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THREE WIVES.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

“MARGARET AND HER BRIDESMAIDS,”

“THE VALLEY OF A HUNDRED FIRES,”

&c., &c.

“Heaven witness
I have been to you a true and humble wife,
Ever in fear to kindle your dislike;
Yea, subject to your countenance, glad or sorry
As I saw it incline. Sir, call to mind
That I have been your wife in this obedience
Upwards of twenty years.”

SHAKESPEARE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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E V E.

CHAPTER I.

“Old age explodes all but morality :
Austerity offends aspiring youth.
But he that joins instruction with delight,
Profit with pleasure, carries all the votes.”

ROSCOMMON.

“**W**OULD that I could live my life again,” said
one in my hearing.

I sit back in my chair, finding an echo in the words that reaches my heart. Yet there recurs to me “a still small voice,” penetrating with subtle power: “Few and evil have been the days of my pilgrimage.” Could I live and bear as I have borne? Nay. The echo is gone—the truth remains. I have nothing to regret for the past. All my hopes dwell on the future; and in that future lies an expectation—a sunshine of happiness, that dazzles and enchants me. With half a century of days whitening my hair and enfeebling my frame, husbandless, childless, alone, with no near kith or kin, I bless God that the “evil of my

pilgrimage" is past. I would not recall my life, even if I might have it with the boon of experience—the wisdom of age. I content me with looking forward. The past is a doleful struggle—the future radiant and joyful. I am not so old, but that I remember the whims and conceits of youth—I am not rusty with absolute age—turning heavily and drearily to the present ways of the world. God has been so good as to remove selfishness from my heart. I have lost all my nearest and dearest; but I know they are only gone before, and will look for my love again.

Let me keep it green and fresh with such subjects of affection as are yet around me, with the will and the power to make it pleasant with love, and happy with duty. Twenty years more ere I reach the three-score years and ten of man's allotted life. What may one do in twenty years? Days fly fast; they slip from my grasp like jewels dropped into the ocean. Never more will they be mine. Let me regard each one as a precious trust, of which I am to make the most. Let me record what I have done each day. In doing this, the present will blend itself with the future; and the objects of my care and affection now will mix themselves for ever with those I have lost—to whom it

is my daily prayer to be united. The advance of age has been in a manner softened to me by the loss of those for whom I lived. Yet methinks age has many advantages which youth lacks. The repose of the mind, the freedom from the hot temper of youth—the pause in the demands of the world upon one's time and talent—the leisure that enables one to feel that one is living, not grasping at life and its doings : all these cause peace and serenity, which borders, if it does not touch on purest happiness.

I sit in my garden and wonder to myself that I never noticed the singular loveliness of the flowers and the foliage—the wonderful mysteries of the insect tribes ; the melody and beauty of the native songsters that live in it. Even in this my garden it seems to me that indeed life is too short to comprehend the order and beauty of everything within it. The very aspect of the heavens by day, still more by night, would take a lifetime to comprehend, and an eternity to admire the variety and order.

In this, my fiftieth year, I have taken up Astronomy as my study, and begun collections of flowers, mosses, insects, and all other treasures that live in my garden. And when so inclined, I peo-

ple it with fond memories. For this has been my only home. I was born in this house, married from it, returned to it, and never had any other home. It is a fine old place, with mullioned stone windows and casements, which are clung to with loving tenacity by tendrils of ivy, through which creep clustering rose-buds and honeysuckle blooms. Round the house is a rich border of sweet-scented, old-fashioned plants, that blossom gaily, when my neighbours have their parterres empty. I love to surprise them with a winter nosegay or a bunch of violets in February.

In my garden are some fine trees. Under these I have tea in summer evenings; and that I may not brood in selfish sorrow, because the sweet voices of my children are no longer heard, or their dancing figures seen glancing like pretty fairies in and out among the trees, I have the little Misses and Masters of the village to my tea, when it pleases them to come; which is, indeed, pretty often. It is a rare chance for me to take my dish of tea alone. And yet not alone. Again I see my darlings, and in spirit I tell them I am coming—coming!

Our village is populous, and very pretty, as befits a village that belongs to a great house. In the centre of it there sweeps through an archway

a broad gravelled road, that runs for two miles through a park, to the castellated hall of the Earls of Bifron. On either side the archway in the village are placed on pedestals, fettered with mimic chains, two kingly vultures, carved in stone. They seem to keep ward and watch over the village, and it mayhap have some influence over the unruly boys and wayward girls that are at every door-step. Opposite the archway lives the doctor, in a stone house of much pretension and size. Near him is a quaint and pretty mansion, inhabited by a widow, her maids, and two children. It seemeth to me our village has not been so peaceful since she came, though she is a sightly person, and full of kindly interest for us all. I am not altogether sure if, had she been a little more reticent, we should have liked her better. She patronizes. Now we permit "my lady" to patronize us, but we scarcely seem to care for the notice of pretty Mrs. Brooks Browne. It has also been thrust upon us that the time and interest she so lavishly bestows on us, in regard to inducting us into the present modes of the world, would be better bestowed on her boys. I never thought to dislike a boy. Yet I fear me I have no great affection for the young Brooks Browne.

But enough. She is at this moment an object

of my pity—and truly I do not wonder that she longs for a strong arm on which to lean, and a sensible head to govern her boys. But, my poor woman, you will sigh in vain. Our good, fine-hearted, noble Jack pays you the homage due to a pretty woman, and one widowed; but he will never be second husband to you.

But of him anon. I have not finished with our village. We are justly proud of our school, built at my lady's request, in commemoration of her boy's birth—the first boy born alive, after five born dead. The school is very picturesque, and of excellent proportions. As the great London Road runs through our village, we are sedulous to deserve admiration and praise; and truly I never saw any cottages so neat and pretty as ours. "My lord," as we style him—because it is only of late that he has been made an Earl, and we have not accustomed ourselves to the apparent familiarity of styling him "the Earl,")—my lord encourages people to come and settle in the village, building houses for them as fast as they are required, each one, seemingly, after a more picturesque and quaint fashion than the last. These cottages, intermingled with the handsome houses of the doctor, the agent, Major Jones, the schoolmaster, and one or two

other gentlefolks, give our village the aristocratic look on which we pride ourselves.

A beautiful old stone church, grey with age, and humanly interesting, with its crowding tombstones and grand old yew-trees, stands on a little eminence, from whence it can be seen by almost every inhabitant of the village. It is suggestive of the beautiful thought, "We will go up into the House of the Lord!" Embosomed in ivy, with a gay, verdant garden adjoining the church-yard, stands the Rectory. But lately mourners were busy in the house, and a solemn procession took its slow way, through those gorgeous beds of flowers, into the churchyard. Dust had scarcely been restored to dust, when a yellow chaise, with jaded horses, rattled up to the Rectory door, and a handsome young parson, with a pretty, lively wife, just newly married, entered the house, with jocund step and light laughter. The bright flowers, had they minded, could have discoursed to each other of the solemn procession that passed over them in the morning, and the laughing, sparkling creature that carelessly plucked them in the evening.

CHAPTER II.

“Nil ego contulerim jucundo sanus amico.”

HORACE.

“The greatest blessing is a pleasant friend.”

SUCH are the changes to which we must submit. Just at the southern end of the village is a moss-grown, low-thatched cottage, which is used as a lodge; for an old-fashioned, heavy oaken gate leads into an avenue of beech-trees, through which runs a narrow carriage road. At the end of the avenue is visible a red-brick house—not of new or gaudy hue, but indescribably venerable and quaint. A long casemented window in one place, an elaborately ornamented bay window in another; a turreted tower jutting from the first floor at one end, a square erection from the ground at another. Nothing matched anything else in this house but the colour, which is of a warm rich red, deeply scathed with marks of time, and thickly coated in various parts with lichen and moss. Trellis-work

here and there permits the rich growth of myrtles, magnolias, and pomegranates to cluster up the walls, contrasting their beautiful green shades with the red hue of the house, in a wonderfully pleasant manner.

Rightly is this beautiful spot named Fairlie. Almost surrounding the house runs the sparkling, noisy river called Fair-Water; and over a bridge built of red brick, to match the house, is the road to Fairholme, my house. That is the road that joins the two houses of Fairlie and Fairholme, for I am much nearer the village—a pretty bowery lane leading from it to my house.

For many eventful years few days have passed without a communication between Fairlie and Fairholme; and during those fifty years nothing has interrupted the harmony of the intercourse. Doubtless, Fairholme had once formed part of the estate of Fairlie, the river dividing the property in half. Old title-deeds showed this unmistakably; and that we Nugents of Fairholme had been in possession more than eighty years, whereas the Farralls of Fairlie had belonged to the land from the time it had been enclosed and made into an estate. The name originally was Fairall of Fairlie, suggesting that the owners of

the land were thus designated by their neighbours to signify the worth of their character. And there was the more apparent truth in this, by reason of the upright character and strong good sense of the only remaining Farrall left—my dear and good Jack, son to my old, long-loved, and much-esteemed friend, Eleanor Farrall. Sweet, fair Eleanor, she came a bride to Fairholme, from out of the south of England, just as I had laid in the grave my first-born. Her pitying eyes, her soft kiss, awoke my poor heart to tears, as, in all her bridal bravery and happiness, she crossed my path, coming sorrowful from the grave.

Much were we beholden to each other ever after, for this was but the beginning of sorrows to me ; while she had a weight of trouble on her gentle heart, that would have broken but for her faith in God, and, as she was pleased to say, my love for her, I have had to acknowledge often to myself how much more blest was I in falling, as David had desired, into the hands of God, who took those I loved into his safer keeping, than she, a victim to the weakness, nay, wickedness of man.

For her husband was by no means deserving of the name of Fairall, being but a selfish, foolish man, whose vain head was turned by the courtesies

and arts of the newly-arrived Lord of Bifron. Mr. Farrall would not heed the suggestion that my lord desired to have his estate of Fairlie, much of which lay in the way of forming the new Park of Bifron. He had not the wit to see that, unable to persuade him to part with it by fair means, he was, by cajolery, by tempting him to gamble, to keep racers, to indulge in an extravagant mode of living, bringing him to such straits as would necessitate the selling, whether he would or not. Nay, but he thought it fine to set up his coach, no Farrall having done so before; and he considered himself mightily recompensed for the expense when my lord familiarly drew him by the arm through the crowded market-place, treating him as if he was his brother. Much drinking was the habit of those days, and my poor friend, Eleanor Farrall, never of the strongest, lost her health, and almost the use of her limbs, sitting up late of nights—even wandering along the road to meet her husband, as he came in his cups from Bifron.

To be sure, after her son, my good Jack, was ten years old, she had never to do that more. He was a boy of whom it may be said, I knew not if I loved or respected him most. Oh! my poor Jack!

But in good time will I write of thee. At this moment I have but to say, if it had not been for thee, young as thou wast, Fairlie would have been but part of Bifrons by now, and Fairholme would have followed in due course.

It seems strange that folks will make for themselves Naboth's vineyards. The late lord was most covetous after this old inheritance, so long in one family, and spared no means to beguile Mr. Farrall. He was by no means scrupulous in the manner of it. Moreover, he early understood that he could not handle Jack after the manner he did his father. It must be done in the reign of the present Farrall, or it would slip from his grasp; which would be a mortifying mischance. So that I must somewhat excuse my lord if he set little store on the mischief he was doing, ruining a family for the benefiting of his own. "My lord," the Earl, is to the full as blameworthy, not only inheriting from his father this perverse obstinacy, but an ill-nature and rancour that we look for only in the baser sort of men. Daring is that soul which, delicately nurtured, and of the best education, yet sins as flagrantly as those who have been unhappily left but to the suggestions of their own natures, having had neither teaching nor example.

But more of "my lord," the Earl, anon. We are now but discoursing of his father, who, with arts smacking greatly of those used by the father of lies, and Jezabel herself, was about accomplishing his wish of gaining the estate of Fairlie. Deeply was Mr. Farrall in debt. Still more deeply was his health impaired. His son Jack had been at home some time now, for there was no means of paying for term at college. My dear Eleanor had restricted her expenses to the narrowest compass. She knew her boy, though but approaching eighteen years, would as soon lose his life as Fairlie. The love between Jack and his mother was of that sort, they lived only to love and bless each other. It would seem that Mr. Farrall, like many another sinner, made one fault pay for another, which in the end worked great good to those he forgot for his fine companions. His vanity would not permit him to let my lord know how deeply he was in debt, so while he borrowed, at my lord's earnest request, a little of him, he had another creditor of whom he borrowed much. My lord, ignorant of the extent of Mr. Farrall's means, thought he took long to be ruined, as it did not occur to him that Mr. Farrall would break his solemn promise to him of borrowing from none other than his good friend

my lord. It gave Mr. Farrall small qualms to add this sin to his many others. What he had of conscience was taken up wholly by the grief he was causing the dearest woman in the world, his wife Eleanor, and the best son ever man had, his darling Jack. For that he loved, and was proud of both, even I, who scorned and flouted him, cannot but allow. Only he loved himself better, and indulged his vanity more than either wife or son.

It was just about this time that I was sitting under the chestnut-tree in my garden, sorting the seeds that I had gathered from various flowers, thinking of my friend Eleanor, who had been now ailing some months. Suddenly I heard her soft voice calling me. I went to her, and found her sitting on a rustic seat I had had made in the drive between Fairlie and Fairholme.

“I called you, dear,” said she, “as I am a little fatigued, and care not to waste my strength.”

“Have you,” I asked, “done as I bade you, and consulted the doctor?”

“Yes, indeed,” she answered, and a pretty, soft smile illumined her face, while the quick blood rosied it to the very roots of her hair.

“There is nothing the matter?” I asked, quickly.

2 “Indeed there is,” said she; “but I know not how to tell you.”

“Oh! Eleanor, my Eleanor, can you smile thus, and be about to leave me?”

“Please God, I am not to leave you, Katherine; but how am I to tell you?” And her smile broke forth into a pretty laugh, and the blush deepened to the purest red.

My woman’s wits were quick. I clasped her joyfully in my arms.

“Ah! what happiness—what will Jack say?”

“If the doctor is right in his strange fancy, I pray heaven it may be a little girl. But can it be true, Katherine?”

“Why should it not be so? Such things have occurred before.”

“But my Jack will be eighteen years old in the very month that I am to expect my new blessing.”

“A pretty birthday present for him, if, as you hope, it should happen to be a girl.”

“He will love it. I am glad—for she will be to him what I may not live to be long.”

The pang that passed through me was the more severe, because in this, as in every other thought, we something agreed. Would that I could deny the fear—she was fading away, even though the un-

expected event about to occur accounted for much of her indisposition. Never strong, I had much reason to be anxious lest the birth of this new child, at first so joyously received, might not in the end prove the last blow. But it was not by indulging these sad and moody thoughts that I could show my love for her. On the contrary, I took her now into my cheerful, hearty care, and shielded her from many ills that daily gathered round the doomed house (as it now seemed) of Fairlie. She, before averse, now willingly submitted to all my orders, and carefully husbanded her small remaining strength.

“I have not told my Jack,” whispered she one night to me, as I, lingering late, waited to see her safely placed in bed.

“And the dear, good, honest fellow will never see what he is not told—so unlike us women,” I answered.

Jack walked home with me, and so far belied my words as to ask me how I thought his mother was doing.

“It seems to me,” said Jack, “she is much heavier to carry upstairs than a month ago, Madam, and” (Madam was the usual name of the lone

widow of Fairholme) “that is a good sign, for all she is so feeble, is it not, Madam?”

“It is, Jack. Please God, we will have her strong and well again shortly.”

“Please God!” echoed Jack piously. “Tomorrow is my birthday, and I want her to enjoy it.”

The next morning—I being haply dressed, it being six of the clock—Jack without word or warning burst into my bed-chamber, and hugged me rarely in his strong young arms. I thought it a good chance he had not found me in my bed-gown and cap, as it would have been all the same to him.

“She is well!—tell me?—she is well, and all happily over?”

“Oh! Madam—Madam! do you know what my birthday present is? Such a rare thing! A little sister—think of that!—and I not knowing it was expected! The smallest little thing, and yet—would you believe it?—it clasped hold of one of my great fingers as sensibly as if it was my age, and it only an hour old! A little sister!—that God should be so good to me! I cannot tell you how I feel—I cannot describe my thundering sensations—I am beside myself! A huge blustering big fellow to have a sister like

that! My mother has given her to me—she is my birthday present. By the great God who is above, I swear there is nothing I will not do for that child—for my sister—the smallest, sweetest thing; and it clasped hold of my finger, just as much as if it knew I would be pounded to death for her sake! Oh! Madam, Madam, don't think me a baby—a fool, but the tears will come when I think of the fingers—tiny fingers you can scarce see—clasping mine so confidingly.”

“My dear, good Jack, your tears do you honour. But your mother—how is your mother?”

“God forgive me! I never asked; but I saw her just now—she gave me my ‘Childie’ herself. After I left you last night, I went, why or wherefore I can hardly say, to look for my father. I met at that hour a horse-messenger from Bifrons, who came at my lord's desire for my father's private desk. I went for the desk, when I met old nurse Lucas, who has been in our house some days, and she asked me for my father. When I told her where he was, she said, ‘Go in the little chaise, Master Jack, and fetch your father home. The mistress is fretting for him.’ That was enough for me. Off I went, and fetched my father home. But he was in no condition to go to my mother, which I told Mrs. Lu-

cas. She bid me see him safe in bed in the blue room, as my mother only wanted to be satisfied that he was safe in the house. I obeyed her, and it was nigh on twelve o'clock at night when I went to my mother's room to see if she was comfortable, or wanted anything more of her son. She was wide awake, and there was a sort of light and bustle about the room, as if folks were not intending to do the right thing and go to bed. I was a little excited, and had no mind for sleep myself; nevertheless, Mrs. Lucas let me have no peace, urging me to go; and at last even my mother said, 'Good night, my son, come early in the morning for your birthday present.' Though I had thought myself not sleepy, no sooner was I in bed, than I went off like a top, and made but one nap of the whole night. On awaking, I reminded me the first thing of my mother's order, and as soon as I was dressed made all haste to her room. 'Hush!' says Mary to me, as I banged my bed-room door after me. 'Hush!' says the cook, sweeping the stairs. 'Hush!' says Mrs. Lucas, peeping out of my mother's room. 'Pooh,' said I, 'my mother likes my noise,' and went bang into the room. 'So I do, my darling,' she answered in her soft voice, softer than ever I thought. But her dear face was so

white—the first look of it knocked all my noise and bravery out of me. I fell on my knees by her bedside, stunned. But she smiled so happily, and a colour flushed her face as she said, ‘I ought to have told you, Jack; but somehow you are such a big boy. See, here is your birthday present—a little sister.’ And she raised the bed-clothes with her white hand, and there I saw the tiny little thing. Oh! Madam, I could not help it, I cried like a big booby, the shock was so great, you know, the astonishment, and the helpless innocence of the little thing. Lord, I thought Mrs. Lucas would kill it when she lifted it up, and laid it on my knee. My mother would have her do it, and then it was that it clasped my finger. Please God, I will be a good man for that little creature’s sake. Please God, I will never have a thought but that she shares in it. Please God, I may see her live and grow, and when she comes to laugh and talk—and call me by my name—Lord! Madam, I shan’t be able to contain myself. Is it not curious now, how a great, rough fellow like me should feel his heart melt like dew at the sight of that wee little thing? A baby! I really don’t suppose I ever looked at a baby before. If I thought of one, I had an idea it was disagreeable and troublesome.

Do I tire you? You are not more anxious to see my mother than I am to show you my baby. And it clasped my finger when it was not an hour old!"

In this manner did the good Jack talk all the way between Fairholme and Fairlie. I own to having had misgivings as to his reception of another claimant on his mother's affection. He was so essentially manly, hardy, and blunt in his manners, that I thought it impossible for him to take any interest in a baby. But I had not arrived at my time of life without experiencing the fallacy of human judgment. I loved the dear fellow more than ever for this new trait in his character, and thought I had never seen him more to his advantage, than with the tiny baby on his knee—again was enacted the famous feat of clasping, with a sort of divine instinct, that finger which throbbed with ecstasy at the tiny clutch.

Mr. Farrall seemed to awaken for once out of his infatuated dream of vanity and ambition; but his health was greatly shattered by the excesses to which he had become devoted. He strove, I am sure, with all his might, to struggle out of them; but a dreadful depression followed each attempt. His children, the big son and the tiny daughter, unconsci-

ously added to these feelings ; for he could not look at either without feeling that if he lived much longer they must be beggars.

Thus, though the birth of Jack's " Childie " gave him and her mother unspeakable happiness, it is much to be feared that it hastened her father's death. Of the manner of it I shall say nothing, but that grave doubts were entertained as to the hand he had in it himself.

I have not fulfilled my promise to myself to write a daily record of my doings ; for, in truth, torn and wounded as I thought my heart at fifty years of age, it had never suffered as in this last twenty years. I thought to write my journal calmly, but what gaps !—what blottings with tears ! Have I strength and courage to go on, looking through its blotched pages, to complete my story ? Let me try.

CHAPTER III.

“*Exempta juvat spinis e pluribus una.*”

HORACE.

“Better one thorn pluck'd out than all remain.”

ON the night of “Childie’s” birth a messenger had come from Bifrons for Mr. Farrall’s desk. Twice during the first month of her life my lord had been to see Mr. Farrall, and apparently urge upon him the settlement of some important matter. My lord was somewhat advanced in years, and had of late become testy and impatient. That he gave way to terrible fits of passion on these two occasions, I heard from more than one person; and further, that Jack had interfered, and even thrust my lord out of his father’s presence. The Hon. Mr. Hazlewood, my lord’s eldest son, had been heard to say, “he would horsewhip that young Jack-a-napes.” But the horsewhipping never came off, which was so far lucky for Mr. Hazlewood, he being but a

puny sort of man, while our young Jack was a giant, and, moreover, as hot-headed and proud as any young lord of the day. And he had some reason to be so, if antiquity of blood gave it him. The Farralls were known in the country a couple of hundred years before the Bifrons. But it would seem, what with one thing or another, that my lord at last got Mr. Farrall to accede to his wishes.

Jack's "Childie" was near five months old when my lord was heard, in his imperious way, to tell Mr. Farrall that he was to come to the Castle next day with Mr. Markham, a neighbour and friend of the Farralls, to meet his London lawyer.

Before that day came Mr. Farrall was dead. The doctor told me in confidence his constitution was worn out with drink, and that an extra dose of brandy might have been the cause of his sudden death. At the time he asked me if I thought he was in the habit of taking laudanum.

"Though," he added, "I need not ask the question, as those who indulge in drinking spirits seldom take laudanum." And he looked grave and serious as he fell into a fit of musing.

But whatever the cause of Mr. Farrall's death, there was no meeting at Bifrons. It soon became

known why my lord had been so urgent. Mr. Markham was the friend who had lent Mr. Farrall so much money on the mortgage of Fairlie, and my lord was anxious to buy him out, and be the only creditor. Mr. Markham was too good a friend of Jack's to accede to my lord's wishes without the permission of Jack. Besides, he was not of age, and, therefore, nothing could be done. Thus mercifully, they had not the pang of bewailing husband and father, feeling all the time this same husband and father had been their bitterest enemy. They had Fairlie still, and, as Jack swore to his mother, "Fairlie shall be free from mortgage or debt before I die."

What incredible exertions that good fellow made to give his mother as many of the comforts of life suited to her condition as could be, and that his "Childie" should be encircled by love and care, need not be told.

The old lord saw, with mingled anger and hatred, that puppet as his dear friend Farrall had been in his hands, nothing could exceed the dogged determination of the younger Farrall to have nothing whatever to do with him. He met my lord's advances with a sort of stern contempt, which, in one so young, marked him with

a strength of character which it would seem hopeless either to coax or bully. The old lord grew ill with irritation and fretting; at last dying with the words on his lips to his son—

“I leave you to punish that lout of a farmer, Jack Farrall. Wound him in his sorest point, if you would have me lie easy in my grave.”

His son not only eagerly promised, but did so with so much of unction as to bring a grim smile on the almost dead face. And he kept his word. The great man in a place has a thousand ways in which he can torment and bully his lesser neighbours. My lord, the Earl, not satisfied with ordinary ones, invented every species of annoyance and worry that a vindictive mind could create. Jack bore it all with unflinching courage and imperturbability. If in his heart he scorned the paltry fears and low cringing of those of his neighbours who deferred to my lord, and begged his pardon for wronging him, because it was my lord's order, he gave no outward expression of his wrath; he took all, as it seemed, in good humour, and only worked the harder.

Mr. Markham was a farmer on a very large scale, and, of course, held as much of the land of the Fairlie estate as paid him the interest of money

lent thereon. Jack farmed the rest. My lord had threatened a seizure of all that they held most dear in the house of Fairlie—plate, pictures, the curious old furniture—everything, in short. Jack would have cut down timber, but not being of age, he had no power to do it. But our interests were the same, for I had at the death of my last child decided to make my good Jack, who was as a son to me, my heir, so I lent him the money; and it is hard to say which was most happy, he or myself, when Bifrons could not lay claim to even a leaf of one of the trees at Fairlie. But as is often the way with people, the more a thing is impossible for them to have, the more they long for it. Eager as the old lord had been to get possession of Fairlie, my lord the Earl was still more so. It became an infatuation with him.

Apart from the annoyances that were inflicted upon Jack in his efforts to pay his way, keep his mother and sister, while he lessened the debt on Fairlie, it may be questioned if he was ever happier than during the eight years after his father's death. In addition to the delight of knowing he was everything to his darling mother, the child so unexpectedly given her—Jack's birthday present—was almost, as it seemed, a gift out of the very heavens

itself. For surely never was there seen in mortal guise before such an exquisite little creature. Of beauty truly angelic, she had an intelligence of mind and a nobility of character astonishing in one so young. She was one of those haply born, at times, to remember one that we were originally made in the image of God. At the same time, she gave one the fear that she was too perfect to remain long amongst us. "The child is too good to live," was the general remark of all who saw her. Not unfrequently was this said to me; and I have reason to believe that, with the usual unconcern of the lower orders, it had been said more than once by our poor neighbours to her mother.

For one day, as Eleanor, on her couch by the window, lay watching her child's pretty gambols in the garden, I seated by her side, she could not but smile at the picture. The big Jack lay stretched on the grass, intently regarding a map, and the little one was, with loving audacity, playing with him. Anon she ran over him with little flying feet; anon she made vaulting leaps over his long legs; anon she pushed the great clustering curls from his brow and kissed it. It seemed as if none of her wiles would move Jack from his studies; but in a moment, when she was least

looking for it, he rose, and snatching at the little thing, made her sit on his great hand, and held her up to the window to kiss us. Such a lovely picture! His manly, ruddy face, all aglow with health and happiness, was beautiful, from the mere beauty of purest health and vigour. His luxurious curls of hair were in themselves such as one might fancy Samson's locks. As he lifted up the lovely, laughing child, she clutched these noble curls to steady herself; and so enamoured was I with the picture they presented, I had them painted so. I have it now—I draw it out to look at, and once more say, “Oh! my poor Jack!—sweetest Childie!” What wonder the mother doted on them, and smiled almost to tears of happiness as Jack, in answer to my advice “to be careful,” said,

“You are not afraid, Childie?”

“No—I with my Farder Sack.”

Father Jack was the name she called him, and it seemed to me as if the sensible child knew all it expressed, for methought never were such sweet words uttered by so sweet a voice as “Father Jack” spoken by Childie.

When tired with their play, and the walk round the garden, seated still on Jack's hand, and hold-

ing fast by his curls—the two were gone from our hearing—Eleanor said to me,

“He will be all to her—father, brother, and mother!”

“Nay, Eleanor.”

“It is even so, Katherine. I shall not live to see my little daughter a woman grown; but she will have you and Jack. She will want no other.”

“But, Eleanor, it almost seems to me as if God would not have given you so matchless a child, and not see her grow to perfection.”

“She was given for Jack’s sake, not mine.”

And the conviction thrust itself upon me even in that moment. What would be the future of Jack, uninfluenced by the love and attentions of women? Though I have recorded he was eminently sensible and shrewd with regard to his own sex, Jack had that sort of chivalry that sometimes dwells in the roughest nature, which would make him as wax in the hand of a woman—adamant to any of his own sex. It may have been the conduct of my lord at first, and his son afterwards, that made Jack so hard, so unrelenting, so stern in his judgment of men. And Childie perhaps was given him to keep his heart tender and susceptible. For Jack did not seek woman’s society as a thing neces-

sary to his happiness. On the contrary, his nature was altogether independent of their virtues or attractions. But his delicate mother, always suffering from the deeds of his father, the unexpected birth of Childie, and the wonderful charm of her presence, opened his great, rough-and-ready heart to a very exquisite perception of the devotion of love.

To feel in himself a strong throb of life, to be conscious of a strength to do, and a power to perform what any man had ever done before; to be aware that with this strength he possessed a nobility of soul that could not brook falsehood or shifts,—all these might have made Jack but a loud brawler in the acts of life, a noisy citizen of the world, who had but to roar to be obeyed. Now he had to use his great powers in a tender and delicate fashion. In his strong grasp was the welfare and charge of two beings whose very essence was fragility and love. He was as a lion guarding a little Una through the dark forest; as a man whose mother's life depended on his fostering love and care. The very servants, who dreaded his searching glance, his quick perception, and his instant punishment of wrong and neglect, knew that they had but to name his mother, or mention

Miss Childie, the word he loved to hear, and he was as gentle and kind as the gentlest woman.

And yet—so odd was his nature—I much question if, without mother or Childie, he would ever have turned to woman's society as a good he could not live without. He had all the elements of a thorough man's nature. From courage and fearlessness he would have rushed into every danger and difficulty that presented itself to his notice, deeming such doings but part of the pastime of his life. All the sports of men were beloved by him with passionate fondness; the confinement to house or place was not to be borne patiently, unless it was for the benefit of his mother and sister. It seemed nothing to him to start in the dead of night, walk twenty miles to a meet of the hounds, follow them on foot all day, and walk home again at night, entering his mother's sick-room more jocund, stronger, healthier than when he left it.

In short, Jack lived upon sunshine, exercise, and the hearty contentment of one who was at ease with himself, and content with his lot. During these eight years Jack scarcely knew that within his temperament there lurked the seeds of a passionate nature and a wilful obstinacy. We can

all of us be merry and sweet-tempered when we have our own way.

Jack, giving his mother and his Childie all they required, and gradually freeing his estate from debt, spite of all the arts of my lord, the Earl, felt himself as a king in his pride of will and strength. "Though no king," said he to himself, as he royally strode over his dominions, "ever had such a mother as mine, or such a Childie!"

CHAPTER IV.

“Stultitiam patiuntur opes.”

HORACE.

“Their folly pleads the privilege of wealth.”

IF Jack felt himself as a king, powerful to do what he willed, my lord, the Earl, great though he was, by no means experienced the same feeling. A little man, fussy and foolish, he seemed by some ill fate always to do and say what was most ill-timed and useless. And though foolish, he was not without the perception that he was a fool, which, so far from making him wiser, only gave him fresh excuse to be irritable and arbitrary.

“I am not to be judged like other men,” I could fancy he said to himself; “what I do, it is of course right that I should do, whether it may be convenient or not. People must put up with my whims. I am one who ought to have whims.”

Pandering thus to the suggestions of a most un-

wise and perverse nature, he made everybody about him uncomfortable, and none more so than himself. For a sort of shame of himself would make itself felt, and not all the assurances and encouragements that he gave himself could do away with the conviction that he was a wretched little man, with a mean little soul.

Thus he was never at ease. In company he was fidgety and quarrelsome, at home pompous and arbitrary. He did not look a gentleman, and never acted like one. To those who only had his society at intervals, and many of whom thought all the more of him because he was not only a lord, but a proud, disagreeable one, this did not signify. They were not daily, hourly tormented by his temper and conceits. It was at home, amongst those whom he really loved after his fashion, that his peevish, irrational temper did the greatest harm.

He married, some time before his father's death, a young lady of equal birth to his own, whose gentle, somewhat timid character would easily have moulded itself to his, could she have felt sure what that character was. But even now, fifteen years since her marriage, I feel certain she knows as little about his nature as she did when she mar-

ried him. In truth, she would be a sagacious woman that did, as he was never two days in the same mind. It is a marvel to me that she still retains so much of her sweet temper and gentleness. And at times I cannot but sometimes regret she does so. I fancy it would be greatly to her advantage, especially the welfare of her child, if she suddenly rose and defied him. It is not unusual for a bullying, weak character to give way to a righteous wrath; and once a victory is gained, nothing is more easy than to retain it. But, alas! though sweetly amiable, and one most loving and good, my lady has as little character as her husband. She may suffer, and she does, both in heart and health from being an unfortunate victim to his fussy affection; but the irritation is momentary with her. Before she has already felt the annoyance, it is gone—dispelled by a word of love—an anxious thought for her. She is not without the weakness of the conventional potency of rank, irrespective of character; truly she could hardly escape being infected with my lord. But this gives her, in addition to the clinging fond love of a woman for her husband, a deference and honour which is simply paid by her to his rank. Much of this arises from his love of it; but I

sometimes think that as the love of women is fed on, or born, through the very sober quality of respect, she gives to his rank that which she cannot bestow on his qualities ; and yet, woman like, flatters herself it is the same thing.

But, without saying more, our lord and lady do not add much to the weal of our society. We feel a certain pride in seeing the flag flying from the top tower of Bifrons ; but we nerve ourselves to being made uncomfortable—disturbed from the peaceful serenity of country life and duties. Without at all adding to our pleasure, the return of our great people from the London season, or their tour abroad, or their few weeks at the seaside, arouses us from our contented hum-drum life into one we do not like so well. We feel sure my lord's fussy irritability and exacting arrogance will penetrate into our most secret chamber, and if they cannot hurt us, still they have a subtle power to annoy. We who are somewhat independent of him, still have visits from himself or his agent, complaining of small licences taken without his permission—an interference as to the rules of the school ; a hint that one of our servants was seen walking in the sacred Park of Bifrons ; a fear that we have been encouraging amusements that

my lord has not as yet taken into consideration the propriety of allowing his people to indulge in.

Nothing is too small to attract my lord's notice, or too insignificant to stir his lordly temper. And if we suffer, it may be well conceived the annoyance he gives those dependent on him. A rose-tree removed in a garden, altering a gate, even so much as the inevitable birth of twins in a cottage, only intended for a couple without incumbrance, has so seriously affected my lord, as to cause the whole village to tremble lest they should all be swept away in one swoop, to appease my lord's wrath. Weariful and wearying, so far from mitigating those necessary evils of life which befall us, as our birthright, he adds to them by the aggravations of his own temper. He never seems to have power to reason upon the result of his actions, and if the consequences are disastrous, lay the blame on any other than himself—rushing into fresh inconsistencies, by way of proving his impeccability.

The study of such a character, the penalty one paid for living near its influence, caused me many anxious and perplexing thoughts. The power he held in his hand to injure, and his utter recklessness as to doing it, made me fear what evil one so de-

spised could do. And the vexation caused by constant worry and annoyance was of that sort religion seemed to have no influence to soothe. Was it for us to lay before God the peevish ill-nature that vexed our lives? It seemed of that sort we disdained to notice it; yet it ate into our comfort, like a corroding wound.

Nevertheless, as I said before, we did not suffer so much as those immediately about my lord. I could have pitied my lady; but her feelings were so evanescent, and her belief in my lord as my lord so infatuated, it was clear waste of sympathy to do so. And yet she had sufficient proof of his fallibility in losing five children in succession through the fact of following his foolish and absurd whims; to which, moreover, she owed a weak, ailing existence now, that forbade the hope of any more children. They had one now, at the period of which I am writing, nine years old, a fair and noble boy.

Entreated by his mother and her doctor not to inform my lord of his probable birth, until it could not be concealed—separated from him, during the time, by the kind devices of the same people, as much as it was possible, his birth took the Earl by surprise—under the influence of which the grand-

mother took possession of the child, and had him healthily and naturally nursed by a strong country mother. With a misrepresentation almost venial, the doctor urged my lord to take my lady to some other climate than England, as necessary to her life, and kept them from home as long as it was possible. They returned to find their child somewhat advanced in his second year, as blooming and beautiful a child as parents could desire to see.

For some time the love of the mother was sufficiently strong to prevent the father interfering much with the bringing up of his son. But the very fact of the promise of the boy, in every way, awoke in his father the desire to do justice to that promise.

From the moment he could read, the young lord was taken from under the care of his mother and nurses, and consigned to that of a tutor.

My lord, as before hinted, was in an uncomfortable degree conscious that he was a fool. And if there was a thing he coveted, it was to be wise. Many of his odd, random doings arose out of the hope that some of them might chance to be good, if not sagacious, though of the two he preferred wisdom to goodness—learning to sweet temper. It gave him almost a throb of happiness, the hope

that if nature and education had forbidden him to equal Solomon, he had a son who, in his arrogance, he trusted might excel. Nothing was wanting on the part of nature, nothing should be left undone by his father.

In his eagerness to become remarkable for being the father of the wisest man living, my lord lost sight of all prudence. The boy's health gave way under the taxation of his father's mania for teaching him all things. At first a torpidity or dulness of intellect, an idle, listless manner, made itself apparent, which only moved his father to a course of severity and punishment. Had he not made up his mind to be the father of a man who should arouse all Europe with the fame of his learning and wisdom? "A world-wide celebrity," repeated my lord again and again, as if he had coined the phrase for himself and son. When this severity had to be increased, and the young lord, sacred though he was, underwent at the hands of his own father, a caning, administered with right good-will, a more painful punishment awaited my lord than had ever yet befallen him. His son was taken from under the hands of his father, insensible and idiotic for the time, foaming at the mouth in a fit.

Once more, as the means to save both life and reason, he was consigned to the care of his grandmother, during which period he only saw his mother at stated times. Whether they again resorted to an expedient falsehood, we do not know, but it was rumoured on each mention of his father's name the young lord had a recurrence of his fits. They kept this up for some time—indeed, until the death of his grandmother, when he returned once more to Bifrons—a beautiful, fair boy, but with those unerring signs of brain-mischief that, however slight, are not to be mistaken. A slight tendency to oddity, fits of ungovernable passion, succeeded by torpor and dulness, ought to have warned any less obstinate and wilful than his father—any more heedful and apprehensive than his mother. And yet she was apprehensive, after her fashion—apprehensive of a shower that would have cooled rather than harmed his heated brain—apprehensive of too much of the air and exercise that, as physic from out of heaven itself, were necessary to his life and health; apprehensive of anything and everything but the purposeless, foolish, wayward whims of his father regarding him.

It was at this period that the young lord first made acquaintance with Jack's Childie in my gar-

den. He had ridden from Bifrons to visit me on his pony; but his mother followed in her carriage to take him home, as the ride there and back was considered too much for him. My little lord was not of the same mind as his mother, and she argued with him almost in tears. He had one of his fits of passion. To see him was, I should have thought, sufficient warning to any who loved him not to thwart him, until reason was in some measure a prevailing quality of his mind. I scarcely know how the scene would have ended, had we not been startled by the apparition of a little angelic thing in a white frock, who, heedless of any danger to herself in the reckless blows of the young lord, which he dealt in every direction, ran up to him, and clasping her arms round him, as he rolled on the floor, exclaimed,

“Oh! poor boy! poor boy!—who has hurt my poor boy?”

The little pitiful voice, the tears in her eyes, the lovely face, acted on him like a charm. He hid his face in both hands, as if ashamed, while Childie kissed his hair and hands, murmuring, “Poor boy! poor boy!”

“Take him into the garden, Childie,” said I, feeling that he would recover sooner, and be more

at ease with her, if alone. They were both gone in a moment.

As was her wont, the poor, gentle mother eagerly asked my advice, which I gave, knowing it would never be followed. In this way we passed half an hour, when she began to be anxious.

“Childie will bring him back in safety,” I said.

“He is never suffered to be alone,” murmured my lady. “I must go and watch him. How can he be safe with such a baby?”

“She is five years old, and as wise as fifty. You may be sure they are very happy. Hark! I hear them laughing. See! Childie has brought him under the window for you to see that he is all right now.”

“He is indeed, and happy too. God bless the little dear! I often wish he had companions of his own age, but my lord fears contamination of manners.”

“He need fear nothing with Jack’s Childie.”

CHAPTER V.

“Parvula, pumilio tota merum sal.”

LUCRETIUS.

“A little pretty, witty, charming she.”

OH! Jack, Jack! have you ever had the heart to blame Madam for what she did then, and for some time after? You had reason.

I counselled my lady to bring her son often to Fairholme, promising each time he should have Childie to amuse and play with him. At first neither she nor I could felicitate ourselves enough upon the benefit of this intercourse to the poor boy. Wholesome, frolicsome child's play was the physic he required; and if ever there was a gleeful, winsome play-fellow, it was Jack's Childie. And the sweet wisdom of all she did, led him, even by the charm of pastime, to think and reason, and love something better than play.

“See how good Madam makes a home in her garden for all the birds, just as we shall have a

home in heaven with the good God, if we do rightly."

"That is, not to get into passions," said the little lord.

"More than that," responded Childie; "we must do what we are bidden, if we dislike it ever so much."

"What do you dislike, Childie?" asked her companion.

Childie mused.

"I dislike to see anything hurt," she answered.

"So do I; but I also dislike physic, and, above all, rice pudding—and, more than all, my tutor."

"Physic is sent by the good God to make us well, if we are ill. Think of that. I daresay if we were hungry like a beggar, you know, we should love rice pudding; more than anything would it be wrong to dislike those who teach us. Would you like to teach?"

"No, Childie; but then I am a lord, and need not do what other people do."

"If I was a lord, I would try to be better than other people—more clever—kinder."

It was now his turn to muse, and apparently only, to agree with her. Indeed, 'twas impossible not to agree with Childie. The sweetest, most innocent,

little loveable face turned upon you with a gravity and sagacity that made you wonder while you loved.

“Jack,” I remarked one day to him, “I have a fault to find with your Childie.”

“It is that she is too good,” he replied with beaming happiness.

“Too sensitive. I really mean it, Jack. The child’s heart is so tender, I dread to think what it may have to undergo, merely suffering common human suffering.”

And as I said this, there rushed through me one of those mortal spasms of agony that a remembrance of my past life entailed on me. Would Childie have borne as I had borne, the harder pang of seeing death rather than enduring it? Often and often had I prayed “to be taken and the other left.” And yet I was alive, cheerful, full of life’s business and pleasures, as if I had lost nothing—suffered nothing. But this little sweet, angelic Childie would have gone too, died with those she loved. But said Jack,

“What! Madam, Childie suffer, and her Father Jack at hand! Of what are you thinking? I should just like to see a tear in her eye, that’s all. There should never be another.”

“Nay, Jack, you are presumptuous. You may not see them, but the tears come if but the wing of a butterfly is crushed. Only yesterday, on seeing that poor boy in a fit, though she did not for a moment lose her presence of mind, she wept for hours.”

“Then, Madam, she shall play with him no longer. I will not have my Childie vexed.”

“I have thought perhaps it was not good for her to be much with him, she is so sensitive. But she pines after him, as much as he does for her.”

“Oh! she will soon forget him. I am going to buy her a pony this autumn, if I have luck selling my sheep.”

“It is a wonder to me, Jack, that you make anything by your farm, considering how my lord persecutes you.”

“Ah! ha! he cannot prevent me having the best stock to sell. Besides, people know me, and are sure of having their money’s worth. Only yesterday, Madam, I received an order for forty ewes, and the cheque was inside to pay for them! Do you suppose my lord, though he were a king, could cast a slur on Jack Farrall’s name?”

Jack was, dear, dear fellow, perhaps a little

vain-glorious. Yet not vain—too reliant, too confident in himself.

“No, no,” he continued, exultingly proud, “my Childie has not a fault. I love her little tender heart—why, it is but a week ago I found her behind the bushes, stripping off her petticoat to give a beggar girl. I made-believe to scold her, saying she would be the ruin of Father Jack giving away her clothes; and she only kissed me more fondly than ever. No, no, I dote on her tender heart—she may give away all she possesses, and her Father Jack will find money to supply his darling again.”

And I could not doubt that, as long as there was work to be found in the world, even to breaking of stones for the road. But still the child's nature was so keenly sensitive to pain and suffering in others, so quick to feel, even to agony, as I had seen when her poor little playfellow had a fit before her, that I was not unnaturally alarmed for the future. All the more because, as the days passed quickly by, I saw that I was again about to be tried in the sorest point. Jack's and Childie's dearly loved mother, my dearest, truest friend, was slowly fading, was about to be taken from us. Of

late she had talked without reserve to me of the time when we should see her no more.

“You, Katherine,” she said, “are about to become my children’s mother.”

“If this is to be so,” I answered, with as much fortitude as I could muster, “lose no opportunity of filling my mind with your spirit, that I may carry out your wishes regarding them.”

“Nay—how can that be necessary? You love them, that is sufficient assurance to me that my place will be supplied.”

“But,” I returned, thinking of my conversation with Jack, “Childie is not of the common nature of children. In addition to her rare precocity of mind, she has a disposition of such peculiar tenderness and enthusiasm, I dread the trial of any grief upon her. Oh! my dear, dear Eleanor, broken in spirit, smitten to the heart, as I shall be wanting you, how shall I be able to comfort and soothe Childie for the loss of her mother?”

“Katherine, you anticipate what will never happen. You will have trouble enough to console my poor Jack; but Childie will assist in reconciling you both.”

“At present I cannot see how you conclude this will be the case, for she is now unable to speak

without tears, of the probable absence of her poor playfellow, Lord Beaufrère, for three months."

"His absence is caused by man's decision, and could be reversed. But have you not noticed in Childie not only an extraordinary piety in one so young, but a sort of faith in the Almighty, that is more like the faith of an aged pilgrim journeying to his rest."

"I have noticed how constantly she refers to the Almighty in regard to His works; but, indeed, Eleanor, when she is smitten with the blow of losing her mother, nature and her sensitive heart will assert their power over her."

"Well, let it be so; but she will rise from the shock only more good, more strong in faith. At times I have almost felt as if God had permitted a good spirit to take the form of my child, in order to comfort and guard my good Jack. I love to read of Raphael, and fancy that Jack, another Tobias, will be kept from evil and sin by the ministering of this little angel at his side."

"Jack has a noble nature—it would bring tears into the eyes of angels if anything in the world ever befell him, so as to shake him in his integrity. But Jack is very human, and it is his humanity that makes one love him so. He is perhaps a

little self-reliant. We must not forget to pray for him, as we know what befell a greater than he in heaven, from the sin of pride."

"If ever there was excuse for pride, my Jack has it. Not nineteen when his father died, on his hands a sickly mother and a baby sister, an estate heavily encumbered, an enemy bitter and remorseless, how has he fought his way during the eleven years that have elapsed! My life has been prolonged, made so exquisitely happy by his care and filial devotion, that the bliss of these years has obliterated the misery of the twenty years before. Childie has been educated and guarded by him with a love and forethought that have made her—I may say it, because no one can deny it—matchless. Fairlie is almost free from debt; and more than all this, my Jack is the most honoured and respected of all people within the circle of the county."

"And well he deserves it."

"God pardon me if I have boasted too much; only to you, dear Katherine, do I permit such proud thoughts to pass my lips. To me the name of Jack, homely and common, expresses the noblest, best of human beings; while that of Childie, scarcely less simple, conveys to me the idea of a little angel dwelling in a human form."

As Eleanor thus discoursed of the children she was so soon to leave, while I acknowledged the truth of the words, and could have endorsed her opinion with all my heart and soul, yet some thrill of anticipation of impending woe, of the utter vanity of everything on earth, as a possession, smote me sorely.

When Jack and Childie were no longer, one working for a purpose, the other a woman grown, would they retain the same feelings as now? With no particular object in view, the powerful, eager, strong-hearted man would pant for some work to excite and glorify him. Strife and emulation, renown and fame, would attack him with their powerful magnates. Would he be content to remain nothing but the farmer of Fairlie?—have no other title than the present one he doted on—Father Jack? Would no other love come between him and his Childie?—and would that love be as pure and exalted as the love with which he regarded the little creature so unexpectedly given him as a birthday present? And Childie, with her sensitive heart, her early love for God and good, her exquisite perception of the word “charity,” in its fullest sense, what would she be, a woman grown? Would she expend all that world of love, which

seemed to compose her whole being, only on her Father Jack?

I could not think so, as I watched her day by day, loving all things that wanted love, tenderly apprehensive for weak and ailing things, always on the search for something to soothe and cherish. If Jack, strong in his love for Childie, too full of man's conceits and projects to think of any other love—if he did not marry, still Childie would be sure to suffer the enthusiasm of her woman's nature to lead her into love, that love which is without limit, stronger than strength. But the future was with God. Why seek to penetrate into what is often withheld in mercy?

Childie had passed her eleventh birthday but a week, when once more Jack intruded suddenly into my bed-room. I was in bed, as it was but two in the morning. "Come," he said, hoarsely—"come, my mother has broken a blood-vessel."

When I arrived at Fairlie, I found the faithful servant, Mary, holding up her dying mistress, while with dry, but solemn, serious eyes, the fairy child Childie was administering restoratives to her mother. When Jack entered with the doctor, all the words said by the doctor were,

"Jack, kneel and receive your mother's blessing."

Childie, with so strange a light and awe in her eyes as to impress us all, lifted her mother's hand on to those glorious curls, the hand that had always loved to arrange them, and a word came from those dying lips—"Jack!"—no more.

My poor Eleanor was right. Jack delivered himself up to a whirlwind of grief. Childie was calm and still as a saint. As Jack gave way to one burst of sorrow after another, Childie seated herself on his knee. After awhile she said softly,

"Our mother has gone home, Father Jack!"

"Oh! home! home! what will it be without her?" groaned Jack.

"Our mother said I was to tell you to be sure that we two came home to her."

"God helping us, we will, Childie!" And Jack went to his room to pray.

CHAPTER VI.

“ Who can all sense of other’s ills escape,
Is but a brute, at best, in human shape.”

TATE.

MISFORTUNES troop together.

On the evening that Childie sat in her black frock on her brother’s knee, comforting him, still with solemn dry eyes, because that on this day they had laid their mother in the grave, and even the absolute comfort of the presence of her coffin was gone from the house—Jack feeling a desolate unhappiness that received no cure from his pride of strength, his will to do and dare—they were aroused by the wheels of a carriage grating on the gravel. Jack looked up angrily. This night was sacred to him and his grief. For once Jack had been made to feel that his happiness did not lie in his own grasp. In addition to his sorrow was the humiliating conviction he could not be all things, even life itself, to the two creatures he loved so

well. And this submission was accompanied by a growing perception that he, the strong, mighty man, fearing nothing, was but a puppet in the hands of his Maker.

Jack was, for his class and for the times in which he lived, remarkable for all outward reverence for the worship of God. Early taught by his mother to be so, he was exactly scrupulous in following her teaching; and he was not without that enthusiasm of gratitude which is part of the nature of truthful, simple hearts. He was outspoken, without ostentation, when happiness and success filled him with content; and praised God with a fervour and simplicity that was as edifying to witness as rare to see. At the same time, it may be questioned, if it had pleased the Almighty to frustrate all Jack's hard endeavours, whether he would have submitted with pious fortitude. By the manner in which he mourned his mother's death, I could not but think Jack's religious principles were founded more upon his own love of rectitude and virtue than love to God as his God.

But let him develop his own character. A ring at the door bell on this eventful night, when Jack with his Childie were shut up together, giv-

ing a sacred time to the mourning of that mother whose presence they were to know no more in this earthly home, was followed by the entrance of the housekeeper from Bifrons. With pale face and struggling words, the woman entreated Mr. Farrall to allow "Miss Childie to return with her to Bifrons; an accident—a very sad accident—"

"Impossible!" exclaimed Jack haughtily and impatiently. "We buried our mother to-day."

"I know it, sir, my lady knows it—but Lord Beaufrère—"

Childie sprang from her brother's knee; the tears that scarce flowed for her mother, once pain and sickness had left her, now burst forth in torrents.

"I will come—I am ready!"

"Childie!" said her brother, for the first time in his life rebukingly.

"He is in pain—he suffers!" and Childie shivered and turned pale as if in agony herself.

"It is true, Mr. Farrall, he does suffer; he has not said a word since the accident, but to call 'Childie—Childie!'"

"Accident!"

"Yes, Mr. Farrall; I hardly dare like to say, but I think, as my lord must have lifted his hand

against him—any how, he fell over the parapet.”

“Oh! Silvain! Silvain! Let me go, Father Jack?”

“No, Childie; what have we to do with their sorrow?—’tis not like ours.”

“’Tis worse, Mr. Farrall—worse; if the young lord should die!”

“What is his death to us?—we are mourning our mother.”

“Jack! Jack!” said a voice at the door, “ought you not to feel sorrow for others now you are in grief yourself? I had some fear about you, so I followed the messenger. You look ashamed, Jack, and well you may. Would not your mother have been the first to send Childie at the urgent need of a distracted mother?”

“She would. Doctor, I will take Childie myself.”

And carrying her as if she was still almost able to sit on his hand, steadying herself by his thick curls, Jack took his Childie in his arms, and bore her into the carriage. The doctor and house-keeper followed. No word was spoken until Childie, spreading out her little hands all quivering with agitation towards the doctor, murmured,

“Will he die?”

“I cannot tell, Childie; he is injured, I fear. But it is his brain at present that alarms me. He has had a fearful fit of passion, or of shock. We want you to soothe him, as you have done before. When we can quiet him, I shall then be able to see what injury he has received from the fall.”

“An accident?” asked Jack, feeling that he ought to atone for his first coldness and indifference.

“Yes, as far as I can judge—for not even my lady will allow my lord is the cause of it. Now and then my lord takes it into his head to interfere with the education of his son. During their absence at the seaside he has, I believe, been worrying the poor fellow with constant examinations and questions. Finding him not quite so forward as some playfellows of his, he insisted upon increased work being given. My lady is too nervous to interfere, and the tutor dare not. So some mischief has been brewing for a little time, I fear. At all events, the young lord was charmed to return home, and was promised an immediate visit to Fairholme. You were then, Jack, sitting by your dead mother. Though it was a severe disappointment to the boy, yet I must do him the

justice to say, he could only think of your and Childie's sorrow. Being a good deal taken up by this, he neglected some task his father desired him to learn. My lord was sitting on the terrace wall; you were looking out of a window, Mrs. Thomas, were you not?"

"Yes, sir. I heard my lord speaking in extreme anger, and looked out to see whom he was reprov- ing; and at the very moment that I looked out, he raised his riding-whip, and was about to strike Lord Beaufrère. My young lord threw his father's hand up, and, I should say, over-balanced himself, for he fell over the wall; and when we ran to pick him up, he lay all of a heap like, and quite insen- sible, with blood running out of his mouth."

Poor little Childie shook and trembled in her brother's arms, as if some dreadful nightmare pos- sessed her. But not a word did she utter.

Upon arriving at Bifrons, they were taken at once upstairs, Jack still carrying his Childie. The first person they saw was my lord, who, pacing violently up and down the room, was loudly giving one order after another.

"Hush! my lord—hush!" said the doctor. "I must not have a sound."

Really in terror for his son, my lord obeyed.

Childie struggled out of her brother's arms; and while the doctor kept him back and waved his hand for silence, she ran to the bed on which lay the poor boy. Lightly sitting on it, Childie took one of his hands in hers, and began to sing a low little pitiful song. In a few minutes a sort of smile came fluttering to the lips, all blood-stained and set. Then the eyelids moved, and slowly opened.

"It is you—Childie?" said the boy faintly.

"Yes, Silvain, it is Childie? Please to drink this;" as the doctor handed her a cup, with a sign.

"No, I won't!"

"Silvain!"

"I want to die. I can't live and be tormented."

"You will be tormented no longer. Drink it, Silvain."

As Jack told me afterwards, not the fiercest brute could have withstood the voice and pathos with which she spoke to him. He drank it.

"My father was going to strike me, Childie." And a gleam of the wild passion that now and then possessed him convulsed his face.

"That was better than if you had raised your hands against him, Silvain. Besides, he is sorry. Are you not sorry, my lord?"

And whether he would or not, it was just as if compelled by some holy angel to do it, my lord came to his son's bedside, and said,

“I am sorry indeed—very sorry, Silvain.”

“Enough, father—say no more. Go all of you away; I want to sleep. You won't leave me, Childie?”

“I must go to my Father Jack. We are very sorrowful, because there is now no mother in our house.”

“And if you had not come there would have been no son in this house. I was determined to die.”

“No, you will not. Go to sleep now, and I will return in the morning.”

And Childie, with a child's gesture, kissed the poor hot lips of her playfellow. He smiled happily, closed his eyes, and sank at once into a heavy slumber.

“I am sure,” said my lord, in his usual clumsy and unfortunate manner, “we are much obliged to you, my dear;” as he followed Jack downstairs, who was carrying Childie in his arms.

“No thanks, my lord,” returned Jack, frankly; for in fact his good heart had been strongly moved by the picture of that poor boy, once with the pro-

mise of health and strength, as inexhaustible as his own, now lying like a shattered wreck on his bed. It occurred to Jack, even in that moment, to forgive his foolish, rancorous enemy from his heart, for had he not proved his own son's bitterest foe? Loving him too, as doubtless he did—for drops of agony were falling fast from that narrow, receding brow.

“I am sure I am glad to see you at Bifrons once more, Mr. Farrall; pray come again with your sweet little girl. It is my ambition to be on good terms with my neighbours. I wish to set a good example in that respect, as it becomes me to do.”

Jack must speak the truth, no matter to whom or where.

“You deceive yourself, my lord. An hour ago, I would have gone to the world's end sooner than into this house, entirely owing to yourself.”

“Well, well, I am sure I can't say. I was very fond of your father, and am much obliged to your little girl. She seems to be a kind-hearted little creature, I am sure.”

Jack hugged his Childie closer to his big heart, now swelling with the thought that though my lord only called her a “kind-hearted” little crea-

ture, she was in truth a matchless thing, that no other than Jack possessed in the world. He refused the offer of the carriage to take her home, but wrapping her in a little shawl that the housekeeper brought for her, he strode out with his darling nestled in his arms, hatless, but even jubilant.

Yes, even on this, the close of a day that had removed his beloved mother for ever from his sight, Jack experienced one of those emotions of earthly pride and satisfaction that inflate us, in spite of ourselves. His little Childie, his darling, his matchless thing, had enabled him to heap coals of fire on the head of his greatest enemy. The "kind-hearted little creature" had revenged him.

As Jack pressed his Childie closer to him, in the thrill his thought gave him, she passed her arm round his neck, and leaning up to his ear, whispered,

"Mother is pleased with us, Father Jack."

"My darling," he murmured, suddenly abashed in his own mind. He, in his man's exultation had forgotten his mother—she, in the tenderness of the hour, and the good she had done, remembered her.

"I thought it strange she took her mother's death so quietly, Madam," said Jack to me, as he retailed

all that passed the evening before; "but she seems to think her still here amongst us."

"And why should she not, Jack? I people my room, my garden, with the unseen figures of those I love."

Jack shook his head. His was a nature so matter-of-fact, he could realise nothing he did not see or feel.

"I have been to Bifrons this morning; the young lord is better."

"How good of you, Jack!"

"Why, I must confess I thought 'Childie' would fret to know; and she has had a good deal to try her lately, Madam."

"She has, Jack. One can never be too careful of a nature that feels so much and says so little."

"And I have let her go to Bifrons for the day. The doctor is going to examine Silvain, and my lady wanted Childie at hand. Isn't she a wonderful creature, Madam?"

"Who?—my lady?"

"Now, Madam! I do assure you it is quite impossible to resist Childie's ways; and when she takes to coax, God bless my soul! if she asked for my heart out of my body, I'd take the knife and cut it out for her myself."

“But, Jack, she is too sensitive. I fear for the future.”

“Not a bit of it, Madam. See what command she had over herself at our mother’s grave. She never shed a tear, for fear of upsetting me. I had a doubt about letting her go—but truly I wanted the comfort of her dear hand in mine.”

CHAPTER VII.

“ Plus aloës quam mellis habet.”

JUVENAL.

“ The bitter overbalances the sweet.”

SILVAIN'S spine was slightly injured. As he suffered no pain, the mere irksomeness of having to lie always on his back brought a certain panacea with it ; he could do no lessons, and was to be amused all day. A slight return of his fits alarmed the doctor for a while, but in whatever other way his invalid's posture and habits told upon his frame, the effect of his present life on the brain was most satisfactory. Gradually his mind seemed to enlarge, and become capable of reasoning. The effect of this was to control the fits of irritability, until they not only absolutely left him, but he had not to restrain any rising impulse to indulge in them.

I come to the time in my journal when he was seventeen years old, and the change from boy to man

proceeded rapidly. In nothing was this more conspicuous than the delight he now took in studies that before he had abhorred. At his own request, he was provided with the different tutors he fancied to have, and the general bias of his mind assumed a tone at once high and exalted. The little, loving Childie was his playfellow as before, when he permitted himself to relax at all. She who had been so much to him in his childish days, was now only the companion of his idle moments.

This lulled me into security. The welfare of Jack and Childie was the principal business of my life, and I could not but feel that some unknown danger lurked in the constant companionship of so lovely a little being as Childie, with one so dependent on love and care as Lord Beaufrère. He could not but love her, as we all did, because it was impossible not to do so, and she, from the tenderness and susceptibility of her nature, thought more of those who suffered than of those who needed nothing. 'Tis true she was but a child, but she was one of those precocious children with whom first impressions were all-powerful, because imbibed with reason and common sense to recommend them.

Jack, after that visit to Bifrons, kept up a sort

of half surly, half friendly greeting with my lord. The latter, subdued and conscience-smitten about his son, was, for a short time in his life, somewhat quiet and reasonable. Consequently, the two years which passed after the death of my dear Eleanor were calm and uneventful ones.

I had begun to see, to feel that, even in taking every creature that I loved, still the Lord had been very gracious to me, giving me the love and companionship of two such beings as Jack and Childie. The little one passed her mornings with me, during which I taught her all of women's lore that I knew myself. In doing this I could not but marvel at the extraordinary gifts of the little creature in some things, and her dulness in others. She was growing into womanhood of the purest, most womanly type. Of vanity, and dress, and show, with all the accompaniments of inflation and worldliness, she had not a trace. As gentle and simple as the little innocent Childie, who sat so confidently on Father Jack's hand, she yet was the strong-hearted, self-sacrificing, intelligent woman, when occasion demanded the exertion. Oh! my little Childie, were you indeed but an angel in disguise, sent down to do good to erring, obstinate, passionate man, gentlest, sweetest, purest Childie?

With you by my side, now grave, now gay, I lost the recollection of the past—I lamented the days flying like a weaver's shuttle, because, Childie, old age was creeping on a-pace, and how long might I look on your sweet face, watch day by day new witcheries rising to entrance our hearts. And if I loved you so, how was it with your Father Jack? Time must tell, and Time speeded on. At one time Jack consulted me as to the propriety of giving Childie the advantage of masters for dancing, singing, and languages.

For once in her life the little thing sulked and moped. As for Father Jack gainsaying her, he could not do it, though he went so far as to argue with her, and ask her if she did not desire to be like other little ladies, accomplished and fashionable. Childie shivered at his words, the only mode she had of expressing dissatisfaction.

“I am no little lady of high degree, I am Father Jack's Childie. I only would dance at the sound of his voice, and sing when he says he can do nothing without me. As for fashion and accomplishments, they do not belong to the work I have to do.”

And we felt she was right. Lovely after her own little innocent fashion, wild and sweet as a

bird, we thought it not wrong to leave so pure a heart to the promptings of its own nature. Though we did not know it, or, if we did, allow it, Childie ruled us all.

At the end of two years Lord Beaufrère's injury assumed the permanent shape of deformity. He grew, but the growth was only to distort his figure still more. Sensitive and nervous, perhaps with a pardonable vanity, this distortion of the spine was kept a profound secret, at his own request. Even Childie, who was his most constant companion except his mother and his favourite servant Swaine, was not aware of the extent of the disfigurement. Some whispers of it were bruited about, and on one occasion the poor young fellow said to Childie,

“Do you love people for their looks or their virtue, Childie?”

“I think of neither,” she replied. “I like them for themselves, and if they suffer they have all my pitiful love.”

“Then you will love me at all hazard?” he asked.

“At all hazard,” she replied, her eyes beaming with the truth of her words.

“Now, my father thinks differently; he seems to look upon me with horror.”

“Because he is reminded of his own work.”

“It may be so.”

But they were wrong. My lord, having indulged in the hope of being famous through his son, by no means desired to be so from the notoriety of being the father of a hunchback, with the additional rumour that he owed his deformity to a blow from that father. He shrank from this, as a man might shrink from the flame of a furnace. Not even the fact that his son could now very well take his place among the cleverest and most excellent of the earth, soothed over the fatal fact that he was a strange and misshapen being to look at.

The effect of this disappointment was not so much caused by remorse, or qualms of conscience, as might reasonably be expected, but that he could not bear the world to have it in its power to gibe at one of the sacred scions of nobility. Indeed he could not bear to look at his son himself, which was so far beneficial to Silvain, that he escaped all the worry and torment that had hitherto so marred his life. His father left him very much to himself, sometimes not seeing him for days; and the effect of this absence was to leave Silvain to pursue a life that was both beneficial and noble. As he approached manhood, either from over-study, or a change in the current of his life, he was again at-

tacked with fits. To remedy whatever evil had brought them on, he was ordered abroad, and went there accompanied by his mother, his doctor, and his faithful servant Swaine.

My lord, during their absence, busied himself a good deal with his neighbours' affairs, and once more came into collision with Jack. He revived, in an ill moment, the boundaries of Bifrons Park. It is strange how we let ourselves be governed by the mere fact of a person's manner, without reference to the matter.

This time my lord did not desire to have the whole of Fairlie estate, but only that part which ran on the side of the great London Road, and which adjoined his land. This road he designed to be the boundary between himself and Jack. With that arrogance of rank, his peculiar foible, and an insolence of temper, his particular vice, my lord made all the necessary preparations for effecting the exchange; and Jack's first intimation of the fact was a visit from my lord's agent, with the new maps of the estate made out, the value of the land calculated, with a proposed additional sum as a *douceur*, in case Mr. Farrall required it, and the money for both in his pocket.

Jack was passionate, that I have allowed. His

temper rose at the proposal, couched in words that seemed to imply Jack had not a voice in the matter. The maps, the agreement, were all so many further aggravations; but when the agent, with a smirk that said plainly, "This is irresistible," showed the *douceur*, and pulled the money out of his pocket, I am afraid to tell after what fashion Jack drove him from his door.

CHAPTER VIII.

“Animum nunc huc celerem,
Nunc dividit illuc.”

VIRGIL.

“This way and that he turns his anxious mind.”

DRYDEN.

IT was just at this period that my lady wrote to beg I would pay her a visit, and bring Childie with me, if her brother permitted. “To tell you the real truth,” wrote my lady, “Silvain has become so sensitive as to his personal appearance, that it is beginning to prey upon his mind. His dear face is still as handsome as ever; but undoubtedly his deformity increases, and will do so, I am told, until he has stopped growing. He will be of age next year, and his father will expect him to go out and mix in the world. I am therefore advised to begin to accustom him to society, that we may have no disturbance of brain when he has to do his father’s bidding. I have told him all

this, and he replied, 'My father will never wish me to show so hideous an object as I am to the world.' 'But you are mistaken, dear Silvain, you are by no means the object you fancy.' 'You have been with me so long, mother, you do not see it.' In vain I tell him there is no eye like a mother's—he will not listen to me. But last night, after a long argument, he said, 'Ask Madam and Childie to come and see me, but do not tell them more of me than that I want to see them. If they perceive no difference, are not surprised, shocked, I will endeavour to do what you wish.' So come, dear friend; and if your good Jack will but spare her, bring the dear little creature to whom I already owe so much."

I gave this letter to Jack to read, without preface from me of its contents. Of course, as he read, he made the exclamation I expected,

"By no means—Childie shall have no more to do with any of them. A man to offer me a bribe to part with my land, to expect that I should take more than its worth, why, Madam, I have only one regret—namely, that it was the agent, and not my lord himself, whom I turned out of my presence, neck and crop."

"Jack, Jack, be moderate! Remember, my

lord is not altogether a man—he is very poorly-gifted.”

“So he is—but to offer me a bribe. By Heavens! Madam, I shall never get over that insult as long as I live.”

“Then you are not so sensible as I gave you credit for, Jack. We are worried by gnats, but we don’t fight them, we keep out of their way.”

“I mean to keep out of his way, and neither I or mine shall have more to do with them. Thank God! I am an independent man now—I want nothing from a living soul but to be left alone.”

“No love from Madam?—no respect from your neighbours?”

“Pooh! Madam—Fairlie and Fairholme are one and the same thing; and as for my neighbours, I should hope they know the difference between Jack Farrall’s word and my Lord of Bifrons’ oath!”

“Hush! Jack, don’t be boastful—go on with the letter.”

Jack so far had something of the same nature as his sister, that he was pitiful, especially to weakness or sorrow.

“God bless my soul!—poor fellow!—and has it come to that? Madam, had that boy received

fair play, he would have been a strong, hearty fellow like myself. Taller, I should fancy, though perhaps not so full of muscle. It requires work to make muscle. Poor fellow! and to have all the horror of knowing his own father did it!—that pitiful creature who offered me a bribe! Well, Madam, what do you say—ought I to let Childie go?”

“It would be very kind of you, Jack; but I am always scrupulous as to advising you. I would much prefer you should do exactly what you like yourself.”

“Like!—of course I do not like parting with the child; but, as she is ever repeating to me, we must think of other folks—and I do pity that poor fellow from my heart!”

“So do I—and his mother. At the same time, Jack, it behoves you and me to think of one thing—Lord Beaufrère is now grown up. Childie, as we both know, and the whole world about us declare, is singularly lovely and engaging—he might fall in love with her!”

“Ha!—ha! what a joke it would be; and for him to ask my lord for leave to marry that lout, Farmer Farrall’s, sister! That’s what he calls me, Madam—a lout of a farmer! I with blood in my

veins of which one drop is older, better, purer than all his, running in his meagre little body."

"My dear Jack, would you have me think you vain and spiteful?—two feminine sins."

"I am a fool! I beg your pardon, Madam, but as to your fear about Lord Beaufrère, he may fall in love with Childie and welcome—I can't see what difference that will make to her."

"It will, Jack—it will. She is so tender-hearted."

"But that won't make her love him, unless I chose; and as my lord would rather see his son in his coffin than married to my Childie, I would rather see her go to her mother than consent. Besides, you forget how sensible she is; she prefers being a farmer's dear little housekeeper to all the fine things great ladies do and like. She would not learn to dance, you know; and she won't let me buy her a silk frock if it was ever so. She fall in love with a lord! It is my belief she would prefer your garden-boy."

"It is not a question of rank or station, but of sympathy. Love is a very curious thing."

"Thank God! mine is straightforward enough. I love Childie, and would die for her—and for the matter of that, Madam, you could ask me nothing I would not do for you."

“I thank you, Jack, and I believe you fully; but of the love of which I am speaking you know nothing.”

“I suppose I don’t, and, moreover, never shall—it’s not in me.”

“And do you wish Childie to be the same?”

“At present. I have not thought of it, she is so young; and somehow (I may as well make a clean breast of it to you, Madam), when it has crossed my mind that I should like Childie’s child to have Fairlie—Lord! what a thundering state of jealousy I have put myself into when I considered she would have a husband! I am afraid I should hate the fellow, and perhaps do him some harm.”

“You must marry yourself, Jack, and have a child of your own. I know a good many of our neighbours who would like to have handsome, manly, fine-hearted Jack Farrall for a husband. One in particular, not so far off.”

Jack blushed like a girl.

“She is a very pretty woman,” answered he frankly; “and very good-natured—too good-natured to those boys of hers.”

Jack’s nature was so honest and truthful, he could not fence off any inuendo.

Mrs. Brooks Browne had just come to settle in the village, and had not been there a month before she made up her mind that she would be Mrs. Farrall. The arts of widows have been celebrated by the ablest pens. To the best of her ability Mrs. Brooks Browne meant to essay those arts. And when I considered she was all Jack said—a very pretty woman, moreover, extremely good-natured, and that Jack was so simple and unsophisticated—also, that love begets love, and that Mrs. Brooks Browne was not very shame-faced in showing her love for Jack,—all these things bred in me the fear she might gain her end.

I say “fear” under protest. I certainly did not know enough of Mrs. Brooks Browne to say why I feared for the consequences of her becoming Mrs. Farrall. But it was so strong a feeling, or intuition, that I began to dislike the poor woman, and deride her in my heart, for her open love-making to the man she called, with a widow’s privilege, “dear Jack Farrall.”

It would seem I had my fears for Jack, as well as Childie. As regarded the latter, we agreed to let her decide for herself about my lady’s invitation.

Jack! Jack! does it ever cross your mind how

carelessly we settled her fate that day? But no, we had little hand in it. It must have happened. Let me take the poor miserable comfort to my heart, that I gave warning sufficient. I have borne enough, without charging my conscience with this!

CHAPTER IX.

“Nunquam aliud natura aliud sapientia dixit.”

JUVENAL.

“Good sense and nature always speak the same.”

CHILDIE was not one of those people who go into ecstasies of delight at what pleases them. But when the question was put to her as to whether she would like to pay this visit, a flush coloured her cheeks, her eyes scintillated a radiant joy, though she said no more than,

“Can my Father Jack spare me?”

“Ay, my darling, and welcome, if you can cure—but, Lord! I am not to tell of that—if you can help my lady at all.”

“Is Silvain ill again?” asked Childie.

“No, he is better than ever he has been. And next year he will be of age, and is to come home.”

“How glad he will be! he loves Bifrons.”

“He will be happy if his father permits it.”

“Ah,” sighed Childie, “his father can hurt him

no more now. There are happy days in store for him now."

"Please God," responded Jack, who always endorsed whatever Childie said.

So we made preparations to go, and Jack gave me many a gigantic wink as we discoursed of the dresses Childie was to take on this her first entry into another world than that in which she was born. Childie was still against the silk frocks.

"I am only Farmer Jack's Childie. Wherever I go I will wear my cotton frocks."

Jack's wink nearly threw him off his balance.

"Still, Childie, I should have a silk frock, perhaps two; because to be as neat and elegant as Farmer Jack's Childie likes to be, we shall have to take a very large box of cotton frocks, and there may be fears as to getting them washed."

"You are right, Madam," answered Childie. "Father Jack, if you have so much money to spare, I will have a black silk frock to wear in the morning, and a white one for the evening."

"My darling, Father Jack can give you a dozen of either."

And Father Jack was thanked after the manner of Childie. When they had done kissing, I went on—

“I would also recommend, Childie, that you now begin to do up your hair in womanly fashion. So many curls floating about, while we are travelling, you will not only find inconvenient, but singular.”

“Shall I cut them off?” asked Childie.

“God forbid!” cried Jack in alarm; and then gave me another wink, by way of reminding me of his opinion.

“No, no, not a curl removed. But I will ask Mrs. Brooks Browne to give you a lesson in putting it up.”

“She is as neat about the head as any woman I ever saw, though I don’t notice them much. Pretty black hair, too, and she’s a monstrous good-natured woman.”

“Yes, she is, Jack, though I like Fanny Hazlewood better; still she is very untidy, and her hair as limp as flax.”

Thus did I credit Mrs. Brooks Browne with what was her due, yet gave her a slap, as it were. Fanny Hazlewood was our parson’s wife. Between her and Mrs. Brooks Browne was no love lost. But of them anon.

“Also Childie must have a bonnet.”

Childie opened her mouth, as if to remonstrate.

“Of course she must have a bonnet. I long to

see her in it," broke in Jack, before she could say a word.

In short, we made out a great many wants for Childie, and the more I required the more Jack seemed pleased. Mrs. Brooks Browne justified my opinion of her good-nature and taste, by dressing Childie's hair in so sweet a fashion, that lovely as she looked before, she could not but blush herself with pleasure at the picture she presented. Jack was in ecstasies, and insisted upon her wearing her silk dresses and bonnet when they came home, that he might see her in them.

"Lord, Madam, I could not think of my prayers for one minute in church, I am ashamed to say, she looked such a darling love in her new clothes. A lord, indeed! why, there is not a lord in the land but might be proud of her; and she belongs to me ever since she was an hour old, and clasped my big finger! I thought her a wonderful little thing then, Madam, but did you ever expect her to grow the beauty she is?"

"And such a darling, Jack!"

"Ay—a darling—a darling such as no one else ever had before."

Truly the change from child to woman was marvellously improving to our little Childie. Her wo-

man's garments suited the grave, serious expression of her face, which, however, dimpled into childhood's smiles at the smallest provocation.

Thus did we deck out our lamb for sacrifice. We had not told Childie of the young lord's wish to undergo the ordeal of any surprise she might feel at his appearance, but it never occurred to me to think of the effect upon him of her improvement. How we suffer our reason and judgment to be thrust aside for feeling !

The parting between Jack and his Childie had something in it prophetic. It was so much harder to bear than they anticipated. I am not altogether sure they would have parted ; but on a sudden impulse Jack said,

“ I will come and see you, Childie ; yes—I will come and see my Childie in a fortnight.”

A lesser time has been known to upset kingdoms. But Childie was comforted, and after an hour's travelling, dried her eyes, and said in her usual childish fashion to me,

“ Mother is pleased when we make sacrifices.”

Though I made no reply to this, it set me thinking upon the strange mixture in Childie's character ; at times so childish, at others so intelligent.

We were to stay a few days in London, during

which the little thing attracted a great deal of notice, not only from her beauty, but from the sweetness and vivacity of her expression. After one or two drives in the Park, during which we were accosted by my lord, who bowed low to Childie, as to some fair debutante just ushered into the great world, without the least recollection she was that lout of a farmer's sister, Childie made many shrewd remarks on all she saw.

“This is senseless work, Madam. Is nothing else done in London—but to dress, and show oneself?”

“No, Childie, many perhaps of those whom you see now are truly excellent and good; and after showing themselves here, so gay and fashionable, spend the rest of the day in doing good deeds for the poor and miserable.”

“That is the only reason I should like to be a great lady—to have the power a great lady has to do good.”

Childie wrote every day to Jack, and, as somewhat was the fashion in those days, brought her letters to me to read. Has Jack got them now? They were the sweetest letters, full of the divinest thoughts and fondest expressions that ever rose in a gentle heart. They would comfort him now to read, methinks.

So we journeyed on to the south of France. I was much beset in my thought about the poor young lord. If Childie should say or do—but I might trust her. Her intuition was so exquisite, she could not, under any circumstances, pain the most sensitive heart.

We arrived, and were warmly welcomed by my lady. She had seen but little of my lord of late, and had from her son imbibed some of those large and ennobling thoughts that make us long to be free from the smaller ones of earth. And yet on earth are borne the occasions for them.

Silvain was out driving. On his return we greeted him from the window.

“May I go?—do let me go and help him from his carriage?” asked Childie.

My lady assented by look more than word. The beautiful beaming face of his little play-mate greeted Silvain as he was lifted from the carriage.

“Do, Swaine, suffer me to support him,” said Childie.

And with his hand on her shoulder, but by no means so tall—misshapen beyond all my forebodings—Lord Beaufrère, sadly misnamed, entered the room.

While I could hardly look on him without tears, Childie seemed to see nothing, know nothing, but that her playfellow was once more the object of her care and love.

CHAPTER X.

“ Quod verum atque decens curo et rogo, et omnis in
hoc sum.” HORACE.

“ What right, what fit, what true we justly call,
Let this be all my care, for this is all.”

POPE.

“ **H**AS she made no remark to you, Madam?—
does she not see his deformity? He
begged me to ask you this himself,” said my lady.

“ Not a word—not a sign has she given me in
private that she regards him as different from any
other person. In former days she would call him
‘poor Silvain,’ and her manner to him, and speaking
of him, was full of a pitiful tenderness. Now it is
altogether different. Even in her letters to her
brother, which she brings to me to read, she says,
‘Silvain is so altered, oh! my Father Jack, so
clever, so good, he makes the tears come into my
eyes as he talks of all he means to do (if God will
give him leave) for the good of mankind. He

makes his rank noble by the noble way in which he means to use it. I think, Father Jack, that, after you, there is no one I should like to be so much as Silvain ; and he is so good to your little Childie, still so childish.' ”

“ Oh ! that he could have seen that letter ! In spite of his superiority in intellect and knowledge, so that he surprises the cleverest people, we must pardon him, Madam, if he is a little sensitive as to the misfortune of his appearance.”

“ Beg him to talk to Childie of it. I am not without hopes she may so influence him as to make him see how little personal appearance has to do with his happiness.”

As we sat not far distant from them, on the terrace of the garden, we overheard this conversation :

“ Childie,” began Silvain, “ you seem to ignore altogether my deformity. In talking of the future good I am to do in the world, do you not think to be so hideous, so unlike men, it were better for me to exclude myself for ever ?”

Thus abruptly questioned, it almost seemed as if Childie must say, or admit that he was what he fancied—painful to look at. She answered simply, and at once—

“What does God say?”

Silvain was silent.

“God is not man, Childie,” he answered at last.

“But he took on him the nature of man.”

“Still, Childie, there are people in the world who are antagonistic to God.”

“And, therefore, not to be regarded.”

“But, Childie, do you never look on me with grief—dismay?”

“On you!—I am dismayed at myself sometimes. I look on you to be encouraged to go on, and bear likewise.”

“It is so hard to be an object of disgust, Childie.”

“Hush! in thinking thus—in saying these words, you break a Commandment—you are undutiful to your father.”

“Why to my father?”

“Your father did not mean to hurt you. If you fret about it, you remind him always of his deed. If I was your father, I should suffer more than you, Silvain, from remorse.”

“I think you are right, Childie. I forget to feel for my father in my own calamity. Of course, Childie, if I was in my father’s place, I should never know how to forgive myself.”

From that time Silvain endeavoured to forget his deformity, and to speak and act, as far as he could, as if he was as other men.

“There is one thing that would add greatly to his happiness,” confided my lady to me, “and that is, to marry. I can see that he already looks to domestic happiness as the one thing that will atone, or, rather, repair the unhappiness of his early life. He is fond of children, and to educate and guide little beings to become what he had hoped to be will be his great delight. He fondly thinks, and thinks truly, I am persuaded, that his children will regard him as their chiefest good and benefactor, and that, however deformed, he will be that being they love best in the world.”

“A noble ambition,” I replied—“may we see it realised !”

And though I could not say it to his mother, yet methought Silvain’s ideas as to the bringing up of children were born out of the misery he had endured at the hands of his father.

Even as this thought ran through my mind, another rose in strong vigour, prompting me to ask my lady, if such were the hopes and aspirations of her son, were we right to place before him the sweet perfections of Childie! What other

woman gave such promise of being the wife he required?—gentle, tender, intelligent; or the mother he would desire for his children—pious, wise, yet of joyous, happy nature? Was she not almost born to be the comforter, soother, lover of one smitten as he was?

This was my conviction, growing every day into a certainty. It was but my duty, out of love to Eleanor's children, to probe and ascertain the feelings of my lady on this point. I laid all that was in my heart bare before her, not concealing that my motive for so doing was care for Childie, and, through her, for Jack. My lady has not yet freed herself from a sort of awe of my lord—or, at least, if not awe, that species of deference that she has been so long accustomed to pay him. Neither is she capable of weighing consequences against deeds. She acts, and only reflects when the action done imperatively demands a reason. I saw she was a little surprised. But the surprise rapidly gave place to fear.

“My lord—what would my lord say?” she murmured.

“He would never consent—that is my conviction.”

“I fear not—he looks high for Silvain. He

has talked much of increasing our political influence by marriage."

"Doubtless—somewhat after the manner of royalty—an expedient marriage is to be considered, rather than one of affection."

"Affection!" repeated my lady; "my poor Silvain!—all he requires is affection—love for himself."

"That will be difficult to find in one who does not know how much the beauty of his character makes up for any disfigurement."

"We ought to begin at once, and introduce him to those whom his father might like him to marry."

"Yes; they should have been brought up as familiarly with him as Childie has been."

"I wish we had thought of it sooner—I have never forgotten the power Childie had to soothe and quiet him the night of the accident. It ought to have warned me of the influence a woman would have over him."

"I should write to my lord, and ask his advice about it. I really think the sooner he marries, the happier for you all."

"My lord is coming here the end of the month. I fancy I can tell him better than writing on such a subject."

“Meantime, dear lady, I have warned you as regards Childie. It would be as well to keep a sort of watch over them both. We should never forgive ourselves if we let them love only to tear them asunder. Childie will love but once in her life, if she loves at all.”

“Dear, pretty Childie, for my own part, there is no one whom I should like for my daughter-in-law better. She is more lovely and refined than almost any one I ever saw—I should really be proud of her if she was my child. But above everything would she make my Silvain happy; and that weighs more with me than any other thing.”

My lady talked, as was usual with her, out of book. She ran away with the sentiment of an idea, regardless of its truth or significance. My little Childie must have a more watchful guardian of her happiness in me. On the first symptom of anything that in modern language is termed flirting, I would speak to my Lord Beaufrère, as his grandmother might do, honestly and firmly. And if I saw in Childie that sweet confusion of happiness that reveals what the heart dare not speak to itself, we would go home to Father Jack. The silk dresses should be laid aside for good; the

cotton frocks daintily doffed, with the only ornament allowed—pretty ribbons. And with wise and discreet airs, Farmer Jack's little housekeeper should trip about her dairy and house happy in her duties, happier in being with her Father Jack, happiest of all in feeling perfect contentment with her lot. And I should look on, thanking God that He had replaced those I had lost, making the evening of my life happy with love and peace; while, if Eleanor hovered unseen near her children, she would murmur thanks in the night air to her friend Katherine.

CHAPTER XI.

“ I take it to be a principal rule of life, not to be too much addicted to any one thing.”

Spectator.

THERE are few amongst us who have not experienced the influence of sunshine and scenery as affecting the actions of our lives. And by some secret sympathy, evermore, a sacred time, an exquisite hour, an expected good, has been associated in our minds with the scent of some flower, the remembrance of a view, or the recollection of a happy sunshiny day, given us to understand the very luxury of living. And in contrast, a howling wistful wind, a dark and gloomy day, a whispering of many storms and tempests, collecting and gathering their forces together, brings the shudder with it of awful grief, and human passion, and ecstasy of woe.

It was on a day sunny and fair that I first noticed the dawn of some unusual emotion stirring

the heart of Childie. The day was wholly made up of luxurious sweets, beautiful sights, and luscious, dreamy happiness. The sky seemed composed of blue ether, tremulous with soft zephyrs, and the fluttering of birds' wings. Wafted about was the incense from a thousand flowers, while the plashing of cool water made nature's music. If ever there was an exquisite moment in life it was this. We sat gazing at the landscape in a silent adoration of the power of it to make us happy. If my old blood was stirred within me, could I wonder at the influence of the hour upon those whose hearts were just realizing the hopes and inspirations of youth—who were beginning to feel that enthusiasm which is so beautiful in the young? My lady was sitting beneath the slight awning that swung from one tree to another over the couch on which her son lay. Childie was perched on the lowermost branch of a cedar-tree, looking like a delicate fairy queen, reclining in a verdant bower. Exquisitely pretty was her attitude, the bough sweeping with its rich fringe of foliage down on to the sward, cradling her little form, as if some nymph was resting there.

The group was before me, making the centre of the picture that delighted me. Suddenly I

noticed the stillness of Childie's gaze. It was fixed upon Silvain, who, lying on his back, was so placed that nothing was seen of him but the noble head, enriched with those fair curls that arrange themselves in prettiest fashion; his delicate profile, like a woman's for fairness and delicacy, was defined only by the deep blue of the sea. It seemed cut in alabaster, until, moved by the stir of some noble thought, kindled by the book he was reading, a flush tinged it from brow to throat, his eyes opened wide, sparkling with animation, his lips parted with a radiant smile. What a beautiful face it was! As if in answer to the thought that spoke in his face, Childie's also flushed crimson, her eyes dilated with excitement, her lips moved with some thrill that made them tremulous; she seemed like one expecting, nay, receiving a measureless boon of happiness.

I withdrew my eyes for a moment, for my heart seemed to close as if it would cease to beat. I felt like a lost wanderer. I must pause to recover my breath ere I dare look again at what was before me. It might be a fearful precipice. And so in gazing round once more on the beautiful landscape, the tremulous sky, so blue, so ethereal, so sensitive of the air and sunshine, this scene became indelibly

impressed on my mind, with the fact that Childie loved.

Loved after the fashion of us women, for life and death. Loved for aye and for ever. Loved with that mightiness, that all other loves would be swept away before the power of it. Father Jack had lost his Childie. No more watching for me, no further use in it, no need to take precaution—all precautions were useless. The jewel was stolen, the casket I meant to guard, empty.

“See,” said Silvain, “how a true poet paints a scene, the truth of which lies open before us. And he was a man who lived in cities.”

He read aloud, with exquisite voice and pathos, the poetry he admired.

“Ah! what a gift is genius,” he exclaimed; “it is a boon straight from the skies, fit for gods.”

“But not for men; at least, not for their happiness, Silvain.”

“How do you prove that, Madam?”

“By their lives. Genius is so far different from talent, that it absorbs the nature of the one gifted with it. His genius has to be to him affections, duties, happiness. More than that, it stands sponsor for sins—perhaps, maybe, the panderer to vice. It reigns so supreme and entirely, that the

smaller virtues, the common-place requirements of reason and judgement, find no place in its composition. It has happened that genius even despises the lesser sins, and prides itself in the enormity of its villainy."

"You mean, Madam, that when a man has the gift of genius, it takes possession of him to the exclusion of everything else?"

"It is hard to say so—I began by asserting genius disturbs a man's happiness."

"Yet, how noble, when it bursts through every boundary of place, education, position, infirmity, to have such power that you make your name immortal—that, let your sins and infirmities be what they may, the splendour of your genius obliterates them all. A genius that glows with such a halo of light, all men see it, and adore; and, Madam, as they adore, they find themselves ennobled, and taken up out of the dust and ashes of this world's work, elevated towards that heaven which men are sent into the world to attain."

"All that is true, Silvain; but genius is not a gift I would care to possess."

"I half agree with Silvain," said my lady, who, as usual, scarce understood the matter discussed.

But Silvain's eyes were bent upon Childie. He had no need to speak, she understood what his eyes said.

"The genius which does good to mankind," said Childie, "is given for that purpose, and should be used. It does not seem to matter what becomes of the happiness of the mortal gifted with this genius. He was born to execute it, as martyrs die for their faith."

"And a glorious death—or destiny," answered Silvain, again looking at Childie.

"Yes," she replied, "to sacrifice one's own ease and happiness for the good of multitudes is a high destiny; but to live for the good of one or two, is in the power of us all."

"Ah! Childie," he half sighed, "that is what you will do—it is what I should like to do."

"Talent," I remarked, to give a turn to the conversation, "is a much more useful gift."

"More common," said Silvain; "moreover, by application or industry one can overtake, or at least attempt to rival, talent."

"There are many people whom I have had cause to love and admire, possessed of neither talent, industry, nor application. Simply they are good, warm-

hearted people, who, by a certain charm of manner, a sympathetic nature, demand our love, and make us respect them."

"And they deserve both; indeed, much as I have praised genius, and greatly as I admire talent, I must give the palm over both to a simple, honest, hearty nature, that is as guileless as it is true."

"My Father Jack," murmured Childie.

"Yes, he exemplifies what I say—we never at home hear any name but his, if a question arises in which an honest judgment is required."

"Your dear father is a little prejudiced, Silvain?"

"Hush! mother; my father's judgment has had a twist given it. Jack has all he wants, and we poor, weak creatures of wealth and rank find it hard to bear disappointment. Jack is quite right not to part with what he values, merely for a lord's whim. Nevertheless, I don't despair of seeing them friends before they die. I have been long thinking of a plan to make them so, and if it succeeds, it has this advantage, that in doing this good it makes my happiness."

What did Silvain mean by this? Was there a glance of intelligence exchanged between him and Childie? I think not—nay, I am sure of it. Even

if he had spoken to her of love, such was her nature, her character, she would have frankly told his mother or myself. I tormented myself uselessly.

CHAPTER XII.

“*Spes incerta futuri.*”

VIRGIL.

“Hopes and fears in equal balance laid.”

DRYDEN.

JACK fulfilled his promise, and came to see Childie. Great, ruddy, manly English Jack, who strode about the foreign town as if he was king of it, and laughed out his hearty laugh in the streets as if he had a mind to let strangers see what beef and work made an Englishman do. Yet was he concerned about Childie.

“She looks as well—nay, better than I ever saw her, Madam; but she has such a wistful look in her eyes, as if she had done something at which I should be vexed. Lord love her, she can’t vex me, if she tried ever so much. I like to be put out for her. Don’t you remember, Madam, what I said when she was born?—it may have sounded then as if it was too much to expect of me, or that

I would never do it. But not only can I do it, but I would do a thousand times more. I said I would be pounded to death for her. Pounded to death!—pooh! that's nothing."

What was I to say to Jack? Moreover, my woman's nature forbade me the supposition that love was awakened in her heart before Silvain's. But I was not kept long in suspense. Childie was seated with me down on the sea-shore, when we saw Jack coming down the rocky steps at rather more than his usual head-long speed. He came straight to Childie, and took her in his arms, gazing into her face with the same somewhat sad, wistful expression he had bewailed in her.

"My Childie," he said at length, "your Father Jack's own Childie, who took possession of all the heart he had, when you were but an hour old, by merely the clasp of your tiny fingers—oh! my Childie, there is a man seeking your love, wanting my Childie from me—wanting you for his wife!" And his voice became broken, great tears rose up, and fell in quick succession on her drooping head. "Madam," he continued, "you know my thoughts—you know that I have considered Childie's marriage, but—but her husband! Well, well, let that be—I could not hate him—no, no.

Am I not here, at his own request, to plead with Childie for him—to offer her his love? And I do it, Childie—yes, I keep my promise, because it was noble of him to wait until I came—to wait until he knew whether he could be better or worse. He has loved her always, Madam, from the first moment he met her in your garden. And, Childie, he says you were born for him, not me, because he is afflicted, and I am—what I am.”

Childie’s arm was round her brother’s neck in a passionate embrace, as if in answer to this.

“You think the same, do you, Childie? Now let us sit down, and hide your face, if I may not see it, for I have much to say, and the Lord help me to do what is right, and the best for my darling! But let me hear this before I proceed. Silvain says you love him, Childie. He knows it, and feels it, though no words have passed between you. Father Jack must know if his Childie loves Lord Beaufrère.”

She murmured a word in his ear.

“Madam, do you remember how I laughed at the idea, and here it is true. Childie, I thought you would never love anyone like your father Jack.” And his voice trembled, his whole frame

quivered, as the earth trembles under the shock of an earthquake. For Jack was so human. It is at moments like this that even the strongest heart loses its balance. For a second of time there rose in Jack's mind a sort of muster-roll of all the wealth of love that he had poured upon Childie. There was nothing of selfishness in it—no memory of anything he had foregone for her sake—no serving up of sacrifices—simply he had bestowed on her every affection he possessed, and required nothing but hers in return. He must be forgiven if he said, with as much bitterness as pathos,

“You love him more than me, child.”

“’Tis a different love,” exclaimed Childie, showing us a flushed and tear-stained face quivering with emotion. “Oh! my Father Jack, I love you as one loves that which no other possesses—my pride—my glory—my Father Jack! He is only second to my God in my heart. But does not that God, our merciful Father, love us in different fashion from our love for each other—a tender, pitiful love, full of care, of watchfulness?—such is my new love.”

“I can understand that, Childie; but am I right to put such a care on you?”

“Listen, my Father Jack. Madam will tell

you that in the hearts of little maidens there is ever rising the thought of what good they can do here and there in the world,—for mostly men have to do the work of the world, and women the ministering. And I said often to myself, my Father Jack wants nothing from me but love, and kisses, and playful ways; he is so strong, I can do nothing for him—so sensible, I cannot help him to be wiser. I am his pet, his darling. Happy to be so—too happy; but my heart was so large it kept whispering to me I ought to do my woman's work; I must not be contented to be my Father Jack's darling, I must do some good."

"My darling, you were always busy about some good deed or another."

"But can you tell how I felt, Father Jack, when I saw that the sound of my voice soothed pain and anguish?—that at my touch the warm blood would flow vigorously, when at other times it was slow and feeble?—that a smile had power to soothe, a look to please? It seemed to me that I felt God had provided me with my woman's work."

"May be you are right, Childie. I don't pretend to fight with the will of my Maker."

"But I thought of you, my Father Jack, amid

it all. I was ever putting my Father Jack foremost in my thoughts, because of our mother who gave me to him. At last my heart said to me—”

“What did it say, Childie?—don’t fear to tell me.”

“It said, it is like the noble heart of my Father Jack to be glad he has reared up a comforter for a man who has always been his enemy; to rejoice that he makes his son happy—by giving him that he loves best in the world.”

Jack tore up the tares just sprouting out of his heart.

“Childie, have your will. If my lord consents, I will give you to be his son’s wife.”

And the two clasped each other in so close an embrace, their tears mingled in one stream.

“My dear, good Jack,” said I after a while, “have you told my lady?”

“Of course I have—that is, my lady was present; she heard all that Silvain said to me.”

“And did she make no objection?”

“None in the least; she was most anxious for Silvain to marry, and would like him to have Childie for his wife sooner than any other person.”

“And did she say nothing of my lord?”

“Of course we all know well enough what my lord will say. However, I have it in my power to bribe him.”

“Father Jack!” exclaimed Childie.

“Yes, Childie, I can bribe him, never fear. Madam knows that what I would do for you is just what a man can do if he chooses.”

“But not with Fairlie—oh! no, not with Fairlie, that is for my Father Jack’s own son—a Farrall of Fairlie.”

“Pooh, child!” said honest Jack, blushing; “I shall not marry. I always meant Fairlie to go to your son—didn’t I, Madam?”

“But still, Jack, you designed in your heart that Childie’s child should be Farrall of Fairlie; and I do not see how that can be now.”

“No, I suppose not. But this is not a matter I care you to hear more about, Childie; besides, I promised to take you to Silvain if you gave a favourable answer. Lord, how I did hope I might go back alone to him!”

“Go, Father Jack!” and the child sprang out of his arms.

Jack looked at her wistfully, longingly, and she returned his look with love beaming in every feature.

“Come,” said he at length, with infinite sadness,
“come, for truly I do not dare to face him without
you.”

CHAPTER XIII.

“They that do much themselves deny
Receive more blessings from the sky.”

CREECH.

DEAR, tender-hearted Jack! His nature was as like his Childie's as could be; and as he witnessed the sparkling happiness of the little creature, the wistful look left his eyes. But when he saw, as who could fail to see, the deep, overflowing contentment, the happiness beaming from poor Silvain's eyes, he called himself a brute to have ever thought of disappointing him, and began to be much of Childie's mind, that she was born for the purpose of consoling the poor fellow for his sad lot.

My lady at first proved herself full of fears; but her nature generally took its tone from those around her, and all the more strongly if it chanced that her feelings ranged on their side. She earnestly desired her son's happiness—she felt this

would be ensured by his marriage. Her love, fond as any other mother's, was still not the absolute love he required. She had other duties; my lord must have the first place as much in her affections as in everything. Silvain only came second; yet was Silvain so dependent on love and sympathy, that he required a love of such entirety and completeness in its integrity, that no other duty was required of it, but love? A love that saw in him so much of an admirable nature, it was altogether independent of the mere accident of deformity!

This my lady felt by intuition he would have from the singular little being—Childie, who seemed to know no happiness but in ministering to the happiness of others; and who had never, by so much as a look, regarded Silvain as different from his fellow-mortals.

“She is not, perhaps, so polished and highly-bred as my lord may like, he being peculiarly fastidious in this respect, but she is exquisitely pretty, and loves Silvain devoutly. We cannot expect a fashionable and high-born girl will attend to his little whims and fancies, be content to remain ever by his side, and give up all society, as I am sure Childie will, for his sake.”

“She will do so, certainly; nevertheless, let us

not suffer them to be too secure in their present happiness. My lord will make objections, even if the good Jack offers him the bribe I expect he means to make—namely, Fairlie, as Childie's marriage portion."

"Fairlie! really do you think so? Then I am sure my lord will be delighted! I can scarcely tell you, Madam, how much my lord has endured of worry and vexation to obtain Fairlie. Sometimes I have been quite alarmed for his mind."

"I do not know for certain that Jack will offer Fairlie; but I know he will think nothing of any sacrifice for Childie's sake."

"Dear little thing, she deserves it! I really believe, my dear Madam, she loves Silvain for his own sake, and not for his rank and position."

"She loves him because he is not only an object of pity and commiseration, but he is so good, and bears his lot so patiently. And I am persuaded that the only thing she does not like is, that he is a lord, and his position too high for her to go to her Father Jack and say, 'Let us take Silvain for our Silvain, to live with and be ours for ever.' And her Father Jack would have answered, 'By all means; and God help me to be a good brother to him!'"

“Do you think this of them, Madam?”

“I do. Jack has the highest nobility God gives to man—an honest, honourable heart; while Childie has so much of the divine in her nature, I am at times thinking she has strayed from Heaven here—and for Silvain’s sake, perhaps.”

“My poor Silvain! she does indeed seem to understand merely the movement of his fingers.”

“There is another thing that will distress both the poor young things sorely, and that is, if my lord should insist on taking Jack’s offer and accepting Fairlie.”

“Why should he not, Madam?”

“Jack is not much more than thirty-five years old; he might marry and have children of his own. It would be hard to see Fairlie go from a Farrall, even to an Earl of Bifrons.”

“But still, if Jack chooses to do so, why should he not? Besides, my lord has set his heart upon having Fairlie.”

“And he will have it, if Jack has to buy his consent, to ensure his sister’s happiness.”

“How very charming! I long for my lord’s arrival to tell him. I do not know when I have felt so happy—my dear lord gratified at last in his most ardent wish, and my poor Silvain

married to the sweetest little wife possible!"

"I find Jack intends to set out to-morrow for England, that no time may be lost in apprising my lord of what has occurred."

"I am very glad of that; it is indeed due to my lord that Jack should do so. He will tell him, of course, that we are all waiting for his consent to be happy."

This world would have been a very pleasant world had my lady ruled it. She desired only that everybody should be happy after their own fashion. To be sure, there would have been some clashing; but, after all, many regard what they long for, by the rate they pay for it, in money or trouble. So it comes to the same thing in the end. For my part, I saw the sure signs of a determination on the part of Silvain to accept nothing from Jack but the priceless gift of his Childie's hand, as I saw that Jack would fulfil his vow, to the last drop of blood my lord could extract from him.

"I mean, Madam," said Jack, "to propose to him, as my Childie's fortune, that portion of the Fairlie estate which, as you know, the man was base enough to offer me a bribe to part with. If he has the feelings of a man, let alone a gentle-

man, he will be so ashamed of the recollection of that deed as to close with my offer at once. He will not like to be stung by an allusion. That's what I should feel about it, and I always think you don't do a man an injury if you give him credit for what you feel yourself."

"But, Jack, suppose he is not the man—the gentleman he ought to be!"

"Suppose he is not contented with that! Not contented!" repeated Jack, walking up and down the room, more perturbed in manner than I had ever seen him. "Not contented!" and Jack's fine open forehead wrinkled itself up into a vast frown, angry and gloomy. "Not contented!" in a voice of thunder, which instantly broke into a low, pathetic murmur, "then he must have Fairlie, the Farralls' Fairlie—and the name will die out in the land!"

Even the poor solace of inheriting Fairholme would seem nothing to Jack in this extremity, so I said no more than—

"The result will ennoble the sacrifice!"

"Her happiness! Yes, I swore to do it. God has seen fit to try if my words were but empty sounds. I swore to do it, and I will keep my vow. But, Madam, I don't mean to cringe to my lord. I

give him all that I have in the world—my Childie now, the lands of thirteen Farralls in succession afterwards. I give like a king, and he shall feel it so!”

“But, Jack, he has such a mean little soul. Do not chance their happiness—disposed as you are to make such gigantic sacrifices—merely because you cannot keep your temper with him. He resents a want of deference to himself personally, as other men resent a lie to their face. His mind is so small, and of so peevish a kind, even if it lost him Fairlie he would indulge his temper.”

“So much the better for me, Madam!”

“But not for Childie and Silvain!”

“By the Lord, no! But is it not odd, Madam, though it seems to tear at my heart-strings to do it, I feel it will be less difficult for me to promise him Fairlie at my death, than to resist taking hold of my lord by the nape of the neck, and giving him a shaking, as the big dog shakes the little impudent dog. I know he will provoke me, and I know I shall have to keep my temper.”

“Why go at all, Jack?”

“Because no one shall say that Jack Farrall’s sister took advantage of that poor fellow’s state to inveigle him into a marriage. My lord shall

know from Jack Farrall's lips he would prefer a farmer for his sister's husband to a lord; and all the world shall know that I am not going to give him my Childie, and perhaps Fairlie, without my lord fully understanding he has much the best of the bargain."

CHAPTER XIV.

“Hæ nugæ seria ducent
In mala.” HORACE.

“These things which now seem frivolous and slight
Will prove of serious consequence.” ROSCOMMON.

AND so far Jack was right, if my lord would but see it. But he was of a disposition so curious, not even his wife could be sure of what he would say or do.

Meantime, Jack departed; and my lady, sunning herself in her son's happiness, more and more enthralled by the sweet ways of Childie, grew each day happier with the idea of their marriage, until at last she became much of Silvain's mind, that Childie was born for no other purpose than to be his little ministering angel. All the sweet motherly words she gave Silvain she now bestowed equally on Childie, and not a day passed that she did not present her with some gift; at times a little trifle, at others a costly jewel, with stores of rare lace,

and pretty knick-knacks, that were much thought of in our young days—my lady's and mine. Her versatile, pliant mind had lost all remembrance of its first fears, and was now occupying itself with little feminine matters regarding the wedding, Childie's dress, her ornaments, their establishment, the equipages they would require, in which things she had always delighted.

“They must have Fernhill for their home, for it is so pleasant for a bride to go to a home of her own. I remember how sad I felt living at Bifrons, not the mistress of it, with nothing to do. Even after my lord came into possession, I was a long time feeling myself at home there, merely because of that first impression.”

“Fernhill is such a pretty place, Childie,” continued my lady; “and the moment I return home, I shall set about the re-furnishing it for you, dear. Furnishing is a thing I delight in; don't you, Madam? And I flatter myself I have great taste. I was the first person that introduced the idea of having papers made to match the chintzes. The Bifrons furniture, it is called. And Fernhill is but twenty miles from Bifrons—it will be so pleasant to come and pay you visits, my children.”

“And so pleasant for us to receive you, mo-

ther," said Silvain. "I believe I shall have a rare little housekeeper in my wife, considering she has so long superintended the best organized house in the country."

"Is that the case? Unfortunately, you know, we have not been on good terms. I really believe I have never been inside Fairlie."

"I have, often," said Silvain; "only just to catch a glimpse of a little housekeeper, sage and serious, going about in a little cotton frock. By-the-by, I never thought to see that little housekeeper in a silk gown, until I made her Lady Beaufrère."

"Madam advised me," said Childie, blushing, "because of the convenience of packing."

"So Jack gave her two—only sorry it was not two dozen," I remarked, just by way of identifying myself with all their little simple thoughts. For somehow I was much depressed. I was wishing I had gone home with Jack. Not because the sight of so much happiness urged on my memory to contrast my lonely lot with that of Lady Bifrons, preparing for that happiest of all mother's duties—a child's marriage; but because my experience had proved to me that excess of joy preceded woe. The full flavour of the one was to

be annihilated by the bitterness of the other. I was full of forebodings, and could scarce refrain from saying, "Of what good is my life to me?—take me away ere I see more evil."

But I had let none of these thoughts be seen, babbling much, as my lady did, of all trifles that were simply nothing in the eyes of the two lovers. For their wealth of love was centered each in the other. Childie was to make Silvain forget his misfortune in the exquisite bliss of possessing her love; while Silvain thought but of the devotion he would pay her for giving up everything for him. But my lady speaks.

"Two dozen—of course she must have two dozen silk dresses of one kind or another. Especially blue ones—I fancy you in blue, Childie."

"Now, I love her in white," cried Silvain, looking at her with a sort of passionate admiration, as she sat by his side in her white silk frock.

"White suits everyone, especially young people; but, Childie, by-the-by, dear—excuse the question—what is your Christian name? My lord is so particular, he will be sure to insist upon your being called by your right name. He does not like abbreviations; and I partly think he is right in styling them vulgar."

“Her name is Eve,” answered Silvain; “my Eve.”

With what expression and love he spoke.

“Eve!—a curious name.”

“’Tis a family name of the Farralls, and much prized by them.”

“Still, Madam, I fancy my lord would like Eveleyn better, so let us say ’tis Eveleyn. That is quite an aristocratic name. My lord is most fastidious about names. My poor Silvain was very nearly not being christened at all, he could not settle a name to his liking. He desired one at once singular, elegant, and expressive, which Silvain is.”

Poor Silvain! a shiver of pain ran through him at the unconscious parody his mother was making of him; but Childie’s little hand slid into his, and her gentle eyes beamed love on him.

“By-the-by,” said my lady, “I want to see Childie, I mean Eveleyn, in the pearls that will be hers at some future day.”

“Long distant, I trust, mother. Besides, my wife wants no pearls; she is my nurse and companion.”

“But I should so like to see her in them. They will especially suit that white frock.”

My lady had that obstinacy which is often seen

in feeble-minded persons, so she carried off Childie to be decked in pearls. During their absence Silvain said to me,

“I do not mean my father to accept Jack’s offer of Fairlie, if he makes it, Madam. Childie must have no bitterness mixed in her union with me of that sort. And she will feel it almost to the extent of giving me up, rather than submit to such a sacrifice.”

“I think it is most probable that she will try to do so, Silvain, but she will be sorely racked in the doing it.”

“I shall be of age in fourteen months, then I can do as I like.”

“But, Silvain, would Jack permit his sister to enter a family unwilling to receive her?”

“To tell you the truth, Madam, Jack will be as difficult to deal with as my father; there is but one way—only one way.”

“What is that?” I asked, seeing him pause.

“You shall know in good time, Madam; but I would have you, loving us, as I know you do, remember the heavy calamity with which I am afflicted, and the absolute necessity of a freedom from vexation and worry. Even the mere fact of expecting my father’s answer to Jack brings a sort

of numbing sensation to my limbs, which has been, and always will be, the precursor of a fit."

"I was in hope you had outgrown them, Silvain."

"No, Madam, there is an old saying, which will, I think, prove true in my case. 'He that hath epilepsy between seven and fourteen will be well of it at twenty. He that beginneth at fourteen will keep it his best days, and not be well of it until forty-five.' Nevertheless, I am persuaded, if I am permitted to do as I like, if I am kept free from any shock or anguish, that I shall never have another fit. My frame requires soothing. Could I have it, and lead a peaceful, happy, married life, there is nothing to prevent me becoming a strong and vigorous man at forty-five, though I can never be a straight one. But I must have peace and love."

Poor fellow! He was not likely to have either with such a father.

"What is your impression as to the opinion your father will have regarding your marriage?"

"It is the not having the power to form an opinion that makes me so nervous. If Jack went to him and said, 'I deeply deplore, my lord, the infatuation of Lord Beaufrère, and only listened to it because of his delicate health, which the doctor

said must not be tried, mentally or physically. If you find it is absolutely necessary for his life and happiness to marry my sister, I can only offer to make it palatable to you by giving her the land you desired to buy of me.' If Jack said all that, my father would, after his fashion (sorely hard for Jack to bear), consent. But we know Jack won't say this."

"He won't, alas !"

"Even if my father, walking over the long coveted land, should meet Jack, and Jack should say, 'My lord, this is yours, provided you permit my sister to marry your son,' he might consent. The bait would be so powerful. In short, I cannot hide from you, Madam, the nightmare that is unnerving me, namely, that my all of happiness in this life really depends only on a whim—on the humour in which my father may chance to be, when he first hears the news. Even the very mode of telling him may grate or please, and once either sensation is felt, it is, as far as the particular subject is concerned, final."

"You must look forward to coming of age."

"'Tis a long time to wait, and somehow I feel conscious of a crisis in my constitution. New sensations are fighting with the lethargy of disease,

and it seems to me that once happy, at ease, master of myself, I should break through the long enthrallment of my frame, and experience what has been so long denied me, the exquisite sensation of health and strength. But if I have to endure—if my father, for the third time in my life, mars the beauty of it—I shall succumb to my malady, a victim for life.”

“This must not be permitted. As far as an old weak woman can assist, as much as I may help you, without injury to the child I consider more sacred than had she been my own, you may rely upon me.”

“Thanks, Madam, your love for her deserves my utmost confidence. If I find my father exasperated at the idea of the marriage, and Jack irritated into offering more than prudence, reason, or justice warrants, I shall be greatly tempted to urge Childie to a private marriage.”

“You would not alter Jack’s intention by this. Having said he would do it—he will perform his word.”

“But I will not take Fairlie.”

I shook my head, and was about to say more, when the door opened, and Childie, sweet as roses in her cotton frock, now looked a lily of loveliness

in her white silk frock and pearls. Her hair was drawn from her fair face, now rosy with the blush of modesty, which scarcely dared think she was so pretty, yet conscious of it; two or three long curls escaped, falling in nature's curves and waves below her waist. Others were kept in their place by a knot of pearls, in the midst of which gleamed dewy drops, each a glorious diamond. A similar cluster fastened a twisted band of hair, with two circles of pearls turned in it. Little pearl drops in her ears, with a necklace round the slender throat—large, orient, softly resplendent, making the throat fairer still with their pearly lustre. The white silk frock, the glossy pearls, the rich luxuriance of hair, with the sweet eyes half concealed—but luminous—the gentle bashfulness, and soft rising blushes, made Childie seem the very masterpiece designed by divine art to represent a bride.

Silvain, by nature most susceptible to feminine beauty and gentleness, gazed at her in a sort of speechless admiration, which turned to a mournful, half bitter smile, as he seemed to look upon himself. His long white fingers, and attenuated hands, indicative themselves of ill-health and deformity, he held up in scorn, as it were. His mother saw nothing of this, but the quick percep-

tion of Childie felt it, though she was not looking at him. With a sudden irrepressible emotion she knelt by his side, and blushing rose-red, put one arm round his neck, and laid her pretty, pearl-decked head close to his.

Even in that moment the door opened, and my lord walked in. It was impossible he could have seen Jack, unless he met him on the road, and that was most unlikely. Besides, his astonishment at the scene before him was of itself sufficient to show that they had not met. My lady shrank into her chair, and for one brief moment felt what only ardent, strong-hearted people endure in its agony, the chill of fear. Silvain drew Childie closer to him. As for me, I rose, and taking my lord's hand, said,

“Mr. Farrall has gone in search of you, my lord, to tell you of your son's desire to marry his sister, and to obtain your consent.”

“My consent! If my eyes don't deceive me, my consent is either worth nothing, or considered secured. Why, she has got my lady's pearls on!”

CHAPTER XV.

“ Look round the habitable world, how few
 Know their own good—or, knowing it, pursue.”

DRYDEN.

MY lord was just one of those sort of people who are more put out by trifles than by gigantic crimes. I believe, had he found Lord Beaufrère married, he would not have been so angry as he was on discovering that his consent was taken so much for granted—that the young lady of his son’s choice—the last young lady he would have selected for him—was already dressed out in my lady’s pearls.

Few men would have had that sort of mind which lends itself to such trifles as to have noticed the pearls, but such was my lord’s mind. It was useless to put the fact of her being dressed in them on my lady herself—my lord, as part of himself, and his dignity, would not permit himself to cast the least blame on her. It all fell on the

little Childie herself—simple, modest, blushing little creature, whom he scarce refrained from calling to her face the coarse names that so quickly rise to the tongue of a coarse nature. When he did so to me, it was due to Childie, as well as to the memory of her mother, that he should be rebuked in such language as an outraged gentlewoman might use. I was not to be withheld by any fear for the future to the two lovers. My lord wanted a scolding, if such it could be called, and he had it. He winced, as was natural, and blustered, as I expected, but I let him not escape my hand until he knew fully the estimation in which the world held Bifrons and Fairlie. And, angry as he was, the man was forced to allow all I said.

“It was no fault of mine that he should be different from his father, who was my father’s intimate friend and associate. Instead of herding with farmers and clodpoles, why did he not imitate his father, and associate with gentlemen?”

“And been ruined. But how do you make out that Mr. Farrall is no gentleman? There is not a name in all the country so respected as Farmer Farrall’s, as you style him. It stands higher than that of Bifrons.”

“Madam! you insult me—I am not used to being insulted—I will not be insulted!”

“Then, my lord, cease insulting one of the sweetest, most innocent of beings with names you ought to be ashamed to utter, to a lady, of a lady. And don’t abuse Mr. Farrall for assuming an occupation that you and your father thrust upon him.”

“He is so haughty and presumptuous.”

“He is a noble-hearted fellow, and desires nothing from you but the courtesy of one gentleman to another.”

“Has he shown it to me, when I took all the trouble and expense of apportioning our lands, even offering him a third more than the land was worth.”

“And so insulting him. Had you gone to him yourself, and pointed out the boundaries that would satisfy you, offering him the worth in exchange, he would have met you fairly.”

“Why am I to submit to his whims and tempers? He kicked my agent out of the house; he might have kicked me—I owe it to myself to have nothing to do with such an ungentlemanly savage.”

“There are none of us, my lord, so powerful as

to be independent of even a weak fellow-mortal. You desired a favour of Mr. Farrall, and so should have done him the common justice of asking for it, instead of demanding it."

"Well, he has had his revenge, inveigling Lord Beaufrère into falling in love with his sister."

"That, you know, my lord, is false. He would much prefer she should marry some one who could take the name of Farrall, in case he had no heirs of his own. Believe me when I tell you, Eve Farrall will give you that you have so long tried to obtain. I say nothing of your son's happiness, or the question that ought to weigh with you, that in one so afflicted every whim ought to be gratified."

"So is every whim gratified. I, his father, interfere in nothing. I never inquire into his studies, or trouble him with advice. He has only to ask for money and has it. But in a matter so important as his marriage, I must have a voice."

"You are to have a voice, my lord; it was never intended otherwise. Mr. Farrall has gone to England on purpose to ask your consent."

"And yet I find that little forward, shameless thing with her arm round my son's neck, and wearing my lady's pearls."

“It was unfortunate, I allow. But she is, in truth, the shyest, gentlest creature.”

“I have always been afraid that Lord Beaufrère would be taken in by some designing woman. It is his constitution to be so. He has not the least pride as to forming a suitable alliance; or any of that devotion to his country which would naturally urge him to seek a connexion with the great leaders of the world.”

“He is debarred becoming what his talents and mind warranted, by the accident of deformity. Surely, my lord, you will not stand in the way of his making himself happy, as he cannot be famous?”

“No, perhaps not,” answered my lord, shrinking as if smote by some inward pang, “but his tastes are low, very low—a farmer’s sister!”

“With older and better blood than possessed by either you or me.”

“What is the use of their blood? Who ever heard of the Farralls in London?”

“It is in your power to make them known. It will be something to say of the future Lady Beaufrère, she is of ancient descent and will inherit an excellent property.”

“But people are so curious, and almost all my

friends know what I have suffered at the hands of Farmer Farrall.”

“Then suffer still,” said I, indignant, and left him.

I had no further conversation with my lord, but I could perceive, as if the thoughts of his mind were mirrored before me, that he was torn in two directions. He hated Farmer Farrall so much, that he longed to torment him through his sister—yet he could not do so without also tormenting his son. And, on the other side, by consenting he would at last obtain the object of his greatest desire.

I left him, still debating in his mind which of the two passions he would gratify—a mean feeling he dignified by the name of revenge, or a yet viler sin, which even he had no other name for than covetousness. For I went home, partly for the sake of Jack, and partly to oblige Silvain, who sorely feared that Jack, left to himself, would have a reaction. Out of sight of Silvain’s beseeching looks, no longer governed by Childie’s coaxing ways and kisses, Jack might assume his dogged English nature, and refuse to let his good sense be thrust aside as a useless commodity.

But before I left I could perceive that Childie, with her rare gift of intuition, was making a favourable impression on my lord. With that singleness of

heart, and straightforward frankness so conspicuous in her brother, Childie made no concealment now of her love for Silvain. His father had discovered her with her arm round his son's neck. Bashfulness must be thrown aside; she had declared herself to be Silvain's love. Silvain's love was a creature who had but one object—Silvain's happiness. She took upon her little airs of authority, in all that regarded his wishes and comfort. Even my lord himself found her an inexorable tyrant if he "presumed"—so she styled it—to interfere with plans laid down for his health and repose. She was vigilant, as the most devoted spaniel, that nothing should occur to vex him; she was always and ever thinking of something to amuse him; she was on the watch for too much sun, too much air, too much company. And withal she had so pretty a way with her. "Our Silvain wishes that, our Silvain would be best, our Silvain must be indulged," until my lord and my lady found their son completely taken out of their hands, and yet could find no fault with her who had taken their places.

The evening before I left, I watched my lord watching her, as she gave to his son, by her witching, tender ways, a foretaste of the happiness that would be his when she was his own for ever. And

I am much mistaken if my lord did not feel that perhaps in Farmer Farrall's sister his poor deformed, sickly son would find a recompense for all the ills his father had made him suffer, on the day when he might call the sweet loving thing his wife.

CHAPTER XVI.

“Immania monstra
Perferimus.” VIRGIL.

“Things the most out of nature we endure.”
Spectator.

SILVAIN was so far right, that Jack, not finding my lord at home, having done what he considered the proper thing to do, decided there was no necessity for him to give himself further trouble. In truth, poor Jack was sorely tried; as I have said, he was so human in every sense. He felt to its utmost extent the seventeen years of incessant labour (which labour he had loved, from the mere fact that it was to free his beloved Fairlie from the debt upon it)—and all done only to give it adorned, more beautiful, more beloved than ever, to the enemy who had given him this trouble.

“He might just as well have had it in the state my father left it,” muttered Jack one evening to

me, when I was giving him his tea at Fairholme.

“Silvain will never permit you to give it, Jack. Or if he apparently takes it, just to satisfy his father, he will restore it again at his father’s death.”

“But, Madam—don’t laugh at me—I think I shall like Silvain to have it—but I cannot bear the idea of my lord getting his own way at last. I don’t know that ever I felt such odd notions as I do now. I was thinking the other night that I was becoming rather like my lord himself. I don’t feel to know myself at all just now, Madam.”

“You have a great deal to bear, Jack ; and naturally you look about to see in what manner you can escape the vexation.”

“I hope I shall never have to bear worse, for I know I shall turn out such a beast, I shall hate myself. I have had a letter from my lord. He sent it by a private messenger. Perhaps he thought some post-office official might chance to see the monstrous proposal in it—or the letter might burst in the letter-bag for very shame at its contents.”

“Nay, Jack, end my suspense, and let me see the letter.”

“Here it is, Madam. I think I will have it

stuck up on the church-door, as a specimen of my lord's notion as to the fitness of a marriage between his blood and mine."

I read the following letter with feelings that gathered in anger and indignation as I read :—

"SIR,—My son, Lord Beaufrère, has intimated to me his desire to marry Miss Farrall, who is, I believe, your sister. Circumstances, that it is needless for me to explain to you, render it expedient that I should not thwart him, which, if things were otherwise, I should most certainly do. I need not remind you of the great disparity of position that there is between Lord Beaufrère and the young person he has selected; but being, as I said before, in a manner obliged to humour my son, I give my consent to the marriage. You will, of course, see the justice of my coupling it with two conditions—the first, that, in becoming Lady Beaufrère, Miss Farrall shall cease to hold intercourse with any of her former friends, or connexions, or relations; the second, that you make over to her the estate and manor of Fairlie, so that it may be at once incorporated in that of Bifrons.

"I am, sir, your most obedient servant,

"BIFRONS."

“Jack! Jack!” I exclaimed in a sort of horrified dismay.

“I think myself ’tis too ridiculous to be true,” answered Jack, kicking the letter from one end of the room to the other. “I had a mind to burn the letter, thinking it a joke.”

“To give up Fairlie at once!—in your lifetime!—now! How are you to live? Where to go?”

“Oh! that’s nothing to the first condition, which says my Childie is not to hold any intercourse with her former friends, her connexions, and that last word, her ‘relations,’ scored under with a black mark. I am her friend, her connexion—her only relation in all the world; and the man knows it. And he thinks to bar all intercourse between my Childie—my own darling Childie and her Father Jack! I’ll burn the letter, Madam!”

“Do, Jack; it is best to treat it as a myth. But, after all, that first condition of his, now I sift it thoroughly, is but an idle, empty vapouring. He is obliged to consent to the marriage, but he will make his consent more insulting than the most mortifying refusal.”

“And there is one very serious thing to be considered, Madam—I made a vow there was nothing I would not undergo for Childie. If I am to give

up Fairlie, if that man is to have it, rule over it, walk across my meadows as his own, cut down my trees, live in my Fairlie, I had as lief be in another world, Madam. I'll find out that spot furthest from England, and work for my living there. I am not afraid of work; I shall want work. Lord, Madam, I pray that I may have something to do night and day; that I may be foot-sore, which I never was yet; leg-weary, of which I don't know the sensation; broken-backed, dog-tired, wearied to the last extremity of weariness, so that I may sleep! I shall not be able to think, without becoming like my lord, a pitiful, mean wretch. God help me to keep myself honest, true Jack Farrall!"

"God will help you, my honest, true Jack."

"Not even to give me the chance to see her happy—to feel that, if I have made a sacrifice, I am every day repaid for it—he a man!—pooh! a bit of mud, that I would fling off the heel of my boot!"

"They will never consent—Silvain and Childie will never marry, and suffer this injustice."

A soft, sweet, tender smile stole over Jack's face, like the gleam of silver moon-rays through the tracery of forest branches. It gave him the look of one touched with the halo of an immortal deed.

Low and touching was his voice, but distinct and firm, as he said, "But—they must never know it."

In the silence that followed there came upon me the full comprehension of the noble heart of the man before me. His were to be no idle words, though spoken to a child an hour old. To part with the little creature whom he had so loved and fostered was doubtless a severe pang, but he had thought it might happen. To give up Fairlie, that home sacred to him in every way, better loved than his own life, was possible, after his death. But to do it now, in the veriest prime of his life, at the period when he had just begun to realize that it was his own, with not a claim, not a flaw upon it, beautiful and perfect, was a mighty deed of sacrifice; one that deserved the recognition of the multitude, that they might applaud, and do homage to the great heart who made it.

But the sacrifice was to be made in secret. He was to go forth into the world homeless and solitary, a man to whom home was as heaven, whose heart expanded to the claims of society and relationship, who prided himself on his strength and health, because it gave him power to help his kind; he was to be ostracised and excluded from the little world that he so blessed and delighted in, and

live far from it; and not even to be permitted the human consolation of sympathy and praise.

The swift dart of lightning into the heart of a noble oak in its full prime and vigour, smiting it asunder, and blighting it for evermore, would be but too true a type of Jack, bereft of home, of Childie. The picture of it in my mind drew from me as bitter tears as ever I shed in my life.

“Nay, Madam, nay, keep up—I will always let you know how I go on. I love work, as you are aware. I shall hear from you of my Childie. That man cannot live for ever, though I take shame to myself anticipating his death. Come, come, Madam, you will almost make poor Jack cry himself, if you go on thus.”

“Jack, Jack, you are as my son to me. I have made you my son.”

“And you are as dear a mother as ever man had, and will be the link between me and Childie. You see, Madam, this must be kept a secret. Why, the child would fret if she knew.”

“I know she would, Jack, and Silvain too.”

“There, now, dry your eyes, and read my answer to my lord. I have trusted it to the post, not being ashamed of it. And I have given him conditions too, as I have a right to do.”

“MY LORD,—I give my consent to the marriage of my sister, Eve Farrall, to Lord Beaufrère, your son. I endow her, as a marriage portion, with all I possess in the world, to be hers on the day she marries. But, like you, I have two conditions coupled with my consent. The first, that her second son, should she have one, shall bear the name of Farrall, and inherit all that portion of the Farrall estate on the right side of the high road. The second, that you never divulge to your son or my sister the sacrifice made by

“JACK FARRALL.”

CHAPTER XVII.

“Parva leves capiunt animos.”

OVID.

“Light minds are pleased with trifles.”

Spectator.

THEY are all at home now—Childie at Fairlie, Silvain at Bifrons. I hear no day fixed for the marriage. Childie is radiantly happy, Silvain is inexpressibly so. Perhaps they are content to wait until he is of age, perhaps Silvain suspects what Jack intends, and will not marry until his majority gives him some power to defy his father. I can well believe he will not enjoy his own happiness, if there is the least cloud on the heart of the dear little sensitive creature who is so devoted to him. Jack is eminently busy and fussy. Hard at work all day, he is transplanting, levelling, thinning woods, and doing all those matters that are best symbolised by a general routing and re-arranging.

“Methinks, Jack,” I said mournfully to him,

“you need not work so hard. It is anguish to me to think for whom you are doing it all. That new road must be costing you a great deal of money.”

“To tell you the truth, Madam, I am still not altogether myself, and I am afraid lest something should slip from me that would give my Childie an inkling of the truth. So I make-believe to be amusing myself with new improvements, and such like, just to blind her. She thinks I am spending a good deal of money, too; for she keeps my accounts, and informed me only this morning that the labour bill amounts to £47 odd for the month. Ha! ha!”

And Jack made a sad attempt at laughing—so sad, my tears would flow.

“And, Madam, would you believe it? I really feel a sort of a desperate kind of satisfaction that I hand over Fairlie to my lord in as perfect condition as an estate can be. Not a fence out of order, not a gate badly hung, not a wood unthinned, and the new plantations are the admiration of all who see them—much better than his. Why, Lord! Madam, he will not save one in fifty in the whole of his last plantations—one in fifty! I will make an even bet, not one in a thousand. I see my own work done. Some of these days, Madam, you will tell my

Childie I planted every one of the trees this side of Fairwater Hill. And as they grow, you will perceive in the early spring, when the larch is all of a tender green, the signs of some pattern marked in Scotch fir. 'Tis Childie's name, which every year will grow more distinct and perfect. Ha! ha! I have done my lord there. The whole country shall see for themselves to whom Fairlie belongs."

"Oh! Jack, Jack!"

"Perhaps I may be back by then, Madam. I have been over to-day, and seen the draft of the settlement. And it is all fair and right; my lord has certainly complied with my condition. I wish I might be sure he remembered the other also—for Silvain was driving into town as I came out."

"And neither he nor Childie seems to be in a hurry about the marriage."

"No, so far from it, he is again going from home, and my lady has asked me to let Childie go too."

"How thoughtless of my lady! As if Childie would wish to go, to leave you."

Jack's face crimsoned.

"We must not blame her, Madam. Really 'tis just as she said. Silvain's health, and peace, and comfort, all depend on Childie now."

“Then Childie wishes to go.”

“She does for awhile, she says.”

“Then of course they don’t think of marrying at present. They will wait until Silvain is of age?”

“My lord is getting uncommon impatient to have possession of Fairlie. I should not wonder if he orders them to be married this side of Christmas.”

It was universally known now all through our little world of the intended marriage between Lord Beaufrère and the pretty little sister of Jack Farrall. After the manner of the world, many comments were made. While the men congratulated the poor young fellow on the prospect of obtaining so sweet and loving a wife, the women were not without their fears, she had sold herself for rank. Fanny Hazlewood, our parson’s wife, called her a rash little thing to undertake a man subject to fits, but a regular darling for not minding his deformity. She thought him the luckiest fellow that ever lived; at the same time, he deserved the love and attention of everybody, because he was so afflicted.

“As for marrying a man subject to fits, and such a distressing sight, I could not do it, Madam. I should always be in agonies lest he was going to

be taken ill, and run away when he was ; because I can't bear to see blood, or anything painful."

"Fanny," murmured her husband, who was as silent as she was talkative, and generally only spoke to keep her in order. He was connected with the Bifrons.

"Now, don't snub me, Tom, you know I can say anything to Madam—she is so safe. And I want to ask you, Madam, is there any truth in the report about a double marriage—Mrs. Brooks Browne?"

"I do not know. To Major Jones?"

"Oh! dear, no—she has given him the cold shoulder ever since the marriage of Childie was announced. She thinks now she is sure of Mr. Farrall."

"Why?"

"Because, loving his sister, he will be so lonely now, and want some one to keep his house. She told me only last night, when I had her in to tea, that he told her himself he hated living alone; and she hinted something about letters she had had from him."

"He has been getting one of her boys into the Blue-coat School, and may have written about him."

"What a blessing to get rid of one of those unruly boys, is it not, Tom?"

Tom signed an assent.

“She told me Mr. Farrall was most particular in his manner, when he said he hated living alone. So expressive and emphatic, and looked at her in so strange a way; and she is gone this morning to teach Mary how to make Chutney sauce with apples.”

“At Mr. Farrall’s request?”

“Well, that I could not make out. What do you think, Tom?”

“Nothing,” responded Tom.

It must not be supposed that Tom was not a clever and a nice fellow—he was both, and was much beloved by us all. But his Fanny was so gushing and impulsive, he rarely spoke when she was present. She was a good, worthy creature—perhaps a little overpowering. Nevertheless, when the usual addition to the Parsonage nursery was made every year, and Fanny was secluded from the world behind the bed-curtains, we all missed her, and gladly welcomed her back again amongst us. She stirred us up by her lively, chatty remarks. Besides, she was full of pleasant, worldly little ways, to which we all have an inkling in our hearts. She was great after fashions, though always untidy and excessively dowdy. When most

smart, she was least fit to be seen. But she had a love for patterns, and work, and receipts, and was always excited about some little bit of news as to bonnets, new sleeves—the Royal family, and our royal Bifrons. She never dined at the great house without being able to give us a full and perfect account of the dinner—if there were any new dishes, which set of plate was used, what the new footman was like, how my lady was dressed, and all her company.

While one despised all these little details oneself, when related in a lively and amusing manner, they added much to our hilarity. And as Fanny was never ill-natured or untrue, one could readily pardon the apparent folly of much that she said. One wants to laugh in this world. Laughter is as good physic as any I know; and laughter is more easily moved by a good-humoured chit-chat than any other thing. Laughter that does good—laughing even at one's own folly in being amused at so little. But Fanny, with nothing remarkable about her, save her sweet temper, and a ready enthusiasm for the merest trifle, was very acceptable to our society. She had but one rankling corner in her heart, and that was kept in constant irritation by Mrs. Brooks Browne.

"'Tis useless, Tom, crying, 'Fanny! Fanny!' to me; the woman is a meddling, interfering, untruthful woman, with the most odious children I ever saw. She never comes into this house but that she means to extract something out of me—either a pot of preserves, or the pattern of my last sleeve, or to stuff me with untruths about Jack Farrall. Even you, Tom, good Christian as you are, ought to be disgusted with the way she runs after him."

"No," said Tom.

"Yes, you are—I know you are—making our sex so cheap—that is what disgusts me. You men are only too glad to find out flaws in us, if you can."

"No," said Tom.

"Well, perhaps not you, Tom. I will do you the justice to say you always judge us most kindly; and really, when I know what you might say of Mrs. Brooks Browne, I honour you, Tom—I do indeed."

"Humph!" said Tom.

"I am sure I don't know what poor Jack will do. He can't open his mouth but she is ready to pop down it."

Tom laughed.

"'Tis no laughing matter, Tom ; he is such a good, kind-hearted fellow, that really I am sometimes almost afraid lest he should marry her out of compassion."

"No," said Tom.

"He will find it very lonely without Childie, and I have heard him admire that woman's hair and her foot, and she is always asking for a lift in his dog-cart to town—shameful creature ! and if she has not any compunction making up to him as she does before our faces, think what she does behind our backs."

"Kisses him," said Tom.

"Oh ! Tom, and you a clergyman ! Do, for goodness sake, remember what is expected of you, as a clergyman, Tom. Nothing can be said too bad of that woman, I allow. She absolutely said to me, the other day, that little Tom had red hair."

"So have I," said Tom.

"No, only your whiskers ; but, goodness me ! here she comes through the garden gate. She knows Madam is here, and comes to find out something about Jack. I must say not at home, Tom. James, James, not at home !—mind, not at home, James, at the door. Now do listen."

"Missus is not at home, mam."

“But I saw Madam Nugent come here.”

“Missus is out, mam.”

“But I will come in, James, to see Madam.”

“Missus is particularly engaged, and can't see you, mam,” and James slammed to the door.

“There, Tom, did you ever hear such a woman? One is obliged to be rude to her. She won't even be content with a polite fib.”

I also would have had my fears that Jack's good, kind heart would have melted before the warmth of Mrs. Brooks Browne's advances, but for the secret that I knew. Without fortune or home, Jack was in no condition to marry, had he felt so inclined. But the fate that was looming over him gave, so far, a colour to Mrs. Brooks Browne's hopes, that he was peculiarly gentle, and even affectionate, to everyone.

Unlike the Jack Farrall of old, short and concise in speech, abrupt and self-sustained in action, he now lingered near anyone who would talk with him. A gentle, wistful expression sat permanently fixed in his eyes, whilst there was also an abstraction in them that told of some secret thought possessing him.

Mrs. Brooks Browne is not the first woman who has fancied herself the object of a man's thoughts,

with nothing more to show for it than that he was abstracted. The simple fact of walking openly with her through the village, bred the wildest thoughts in her ; and if he had accepted her invitation to walk into her house, she would have been certain it was to make her an offer.

That Jack did not go in arose from the simple circumstance that he had had enough of her company, and desired some further excitement to relieve him from the burden of his thoughts. For I had asked Jack to live with me, and he had put the climax to his fate by declining.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“Curæ leves loquuntur, ingentes stupent.”

“Light sorrows speak—great grief is dumb.”

Spectator.

TIME was passing quickly. Lord Beaufrère would be of age in three months. Still no day fixed for the wedding. Still was Silvain perfectly content, and Childie more sweetly gay and lovely than ever.

“How little she thinks,” said Jack to me, “what a doomed day her wedding-day will be to me, Madam!”

“The child loves to make others happy. She sees Silvain almost restored to all he had lost, merely by the fact of her love for him—and that makes her jubilant.”

“I suppose, Madam, I am a brute. I sometimes long to hear her crying, instead of that incessant singing.”

“ Ah! Jack, she will cry soon enough when she has lost you.”

“ She will, God bless her!—she will. But you will comfort her, Madam; tell her her Father Jack has now no happiness but to hear she is happy. She will believe you. She knows if ever there was truth in a human being, 'tis in me. And, Madam, I shall be happy. I make no doubt but that I shall be happy.”

The tone of his voice had such a mournful pathos in it, I did not wonder that it struck himself; for the tears welled to his eyes, and overflowed.

“ Is it not odd, now, Madam, that I should be so weak? If any one had told me that I should have shed a tear doing that which will make my Childie happy, I should have been apt to knock him down. Does it strike you, Madam, how queer we men are? Here is my lord absolutely impatient for his son's marriage, to begin and pull down the fences of the Fairlie fields. He has not the heart to do his dirty deeds himself; but sent his head gardener to know if I had any objection to let him begin?”

“ Now,” says I to the man, “ has your master told you what it is he wants; for if he has, he has

broken his word with me, and I have a mind not to keep mine with him."

"My lord told me, Mr. Farrall, as you was a-going to let him have the land t'other side of the road, seeing as how you was a-dividing of the land with Miss Farrall; and in course her share was a-coming to my Lord Beaufrère."

"I was so wicked as to have a hope, Madam, that he had broken his word. He is going to take down the fences. I said he might."

Poor Jack! Did Childie see, under his efforts to be the same as ever, that they were, though great for him, miserably poor ones. If he could not tell a lie, it was still more impossible to act one. His strong frame seemed bending, as if overworked; his thick crisp curls fell flat and lustreless; his eyes were constantly dimmed as with tears; and instead of his free, firm step, he seemed to drag his legs wearily, as if heavy weights were attached to them. Yes, my poor Jack, you were a very bad dissembler! And yet was Childie full of sweetest joy and happiness.

The day week after this conversation with Jack, I heard a carriage drive up rapidly to my door, and was shocked to see Silvain, dreadfully agitated, enter the room. He had to be supported

by Swaine, ever a bad sign with him. No sooner were we alone than he said,

“Oh! Madam, I experience once more one of those ungovernable fits of passion that used to overwhelm me. My father is taking down the fences of the Fairlie fields.”

“Only on the side of the road next Bifrons,” I answered soothingly.

“Madam, can you deny that my father has demanded, and Jack has consented, to give the whole of the Fairlie estate to Childie? Did you think she and I were so engrossed with each other that we had no heed for Jack? I have seen the settlement—my noble Jack’s letter. I tore the former in two.”

“Dear, dear Silvain, how I love you for this! Now I see why you have so long delayed your marriage. You waited to be of age!”

Silvain smiled—one of those beautiful smiles that are the representatives of fine thoughts.

“Come home with me, Madam. I must stop what my father is doing—come home with me. Childie is already at Bifrons, and Jack is sent for.”

Silvain leaned back in the carriage, seemingly exhausted. I longed for the time when, all this

worry and vexation over, he might retire to Fernhill with his wife, and be at peace. I could see now why Childie had been so joyful, because Silvain, who loved her, loved her so well, he would not ask her to marry him until she could do so secure of Jack's happiness. What delight for Jack to hear all this, to know that they thought of him even more than themselves. We entered the house of Bifrons; no sweet face looked out of the window, as was usual, each to catch a glimpse of the face most dear to each.

"My Childie," murmured Silvain, "what can have happened?" Again Swaine almost carried him upstairs.

"I will take my lord to his own room," said Swaine, as we became conscious of a loud and angry voice.

But Silvain flung himself free, and opening the door wide, discovered his father and mother there, with Childie, pale, but undaunted, standing before them. My lord was trembling with passion.

"You are in good time, Lord Beaufrère. This girl, your intended wife, has shown a temper and an obstinacy only just discovered in time. Unless she can remember her duty to me better, and promise that I may never be subjected to such un-

seemly conduct again, I withdraw my consent to your marriage."

"It was I who sent her to you, father. I will not have Jack Farrall's land."

"Then you shall not marry his sister."

Silvain drew Childie towards him, and with a smile of ineffable happiness, said,

"You are too late, father—we have been married these six months."

Childie nestled herself close to him, drawing him down on to a sofa. We stood speechless.

"I meant Jack to have been here when I acknowledged my marriage. I expect him every moment."

"Marriage! A marriage, and you under age—'tis no marriage! That girl is your mistress. A very fair lot for Farmer Farrall's sister."

"My lord! my lord!" I exclaimed, as the spasm of passion passed over Silvain's face, and his mother uttered a little fearful shriek.

"Love! love!" murmured Childie, "be calm, be prudent!"

His chest heaved, his colour came and went. With Childie's help he drew from his pocket a small silk case—from it she took a paper.

"Here, father," said Silvain, with a gentle en-

treaty in his voice, "here is my marriage certificate ; we were called in church, the witnesses are ready to come forward." Silvain paused, we heard Jack's voice outside the door.

My lord snatched at the paper, the silken case ; in a moment they were on the fire, in another consumed. Jack entered the room.

"Here, Farmer Farrall, come here and see what a fine sister you have. She is my Lord Beaufrère's mistress. Take her home—take her home! Some good man of your grade will think none the worse of her that she amused my Lord Beaufrère's idle moments!"

"Man, man, are you mad? Look at your son."

With a fearful cry of agony, Silvain fell into convulsions most terrible to witness.

"Tear him away—take her from him! She has inveigled and misled my son!"

Jack flung my lord aside, and going up to his sister, asked, with mute voice, the reason of all he saw.

"My Silvain! oh! my Silvain!" murmured the poor child.

The doctor, who always lived in the house, came, with some assistance, to carry the poor insensible Silvain. Childie was, by my lord's order, torn from

him. I have scarce sense or feeling to recollect what passed. I understood nothing of what I saw, but that Jack, taking up the distracted Childie in his arms, said,

“Come, my darling, my own, come home with your Father Jack. No matter what has happened, nothing and no one shall ever part his darling from Father Jack!”

CHAPTER XIX.

“Pendent opera interrupta.”

VIRGIL.

“The works unfinished and neglected lie.”

Spectator.

WHAT a miserable wretched time was this! And I believe, amongst us, none was so utterly wretched as my lord. In a moment of passion at the frustration of all his hopes, just as he had begun to realise the fact of the possession he had so long coveted, his own mad temper seemed about to deprive him of all. If he had been but a little patient, if he had waited until his son was of age, honest and straightforward Jack Farrall would have made over to him the lands of Fairlie, and would himself have commanded his sister to take it. All would have been well. But the desire to possess it, begin on it, vexed him like the temptings of a demon. He yielded, and was about to pay the penalty of his sin in losing his son.

For Silvain was very, very ill. I recalled what

he had told me of the crisis in his constitution. In vain was poor little Childie brought back at my lord's request—her pitiful little love words, her soft loving kisses—her cries of "Silvain, Silvain," were alike unheeded—until at last, fainting from exhaustion, she was carried home to Fairlie, almost as ill as Silvain himself.

My lord said nothing about the marriage; but that did not prevent me from loudly proclaiming it, until forbidden to do so by Jack.

"Say no more, Madam; of course they thought it all right, but the law of the land renders a minor's marriage illegal. At least, so I think. Poor Silvain is never likely to recover. I have got my Childie back again. Let matters be."

And for once in his life Jack was selfish.

"Remember her good name, Jack. Force my lord to acknowledge her as Lady Beaufrère. My dear, dear Jack, in your happiness at getting her back, do not forget that you are the guardian of her reputation."

"No, Madam, I shall do nothing. My Childie is mine again. Those that flout her, may flout, she will only be dearer to me."

"At least, let me find out where the marriage took place, and when."

“Can’t you guess that, Madam? Why, of course it was when I let her go with my lady and that poor fellow in the winter.”

“Swaine will know. I will not have my Eleanor’s child scorned and pointed at.”

“She won’t care for it, neither shall I. She is mine again.”

Oh! Jack, Jack! how you vexed me, how little you thought of the future; but I must do you the justice to say, you felt for poor Silvain. Each time that Childie got a little stronger, each time he carried her over in his arms to Bifrons, to see if her voice would awaken in Silvain any sense or recollection. The hardest heart could not hear her unmoved, as she pleaded to Silvain for one word, one look, and only ceased when she was exhausted.

Strange it was that my lord would not recognise her as his son’s wife. It was clearly to his advantage to do so; and had Jack desired it, I think it would have been done—provided the original agreement was adhered to.

From Swaine I learnt nothing as to the marriage; for he had been given leave of absence.

“I partly think my lord did it o’ purpose, not for me to get into any mess like with the earl. He was always so careful, was my lord, not to get us

bullied, as the earl was in the habit of bullying. Of course I knew as they were married, but I couldn't say as how of my own knowledge, as when and where they'd done it. Most like the Countess was there at the time, but she's easy deceived. They might have married under her very nose, and she knowed nothing. Most like she heard their very hans called, and never guessed who it were."

This was certainly very likely to be the case, but, poor woman, who could dare to trouble her? She was like one suddenly stunned out of life and reason. And so a weary time passed.

Silvain had been removed from Bifrons, and taken to Fernhill, which, in preparation for a happier time, had been got ready for him. It was hoped by the doctors that complete and profound quiet might gradually restore him to reason. His foster-mother as nurse, his faithful Swaine to assist, and a good and careful doctor always in the house, poor Silvain was shut up at Fernhill, seen by neither father, mother, nor wife—for she was his wife—who dared deny it?

Jack angered me then sorely. I shunned him, as one not acting uprightly. My fine, noble Jack was gone. He loved Fairlie too much. On him

lay the sin of covetousness now. When he was from home, I spent most of my time with poor little Childie. It did not seem to grieve me that I saw her fading, yet her sorrow was so touching, it almost broke my heart to witness the gentle pitifulness of it.

“My child, is there nothing I can do for you?”

“No, Madam—I want to go to Silvain. He might call me.”

“They say he is to be kept so quiet, my darling.”

“Yes, with me as his only nurse.”

“That can hardly be, Childie; for though, no doubt, you were married, still, being under age, my lord might deny the legality of it.”

“But there is his life—my Silvain’s life—at stake. Why think of such mockery as law?”

“We must think of these things, darling; and there is no need to violate them, for the uncertain chance of—of (it was heartless of me to say it, but I did) saving Silvain.”

Childie rose, a frown on her brow, as full of wrath and indignation as ever Jack had shown.

“Chance!—uncertain chance!—and will you leave my Silvain’s health to chance? Oh! Madam, Madam, has not the meanest wretch alive a claim on our pity? And yet you would leave him, so

heavily burdened by the sin of others, to chance!"

I felt rebuked by the child, and could say nothing but "What would you wish, my darling?"

"That you would obtain my Father Jack's permission to let me go and live at Fernhill with Silvain. What nurse will attend to him as I will? Who can love him as a wife loves? What doctor has such skill as the unerring watchfulness of the heart that loves? Why does God permit men to be so wicked as to blot and mar the life and happiness of such innocent victims as Silvain and myself? Wild beasts prey upon each other, but only to devour, not to kill by slow torture."

And in the wildest abandonment of grief, Childie showed me that, under a little gentle exterior, she hid the very strongest feelings of our nature.

"I will advise Jack, my poor Childie—indeed, I have already spoken most seriously to him, because of your reputation."

"Reputation!—and my Silvain so smitten! Madam, there is not a woman's heart in the world but does not know that I am married—my Silvain's wife—that my place is by his side—my only care is for him. It is my duty, as it is the sole pleasure you have left me. Why keep up a

mocking cry for name and reputation? Give me peace to go to my duty."

"If I can persuade him, you shall go, my poor Childie. But, darling, your Father Jack is altered. He has gone through much during the last year. It is not as if Jack's nature was one of those quickly, easily moved. He lets a feeling eat into his very heart, and if it has to be extracted, it leaves a festering wound. To give up Fairlie—"

"Why tell me of that? Was it not to save him Fairlie that I consented to what I abhorred, namely, to deceive my Father Jack? He knows me—he knows me well. I would not have married Silvain and taken Fairlie. But to save Silvain, I consented to deceive my Father Jack, and be married secretly."

"And your mother, Lady Bifrons?"

"Ask me no question of my marriage, or where it took place, or who was present. There is no need to have more suffering inflicted on this doomed family."

"You are right, Childie. She was ever in such awe of my lord, poor woman! My Childie, be comforted. I will go to Jack in the name of your mother."

CHAPTER XX.

“Love bade me do it.”

Spectator.

AND I fulfilled my promise, albeit Jack was in a mood I had never seen before.

“I am here, Madam, at your bidding; and much amazed was I to get your message. You have but little feeling left in your heart for poor Jack, and so, missing your kind looks and words, I have no mind to put myself in the way of your frowns. It makes a man feel as if he was in some sort a villain, wanting the love that has always been his.”

“My dear Jack, I love you still, though I cannot but be sorely hurt at your doings. Always my pride and boast, it is heart-breaking to have to blame you.”

“Why blame me?—put all that has happened on the rightful shoulders—my lord.”

“What has happened, I do; but what is now passing will rest on your shoulders; and it is a grievous sin that is going on.”

“Well, I am none so contented with my life at present, not to see there is something wrong in it. I thought to be happy with Fairlie safely my own, Childie mine once more, yet somehow I have no heart in my work; and the child—yes, Madam, the child vexes me so, that for the first time in my life there is a cross word on the tip of my tongue ever ready to hurl at her. And though, thank God, I have never said it, yet, ’tis my belief, Madam, if I did, she would no more mind the hearing of it than if it was empty wind.”

“She is more sorely afflicted than any of us.”

“She is; and I never see her that I don’t long to take her in my arms and say, ‘My darling, love your Father Jack, and tell him what deed he must do to make you happy.’ And while I am longing, Madam, some devil puts it into my heart to think she does not care for my love now. Maybe she’d flout me; and for Childie to refuse to take shelter in my arms, for my Childie to look coldly on her Father Jack, Madam, it would clean drive me crazy!—I couldn’t stand it! And so, for fear of it, I just say nothing.”

“You need not fear it, Jack; even in all her love for Silvain, she is always thinking of you.”

“That in course; she would never have deceived me as to her marriage, had it not been for my sake. There is no need to tell me that, Madam.”

“Then you allow the marriage, Jack?”

“As if I would doubt the honour of poor Silvain! But he was under age. What can I do?”

“Jack, you know as well as I do, you have but to go to my lord, and demand his recognition of the marriage, and he will gladly do it.”

“Yes, with the offer of Fairlie in my hand.”

“Then Childie will take her proper place by Silvain’s side, and be happy once more in endeavouring to restore him to health and reason.”

“So I am to give up Childie too?”

“You have done it once, and done it nobly.”

“And got her back. Oh! Madam, if you did but know what burning feelings possessed me as I carried her home that night, mine once more, Fairlie safe, you would not wonder I yielded to the temptation.”

“You yielded for a time, Jack—it was excusable.”

“For a time!—why for a time? God has decided that I have done enough. May he for-

give me if I am profane. A better than I offered his son, and his hand was staid in time. Had men in those days stronger feelings than now? Was my sacrifice, my child, my home, my lands, my all, nothing?—and was I to feel it as nothing?”

“You promised, Jack—at her birth you promised. God was not tempting you as Abraham. He demanded the fulfilment of your vow, as he did that of Jephtha’s.”

“How do you know that?”

“Because you are unhappy—because you do not, like Abraham, go home rejoicing, blest and blessing—because you are dissatisfied with yourself, and in your heart of hearts you long for that fortitude and strength of mind, to go to Lord Bifrons with the title-deeds of your estate, to restore your sister to the unhappy duty of watching her husband’s sick-bed.”

“I will do it, Madam; pray to God to help me, for I am very weak.”

“I will, Jack, I will; but you have returned to your noble self. And now I will tell you what, had you remained hard and selfish as before, I left as a last resource, to compel you to right your sister. Mary has been here this morning to tell

me her suspicions. Childie herself, perhaps, scarce guesses it; but she will be a mother some day, she will have a little child."

"A child! Childie's child!—oh! Madam, why tempt me harder? Don't you remember what I said of Childie's child? And she is to have one, and at present it has no father, no name. What I in my jealousy desired. Childie's child, and I would be its father, and it should have my name. Childie's child! My God, is this on purpose?"

As if unable to control his agitation, Jack sprang out of the window hatless, heedless of the drenching rain. I did as he requested, and prayed to God mightily for him, that he might overcome this last temptation. Hours passed, and I saw nothing of him. In the evening, when the elements seemed to combine together to pour out their first rage and wrath upon the earth, a little dripping figure appeared at my window, craving admittance. It was my poor little Childie. Wet as she was, there was a flush on her face, and a light in her eyes, that spoke of hope and expectation. I drew off her wet things, and wrapped her in a dressing-gown of mine, warming and chafing her little white feet with my hands.

"You have seen Jack, darling?"

“Yes, mother,” said she, putting up her face to be kissed, which was a way she had when pleased.

“And what did he say?”

“First he came into the house without a word, and changed his clothes, for he was soaked through from head to foot, and had no hat.”

“He left it here.”

“Then he came to me and took me in his arms, more tenderly than ever he had done before, I think. And we sat there, I kissing him now and then. At last he said, ‘So my darling does not hate her Father Jack.’ ‘Oh! my own, own darling fellow!’ I said in answer, with other things, as you may guess, Madam. Upon which he said, laughing his own dear laugh, ‘Do you know, Childie, I was almost afraid you might refuse to come to my arms.’ So, Madam, I soon satisfied him of that, and we sat thus—oh! so happy! At last there came from my Father Jack so great a sigh, I was almost blown out of his arms, but I was happy, I knew he had now made up his mind I was to go to my Silvain. And in a while he said, ‘Childie, it seems you and I are going to have something more to love.’ Oh! Madam, I did not know what to say—I had not thought of this since that terrible day. I had forgotten all about Silvain’s child, because of Sil-

vain. 'Now you know,' continued my Father Jack, 'until Silvain can do it, I must take care of his little child. So I am going shortly to Bifrons, to get matters settled with my lord, and you had best be getting your things ready to go to Fernhill.' Then came another sigh, larger than the first; but, Madam, if you had only seen his face, so beautiful it looked, with goodness and high resolve. So he has gone to Bifrons. Mary is packing up my things; but I could not resist creeping over here, to tell Jack's and my Madam and mother of all this."

What a picture she looked, with her tumbled hair, her brilliant eye, all radiant and happy, her little white feet peeping out from the dressing-gown! I never saw anything to equal it! and between looking at her and thanking God, I scarce knew what I was about."

"But I must go now," said she.

"You must have the carriage, Childie."

"Impossible, the large Spanish chestnut tree is blown down straight across the carriage road. Nothing can pass until it is removed. I shall not be ten minutes running. And I suppose my Father Jack will again offer Fairlie to my lord, won't he?"

“Of course, my darling. What weather it is! For three days now it has been pouring!”

“And my lord will take it?”

“Not a doubt about it. Let me send William with you, Childie?”

“No, no. I shall run like a lapwing the short way.”

CHAPTER XXI.

“Tu non inventa reperta es.” OVID.

“So found, is worse than lost.” ADDISON.

WHAT a sweet evening I spent with myself and my thoughts after Childie left, though the first part of it was sadly broken by the news of the bursting of my lord's newly-made dam, which he had constructed to form a lake. The heavy rains of three days in succession had been too much for it to bear, and as it gave way a volume of water rushed through the village, two or three feet in depth, sweeping everything before it, for at least ten minutes, while it lasted; but, fortunately, not powerful enough to endanger life. I sent my servants up to see if they could help; they were back in an hour, and reported that nearly every house had the flood in, and it was rather unlucky that, being Saturday evening, most of the people had

their Sunday clothes out airing, and so they got wet.

Both Jack and Mr. Hazlewood were there helping. I mind me that Jack said, if the lake ever burst, it would pour its waters through the village. This will make my lord more unpopular than ever.

Pretty sparkling Fairwater, I hear you roaring as if you were a mighty river, capable of doing great mischief, but you know you are but a little babbling, bustling brook, and if you are making a great noise now, it will soon be over, and you will return to your own pretty banks again. You know you are only meant to add to the beauty and fertility of the country through which you meander. No ships can sail on your bosom, even a little tiny boat would have much ado to float on you. Be content that you are pretty, sparkling, and musical withal, not wholly useless, as you contribute to fill the great reservoir that supplies our marvellously increasing town. You are roaring still, Fairwater, and there is a moan in the air. I would that Jack would come, as he surely will, to tell me of his interview with my lord. And I have to tell him of Childie. Ah! Eleanor, do you look down from the Heaven, where you are

waiting for them, and see with love and delight how true your children are to each other? They have been tried both sorely, but surely God's blessing will rest now upon them. The faithful, fond heart of Childie will be rewarded by the recovery of her husband.

Here is Jack.

"Madam, I am not fit to come into your presence, I am all mud and dirt, but I knew you would be anxious about the village——"

"And your interview with my lord."

"Ay, well, that of course could not go wrong. I didn't know whether I wasn't feeling some pity for my lord. Absolutely the tears rolled down his cheeks when I told him what might be expected—Childie's child, you know. And I really believe, in the first flush of knowing that he was likely to have an heir (that's how he took it, you know) he would have forgotten all about Fairlie. However, it did not become me to do so, and I left him really, I suppose, as happy as such a wretched little soul as he is could be. I not only gave him leave to go on knocking down the fences, but I am going to help to do it myself. There, now!"

And Jack looked in my face, glowing with all the enthusiasm of his fine heart at the victory over

himself. Spite of his muddy and dripping condition, I clasped my arms round him and kissed him heartily.

“That is for your mother, Jack.”

“Thank God, I have a right to receive it,” he answered cheerily. “Lord, Madam, if you only knew the difference in me! I feel Jack Farrall twenty times over, strong as Hercules in every way. And as for Fairlie, why, what is Fairlie to me, in comparison with my Childie? I am glad to be quit of it. I am glad and proud that my Childie goes so well dowered into her new family. They ought to bless her, for she will devote her life to saving Silvain; and they ought to be grateful to her, because she gives them what they have been so long grasping at. It’s curious, Madam, how the Almighty brings things about. Since I settled with you this morning to do the right thing, I don’t seem to regret Fairlie at all.”

“My good Jack!”

“I was only thinking, as I returned from Bifrons, what an opportunity I have now got for knocking about the world. I have always had a sort of longing to go round it. Now I shall go. I think to go soon, Madam.”

“By all means, Jack, as you will be the sooner

back again. Do you think my lady was at the marriage?"

"I can't say, I am sure, and I don't care. It's for my lord's interest to acknowledge it now. She is a nervous sort of a woman, and I don't understand those kind of people. But I must go to my Childie. I long to have her arms round my neck, and feel her sweet kisses. Do you mind, Madam, how she used to sit on my hand?"

"Yes, here is the picture."

"So it is! What a little beauty she was; and so wise and good!—I could almost wish she was that age again, so that she might sit on my hand once more. But never fear—please the good God, if she never sits there, Childie's child may. To think of my Childie having a child! Lord! how I shall love it, and teach it to sit on my hand, and wonder all the time how I had the heart to grudge giving Fairlie for it. But I must go."

And Jack, a usual thing with him, leant over my chair, and gave me one of his hearty kisses, by way of good-bye. Then I did what few people, happy and heart-content as I was, can resist doing—turned my soul to God, praising and worshipping Him, and beseeching a favourable turn to poor Silvain's malady, as the only blessing want-

ing. Even should it be what the physicians feared ; a long and tedious cure, still what he said of himself, I recalled with pleasure—namely, that at forty-five a man might be rid of epilepsy ; so Childie's life, apart from any suffering of her husband, would be that ministering one she loved. And then she would have her child to amuse her ! Altogether of Childie I could think with some degree of pleasure. Her fate and life were full of hope.

As for Jack, I did not doubt but he would do well. He was always hankering after work, and if my lord would but employ him as his agent, Jack might still live at Fairlie. There are many ways of making money to one of Jack's energy and talent. Besides, he knew he was to have Fairholme, which would perhaps be one inducement for him to marry. He had something tangible to settle on wife and probable children. To be sure, we had lately passed through a sad time, and it did not become us to make too certain of any happiness. But it was to be hoped that we had come out of the struggle of battling with temptation and calamity, in a manner that the angels, looking on, might admire. A little while ago I had thought I had lived too long. Now I found myself praying

heartily to be spared, seeing them once more all happy and prosperous. I did not doubt but that my lord had received a very serious and beneficial shock. He had seemed to me, the only time I had seen him since that terrible scene at Bifrons, much broken and subdued. He had the air of a man heartily mortified and ashamed, as was right he should be.

“Who is that rattling at my window?”

“Open!—open! for God’s sake!”

The voice was Jack’s; he dashed into the room, and glared round, gasping and smitten with some inconceivable horror.

“Where—where is my Childie?”

My heart ceased beating, and the roar of the little petulant river smote on my ear, and the wind moaned through the shutters.

“She is not at home—has never been at home since she left to see you! Madam, what is that?”

He drew from his breast a tangled mass of curls of woman’s hair. They were matchless—unmistakeable.

“The river swept over Fairlie bridge in that ten minutes’ flood. I found this jammed between the loosened stones of the parapet, and whatever the river carried away this night has gone into

that measureless, bottomless, loathsome place, the county reservoir. Madam, Madam, God is too hard on me!"

I heard no more. I fell back stricken with paralysis.

CHAPTER XXII.

“Yesterday was once to-morrow ;
That yesterday is gone, and nothing gained.”

DRYDEN.

MINE was a long illness. Mercifully the brain was numbed as well as the limbs.

“What,” said I to my maid, with imperfect speech — “what is that noise which I hear?”

“’Tis the river, Madam ; there has been a great deal of rain, and it is flooded.”

“Three days of rain ! Miss Farrall got safely home ?”

“Miss Farrall, Madam ?”

“Yes, Childie !”

The woman looked at me puzzled, but sorrowful.

“No, Madam, this is not a flood like that dreadful one. My lord’s lake burst, if you remember.”

“How long ago ?” I asked, struggling with my blinded intellect.

“Five years, Madam.”

“Five years!” Had I been ill all that time? “How is poor Jack?” I asked, suddenly and clearly. I ought to have been well to comfort him, though why I hardly realized.

“Mr. Farrall, Madam—we all wish we could tell. He has never been seen, or heard of, since the day poor little Lady Beaufrère was drowned in that awful flood, and he found some of her hair entangled in the parapet of the bridge.”

“Lady Beaufrère?”

“Yes, Madam, his sister, Mr. Farrall’s sister. My lord has had a splendid monument put up to her memory. People come from far and near to see it. It says:—

‘EVE—LADY BEAUFRÈRE—

Only daughter of Edward Farrall, of Fairlie Court ;

Married Lord Beaufrère at Bognor,

15th of March, 1828 ;

Drowned 23rd of Sept. in the same year,

In the 18th year of her age.’”

“Then she was drowned!” I murmured, the long-withheld relief of tears flowing freely.

“Yes, indeed, Madam, and my lord wanted the great county reservoir emptied, to find her body, and have it buried with great pomp and honour. Everything was prepared, but it was decided that

to do so would deprive the town of water for a year and a half—perhaps more. It could not be done.”

“Where is my lord?”

“At Bifrons, Madam. We see a great change in him of late. He is much broken, and my lady’s hair is like snow. They lead a lonely life enough, Madam, and ’tis said my lord can’t abide his heir.”

“His heir! who is his heir?”

“In course my Lord Beaufrère is his heir at present; but he ain’t likely ever to marry, Madam, though they dosay—however, it ain’t for me to spread reports—but he is never seen away from Fernhill, Madam, except he be met driving, and then there is mostly some one in the carriage with him, who is his keeper.”

“He has never recovered, then?”

“I believe, Madam, he is well enough in health, but has never recovered his reason.”

I felt unequal to hearing more, and lay back on my pillows, dreaming again the horrid dream that it seems had possessed me for five years. But that mysterious current of life, rising and falling we know not how, was struggling with feeble energy to regain a portion of its power. I felt a languid pulsation beating in my veins, each day

gaining a little strength. In a while a desire for air, light, food, awoke in me. I could taste, and see, and feel. To hear had been the first effort of my benumbed faculties. But I am not sure if it was not part of my nightmare. I felt as if I was always hearing the roaring of Fairwater. The air and sunshine were God-like gifts to me, reviving me as cordials. My good doctor at last recommended a change of scene and place, with the benefit of baths of mineral water to strengthen my limbs. Kind, cheerful Fanny Hazlewood went with me, for the first fortnight; after which she came now and again, during a period of six months.

So beneficial was my stay at Harrogate, that, whereas I was carried into my chaise to go there, I could now walk to it, to come home. Once more I began to take a pride in my garden, but, indeed, my people had kept it very neat.

The summer evenings were now at their longest, and I was well content to pass the whole of them in the open air. I did not seem to hear the roaring of Fairwater out of doors, as I did in the house, with the shutters closed. And the moaning of the wind—indeed, it was very teasing, always coming when I was settled down just to think a little of the past. Because, once I could

make it all clear in my head, I should the better speak to God of my trouble. For I was very low, only the doctor said it was weakness.

I minded me after a while of my book, wherein I had written a good many of my thoughts, and therein was the history of the past. Matilda, my maiden, was loth to bring it to me, but I would not be denied. So I open my book at the first page, and therein read that wish, "Would that I might lead my life over again!"

Glad am I my life is almost done. I will spend the rest of it in earnestly studying the Divine life, by which I shall hasten the time, maybe, to finish it. I will not grumble at the weight of years, or find fault with infirmities; they are but so many links, breaking and giving way to set me free.

Many years are past and gone since I began this book. If I remember right, Childie was eleven years old. Childie!—oh! sweet, pretty, innocent Childie! Surely, when the cruel water overtook you, some angel flew down and bore you up to heaven! Do not tell me that exquisite perfection of form and feature lies in that dreadful water! It is too dreadful. My nightmare haunts me still. Let me think of some other thing. There is one subject ever recurring, but never

assuming a tangible shape, for I dare not suffer it to do so. I must wait until my mind is stronger. But still, above the roaring of Fairwater, in the midst of the moaning of the wind, in the voices of people, in the rustling of leaves, I hear—I almost see—nay, I can feel the words, “God is too hard on me.” “Where is my poor Jack?”

Can it be true that the mania of suicide is hereditary? They said such strange things of Mr. Farrall’s death, my Eleanor’s husband. But he was a coward.

“Cowards rush to death—
The brave live on.”

And my Jack was so brave. But still he felt “God too hard on him.”

“Oh! my God, out of Thy pitiful, tender mercy, pardon Thy poor servant this thought. He had perhaps a little—nay, it might be much—too much of a self-reliant spirit. He was to be punished, humbled, but not annihilated—lost—condemned to all eternity! Remember, my God, for good, his truth, his faith, his exceeding singleness of heart, his mighty temptation, and his resistance, his tenderness of nature! Lord, out of the very tenderness of the nature Thou gavest him, he erred. Canst Thou not pardon Thy servant that

he was, as the Lord himself, very tender and pitiful. The Lord wept. He wept for the death of a friend, and Thy poor servant, in the very pinnacle of a victory over himself—in the very glory of a noble sacrifice—in the full flush of gratitude to Thee for crowning him so mercifully with the never-fading bays of a Conqueror, was hurled to the lowest depths of misery, anguish, and despair; so that in this moment he said, ‘God is too hard on me!’ Pardon him, my God—pardon him in this thing, for the sake of that pitiful Saviour who wept!”

Thus did I cry in my sleepless nights to God for my poor Jack, and thus it was that it seemed to me I cared but little for the rest of the world. I desired to see Jack and die. But how should I see him? And this it was that now became my nightmare. He was alive—surely he was alive! Was he the Jack of old, or had he become something I dared not name, forgotten of man, let alone by God? In his despair that “God was too hard on him,” had he turned and denied his God? No—never! Though her dear body lay in that dreadful water, her soul was gone to God, and Father Jack would pine to see his Childie again.

CHAPTER XXIII.

“The mind ought sometimes to be diverted, that it may return the better to thinking.”

Spectator.

I WENT to church yesterday. My lady seemed really glad to see me. I saw that monument. Oh! foolish man, bewitched into raising up before all the world the emblazonment of your own folly, your great sins, reminding the gazers thereon what an amount of evil a miserable spirit can burthen the world with. What a scourge to those around him is that man who has no law to govern his nature but the whim of the moment; no stability but in the strength of passion; no consistency but in inconsistencies. Good were it for that man if he had never been born! Yet I pity him. He has just been here; and with a show of feeling genuine and good, I am sure, paid me pretty compliments as to my restoration to health and return into society. He is, as Matilda says, much broken;

but he is, as I might expect, still unconscious of the effect of his deeds on the happiness of those I loved. Even in speaking of his son, a stander-by might say, "Never was so fond a father, or one so careful or so conscientious." And yet, we know!

Poor Silvain! But he is better. For two years he has been sufficiently sensible to write letters, to indulge in reading. His father is now admitted to see him at stated intervals, and his mother whenever she likes. "But—" began my lord, colouring and confused. And "but" was all he said. I know not what that "but" concealed. Something not altogether one could wish. Said my lord, all unconscious of the thrill of pain his words and manner gave me, speaking in so light a tone,

"Is it not odd we hear nothing of Jack Farrall?"

"How could you expect it?"

"I am sure I thought him so fond of Fairlie, he would never leave it."

"He was still more fond of his sister."

"I believe he was—poor, pretty little thing, just as we were all reconciled again. You have seen the monument I put up to her memory—I think it will please Jack when he returns; he will see I have done her justice. Did you ever hear that the Countess was present at the wedding? Had she

said so, of course I should have allowed the marriage at once. It was so unfortunate she did not say so. Her nerves are very sad nerves. It is the more unfortunate because—"again my lord reddened and looked uneasy; but again he gave me as little clue to that "because" as to his former "but"—"I am particularly anxious to see Jack, and to thank him. In the middle of his distress—and I believe no man ever felt more, and I am sure so did I, such a shocking death, just as we were all reconciled; and we should not be now—that is—however, in the midst of Jack's distress, he wrote to me, to take immediate possession of those fields the other side of the road, that I wanted to enlarge my Park."

"Did he?—did he indeed?"

"Yes—he said as an atonement. What did he mean by that, Madam? Perhaps God would accept it as an atonement—those were his words—I have often wondered what he meant by them."

"It makes me very happy to hear that he did write those words, for the last thing he said to me oppresses me like a nightmare—he said, 'God was too hard on him!'"

"Poor, poor fellow! I am sure I should never have given him credit for so tender a heart. I am

so peculiarly given that way myself, that I never expected to find a man so different from me in every way, possessed of such feeling."

It was useless to be angry with my lord.

"He did not give you Fairlie, then?"

"No; and if the truth must be told, I did not expect he would give me those meadows. But he did it, he said, by way of atonement; and I suppose he knew what he was about. At all events, the meadows have so long been part of my Park, you cannot now trace where they were. 'Tis a wonderful improvement. You must drive there some day and see it."

"I should like to drive some day to Fernhill, and see Silvain."

"Ha! yes, to be sure—how delighted he will be to see you; but—"

"But" again, and nothing more. I thought perhaps my lady would let out the secret of this "but." On the contrary, she was as like my lady at the time we were in the South of France, as if neither sorrow, nor woe, nor grief, nor death had passed over us. I proposed to go and see Silvain, and she was delighted.

"But you must give him notice."

This "but" was intelligible and reasonable.

“Some days he is not so well as others, and it would be a pity for you to take so long a drive, and all for nothing.”

“My lord seems a little uneasy about him?”

“My lord always was so, don’t you remember? I never saw so fond a father.”

“Will Silvain ever be well enough to come out into the world?”

“I do not know; he seems contented and happy.”

I could not but think my lady was a little childish. Poor woman, she had had enough to make her so.

I wrote to Silvain, and had as excellent a letter back as ever I read, firmly written, and without a trace of any infirmity of brain. And yet I had understood from Mrs. Brooks Browne he was permanently deranged. But I remembered in good time her gossip often emanated from her own head. Nevertheless my lord’s “buts” and “because,” they must have had reference to something of the sort. In Silvain’s letter, he tells me the drive is too far for me, and it is too far for him to come to me. So any day that I am out driving, we will meet half way, and have a little chat on the road. In this plan he is wise. We can revert to nothing

of a private or painful nature before the servants. A casual meeting on the public road will deprive such meeting of much of inevitable pain.

But he fixes no day or hour. My poor Silvain! we may each drive for months and never meet. Yet I remember how sensitive you were to coming events; how you dreaded your father's answer! You fear, probably, lest I might say something. You cannot even bear the anticipation of a meeting, and so leave it to time and chance to effect. This shows some weakness still of some kind, and he is right not to expose himself to the trial.

Our village does not seem altered during these five years, except that there is a stone erected, by my lord's order, in a conspicuous part of the village, noting that a flood passed through it, so high. So like my lord to do it!

Because this flood was a remarkable thing, and he considered it his duty to have it recorded, he loses sight of the fact, it was entirely owing to him it occurred; and until some still more foolish Lord of Bifrons makes another lake, with an inefficient dam, there is never likely to be such another flood. And then the awful catastrophe of that flood! To dare to keep it always in men's minds! To harrow tender hearts by the sight of that re-

cording stone! Oh! foolish man! how is it such folly has more power to sting, than pain or anguish? It is the falling into the hands of man that makes us cry out in the intolerable misery of having no redress. If poor Jack comes home— Oh! my dear Jack, how I long for you! Your name is ever spoken in my hearing, as that of one still ruling us, through the memory of him and his good deeds.

I believe that poor woman, Mrs. Brooks Browne, really loved him. She is becoming grey, and in her face has lines of care and coming age. She is, moreover, very restless and fidgety, like a woman ill at ease with herself. Fanny, not ill-naturedly, will have it she is a little sore Major Jones has married his cook-maid. But if she loved Jack, she would not care who married Major Jones. I think myself Major Jones has well mated himself.

But it is the way with us women. We must have something to love and cling to. She is getting on now to forty years of age, and probably thinks that every year makes her chance to marry less. I fancy she has some hopes of Mr. Markham, who has the management of Fairlie, and is therefore often in the village.

But be patient, Mrs. Brooks Browne, he is so newly widowed, he will but be disgusted if you are too eager to console him. I have pity for you, my poor woman, not scorn.

CHAPTER XXIV.

“ Ad humum mœrore gravi deducit et angit.”

HORACE.

“ Grief dejects, and wrings the tortured soul.”

ROSCOMMON.

WE have met, Silvain and I, quite as by accident. He looks well. His eyes filled with tears as I had to give him my left hand. The right will never feel touch more. Moreover, he looks happy. He is much stouter; his eyes very bright, with that dark clear colour in them expressive of health. His foster nurse, Margaret Ellis, was on the opposite seat of the carriage, and on her lap a sleeping baby. I wonder I was not surprised at this, but I was so occupied with Silvain I did not at first think of the strangeness of it. Even in a pause of our conversation, which I thought awkward, I made use of the circumstance to remark on the child.

“ Margaret has got her baby, I see.”

“Oh! no,” replied Silvain; “I was Margaret’s last baby.”

And truly Margaret was upwards of fifty years of age.

“You are fond of children, Silvain?”

“Very,” he answered. “I wish this little one was awake; she is the most loveable, engaging little thing!”

“How old is it?” I asked, with the hope of hearing to whom it belonged as well.

“She will be two on the twenty-third of September,” said the nurse.

What other event had happened on the twenty-third of September, which made me shudder with uncontrollable pain. Perhaps Silvain knew, for with a sad sweet smile he signed to his servants, waved his hand to me, and we drove separate ways.

Mr. Markham has never heard from Jack, since he received a letter from him, written as if his hand was palsied, desiring him to take charge of Fairlie; to keep everything just as it was—make use of what he liked. No mention was made of any money to lay by, though Jack was, as might be expected of one who began so early to count the cost of everything, particular to a farthing in his

accounts, and had the character of loving money a little. Not that he really loved it; but he was fully aware of its power. But though Jack had made no mention of storing up money for him, Mr. Markham was doing so.

“Jack is such an independent fellow,” said Mr. Markham to me, “that I have given myself a salary out of the money. So he will have no excuse to make me take what I have saved, which, you know, he is very likely to do.”

“And you never hear from him?”

“No, not a line.”

“And you cannot guess where he went, or where he is now?”

“No, not in the least. He used to say he would like to go round the world.”

“Do you think he will ever come back, Mr. Markham?”

“Undoubtedly, Madam; remember his extraordinary love for Fairlie.”

“But he loved his sister better; and her dreadful death——”

“Awful, Madam—awful! don’t allude to it. But he will remember in good time it was God’s will. The things I find it most hard to submit to, Madam, are those mishaps which I bring on my-

self by my acts. No, no; in time Jack will remember a due submission to God's will, and when he feels that, he will come home. And he shall find everything in as exact order as when he left it."

"A man can go round the world in less than six years, Mr. Markham."

"They can, Madam, but not if they desire to see anything of the countries they go through. In fact half one's life would be too short. Depend upon it, Madam, when Jack has had enough of knocking about, when he begins to feel he is past his prime, and that even his strong frame can be weary, and longing for rest, he will think of his beloved Fairlie, and come and end his days here."

"But I shall be dead!"

"God forbid, Madam! Jack will be apt to go off again, if he does not find you here to welcome him."

"He was fond of Lord Beaufrère."

"He was, Madam; but don't lose heart—keep up your health and spirits. There are awkward reports about Lord Beaufrère I do not care to repeat to you, ma'am; but they will be apt to anger Jack."

“Indeed, I have noticed an uneasiness about my lord when speaking of his son.”

“If all should be true that is slowly oozing out of the doings at Ferndale, my lord has only to thank himself. He will be the bitterest punished man that ever lived.”

I thought of these words of Mr. Markham’s constantly, never more so than after a visit to my lady at Bifrons, during which she gave me the impression of being the happiest, as well as the most contented of human beings, utterly without the forebodings of my lord. Absorbed in some new work, she could only talk to me of her pattern and wools ; and when I said—as I found myself saying to everyone—something of Jack,

“Ah!” said she, “poor fellow, ’tis time he should be returning home. I will work him a chair for his drawing-room.”

Did she see, as I saw, conspicuous from every part of the drive in Bifron’s Park, the young plantations growing on Fairwater Hill? Distinct were the dark fir-trees among the larch. Plain to me on that hill-side was the sacred name of Childie growing—a fitter and more beautiful monument than that costly marble fabric in the church! Does my poor Jack ever think of that

wood? Does it strike him, as it does me, that what he meant for the living glorification of his Childie, has turned into a monument to her memory? If so, I think it will be long ere he returns. If so, he will have that wood levelled before he sees Fairlie again.

Time went on. I met Silvain on several occasions driving out. Each time Margaret was with him—the sleeping baby on her lap. And I noticed now it was richly dressed. One evening I remarked to Matilda that I felt almost a sensation of health at last. Life was not such a burthen to me as it had been.

“And, moreover, Matilda, I do not hear the roaring of Fairwater so constantly, or the moaning of the wind. There is a sound in my ears, but it is altogether different to-night, as if joy-bells were ringing.”

“They are ringing, Madam.”

“Indeed, I am glad it was not fancy. What has happened? My lord has not been from home and returned?”

“No, Madam, better news than that. My lord pays for his peal of bells. These have rung out almost of themselves. Dear Madam, Mr. Farrall has got home at last!”

“Oh! joy! joy! Run, Matilda, run to Fairlie, bid him come to me—say that I am longing to see him ere I die. Jack, my Jack, come home at last!”

“Do not run, Matilda—I am here, and here is my wife.”

Jack stood before me, and I did not know him. By his side stood a tall, slender figure, whose fair, gentle face had on it the pure expression of a Madonna, that pleased better than beauty. No great massive Sampson curls adorned my Jack's head—he was bald and grey. His mouth, the handsomest feature of his face, mobile, always beautiful, with its ruddy lips and gleaming teeth, was wholly concealed by an enormous bushy beard. He was burnt to a fiery redness of face, and his eyes, unlike my Jack's beaming frank eyes, looked feeble and tear-washed. But there was no mistaking his voice, that Herculean frame, that firm tread.

“Jack, I feared I should die without seeing you!”

“I came home rather in a hurry,” said he, carelessly. “I had not time to write.”

His voice was hard, and his look stony; but perhaps he was endeavouring to master his emotion.

“Tell me how I am to call your wife? Does she know I would give her the welcome of a mother?”

“Yes,” answered a soft, low voice; and kneeling down, a pair of clear blue eyes looked straight into mine, asking for love. I drew the face towards me, and kissed her. “My name is Jessie,” said she.

“I told her,” said Jack, “you would love her. She hasn’t a mother.”

“How long have you been married, Jack?”

“Three days, Madam. Jessie, let us go home now. I am hungry.”

And with a careless kiss on his part, and a warm one on hers, they disappeared.

CHAPTER XXV.

“Nil fuit unquam
Tam dispar sibi.” HORACE.

“Made up of naught but inconsistencies.”
Spectator.

AND this was the interview I had longed for. Perhaps it was as well that Jack steeled his heart against all the love and fond welcome given him. Had he shown any feeling at all, it must have been overpowering. He acted just as if he had left us the day before, except that, instead of being the warm-hearted, noble Jack—the pride and delight of us all—he was both rough and surly. The disappointment of this became too great for silence.

“I am sorry for his wife,” said Fanny; “she seems such an excellent creature, so gentle with him, not afraid, yet always forbearing. And he is so rough to her, and they have not been married a week.”

“He is less rough to her than to us,” I said.

“So he is, and what a good thing that is! She is quite my idea of what a woman should be, so sweetly self-possessed and gentle. Have you heard where he met her, and how he came to marry her?”

“No, Fanny, but doubtless I shall. She has taken to me at once, and I have a fancy I shall get very fond of her.”

“Is that Mrs. Farrall of whom you are speaking?” said Mrs. Brooks Browne, just entering the room; “then all I can say is, I shall be surprised if you do, Madam. She only brought one box with her. I saw the fly passing my window, and could not think who they were; he is so altered by his beard—the very handsomest beard, I think, I ever saw. Moreover, she cannot be a lady—she speaks broad Scotch.”

“She has an accent, certainly, but I think it singularly pretty in her.”

“Oh! Madam, how can you say so? But you must allow she is very plain.”

“Taking her features separately, perhaps, they are not good; but combined together, they please me much. It is such a pure face, and the eyes so liquidly blue.”

“And then her hair—what coils upon coils she has of silken hair!” said Fanny.

“Pooh! half false—’tis impossible all can be her own.”

“You can easily see it is; the parting shows it standing up an inch high; and besides, ’tis such a colour—the absolute yellow hair of Scotland.”

“A most unmeaning, unbecoming colour! However, poor thing, I pity her. Dear Jack Farrall evidently no more cares for her than for you, Fanny.”

“Or you, Emma,” retorted Fanny.

“Mr. Markham is quite low about them. He sat with me for an hour this morning, begging me to comfort him, as he was afraid Jack had only come home to be more miserable than ever.”

“Your clocks want regulating, Emma. They must gallop, for Mr. Markham was with me at eleven, and he was at the parish meeting with Tom at half-past.”

“You take a vast deal of trouble about me, I am sure, my dear, and I am truly grateful; but you can’t deny the fact that poor Jack Farrall has somehow married the wrong person.”

“So far from it, if ever I saw a woman who will make a man happy, ’tis Mrs. Farrall.”

“Finish your quarrel, my dears, anywhere but in my drawing-room. But give me leave to say it is only just that we should give Jessie——”

“Jessie!—I told you she was Scotch, Fanny.”

“And I am glad she is Scotch, Emma.”

“That we should give Jessie time to look about her. I so far agree with Mrs. Brooks Browne that, now that Jack has got a wife, he does not know quite what to do with her.”

“That is, he does not love her—I saw that at once, Fanny.”

“But she will make him love her—I can see that decidedly, Emma.”

“He does not quite know what to do with her. But I also thoroughly agree with Fanny, that she will not be long before she relieves him of that sensation.”

“Ha! she will leave him, and go back to her friends. The best thing she can do—is it not, Fanny?”

“By no means; she loves him dearly, and will bear all things—won’t she, Madam?”

“She has that fine expression that belongs to fine natures. She has suffered before, or had to endure; but let us say no more of her until we know more of her. I have never yet taken a

sudden fancy, or prejudice, that I have not had to modify it in some way."

"Of course you will find, dear Madam, that your present fancy for Mrs. Farrall will be followed by great disappointment."

"Of course not," responded Fanny; "but our dear Madam will be vexed she did not think enough of her."

"My dears, go away, and quarrel in your own homes."

And they left me, arguing until out of hearing. I pray God dear Fanny may be right.

At present, each time I have seen Jessie I am surprised at the interest she excites in me. God has not forgotten my dear Jack; he has provided him with a comforter most especially suited to him, only in the pride of his man's nature he will not acknowledge it. Mary came to visit Matilda, and is not without warm praise of the new young wife.

"She hev a way with her as do take the heart clean to love her, whether one will or no. And she hev a knowledge of the ways of a house as will make master most as satisfied as if my poor missus, his mother, was still alive. She do know the ins and outs of everythink, and was pleased to say as master had servants as knew their duty. But,

Matilda, she's awful good, she's that pious as will make it a shame of us to deceive her. She is very sarious—very sarious, but will smile and laugh in a minute, quite sweet-like. I'm thinking, Matilda, as she hev been hard-treated somehow, for she bean't a bit put out with master's humours. And, laws, Matilda, often as I did pray for poor master to come home, little did I think as he was coming home so rumbustical. I'm thinking it's all along of that beard, it do masquerade him past everythink. But his temper, it do be gone shocking. I most wonder how such a gentle, good lady like our missus dare ventur with him."

"And I believe, Mary," says Matilda, "that she married him quite in a hurry like, for Mrs. Brooks Browne was a-telling Madam as she had but one box of clothes."

"No more she hev, and they be mostly old clothes, nothing like a bride's. But whatever fancy she hed for marrying of master, I raly do think, Matilda, as the Lord so ordered it, for the sake of poor master."

"Perhaps so; for truly, Mary, the Lord has seen fit to try Mr. Farrall very hard."

"But then you know, Matilda, them as He most loves He tries. Master should think of that, and

he doesn't. We haven't never no prayers, and he never went to church o' Sunday, and it's my belief, when I hears him a-swearing and a-going on, as he's clean forgot as there is a good God above us, as ever was."

So my fears for my poor Jack were true. His bitter grief had hardened his heart. God had given him more than he could bear, and in his man's pride and wrath he was impotently resenting the trial. By the very manner in which he roamed about, restlessly seeking for something to do, and on which to employ himself, I saw he was altogether lost to the consciousness of those moments when a lull in the world's work takes the soul up to God, burning with love, with gratitude; full of hope's beautiful aspirations—triumphing in the beauty and order of the world God made for him; secretly communing with his Maker, as his consoler, guide, comforter; or seeking to be alone with Him, that he might pour out the burthen of his woes, and spread it before him. These precious privileges were foregone by this poor, tired soul, and how would they be restored? Any, the most remote hint of the past prove him from one's presence. Any conversation but the absolute matter of the day present, he would not join in.

The least opposition to his will made him rude, any disobedience to his orders caused him to be violent. Yet would he lift me with the utmost tenderness into my chair; he was like the Jack of old to all little children in the village, and though apparently without that love for his wife which a good and newly-made husband is naturally supposed to have, the name Jessie is oftener in his mouth than any other word. And there is a pleading sadness in his hollow eyes when he looks at her, which seems to say, "Save me, Jessie, for otherwise I am a lost soul." And I am persuaded this look is perfectly interpreted by the sweet womanly creature Jack has married.

CHAPTER XXVI.

“Longa est injuria, longæ ambages.”

VIRGIL.

“Great is the injury, and long the tale.”

Spectator.

“**M**ADAM,” said Jack to me, ten days after his return, “I wish you would come and stay with Jessie awhile, I have not time to introduce her to all her new neighbours, and it is not in my line, either.”

I was not yet so helpless but that I could be of use in this fashion. Moreover, in the closer intercourse that being shut up together would engender, Jessie would exchange confidences with me. I felt sure she would be thankful to know her husband’s previous history, and if hers had nothing eventful in it, still I was not without curiosity to know how she and Jack came to marry.

She received me with so much of pleasure expressed in her soft sweet face, as to make it quite

lovely to me; and I was greatly struck with the manner in which she had arranged my rooms, showing how observant she was of the little things that make up the happiness of one nearly done with the world. Yet was she full of the likings of youthful hearts, showing to Fanny and me patterns and various things she was having in lieu of a trousseau.

“I was married in such a hurry,” said she, “I had no time for preparations. John said he would give me money for them afterwards.”

“You call him John?”

“Yes, he told me to do so, but he so seldom answers when I do it, that I mean gradually to slip into the name you all use.”

“Pray do, that John sounds unnatural to me, and by degrees will but remind him of his sorrow. Has he ever alluded to his sorrow?”

“Never, but I infer, from the reason that made him marry me, it has to do with a little sister, born when he was grown up.”

“You guess rightly, but how could anything cause you to think of such an uncommon circumstance?”

“Because I also was born in my father’s house, the only other child, when my brother was twenty

years of age. Let me tell you my little tale."

Both Fanny and myself signified an eager consent.

"My father and mother lived in those parts where it was still the habit of parents to arrange their children's marriages, so as to suit each other's fortunes, rather than with any regard to their dispositions or likings. Not but what it fortunately happened that my father and mother loved each other dearly, and had the further satisfaction of knowing that she might inherit a small estate so contiguous to that of my father, it was of great importance to him. They had not been married ten years, having but one child, my brother, when my mother's uncle and god-father died. This was an event looked forward to by my father as the one thing wanting to complete his happiness. For in truth this old uncle was but a crabbed sort of fellow, and had long teased both my father and mother as to how he should leave his estate. It was not much to be wondered at that my father was anxious about it, as this little estate ran down so close to the Manor-house, my father's house, that part of the stables were built on old Uncle Andrew's land. Moreover, the coach road ran for several hundred yards on it.

“At times I have heard that her old uncle vexed my poor mother very much, by threatening to break up the road, and pull down that part of the stables on his land. The estate was very small, barely two hundred acres, but he was as full of it as if it represented half of England, and as troublesome about it as the sternest landlord. No week passed that my father and mother had not to endure some vexation at his hand, which I mention to excuse them, in some part, for finding his death a release—nay, I fear it was a matter for rejoicing. Yet did old Uncle Andrew contrive to teaze even after he was dead, and, without knowing, mark out an unhappy fate for a poor unborn girl. He made a will that left my mother his estate for her life; but he entailed it on her second child, boy or girl, who was to have the estate and his name on my mother’s death at once, whether of age or not. No guardians or trustees. If this unborn child had been but a few months old at his mother’s death, he or she had a right to do what they liked with the proceeds of the estate. At the same time, no power was given to forestall the rent, to mortgage the land, or to part with it, during life.”

“A curious will—did it entail the estate after death?”

“Only in case there was no child of my mother’s second child, in default of which it would fall to her eldest child’s son. At first my father and mother were sadly vexed at this will, but as time went on, and my mother had no second child, they forgot the annoyance, and began to consider Uncle Andrew’s land as their own. My brother was a man who was fond of home and country pursuits. Not a lover of roaming, as it is said Scotch people are—on the contrary, he would not be advised by his father as to seeing a little of the world, and more especially improving his education at one of the universities. He loved nothing of the sort, and took so ill to learning of any kind, as to be much behind his rank in life. Which is again unlike a Scotchman, for they usually think much of education.

“So, at about eighteen years of age, he settled himself down at home as a sort of half-sportsman, half gentleman-farmer, in which latter capacity he pulled down all the fences belonging to Uncle Andrew’s estate, and, amongst other improvements, built a lodge at the entrance of the carriage drive. Moreover, my brother fell in love, and engaged himself to a girl who was not very well known to his parents. This grieved them;

and I have often heard the story from my mother how she sat over the fire nursing a very bad tooth-ache, while my father discoursed to her of the sad change in the manners of young people, who fell in love and engaged themselves to be married without ever permitting their parents to arrange a fitting match for them:

“My mother said she agreed with him, as well as she was able from the pain in her tooth; but she felt very sore in her heart that her son should not have, at all events, confided in her. She said she felt very pettish, and was at pains to assure herself she would not like or care for her son’s wife, and was altogether so put out, that my father declared she should go into town next day and have her tooth out. Which she did; but she still felt, she said, as if it was aching in her mouth, and was altogether very poorly, so that my father began to put her ailments down to vexation at her son, and ceased to be anxious about her.

“‘Here,’ said he to her one day, ‘here is a precious document. Alec has had his settlements drawn without consulting me. He means, they tell me, to be married the day he is of age. I have a mind to put in a protest about Uncle Andrew’s

land. He cannot make as free with that as he is doing with his father's.'

" 'No more he can, husband,' said my mother; 'and the more so, because the doctor has been here to-day, I was so poorly, and he gives me the marvellous news that if all goes on well I shall have another child before the year is out.'

" 'God bless me!' answered my father; 'God bless me!' and that was all he could say, he was so astonished. But the doctor was quite right, and I was born before the year was out; and I am called Andrew—Jessie Andrew, and I have got Uncle Andrew's estate of two hundred acres. I have had it ever since I was fifteen years old, when my dear mother died. But of course, as you will guess, my brother was sorely angered, and has never forgiven me."

"How unjust of him!"

"His marriage was broken off, I think because he showed more temper than the lady liked about this most 'iniquitous business,' as he called it. But he has since married another lady, who is as vexed as he is; and together they fret and worry themselves until they are very unhappy people. It is wholly out of my power to make matters better, and feeling how great a vexation I was to

them, I spent the value of my property—at least, as much as I dare let, without taking from my brother what he considers would absolutely be unjust to him—I spent all I had in putting myself to school—in fact, I may say, I have always been at school since I was fifteen; but there are times when my poor brother and sister need some help in their household, and then I go to give it.”

“But still we have not heard how you became acquainted with Jack.”

“It was brought about in very simple fashion. You will readily understand that when people give themselves up to fretting about what cannot be amended, they are apt to do nothing else. My brother ceased to take any delight in farming, or in country pursuits. He had lost all heart, he said, in the former, and as for any of his beloved sports, he could not go across his own land without being reminded that a field every here and there was mine; which gave him such disgust, that he would rather stop at home all day than be so annoyed. It is, I believe, a well-known fact that illness of mind brings on illness of body. He began to fancy himself much of an invalid, and was so. His wife encouraged him in this, being an indolent woman herself. Consequently his affairs fell into great

disorder, and from being people comfortably off in many respects, they were reduced to a condition of constant privation.

“It was about six months ago that an intelligent person from a neighbouring county came to visit that part of the world, with a view to examining the water-power. He designed setting up mills.

“After some time spent in examining the capabilities, he decided that nowhere could he be sure of the supply he required so well as on my brother’s land—consequently on mine. And he visited us several times, with proposals for renting land of us, and paying us a certain water-rate.

“You will not, perhaps, so well understand how afterwards I consented to marry in such a hurry, if I do not give you some slight idea of the annoyance I was to my brother. And therefore it is in no ill-natured spirit that I confide in you my poor brother would listen to no proposal that benefited me as well as himself. He preferred sinking further and further into debts and difficulties, rather than I should share in the good fortune that might now be his.

“In this sad dilemma I walked over one day to Lanark, accompanied by my eldest niece, who was but a year or two younger than myself—and very

dear is she, as well as all my brother's children, to me. I went to consult our lawyer—as I had often done before—to know if there was not some possible means by which I could so manage, to let my brother have the proceeds of this good chance, and thus induce him to accede to proposals so very much to his advantage. At the other end of the room, behind a screen, I fancied I saw a figure, but as our lawyer did not seem to regard the figure, neither did I. Moreover, I spoke in a very low tone of voice. But I was much astonished, after a long conversation with the lawyer, to be accosted by an utter stranger, no less than the Jack you all love so much, who said,

“‘I am the man about to superintend the building of these mills. Let me walk home with you, and speak to your brother?’”

“‘Do permit Mr. Farrall to go with you, Miss Campbell,’ said the lawyer. ‘He has a very convincing way with him!’”

“So Mr. Farrall walked home with us, five miles; but as we were overtaken by a neighbour in his cart, I made my niece, who was delicate, accept his offer of a lift home. So I had my Jack to myself. I am unable to tell you how quickly there rose in my heart a pity for this fine, forlorn creature,

who spoke so grandly, but was so sad—who had a love and care for the worms in his path, and yet seemed utterly lonely and unloved. He lifted me over a small swollen burn as if I had been a child, and he talked to me as if I was a child, and he was unburthening his heart to me.

“Neither can I tell you how I came to see that he wanted love as a necessary to his existence; that without it he was like a blasted, barren tree. Abrupt and rude to those whom he met, there was a sad sort of pathos in his voice when he spoke to me; and my nimble thoughts ran at such a rate, that by the time we reached the Manor-house I was thinking what a grand fate for any woman to have it in her power to soothe, to soften, to make happy so rugged a nature.

“‘You don’t live here?’” he said, and he looked in disgust at all the disorder and negligence so conspicuous about the place; and then, I believe for the first time, examined me from head to foot. ‘No, my dear, I see,’ said he, gently, ‘this is not your home!’

“‘But my brother’s, whom you came to see.’”

“Some ugly word of anger and contempt dropped from his lips; but Ellen, my niece, opened the door for us, she having arrived some half hour before.

“‘I have prepared my father,’ whispered she ;
‘and put the room tidy, and ordered luncheon.’

“We took the stranger in to my brother.

“‘I want to see your brother,’ said he.

“‘This is my brother,’ I answered.

“Before we could either of us say more, my brother, as was his wont, immediately launched forth into the vexed question of my birth ; and he was all the more graphic and eager, because he had fresh ears into which to pour the pitiful tale of his wrongs.

“How am I to describe to you both, the wonderful expressions that passed over the face of your and my Jack. He did not utter one word ; but the back of the chair he grasped in his hands broke into pieces, and great drops of anguish fell from his face. But he never spoke word. Again and again my brother, only too much pleased to have such an auditor, retailed his wrongs.

“‘And now, sir,’ said he at last, exhausted, ‘don’t you think I am perfectly justified in refusing to do anything that will benefit her?’

“‘Man!’ exclaimed he in answer, with a voice that thrilled through me, it was so pathetic and woe-ful, and with so deep a sigh, it was almost a groan, ‘do you mean to tell me that girl is your sister?’”

“ ‘Yes ; I have told you so all along.’

“ ‘Your only sister—born when you was a man?’

“ ‘Yes, the only relation I had ; and whose birth choused me out of my estate.’

“ ‘Estate—pooh !—estate. Ah ! yes—estate. I begrudged mine—estate ; well, so you have given her your estate?’

“ My brother turned a look of mingled astonishment and fear upon him, the look of a man encountering a madman. It seemed to bring back Mr. Farrall’s senses ; for with a mighty effort he repressed all further emotion. He gazed at the fragments of the broken chair in his hand, made some sort of apology, and sat down before my brother, with a keen, sagacious look in his eyes.

“ ‘I am come to make proposals to you, regarding M’Ivor’s intention to erect water-mills. Do you agree or not?’

“ ‘Not if she is to benefit.’

“ ‘Very good ; then we will erect our mills solely on your land, Miss Campbell. The water-power comes from thence down to you, Mr. Campbell, so we need nothing from you. Good morning.’

“ ‘Stop ! stop ! Man, what do you mean?’

“ Messrs. M’Ivor intend erecting their mills

here—it suits them in every way. You seem averse to letting your land; Miss Campbell is not. Fortunately hers suits us best. Good morning.’

“Then turning to me, he took my hand, looking at me with such sad, wistful eyes, and said,

“‘My dear, trust the arrangements with me. I will walk over with the draft of them the day after to-morrow. You trust me?’

“‘Willingly,’ said I with my lips; while my heart leaped up with a hearty consent.

“You must not think I was mercenary, dear ladies. I desired to be rich for the sake of my nieces, who were glad to be sent to school; and they had no chance of that unless I could afford to send them. Even Ellen, now twenty years old, desired to go.”

“And how soon after Jack had settled this matter, and walked over with his draft, did he ask you to marry him?”

Jessie coloured.

“I hope, Madam, you will not think me very forward; but that very day he brought the draft he said to me, ‘I wonder, now, if you would come and take care of such a wretch as I am. I wonder, as you cannot be my sister, my dear, if you would be my wife?’”

“And what did you answer, Jessie? You desired time, of course?”

“No, Madam; I said at once I would be his wife.”

CHAPTER XXVII.

“Say, wilt thou thank me if I bring you rest,
And ease the torture of your labouring breast?”

Spectator.

“OH! how brave of you!” interrupted Fanny.
“And he so altered, so rough, and—and—
did it not strike you he asked you out of pity, not
love?”

Jessie smiled, as she answered,

“His pity pleased me better than his love—I
am going to gain that. Besides, he would not care
for any but a straightforward answer.”

“You are right, my dear—yes, you will gain
his love. Besides, I can understand why his pity
pleased you—you wanted commiseration.”

“Yes, Madam, I desired some sympathy for my-
self. Always held up, by those who ought to have
loved me, as an object of dislike and censure, with
the consciousness how little I deserved either, I
pined for sympathy; and, you know, from him I

had it in copious draughts. I luxuriated in his pity; it seemed better to me than any love, for love is often selfish—pity is divine!”

“Poor dear! how you must have suffered! But I am curious to know what your brother did, not only as to his mortification in losing any profit, but as to your marriage.”

“Your and my Jack can never be malignant. My brother gave way at once, and became as eager to oblige as he had been repellent. And as for the marriage, Madam, I did not tell him. It took some time to draw out the agreements, and make the necessary arrangements. Mr. Farrall was to have been their head man, but he gave in his resignation the very day he asked me if I would marry him, though he agreed to have everything settled first. When everything had reached to that point, nothing was left but the signing of deeds by my brother and myself. He brought them over, read them to us (they were favourable for us), and we signed them. Then he drew another paper from his pocket, which he desired me to read. It was an agreement on my part to divide my profits with my nieces. I signed it at once. ‘My dear,’ said he to me, his eyes all alight with a sort of

beseeking entreaty, ‘am I to sign it too?’ ‘If you please,’ I replied. I was so impressed with the idea he must be answered yea or nay, or not at all.”

“Do you mean to say that nothing further had passed between you, regarding your marriage, since the day he asked you to marry him?”

“Nothing.”

“What! no love-making?” exclaimed Fanny.

“No; he was very busy measuring land, ordering drains, and marking out sites. All day long he was busy about the place, and I used to go every day, with my work, into a wood, and sit where he could see me. Moreover, I and my nieces brought him bread and beer—the only things he would take. And we exchanged a few words every day, but only on indifferent subjects.”

“How very odd of him!” said Fanny, her eyes extended; “and you such a dear creature!”

“I had sure signs that he had not forgotten I was to be something to him, for he was always restless and looking here and there until he saw me coming. Even the workmen remarked that. But once I was seated in the wood, he worked like a horse—I wonder if I am the first woman that

ever loved a man because he was so skilful and hard-working a man?"

"I should think not, Jessie; nothing demands admiration from us women so much as the power to do, and the nobility of work."

"And then, Madam, he was so like a king among the work-people. They could so little deceive him as to the manner and time of their work, that they obeyed him like a flock of sheep. 'No need for us to come down again, Farrall,' had said one of the firm to him; 'we shall do better leaving you to yourself.' Grand praise, Madam. Do you wonder I trusted myself with him?"

"No, Jessie; but did he sign the paper?"

"When I replied, 'If you please,' he said, with quite a flash of pleasure in his eyes, 'And you will go with me to-morrow, to church first—afterwards—home.' I was a little startled, Madam, as you may suppose; but the sort of panting anguish with which the word 'home' burst from his lips, made me forget myself. 'Yes,' I answered, and gave him my hand. He clasped it eagerly, Madam, holding it against his breast, as he signed the paper. Oh! Madam, his heart was bounding like in great leaps. It frightened me so, I felt about to faint, but he gave the paper to my brother to read,

and drawing my arm under his arm, stood waiting until he had done so. 'Jessie and I,' said he, 'are to be married to-morrow. I have the licence and all things necessary. I have enough to keep her in comfort and ease, but I should wish my wife to feel herself independent. So I only permit her to give your children half of her rightful fortune. If any of you desire to witness the marriage, you can do so.' And the next morning we were married, all attending the ceremony, even my brother, who was so astonished at the turn affairs had taken, and so thunderstruck at losing for ever the sight of one who had been such a fruitful source of complaint to him, that he was almost kind. I thought the distance to this, my new home, long. I fancy Jack was nerving himself to come, and so lingered. Much as I was occupied watching him, and endeavouring to be that comfort to him which he requires, I was not insensible to an exquisite pleasure in coming to such a home as this—to find myself married to a man of such position—even better, such ancient blood. When we walked into the house, the inexpressible delight of his servants, the sudden ringing of the joy-bells—the sort of rush of people to learn if the news could be true, filled my heart with that unutterable sensation of

relief and gratitude, that once to feel makes one God's own child for ever. I had done right in following the dictates of my heart, and if there might be some ruth to me in the doing of it, how delicious the reward !”

“ Why ruth, Jessie ?”

“ Because I came upon you all nameless, unknown ; every question asked of me, if answered truthfully, would but prove me to be somewhat forward—perhaps imprudent—at the very least, strangely wanting in all those conventionalities of life that make respect do the duty of love. But my reward ! If Jack loses the ever-recurring tears in his eyes—if he smiles naturally—happily, if he confides to me that he had a sorrow, and by so doing opens the flood-gates of it, and suffers it to drain itself away—if, above all, your and my dear Jack once more bends the knee in humble submission to God, that will be a reward an angel might envy.”

“ You are right. God give you grace to obtain it ; for truly never was there a better man. And he is godless, you may say, at present.”

“ I fear so, and yet it is not so much a denial of the great Being who holds us in the palm of His hand, but a strange, wilful defiance of Him. It

is as if the Almighty had hurled the worst of fate upon him that a mortal could bear, and there was no more for him to endure."

"You shall hear what God gave him to bear; but before you do so, go with Fanny to my house. Take this key, open my oaken cabinet, and bring back with you what seems a picture, carefully packed. Do not open it, but bring it as it is?"

They obeyed me, and during this absence I lay back, thinking much of the mercy of God, who, having afflicted my dear Jack, had given him, after so singular a fashion, a comforter such as Jessie would be to him.

No other woman would have awakened any interest in his heart, but one whose birth aroused in his mind recollections the dearest and best—and yet who claimed his sympathy from the fact that she was considered an interloper, was condemned as a usurper—was treated almost as a criminal, being most innocent, most sinless. And that other one, so warmly greeted, so lovingly loved, so guarded, petted, doted on, idolised, for whose sake the claims of ancestry were foregone, and all the dignities of pedigree and antiquity laid down an offering at her feet—where was

she? Perhaps God had decreed that she, having had all good things in her life-time, must give place to her who had wanted them. But her death, sweet pretty Childie! Would that familiar name ever pass Jack's lips again? If it did, only to call the new Childie, Jessie, would he do so—only to show to her that she had indeed proved, what God intended her to be—his comforter.

And, fortunately, in some things so unlike that little loveable dainty thing, who, all quivering with her passionate sympathies, moved to tears at the least object of pain and anguish, and living on love and kisses, was content to be the care and pet of everyone, taking nothing else as her duty in life but the exhibition of tender love and pity.

But this new Childie was a woman who had suffered. Keenly sensitive to love, she had been all her life subjected to the malevolent rancour of an evil mind, a mind whose very vulgarity outraged her, and who owed her love and a kinsman's duties instead. Moreover, she was a true woman in her love for woman's duties, the order and sweetnesses of home, the household virtues, that make home a paradise, that innate dignity of mistress and wife, which makes her the presiding queen of it.

Jessie knew to its utmost extent the privileges

of her position; and whereas the sweet, loving Childie obeyed but the orders and wishes of her darling Father Jack, Jessie took on her the rule of his house—Jack, when in it, was one of her subjects. In time, I doubt not, the most loving, most fond one in it, and all the happier for being so.

It may be—indeed, I have said so—that Jack was somewhat self-reliant. He had had no one to check him. He was his mother's counsellor and helper at ten years of age, his sister's father at her birth. It may perhaps be well for my dear Jack if he is bound down into a loving thralldom by a loving wife. It will be for his good.

But they have returned with the picture. Gently and solemnly we told to the second Childie the history of the first; and when it was finished, opened the picture, and looked on the beautiful image of the little creature sitting on her brother's hand, and clutching those glorious curls. And the second Childie mourned for the first in as true a manner as ever we did, who had known and loved her.

“Do you know, Madam,” said she, at last, “he has almost told me this tale in his dreams at night. The name of Childie is ever on his lips, and the shuddering agony of a man awakening out of nightmare often oppresses him, as he groans out, ‘The

water! oh! the water!’ And, Madam, he has that tangled hair still, I feel certain. He wears it next his heart, in a little silken bag he must have made himself.”

So we three mourned together over poor Jack, and came to the conclusion that he had suffered as much as mortal man could bear.

“It is not as if he was a weak and facile character. Every sensation is with him as strong and impressive as the laboured tuition of an art, or the careful education of an idea. Where he does not feel he knows nothing, is unconscious of sensation, and neither time, nor education, nor any amount of trouble would awaken in him the perception. Therefore it is that those words haunt me, ‘God had been too hard on him.’ They are there still in his heart. It is not unlikely that he still continues to pronounce them with his lips. How and when can we remove the impression from him, burnt in, as it were, like burning coals? How are we to bring him back to his God?”

“It must not be by the feeble means of ever-reproaching advice. Some good thing will befall him!”

“Nay, it has—he has got you!”

“But he has not yet realized that I am to be his

good. At present he has the satisfaction—a little grim of its kind, that he has done good to me.”

“That pleases him, and what pleases opens the heart to other feelings of the same kind. In spite of himself, such is his nature, I doubt not that he feels grateful to God he had a home, and such a love as he could give, for you.”

“With gratitude comes love. There is one thing certain, he derives infinite comfort from being amongst you all again. Changed as he may seem to you, he is still more altered since I first knew him.”

“He must have been a savage, Jessie!” said Fanny.

“A noble one!” she replied.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

“I see the right, and I approve it too ;
 Condemn the wrong, and yet the wrong pursue.”

TATE.

A PASSIONATE entreaty from Silvain to see Jack, addressed to me. “I want no speech of him—nothing but to look at him,” said the letter. I returned for answer that Jack was busy at this time on Fairwater Hill. Let Silvain drive there by the lower road, and it was not improbable he might catch a glimpse of him.

Jessie was of opinion Jack should be told of this wish. Jessie had not been told of that which was now openly talked of, even by my lord. His punishment had come upon him, for though a man no one loved, and all despised, he was keenly alive to any slur or disgrace. He was a thoroughly moral man. Our little angelic Childie was forgotten at Fernhill. The child on Nurse Margaret’s knee was Lord Beaufrère’s child, and

its mother Margaret's daughter. Methinks Farmer Farrall's sister is more lamented and mourned over by my lord than he has words to say.

Are we to pity Silvain or condemn? Let us leave him alone.

I know not how it happens, but my lady irritates me beyond bearing. Unlike my lord, she has no horror of the disgrace. She simply says, "Silvain is happy; he has been very much harassed all his life; he has a right to be happy in whatever manner he pleases." I thought her so good a woman, but, in truth, she is childish, with her wools and her patterns,—inconceivably weak and feeble-minded.

And he desires to see Jack!—truly this is incomprehensible. I will have no hand in it, as I will never go to meet Silvain again. The most shattered intellect knows a sensation of shame, I should hope. But he, strong and clear in sense as ever I saw him, appeared to have none. Mrs. Brooks Browne was my first informant, bringing it out in a rude, bold manner, most repugnant to me.

"A regular Turk, my dear Madam; he drives round the country, and whenever he sees a pretty girl, persuades her to return home with him."

“Excuse me, this is too horrible and shocking to be believed.”

“I have it from the best authority, and I need not request you to keep it quite to yourself. You have heard how he first saw Nurse Margaret’s daughter?—feeding the pig—absolutely feeding the pig! But she was singing, and that attracted him. He called out, ‘Childie! Childie!’ and my lady, who was in the carriage, ordered her to get in, all in rags and dirt, smelling of pig, and took her herself to Fernhill. She would not have her son thwarted. There are lots of children—dozens—running about the house!”

Fortunately Mrs. Brooks Browne is accustomed to be disbelieved; though, I believe, the less you credit her the more monstrous are her assertions.

“After all, Madam, perhaps dear little Childie was taken from a very sad life. If Lord Beaufrère is given this way, what she would have suffered! But I am told ’tis always the way with deformed people. They are wicked as wicked, and, moreover, cannot help themselves.”

“My good woman,” I exclaimed, “don’t let me imagine you are as bad.”

“Do not be angry with me, Madam. I sometimes, indeed, say a little more than I mean, but I

feel so much ! I cannot help fretting about poor Mr. Farrall, and he will have no comfort from his wife—she is so cold and proper.”

Fanny knew but little of the scandal of Fernhill, as her good Tom kept it carefully from her, and her own good feeling prompted her to listen to no scandal propagated by her friend Emma. But my next informant was my lord himself, who came, strange to say, to consult me as to the propriety of consulting Jack with a view to taking him to Fernhill, in order to persuade Silvain to marry the mother of his children.

“There is another expected,” said my lord, “and an heir is so desirable. My cousin, who is next in succession, is a man, Madam, I am justified in absolutely abhorring. I should not be easy in my grave, and know that I had left him to take my place among you. A clod, wholly given up to some whims or crotchets concerning the date of the world, he has not a single regard for the immediate welfare of his country. He has never even qualified as a magistrate, which, by-the-by, is so far wise, he is not fitted for the work. So, as I was saying, Madam, a probable heir would be a Godsend to me.”

“But why have the monstrous idea of sending

Mr. Farrall to persuade him? It would be the cruelest insult."

"Do you think so, now?—I am sure I don't. The fact is, my son won't do it, unless Jack persuades him—so now you know the truth."

"Who says so?"

"That is my opinion. I seldom form an opinion unless it is the right one. My opinions are convictions, and convictions are generally the truth. Here is Mrs. Farrall: do permit me to ask her opinion?"

"She does not know the necessity, my lord."

"I will explain it delicately to her, Madam."

But I soon perceived that Jessie had heard the scandal.

"It would be like the Jack of old to do as my lord wishes," said Jessie, her sweet face all in a glow, partly shame for her sex, partly a pride and faith in her husband.

"Well, it would, Mrs. Farrall—it would. Jack was a very fine fellow—a very noble fellow! I have always regretted we had not known more of each other. And he had the sweetest little sister!—sad fate, very. I put up a monument to her—I daresay you have noticed it. I did her that justice. So unfortunate—so very unfortunate. An

heir expected. And now see to what I am reduced!—absolutely I am desirous he should marry a drab of a girl out of a cottage—I am indeed!”

And my lord drew out his handkerchief, and wiped genuine tears from his eyes. Childie was avenged.

“The Countess has seen the young person, and says she is genteel-looking; but then the Countess cares for nothing but her son, and if Lord Beaufrère chose to say she was an angel, she would instantly say the same. A fond mother—a very fond mother, but, alas! not prudent. The only differences we have ever had has been about our boy. Poor Silvain!”

And my lord shed tears again.

“It was the Countess who told me there was another child expected. If a boy, how desirable it should be to be born in wedlock. I would take possession of it at once, and devote the remainder of my life to its education. I have always had an ambition to leave a worthy heir. Indeed, I sometimes fear I was too anxious about this.”

And as he stopped, overcome by some twinge in his conscience of the past, that of being father to the cleverest man of the age, of world-wide celebrity, must have smote him sorely. A pretty

hand he had made of it, desiring to leave a worthy heir! Disaster, ruin, disgrace, and death had followed him at every step. But, undeterred by the remembrance of the past, he was still absorbed in this object—ready for another victim.

“I cannot counsel anything so monstrous as that which you propose, my lord.”

“You are scarcely aware, Madam, of the influence Jack has over my son. He drives to Fairwater Wood every day of his life, merely to look at Jack thinning the plantation.”

“Have they seen each other yet—spoken?”

“No,” answered Jessie, “for only to-day Jack said to me he should not go to the wood again—he did not like being watched.”

“There, my lord, you hear! He knows your son watches him; and rather than speak to him, he will not go to the wood again.”

“But I should like my Jack to do this thing,” said Jessie, her face all glowing again.

“Thank you, Mrs. Farrall—thank you. It is of great consequence—very great consequence, and cannot be done too soon, because, you know, of the expected event.”

“You think only of your heir, my lord. You

have little consideration for poor Jack Farrall.”

“But Mrs. Farrall has; and, to tell you the truth, she quite understands what I want. I am sure no one desires to do more justice to a character than I do; therefore I cannot speak too highly of Jack—the excellent Jack. The manner in which he is respected by every one—so honoured; and truly he deserves it. And so, if he and you, Mrs. Farrall, would lend us your assistance—if you would be kind enough, both of you, just to assist me in this little matter, and introducing Lady Beaufrère—that is, noticing her, when she is Lady Beaufrère, I feel certain the world will think better of her. I mean the world will like to do as Jack does, you understand.”

How were the mighty fallen! As my lord hesitated and stumbled over these sentences, I felt a little of Jessie’s enthusiasm. What a noble revenge for Jack!

“We are getting a little old, the Countess and myself—we see things differently; and, in truth, I do not find myself as in good health as formerly. I am anxious to leave the world in peace with every one, and also that my family should be on good terms. We are now connexions, you know.

I put up that monument on purpose to let the world see we are connexions. And Jack gave me his land. I have never forgotten that of Jack."

CHAPTER XXIX.

“Oderunt peccare boni virtutis amore.”

HORACE.

“The good, for virtue’s sake, abhor to sin.”

CREECH.

PERHAPS after all my lord was changed, and changed for the better. It did not become me, so near my end, to judge him hardly. Perhaps, indeed, for once in his life, he was showing wisdom. It would be infinitely to the advantage of the plebeian Lady Beaufrère to have the pious, exemplary Mrs. Farrall as her friend. But that could never be. As part of her duty to society, the refined, pure-minded woman could not take her by the hand, in the face of all the world, and say, “This is my friend.” Of this I was satisfied.

Meantime, at Jessie’s request, and in her presence, I told Jack of my lord’s wish. As I expected, his honest, good heart sent a crimson flow of shame to his cheeks. In the first flush of this,

Jack forgot that most subtle and unerring weakness of human nature—a sense of triumph. No enemy ever fell more abased than my lord at Jack's feet, as I thought; but his voice had the softness of old days, and a tender light came to his eyes, as he replied,

“Poor Silvain, that is why he has watched me so at Fairwater Wood, and yet would not speak to me. Jessie, he was ashamed, yet he desires to do justice to this poor creature. Jessie, shall we go to Fernhill?”

And as she gave me one of the sweetest looks of happiness and triumph that ever mortal face expressed, he laid his hand on her head, saying,

“Madam, Jessica is very good to me.”

And the dear face, still disfigured by his beard, yet lightened with a faint gleam of happiness; and I thanked God that night, not only for the sight of it, but for the caressing action of his hand, and the sweet tenderness of his voice as he pronounced the name “Jessica.” A sweet, pet name, to be shortly graven in his heart by that of Childie—a name that told me my poor Jack would ere long forget that God had been too hard on him, and remember only that He had given him his Jessica. We women are so fond of these little traits, dwelling

for hours on the remembrance of a slight caress, the tone of a voice, a pet name coined only for one ear.

Gradually, but surely, sweet Jessica was creeping into that bruised and wounded heart. Once she had possession, it would be filled with the delicious sense of her presence and love.

So it was settled that Jack and his wife should go to Fernhill with my lord and lady. My lady made, as I feared she would, some objection—probably she was full of her worsted work. Nay, I am reprehensible, and ask her pardon. Doubtless she feared any harassing scene for her son. God pardon me the ill-nature of my thoughts!

Jessie was, on her return, to come and tell Fanny and myself of the visit. We were not without our curiosity regarding the appearance of the Lady Beaufrère, that we were to be civil to. Moreover, we would know of Silvain, whether he demurred. Further, if some arrangement would not be made regarding the nurse Margaret. Surely she must be pensioned off; the mother and grandmother of the future grandees of Bifrons—merely a cottager! And yet I had heard, but for her and Swaine, Silvain would never have become the man he was now. Poor Silvain!—but, oh! wicked.

Poor Silvain! I kept saying so, yet in my heart shuddering that I did so.

It becomes the old to have compassion for the young. "Mercy and forgiveness for this poor creature," I prayed. And well it was I did so, for surely I could not soon have forgiven myself after hearing Jessie's tale. The sweetest happiness and joy beamed in her face as she ran in.

"Silvain agreed!" we both exclaimed.

"No, Madam, he could not do as Jack and his father wished, because, Madam—and, oh! how could you doubt it, after seeing his good, beautiful face, and knowing him so well?—he was already married. He married this poor thing as soon as ever he was in the full possession of his senses, and found the injury he had done her. He fancied, somehow, she was Childie."

"And is she like Childie? What is she like?"

"I did not see her, for, strange to say, Madam, she had a beautiful boy only this morning. We saw him, and he will be the image of his father."

"How wonderful!—how strange!"

"You cannot think how delighted was my lord; and yet, would you believe it, nothing affected him so much, not even my lady bringing in his grandson, as two words from my noble Jack."

“What were they?”

“And they will make you cry for joy too, Madam. When Silvain—(as he always says I am to call him)—when Silvain said, ‘I am already married,’ Jack took his hand, and with heart-felt earnestness, said, ‘Thank God!’ He is remembering his God again; but what moved my lord was the fine spirit our Jack showed. No remembrance of the past, no recollection of Farmer Farrall’s girl; he was honestly, truly thankful that there was less of sin to be bewailed over than we feared. I am persuaded my lord will never forget that ‘Thank God!’ It made him see what a high-hearted, magnanimous fellow was the man he had scorned and scouted all his life. Rejoiced as he was over this coveted grandson, he was so silent and subdued on our road home, that I fancy, for once in his life, he was praying that God would forgive the Earl of Bifrons for many wayward sins. As for Jack, I was Jessica all the drive, so, you know, he was pleased with himself. But, Madam, where is that picture? May I look at it once more?”

As Jessie gazed at it, an expression passed over her face of such serene contentment, we were struck by its beauty. Even tears, apparently of

joy, came to her eyes. "What is the matter, Jessie?" asked Fanny.

"Nothing," she replied, her eyes drooping—"nothing; but the day has been a blessed one. My lady remained at Fernhill, installing herself as head nurse. But there is another child—a girl, three years old."

"Yes, I have often seen her, and lately never without anger, poor little creature."

"I saw her; if she is like her mother, the mother must be a lovely woman."

"I never saw the child awake, so I did not notice what she was like."

"She has not the slightest resemblance to her father."

"Was Jack taken with her? Sweet Childie was just three years old when I had that picture painted of her."

"Jack did not see her. I took the newly-born baby back to its nursery, and she was there."

Matilda looked in at this moment.

"If you please, ma'am, Mary wants to see you."

"Indeed! May she come in, Madam?"

"With all my heart. Mary amuses me; she runs one subject into another in the most marvelous manner."

Mary entered, and having paid what she called her "respects," began to tell her errand.

"There is a strange sort of a gentleman, like, waiting to see you, ma'am, and I have made bould as to tell him it ain't no manner of use, his trying to arger my life out of me. He do be quite vext-like as to think this be Mr. Farrall's home. And I ses, 'Our Mrs. Farrall is a lady as deserves the best of everythink, and that master is sure to have for her, seeing he is as good a gentleman, and of a noble and antiquated family, as there isn't none more so—not even my Lord of Bifrons—and his sister's name in the church, put up for all folks to see, as she died Lady Beaufrère, being drowned, poor, sweet darling, and had never no burial, because her body lies in that hawful place; and we are as sweet upon our new missus as syrups, and that's what I'll say to the face of every strange gentleman as chooses to come here. 'I am speaking,' says he, 'of a tall, fair woman, who married one of M'Ivor's work-people.' 'Then go to M'Ivor's and seek her. Our missus is tall and fair, and as sightly a lady as you may wish to see. And it ain't like as if we should hev in a house like this anybody as you do seem to want.'"

“Mary,” interrupted Jessie, “I believe the gentleman must be my brother. Will you go home and say I am coming?”

As soon as Mary was gone, Jessie continued—

“I have always felt certain my brother would seek me out. My marriage took him so much by surprise, he had not time to make any remonstrances. I hope he will not make my dear Jack angry; he has come either to demand more of my money from me, or to insult me, and so annoy him. I am sorry to seem so malicious, but I cannot hope he has come for a kind purpose.”

“If he proves himself what you fear, send him here to me. I will give him dinner and a bed, and permit him to talk until he is tired.”

“You are most kind, Madam.”

“Send him over to Tom,” said Fanny. “I will vouch for his being an excellent listener.”

“Come home with me, Fanny; he may restrain himself before a stranger.”

“Hark! my Lord has set the joy-bells going because of the birth of an heir.”

“What bad judgment!”

“Still, the sooner the world knows the truth the better. Before the mother is out of her bed, and about to be shown to us, looking to us for kind-

ness and forbearance, the world will have become accustomed to the idea, and the first shock of it all will have passed away."

"You are right, Jessie. But I hope poor Jack is not within hearing of them."

"I pray still more he may not be within hearing of my brother. He is, I am sorry to say, just one of those people who provoke, and make you more angry that you are provoked by him, than with that with which he provoked you. I wish you may make sense of all that."

"Enough to understand what troubles you; it is something that, I fear, troubles me, when in my lady's company, though, I am certain, without so much cause."

But we were all deceived in Jack. So far from resenting the arrival of Mr. Campbell, he was studious to do him honour. He even upbraided him for not coming before, and at every show of cross-grained humour exhibited by his brother-in-law, Jack seemed to expand into a more genial and happy mood. He insisted upon giving his brother-in-law an entertainment, to which was invited the whole village, including the great house. We each of us did our best to assist the most tidy and anxious of housewives in preparing a feast worthy

of the occasion, thrust upon her, as it were, at a moment's notice.

Fortunately she was one who, taken by surprise, is given an opportunity of showing it is a condition exactly suited to her capacity. The old-fashioned Fairlie plate, with its rich embossments and delicate tracery, was never seen more bright and beautiful. The napery had always been marvellous for fineness and uniqueness of pattern, while the china was even to be envied at Bifrons.

Simultaneously we all seemed possessed with but one thought, namely, to do honour to the sweet, loving woman who was devoting herself to restoring the happiness of our darling Jack. My lord's compliments, if clumsy and irrational, were at least genuine. In truth, we could see through him. By the aid of Mrs. Farrall he meant to palm off his new Lady Beaufrère on the world; she was to be sugared and coaxed into doing this kindness for the great house of Bifrons.

And he was extremely civil, too, to Mr. Campbell, being the brother of Mrs. Farrall, without perceiving that Mr. Campbell in something resembled himself. He was a man of miserable spirit, this Mr. Campbell. Unable to contain his astonishment at his sister's position and consequence, not

without the baseness of a vulgar mind at the pride of it, he yet suffered his envy and anger at her good fortune to ooze out at every minute.

“He is an impostor, is Mr. Farrall,” he growled. “He came to us as one of McIvor’s work-people.”

“Lucky I did so,” responded Jack, with a glance at his wife, that made me long to kiss him, as my dear Eleanor’s long-lost Jack returned to us again.

“He had no business to deceive me.”

“He deceives no one,” said my lord. “That is one of the great points of Jack’s character, the one I admire most in him. His word is the truth.”

Mr. Campbell seemed nervous as to contradicting a lord, so turned to Mrs. Brooks Browne, who readily fell into his way of thinking.

Now, as once or twice mentioned before, Jack had always liked and admired Mrs. Brooks Browne. I have my suspicions that had he not met Jessie, had he returned home without a wife, he might, in very loneliness of heart, have made her his wife. He never gave her the rough and ready words that we sometimes received, loving us as we knew he did. He had—what is an honourable and praiseworthy feeling in the heart of every good man—an admiration and liking for a pretty, lively, good-tempered

woman. Thus his original liking for Mrs Brooks Browne remained firmly fixed in his heart, and he, moreover, showed a little more of it, now that he was a married man, than he had done in his bachelor days.

This was not lost upon this foolish, frivolous woman, who, in the variableness of a vain and exuberant imagination, lent herself to whims and conceits of the most fantastic character. At all events, she found a kindred spirit in Mr. Campbell, who got on so far with her after dinner, as to let out the secret of his wrongs, and the infamy of his sister in being born at all.

In learning for the first time the cause of Jack's first interest in his wife, Mrs. Brooks Browne felt a thrill of triumph. It was not love for the woman, but the remembrance of Childie that caused his marriage. True, he was married—more the pity—but still she could not help thinking he admired her the most; and she felt almost as indignant as Mr. Campbell at the untimely intrusiveness of his sister's birth. Her commiseration for him was so genuine, founded—all unknown to him—on her own disappointment, that together they forgot all caution, and in her energy Mrs. Brooks Browne said, rather too loudly,

“I pity you from my heart, sir; it was iniquitous—most iniquitous? Why does she not restore the estate to you at once?”

“Because she won’t, ma’am.”

“She has no heart, sir; I thought that from the first—so cold and reserved; so unsuited to Mr. Farrall in every way.”

Jack heard her, and I was not sorry to see the thunder of his frown this time.

“You are talking of my wife.”

He crossed over to where she was sitting, and with one of those soft, loving smiles that were ever and always at Childie’s service, he touched her on the shoulder, saying, with infinite tenderness, “My Jessica.”

She looked up at him, her eyes full of love, and a charming flush and smile rose to her face, making her beautiful; but she made no reply. He glanced back disdainfully at the two, and then, with one of those joyous laughs once so frequent, now almost forgotten by us—

“Shall I tell you how I won my wife?”

As we signified a glad approval, he began, in his usual frank fashion, to tell his tale.

“I need not tell you all how I love work. I must be doing something; and as fast as I mastered one

sort of trade I tried another. Amongst other things that pleased me was the power of water, and the use to be made of it. I went about the world testing springs, so as to satisfy myself as to the level of the water contained in the earth. Nobody takes pains about a thing without gaining credit; so I got a name, and gained a good lot of money as a water engineer, and, moreover, enjoyed the work. My duty took me to Lanarkshire, and I was at a lawyer's there, drawing out the agreement between my employers and myself, when two Scotch lasses entered the room. I don't care to mix myself in other people's matters, and so wrapped myself up in my thoughts, to which all the time some sweet tone was making music, until the earnestness of this sweet tone awoke me from my reverie. 'Do try to manage it, sir. I can go out as a governess—anything for peace and comfort!' I looked at the speaker, and thought I had never seen such a pretty woman—don't blush, Jessie, but I did. She hit my fancy all over. I am no great admirer of black hair, rosy cheeks, bright eyes. What I love in a woman is that she should be a woman—gentle, sweet, and quiet. There was such peace in this girl's eyes. After a while I learnt my Jessie's share in the affairs which had brought me to Lan-

arkshire, and I walked home with her. She it was who was so thoughtful as to let the younger one have a lift home in a neighbour's cart. So I had her to myself; and before the walk was over, I made up my mind, if ever I had a wife, this should be she. But of course I meant to take time about it."

Jack paused; the forlorn, sad expression came back to his eyes, which seemed to become dim with unshed tears. But he nerved himself, and went on—

"I meant to take time; but that day I heard an account of my dear Jessie—her birth. She was born to her brother when he was a man, and she was not welcome to him. Friends, she was not welcome to him! So I left the house, lest I should take her to my heart then and there, which would startle her, as she could not know the reason, as you do. Then the thought grew in my heart she was meant for me. I decided to try if my thought was true. On the second day, not having seen her in the interval, I carried over the draft of the agreement; and after she had signed it, I said, 'My dear, you cannot be my sister; but will you come home with me as my wife?' I had said to myself, if she answered frankly 'yes,' I should understand

the meaning of this thought. I am unable to tell you how, for the first time in all the sad period since last I saw you, a joy woke in my heart. She frankly said 'yes.' Then I knew," continued he hoarsely, "that, perhaps, God had not forgotten me. And so," he continued in his natural voice, and an attempt at unconcern, "that is how I won my Jessie, by being a working man; and rather than lose her, I would break stones on the road against the strongest workman that lives. Therefore you can go back, Campbell, and tell your friends Jessie is quite comfortable, and a bit of a squire's lady. She will be happy to welcome any of them here, but you need not return yourself until you know how to do justice to the best sister ever man had. Why, she was to you what you ought to have been to her. Tell them they shall never meet anybody here who does not acknowledge her to be Jack Farrall's dearest comforter—his honoured wife, who every day makes him feel that, perhaps, God has not forgotten him."

If Mr. Campbell was not touched by Jack's simple tale, Mrs. Brooks Browne was at no loss to understand the hints in it. She took heart of grace, and veered round from the chilly north to the balmy south.

CHAPTER XXX.

“Turpi secernis honestum.” HORACE.

“You know to fix the bounds of right and wrong.”
Spectator.

ONE mercy after another crowns the close of my life. My dear Jack may look forward to having one of his name to inherit his beloved Fairlie.

“Does Jack know it?” I asked, of the happy, expectant mother.

“Not unless he guesses it,” she replied.

“Let me tell him.”

“Do you not think, Madam, ’tis as well to leave it to chance? His heart is still a little hard. You know, I have never been able to persuade him to go to church. We all hoped, after my brother’s visit, as he had acknowledged that perhaps God had not forgotten him, he was in a fair way to ask pardon for his long mistrust of God’s mercy.”

“It is true—he is still much of a savage; not even to please me will he remove that odious beard. So unlike his former ways.”

“One strong powerful rush of gratitude, such as would be caused by the birth of a son, may perhaps throw down every barrier of pride and self-will. But this would lose its effect if he had long to wait. He is a true man, for never observing things to which his attention is not attracted, so perhaps he may remain in ignorance to the latest moment.”

“Well, my dear, have it your own way; I only hope I may live to see my dear Jack with his son in his arms. I find old age does not prevent our being impatient.”

“’Tis for a good purpose, Madam.”

“Truly, if you can keep the purpose; but, indeed, I am pettish, my dear. I think myself Jack’s own mother, and, in so doing, forget that old folks should not interfere with the young. We cling to the thought of being necessary to you all, my Jessie, and so lose sight of the fact that we are only necessary from loving permission.”

“We find great changes in ourselves merely in short periods, and so it occurs that between the old and the young there are great gaps of time,

rendered still longer by the ways of the one being obsolete to the other. But God forbid that we should presume to think ourselves wiser than those who have borne the heat and the burden of the day, and are now resting in sight of heaven."

"And, Jessie, if we are so fortunate as to see Heaven in sight, ought we the more to leave the work of the world to those who are still labourers in it."

"Yet are we encouraged by your sympathy, Madam, and I shall not enjoy Jack's knowing of this news unless you are present to share it with me."

"Thanks, my dear. But I have a question some time hovering on my lips—Why is not Lady Beaufrère announced to the world?"

Jessie seemed to seek a reply in her thoughts. At last she said,

"She has been ill, as you know, Madam; her strength may not be equal to the ordeal. After her confinement, she was attacked by low fever, and my lady was in serious anxiety about her."

"And my lord?"

"Why, no; all he cares for is the boy, who lives at Bifrons."

"Do you mean to tell me this cottage girl has be-

come so fine a lady she does not nurse her own child?"

"One soon becomes whatever one likes, Madam; but it is not her fault. The doctors ordered the child a healthy nurse."

"And my lord has him in his power?"

"You will be pleased to know he never interferes; he merely worships the child as if it was some god."

"And it is healthy?"

"A most beautiful boy, as healthy as possible. When you have recovered from the effects of your journey" (I had been to Harrogate), "we will go and see him."

"I shall dearly like to do so; but tell me, Jessie, has no one as yet seen Lady Beaufrère?"

"Yes, Madam, I have."

"And what is she like?"

Jessie coloured.

"She has a very pretty face, Madam—in fact, she is what I fancied when I saw her little girl."

"I forget what you said."

"You will see her yourself, Madam, soon."

"Is she shy and awkward?"

"She is very nervous."

"Quite a fine lady, in short."

"Quite, if being easily knocked up, and shut

up half her life with nervous headaches, will do it.”

“I have heard, Jessie, she made a devoted nurse. She must have lost her health and strength by it.”

“There can be no question of it, Madam.”

“Does she seem pleased and gratified that she is now Lady Beaufrère? Has she any sense of her former shame?”

“She acts, Madam, exactly as if she had never been anything but a true and devoted wife.”

“I see, Jessie, she has found the way to your kind heart. But, my dear, we must not forget what is due to society. If it were not for the barriers that propriety and custom demand, this would be a very sad world indeed.”

“It would be most sad to permit vice to assume the appearance of virtue. Do not fear, Madam, that I shall have the sin on my conscience, of pleasing my heart at the expense of my principles.”

“I ought not to fear it, but indeed, Jessie, the curious behaviour of my lady breeds in me many sad thoughts. She seems altogether to have forgotten there is right and wrong in the world.”

“She is, almost more than we think it, a very fond mother.”

“Can we credit that one so full of her needle and wools has any strong feelings?”

“But she has, Madam,” pleaded Jessie, laying her hand tenderly on mine—“she has. Her love for her son is so great, as almost to crown her with the name of heroine.”

“I will take your word for it, Jessie, and pray that she may have her reward.”

“It is she who is the origin of the hospital, the prospectus of which I see lies before you; and all the benefit societies in the town are largely indebted to her. I like to see her sitting at her worsted work, for when she thinks herself unobserved she speaks aloud. It was thus I knew she designed to have the infirmary. It is her way of showing gratitude to God for any mercy. I spoke to her of it, and she answered me in her simple, somewhat childish manner, ‘My dear, Silvain is well and happy; my lord has his grandson, and I have a pretty little grand-daughter to amuse me. So I am pleased, and I cannot be pleased without bountifully scattering out proofs that I am so.’”

This speech of my lady’s touched me, and I owe it to this dear, good Jessie that I was no longer unjust to my lady, but could even with thankfulness take lessons from her. And I began at once, so that my mind was amused and my impatience quelled, as I sat in my chair and designed almshouses, to be

built and endowed at my cost, in commemoration of the birth of Jack's son.

To be sure he must know it, so near now, and yet he did not speak word to me, much less his wife, and she was sewing her pretty little things before his eyes.

“I think he guesses it, Madam, and his heart is all quivering with the recollection of the last baby born at Fairlie. He is rarely at home now, but takes journeys for a day or two at a time, on pretence of business. He takes those journeys, Madam, to be out of the way.”

“It may be as you say. If it is a girl, you must not expect much notice of it from him.”

“None at all, I fear; but it will be a boy. I could not, loving him as I do, lacerate his heart by letting his first child be a girl.”

She was happy and hopeful. Old people, in losing the enthusiasm of youth, and thinking with somewhat of melancholy on the constant disappointment of earthly hopes and longings, are apt to be foreboding and querulous. That faith which should accompany us, and step by step lead us up to a perfect serenity and trust, gets sadly marred and discouraged by the battles we fight, as we think, for our own defence. We should the more

consider this, if we suffer ourselves to restrain or censure that beautiful eagerness and hope which we admire, yet fear, in the young. What have we to show them in lieu of their dazzling horizon? Can we attract their roving, restless eyes with the mild splendour of perfect peace? Do we stay their eager steps, rushing after some new thing, by the serene aspect of a higher joy? 'Tis what we ought to do.

If the young are full of life's hopes and delights, they should find us basking in a sunset of such glorious hues, that they pause awhile to enjoy it with us.

If they fall, heedless and passionate, to whom should they come for comfort and sympathy but us, who have fallen and risen in our youth? While they go about the world, ever seeking pleasure and work, they should find us in our arm-chairs, by our fire-sides, earnestly engaged on some divine topic. Their love of home, and comfort in returning to it, are typical in us of the longing for a heavenly home, to be at rest. And amid all the rough usage of the world, their worries, their troubles, their wounds, their bruises, let them see us welcoming infirmities and weakness, because they lead to the better life, where "sighing and

sorrow shall be no more," "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest."

Only thus should the aged pilgrim cross the path of the young, and at no time be without "that hope which maketh not ashamed." "Ye that fear the Lord, wait for his mercy." "Ye that fear the Lord, believe him." "Ye that fear the Lord, hope for good, and for everlasting joy and mercy."

"Amen," said a voice outside the window, as I read aloud those words.

And methinks that solemn "Amen" came from the lips of my dear Jack. If so, he is conscious of a new hope and happiness. If so, he is about to ask pardon of God, for his want of submission and faith.

CHAPTER XXXI.

“*Multa et præclara minantis.*” HORACE.

“Seeming to promise something wond’rous great.”
Spectator.

JACK has shaven off his beard.

Methinks I am more childish than I thought my lady, in my joy at this. Now I can see his beautiful mouth again, and note that sometimes it has his smile of old.

“I am glad of this, Jack,” I said, stroking his chin.

“I find I am apt to frighten the children,” he answered, reddening.

He is thinking of his own child.

“You will look after Jessie for me, will you, Madam? I am going off for a day or two.”

He knows what is expected. My good, dear Jack, what a tender heart you have!

Lately Lord Beaufrère, with his Lady, has taken to drive as far as the village, resting at Fair-

lie. Mrs. Brooks Browne tells me she is a large woman with a red face, but Fanny saw nothing but a little person sitting, or rather reclining by Lord Beaufrère, as an invalid, closely veiled. Mrs. Brooks Browne is not much bettered by Mr. Campbell's visit. She has lost the flattering unction she laid to her soul, that the dear Jack Farrall liked her. He hates anything like falsehood or malice, and, in his present brusque mood, is at no pains to conceal from her that he will never forget, even if he can forgive, what she said of his wife. She talks of going to some cheap place abroad, as the knowledge of modern languages is a great help to young men who have to go into business. It seems we all strongly commended her for this thought, but I much fear we are thinking more of ourselves than her children.

It is very irksome to be on such intimate terms with a person before whom you know you can say nothing that will not be repeated—and repeated after a fashion that hides under a gloss of truth the most exaggerated statements. All pleasure in her society was lost from this cause, even when she was good-natured and pleasant. But now that the milk of human kindness has curdled in her, we are put to our greatest shifts to be com-

monly civil to her. She is unusually cross at present, for so far from thinking of marrying himself, Mr. Markham is planning only of his eldest son doing so. And if we are not much mistaken, the young lady will be Jessie's eldest niece. Much of her age, and like her too. She has come to be with Jessie for a little time, and while young Markham looked and admired, old Markham fell deliberately in love with her, as a father; and, as I understood, is bent on the match. He told Fanny that as soon as Mrs. Farrall was safe and about again, he should proceed to set matters on foot, to get the pretty Scotch lassie for his daughter; that he designed to give up his house and farm to the young couple, reserving two rooms for himself in the former. And that the rest of his life he should spend as a gentleman, amusing himself in idle fashion.

Which plan of his, Fanny had repeated to her Emma, with a view, as she said, to remove any hopes she had of becoming Mrs. Markham the elder. But it appears she was encouraged by this, thinking he meant to propose, and then live with her in her house, in this gentlemanly idleness. But of all the folks who advocate her going abroad, no one expresses his opinion so strongly as Mr. Mark-

ham, who absolutely was so heartless as to add,

“Who knows, ma’am, but you may pick up a foreign Count for a husband? I hear they will marry the plainest English woman ever born, provided she does not knit. We shall be heartily glad to hear you are a Countess, ma’am!”

What hope had she, after this public expression of the way, in which his good wishes for her, extended?

My lady paid me a long visit to-day. It was a relief to me to find that so far from being irritated, as formerly, with her little crotchets and inanities, I found myself constantly thinking of her good and charitable deeds, and the noble way she has of proving her gratitude to the good God and Father of us all. I could not but speak to her of them, and was greatly struck with the soft and beautiful expression of her face as she spoke of God and all His mercies to her. She was always a pretty woman, but when young had a peevish, somewhat disdainful expression, as if there were few people good enough for her to speak to. Now there is a halo of the sweetest, serenest peace in her eyes, with a gentleness and humility of manner, most touching, when, with pious enthusiasm, she speaks of that inward life which makes itself our real life as we grow old.

We discoursed much to each other of the thoughts which were thronging at our hearts, thrusting aside the ties and glories of the world. And I, much the elder of the two, already smitten by a death-stroke, took from her lips many a lesson on which to ponder and improve myself. If I was impatient for the birth of Jack's son, she was still more so.

"I look to Jack's having a son," said she, "as the completion of every mercy I desire of God, but the forgiveness of my sins."

"But, Madam, neither you nor my lord can in any manner blame yourselves for the manner of our darling Childie's death."

"No, I don't blame myself. Jack's son is not to replace Childie to him. I do not mean it in that sense."

"You still think my lord covets Fairlie?"

"No, I must do my lord the justice to say that I really think he would not take Fairlie if it was offered to him. It is Jack himself whom I wish to benefit, and the birth of a son will effect it."

My lady was a little incomprehensible to me, but as she did not explain herself more, I ceased to try and understand her meaning.

Two days after this I was in my garden, sur-

veying the wreck of an old walnut-tree, blown down by the boisterous wind of the night before. While I was doing so, Jack appeared, having returned home. He condoled with me about the tree.

“You would not believe, Jack, how I mourn over it. It seems as if I had lost an old friend.”

“Tut, Madam; you will not think about it when 'tis removed. I'll fetch an axe, and help your man to cut it up. You'll see it all this Christmas, merrily burning on the fire, and keeping you warm.”

So Jack took off his coat, and did, as he had often done before, worked hard in my garden, I going in and out to look at him, as the fancy took me. I, so feeble and useless, could not but admire his powerful frame, and the work so quickly and skilfully executed by his strong blows.

“I thought perhaps Jessie might come here to take her luncheon,” said he, as I brought him his favourite beverage—a glass of beer.

“Ellen was here not long ago, wanting to know if you were with me, saying Jessie did not feel up to the walk.”

“You don't think she wants me?” said he, turning pale.

“By no means, Jack. Ellen told me to keep you employed all day, if I could, and made me promise to give you good wages. No, no—be at ease; they are glad you are here; they only wished to be sure you were so.”

“I saw the doctor going into town,” observed Jack.

I knew of what he was thinking—that Jessie could not be ill, as we might expect, and the doctor leave the village. But Jessie had decided to have no doctor.

“We women are cursed with pain, but the peril depends much on ourselves. Nurse Margaret is to be my doctor.”

Nurse Margaret!—it was strange. However, we had only to remember she was a good and skilful nurse.

So Jack went to work again, and as he loved his dear old Madam, and did not care to see her grieve over the remains of her old friend, the walnut tree (under which my children had played), he worked hard, until the perspiration ran out of every pore.

“There,” said he, wiping his brow, “we have made it as tidy as we can; the root shall have a clematis or honeysuckle growing over it; and, after

all, I think the garden will be much improved by the absence of the tree ; it will have more sun and air."

"But, Jack, I dislike losing an old friend."

"There are plenty of new ones to be had, Madam. Hullo ! what has happened ? "

The joy-bells rang out a peal such as we thought we had never heard before.

“ Hear the mellow, mellow bells,
Golden bells !

What a world of happiness their harmony foretells !

What a gust of euphony voluminously wells !

How it swells !

How it dwells

On the future !—how it tells

Of the rapture that impels

To the swinging and the ringing of the

Bells, bells, bells !

Bells, bells, bells !

To the rhyming and the chiming of the bells ! ”

I thought of these lines as Jack turned to me with an imploring look on his face.

“ Jump on the wall, Jack—do you see a red flag on the bridge ? ”

“ I do.”

“ Then come here, and let me kiss and bless you, for you are the father of a son—a little Jack Farrall of Fairlie at last.”

CHAPTER XXXII.

“Quicquid dignum sapiente bonoque est.” HORACE.

“What befits the wise and good.” CREECH.

ALL the world came to see little Jack Farrall. It seemed as if all the world considered themselves personally interested in his birth. And such a noble fellow!—his father Jack all over, even to the promise of his famous young fist. He stretched and he yawned, he threw up his arms and kicked out his legs with so much vigour and independence, he excited the admiration of everybody. He was born six months old, nurse Margaret declared.

If Jack had felt any fear as to the effect upon him of the first sight of a new baby, it must have soon vanished at the difference of this one from the little delicate morsel of humanity who first took possession of his affections by her very weakness and helplessness. Young Jack was a thumping big boy, with manly attributes about him on the

first day of his existence. He had even a sagacious look about him; and when accidentally knocked on the head by a too eager kisser stooping to honour him thus far—when nurse Margaret was raising him to receive the kiss—he looked indignant, but never shed a tear. As for the first proffer of food, in all her experience of babies, Nurse Margaret never saw one take to it so vigorously—relish it so exceedingly.

If the remnant of hard feeling did not give way in Jack's heart at the exceeding goodness of God in giving him a son, the natural susceptibility of his nature was moved and touched to its finest chords by the joy and delight of his neighbours and friends at the birth of an heir to the ancient Farralls of Fairlie. My lady had been so interested as to assist with her presence at his birth, and repeated the account of her astonishment at the magnificence of the baby giant, who had his first shelter in her arms, to every one who thronged to hear it. My lord insisted upon being taken up to the nursery, and then and there presented the young man with a silver goblet worthy of his size and future promise. Moreover, he scattered gold about the nursery, among the nurses, in the most lavish manner. Nothing like one joy, enabling

the possessor of it to understand the joy of another. Fanny seemed to think all her annual affairs were summed up in the pleasure of this one birth ; while her Tom turned into a regular chatter-pie, as he discoursed of the baby, and his joy that Jack Farrall had a son. Even Mrs. Brooks Browne was forced to own she had never seen so fine a baby in her life. And so Jack could not but look happy, with the old light beaming in his eyes, though it was bent oftener on his Jessica than her son.

As she had so delighted us all with giving us such an heir for Jack Farrall, so was she pleasing us as much again by recovering in the most satisfactory manner. It was my chief pleasure to spend a part of every day in her nursery. Young Jack being nearly a month old now, I said one day—

“Have you spoken about the christening to Jack yet?”

“No, Madam.”

“There he is in the garden. I will call him.”

Jack came into the room with the timid steps of one desirous not to make a noise. Jessie had a shawl over her shoulders, so he did not perceive the baby on her knee ; and we were alone in the

nursery. Just as he came in, we heard carriage wheels, but did not notice them, as people often drove that way by permission.

“We must now think of the christening of your son, Jack.”

“Yes,” said he gently, “the boy must be christened.”

“Have you chosen his godfather and mother?”

“My lord said something,” murmured Jack.

“I have got a godmother,” said Jessie.

“Who is she?” asked Jack.

“You shall know in good time,” she replied smiling; “but there is one thing I am dying for you to do.”

“I’ll do it, of course; otherwise I shall offend my son,” said Jack, with the spirit of old days.

“Please to go into town to the lawyers, make your will, and entail Fairlie on my son.”

“Of course your son will have Fairlie, Jessica—there is plenty of time about that, especially as he is sure of Uncle Andrew’s estate. Suppose we call him Andrew, Jessie?” smiling like the Jack of old.

“You may call him what you please, if you will do what I ask, and bring the document to me to keep.”

“Where is the use of that?—I could revoke it during my life.”

“Jack! Jack!” exclaimed Jessie, pale as death.

“My darling Jessie, my Jessica, what ails you? There, I promise, I swear, by the God whom I have so long mistrusted!”

As Jack in his vehemence clasped his arms round her, he became aware the baby was on her knee. Drawing aside the shawl, he beheld the young giant, as we called him, in the serenest enjoyment of his midday meal. To one so alive as Jack to all the sweetest sympathies of our nature, the sight was to him the most beautiful in the world. The miniature hand, so like his own, was wandering, as is the manner of babies, over the sweet fountain from which he was drawing delicious food. A solemn awe came over Jack’s face. With a sigh from the very bottom of his soul, he timidly, tremblingly put his finger into the clasp of the little restless hand. In a moment, with a strength that seemed to Jack miraculous, his finger was grasped. The little mouth was withdrawn from its occupation, the baby’s face was turned with intelligent and searching eyes, as if to investigate the cause of this new phase in its life, the touch of something it had never felt before.

“Baby,” murmured Jack, with the softness and tenderness of the softest, most tender mother.

Baby seemed to take in the fact that somebody was looking at him who loved him, though unlike the fair, delicate face usually seen doing so. For a moment he looked, then clutching hold of his father’s finger tighter than ever, one of those laughing baby smiles broke over his face, and he turned with infinite content to his food again.

“I cannot withdraw my finger, Jessie,” whispered Jack, his face all glowing.

“Then you won’t begrudge him Fairlie?”

“Begrudge!—have I not sworn he shall have it?”

“And you will go to church with me on Sunday?”

“I will, please God, I may come.”

“And attend baby’s christening?”

“If God will permit me.”

“Then, Jack, my own Jack, turn round, and look upon our boy’s godmother.”

Was it the ghost of Childie who glided into the room, and fell on Jack’s breast? So faded, so worn, so like her mother! A groan, as if of agony, burst from Jack’s lips as he held her from his heart, and gazed at her. Slowly, feebly—like a far-off sound came the words,

“My Father Jack!”

“Do you know that I cursed my God for loss of you?”

“My Father Jack!”

“That I thought to kill myself?—it was merely the brute courage of my nature that hindered me.”

“My Father Jack!”

“Go, I have Jessie—I want nothing more!”

And he would have thrown her from him, but she was insensible.

The room seemed filling with people. I only noted that Nurse Margaret carried off the baby, who, for the first time in his life, roared. As Jack heard the sound, he started, and looked down upon the white face that lay on his arms. He trembled, his chest heaved with vast sighs, tears rolled in torrents from his eyes.

“I said—yes, I said I would bear anything for her sake! I will bear this most monstrous abuse of my love; out of gratitude to the God I mistrusted, as the only proof I can make that I feel my error, nearly as she has lost me, both my body and my soul, I forgive her! Jessica, Jessica, come to me!”

“I come, my Jack; but hold her to your heart with one hand, and me with the other. Look at

her, Jack, so faded, so care-worn, so like, they tell me, to your own mother. She became thus, mourning because she had to live, deceiving you. She had to choose between you and her husband. My lady will tell you.”

And my lady came forward, and with an energy of words that penetrated every heart, told how it became known to her that the only chance for the life of her son was that he should be watched and nursed by the being he loved best in the world ; so that if his hand was spread out, even in the delirium of fever, he must be calmed and soothed by feeling in it the familiar hand he was seeking. If he cried out a name, the owner of that name must answer. So finely allied together were the tissues of the brain and the body, that it was an absolute demand that the one should serve the other, for the preservation of life and reason. So fragile was the thread of either, that the watcher and nurse must watch and attend with a vigilance and tact that nothing but a mighty love could achieve. And there was to be no other claim to interfere—there was to be a silence as of death, a quiet like the grave, to enable the shattered reason to right itself. One break, one single intermission, would undo the work of months.

“So there was no one but my Childie to do it,” continued my lady, softly, but clearly; “and I bribed her, and I tempted her, and coaxed her. She was going to die with Silvain, she said, because she could not be all to Silvain I wanted, and deceive her Father Jack. ‘But,’ I said, ‘you will save him Fairlie?’ And she resisted long. I took her to Silvain, and she heard him murmuring ever, ‘Childie! Childie!’ She put her hand into his, and he stopped that constant cry, and felt the little hand trembling, and his first smile came on his face, and his first sleep to his weary brain. Then I said, as if I only thought of her and Jack, ‘Go to Madam, find out, if I take you openly to Fernhill, whether Jack will keep Fairlie or no.’ Ah! dear Madam, what do I not owe you? By your unconscious words, I won my Childie, and so saved my Silvain!”

“But, oh!” groaned Jack, “the cruelty, the cruelty of this!”

And he drew forth from his breast a little silken bag—tearing it suddenly asunder, he displayed a handful of dishevelled curls.

“Mine was the cruelty; it was I who was so nearly drowned by the bursting of my lord’s lake.

My Childie, the better to disguise herself as Nurse Margaret's daughter, cut off her curls in the summer-house at Fairlie, and not knowing what to do with them, I ran down to throw them into Fairwater. It was just beginning to pour down in flood, and I had only time to cling to the lavender-bushes on the garden wall, and get up out of reach of it. I dared not move for some minutes, lest I should be seen from the windows of Fairlie. And as I hid, the flood went down almost as quickly as it rose. I threw in my Childie's hair, and some of it must have caught in the parapet of the old bridge. So I took my Childie to her Silvain, and thinking of herself as now lost to Jack and the world, she thought only of her husband, and by God's mercy has saved him !"

"Yes, Jack, she saved me," said Silvain.

"Why keep it secret so long?" whispered Jack hoarsely.

"Jack, if we had come to you on the instant of hearing of your return, would you not have given Fairlie to my father, because of the word you passed to him?"

"I shall do it now!" cried Jack, loudly.

"Nay, Jack, you have sworn it shall be my

son's," said Jessie, looking up into his face with one of those potent smiles of love she so well knew how to use.

"And I won't have it," cried another voice, no less than my lord's, who had entered no one knew when.

Childie recovering, her face still on her brother's breast, was trying to steal her arm round his neck.

"Nay," said he, with the old jealousy, "spare me this—to live so near me, and not care to see me!"

"We have seen you nearly every day, Jack," said Silvain.

"To have no remembrance of your Father Jack," continued Jack, unheeding him.

"Wait one moment, Jack," said his wife, and slipping from his arms, she ran to Silvain. He, withdrawing the folds of the usual cloak that he wore to conceal his deformed figure, discovered a child within. "Now, darling," she said, encouragingly.

And a little lovely girl, the exact image of the picture I had in my possession of Childie sitting on Jack's hand, stood fearless and smiling amongst us all. As she looked up at one face after another, she suddenly caught sight of Jack. With a little

cry of joy, clapping her hands, she ran to him, and pulling at his coat said,

“My Farder Sack, put me on your hand!”

It was irresistible. Jack stooped and held out his hand; the little thing fearlessly placed herself on it, and as he raised her to a level with his face, she put up a mouth he felt he had kissed scores of times before, and said,

“Tiss your new ’ittle Childie!”

He kissed her reverently, tenderly.

“Now tiss mother!”

And Jack held the two Childies to his heart. Then Jessie brought in the young giant, and the little Childie insisted upon having him on her lap. And the elder Childie, in her low, tender voice, said a few of the familiar words of old, and as if there was some spell in the music of them, all the wrath and indignation that would well up in Jack’s heart seemed suddenly annihilated and destroyed.

“My Childie,” said he, taking her in his arms, “why are you so thin and pale, like our mother before she left us?”

“Our mother has been very near me all these years, Father Jack. She has my first-born in heaven with her!”

Jack drew her more near to him, kissing her in a kind of tender compassion. "And how did you find out what a darling my Jessie is?"

"Because Jessie found out our secret. She first saw me driving, and said to herself, 'That is not Nurse Margaret's daughter.' Then she said to herself, 'My lady's happiness is of a different kind from that which would be caused by merely doing justice to the character of a low-born girl. My lady's happiness was so heart-felt and exalted.' Then she saw the little Childie, and all her suspicions became facts."

"And so, my Jack, I became as naughty as any one of them, deceiving you. When I discovered I was going to have this young monster of a son, I determined his father's obstinate, perverse disposition must be controlled and subdued. I have not lived so long with you as other people, but I know as well as they do that the stubbornest spirit that ever was born is that of my son's father. And my son is going to be just like him." And Jessie kissed them both most fervently, as if they were yielding as wax.

We were all deeply touched by my lord.

"My dear," said he to Childie, "can you ever forgive me?"

“Father!” answered she, kissing him.

“My dear, people may think I have been a happy and contented man, but I have never known a single moment of peace, from the time I thought you drowned in that dreadful flood, until now. Not even looking at my grandson.”

CHAPTER XXXIII.

“Vitæ summa brevis spem nos vetat inchoare longam.”

HORACE.

“Life’s span forbids us to extend our cares,
And stretch our hopes beyond our years.”

CREECH.

I HAD thought perhaps I might not live to see Jack’s son, and lo! he has been here this morning with his two sons, Jack and Dick, both their father in miniature. They are grave, orderly boys, always striving to be useful, and not altogether happy unless something is entrusted to their care. They both imitate their father’s walk, and but this minute their father hath shown me how little Jack has the liking to balance his accounts after Jack’s own daily fashion :

This day father gave me $1d.$

Gave to Dickie . . . $\frac{1}{2}d.$

Left in my pocket . . . $\frac{1}{2}d.$

“Is not that capital, Madam?” said Jack, ad-

ming his little son's bill. "He will be a rare fellow some day at accounts."

"Fairlie will not suffer in his hands, good Jack."

"No, though it will be long, please God, before he shall have it. I don't know that I ever felt heartier or stronger than now."

"That is because you are so happy, Jack."

"Thank God for peace of mind more than anything. I never thought to shed a tear at my lord's death, but I did, Madam—in truth I did."

"Well, in what had he hurt you? Your Childie was his cherished daughter, and you have Fairlie still."

"Jessica tricked me out of that; but, after all, I do believe my lord was sincere, saying he would not have it. Indeed, the meadows t'other side the road were all of Fairlie that they wanted. Only, having set their minds on the one thing, they did not know how to let it go."

"I hope, Jack, before I die, and go to your mother, to be certified that all soreness in your heart has gone out of it, in regard to Childie."

"Madam, my Childie certainly died to me. I mourned her for six or seven years with every throb of my heart. That I am relieved from the

terrible nightmare of thinking she lay in that awful drear water, is a mercy that I thank God for, night and day."

"Yet you will not forgive her for the deception passed on us."

"God love you, Madam!—if I did not, where should I be now? Did not I deny and battle with my Maker?"

"Then, Jack, why is she no longer to you what she was? You call her Eve—the loving name of Childie we never hear now, and you are more anxious about Jessica's little finger than Childie's fondest wish. Look at her picture sitting here on your hand, and tell me if this is not true?"

"It is true, Madam, and it sounds to me very strange that it should be true. But if I can believe my own heart, this arises from very natural causes; only my Childie that was, has escaped the first shock of knowing that I could love another better than her. You can surely remember, Madam, what odd fits of jealousy I had about her supposed husband, and the horrible temptation I endured when I thought to keep her and her child with no husband at all. At first, when I was so overcome at her sudden appearance, and my anger and indignation at being duped would burst forth,

I was very sore indeed—much more than ever I showed or confessed. But, Lord love you, Madam, don't you see how I dote on my Jessie? I declare to you that, often as I said I would bear anything for Childie, I go to God, every time I see them, to pray for blessings on my wife and children. I feel they are too precious to me to be only in my hands. Strong as I feel myself, I tremble like a child if any evil hovers about them, and submit, like the sinner that I am, to beg of God to shield them from it. And if my love is of this sort, cannot you see, Madam, that Eve's is the same for her husband and children? There is no soreness between us. She chose another love than mine, and it has been a love beautiful and edifying to see. I took another love to console me, and it has consoled me. Dear Madam, where will you ever see anyone in the world like my Jessie?"

"Nowhere, Jack; and yet, I remember me, you did not care much for her when you married her."

"Ah! she twits me with that now at times, but I always revenge myself. Now I hope I have explained myself well to you? Who would suppose Jack Farrall could have reasoned and philosophised about love?"

"You have reasoned well, Jack, and removed

all my doubts; and, after all, you need not be surprised at your own eloquence. 'Tis easy to speak out the thoughts that crowd upon you as solemn truths."

"It is, Madam. I seem to see it all clear. Eve is now a great lady, and has to soar some way above us, for the sake of her children."

"I do not know that she has to keep above you. If all I hear is true, you are a rich man, Jack; and may be very rich if you please."

"Yes, I may be that; and 'tis partly owing to Jessie's inheritance from her uncle Andrew. Now that her brother is dead—and I really believe he died of peevishness and vexation that she benefited so much from the erection of M'Ivor's water-mills—I am appointed by his widow sole guardian and trustee. She is coming to live in Mrs. Brooks Browne's house, to be near her daughter, Mrs. Markham."

"By-the-by, Jack, there is an odd story about Mrs. Brooks Browne."

"Funny, Madam—nothing more. She married a man she thought a Baron; but when he took her home, she discovered he was only a brewer of Bavarian beer. In short, a man like Mason at the 'Bifrons' Arms.'"

“ Poor woman !”

“ Oh ! she bears up bravely, and calls him the Baron, writing to her friends here. She was always a plucky woman, and was very neat about the hair—but such a liar ! Lord bless me, Madam, she lied by the bushel.”

Jack was still, at times, very brusque in his ways.

Day by day all these who have made the very bonds that held me to earth, are fading from my view, and I sit by the fireside dreaming of the world to which I am hastening. And I seem almost to be there, until I am awakened by Matilda: “ Mrs. Farrall, Madam, come to know how you feel yourself to-day ?”

And the fair, pure face that bends over me does not seem altogether familiar. I take some time to recall that one of those now dearest and most like a child to me, is not mixed up in the remembrance of my younger days ; and so, when dreaming thus, I seem to forget her. But I do not. I have only just been trying to find words to describe to Eleanor what her Jack’s Jessica is—the sweetest, dearest creature ! And I tell Jessie so ; and she smiles as those smile who know they are blessing, as they are blest.

I am scarcely at my dreams again, when Matilda again arouses me.

“My lady, Madam, and the Countess.”

The latter grows younger and happier. Her hair is snow-white, but her eyes clear and bright; her figure, as it ever was, upright and stately still. I never see her that I do not pray God to forgive me my hard thoughts of her. Truly in His hands the weak become strong, and the foolish full of wisdom and goodness. Jessica once told me she deserved the name of heroine, and truly I think so now. She is reaping the reward of all she did, for her Silvain is as strong and hale a man as one deformed can be, and has long gained the name that his father designed he should have. She is surrounded by pretty grandchildren, and sees one the image of what her son was. She is so happy she lives on happiness, and Time seems not to touch her. I tell her she will live to be a hundred, and she replies with her sweet, soft smile, “Please God I may.”

“And the Countess—that is your child, Eleanor. You were a good wife, and she has followed your example.”

Sweet, gentle Childie! Though a great lady, and ever on the watch to make her virtues out-

shine her rank, yet there is something about her still of that Childie we loved so deeply, mourned so woefully, and saw restored suddenly to our love. She loved, if I remember right, cotton frocks and housewifely ways. Now she sits in silks and satins, and has no other occupation but to love. And she does love, so that the mere sound of her soft murmuring voice dispels anger, alarms malice, and scares hatred and ill-will. Childie, you were born unexpectedly. And we thought, Eleanor and I, it was for Jack's sake. But methinks we were mistaken. Your mission was to repair the mischief done by one of those wayward sons of men who forget what evil they do in following the dictates of their own whims.

It is like our God to make common mortals ministering angels of His commands. Without knowing it, we may each of us be the avenger, the victim, the atonement, the messenger that is to help to save some soul we love. To-morrow I will trace back this thought, and prove it from the lives of those I love. Methinks such a thought ought to make us very heedful of what we are doing. To be God's instrument for good! What a noble idea!—angelic work before we are angels.

“Alas! alas! our dear Madam is gone. She had her ‘to-morrow’ in heaven. We found her with her pen still in her hand.”

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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