cottage, where Mrs. Deeping could have two rooms on the ground-floor, and a chamber for herself upstairs. Delightful rooms,

looking out upon the village green on one side, and on the back, into a garden with the Abbot's brook running at the bottom; really such a suitable place that one might almost wish to be an invalid oneself, to be taken there.

His mother had said something about keeping him at Canton House until he was well enough to be taken home to Jersey, but Mrs. Mallinson knew better than that. Jersey! why, he would have to stop a month longer before he could take a journey like that, and she had had more than enough of it already. She wanted to get the house cleaned down, and swept out, and fumigated, and the ceilings washed, and the best rooms re-papered, and a coat of paint put on, and things got a little into trim, against Sarah Matilda's wedding, which was to take place early in

autumn. And when the thick of the cleaning was done, she must give her mind to the dressmaking, and the details of the ceremony, for she meant it to be such a wedding as did not take place every day in Grosmont Road chapel. No; she was going to have no dawdling about until such time as the young man could manage a journey right away to the far end of the kingdom. They must both of them move out of the house as soon as ever the doctor said he was fit to be put into a cab and walked very gently down to the lodgings which she had taken for him at Lyneton Abbots.

Which desirable state of convalescence was reached towards the end of May, when the old Manor-house was looking its loveliest, when the chestnut-trees in the Rectory garden were just one sheet of snowy blossom, and

the village green was strewed with the pale flowers of the sycamore, rare and dainty enough for a bride's little foot to turn aside.

But poor Hugh did not care much for their beauty, as, propped up with pillows, and guarded like a baby from even the sweet May breeze with rugs, and blankets, and comforters, his mother brought him to the little cottage at the corner of the green; the corner farthest away from the churchyard and the old house at Lyneton Abbots. Indeed, one could only know that there was a house there at all by the shadow which its gables cast across the road at some times of the day. The church and the row of yew-trees hid all the rest. Mrs. Deeping was glad of that. She did not want him to be vexed with any memories which the sight of the old Manor-house might bring back. She wanted him to

forget that he had ever had a welcome to its fireside, or that the pride of the people there had so greatly marred his life, or that the love of one of them had cast a passing brightness upon it. As if there could ever be any forgetting of that!

Truly, it was a pleasant resting-place in early summer-time, that little cottage, whose parlour window opened through lattice-work of vine leaves into a garden crowded with old-fashioned English flowers, roses, pinks, marigolds, lavender bushes, and great beds of sweet-William and yellow wall-flower, which scented all the air as soon as twilight began to fall. Not far off a shallow brook told its little story to the flag-leaves and forget-me-nots which grew upon its banks; told it with many a flash and sparkle as it hurried over the shining gravel, and then

away past meadow and hedge-side to the great Oresbridge river, where its silver speech was silenced, and its merry sparkle quenched, and where, instead of singing to the forget-me-nots and flag-leaves, it must needs help to bear many a tall-masted vessel and laden bark, and have many a stain upon its whiteness before it found rest at last in the wide ocean.

After a while it told its little story to Hugh Deeping, too, when he got strong enough to lie upon the sofa by the open window and listen, half sleeping, half waking, to the pleasant murmuring sound. And his mother would sit by him, pleased to see how the worn lines of pain were gradually smoothing out from his face; and her own grew calm again as she thought of coming days, when he, hale and strong once more,

should watch her as tenderly, though not so anxiously, as now she watched him.

But through all those bright summer days of returning life and health, they neither of them spoke of Miss Lyneton, nor of Jeanie; nor did Mrs. Deeping ever ask more of him than he had unwittingly told her in that long, dreary illness. Perhaps when he got quite well again he would tell her all. She could wait.

CHAPTER XII.

HUGH and his mother had been three weeks at the cottage, long enough for a faint tint of health to have come back to those pale cheeks, and a little of the former cheerfulness to the voice which used to be so very weak and feeble. Mrs. Deeping even began to make arrangements for the time, not very distant now, she hoped, when he would be able to take the whole journey home to Jersey. And when he once got to Jersey, she was quite sure the pleasant sea-breeze, and his sister's company, and all the tender care which they would both be able

to give him, would soon build him up again, make a man of him, make him just as bright, and buoyant, and cheerful as he used to be, years ago, in those old college days.

But Hugh would never again be just what he used to be in those old college days. The man who has been mistrusted and misunderstood, the man who has erred deeply, and repented bitterly, never comes back—sad indeed for him if he could—to the unthinking brightness of the time when he knew not any of these things. His sorrow, his error, and his repentance, shall lead him through the gate of God's sweet forgiveness, into a better country, even a heavenly, where the untried, and therefore so dauntless daring of earlier years is changed into the steadfast, abiding confidence of the man, who, strong in his humility, and bold only in a higher

courage than his own, learns to bear patiently the toils and difficulties of the way. He is content to leave behind him life's young joyfulness, for the faith which is made perfect through suffering; and its boastful pride for the more excellent charity, which vaunteth not itself, and is not puffed up.

These three months past had done for Hugh Deeping the work of years. He had lived a long lifetime in the tumult and suffering which they had wrought. There had been the earthquake, the whirlwind, and the fire; now he listened, reverently and in silence, to the still, small voice, a voice so still that they who would hear it must listen in the calm of a forgiven heart, a heart at leisure from itself; at leisure, too, from passion, and selfishness, and pride. Which his had not been until now.

He was not to go back to Oresbridge any more. Even if Mr. Feverige had not supplied his place with a fresh "hand," the doctor said that he would no longer be able to bear the strain of continual employment at the Bellona works, in the stifling atmosphere of that little counting-house, amidst the din of the hammer, the roar of the furnaces, and the clamour of two hundred workmen. He must seek some lighter employment, the doctor said, something which, if not so remunerative, would tax his brain less heavily. It was a pity he should be obliged to turn away from such a fine opening, for, as everybody knew, there was nothing like iron for establishing a young man in the world. Oresbridge could count its metal princes now by hundreds, men of weight, and mark, and respectability in the place, who had begun the world with nothing

but steadiness—the doctor emphasised that word very strongly—with *steadiness* and so much a week in an iron-work. If a young man was only steady, he might do almost anything in a place like Oresbridge. But health was the first consideration, and if Hugh valued his health, he must go back no more to the Bellona iron-works.

So the worthy doctor said, at the close of one of those professional visits which he was still obliged to pay very frequently to the little cottage at Lyneton Abbots. And Hugh listened quietly, not so much disappointed as his medical attendant thought he would have been, by this overclouding of his worldly prospects. He had talked these things over with his mother as soon as he was able to think clearly about anything, and had laid out fresh plans for the future. His first dream was to

come true after all. He was to tread in his father's steps, and do the work his father had done, and perhaps by-and-by win for himself the place which his father had so earnestly coveted for him. For the old uncle's legacy, coming just when it did, would enable him to return to college, and afterwards to study in Germany for two years, before coming home to enter upon his work. Hugh felt that he had something to say to his fellow-men now, which he could never have told them before. Not for fame nor position nor power any longer, would he seek the holy office of a teacher; but that, having become wise through his own sufferings, others might learn from him that wisdom; that, warning them from the rocks on which his own little bark had been so nearly wrecked, he might lead them into that haven of trust where he had found rest at

last. It was a noble life to ennoble the lives of others. It was a bright hope to be able to rouse them to think, and strive, and endure.

Only there was no longer now that other hope which had once made even this seem so much brighter. He would have to do his work alone, and take any joy or suffer any weariness it might bring, by himself. There would be no bidding back again now of the light which had once brightened his life. He had given what he could never give again with just so much freshness and entireness. His was a nature that must ever have something to love, something on which to spend its warm overflow of affection. He could never live alone, as some men do, enough for himself, proudly independent of sympathy and companionship. But also, he could never

live now so perfect a life, so full rounded in its happiness, as he could if Jeanie had been true to him. All other love which he might give would be only a shadow of this, his first and best.

For in June mornings, when the sun shone very bright, and he could bear to feel the warm wind playing round him, Hugh would creep out into the little front garden of the cottage, supporting himself upon the wicket-gate which opened out into the village green. And there he could see the shadow of the old house at Lyneton Abbots—the shadow of its tall pointed gables lying over the road, and he could hear the noisy chirp of the sparrows which fluttered in the gables, and the cawing of the rooks in the tall elm-trees which sheltered them. And at evening-time, when the sun had made a golden

glory in the west, he knew that the tower of St. Hilda's church was darkening the room where, long ago, Jeanie used to sit, thinking of him.

But where was Jeanie now, and did she any longer think of him? And did she know that he had been so near death? And did she know, or did she care to know, how life had changed for him, and how the work which once he sought so eagerly, because doing it, he might win a better place for her, had been given to him again, now that she wished no more to share it with him?

These thoughts stole into Hugh Deeping's heart and made it sad as he stood in the sunny June mornings by that little wicket gate, looking away past the churchyard yew-trees which held out their gnarled branches,

hale and strong now, as they had been when the old Lyneton knights fought for Prince Charlie, or when the Lady Gwendoline de Lyneton, Queen Catharine's favourite maiden, had passed beneath them to her bridal in St. Hilda's church; hiding beneath coif and veil a face as fair, though not so grave, as the lady's who bore her name to-day.

Mrs. Deeping had never told her son of that visit of Gwendoline Lyneton's to the house in Grosmont Road, nor how bitterly she, the meek widow mother, stung to anger by all the wrong that had been done him, had spoken to the stately mistress of Lyneton Abbots. That name was kept very silent between them. Hugh's mother did not know why in the warm noontime he would stand there, leaning on the wicket gate. She thought

it was only because the sunshine fell more warmly and balmily there, that he loved to stand and feel it. She never passed the old house herself without a sad, resentful pain, a feeling of impotent bitterness against the people who had put so deep a stain into her son's life. And when on Sunday at the little village chapel the minister prayed—"Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us," she bowed her head and felt that it would indeed go hardly with her if such measure as she meted to others, and only that, were measured to her again.

But her boy Hugh had once been so bright and happy, the very sunshine of her home; and now he was so changed. She almost thought sometimes that he would never win back the old cheerfulness, that she should

never hear his merry laugh ring out again as it used to ring out when he was a lad at home. And all for pride of theirs. All because their name was so very noble that no touch of his must come near it.

That was the reason why Mrs. Deeping would fain leave the pretty village and go back to Jersey again. That was why she waited so anxiously for Hugh's returning strength, and watched with such eager eyes for the slowly-reviving light in his, and listened with such quick ear to note how his step grew firmer as he paced about in the little garden. She wanted him home, quite away from everything that might remind him of the friendship which had cost him so dear. She thought he would forget then, and be himself again.

But Hugh never would forget; and the

name so carefully unspoken between them, was only living on in his thoughts the more vividly for that very silence:

And so the June days passed slowly by, each one waking some new flower, touching into deeper green the long tresses of the birch-trees, giving a wilder wealth of perfume to the roses which clambered over the cottage door, and kissing into fairer bloom the white lilies that rocked so sleepily to and fro beneath the fountain urn in the old garden at Lyneton Abbots. And still Hugh kept getting stronger. He might soon go home. Only another week now, the doctor said, and he would be able to bear the journey; only a week and then many a mile, yes, even the deep ocean itself, should lie between him and this, the place where he had been so cruelly wronged.

He had lain down for his afternoon rest in the cottage parlour, and Mrs. Deeping, fearful of disturbing him, took her sewing-work into the trellised porch, where, as she busied herself with it and with loving thoughts for him, she might look up from time to time and watch the merry sunshine flickering through the vine-leaves overhead, or see it lying on the churchyard graves—those graves which, thank God! held no child of hers beneath their daisied mounds. Hugh would not need a resting-place there now.

And yet it was a sweet spot to rest in. It reminded her of the quiet grave-yard, far away among the Westmoreland lakes, where her husband lay buried, the flowers scarce grown around him yet. Just so warmly the sunshine would be falling there now. Just so silently as it crept over the trunks of

these old yew-trees, would it be creeping over the broken column which had been put upon his grave. It was nearly a year now since he died, for the July flowers were at their brightest on his funeral day. Nearly a year of sadness and widowhood, pitifully different to the bright years which had gone before it, when she had felt so sheltered by her husband's love, so proud of the respect that people gave to him; when she used to look forward so confidently to coming years, hoping to see their boy tread in his father's steps, and do his father's work when they were both of them old and feeble. Perhaps he might labour amongst his father's own people, never leave them at all, except for his college years; and she and her husband would listen to him with loving pride, not untouched with thankfulness that he, their

only boy, was living so worthy a life, and repaying so well the years of care which had been spent upon him.

Sad, yet tender thoughts which brought a mist of tears into the widowed mother's eyes, and caused the sewing-work to lie all unheeded in her lap as she sat there in the little vine-covered porch, looking out upon St. Hilda's churchyard, everything around her so hushed and peaceful.

The sound of the churchyard gate, gently opened, roused her from her reverie. Someone was coming across the green towards the cottage. Not Mrs. Stenson, the woman of the house, a bustling good-hearted farmer's wife, who had that morning gone to Oresbridge market with her basket of eggs, and must soon be returning now, to be ready for her good man's dinner. This

was a young girl, whose step, as she neared the wicket-gate, was scarcely heard upon the mossy path. A quiet, thoughtful looking girl, simply dressed, yet with a nobleness in her very simplicity which stamped her plainly enough as belonging to what the village people termed "the quality." Quite different from Sarah Matilda Mallinson, who, resplendent in innumerable flounces, and a pork-pie hat, and almost an entire pheasant on the top of it, had rattled up the path a few days before with her "ma's" compliments, and they hoped Mr. Deeping was going on well. Very different, also, from Miss Stenson, the farmer's daughter, a rosy-faced lass, with more than Dutch substantiality of foot and ankle, who used always to be singing barrel organ tunes when about her work, to the great detriment of Hugh's afternoon slumbers.

This young girl came up the walk with a step as gentle as Mrs. Deeping's own, when tending the lightest of those slumbers; so gentle that she did not even, with instinctive vigilance, turn towards the open door of the room where her son lay, to listen for the movement which might tell it had disturbed him.

"Is this the cottage where Mr. Deeping is staying!"

Her voice was low and soft, and there was just the slightest touch of fear in it.

"Yes; my son has been here for some weeks."

The girl's face flushed a little, a very little, as she lifted her calm eyes to Mrs. Deeping's face.

"I am Jeanie Lyneton."

That was all. No further question or ex-

planation, only that straightforward look, that look of unchanging truthfulness, which seemed to tell that whatever might once have been in her heart of love and trust, was there still. Meeting that look, almost awed before its grand purity, Mrs. Deeping felt that no words of hers, words of bitterness or reproach, were needed. Gazing into that young face, so grave and pale now, so patient beyond its years with the patience that long trial teaches; reading with a woman's quick instinct the unspoken story there of other suffering than Hugh's, of other steadfastness and endurance than his, the tears overflowed her eyes. Whatever had to be forgiven was not to be forgiven to this young girl.

She put her work aside, and without another word led Jeanie into the little parlour,

where Hugh lay asleep. Then closing the door after her, she left them there. She knew he would not wake too soon now.

CHAPTER XIII.

JEANIE never knew how long she waited there, for her heart was full of that quiet content which does not take much count of time.

The hours had seemed to weary on slowly enough a week or two ago, when she had been sailing up the castled Rhine, listening to Martin Allington's complimentary speeches, or Sir William's elaborate descriptions of the scenery. Sir William was quite like a walking guide-book for Germany and the Rhine. He had been there so often, that he knew every tumble-down castle that reared its grey

turrets on the rocky banks, and could fit to each its own particular legend of doughty knight and captive maiden, as the case might be. Fine legends, too, and poetical enough, if only he had not told them with such very mechanical accuracy, never changing his voice when the sad part of the story came, or firing up into anything like animation when the captive maiden was released and carried off in triumph by her faithful knight. Yet not so beautiful or graceful as others which Jeanie had listened to in the oriel-room of the old house at Lyneton Abbots; quaint, sweet English legends, which told of honour as unstained and courage as lofty as any whose memory those ancient Rhine castles held.

And Sir William knew all about the black old Norman cathedrals, too; could tell the

date of every doorway and canopied niche, could explain all the imagery and symbolism which was hidden away amongst those grim gargoyles and writhing, contorted faces that peered down from beneath crocketed spire or richly-foliated capital. And he could repeat, also, with grave, mechanical accuracy, the stories of the saints and martyrs, whose sweet calm faces the sunlight shone upon in many a stained window. Though Jeanie wished sometimes he would let those faces tell their own story, and not spoil with tedious historical detail the holy stillness which seemed to brood upon her when she looked up at them, standing there with folded hands and crowned brows, and un-girded robes full flowing to their feet, because now all their work was done. Would her mother's face wear a smile like theirs,

when she first looked upon it among the shining angels? And would her own win so grand a peace when all the waiting and suffering of life were passed? For Jeanie knew a little of life's suffering now, though she hid it so quietly away.

So the hours wearied on even there, amongst the old Norman cathedrals, spite of all Martin Allington's complimentary speeches, and Sir William's elaborate descriptions of ecclesiastical symbolism. And they had wearied on too, slowly enough, amidst the light and glare and perfume of London drawing-rooms, where she had been forced to sit through many a long evening, listening to the chit-chat of fashionable society, or to walk through stately quadrilles with fine London gentlemen, and belles of ten seasons old, whose smiles were as artificial as the flowers in

their hair. But the hours did not weary on here in this little cottage parlour, whose one small latticed window looked out into an old-fashioned garden, where robins were chirping in the lilac-bushes, and the drowsy bees were humming over beds of purple columbine and red sweet-Williams. This little cottage parlour, where Hugh Deeping lay asleep, not knowing she was so near him. Hugh Deeping, who had never written to her, or taken any notice of her since she went away; of whom she had never heard through all that long time, except that he was getting very wild. Aunt Hildegarde had told her that, with a great deal of other Oresbridge gossip, not long after she went to London.

He did not look as if he had ever been very wild, lying there now quiet as a little child, with almost a child's smile upon his

face; thin too, and with such dark shadows under his eyes. Aunt Lyneton had told her all about how ill he had been, how very near death; and how his mother had been sent for all the way from Jersey to nurse him; and how, as soon as he was strong enough to bear the journey, he was to be taken home, where he might have to stay many months before he was able to do anything again. But when she spoke about him, there had not been that cold, proud look in her face that Jeanie remembered there four months ago, when they met him in the Lyneton Abbots road, just before she went away to London.

Jeanie knew why she had gone away at all; because her father and Aunt Lyneton were afraid that she and Hugh Deeping were growing to care for each other, and he was not good enough for her. As if Hugh's know-

ledge and culture, and those years of college life in which he had learned so much, did not make him good enough for anyone in the land. As if to know all about those old Greek and Latin poets, and to have a mind stored with the grand thoughts of men whose names England is so proud of; and to be working too, honestly and steadily, to make himself a useful standing-place in the world, was not more honourable than living on expectations, like young Mr. Allington, and sauntering idly through a college course, and then lounging into the Church, not because he cared anything about the saving of souls, but because his uncle had a good living ready for him, and a nice roomy rectory in the midst of a fine hunting country.

Yes, she knew why she had been sent away, but not why her aunt had called her

home again; nor why, when she had come home, instead of banishing Hugh's name from their conversation, or mentioning it only with haughty constraint, her aunt had spoken of him tenderly, forgivingly, and had even bidden her go to the cottage and say good-bye to him before he went away to Jersey.

Only bidden her say good-bye to him. But as Miss Lyneton bade her do that, there was a strange new softness in her voice, a look in those great quiet grey eyes of hers, which told more plainly than any words could have spoken, that she knew all, that she had forgiven all; that any barrier which might have parted between them was broken down now, and that their hands might clasp again, not with new trust, for Jeanie had never doubted him, but in a clasp which neither rank nor pride should have power to put asunder any more.

This Jeanie knew, but not how it had all been wrought; not what bitter strife had been overpast, what bitter sorrow met and conquered, before Gwendoline Lyneton learned that that there are other things in life more noble than ancient name and high descent; that these do not always bring the faithful heart and the unstained honour, which lowly birth can hold as well.

A little robin that had been carolling on a vine branch outside the window, treated his companions to a roulade of unusual brilliance just then, and woke Hugh Deeping from his sleep. Jeanie was standing by him, just as he had seen her, years and years ago, it seemed to him, standing in the March twilight, by the doorway of the old house at Lyneton Abbots; just as he had seen her many and many a time since then

in dreams. Was this a dream, too? Would she turn away those quiet, trustful eyes, and glide from him, leaving only a track of brightness where she had stood? Would that world of sleeping fancies fade out, for the poor dim life of patient waiting which lay before him now?

No, this was no dream. For by-and-by he felt the touch of Jeanie's hand upon his own.

“Aunt Lyneton said I was to come.”

The little robin had it all his own way after that, for the rest was told in a happy silence sweeter far than words.

CHAPTER XIV.

HUGH made haste to get well after that beautiful waking, and by the middle of July he was able to go back to Jersey, there to gather up as much strength as would carry him through the remaining years of his college course.

But he had one quiet evening at Lyneton Abbots before he went away; a quiet evening with Jeanie's father in the library, that old oak-wainscoted library, where in months past he had spent so many busy Saturday afternoons. Busy and profitable, too, for it was chiefly owing to his diligent care that the estate was so much better managed now, and that

it seemed likely before long to be self-supporting, and even remunerative. But there were no estimates and balance-sheets brought out this time, and the only plans talked over were those of Hugh's future life, a life which had indeed got back much more than all its former promise now, a life which he hoped ere long to make so noble and worthy, that even Gwendoline Lyneton's niece need not stoop down very far to share it with him.

Afterwards, there was a ramble with Jeanie in the old-fashioned garden, up and down beneath the shelter of that mouldering wall over whose lichen-stained copings the vine had spread such rich garniture of leaf and tendril. And there Hugh told her of all his life during those five months past, not hiding from her any of its folly or reck-

lessness; telling her, too, of the wisdom which suffering had brought, and of the patience which came to him when hope had gone. But there was no look of chiding in Jeanie's face as she listened.

So they bade each other farewell under the old stone gateway, and parted, he for his years of hard study in that German University, where, amongst grave philosophers and professors he was to lay the foundation of learning and experience on which afterwards such a fair structure should be raised; she to her life of quiet trust and waiting at home, a life through which the thought of Hugh and the love of him should flow like a hidden brook through woods, itself unseen yet ever singing its own sweet music, and refreshing with its cool waters the sometimes thirsty flowers which bent over it.

Perhaps Gwendoline, seeing them from the oriel window, where she sat reading to her brother, might be reminded of another parting on another July night, when the stars glimmered out as now through the grey gloom of coming night, and the red light of the Oresbridge furnaces glowed on the eastern sky, telling its fiery story of toil and labour, and she and Maurice Demeron had stood by the stone gateway, saying a good-bye to each other which would last for five long years. Those years were over now. Maurice had come home again, and yet they were farther from each other, how much farther, than when first the wide sea lay between them. She had kept her word faithfully enough. Who ever trusted a Lyneton of Lyneton Abbots, and found that trust betrayed? If he had been as true!

But Gwendoline never spoke of these things. The heavy price that her love and pride exacted was paid in silence. It was no weakness of the Lyneton people to talk of their troubles, to ask much help or pity from those who would perhaps willingly have given both. And no one could tell, from word or look of theirs, that they needed either. Like the gently-sloping fields and valleys around their own ancestral acres, whose vesture now of waving meadow-grass, and many-coloured flowers, told no story of the mining work beneath, of all the human life and labour spent there in gloom to which no dawn of daylight ever came; so the pride of the old Lyneton race covered with its moveless, stately calm an under-life of great care and pain, a life which had sore need of patience sometimes, and into which there came but little light.

Yet there was no bitterness in Gwendoline's thoughts. Her kindness did not change to hate and scorn when it had been so poorly paid. What the Lynetons gave they gave right royally, never asking it again. She would return to Maurice Demeron calmly enough the gift he had repented of bestowing, but she would not take back her own. She would never think other than kindly of the man who had once been worthy of so much. She would have robbed herself even yet, to do him service. She would have laid down her own life to save his, for that was not the hardest thing he could ask from her. She might trust, and sadly have to take that trust back again, nothing being left for it to stay upon; but she would not love and take that back too. Once given, that was given always.

After Hugh's departure the summer wore

itself slowly away. The village people lived their quiet life as heretofore. On Saturday afternoons, when the Oresbridge manufactories and iron-works were shut up, little knots of pale-faced, stooping men might be seen wending their way along the Lyneton Abbots road, looking sometimes with a very longing, wistful look towards the cottage gardens, where the roses bloomed so cheerily, and the laden apple-trees stooped their golden clusters almost to the ground, and little children, with round, rosy faces, and bright eyes, tumbled about amongst the long grass, and made dandelion chains for their baby brothers and sisters. Some of these pale-faced men had little children too, but not with bright eyes and rosy cheeks, and instead of tumbling about amongst the long grass, and making dandelion chains, they toiled from morning to night

in crowded manufactories, or laboured patiently in deep mines, where the gloom of a perpetual twilight stunted their little limbs, and sucked the rosy blood from their faces, and dimmed the light in their eyes, and made them old and haggard long before their time. What had those little ashy-faced children done that the curse of life should fall upon them so early and so heavily, whilst these, with glad, upspringing joy, drew such freshness out of the long summer days?

It might be that thought which bent the brows of the Oresbridge workmen, and shone angrily through their eyes as they sauntered along in the sunshine under the Lyneton Abbots trees, looking so longingly into the cottage gardens when the roses bloomed, and the laden apple-trees dropped their yellow fruit into the tall, rank grass. For indeed

it was a weary life that the little children lived in that great overcrowded town of Oresbridge, and short holiday could they snatch when the long day's toil was over, and scant measure was meted out to them of any gladness or mirth which should have belonged to the blessed season of youth.

And then a touch of decay began to pale the deep green of the woods, and the maple leaves blushed crimson here and there, and the berries of the mountain ash shone scarlet, like great bunches of coral, amongst the thinning leaves. And the trailing bramble branches were studded over with purple-black fruit, which tempted the children forth in many a laughing band, with tins and baskets to be filled from the copses round about Lyneton Abbots; for bramble season

was ever such a joyous time amongst the village lads and lasses. Then, while the trees still kept reddening, and the chestnuts dropped full ripe among the withered last year's leaves, the sharp report of a gun echoing now and then through the woods, startling the cushat doves from their shady covers, told that October had come; that pleasantest month of all the year, as sportsmen call it, who love to see the red leaves fall, and the days shorten, and the delicate frost-breath whiten the grass at early morning time, for then their turn has come, and whirring partridge and timid hare must look out for danger near at hand.

October, the month when Maurice Demeron was to run down for a day's shooting with Mr. Lyneton. It was such a splendid shooting country all round about

the Lyneton Abbots woods, and over the moorland hills beyond; and Maurice was reckoning much of that day's pleasure, for he was a keen sportsman, and he longed to be once more off and away with gun and dogs and game-pouch amongst the purple heather, where, six years ago, he had spent some glorious days, before those other days of wilder Indian sport and adventure. So he wrote to say that he should come over from Oresbridge, on his way south, next week; come over just for one day, and then he was going up to London, to receive further instructions relative to his return in November, and also to see after a few of those innumerable commissions with which his friends in India had entrusted him. And then he desired his very kind remembrances to Miss Lyneton—it was al-

ways "Miss Lyneton" now,—and little Miss Jeanie, whom he could not yet think of, he said, except as a pretty child in short frocks and pinafores, greatly attached to sugar-plums, and insatiable in her appetite for fairy tales and ghost stories.

Next week; not very long to look forward to. This was just about the time that they had expected him back again from India, if he had returned according to the first arrangement. Gwendoline remembered last autumn, when the leaves began to turn, how she had watched them fall from the tall elm-tree at the corner of the house, thinking with such a glad, bright thrill of hope, that before those great black branches were stripped again, Maurice Demeron would have come home, and her long years of waiting and suspense would be ended. They were ended now; ra-

ther sadly for her, but if well for him, she could still be content.

She need not trouble herself very much about that passing visit of his, next week, though it was most likely the last they should have from him before he went away. There need be no painful consciousness now, no proud, half shy reserve between them; no mute reminder by word or gesture of that unspoken bond which had been given so long ago. He was coming as a friend of her father's, and as such she might receive him with only the grave, quiet courtesy which the Lynetons had used for so many generations past towards all who sought their hospitality, and which they would use still, so long as the old home could shelter a guest within its ivy-covered walls.

She must offer him her congratulations,

too, this time, for was not the wedding to take place towards the end of next month, and had not Rose Beresford written Jeanie a very long letter only a few days ago, telling her all about the arrangements for the ceremony, and how the bridesmaids were to be dressed, and what she was going to wear herself, and what beautiful presents she was bringing home with her from Ireland? Really her friends had been so kind, and had showered such lovely things upon her; jewelry almost more than she could count, and all sorts of pretty little knick-knacks to scatter over her drawing-room out there in Bombay. And she had bought such a splendid outfit; such quantities of exquisite lace and muslin dresses; she never thought she should have been worth so many dresses at once, but of course her mamma wished

her to have everything that was proper, for a residence abroad was such a very different thing from the slow dull life they had been leading lately, just staying a few weeks at one place, and a few at another, to suit Mrs. Beresford's health. Though of course she was the very last person in the world who ought to complain; because, if it had not been for her mamma hearing of the baths at Grantford, and wishing to try them for her nervous depression, they should never have come into the neighbourhood of Oresbridge at all, and in that case they should not have attended the county ball, and she should not have seen dear Jeanie again, and renewed the acquaintance which had led to such unexpected results. And then Rose wound up her letter with a brilliant description of the Dublin gaieties, which, she

thought, were quite equal to anything she had ever been privileged to enjoy, even in London, during the height of the season. Such a delightful succession of balls, and concerts, and assemblies, and little quadrille parties in a quiet way, and musical evenings where the songs used to be given in character, almost like the Opera. It was altogether a charming life. Rose was quite sure there was no place like Dublin for variety and enjoyment.

Gwendoline heard Jeanie read the letter, thinking meanwhile that if a nature like Rose Beresford's could content Maurice Demeron, his must have changed very much since those long past years, when she knew him so well, and trusted him so entirely. And she wondered if, when all this foam and froth of youthful gaiety had passed

away, there would be found beneath it the clear sweet wine of love, growing ever sweeter and clearer as the years went on.

Miss Lyneton need not have troubled herself with any such thoughts. Rose Beresford would never want that splendid Indian outfit of hers, whose exquisite muslin dresses, of all shades and fashions, were even now filling her heart with such satisfying delight. And whether or not the red wine of love brimmed under the froth of girlish excitement, mattered little to Maurice Demeron, for he would never need to stoop his lips to it any more.

CHAPTER XV.

THE ninth of October came, and with it Maurice Demeron, fully equipped for a day's shooting over the moors of Lyneton Abbots. Could he have stolen in quietly, under cover of night, and looked, unobserved himself, through that little uncurtained window in the ivied recess, he would have seen no shade of scorn this time on Gwendoline Lyneton's face, no angry light gleaming out from under those straight brows, no touch of cold determination stealing away the smile from her lips, and stiffening them into such harsh, unlovely lines. Instead, he would have

seen a strange new look of conquered pride, an almost gentle content, which lay upon her face like light on a summer landscape when the evening sun is low, softening it into such tender beauty, that one can no longer grieve for the glory of noontide past.

But Major Demeron did not steal in unnoticed this time. There was no need to gird himself up for the unexpected meeting, to loiter in the shadow of the old many-gabled house, trying to bring back the memories that had already lost their power to charm. He arrived with all due notice, and was met at the Oresbridge station by the Lyneton Abbots foot-boy, with those same little ponies, Skip and Sam, whose shining silver-mounted harness, together with the elegant equipage to which they belonged, had caused Mrs. Mallinson's heart to beat with such proud

satisfaction as she beheld them drawn up before Canton House on the occasion of Miss Lyneton's last visit.

And Gwendoline received him with the pleasant courtesy due to any guest of her brother's, but more especially to one whom he had known so long and esteemed so highly. A soldier, too, who had served his country well in many years of foreign toil, and would serve it still, not withholding life itself, if that were needful. And to have heard the cheerful flow of talk that evening in the oriel room of the old home at Lyneton Abbots,—how Jeanie brought up one after another the childish memories of six years ago, the games of hide-and-seek amongst the laurel-bushes, the stories, told with such patience, listened to with such eagerness beside the fountain in that sheltered corner of the

garden, the splendid swings Maurice used to give her when old Grey was too busy,—no one would have thought that any sadder life lay beneath this, or that those long ago days over which the young girl's laugh sparkled so merrily, could lead to other less happy memories for any of them.

And if, as the gloom of evening fell, and the flickering firelight cast long shadows upon the pictured walls, Maurice Demeron turned again and yet again towards Gwendoline, where she sat apart by the oriel window, changed, yet still the same, with almost her olden girl-ish sweetness given back again, but worn now beneath a crown of womanly calm and dignity; and if as he looked at her, giving by her very presence an air of peace and purity to the home whose happiness she guarded, he thought of Rose Beresford, winning bright

smiles and admiring glances beneath the chandeliers of Dublin drawing-rooms, and found the new love not so fair as once it seemed, such thoughts came too late to deepen into regrets; he must even abide by the lot which he had chosen for his own. Was he not a very happy man, prosperous, honourable, well-esteemed? And was not his bride-elect a model of elegance and beauty, and was not everyone wishing him joy of the happy future? A future which was to be brightened by Rose's smile, the sweetest, most beautiful smile he had ever seen?

Why, then, was he not content in this, his so great happiness? How was it that at night, long after they had parted with courteous farewell, Maurice Demeron kept pacing that balustraded terrace over which the moonlight was creeping now in many a

silver streak? And why did he linger, sad at heart, under the stone gateway, recalling a past which was indeed quite past, now? And why did he look up so often, and so wistfully, to that dormer-window, through which the light of Gwendoline's lamp glimmered amongst the ivy-leaves? Would he indeed have gone back to the old life, if he could? Did those long ago days seem to him now like precious jewels which careless hands have dropped, shining far down on some deep ocean floor, more precious because they can never be reached again?

Poor Maurice Demeron! pacing that mossy terrace in the October moonlight, mourning over the brightness of a lost love, which, when it was all his own, did not seem so very bright. He almost wished now that he had never come again to Lyneton

Abbots, and seen Gwendoline wearing that gentle, peaceful look which he remembered so well when first they belonged to each other. He would rather have gone away back to India, carrying with him the recollection of her as they last parted after his visit in March, so coldly courteous, so very calm and reserved. For six months he had been trying to persuade himself that he had not put away from him such an exceeding precious treasure when he turned from a love so constrained, to Rose Beresford's, bright, glowing, sparkling. He thought he had quite succeeded. When he wrote to Mr. Lyneton, arranging to come over for a day's shooting, he felt sure he could meet Gwendoline without a single regret; or even the slightest tinge of uncomfortableness, except for the little cloud which rested on his own honour,

and which after all might only be because he was over-sensitive in these matters. But now that he had seen her again, the past had all come back upon him. Too late, he learned what life might have been for him.

Yet was it indeed too late? Was there then no recalling of the old content? Might he not even yet plunge into the deep waters and recover his lost jewel which he had let fall from his careless hand so long, long ago, and which shone now so brightly far down below his reach on the wreck-strewn ocean floor?

That night Gwendoline Lyneton dreamed of a little child, a babe in shining white raiment, which someone laid in her arms, bidding her tend it carefully. She had had that dream once before, a long time ago, the night that Jeanie's mother died.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE next morning promised well for a splendid day. There was a grey mist over the woods, which, when the sun rose, cleared away, curling into many a fantastic cloud as it gradually floated up the hill-side. And there was that little touch of frostiness in the air which comes with early October days, just enough for glow and freshness, yet not bringing too keen a reminder of winter's biting cold. There had never been a more glorious day for a shooting-party, Mr. Lyneton said, since he and Maurice

Demeron, and Mr. Lucombe had set off, six years ago, for their last raid amongst the hares and partridges, the autumn before young Demeron went out to India.

Mr. Lucombe was to join them again this time, returning to dinner at the Manor-house in the evening, an arrangement which caused the doctor's lady great inward exultation. For the Lyneton Abbots people were generally so very exclusive, never inviting even the most select of the village people, except the clergyman and his sister, to meet any of their aristocratic friends. They only just asked them once a year, or perhaps not so often, to a formal dinner amongst themselves, which, though pleasant enough in its way—for both Mr. Lyneton and his sister, notwithstanding their reserved manners, were exceedingly courteous, and did everything in a most

finished style—was not nearly so satisfactory as meeting the county families, or people of that sort. It seemed almost like a tacit acknowledgment that they were not considered equal to the Lynetons' own set, insomuch that had it not been for injuring her husband's professional interests, Mrs. Lucombe could have found it in her heart quite to decline the hospitalities of the Manor-house. But since Major Demeron, by virtue of his birth and position, and the intimate relation in which she was quite sure he would one day stand to the family, might be considered as belonging to the Lynetons' own set, the doctor's lady felt proud of the honour put upon her husband, and did not fail to inform her friends, especially Mrs. Jacques, who had not even a calling acquaintance at the Manor-house, that Mr. Lucombe was engaged to dine with the

Major, after accompanying him in a sporting excursion over the moors.

Only she hoped dear James would be careful not to go too near Major Demeron when his gun was loaded. That was the only thing that gave her any anxiety. The Major used to be so exceedingly rash with his gun when a young man, tossing it about, as James himself remarked, just as if it had been a walking-stick, or something of that sort, with no regard whatever to the barrels being loaded. And most likely, after being so many years in India, where, on account of the wild beasts, people were called upon to be more daring and adventurous, he would go to even greater lengths than ever with his carelessness. She did hope, then, dear James would be careful, and not expose himself to needless danger, or she should be in agony the whole time they

were away, she should indeed. Guns were such frightful things. She knew it was very foolish of her, but she felt ready to faint whenever James brought his into her sight, and she did not believe, if it had been to save her life, she dare have taken hold of it, or carried it away for him. She always expected it would burst, or something dreadful would happen. Because one heard of such shocking things sometimes. One scarcely ever took up a paper during the shooting season without reading of some terrible accident, just through carelessness.

And she hoped, too, that James would take particular notice, when the family were all assembled, how Major Demeron conducted himself towards Miss Lyneton. She, Mrs. Lucombe, felt fully persuaded in her own mind that there was an understanding in that quar-

ter. There had been one, she believed, even before the Major went out five years ago; though she would not take upon herself to say that it had ever amounted to a formal engagement, he being so very young then, and his prospects not sufficiently established to warrant anything definite. She remembered, as well as if it were but yesterday, how he used to fix his eyes upon her in church, when the clergyman was reading the lessons, and how he used to be continually seen with her in the garden, or sauntering about through the Lyneton woods; which he had no right to do, unless he had serious intentions, and she could not believe it of anyone, still less an English officer, that he would ever draw back from a thing of that kind. And that he had not drawn back from it was abundantly evident from his continuing to visit at the Manor-house as he did; be-

cause, of course, it was the very last house he would think of going to, if a change had taken place in his views.

Mrs. Lucombe told her husband, too, whilst she was looking out his shooting-coat and game-bag, and getting his evening suit ready for him to put on when he came from the moors after their day's sport, that she was so fully convinced in her own mind that there really would be a wedding at Lyneton Abbots before long, that she had ventured a pair of gloves on it against Mrs. Jacques, and she should feel so triumphant if she got them. Mrs. Jacques said it was Miss Beresford that the Major was thinking of. Miss Beresford was just one of those elegant, fascinating girls that men cannot stand against; but she would not admit anything of the sort until she saw them with her own eyes, standing up before

the altar, which she was quite sure she never should do; and Mrs. Jacques ought to be ashamed of herself, happy and prosperous wife as she was, to have no better opinion than that of any man, especially a soldier and a gentleman like Major Demeron. And so dear James was to be sure and take particular notice whenever he had the opportunity, and bring her word again how the case really stood.

Which James promised faithfully he would do; and being a man of some discernment in such matters, his judgment might be depended on. For his own part, he thought his wife might safely reckon upon the gloves, and he told her so, as he packed up his gun, and stowed away his powder-flask, and donned his shooting costume, in readiness for the day's sport. For he, too, remembered the young

officer's visits five years ago, and had his own opinion about the results to which they might lead.

But there was no pleasant after-dinner chat that night at Lyneton Abbots, no gathering round the fire in the oriel-room to talk over the day's enjoyment, no triumphant emptying of game-bags in the flagged courtyard, and counting of spoils, whilst Gwendoline and Jeanie stood by, half sad to see so much dead beauty. Mrs. Lucombe, cautious little woman, was only too correct in her remembrance of the Major's youthful carelessness. That shooting expedition, begun so brightly, was destined to a gloomy ending, an ending to be chronicled in newspaper paragraphs under the head of "Melancholy Accidents," and read with sighs and regrets at many a fireside, instead of being laid up amongst the pleasant memo-

ries of those who had taken part in it. At noon they brought Maurice Demeron home, cruelly wounded; wounded beyond hope of healing, as it proved. Wounded by his own deed, for, as Mrs. Lucombe said, he was indeed most rash and careless with his gun, and whilst using it to show his companions how some of the Indian jugglers performed their tricks, a barrel which he had left loaded discharged itself into his side. No more shooting excursions now for him, no more wild freaks and adventures in the jungles of Bombay, no more brave service either, or fighting across the seas. Nothing for him but a few hours more or less of suffering, and then to die.

They brought him back to Lyneton Abbots, and laid him upon a bed in the library, and there all that tender skill could do was done

for him. Rose Beresford was far off, singing away the merry hours amidst her gay Dublin friends. No need to summon her, for long ere she could reach him, he would have gone where no love of hers was needed any more. It was Gwendoline who tended him—Gwendoline who listened to his last faltering words, and smoothed his pillow in those few restless hours which yet remained to him.

Only few. Mr. Lucombe told them from the first that it was a very hopeless case. He was scarcely likely to live the night over. Perhaps an hour or two more would set him at rest for ever from the pain which vexed him now. When the good doctor had done all that could be done, he went home to tell his wife the sad story, promising to come back to Lyneton Abbots soon; though no skill of his could be of any use now, except

perhaps to make those last hours wear away with less of suffering.

Miss Lyneton, whose place in the house seemed to give her that right, watched alone by Maurice Demeron's side. He had come back to her then, to die. There was a sad proud pleasure now in the thought that she had always been true to him—that even when he had forgotten her she had remembered him, never thinking of him but with kindness; such kindness as we give to the dead, whom it seems so cruel to blame. She might give him that kindness always now, nor fear that she gave too much for other's right.

The October sunlight came brightly in through the mullioned window; golden sunlight flickering through the elm-tree boughs, from which now and then a yellow leaf

fell so noiselessly and nestled amongst the autumn flowers beneath. And very warmly that sunlight rested on the stone gateway, whose mouldering griffins kept watch and ward over the old house. Next time Maurice Demeron passed under them, he would see no grim defiant look of theirs. Those quaint old faces would gaze down upon his living face no more.

He opened his eyes from a restless sleep, and turned them upon Gwendoline, who was sitting by him. It was an anxious, troubled look, not so much for pain of body as for that sadder pain of soul which will not be bidden down by any proud endurance. He had wronged her very much, and wronged himself also, in casting away from him the love which was so true. It was too late for any regrets now; too late for anything but

forgiveness. And, though she gave kindness, gave the tender care which suffering always wins from a woman, could she give that too ?

He looked away, past the falling elm-tree leaves, to the old gateway, then back to her again, searching with what dim sight was left, the face which bent over him so gravely, yet with no rebuke in it for any ill that he had done. He must have read in it something more than pity or tenderness only, something which told him that he might come back and once more rest in that firm, abiding steadfastness of hers ; for, stretching out his feeble hand to her he said—

“Has time, then, changed us so much, Greta ?”

There was no need for pride nor silence now, no need to keep back any more the

faithful love which had already borne so much. Gwendoline said, more steadily than she could have said it a few hours ago—

“I never change, Maurice; and I cannot forget.”

He tried to clasp her hand, but the poor weak fingers had no longer any strength in them. He could only lie still like a tired child, erring, forgiven, and at rest.

Mr. Lucombe came back, but only to tell them that the end was very near. Whilst they watched him, his mind began to wander; a sure sign, the doctor said, that he was sinking fast. He muttered something about the regiment and the barracks; parade, duty; then he seemed to fancy himself in one of those great Indian cities which he had spoken of, with its vast temples and gorgeous procession, for they caught some

whispered words about priests and robes, and Brahmins chanting their prayers before the idols.

Then there was a long silence. If a word or two broke it now and then, it was still about that Indian life. His thoughts were wandering there yet, and if he seldom spoke, it was only because his strength was failing so fast. Still they listened, to hear if there should be any message for distant friend, any charge he would give to be fulfilled after his death.

No; all was quiet now, until very gently he whispered—

“We can *trust* each other, Greta.”

They were the last words he spoke. Mr. Lucombe heard them, though they were very low. Greta; it was a strange name, some Indian lady, most likely, who had won his

heart out there in Bombay. No name, certainly, belonging to Lyneton Abbots. There had been some promise, then, poor fellow; and he would never go back to fulfil it. Greta; a foreign sounding name, not unmusical, though. Mr. Lucombe might tell his wife that the bet was a drawn one; the Major had some attachment abroad, and neither Miss Lyneton nor Rose Beresford would ever have won heart of his.

After that the worthy doctor went away again. There was no need for him to stay, he said. The most that anyone could do for the wounded man now, was to watch for an hour or two, until all was over, until that weary tide of life had ebbed back again into the great sea of eternity.

So Gwendoline sat by him, in his sight; so near that his hand could touch hers, and

his dim eyes seek her own, so long as the light of a living soul trembled within them. There was no fear now, nor questioning in that look; rather the quiet confidence of the little child, who, having been forgiven some great wrong, looks up trustfully into the face whose grave rebuke no longer saddens it. And even as that little child, wandering, suffering, comes home at last to the love which never fails, so this poor human heart, frail yet gentle, returned to touch with its latest throb, hers, who was ever faithful, even unto the end.

Towards sundown, when the shadow of St. Hilda's church was creeping up over the old house at Lyneton Abbots, Maurice Demeron died.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE great town of Oresbridge still pours out its tide of wealth over all the country round. From its dye-works, and chemical works, and sulphur-works, and iron-works, from its huge manufactories and warehouses, its foundries, mines and furnaces, the cry of human toil goes up to the heavens; and if labour be indeed worship, there is no place more thronged with devotees than the million-peopled town which schoolboys learn of in their geographies as the "great centre of the iron district of England."

Year by year the splendid houses thicken round it, and fresh warehouses are built, and taller chimneys reach up their black fingers through the murky air, and larger furnaces shoot out livid tongues of flame, lighting up the evening sky with such an angry glow. And in those dingy courts and cellars, a more loathsome mass of dirt and vice is swept together, out of sight; only telling its fearful story sometimes when the noisome fever taint creeps out from it to the splendid villa residences on the outskirts of the town, or some deed of foul wrong, hatched amidst its festering corruption, startles British respectability into an unwonted outburst of righteous indignation.

Some of those pale-faced, hollow-eyed workmen who used to saunter down the Lyneton Abbots road, looking so longingly into cottage

gardens where the rosy-cheeked children tumbled about amongst the long grass, saunter there still, during the holiday quiet of Sabbath afternoons. Others of them lie quietly under the sod, their tale of work done at last; having won, it may be, to the eternal Sabbath, from which no weary march of duty shall e'er recall. If not, God pity them! For they had but scant rest or joy here. Their places are soon filled up. There is no lack of human machinery in Oresbridge; for those great furnaces must be fed, and those huge clods of iron puddled and hammered and rolled, and those deep dark mines keep crying out for other children to toil in them; little children, whose faces they blanch, and whose eyes they dim, and out of whose young lives they crush all the joy and all the sweetness; for the work must be

done, and the little children are born to do it.

Mrs. Mallinson's visions of social greatness have been realised to the utmost, for her husband does actually now envelope that square-built little person of his in the robes of supreme civic authority. He is, in fact, the mayor of Oresbridge, and a very excellent little mayor too; very clever in rooting out abuses and getting them rectified; vigilant in administering justice to the thieves and drunkards and vagabonds who are brought up before him week after week, to receive the due reward of their evil deeds. A stirring little man, a very stirring little man, not a bit altered in that respect from the time when he inquired so pertinaciously into the evils and grievances of the old body, and hoisted the standard of rebellion, and suc-

ceeded in organizing such a triumphant split amongst the Park Street congregation.

The split is going on very prosperously, and holds up its head now as proudly as any of the denominations in Oresbridge. Mr. Barton has long ago ceased to supply its spiritual needs, and the Grosmont Road pulpit is occupied by a minister who keeps his practical enforcements judiciously in the background, and deals for the most part in doctrinal expositions, which are more according to the views of the congregation. Of course the split could not exist without Mr. Mallinson. That is a fact expressed and understood every time "our respected chief magistrate" is called upon to take the chair, and support it with gold upon the plate, being a public occasion, as Mrs. Mallinson says; or to open the proceedings at its somewhat nu-

merous tea-meetings, and other social opportunities. But still it is beginning to be self-supporting now, and it can pay its own minister and defray its own expenses, and even talks of building itself a larger chapel, of which "our worthy mayor" is to lay the foundation-stone during his year of office.

Mr. Mallinson does not reside at Canton House now. That has passed into other hands, and the ex-provision dealer and his lady occupy one of the most genteel and commodious family residences on the Lyneton Abbots road, where they support the cause as heretofore by liberal annual contributions, and have their reward in the shape of unlimited flattery and obsequious homage from the less prosperous members of the congregation.

Mrs. Mallinson does not like to be reminded of the time when she took in ball com-

pany, and had a gentleman for breakfast and tea; and she quite ignores the meal and flour shop, or, if compelled to refer to that phase of her existence, speaks of it as "the time when we resided at the Italian warehouse in the Grosmont Road." But if anyone chances to mention the name of Mr. Barton, who is a professor now in one of the Dissenting colleges, she remembers him very well. He would never have risen to such an eminent position but for "me and my husband." It was "me and my husband" that brought him forward when he was a young man, and took him by the hand, and taught him how to preach so as to meet the views of thinking people; in fact, gave him that start in life to which he owes all his present success. Mrs. Mallinson quite appropriates Professor Barton as her own special and peculiar

handiwork, looked at in a ministerial point of view.

And if, when the Grosmont Road preacher comes to have tea with them on a Saturday afternoon, he happens to speak of Hugh Deeping, the Editor of the — *Review*, Mrs. Mallinson remembers that gentleman too, and has a little to say about him, touching the time when he used to officiate as clerk at the Bellona iron-works.

“Father a minister, mother left a widow, poor thing! with not much to do upon. A very excellent young man, though, as me and my husband offered to take into the house because of its being a Christian home for him, and where his principles could be attended to. Quite one of the family, too, and always asked him down of an evening to join in with Sarah Matilda, when she was

having a little music. Indeed,"—and here Mrs. Mallinson draws herself up, and looks complacent—"I shouldn't at all wonder if Sarah Matilda might have had him, only me and my husband thought she might do better for herself, and we've never seen no cause to repent as she settled with a party in the wholesale confectionary line, which is a vast better for making money than what the ministry is, as I always said the ministry was a poor thing for a young man to get himself on in the world with. There's nothing like business for laying by money, and making things comfortable against one gets into years."

And then Mrs. Mallinson sniffs as vigorously as ever, and throws herself back, not into a somewhat greasy-backed arm-chair, such as that which stood by the fireplace in

the back-parlour of Canton House, but into a very rich tabouret lounge, with walnut fittings, which, as she will most probably tell you, cost nine pounds ten shillings at one of the best furniture shops in Oresbridge.

Hugh Deeping, who is thus patronizingly dismissed by his former landlady, lives a secluded literary life in one of those pleasant little villages which dot the outskirts of London; near enough to look now and then upon its busy tide of life, far enough away to escape its noise, and din, and tumult.

He studied hard for two years in Germany, and then, having made for himself an honourable name amongst his fellow-students, and a fair reputation for learning and ability, came home to win such place as might be his due. He has won it now. People speak of him as one of the men of his time. Not

a genius, or a profound philosopher, that Hugh Deeping could never be ; but an earnest, thoughtful, hard-working man, a man who will leave the world better than he found it, a man who is helping to form the minds and mould the opinions of his fellow-men ; not so much by any spoken words of his, as by his writings, and by that silent force of example, which is perhaps the most powerful influence any man can exert, the truest, loftiest form of work in this world.

But when Hugh thinks over all the steps which have led him up to this standing-place of his, he sees chiefest among them, not those early years of village leisure, nor the hard close study at Tübingen, wherein he gathered up such rich stores of knowledge, nor the companionship of great and noble minds, companionship so freely given

to him now ; but that real, hard-working life at Oresbridge, that year in which he toiled and suffered, and learned so much ; in which he lived as a common man with common men ; among them, yet not of them ; that year in which he fell so deeply, yet rose again, and struggled on, conquering at last, as every man may who earnestly resolves to do it in a strength diviner than his own. That year gave Hugh Deeping his true hold upon life. It is from the knowledge he gained there, and not from college halls or library shelves, that he speaks so truly now. It is because he has himself toiled up the mountain side, and knows its pitfalls and precipices, that he can reach out a brother's helping hand to those who are travelling the same road, and looking for the same resting-place.

And for something else than this wisdom, learned of humiliation, and this patience, born of suffering, Hugh Deeping blesses that spell of hard work at Oresbridge and Lyneton Abbots. If he was first taught there how bitter a thing life may be, he also felt with how much sweetness its cup may overflow. The deepest shadows and the brightest lights of memory lie side by side within that little year.

Jeanie does not often join her husband in those literary circles, where he receives so warm a welcome, and where she, too, for her noble, gentle bearing, and for that name of his, which she wears so proudly, would be very courteously entreated. She loves best the quiet of her own fireside. Nor can she, like some gifted and brilliant women, be his companion and helper in those works which

are making his name famous. Much of his life is out of her reach. It is lived amidst thoughts which she can only look at from a distance. But if she cannot follow him into those tracks of close analysis and argument, from which he returns so often with aching head and clouded brow, she knows how to rest that aching head, and clear away the shadow from that brow; and so, with gentle, tender care, strengthen him for new toil. And if, on that great battle-field of life, where he fights so bravely with doubt, and error, and falsehood, there is no place for her, no weapon which her feeble arm can lift; if she cannot stand by his side, and strive with him through the heat and fury of the conflict, she can gird on his armour ere he goes, and when the fight is over, she can unbind it for him, and

cheer him, so worn and weary, with her own brave, bright words of love and sympathy. Perhaps the people who are loudest in their praise of Hugh Deeping, his courage, his earnestness, his noble defence of the truth, little know how much they are indebted for all these to the quiet, simple-hearted woman whose name they never hear, who lives on so peacefully there in the shelter of her own home, caring only how she may make that a sure resting-place for him. They see the light shining from afar clearly and steadily, but they do not guess what little hand pours oil into the lamp, and keeps it always trimmed.

Hugh Deeping does, though.

If Jeanie has not much taste for inductive philosophy and abstruse theories of politics, she loves those evening readings as

dearly as ever, when the long day's toil is over, and Hugh exchanges his heavy folios and books of reference for some lighter story or pleasant old ballad which she listens to as they sit together by his study fireside. Very often they fix upon "Percy's Reliques," and the book always opens at the romance of the "Nut-Browne Mayde." Hugh reads it with a voice that has lost none of its old sweetness and power; which falters sometimes, even yet, over that story of true-hearted devotion, so simply told, yet so touching in its simplicity.

Jeanie's eyelids fall; her thoughts wander far away. She sees once more the oriel-room in the old home at Lyneton Abbots—the oriel-room with its faded portraits, its flickering firelight gleaming over carved oak panels and quaint heraldic devices on those

picture frames; gleaming upon a silvery head—her father's head,—long since laid beneath the chancel stones.

Looking up, Hugh Deeping's eyes are upon her, with a loving kindness deep and true as that which shone out from them in the young days of her girlhood.

There is not much more reading then.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THERE is an old house at Lyneton Abbots, fronting the village church, having but a grassy foot-road between its stone gateway and those churchyard yew trees upon whose black cowed head the snows of four centuries have fallen. So near the village church, that at early morning-time the dormer windows of that chamber where for centuries past the heirs of Lyneton Abbots have drawn their first breath, casts its shadow upon the east front of the church, quite into the chancel, where those same heirs of Lyneton Abbots lie buried beneath canopies of carven stone. And to-

wards evening, when the sun is low, that east front in its turn darkens the dormer window of the old house; so that life and death, the cradle and the grave, seem ever meeting and mingling there.

Still the ivy winds its untrimmed garniture over the tall gables; still the lichens creep with many a stain of russet-brown and olive over those worn stone mouldings. Still Abbot Siward stands, grave-faced and silent as ever, over the old doorway through which so many a brave knight and lovely lady of the Lynton race have been carried, with folded hands and shut eyelids, to their rest in the chancel of St. Hilda's church. The warm October sunlight lingers lovingly as ever in the pleasant old-fashioned garden, touching into purple ripeness the grapes which cluster so thickly on the vine by the south wall.

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And then it steals along those grey coping stones, past many a tangled cluster of hop and bind-weed, past beds of lavender and clove-pinks, past the old sundial with its moss-written legend, to the gateway opposite to the churchyard yew-trees, where the griffins leer down from their lichened pillars, grim and defiant as when, hundreds of years ago, they first mounted guard over the old house. But when the October sun has faded away from all these, it still looks in with slant golden ray through the mullioned window of the library, giving its last gleam of light to the room where Hugh and Jeanie had their first meeting, and where Maurice Demeron died.

Over all the place there rests, as heretofore, an air of autumn-like mellowness and decay. Its glory is departed, its best days

are in the past. Its beauty is the beauty of an aged face, over which the grave must ere long close. And yet the spirit of the old time lingers round it still, and memories of bygone nobleness cling to it,—memories of the love and hope and joy of the people who have been born and died there, the men who fought so bravely and lived so purely, and died so fearlessly; the women who loved so truly and trusted so faithfully. And whilst the memory of these remains, there will ever be a sacredness and a beauty which no time nor change, no mould of age nor autumn of decay, can take away from the old home of Lyneton Abbots.

Gwendoline Lyneton lives there still; a quiet, contented woman; gravely remembering the past, reverently doing from day to day the work which God has given her to

do, patiently looking onward to the golden future not far off. She and Maurice Demeron can trust each other now; and when the sweet call of Death bids them meet again, these long years will seem to her but a few days, for the love which she had to him.

THE END.

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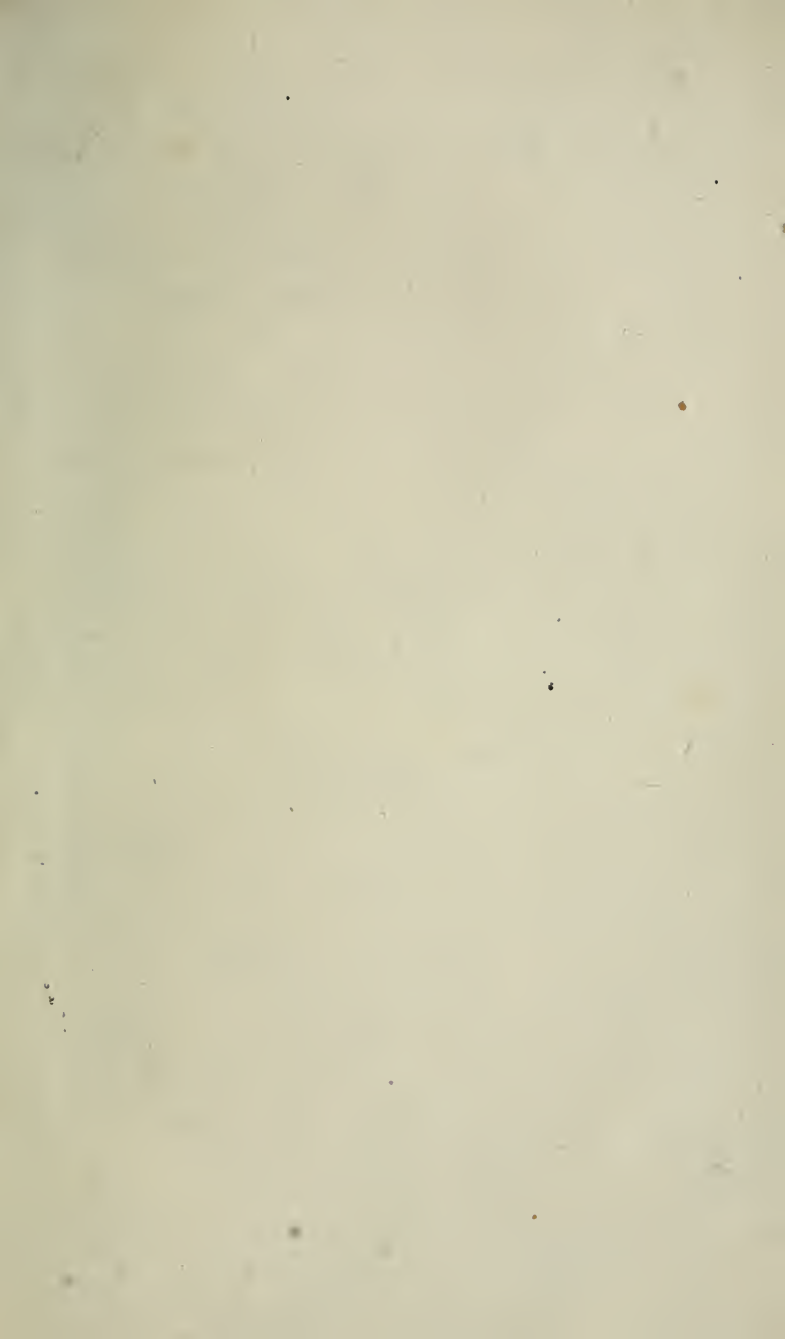
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