

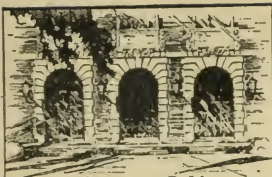


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DESPERATE REMEDIES.

DESPERATE REMEDIES.

A Novel.

“Though a course of adventures which are only connected with each other by having happened to the same individual is what most frequently occurs in nature, yet the province of the romance-writer being artificial, there is more required from him than a mere compliance with the simplicity of reality.”

SIR W. SCOTT.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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DESPERATE REMEDIES.

CHAPTER I.

THE EVENTS OF THIRTY YEARS.

§ 1. *December and January, 1835-36.*

IN the long and intricately inwrought chain of circumstance which renders worthy of record some experiences of Cytherea Graye, Edward Springrove, and others, the first event directly influencing the issue was a Christmas visit.

In the above-mentioned year eighteen hundred and thirty-five, Ambrose Graye, a young architect who had just commenced the practice of his profession in the midland town of Hocbridge, went to London to spend the Christmas holidays with a friend who lived in Bloomsbury. They had gone up to Cambridge in the same

year, and, after graduating together, Huntway, the friend, had entered orders.

Graye was handsome, frank, and gentle. He had a volatility of thought which, exercised on homeliness, was humour ; on nature, picturesqueness ; on abstractions, poetry. Being, as a rule, broadcast, it was all three.

Of the wickedness of the world he was too forgetful. To discover evil in a new friend is to most people only an additional experience : to him it was ever a surprise.

While in London he became acquainted with a retired officer in the navy named Bradleigh, who, with his wife and their daughter, lived in a small street not far from Russell Square. Though they were in no more than comfortable circumstances the, captain's wife came of an ancient family whose genealogical tree was interlaced with some of the most illustrious and well-known in the kingdom.

The young lady, their daughter, seemed to Graye by far the most beautiful and queenly being he had ever beheld. She was about

nineteen or twenty, and her name was Cytherea. In truth she was not so very unlike country girls of that type of beauty, except in one respect. She was perfect in her manner and bearing, and they were not. A mere distinguishing peculiarity, by catching the eye, is often read as the pervading characteristic, and she appeared to him no less than perfection throughout—transcending her rural rivals in very nature. Graye did a thing the blissfulness of which was only eclipsed by its hazardousness. He loved her at first sight.

His introductions had led him into contact with Cytherea and her parents two or three times on the first week of his arrival in London, and accident and a lover's contrivance brought them together as frequently the week following. The parents liked young Graye, and having few friends (for their equals in blood were their superiors in position), he was received on very generous terms. His passion for Cytherea grew not only strong, but ineffably strong: she, without positively encouraging him, tacitly

assented to his schemes for being near her. Her father and mother seemed to have lost all confidence in nobility of birth, without money to give effect to its presence, and looked upon the budding consequence of the young people's reciprocal glances with placidity, if not actual favour.

Graye's whole delicious dream terminated in a sad and unaccountable episode. After passing through three weeks of sweet experience, he had arrived at the last stage—a kind of moral Gaza—before plunging into an emotional desert. The second week in January had come round, and it was necessary for the young architect to leave town.

Throughout his acquaintanceship with the lady of his heart there had been this marked peculiarity in her love: she had delighted in his presence as a sweetheart should, yet from first to last she had repressed all recognition of the true nature of the thread which drew them together, blinding herself to its meaning and only natural tendency, and appearing to dread

his announcement of them. The present seemed enough for her without cumulative hope: usually, even if love is in itself an end, it must be regarded as a beginning to be enjoyed.

In spite of evasions as an obstacle, and in consequence of them as a spur, he would put the matter off no longer. It was evening. He took her into a little conservatory on the landing, and there among the evergreens, by the light of a few tiny lamps, infinitely enhancing the freshness and beauty of the leaves, he made the declaration of a love as fresh and beautiful as they.

“My love—my darling, be my wife!”

“We must part now,” said she, in a voice of agony. “I will write to you.” She loosened her hand and rushed away.

In a wild fever Graye went home and watched for the next morning. Who shall express his misery and wonder when a note containing these words was put into his hand?

“Good-bye; good-bye for ever. As recognised lovers something divides us eternally.

Forgive me—I should have told you before ; but your love was sweet ! Never mention me.”

That very day, and as it seemed, to put an end to a painful condition of things, daughter and parents left London to pay off a promised visit to a relative in a western county. No message or letter of entreaty could wring from her any explanation. She begged him not to follow her, and the most bewildering point was that her father and mother appeared, from the tone of a letter Graye received from them, as vexed and sad as he at this sudden renunciation. One thing was plain : without admitting her reason as valid, they knew what that reason was, and did not intend to reveal it.

A week from that day Ambrose Graye left his friend Huntway's house and saw no more of the Love he mourned. From time to time his friend answered any inquiry Graye made by letter respecting her. But very poor food to a lover is intelligence of a mistress filtered through a friend. Huntway could tell nothing definitely. He said he believed there had been

some prior flirtation between Cytherea and her cousin, an officer of the line, two or three years before Graye met her, which had suddenly been terminated by the cousin's departure for India, and the young lady's travelling on the continent with her parents the whole of the ensuing summer, on account of delicate health. Eventually Huntway said that circumstances had rendered Graye's attachment more hopeless still. Cytherea's mother had unexpectedly inherited a large fortune and estates in the west of England by the rapid fall of some intervening lives. This had caused their removal from the small house by Gower Street, and, as it appeared, a renunciation of their old friends in that quarter.

Young Graye concluded that his Cytherea had forgotten him and his love. But he could not forget her.

§ 2. *From 1843 to 1861.*

Eight years later, feeling lonely and depressed—a man without relatives, with many acquaintances but no friends,—Ambrose Graye met a young lady of a different kind, fairly endowed with money and good gifts. As to caring very deeply for another woman after the loss of Cytherea, it was an absolute impossibility with him. With all, the beautiful things of the earth become more dear as they elude pursuit; but with some natures utter elusion is the one special event which will make a passing love permanent for ever.

This second young lady and Graye were married. That he did not, first or last, love his wife as he should have done, was known to all; but few knew that his unmanageable heart could never be weaned from useless repining at the loss of its first idol.

His character to some extent deteriorated, as emotional constitutions will under the long sense

of disappointment at having missed their imagined destiny. And thus, though naturally of a gentle and pleasant disposition, he grew to be not so tenderly regarded by his acquaintances as it is the lot of some of those persons to be. The winning and sanguine impressibility of his early life developed by degrees a moody nervousness, and when not picturing prospects drawn from baseless hope he was the victim of indescribable depression. The practical issue of such a condition was improvidence, originally almost an unconscious improvidence, for every debt incurred had been mentally paid off with a religious exactness from the treasures of expectation before mentioned. But as years revolved, the same course was continued, from the lack of spirit sufficient for shifting out of an old groove when it has been found to lead to disaster.

In the year eighteen hundred and sixty-one his wife died, leaving him a widower with two children. The elder, a son named Owen, now just turned seventeen, was taken from school,

and initiated as pupil to the profession of architect in his father's office. The remaining child was a daughter, and Owen's junior by a year.

Her christian name was Cytherea, and it is easy to guess why.

§ 3. *October the twelfth, 1863.*

We pass over two years in order to reach the next cardinal event of the story. The scene is still the Grayes' native town of Hocbridge, but as it appeared on a Monday afternoon in the month of October.

The weather was sunny and dry, but the ancient borough was to be seen wearing one of its least attractive aspects. First on account of the time. It was that stagnant hour of the twenty-four when the practical garishness of Day, having escaped from the fresh long shadows and enlivening newness of the morning, has not yet made any perceptible advance towards acquiring those mellow and soothing tones which grace its decline. Next,

it was that stage in the progress of the week when business—which, carried on under the gables of an old country place, is not devoid of a romantic sparkle—was well-nigh extinguished. Lastly, the town was intentionally bent upon being attractive by exhibiting to an influx of visitors the local talent for dramatic recitation, and provincial towns trying to be lively are the dullest of dull things.

Provincial towns are like little children in this respect, that they interest most when they are enacting native peculiarities unconscious of beholders. Discovering themselves to be watched they attempt to be entertaining by putting on an antic, and produce disagreeable caricatures which spoil them.

The weather-stained clock face in the low church tower standing at the intersection of the three chief streets was expressing half-past two to the Town-Hall opposite, where the much talked-of reading from Shakespeare was about to be commenced. The doors were open, and those persons who had already assembled

within the building were noticing the entrance of the new-comers—silently criticising their dresses—questioning the genuineness of their teeth and hair—estimating their private means.

Among these later ones came an exceptional young maiden who glowed amid the dulness like a single bright-red poppy in a field of brown stubble. She wore an elegant dark jacket, lavender dress, hat with grey strings and trimmings, and gloves of a colour to harmonize. She lightly walked up the side passage of the room, cast a slight glance around, and entered the seat pointed out to her.

The young girl was Cytherea Graye, her age was now about eighteen. During her entry, and at various times whilst sitting in her seat and listening to the reader on the platform, her personal appearance formed an interesting subject of study for several neighbouring eyes.

Her face was exceedingly attractive, though artistically less perfect than her figure, which approached unusually near to the standard

of faultlessness. But even this feature of hers yielded the palm to the gracefulness of her movement, which was fascinating and delightful to an extreme degree.

Indeed, motion was her speciality, whether shown on its most extended scale of bodily progression, or minutely, as in the uplifting of her eyelids, the bending of her fingers, the pouting of her lip. The carriage of her head—motion within motion—a glide upon a glide—was as delicate as that of a magnetic needle. And this flexibility and elasticity had never been taught her by rule, nor even been acquired by observation, but, *nullo cultu*, had naturally developed itself with her years. In childhood, a stone or stalk in the way, which had been the inevitable occasion of a fall to her playmates, had usually left her safe and upright on her feet after the narrowest escape by oscillations and whirls for the preservation of her balance. At mixed Christmas parties, when she numbered but twelve or thirteen years, and was heartily despised on that

account by lads who deemed themselves men, her apt lightness in the dance covered this incompleteness in her womanhood, and compelled the self-same youths in spite of resolutions to seize upon her childish figure as a partner whom they could not afford to condemn. And in later years, when the instincts of her sex had shown her this point as the best and rarest feature in her external self, she was not found wanting in attention to the cultivation of finish in its details.

Her hair rested gaily upon her shoulders in curls, and was of a shining corn yellow in the high lights, deepening to a definite nut brown as each curl wound round into the shade. She had eyes of a sapphire hue, though rather darker than the gem ordinarily appears; they possessed the affectionate and liquid sparkle of loyalty and good faith as distinguishable from that harder brightness which seems to express faithfulness only to the object confronting them.

But to attempt to gain a view of her—or indeed of any fascinating woman—from a

measured category, is as difficult as to appreciate the effect of a landscape by exploring it at night with a lantern—or of a full chord of music by piping the notes in succession. Nevertheless it may readily be believed from the description here ventured, that among the many winning phases of her aspect, these were particularly striking :—

1. During pleasant doubt, when her eyes brightened stealthily and smiled (as eyes will smile) as distinctly as her lips, and in the space of a single instant expressed clearly the whole round of degrees of expectancy which lie over the wide expanse between Yea and Nay.

2. During the telling of a secret, which was involuntarily accompanied by a sudden minute start, and ecstatic pressure of the listener's arm, side, or neck, as the position and degree of intimacy dictated.

3. When anxiously regarding one who possessed her affections.

She suddenly assumed the last-mentioned

bearing during the progress of the present entertainment. Her glance was directed out of the window.

Why the particulars of a young lady's presence at a very mediocre performance were prevented from dropping into the oblivion which their intrinsic insignificance would naturally have involved—why they were remembered and individualised by herself and others through after years—was simply that she unknowingly stood, as it were, upon the extreme posterior edge of a tract in her life, in which the real meaning of Taking Thought had never been known. It was the last hour of experience she ever enjoyed with a mind entirely free from a knowledge of that labyrinth into which she stepped immediately afterwards—to continue a perplexed course along its mazes for the greater portion of twenty-nine subsequent months.

The Town Hall, in which Cytherea sat, was an Elizabethan building of brown stone, and the windows were divided into an upper and a

lower half by a transom of masonry. Through one opening of the upper half could be seen from the interior of the room the housetops and chimneys of the adjacent street, and also the upper part of a neighbouring church spire, now in course of completion under the superintendence of Miss Graye's father, the architect to the work.

That the top of this spire should be visible from her position in the room was a fact which Cytherea's idling eyes had discovered with some interest, and she was now engaged in watching the scene that was being enacted about its airy summit. Round the conical stonework rose a cage of scaffolding against the white sky; and upon this stood five men—four in clothes as white as the new erection close beneath their hands, the fifth in the ordinary dark suit of a gentleman.

The four working-men in white were three masons and a mason's labourer. The fifth man was the architect, Mr. Graye. He had been giving directions as it seemed, and now,

retiring as far as the narrow footway allowed, stood perfectly still.

The picture thus presented to a spectator in the Town Hall was curious and striking. It was an illuminated miniature, framed in by the dark margin of the window, the keen-edged shadiness of which emphasised by contrast the softness of the objects enclosed.

The height of the spire was about one hundred and twenty feet, and the five men engaged thereon seemed entirely removed from the sphere and experiences of ordinary human beings. They appeared little larger than pigeons, and made their tiny movements with a soft, spirit-like silentness. One idea above all others was conveyed to the mind of a person on the ground by their aspect, namely, concentration of purpose: that they were indifferent to—even unconscious of—the distracted world beneath them, and all that moved upon it. They never looked off the scaffolding.

Then one of them turned ; it was Mr. Graye.

Again he stood motionless, with attention to the operations of the others. He appeared to be lost in reflection, and had directed his face towards a new stone they were lifting.

“Why does he stand like that?” the young lady thought at length—up to that moment as listless and careless as one of the ancient Tarentines, who, on such an afternoon as this, watched from the Theatre the entry into their Harbour of a power that overturned the State.

She moved herself uneasily. “I wish he would come down,” she whispered, still gazing at the sky-backed picture. “It is so dangerous to be absent-minded up there.”

When she had done murmuring the words her father indecisively laid hold of one of the scaffold-poles, as if to test its strength, then let it go and stepped back. In stepping, his foot slipped. An instant of doubling forward and sideways, and he reeled off into the air, immediately disappearing downwards.

His agonised daughter rose to her feet by a

convulsive movement. Her lips parted, and she gasped for breath. She could utter no sound. One by one the people about her, unconscious of what had happened, turned their heads, and inquiry and alarm became visible upon their faces at the sight of the poor child. A moment longer, and she fell to the floor.

The next impression of which Cytherea had any consciousness was of being carried from a strange vehicle across the pavement to the steps of her own house by her brother and an older man. Recollection of what had passed evolved itself an instant later, and just as they entered the door—through which another and sadder burden had been carried but a few instants before—her eyes caught sight of the south-western sky, and, without heeding, saw white sunlight shining in shaft-like lines from a rift in a slaty cloud. Emotions will attach themselves to scenes that are simultaneous—however foreign in essence these scenes may be—as chemical

waters will crystallise on twigs and wires. Ever after that time any mental agony brought less vividly to Cytherea's mind the scene from the Town Hall windows than sunlight streaming in shaft-like lines.

§ 4. *October the nineteenth.*

When death enters a house, an element of sadness and an element of horror accompany it. Sadness, from the death itself; horror, from the clouds of blackness we designedly labour to introduce.

The funeral had taken place. Depressed, yet resolved in his demeanour, Owen Graye sat before his father's private escritoire, engaged in turning out and unfolding a heterogeneous collection of papers—forbidding and inharmonious to the eye at all times—most of all to one under the influence of a great grief. Laminæ of white paper tied with twine were indiscriminately intermixed with other white papers bounded by black edges—these

with blue foolscap wrapped round with crude red tape.

The bulk of these letters, bills, and other documents were submitted to a careful examination, by which the appended particulars were ascertained :—

First, that their father's income from professional sources had been very small, amounting to not more than half their expenditure ; and that his own and his wife's property, upon which he had relied for the balance, had been sunk and lost in unwise loans to unscrupulous men, who had traded upon their father's too open-hearted trustfulness.

Second, that finding his mistake, he had endeavoured to regain his standing by the illusory path of speculation. The most notable instance of this was the following. He had been induced, when at Plymouth in the autumn of the previous year, to venture all his spare capital on the bottomry security of an Italian brig which had put into the harbour in distress. The profit was to be considerable, so was the

risk. There turned out to be no security whatever. The circumstances of the case rendered it the most unfortunate speculation that a man like himself—ignorant of all such matters—could possibly engage in. The vessel went down, and all Mr. Graye's money with it.

Third, that these failures had left him burdened with debts he knew not how to meet; so that at the time of his death even the few pounds lying to his account at the bank were his only in name.

Fourth, that the loss of his wife two years earlier had awakened him to a keen sense of his blindness, and of his duty by his children. He had then resolved to reinstate by unflagging zeal in the pursuit of his profession, and by no speculation, at least a portion of the little fortune he had let go.

Cytherea was frequently at her brother's elbow during these examinations. She often remarked sadly,

“Poor papa failed to fulfil his good intention for want of time, didn't he, Owen? And there

was an excuse for his past, though he never would claim it. I never forget that original disheartening blow, and how that from it sprang all the ills of his life—everything connected with his gloom, and the lassitude in business we used so often to see about him.”

“I remember what he said once,” returned the brother, “when I sat up late with him. He said, ‘Owen, don’t love too blindly: blindly you will love if you love at all, but a little care is still possible to a well-disciplined heart. May that heart be yours as it was not mine,’ father said. ‘Cultivate the art of renunciation.’ And I am going to, Cytherea.”

“And once mamma said that an excellent woman was papa’s ruin, because he did not know the way to give her up when he had lost her. I wonder where she is now, Owen? We were told not to try to find out anything about her. Papa never told us her name, did he?”

“That was by her own request, I believe. But never mind her; she was not our mother.”

The love affair which had been Ambrose

Graye's disheartening blow was precisely of that nature which lads take little account of, but girls ponder in their hearts.

§ 5. *From October the nineteenth to July the ninth.*

Thus Ambrose Graye's good intentions with regard to the reintegration of his property had scarcely taken tangible form when his sudden death put them for ever out of his power.

Heavy bills, showing the extent of his obligations, tumbled in immediately upon the heels of the funeral from quarters previously unheard and unthought of. Thus pressed, a bill was filed in Chancery to have the assets, such as they were, administered by the Court.

"What will become of us now?" thought Owen continually.

There is in us an unquenchable expectation, which at the gloomiest time persists in inferring that because we are *ourselves*, there must be a special future in store for us, though our nature

and antecedents to the remotest particular have been common to thousands.

Thus to Cytherea and Owen Graye the question how their lives would end seemed the deepest of possible enigmas. To others who knew their position equally well with themselves the question was the easiest that could be asked.—“Like those of other people similarly circumstanced.”

Then Owen held a consultation with his sister to come to some decision on their future course, and a month was passed in waiting for answers to letters, and in the examination of schemes more or less futile. Sudden hopes that were rainbows to the sight proved but mists to the touch. In the meantime, unpleasant remarks, disguise them as some well-meaning people might, were floating around them every day. The undoubted truth, that they were the children of a dreamer who let slip away every farthing of his money and ran into debt with his neighbours—that the daughter had been brought up to no profession—that the son who

had, had made no progress in it, and might come to the dogs—could not from the nature of things be wrapped up in silence in order that it might not hurt their feelings; and as a matter of fact, it greeted their ears in some form or other wherever they went. Their few acquaintances passed them hurriedly. Ancient pot-wallopers, and thriving shopkeepers, in their intervals of leisure, stood at their shop doors—their toes hanging over the edge of the step, and their obese waists hanging over their toes—and in discourses with friends on the pavement, formulated the course of the improvident, and reduced the children's prospects to a shadow-like attenuation. The sons of these men (who wore breastpins of a sarcastic kind, and smoked humorous pipes) stared at Cytherea with a stare unmitigated by any of the respect that had formerly softened it.

Now it is a noticeable fact that we do not much mind what men think of us, or what humiliating secret they discover of our means, parentage, or object, provided that each thinks

and acts thereupon in isolation. It is the exchange of ideas about us that we dread most; and the possession by a hundred acquaintances, severally insulated, of the knowledge of our skeleton-closet's whereabouts, is not so distressing to the nerves as a chat over it by a party of half a dozen—exclusive depositaries though these may be.

Perhaps, though Hocbridge watched and whispered, its animus would have been little more than a trifle to persons in thriving circumstances. But unfortunately, poverty, whilst it is new, and before the skin has had time to thicken, makes people susceptible inversely to their opportunities for shielding themselves. In Owen was found, in place of his father's impressibility, a larger share of his father's pride, and a squareness of idea which, if coupled with a little more blindness, would have amounted to positive prejudice. To him humanity, so far as he had thought of it at all, was rather divided into distinct classes than blended from extreme to extreme. Hence by a sequence of ideas which

might be traced if it were worth while, he either detested or respected opinion, and instinctively sought to escape a cold shade that mere sensitiveness would have endured. He could have submitted to separation, sickness, exile, drudgery, hunger and thirst, with stoical indifference, but superciliousness was too incisive.

After living on for nine months in attempts to make an income as his father's successor in the profession—attempts which were utterly fruitless by reason of his inexperience—Graye came to a simple and sweeping resolution. They would privately leave that part of England, drop from the sight of acquaintances, gossips, harsh critics, and bitter creditors of whose misfortune he was not the cause, and escape the position which galled him by the only road their great poverty left open to them—that of his obtaining some employment in a distant place by following his profession as a humble under-clerk.

He thought over his capabilities with the sensations of a soldier grinding his sword at the opening of a campaign. What with lack of

employment, owing to the decrease of his late father's practice, and the absence of direct and uncompromising pressure towards monetary results from a pupil's labour (which seems to be always the case when a professional man's pupil is also his son), Owen's progress in the art and science of architecture had been very insignificant indeed. Though anything but an idle young man, he had hardly reached the age at which industrious men who lack an external whip to send them on in the world, are induced by their own common sense to whip on themselves. Hence his knowledge of plans, elevations, sections, and specifications, was not greater at the end of two years of probation than might easily have been acquired in six months by a youth of average ability—himself, for instance,—amid a bustling London practice.

But at any rate he could make himself handy to one of the profession—some man in a remote town—and there fulfil his indentures. A tangible inducement lay in this direction of survey. He had a slight conception of such a

man—a Mr. Gradfield—who was in practice in Creston, a seaport town and watering-place in the west of England.

After some doubts, Graye ventured to write to this gentleman, asking the necessary question, shortly alluding to his father's death, and stating that his term of apprenticeship had only half expired. He would be glad to complete his articles at a very low salary for the whole remaining two years, provided payment could begin at once.

The answer from Mr. Gradfield stated that he was not in want of a pupil who would serve the remainder of his time on the terms Mr. Graye mentioned. But he would just add one remark. He chanced to be in want of some young man in his office—for a short time only, probably about two months—to trace drawings, and attend to other subsidiary work of the kind. If Mr. Graye did not object to occupy such an inferior position as these duties would entail, and to accept weekly wages which to one with his expectations would be considered

merely nominal, the post would give him an opportunity for learning a few more details of the profession.

“It is a beginning, and above all, an abiding place, away from the shadow of the cloud which hangs over us here—I will go,” said Owen.

Cytherea’s plan for her future, an intensely simple one, owing to the even greater narrowness of her resources, was already marked out. One advantage had accrued to her through her mother’s possession of a fair share of personal property, and perhaps only one. She had been carefully educated. Upon this consideration her plan was based. She was to take up her abode in her brother’s lodging at Creston, when she would immediately advertise for a situation as governess, having obtained the consent of a lawyer at Reading who was winding up her father’s affairs, and who knew the history of her position, to allow himself to be referred to in the matter of her past life and respectability.

Early one morning they departed from their

native town, leaving behind them scarcely a trace of their footsteps.

Then the town pitied their want of wisdom in taking such a step. "Rashness; they would have done better in Hocbridge."

But what is Wisdom really? A steady handling of any means to bring about any end necessary to happiness.

Yet whether one's end be the usual end—a wealthy position in life—or no, the name of wisdom is never applied but to the means to that usual end.

CHAPTER II.

THE EVENTS OF A FORTNIGHT.

§ 1. *The ninth of July.*

THE day of their departure was one of the most glowing that the climax of a long series of summer heats could evolve. The wide expanse of landscape quivered up and down like the flame of a taper, as they steamed along through the midst of it. Placid flocks of sheep reclining under trees a little way off appeared of a pale blue colour. Clover fields were livid with the brightness of the sun upon their deep red flowers. All waggons and carts were moved to the shade by their careful owners ; rain-water butts fell to pieces ; well-buckets were lowered inside the covers of the well-hole, to preserve them from the fate of

the butts, and generally, water seemed scarcer in the country than the beer and cider of the peasantry who toiled or idled there.

To see persons looking with children's eyes at any ordinary scenery, is a proof that they possess the charming faculty of drawing new sensations from an old experience—a healthy sign, rare in these feverish days—the mark of an imperishable brightness of nature.

Both brother and sister could do this; Cytherea more noticeably. They watched the undulating corn-lands, monotonous to all their companions; the stony and clayey prospect succeeding those, with its angular and abrupt hills. Boggy moors came next, now withered and dry—the spots upon which pools usually spread their waters, showing themselves as circles of smooth bare soil, over-run by a net-work of innumerable little fissures. Then arose plantations of firs, abruptly terminating beside meadows cleanly mown, in which high-hipped, rich-coloured cows, with backs horizontal and straight as the ridge of a house, stood

motionless or lazily fed. Glimpses of the sea now interested them, which became more and more frequent till the train finally drew up beside the platform at Creston.

“The whole town is looking out for us,” had been Graye’s impression throughout the day. He called upon Mr. Gradfield—the only man who had been directly informed of his coming—and found that Mr. Gradfield had forgotten it.

However, arrangements were made with this gentleman—a stout, active, grey-bearded burgher of sixty—by which Owen was to commence work in his office the following week.

The same day Cytherea drew up and sent off the advertisement appended:—

“A YOUNG LADY is desirous of meeting with an ENGAGEMENT as GOVERNESS or COMPANION. She is competent to teach English, French, and Music. Satisfactory references.

“Address, C. G., Post Office, Creston.”

It seemed a more material existence than her own that she saw thus delineated on the paper. "That can't be myself; how odd I look," she said, and smiled.

§ 2. *July the eleventh.*

On the Monday subsequent to their arrival in Creston, Owen Graye attended at Mr. Gradfield's office to enter upon his duties, and his sister was left in their lodgings alone for the first time.

Despite the sad occurrences of the preceding autumn, an unwonted cheerfulness pervaded her spirit throughout the day. Change of scene—and that to untravelled eyes—conjoined with the sensation of freedom from supervision, revived the sparkle of a warm young nature ready enough to take advantage of any adventitious restoratives. Point-blank grief tends rather to seal up happiness for a time than to produce that attrition which results from

griefs of anticipation that move onward with the days: these may be said to furrow away the capacity for pleasure.

Her expectations from the advertisement began to be extravagant. A thriving family, who had always sadly needed her, was already definitely pictured in her fancy, which, in its exuberance, led her on to picturing its individual members, their possible peculiarities, virtues, and vices, and obliterated for a time the recollection that she would be separated from her brother.

Thus musing, as she waited for his return in the evening, her eyes fell on her left hand. The contemplation of her own left fourth finger by symbol-loving girlhood of this age is, it seems, very frequently, if not always, followed by a peculiar train of romantic ideas. Cytherea's thoughts, still playing about her future, became directed into this romantic groove. She leant back in her chair, and taking hold of the fourth finger, which had attracted her attention, she lifted it with the tips of the

others, and looked at the smooth and tapering member for a long time,

She whispered idly, "I wonder, who and what He will be?"

"If he's a gentleman of fashion, he will take my finger so, just with the tips of his own, and with some fluttering of the heart, and the least trembling of his lip, slip the ring so lightly on that I shall hardly know it is there—looking delightfully into my eyes all the time.

"If he's a bold, dashing soldier, I expect he will proudly turn round, take the ring as if it equalled Her Majesty's crown in value, and desperately set it on my finger thus. He will fix his eyes unflinchingly upon what he is doing—just as if he stood in battle before the enemy (though, in reality, very fond of me, of course), and blush as much as I shall.

"If he's a sailor, he will take my finger and the ring in this way, and deck it out with a housewifely touch and a tenderness of expression about his mouth, as sailors do: kiss it, perhaps, with a simple air, as if we were

children playing an idle game, and not at the very height of observation and envy by a great crowd saying ‘ Ah ! they are happy now ! ’

“ If he should be rather a poor man—noble-minded and affectionate, but still poor——”

Owen’s footsteps rapidly ascending the stairs, interrupted this fancy-free meditation. Reproaching herself, even angry with herself for allowing her mind to stray upon such subjects in the face of their present desperate condition, she rose to meet him, and make tea.

Cytherea’s interest to know how her brother had been received at Mr. Gradfield’s broke forth into words at once. Almost before they had sat down to table, she began cross-examining him in the regular sisterly way.

“ Well, Owen, how has it been with you to-day ? What is the place like—do you think you will like Mr. Gradfield ? ”

“ Oh, yes. But he has not been there to-day ; I have only had the head clerk with me.”

Young women have a habit, not noticeable in men, of putting on at a moment’s notice

the drama of whomsoever's life they choose. Cytherea's interest was transferred from Mr. Gradfield to his representative.

“What sort of a man is he?”

“He seems a very nice fellow indeed; though of course I can hardly tell to a certainty as yet. But I think he's a very worthy fellow; there's no nonsense in him, and though he is not a public school man he has read widely, and has a sharp appreciation of what's good in books and art. In fact, his knowledge isn't nearly so exclusive as most professional men's.”

“That's a great deal to say of an architect, for of all professional men they are, as a rule, the most professional.”

“Yes; perhaps they are. This man is rather of a melancholy turn of mind, I think.”

“Has the managing clerk any family?” she mildly asked, after a while, pouring out some more tea.

“Family; no!”

“Well, dear Owen, how should I know?”

“Why, of course he isn't married. But there

happened to be a conversation about women going on in the office, and I heard him say what he should wish his wife to be like."

"What would he wish his wife to be like?" she said, with great apparent lack of interest.

"Oh, he says she must be girlish and artless: yet he would be loth to do without a dash of womanly subtlety, 'tis so piquant. Yes, he said, that must be in her; she must have womanly cleverness. 'And yet I should like her to blush if only a cock-sparrow were to look at her hard,' he said, 'which brings me back to the girl again: and so I flit backwards and forwards. I must have what comes, I suppose,' he said, 'and whatever she may be, thank God she's no worse. However, if he might give a final hint to Providence,' he said, 'a child among pleasures, and a woman among pains was the rough outline of his requirement.'"

"Did he say that? What a musing creature he must be."

"He did, indeed."

§ 3. *From the twelfth to the fifteenth of
July.*

As is well known, ideas are so elastic in a human brain, that they have no constant measure which may be called their actual bulk. Any important idea may be compressed to a molecule by an unwonted crowding of others; and any small idea will expand to whatever length and breadth of vacuum the mind may be able to make over to it. Cytherea's world was tolerably vacant at this time, and the head clerk became factitiously pervasive. The very next evening this subject was again renewed.

"His name is Springrove," said Owen, in reply to her. "He is a man of very humble origin, it seems, who has made himself so far. I think he is the son of a farmer, or something of the kind."

"Well, he's none the worse for that, I suppose."

"None the worse. As we come down the hill, we shall be continually meeting people

going up." But Owen had felt that Springrove was a little the worse, nevertheless.

"Of course he's rather old by this time."

"Oh, no. He's about six-and-twenty—not more."

"Ah, I see What is he like, Owen ?

"I can't exactly tell you his appearance: 'tis always such a difficult thing to do."

"A man you would describe as short. Most men are those we should describe as short, I fancy."

"I should call him, I think, of the middle height; but as I only see him sitting in the office, of course I am not certain about his form and figure."

"I wish you were, then."

"Perhaps you do. But I am not, you see."

"Of course not, you are always so provoking. Owen, I saw a man in the street to-day whom I fancied was he—and yet, I don't see how it could be, either. He had light brown hair, a snub nose, very round face, and a peculiar

habit of reducing his eyes to straight lines when he looked narrowly at anything."

"Oh no. That was not he, Cytherea."

"Not a bit like him in all probability."

"Not a bit. He has dark hair—almost a Grecian nose, regular teeth, and an intellectual face, as nearly as I can recall to mind."

"Ah, there now, Owen, you *have* described him. But I suppose he's not generally called pleasing, or—"

"Handsome?"

"I scarcely meant that. But since you have said it, is he handsome?"

"Rather."

"His *tout ensemble* is striking?"

"Yes—Oh no, no—I forgot: it is not. He is rather untidy in his waistcoat, and neck-ties, and hair."

"How vexing! . . . it must be to himself, poor thing."

"He's a thorough bookworm—despises the pap - and - daisy school of verse — knows Shakespeare to the very dregs of the foot-

notes. Indeed he's a poet himself in a small way."

"How delicious!" she said, "I have never known a poet."

"And you don't know him," said Owen, drily.

She reddened. "Of course I don't. I know that."

"Have you received any answer to your advertisement?" he inquired.

"Ah—no!" she said, and the forgotten disappointment which had showed itself in her face at different times during the day, became visible again.

Another day passed away. On Thursday, without inquiry, she learnt more of the head clerk. He and Graye had become very friendly, and he had been tempted to show her brother a copy of some poems of his—some serious and sad—some humorous—which had appeared in the poets' corner of a magazine from time to time. Owen showed them now to Cytherea, who instantly began to read them carefully and to think them very beautiful.

“Yes—Springrove’s no fool,” said Owen didactically.

“No fool!—I should think he isn’t, indeed,” said Cytherea, looking up from the paper in quite an excitement: “To write such verses as these!”

“What logic are you chopping, Cytherea. Well, I don’t mean on account of the verses, because I haven’t read them; but for what he said when the fellows were talking about falling in love.”

“Which you will tell me?”

“He says that your true lover breathlessly finds himself engaged to a sweetheart, like a man who has caught something in the dark. He doesn’t know whether it is a bat or a bird, and takes it to the light when he is cool to learn what it is. He looks to see if she is the right age, but right age or wrong age, he must consider her a prize. Sometime later he ponders whether she is the right kind of prize for him. Right kind or wrong kind—he has called her his, and must abide by it. After a

time he asks himself, 'Has she the temper, hair, and eyes I meant to have, and was firmly resolved not to do without?' He finds it is all wrong, and then comes the tussle—"

"Do they marry and live happily?"

"Who? Oh, the supposed pair. I think he said—well, I really forget what he said."

"That is stupid of you!" said the young lady with dismay.

"Yes."

"But he's a satirist—I don't think I care about him now."

"There you are just wrong. He is not. He is, as I believe, an impulsive fellow who has been made to pay the penalty of his rashness in some love affair."

Thus ended the dialogue of Thursday, but Cytherea read the verses again in private. On Friday her brother remarked that Springgrove had informed him he was going to leave Mr. Gradfield's in a fortnight to push his fortunes in London.

An indescribable feeling of sadness shot through Cytherea's heart. Why should she be sad at such an announcement as that, she thought, concerning a man she had never seen, when her spirits were elastic enough to rebound after hard blows from deep and real troubles as if she had scarcely known them? Though she could not answer this question she knew one thing, she was saddened by Owen's news.

Ideal conception, necessitated by ignorance of the person so imagined, often results in an incipient love, which otherwise would never have existed.

§ 4. *July the twenty-first.*

A very homely and rustic excursion by steamboat to Lewborne Bay, forms the framework of the next incident in the chain. The trip was announced through the streets on Thursday morning by the weak-voiced town crier, to be at six o'clock the same evening.

The weather was lovely, and the opportunity being the first of the kind offered to them, Owen and Cytherea went with the rest.

They had reached the bay, and had lingered together for nearly an hour on the shore and up the hill which rose beside the cove, when Graye recollected that a mile or two inland from this spot was an interesting mediæval ruin. He was already familiar with its characteristics through the medium of an archaeological work, and now finding himself so close to the reality, felt inclined to verify some theory he had formed respecting it. Concluding that there would be just sufficient time for him to go there and return before the boat had left the cove, he parted from Cytherea on the hill, struck downwards, and then up a heathery valley.

She remained where he had left her till the time of his expected return, scanning the details of the prospect around. Placidly spread out before her on the south was the open Channel, reflecting a blue intenser by

many shades than that of the sky overhead, and dotted in the foreground by half-a-dozen small craft of contrasting rig, their sails graduating in hue from extreme whiteness to reddish brown, the varying actual colours varied again in a double degree by the rays of the declining sun.

Presently the first bell from the boat was heard, warning the passengers to embark. This was followed by a lively air from the harps and violins on board, their tones, as they arose, becoming intermingled with, though not marred by, the brush of the waves when their crests rolled over—at the point where the check of the shore shallows was first felt—and then thinned away up the slope of pebbles and sand.

She turned her face landward, and strained her eyes to discern, if possible, some sign of Owen's return. Nothing was visible save the strikingly brilliant, still landscape. The wide concave which lay at the back of the cliff in this direction was blazing with the western

light, adding an orange tint to the vivid purple of the heather, now at the very climax of bloom, and free from the slightest touch of the invidious brown that so soon creeps into its shades. The light so intensified the colours that they seemed to stand above the surface of the earth and float in mid-air like an exhalation of red. In the minor valleys, between the hillocks and ridges which diversified the contour of the basin, but did not disturb its general sweep, she marked brakes of tall, heavy-stemmed ferns, five or six feet high, in a brilliant light-green dress—a broad riband of them with the path in their midst winding like a stream along the little ravine that reached to the foot of the hill, and delivered up the path to its grassy area. Among the ferns grew holly bushes deeper in tint than any shadow about them, whilst the whole surface of the scene was dimpled with small conical pits, and here and there were round ponds, now dry, and half overgrown with rushes.

The last bell of the steamer rang. Cytherea had forgotten herself, and what she was looking for. In a fever of distress lest Owen should be left behind, she gathered up in her hand the corners of her handkerchief, containing specimens of the shells, seaweed and fossils with which the locality abounded, descended to the beach, and mingled with the knots of visitors there congregated from other interesting points around ; from the inn, the cottages, and hired conveyances that had returned from short drives inland. They all went aboard by the primitive plan of a narrow plank on two wheels—the women being assisted by a rope. Cytherea lingered till the very last, reluctant to follow, and looking alternately at the boat and the valley behind. Her delay provoked a remark from Captain Jacobs, a thickset man of hybrid stains, resulting from the mixed effects of fire and water, peculiar to sailors where engines are the propelling power.

“ Now then, missie, if you please. I am

sorry to tell 'ee our time's up. Who are you looking for, miss ? ”

“My brother—he has walked a short distance inland ; he must be here directly. Could you wait for him—just a minute ? ”

“Really, I am afraid not, m'm.” Cytherea looked at the stout, round-faced man, and at the vessel, with a light in her eyes so expressive of her own opinion being the same on reflection, and with such resignation, too, that, from an instinctive feeling of pride at being able to prove himself more humane than he was thought to be—works of supererogation are the only sacrifices that entice in this way—and that at a very small cost, he delayed the boat till some elderly unmarried girls among the passengers began to murmur.

“There, never mind,” said Cytherea, decisively. “Go on without me—I shall wait for him.”

“Well, 'tis a very awkward thing to leave you here all alone,” said the captain. “I certainly advise you not to wait.”

“He’s gone across to the railway station, for certain,” said another passenger.

“No—here he is!” Cytherea said, regarding, as she spoke, the half-hidden figure of a man who was seen advancing at a headlong pace down the ravine which lay between the heath and the shore.

“He can’t get here in less than five minutes,” the passenger said. “People should know what they are about, and keep time. Really, if——”

“You see, sir,” said the captain, in an apologetic undertone, “since ’tis her brother, and she’s all alone, ’tis only nater to wait a minute now he’s in sight. Suppose now you were a young woman, as might be, and had a brother, like this one, and you stood of an evening upon this here wild lonely shore, like her, why you’d want us to wait, too, wouldn’t you, sir? I think you would.”

The person so hastily approaching had been lost to view during this remark by reason of a hollow in the ground, and the projecting

cliff immediately at hand covered the path in its rise. His footsteps were now heard striking sharply upon the stony road at a distance of about twenty or thirty yards, but still behind the escarpment. To save time, Cytherea prepared to ascend the plank.

“Let me give you my hand, miss,” said Captain Jacobs.

“No—please don’t touch me,” said she, ascending cautiously by sliding one foot forward two or three inches, bringing up the other behind it, and so on alternately—her lips compressed by concentration on the feat, her eyes glued to the plank, her hand to the rope, and her immediate thought to the fact of the distressing narrowness of her footing. Footsteps now shook the lower end of the board, and in an instant were up to her heels with a bound.

“O Owen, I am so glad you are come!” she said, without turning. “Don’t, don’t shake the plank or touch me, whatever you do. . . . There, I am up. Where have you been so

long?" she continued, in a lower tone, turning round to him as she reached the top.

Raising her eyes from her feet, which, standing on the firm deck, demanded her attention no longer, she acquired perceptions of the new-comer in the following order:—unknown trousers; unknown waistcoat; unknown face. The man was not her brother, but a total stranger.

Off went the plank; the paddles started, stopped, backed, pattered in confusion, then revolved decisively, and the boat passed out into deep water.

One or two persons had said, "How d'ye do, Mr. Springrove?" and looked at Cytherea, to see how she bore her disappointment. Her ears had but just caught the name of the head clerk, when she saw him advancing directly to address her.

"Miss Graye, I believe?" he said, lifting his hat.

"Yes," said Cytherea, colouring, and trying not to look guilty of a surreptitious knowledge of him.

“I am Mr. Springrove. I passed Humdon Castle about half an hour ago, and soon afterwards met your brother going that way. He had been deceived in the distance, and was about to turn without seeing the ruin, on account of a lameness that had come on in his leg or foot. I proposed that he should go on, since he had got so near; and afterwards, instead of walking back to the boat, get across to Galworth Station—a shorter walk for him—where he could catch the late train, and go directly home. I could let you know what he had done, and allay any uneasiness.”

“Is the lameness serious, do you know?”

“Oh, no; simply from over-walking himself. Still, it was just as well to ride home.”

Relieved from her apprehensions on Owen's score, she was able slightly to examine the appearance of her informant—Edward Springrove—who now removed his hat for a while, to cool himself. He was rather above her brother's height. Although the upper part of his face and head was handsomely formed, and bounded

by lines of sufficiently masculine regularity, his brows were somewhat too softly arched, and finely pencilled for one of his sex ; without prejudice, however, to the belief which the sum total of his features inspired—that though they did not prove that the man who thought inside them would do much in the world, men who had done most of all had had no better ones. Across his forehead, otherwise perfectly smooth, ran one thin line, the healthy freshness of his remaining features expressing that it had come there prematurely.

Though some years short of the age at which the clear spirit bids good-bye to the last infirmity of noble mind, and takes to house-hunting and consols, he had reached the period in a young man's life when episodic pasts, with a hopeful birth and a disappointing death, have begun to accumulate, and to bear a fruit of generalities ; his glance sometimes seeming to state, "I have already thought out the issue of such conditions as these we are experiencing." At other times he wore an abstracted look :

“I seem to have lived through this moment before.”

He was carelessly dressed in dark grey, wearing a narrow bit of black ribbon as a neck-tie ; the bow of which was disarranged, and stood obliquely—a deposit of white dust having lodged in the creases.

“I am sorry for your disappointment,” he continued, keeping at her side. As he spoke the words, he glanced into her face—then fixed his eyes firmly, though but for a moment, in hers, which, at the same instant, were regarding him. Their eyes having met, became, as it were, mutually locked together, and the single instant only which good breeding allows as the length of such a glance, became trebled: a clear penetrating ray of intelligence had shot from each into each, giving birth to one of those unaccountable sensations which carry home to the heart before the hand has been touched or the merest compliment passed, by something stronger than mathematical proof, the conviction, “A tie has begun to unite us.”

Both faces also unconsciously stated that their owners had been much in each other's thoughts of late. Owen had talked to the head clerk of his sister as freely as to Cytherea of the head clerk.

A conversation began, which was none the less interesting to the parties engaged because it consisted only of the most trivial and commonplace remarks. Then the band of harps and violins struck up a lively melody, and the deck was cleared for dancing ; the sun dipping beneath the horizon during the proceeding, and the moon showing herself at their stern. The sea was so calm, that the soft hiss produced by the bursting of the innumerable bubbles of foam behind the paddles could be distinctly heard. The passengers who did not dance, including Cytherea and Springrove, lapsed into silence, leaning against the paddle-boxes, or standing aloof—noticing the trembling of the deck to the steps of the dance—watching the waves from the paddles as they slid thinly and easily under each other's bosom.

Night had quite closed in by the time they reached Creston harbour, sparkling with its white, red, and green lights in opposition to the shimmering path of the moon's reflection on the other side, which reached away to the horizon till the flecked ripples reduced themselves to sparkles as fine to the eye as gold dust.

"I will walk to the station and find out the exact time the train arrives," said Springrove, rather eagerly, when they had landed.

She thanked him much.

"Perhaps we might walk together," he suggested, hesitatingly. She looked as if she did not quite know, and he settled the question by showing the way.

They found, on arriving there, that on the first day of that month the particular train selected for Graye's return had ceased to stop at Galworth station.

"I am very sorry I misled him," said Springrove.

"Oh, I am not alarmed at all," replied Cytherea.

“Well, it’s sure to be all right—he will sleep there, and come by the first in the morning. But what will you do, alone?”

“I am quite easy on that point; the landlady is very friendly. I must go indoors now. Good-night, Mr. Springrove.”

“Let me go round to your door with you?” he pleaded.

“No, thank you; we live close by.”

He looked at her as a waiter looks at the change he brings back. But she was inexorable.

“Don’t—forget me,” he murmured. She did not answer.

“Let me see you sometimes,” he said.

“Perhaps you never will again—I am going away,” she replied, in lingering tones; and turning into Cross Street, ran indoors and upstairs.

The sudden withdrawal of what was superfluous when first given, is often felt as an essential loss. It was felt now with regard to the maiden. More, too, after a first meeting, so pleasant and so enkindling, she had seemed to

imply that they would never come together again. The young man softly followed her, stood opposite the house and watched her come into the upper room with the light. Presently his gaze was cut short by her approaching the window and pulling down the blind—Edward dwelling upon her vanishing figure with a hopeless sense of loss akin to that which Adam is said by logicians to have felt when he first saw the sun set, and thought, in his inexperience, that it would return no more.

He waited till her shadow had twice crossed the window, when, finding the charming outline was not to be expected again, he left the street, crossed the harbour-bridge, and entered his own solitary chamber on the other side, vaguely thinking as he went (for unnamed reasons),

“ One hope is too like despair
For prudence to smother.”

CHAPTER III.

THE EVENTS OF EIGHT DAYS.

§ 1. *From the twenty-second to the twenty-seventh of July.*

BUT things are not what they seem. A responsive love for Edward Springrove had made its appearance in Cytherea's bosom with all the fascinating attributes of a first experience—not succeeding to or displacing other emotions, as in older hearts, but taking up entirely new ground; as when gazing just after sunset at the pale blue sky we see a star come into existence where nothing was before.

His parting words, "Don't forget me," she repeated to herself a hundred times, and though she thought their import was probably commonplace, she could not help toying with them,—looking at them from all points, and investing

them with meanings of love and faithfulness,—ostensibly entertaining such meanings only as fables wherewith to pass the time, yet in her heart admitting, for detached instants, a possibility of their deeper truth. And thus, for hours after he had left her, her reason flirted with her fancy as a kitten will sport with a dove, pleasantly and smoothly through easy attitudes, but disclosing its cruel and unyielding nature at crises.

To turn now to the more material media through which this story moves, it so happened that the very next morning brought round a circumstance which, slight in itself, took up a relevant and important position between the past and the future of the persons herein concerned.

At breakfast time, just as Cytherea had again seen the postman pass without bringing her an answer to the advertisement, as she had fully expected he would, Owen entered the room.

“Well,” he said, kissing her, “you have not been alarmed of course. Springrove told you

what I had done, and you found there was no train?"

"Yes, it was all clear. But what is the lameness owing to?"

"I don't know—nothing. It has quite gone off now. . . . Cytherea, I hope you like Springrove.—Springrove's a nice fellow, you know."

"Yes. I think he is, except that——"

"It happened just to the purpose that I should meet him there, didn't it? And when I reached the station and learnt that I could not get on by train my foot seemed better. I started off to walk home, and went about five miles along a path beside the railway. It then struck me that I might not be fit for anything to day if I walked and aggravated the bothering foot, so I looked for a place to sleep at. There was no available village or inn, and I eventually got the keeper of a gate-house, where a lane crossed the line, to take me in."

They proceeded with their breakfast. Owen yawned.

“You didn’t get much sleep at the gate-house last night, I’m afraid, Owen,” said his sister.

“To tell the truth, I didn’t. I was in such very close and narrow quarters. Those gate-houses are such small places, and the man had only his own bed to offer me. Ah, by-the-bye, Cythie, I have such an extraordinary thing to tell you in connection with this man!—by Jove, I had nearly forgotten it! But I’ll go straight on. As I was saying, he had only his own bed to offer me, but I could not afford to be fastidious, and as he had a hearty manner, though a very queer one, I agreed to accept it, and he made a rough pallet for himself on the floor close beside me. Well, I could not sleep for my life, and I wished I had not stayed there, though I was so tired. For one thing, there were the luggage trains rattling by at my elbow the early part of the night. But worse than this, he talked continually in his sleep, and occasionally struck out with his limbs at something or another, knocking against the post of the bedstead and making it tremble. My con-

dition was altogether so unsatisfactory that at last I awoke him, and asked him what he had been dreaming about for the previous hour, for I could get no sleep at all. He begged my pardon for disturbing me, but a name I had casually let fall that evening had led him to think of another stranger he had once had visit him, who had also accidentally mentioned the same name, and some very strange incidents connected with that meeting. The affair had occurred years and years ago ; but what I had said had made him think and dream about it as if it were but yesterday. What was the word ? I said. 'Cytherea,' he said. What was the story ? I asked then. He then told me that when he was a young man in London he borrowed a few pounds to add to a few he had saved up, and opened a little inn at Hammer-smith. One evening, after the inn had been open about a couple of months, every idler in the neighbourhood ran off to Westminster. The Houses of Parliament were on fire.

“ Not a soul remained in his parlour besides

himself, and he began picking up the pipes and glasses his customers had hastily relinquished. At length a young lady about seventeen or eighteen came in. She asked if a woman was there waiting for herself—Miss Jane Taylor. He said no; asked the young woman if she would wait, and showed her into the small inner room. There was a glass pane in the partition dividing this room from the bar to enable the landlord to see if his visitors, who sat there, wanted anything. A curious awkwardness and melancholy about the behaviour of the girl who called, caused my informant to look frequently at her through the partition. She seemed weary of her life, and sat with her face buried in her hands, evidently quite out of her element in such a house. Then a woman much older came in and greeted Miss Taylor by name. The man distinctly heard the following words pass between them.

“ ‘ Why have you not brought him ? ’ ”

“ ‘ He is ill : he is not likely to live through the night. ’ ”

“At this announcement from the elderly woman, the younger one fell to the floor in a swoon, apparently overcome by the news. The landlord ran in and lifted her up. Well, do what they would they could not for a long time bring her back to consciousness, and began to be much alarmed. ‘Who is she?’ the innkeeper said to the other woman. ‘I know her,’ the other said, with deep meaning in her tone. The elderly and young women seemed allied, and yet strangers.

“She now showed signs of life, and it struck him (he was plainly of an inquisitive turn,) that in her half-bewildered state he might get some information from her. He stooped over her, put his mouth to her ear, and said sharply, ‘What’s your name?’ ‘Catch a woman napping if you can, even when she’s asleep or half dead,’ says the gatekeeper. When he asked her her name, she said immediately,—

“‘Cytherea’—and stopped suddenly.”

“My own name!” said Cytherea.

“Yes—your name. Well, the gateman

thought at the time it might be equally with Jane a name she had invented for the occasion, that they might not trace her ; but I think it was truth unconsciously uttered, for she added directly afterwards. ‘O what have I said!’ and was quite overcome again—this time with fright. Her vexation that the woman now doubted the genuineness of her other name, was very much greater than that the innkeeper did, and it is evident that to blind the woman was her main object. He also learnt, from words this other woman casually dropped, that meetings of the same kind had been held before, and that the falseness of the *soi-disant* Miss Jane Taylor’s name had never been suspected by this companion or confederate till then.

“She recovered, rested there for an hour, and first sending off her companion peremptorily (which was another odd thing), she left the house, offering the landlord all the money she had to say nothing about the circumstance. He has never seen her since, according to his own account. I said to him again and again,

‘Did you find out any more particulars afterwards?’ ‘Not a syllable,’ he said. O he should never hear any more of that—too many years had passed since it happened. ‘At any rate you found out her surname?’ I said. ‘Well, well, that’s my secret,’ he went on. ‘Perhaps I should never have been in this part of the world if it hadn’t been for that. I failed as a publican, you know.’ I imagine the situation of gateman was given him and his debts paid off as a bribe to silence; but I can’t say. ‘Ah, yes,’ he said, with a long breath. ‘I have never heard that name mentioned since that time till to night, and then there instantly rose to my eyes the vision of that young lady lying in a fainting fit.’ He then stopped talking and fell asleep. Telling the story must have relieved him as it did the Ancient Mariner, for he did not move a muscle or make another sound for the remainder of the night. Now, isn’t that an odd story!’”

“It is, indeed,” Cytherea murmured. “Very, very strange.”

“ Why should she have said your most uncommon name ? ” continued Owen. “ The man was evidently truthful, for there was not motive sufficient for his invention of such a tale, and he could not have done it either.”

Cytherea looked long at her brother. “ Don’t you recognise anything else in connection with the story ? ” she said.

“ What ? ” he asked.

“ Do you remember what poor papa once let drop—that Cytherea was the name of his first sweetheart in Bloomsbury, who so mysteriously renounced him ? A sort of intuition tells me that this was the same woman.”

“ O no—not likely,” said her brother sceptically.

“ How not likely, Owen ? There’s not another woman of the name in England. In what year used papa to say the event took place ? ”

“ Eighteen hundred and thirty-five.”

“ And when were the Houses of Parliament burnt ?—stop, I can tell you. She searched

their little stock of books for a list of dates, and found one in an old school history.

“The Houses of Parliament were burnt down in the evening of the sixteenth of October, eighteen hundred and thirty-four.

“Nearly a year and a quarter before she met father,” remarked Owen.

They were silent. “If papa had been alive, what a wonderful absorbing interest this story would have had for him,” said Cytherea by-and-by. “And how strangely knowledge comes to us. We might have searched for a clue to her secret half the world over, and never found one. If we had really had any motive for trying to discover more of the sad history than papa told us, we should have gone to Bloomsbury; but not caring to do so, we go two hundred miles in the opposite direction, and there find information waiting to be told us. What could have been the secret, Owen?”

“Heaven knows. But our having heard a little more of her in this way (if she is the same woman) is a mere coincidence after all—a

family story to tell our friends if we ever have any. But we shall never know any more of the episode now—trust our fates for that.”

Cytherea sat silently thinking.

“There was no answer this morning to your advertisement, Cytherea,” he continued.

“None.”

“I could see that by your looks when I came in.”

“Fancy not getting a single one,” she said, sadly. “Surely there must be people somewhere who want governesses?”

“Yes; but those who want them, and can afford to have them, get them mostly by friends’ recommendations; whilst those who want them, and can’t afford to have them, do without them.”

“What shall I do?”

“Never mind it. Go on living with me. Don’t let the difficulty trouble your mind so; you think about it all day. I can keep you Cythie, in a plain way of living. Twenty-five shillings a week do not amount to much,

truly; but then many mechanics have no more, and we live quite as sparingly as journeymen mechanics. . . . 'Tis a meagre narrow life we are drifting into," he added, gloomily, "but it is a degree more tolerable than the worrying sensation of all the world being ashamed of you, which we experienced at Hocbridge."

"I couldn't go back there again," she said.

"Nor I. O, I don't regret our course for a moment. We did quite right in dropping out of the world." The sneering tones of the remark were almost too laboured to be real. "Besides," he continued, "something better for me is sure to turn up soon. I wish my engagement here was a permanent one instead of for only two months. It may, certainly, be for a longer time, but all is uncertain."

"I wish I could get something to do, and I must too," she said firmly. "Suppose, as is very probable, you are not wanted after the beginning of October—the time Mr. Gradfield mentioned—what should we do if I were dependent on you only throughout the winter?"

They pondered on numerous schemes by which a young lady might be supposed to earn a decent livelihood—more or less convenient and feasible in imagination, but relinquished them all until advertising had been once more tried, this time taking lower ground. Cytherea was vexed at her temerity in having represented to the world that so inexperienced a being as herself was a qualified governess; and had a fancy that this presumption of hers might be one reason why no ladies applied.

The new and humbler attempt appeared in the following form :—

“NURSERY GOVERNESS OR USEFUL COMPANION. A young person wishes to hear of a situation in either of the above capacities. Salary very moderate. She is a good needlewoman. Address C., 3, Cross Street, Creston.”

In the evening they went to post the letter, and then walked up and down the esplanade for a while. Soon they met Springrove, said a few words to him, and passed on. Owen noticed that his sister's face had become

crimson. Rather oddly they met Springrove again in a few minutes.

This time the three walked a little way together, Edward ostensibly talking to Owen, though with a single thought to the reception of his words by the maiden at the farther side, upon whom his gaze was mostly resting, and who was attentively listening—looking fixedly upon the pavement the while. It has been said that men love with their eyes; women with their ears.

As Owen and himself were little more than acquaintances as yet, and as Springrove was wanting in the assurance of many men of his age, it now became necessary to wish his friends good evening, or to find a reason for continuing near Cytherea by saying some nice new thing. He thought of a new thing; he proposed a pull across the bay. This was assented to. They went to the pier; stepped into one of the gaily painted boats moored alongside, and sheered off. Cytherea sat in the stern steering.

They rowed that evening ; the next came, and with it the necessity of rowing again. Then the next, and the next, Cytherea always sitting in the stern with the tiller ropes in her hand. The curves of her figure welded with those of the fragile boat in perfect continuation, as she girlishly yielded herself to its heaving and sinking, seeming to form with it an organic whole.

Then Owen was inclined to test his skill in paddling a canoe. Edward did not like canoes, and the issue was, that, having seen Owen on board, Springrove proposed to pull off after him with a pair of sculls ; but not considering himself sufficiently accomplished to do finished rowing before an esplanade full of promenaders when there was a little swell on, and with the rudder unshipped in addition, he begged that Cytherea might come with him and steer as before. She stepped in, and they floated along in the wake of her brother. Thus passed the fifth evening on the water.

But the consonant pair were thrown into still closer companionship, and much more exclusive connexion.

§ 2. *July the twenty-ninth.*

It was a sad time for Cytherea—the last day of Springrove's management at Gradfield's, and the last evening before his return from Creston to his father's house, previous to his departure for London.

Graye had been requested by the architect to survey a plot of land nearly twenty miles off, which, with the journey to and fro, would occupy him the whole day, and prevent his returning till late in the evening. Cytherea made a companion of her landlady to the extent of sharing meals and sitting with her during the morning of her brother's absence. Mid-day found her restless and miserable under this arrangement. All the afternoon she sat alone, looking out of the window for she scarcely knew whom, and hoping she scarcely

knew what. Half past five o'clock came—the end of Springrove's official day. Two minutes later Springrove walked by.

She endured her solitude for another half-hour, and then could endure no longer. She had hoped—under the title of feared—that Edward would have found some reason or other for calling, but it seemed that he had not. Hastily dressing herself she went out, when the farce of an accidental meeting was repeated. Edward came upon her in the street at the first turning.

“He looked at her as a lover can ;
She looked at him as one who awakes—
The past was a sleep, and her life began.”

“Shall we have a boat?” he said, impulsively.

How exquisite a sweetheart is at first ! Perhaps, indeed, the only bliss in the course of love which can truly be called Eden-like is that which prevails immediately after doubt has ended and before reflection has set in—at the dawn of the emotion, when it is not recognised by name, and before the consideration of what

this love is, has given birth to the consideration of what difficulties it tends to create ; when on the man's part, the mistress appears to the mind's eye in picturesque, hazy, and fresh morning lights, and soft morning shadows ; when, as yet, she is known only as the wearer of one dress, which shares her own personality ; as the stander in one special position, the giver of one bright particular glance, and the speaker of one tender sentence ; when, on her part, she is timidly careful over what she says and does, lest she should be misconstrued or under-rated to the breadth of a shadow of a hair.

“ Shall we have a boat ? ” he said again, more softly, seeing that at his first question she had not answered, but looked uncertainly at the ground, then almost, but not quite, in his face, blushed a series of minute blushes, left off in the midst of them, and showed the usual signs of perplexity in a matter of the emotions.

Owen had always been with her before, but

there was now a force of habit in the proceeding, and with Arcadian innocence she assumed that a row on the water was, under any circumstances, a natural thing. Without another word being spoken on either side, they went down the steps. He carefully handed her in, took his seat, slid noiselessly off the sand, and away from the shore.

They thus sat facing each other in the graceful yellow cockle-shell, and his eyes frequently found a resting place in the depths of hers. The boat was so small that at each return of the sculls, when his hands came forward to begin the pull, they approached so near to her bosom that her vivid imagination began to thrill her with a fancy that he was going to clasp his arms round her. The sensation grew so strong that she could not run the risk of again meeting his eyes at those critical moments, and turned aside to inspect the distant horizon; then she grew weary of looking sideways and was driven to return to her natural position again. At this

instant he again lent forward to begin, and met her glance by an ardent fixed gaze. An involuntary impulse of girlish embarrassment caused her to give a vehement pull at the tiller-rope, which brought the boat's head round till they stood directly for shore.

His eyes, which had dwelt upon her form during the whole time of her look askance, now left her; he perceived the direction in which they were going.

“Why you have completely turned the boat, Miss Graye?” he said, looking over his shoulder. “Look at our track on the water—a great semicircle, preceded by a series of zigzags as far as we can see.”

She looked attentively. “Is it my fault or yours?” she inquired. “Mine, I suppose?”

“I can't help saying that it is yours.”

She dropped the ropes decisively, feeling the slightest twinge of vexation at the answer.

“Why do you let go?”

“I do it so badly.”

“O no; you turned about for shore in a masterly way. Do you wish to return?”

“Yes, if you please.”

“Of course, then, I will at once.”

“I fear what the people will think of us—going in such absurd directions, and all through my wretched steering.”

“Never mind what the people think.” A pause. “You surely are not so weak as to mind what the people think on such a matter as that?”

That answer might almost be called too firm and hard to be given by him to her, but never mind. For almost the first time in her life she felt the delicious sensation, although on such an insignificant subject, of being compelled into an opinion by a man she loved. Owen, though less yielding physically, and more practical, would not have had the intellectual independence to answer a woman thus. She replied quietly and honestly—as honestly as when she had stated the contrary fact a minute earlier—

“I don't mind.”

“I'll unship the tiller that you may have nothing to do going back but to hold your parasol,” he continued, and arose to perform the operation, necessarily leaning closely against her, to guard against the risk of capsizing the boat as he reached his hands astern. His warm breath touched and crept round her face like a caress; but he was apparently only concerned with his task. She looked guilty of something when he seated himself. He read in her face what that something was—she had experienced a pleasure from his touch. But he flung a practical glance over his shoulder, seized the oars, and they sped in a straight line towards the shore.

Cytherea saw that he read in her face what had passed in her heart, and that reading it, he continued as decided as before. She was inwardly distressed. She had not meant him to translate her words about returning home so literally at the first; she had not intended him to learn her secret; but more than all she

was not able to endure the perception of his learning it and continuing unmoved.

There was nothing but misery to come now. They would step ashore ; he would say good-night, go to London to-morrow, and the miserable she would lose him for ever. She did not quite suppose, what was the fact, that a parallel thought was simultaneously passing through his mind.

They were now within ten yards, now within five ; he was only now waiting for a "smooth" to bring the boat in. Sweet, sweet Love must not be slain thus, was the fair maid's reasoning. She was equal to the occasion—ladies are—and delivered the god :—

"Do you want very much to land, Mr. Springrove?" she said, letting her young violet eyes pine at him a very, very little.

"I? Not at all," said he, looking an astonishment at her enquiry which a slight twinkle of his eye half belied. "But you do?"

"I think that now we have come out, and it is such a pleasant evening," she said, gently and

sweetly, "I should like a little longer row if you don't mind? I'll try to steer better than before if it makes it easier for you. I'll try very hard."

It was the turn of his face to tell a tale now. He looked, "We understand each other—Ah, we do, darling!" turned the boat, and pulled back into the Bay once more.

"Now steer me wherever you will," he said, in a low voice. "Never mind the directness of the course—wherever you will."

"Shall it be Laystead shore?" she said, pointing in that direction.

"Laystead shore," he said, grasping the sculls. She took the strings daintily, and they wended away to the left.

For a long time nothing was audible in the boat but the regular dip of the oars, and their movement in the rowlocks. Springrove at length spoke:—

"I must go away to-morrow," he said, tentatively.

"Yes," she replied, faintly.

“To endeavour to advance a little in my profession in London.”

“Yes,” she said again, with the same pre-occupied softness.

“But I shan’t advance.”

“Why not? Architecture is a bewitching profession. They say that an architect’s work is another man’s play.”

“Yes. But worldly advantage from an art doesn’t depend upon mastering it. I used to think it did; but it doesn’t. Those who get rich need have no skill at all as artists.”

“What need they have?”

“A certain kind of energy which men with any fondness for art possess very seldom indeed—an earnestness in making acquaintances, and a love for using them. They give their whole attention to the art of dining out, after mastering a few rudimentary facts to serve up in conversation. Now after saying that, do I seem a man likely to make a name?”

“You seem a man likely to make a mistake.”

“What’s that?”

“To give too much room to the latent feeling which is rather common in these days among the unappreciated, that because some markedly successful men are fools, all markedly unsuccessful men are geniuses.”

“Pretty subtle for a young lady,” he said, slowly. “From that remark I should fancy you had bought experience.”

She passed over the idea. “Do try to succeed,” she said, with wistful thoughtfulness, leaving her eyes on him.

Springrove flushed a little at the earnestness of her words, and mused. “Then, like Cato the Censor, I shall do what I despise to be in the fashion,” he said at last “Well, when I found all this out that I was speaking of, whatever do you think I did? From having already loved verse passionately, I went on to read it continually; then I went rhyming myself. If anything on earth ruins a man for useful occupation, and for content with reasonable success in a profession or trade, it is the habit of writing verses on emotional

subjects, which had much better be left to die from want of nourishment.”

“Do you write poems now?” she said.

“None. Poetical days are getting past with me, according to the usual rule. Writing rhymes is a stage people of my sort pass through, as they pass through the stage of shaving for a beard, or thinking they are ill-used, or saying there’s nothing in the world worth living for.”

“Then the difference between a common man and a recognised poet is, that one has been deluded, and cured of his delusion, and the other continues deluded all his days.”

“Well, there’s just enough truth in what you say, to make the remark unbearable. However, it doesn’t matter to me now that I ‘meditate the thankless Muse’ no longer, but” He paused as if endeavouring to think what better thing he did.

Cytherea’s mind ran on to the succeeding lines of the poem, and their startling harmony with the present situation suggested the fancy

that he was "*sporting*" with her, and brought an awkward contemplativeness to her face.

Springrove guessed her thoughts, and in answer to them simply said, "Yes." Then they were silent again.

"If I had known an Amaryllis was coming here, I should not have made arrangements for leaving," he resumed.

Such levity, superimposed on the notion of *sport*, was intolerable to Cytherea; for a woman seems never to see any but the serious side of her attachment, though the most devoted lover has all the time a vague and dim perception that he is losing his old dignity and frittering away his time.

"But will you not try again to get on in your profession? Try once more; do try once more," she murmured. "I am going to try again. I have advertised for something to do."

"Of course I will," he said, with an eager gesture and smile. "But we must remember that the fame of Christopher Wren himself

depended upon the accident of a fire in Pudding Lane. My successes seem to come very slowly. I often think, that before I am ready to live, it will be time for me to die. However, I am trying—not for fame now, but for an easy life of reasonable comfort.”

It is a melancholy truth for the middle classes, that in proportion as they develope, by the study of poetry and art, their capacity for conjugal love of the highest and purest kind, they limit the possibility of their being able to exercise it—the very act putting out of their power the attainment of means sufficient for marriage. The man who works up a good income has had no time to learn love to its exquisite extreme; the man who has learnt that has had no time to get rich.

“And if you should fail—utterly fail to get that reasonable wealth,” she said, earnestly, “don’t be perturbed. The truly great stand upon no middle ledge; they are either famous or unknown.”

“Unknown,” he said, “if their ideas have

been allowed to flow with a sympathetic breadth. Famous only if they have been convergent and exclusive."

"Yes; and I am afraid from that, that my remark was but discouragement, wearing the dress of comfort. Perhaps I was not quite right in——"

"It depends entirely upon what is meant by being truly great. But the long and the short of the matter is, that men must stick to a thing if they want to succeed in it—not giving way to over-much admiration for the flowers they see growing in other people's borders; which I am afraid has been my case." He looked into the far distance and paused.

Adherence to a course with persistence sufficient to ensure success is possible to widely appreciative minds only when there is also found in them a power—commonplace in its nature, but rare in such combination—the power of assuming to conviction that in the outlying paths which appear so much more brilliant than their own, there are bitternesses

equally great—unperceived simply on account of their remoteness.

They were opposite Laystead shore. The cliffs here were formed of strata completely contrasting with those of the farther side of the Bay, whilst in and beneath the water hard boulders had taken the place of sand and shingle, between which, however, the sea glided noiselessly, without breaking the crest of a single wave, so strikingly calm was the air. The breeze had entirely died away, leaving the water of that rare glassy smoothness which is unmarked even by the small dimples of the least aërial movement. Purples and blues of divers shades were reflected from this mirror accordingly as each undulation sloped east or west. They could see the rocky bottom some twenty feet beneath them, luxuriant with weeds of various growths, and dotted with pulpy creatures reflecting a silvery and spangled radiance upwards to their eyes.

At length she looked at him to learn the

effect of her words of encouragement. He had let the oars drift alongside, and the boat had come to a standstill. Everything on earth seemed taking a contemplative rest, as if waiting to hear the avowal of something from his lips. At that instant he appeared to break a resolution hitherto zealously kept. Leaving his seat amidships he came and gently edged himself down beside her upon the narrow seat at the stern.

She breathed quicker, and warmer : he took her right hand in his own right : it was not withdrawn. He put his left hand behind her neck till it came round upon her left cheek : it was not thrust away. Lightly pressing her, he brought her face and mouth towards his own ; when, at this the very brink, some unaccountable thought or spell within him suddenly made him halt—even now, and as it seemed as much to himself as to her, he timidly whispered, “ May I ? ”

Her endeavour was to say No so denuded of its flesh and sinews that its nature would hardly

be recognised, or in other words a No from so near the positive frontier as to be affected with the Yes accent. It was thus a whispered No, drawn out to nearly a quarter of a minute's length, the O making itself audible as a sound like the spring coo of a pigeon on unusually friendly terms with his mate. Though conscious of her success in producing the kind of word she had wished to produce, she at the same time trembled in suspense as to how it would be taken. But the time available for doubt was so short as to admit of scarcely more than half-a-dozen vibrations : pressing closer he kissed her. Then he kissed her again with a longer kiss.

It was the supremely happy moment of their experience. The bloom and the purple light were strong on the lineaments of both. Their hearts could hardly believe the evidence of their lips.

“I love you, and you love me, Cytherea!” he whispered.

She did not deny it ; and all seemed well.

The gentle sounds around them from the hills, the plains, the distant town, the adjacent shore, the water heaving at their side, the kiss, and the long kiss, were all “many a voice of one delight,” and in unison with each other.

But his mind flew back to the same unpleasant thought which had been connected with the resolution he had broken a minute or two earlier. “I could be a slave at my profession to win you, Cytherea ; I would work at the meanest honest trade to be near you—much less claim you as mine ; I would—anything. But I have not told you all ; it is not this ; you don’t know what there is yet to tell. Could you forgive as you can love ?” She was alarmed to see that he had become pale with the question.

“No—do not speak,” he said. “I have kept something from you, which has now become the cause of a great uneasiness. I had no right—to love you ; but I did it. Something forbade—”

“What ?” she exclaimed.

“Something forbade me—till the kiss—yes, till the kiss came; and now nothing shall forbid it! We’ll hope in spite of all I must however, speak of this love of ours to your brother. Dearest, you had better go indoors whilst I meet him at the station, and explain everything.”

Cytherea’s short-lived bliss was dead and gone. O, if she had known of this sequel would she have allowed him to break down the barrier of mere acquaintanceship—never, never!

“Will you not explain to me?” she faintly urged. Doubt—indefinite, carking doubt had taken possession of her.

“Not now. You alarm yourself unnecessarily,” he said, tenderly. “My only reason for keeping silence is that with my present knowledge I may tell an untrue story. It may be that there is nothing to tell. I am to blame for haste in alluding to any such thing. Forgive me, sweet—forgive me.” Her heart was ready to burst, and she could not answer him. He returned to his place and took to the oars.

They again made for the distant Esplanade, now, with its line of houses, lying like a dark grey band against the light western sky. The sun had set, and a star or two began to peep out. They drew nearer their destination, Edward as he pulled tracing listlessly with his eyes the red stripes upon her scarf, which grew to appear as black ones in the increasing dusk of evening. She surveyed the long line of lamps on the sea wall of the town, now looking small and yellow, and seeming to send long taper roots of fire quivering down deep into the sea. By-and-by they reached the landing steps. He took her hand as before, and found it as cold as the water about them. It was not relinquished till he reached her door. His assurance had not removed the constraint of her manner: he saw that she blamed him mutely and with her eyes, like a captured sparrow. Left alone, he went and seated himself in a chair on the Esplanade.

Neither could she go indoors to her solitary room, feeling as she did in such a state of despe-

rate heaviness. When Springrove was out of sight she turned back, and arrived at the corner just in time to see him sit down. Then she glided pensively along the pavement behind him, forgetting herself to marble like Melancholy herself, and mused in his company unseen. She heard, without heeding, the notes of pianos and singing voices from the fashionable houses at her back, from the open windows of which the lamp-light streamed to meet that of the orange-hued full moon, newly risen over the Bay in front. Then Edward began to pace up and down, and Cytherea, fearing that he would notice her, doubled behind and across the road, flinging him a last wistful look as she passed out of sight. No promise from him to write: no request that she herself would do so—nothing but an indefinite expression of hope in the face of some fear unknown to her. Alas, alas!

When Owen returned he found she was not in the small sitting-room, and creeping up-stairs into her bed-room with a light, he discovered

her there lying asleep upon the coverlet of the bed, still with her hat and jacket on. She had flung herself down on entering, and succumbed to the unwonted oppressiveness that ever attends full-blown love. The wet traces of tears were yet visible upon her long drooping lashes.

“Love is a sowre delight, and sugred grieve,
A living death, and ever-dying life.”

“Cytherea,” he whispered, kissing her. She awoke with a start and vented an exclamation before recovering her judgment. “He’s gone!” she said.

“He has told me all,” said Graye, soothingly. “He is going off early to-morrow morning. ’Twas a shame of him to win you away from me, and cruel of you to keep the growth of this attachment a secret.”

“We couldn’t help it,” she said, and then jumping up—“Owen, has he told you *all*?”

“All of your love from beginning to end,” he said simply.

Edward then had not told more—as he

ought to have done: yet she could not convict him. But she would struggle against his fetters. She tingled to the very soles of her feet at the very possibility that he might be deluding her.

“Owen,” she continued, with dignity, “what is he to me? Nothing. I must dismiss such weakness as this—believe me, I will. Something far more pressing must drive it away. I have been looking my position steadily in the face, and I must get a living somehow. I mean to advertise once more.”

“Advertising is no use.”

“This one will be.” He looked surprised at the sanguine tone of her answer, till she took a piece of paper from the table and showed it him. “See what I am going to do,” she said, sadly, almost bitterly. This was her third effort.

“LADY’S MAID. Inexperienced. Age eighteen. G., 3, Cross Street, Creston.”

Owen—Owen the respectable—looked blank astonishment. He repeated in a nameless, varying tone, the two words,

“Lady’s maid!”

“Yes; lady’s maid. ’Tis an honest profession,” said Cytherea, bravely.

“But *you*, Cytherea?”

“Yes, I—who am I?”

“You will never be a lady’s maid—never, I am quite sure.”

“I shall try to be, at any rate.”

“Such a disgrace—”

“Nonsense! I maintain that it is no disgrace!” she said, rather warmly. “You know very well—”

“Well, since you will, you must,” he interrupted. “Why do you put ‘inexperienced’?”

“Because I am.”

“Never mind that—scratch out ‘inexperienced.’ We are poor, Cytherea, aren’t we?” he murmured, after a silence, “and it seems that the two months will close my engagement here.”

“We can put up with being poor,” she said, “if they only give us work to do. . . . Yes, we desire as a blessing what was given us as a

curse, and even that is denied. However, be cheerful, Owen, and never mind!"

In justice to desponding men, it is as well to remember that the brighter endurance of women at these epochs—invaluable, sweet, angelic, as it is—owes more of its origin to a narrower vision that shuts out many of the leaden-eyed despairs in the van, than to a hopefulness intense enough to quell them.

CHAPTER IV.

THE EVENTS OF ONE DAY.

§ 1. *August the fourth. Till four o'clock.*

THE early part of the next week brought an answer to Cytherea's last note of hope in the way of advertisement—not from a distance of hundreds of miles, London, Scotland, Ireland, the Continent—as Cytherea seemed to think it must, to be in keeping with the means adopted for obtaining it, but from a place in the neighbourhood of that in which she was living—a country mansion about fifteen miles off. The reply ran thus :—

“ Knapwater House,

“ *August 3rd, 1864.*

“ Miss Aldclyffe is in want of a young person as lady's maid. The duties of the place are

light. Miss Aldclyffe will be in Creston on Thursday, when (should G. still not have heard of a situation) she would like to see her at the Belvedere Hotel, Esplanade, at four o'clock. No answer need be returned to this note."

A little earlier than the time named, Cytherea, clothed in a modest bonnet, and a black silk jacket, turned down to the hotel. Expectation, the fresh air from the water, the bright, far-extending outlook, raised the most delicate of pink colours to her cheeks, and restored to her tread a portion of that elasticity which her past troubles, and thoughts of Edward, had well-nigh taken away.

She entered the vestibule, and went to the window of the bar.

"Is Miss Aldclyffe here?" she said, to a nicely-dressed barmaid in the foreground, who was talking to a landlady covered with chains, knobs, and clamps of gold, in the background.

"No, she isn't," said the barmaid, not very

civilly. Cytherea looked a shade too pretty for a plain dresser.

“Miss Aldclyffe is expected here,” the landlady said to a third person, out of sight, in the tone of one who had known for several days the fact newly-discovered from Cytherea. “Get ready her room—be quick.” From the alacrity with which the order was given and taken, it seemed to Cytherea that Miss Aldclyffe must be a woman of considerable importance.

“You are to have an interview with Miss Aldclyffe here?” the landlady enquired.

“Yes.”

“The young person had better wait,” continued the landlady, didactically. With a money-taker’s intuition, she had rightly divined that Cytherea would bring no profit to the house.

Cytherea was shown into a nondescript chamber, on the shady side of the building, which appeared to be either bedroom or day room, as occasion necessitated, and was one of a suite at the end of the first-floor corridor.

The prevailing colour of the walls, curtains, carpet, and coverings of furniture, was more or less blue, to which the cold light coming from the north-easterly sky, and falling on a wide roof of new slates—the only object the small window commanded—imparted a more striking paleness. But underneath the door, communicating with the next room of the suite, gleamed an infinitesimally small, yet very powerful, fraction of contrast—a very thin line of ruddy light, showing that the sun beamed strongly into this room adjoining. The line of radiance was the only cheering thing visible in the place.

People give way to very infantine thoughts and actions when they wait; the battle-field of life is temporarily fenced off by a hard and fast line—the interview. Cytherea fixed her eyes idly upon the streak, and began picturing a wonderful paradise on the other side as the source of such a beam—reminding her of the well-known good deed in a naughty world.

Whilst she watched the particles of dust

floating before the brilliant chink she heard a carriage and horses stop opposite the front of the house. Afterwards came the rustle of a lady's dress down the corridor, and into the room communicating with the one Cytherea occupied.

The golden line vanished in parts like the phosphorescent streak caused by the striking of a match ; there was the fall of a light foot-step on the floor just behind it ; then a pause. Then the foot tapped impatiently, and "There's no one here!" was spoken imperiously by a lady's tongue.

"No, madam : in the next room. I am going to fetch her," said the attendant.

"That will do, or you needn't go in : I will call her."

Cytherea had risen, and she advanced to the middle door with the chink under it as the servant retired. She had just laid her hand on the knob, when it slipped round within her fingers, and the door was pulled open from the other side.

§ 2. *Four o'clock.*

The direct blaze of the afternoon sun, partly refracted through the crimson curtains of the window, and heightened by reflection from the crimson-flock paper which covered the walls, and a carpet on the floor of the same tint, shone with a burning glow round the form of a lady standing close to Cytherea's front with the door in her hand. The stranger appeared to the maiden's eyes—fresh from the blue gloom, and assisted by an imagination fresh from nature—like a tall black figure standing in the midst of fire. It was the figure of a finely-built woman, of spare though not angular proportions.

Cytherea involuntarily shaded her eyes with her hand, retreated a step or two, and then she could for the first time see Miss Aldclyffe's face in addition to her outline, lit up by the secondary and softer light that was reflected from the varnished panels of the door. She was not a very young woman, but could boast

of much beauty of the majestic autumnal phase.

“Oh,” said the lady, “come this way.” Cytherea followed her to the embrasure of the window.

Both the women showed off themselves to advantage as they walked forward in the orange light; and each showed too in her face that she had been struck with her companion's appearance. The warm tint added to Cytherea's face a voluptuousness which youth and a simple life had not yet allowed to express itself there ordinarily; whilst in the elder lady's face it reduced the customary expression, which might have been called sternness, if not harshness, to grandeur, and warmed her decaying complexion with much of the youthful richness it plainly had once possessed.

She appeared now no more than five and thirty, though she might easily have been ten or a dozen years older. She had clear steady eyes, a Roman nose in its purest form, and also the round prominent chin with which the

Cæsars are represented in ancient marbles ; a mouth expressing a capability for and tendency to strong emotion, habitually controlled by pride. There was a severity about the lower outlines of the face which gave a masculine cast to this portion of her countenance. Womanly weakness was nowhere visible save in one part—the curve of her forehead and brows—there it was clear and emphatic. She wore a lace shawl over a brown silk dress, and a net bonnet set with a few blue cornflowers.

“ You inserted the advertisement for a situation as lady’s-maid giving the address, G., Cross Street ? ”

“ Yes, madam. Graye.”

“ Yes. I have heard your name—Mrs. Morris, my housekeeper, mentioned you, and pointed out your advertisement.”

This was puzzling intelligence, but there was not time enough to consider it.

“ Where did you live last ? ” continued Miss Aldclyffe.

“I have never been a servant before. I lived at home.”

“Never been out? I thought too at sight of you that you were too girlish-looking to have done much. But why did you advertise with such assurance? It misleads people.”

“I am very sorry: I put ‘inexperienced’ at first, but my brother said it is absurd to trumpet your own weakness to the world, and would not let it remain.”

“But your mother knew what was right, I suppose?”

“I have no mother, madam.”

“Your father, then?”

“I have no father.”

“Well,” she said, more softly, “Your sisters, aunts, or cousins.”

“They didn’t think anything about it.”

“You didn’t ask them, I suppose.”

“No.”

“You should have, then. Why didn’t you?”

“Because I haven’t any of them, either.”

Miss Aldclyffe showed her surprise. “You

deserve forgiveness then at any rate, child," she said, in a sort of dryly-kind tone. "However, I am afraid you do not suit me, as I am looking for an elderly person. You see, I want an experienced maid who knows all the usual duties of the office." She was going to add, "Though I like your appearance," but the words seemed offensive to apply to the lady-like girl before her, and she modified them to, "though I like you much."

"I am sorry I misled you, madam," said Cytherea.

Miss Aldclyffe stood in a reverie, without replying.

"Good afternoon," continued Cytherea.

"Good-bye, Miss Graye—I hope you will succeed."

Cytherea turned away towards the door. The movement chanced to be one of her masterpieces. It was precise: it had as much beauty as was compatible with precision, and as little coquettishness as was compatible with beauty.

And she had in turning looked over her

shoulder at the other lady with a faint accent of reproach in her face. Those who remember Greuze's "Head of a Girl" in one of the public picture-galleries, have an idea of Cytherea's look askance at the turning. It is not for a man to tell fishers of men how to set out their fascinations so as to bring about the highest possible average of takes within the year; but the action that tugs the hardest of all at an emotional beholder is this sweet method of turning which steals the bosom away and leaves the eyes behind.

Now Miss Aldclyffe herself was no tyro at wheeling. When Cytherea had closed the door upon her, she remained for some time in her motionless attitude, listening to the gradually dying sound of the maiden's retreating footsteps. She murmured to herself, "It is almost worth while to be bored with instructing her in order to have a creature who could glide round my luxurious indolent body in that manner, and look at me in that way—I warrant how light her fingers are upon one's head and

neck. . . . What a silly modest young thing she is, to go away so suddenly as that !” She rang the bell.

“ Ask the young lady who has just left me to step back again,” she said to the attendant. “ Quick ! or she will be gone.”

Cytherea was now in the vestibule, thinking that if she had told her history, Miss Aldclyffe might perhaps have taken her into the household ; yet her history she particularly wished to conceal from a stranger. When she was recalled she turned back without feeling much surprise. Something, she knew not what, told her she had not seen the last of Miss Aldclyffe.

“ You have somebody to refer me to, of course,” the lady said when Cytherea had re-entered the room.

“ Yes : Mr. Thorn, a solicitor at Reading.”

“ And are you a clever needlewoman ? ”

“ I am considered to be.”

“ Then I think that at any rate I will write to Mr. Thorn,” said Miss Aldclyffe, with a little smile. “ It is true, the whole proceeding is very

irregular ; but my present maid leaves next Monday, and neither of the five I have already seen seem to do for me. . . . Well, I will write to Mr. Thorn, and if his reply is satisfactory, you shall hear from me. It will be as well to set yourself in readiness to come on Monday.”

When Cytherea had again been watched out of the room, Miss Aldclyffe asked for writing materials that she might at once communicate with Mr. Thorn. She indecisively played with the pen. “Suppose Mr. Thorn’s reply to be in any way disheartening—and even if so from his own imperfect acquaintance with the young creature more than from circumstantial knowledge—I shall feel obliged to give her up. Then I shall regret that I did not give her one trial in spite of other people’s prejudices. All her account of herself is reliable enough—yes, I can see that by her face. I like that face of hers.”

Miss Aldclyffe put down the pen and left the hotel without writing to Mr. Thorn.

CHAPTER V.

THE EVENTS OF ONE DAY.

§ 1. *August the eighth. Morning and afternoon.*

AT post time on that following Monday morning, Cytherea watched so anxiously for the postman, that as the time which must bring him narrowed less and less her vivid expectation had only a degree less tangibility than his presence itself. In another second his form came into view. He brought two letters for Cytherea.

One from Miss Aldclyffe, simply stating that she wished Cytherea to come on trial: that she would require her to be at Knapwater House by Monday evening.

The other was from Edward Springrove. He told her that she was the bright spot of his

life : that her existence was far dearer to him than his own : that he had never known what it was to love till he had met her. True, he had felt passing attachments to other faces from time to time ; but they all had been weak inclinations towards those faces as they then appeared. He loved her past and future, as well as her present. He pictured her as a child : he loved her. He pictured her of sage years : he loved her. He pictured her in trouble : he loved her. Homely friendship entered into his love for her, without which all love was evanescent.

He would make one depressing statement. Uncontrollable circumstances (a long history, with which it was impossible to acquaint her at present) operated to a certain extent as a drag upon his wishes. He had felt this more strongly at the time of their parting than he did now—and it was the cause of his abrupt behaviour, for which he begged her to forgive him. He saw now an honourable way of freeing himself, and the perception had prompted him to write.

In the meantime might he indulge in the hope of possessing her on some bright future day, when by hard labour generated from her own encouraging words, he had placed himself in a position she would think worthy to be shared with him ?

Dear little letter : she huddled it up. How much more important a love-letter seems to a girl than to a man ! Springrove was unconsciously clever in his letters, and a man with a talent of that kind may write himself up to a hero in the mind of a young woman who loves him without knowing much about him. Springrove already stood a cubit higher in her imagination than he did in his shoes.

During the day she flitted about the room in an ecstasy of pleasure, packing the things and thinking of an answer which should be worthy of the tender tone of the question, her love bubbling from her involuntarily, like prophesyings from a prophet.

In the afternoon Owen went with her to the railway station, and put her in the train for

Carriford Road, the station nearest to Knap-water House.

Half an hour later she stepped out upon the platform, and found nobody there to receive her—though a pony-carriage was waiting outside. In two minutes she saw a melancholy man in cheerful livery running towards her from a public-house close adjoining, who proved to be the servant sent to fetch her. There are two ways of getting rid of sorrows: one by living them down, the other by drowning them. The coachman drowned his.

He informed her that her luggage would be fetched by a spring-waggon in about half-an-hour; then helped her into the chaise and drove off.

Her lover's letter lying close against her neck, fortified her against the restless timidity she had previously felt concerning this new undertaking, and completely furnished her with the confident ease of mind which is required for the critical observation of surrounding objects. It was just that stage in the slow decline of the

summer days, when the deep, dark, and vacuous hot-weather-shadows are beginning to be replaced by blue ones that have a surface and substance to the eye. They trotted along the turnpike road for a distance of about a mile, which brought them just outside the village of Carriford, and then turned through large lodges, on the heavy stone piers of which stood a pair of bitterns cast in bronze. They then entered the park and wound along a drive shaded by old and drooping lime-trees, not arranged in the form of an avenue, but standing irregularly, sometimes leaving the track completely exposed to the sky, at other times casting a shade over it, which almost approached gloom—the under surface of the lowest boughs hanging at a uniform level of six feet above the grass—the extreme height to which the nibbling mouths of the cattle could reach.

“Is that the house?” said Cytherea, expectantly, catching sight of a grey gable between the trees, and losing it again.

“No ; that’s the old manor house—or rather

all that's left of it. The Aldclyffes used to let it sometimes, but it was oftener empty. 'Tis now divided into three cottages. Respectable people didn't care to live there."

"Why didn't they?"

"Well 'tis so awkward and unhandy. You see so much of it has been pulled down, and the rooms that are left won't do very well for a small residence. 'Tis so dismal, too, and like most old houses stands too low down in the hollow to be healthy."

"Do they tell any horrid stories about it?"

"No, not a single one."

"Ah, that's a pity."

"Yes, that's what I say. 'Tis just the house for a nice ghastly hair-on-end story, that would make the parish religious. Perhaps it will have one some day to make it complete; but there's not a word of the kind now. There, I wouldn't live there for all that. In fact I couldn't. Oh, no, I couldn't."

"Why couldn't you?"

"The sounds."

“What are they?”

“One is the waterfall, which stands so close by that you can hear that there waterfall in every room of the house, night or day, ill or well. 'Tis enough to drive anybody mad: now listen.”

He stopped the horse. Above the slight common sounds in the air came the unvarying steady rush of falling water from some spot unseen on account of the thick foliage of the grove.

“There's something awful in the regularity of that sound, is there not, Miss?”

“When you say there is, there really seems to be. You said there were two—what is the other horrid sound?”

“The pumping engine. That's close by the Old House, and sends water up the hill and all over the Great House. We shall hear that directly There, now listen.”

From the same direction down the dell they could now hear the whistling creak of cranks, repeated at intervals of half a minute, with a

sousing noise between each : a creak, a souse, then another creak, and so on continually.

“Now if anybody could make shift to live through the other sounds, these would finish him off, don't you think so, Miss? That machine goes on night and day, summer and winter, and is hardly ever greased or visited. Ah, it tries the nerves at night, especially if you are not very well ; though we don't often hear it at the Great House.”

“That sound is certainly very dismal. They might have the wheel greased. Does Miss Aldclyffe take any interest in these things?”

“Well, scarcely ; you see her father doesn't attend to that sort of thing as he used to. The engine was once quite his hobby. But now he's gotten old and very seldom goes there.”

“How many are there in family?”

“Only her father and herself. He's an old man of seventy.”

“I had thought that Miss Aldclyffe was sole mistress of the property, and lived here alone.”

“No, M—.” The coachman was continually

checking himself thus, being about to style her Miss involuntarily, and then recollecting that he was only speaking to the new lady's maid.

"She will soon be mistress, however, I am afraid," he continued, as if speaking by a spirit of prophecy denied to ordinary humanity. "The poor old gentleman has decayed very fast lately." The man then drew a long breath.

"Why did you breathe sadly like that?" said Cytherea.

"Ah! When he's dead peace will be all over with us old servants. I expect to see the whole house turned inside out."

"She will marry, do you mean?"

"Marry—not she! I wish she would. No, in her soul she's as solitary as Robinson Crusoe, though she has acquaintances in plenty, if not relations. There's the rector, Mr. Raunham—he's a relation by marriage,—yet she's quite distant towards him. And people say that if she keeps single there will be hardly a life between Mr. Raunham and the

heirship of the estate. Dang it, she don't care. She's an extraordinary picture of womankind—very extraordinary.”

“In what way besides?”

“You'll know soon enough, Miss. She has had seven lady's-maids this last twelvemonth. I assure you 'tis one body's work to fetch 'em from the station and take 'em back again. The Lord must be a Tory at heart, or he'd never permit such overbearen goings on.”

“Does she dismiss them directly they come?”

“Not at all—she never dismisses them—they go themselves. You see 'tis like this. She's got a very quick temper; she flies in a passion with them for nothing at all; next mornen they come up and say they are going; she's sorry for it and wishes they'd stay, but she's as proud as a lucifer, and her pride won't let her say 'Stay,' and away they go. 'Tis like this in fact. If you say to her about anybody, 'Ah, poor thing!' she says, 'Pish! indeed!' If you say, 'Pish, indeed!'

‘Ah, poor thing!’ she says directly. She hangs the chief baker, and restores the chief butler, though the devil but Pharaoh herself can see the difference between ’em.”

Cytherea was silent. She feared she might be again a burden to her brother.

“However, you stand a very good chance,” the man went on; “for I think she likes you more than common. I have never known her send the pony-carriage to meet one before; ’tis always the trap, but this time she said, in a very particular ladylike tone, ‘Roobert, gaow with the pony-kerriage.’ . . . There, ’tis true, pony and carriage too are gotten rather shabby now,” he added, looking round upon the vehicle as if to keep Cytherea’s pride within reasonable limits.

“’Tis to be hoped you’ll please in dresen her to-night.”

“Why to-night?”

“There’s a dinner-party of seventeen; ’tis her father’s birthday, and she’s very particular about her appearance at such times. Now

look ; this is the house. Livelier up here, isn't it, Miss ?”

They were now on rising ground, and had just emerged from a clump of trees. Still a little higher than where they stood was situated the mansion, called Knapwater House, the offices gradually losing themselves among the trees behind.

§ 2. *Evening.*

The house was regularly and substantially built of clean grey freestone throughout, in that plainer fashion of Greek classicism that prevailed at the latter end of the last century, when the copyists called designers had grown weary of fantastic variations in the Roman orders. The main block approximated to a square on the ground plan, having a projection in the centre of each side, surmounted by a pediment. From each angle of the east side ran a line of buildings lower than the rest, turning inwards again at their farther end and

forming within them a spacious open court, within which resounded an echo of astonishing clearness. These erections were in their turn backed by ivy-covered ice-houses, laundries, and stables, the whole mass of subsidiary buildings being half buried beneath close-set shrubs and trees.

There was opening sufficient through the foliage on the right hand to enable her on nearer approach to form an idea of the arrangement of the remoter or south front also. The natural features and contour of this quarter of the site had evidently dictated the position of the house primarily, and were of the ordinary, and upon the whole, most satisfactory kind, namely, a broad, graceful slope running from the terrace beneath the walls to the margin of a placid lake lying below, upon the surface of which a dozen swans and a green punt floated at leisure. An irregular wooded island stood in the midst of the lake; beyond this and the further margin of the water were plantations

and greensward of varied outlines, the trees, heightening, by half veiling, the softness of the exquisite landscape stretching behind.

The glimpses she had obtained of this portion were now checked by the angle of the building. In a minute or two they reached the side door, at which Cytherea alighted. She was welcomed by an elderly woman of lengthy smiles and general pleasantness, who announced herself to be Mrs. Morris, the house-keeper.

“Mrs. Graye, I believe?” she said.

“I am not—O yes, yes, we are all mistresses,” said Cytherea, smiling, but forcedly. The title accorded her seemed disagreeably like the first slight scar of a brand, and she thought of Owen’s prophecy.

Mrs. Morris led her into a comfortable parlour called The Room. Here tea was made ready, and Cytherea sat down, looking whenever occasion allowed, at Mrs. Morris with great interest and curiosity to discover if possible, something in her which should

give a clue to the secret of her knowledge of herself, and the recommendation based upon it. But nothing was to be learnt, at any rate just then. Mrs. Morris was perpetually getting up, feeling in her pockets, going to cupboards, leaving the room for two or three minutes, and trotting back again.

“You’ll excuse me, Mrs. Graye,” she said. “But ’tis the old gentleman’s birthday, and they always have a lot of people to dinner on that day, though he’s getting up in years now. However, none of them are sleepers—she generally keeps the house pretty clear of lodgers (being a lady with no intimate friends, though many acquaintances), which, though it gives us less to do, makes it all the duller for the younger maids in the house.” Mrs. Morris then proceeded to give in fragmentary speeches an outline of the constitution and government of the estate.

“Now are you sure you have quite done tea? Not a bit or drop more? Why you’ve eaten nothing, I’m sure. . . . Well, now, it

is rather inconvenient that the other maid is not here to show you the ways of the house a little, but she left last Saturday, and Miss Aldclyffe has been making shift with poor old clumsy me for a maid all yesterday and this morning. She is not come in yet. I expect she will ask for you, Mrs. Graye, the first thing. . . . I was going to say that if you have really done tea, I will take you up-stairs, and show you through the wardrobes—Miss Aldclyffe's things are not laid out for to-night yet."

She preceded Cytherea up-stairs, pointed out her own room, and then took her into Miss Aldclyffe's dressing-room, on the first floor; where, after explaining the whereabouts of various articles of apparel, the housekeeper left her, telling her that she had an hour yet upon her hands before dressing time. Cytherea laid out upon the bed in the next room all that she had been told would be required that evening, and then went again to the little room which had been appropriated to herself.

Here she sat down by the open window, leant out upon the sill like another Blessed Damozel, and listlessly looked down upon the brilliant pattern of colours formed by the flower-beds on the lawn—now richly crowded with late summer blossom. But the vivacity of spirit which had hitherto enlivened her, was fast ebbing under the pressure of prosaic realities, and the warm scarlet of the geraniums, glowing most conspicuously, and mingling with the vivid cold red and green of the verbenas, the rich depth of the dahlia, and the ripe mellowness of the calceolaria, backed by the pale hue of a flock of meek sheep, feeding in the open park, close to the other side of the fence, were, to a great extent, lost upon her eyes. She was thinking that nothing seemed worth while ; that it was possible she might die in a workhouse ; and what did it matter ? The petty, vulgar, details of servitude that she had just passed through, her dependence upon the whims of a strange woman, the necessity of quenching all individuality of character in herself, and relinquishing her own

peculiar tastes to help on the wheel of this alien establishment, made her sick and sad, and she almost longed to pursue some free, out-of-doors employment, sleep under trees or a hut, and know no enemy but winter and cold weather, like shepherds and cowkeepers, and birds and animals—ay, like the sheep she saw there under her window. She looked sympathizingly at them for several minutes, imagining their enjoyment of the rich grass.

“Yes—like those sheep,” she said, aloud; and her face reddened with surprise at a discovery she made that very instant.

The flock consisted of some ninety or a hundred young stock ewes: the surface of their fleece was as rounded and even as a cushion, and white as milk. Now she had just observed that on the left buttock of every one of them were marked in distinct red letters the initials “E. S.”

“E. S.,” could bring to Cytherea’s mind only one thought; but that immediately and for ever—the name of her lover, Edward Springrove.

“Oh, if it should be !” She interrupted her words by a resolve. Miss Aldclyffe’s carriage at the same moment made its appearance in the drive ; but Miss Aldclyffe was not her object now. It was to ascertain to whom the sheep belonged, and to set her surmise at rest one way or the other. She flew down-stairs to Mrs. Morris.

“Whose sheep are those in the park, Mrs. Morris ?”

“Farmer Springrove’s.”

“What farmer Springrove is that ?” she said, quickly.

“Why, surely you know ? Your friend Farmer Springrove, the cider maker, and who keeps the Three Tranters Inn ; who recommended you to me when he came in to see me the other day ?”

Cytherea’s mother-wit suddenly warned her in the midst of her excitement that it was necessary not to betray the secret of her love. “Oh, yes,” she said, “of course.” Her thoughts had run as follows in that short interval :—

“Farmer Springrove is Edward’s father, and his name is Edward, too.

“Edward knew I was going to advertise for a situation of some kind.

“He watched the *Times*, and saw it, my address being attached.

“He thought it would be excellent for me to be here that we might meet whenever he came home.

“He told his father that I might be recommended as a lady’s maid; that he knew my brother and myself.

“His father told Mrs. Morris; Mrs. Morris told Miss Aldclyffe.”

The whole chain of incidents that drew her there was plain, and there was no such thing as chance in the matter. It was all Edward’s doing.

The sound of a bell was heard. Cytherea did not heed it, and still continued in her reverie.

“That’s Miss Aldclyffe’s bell,” said Mrs. Morris.

“I suppose it is,” said the young woman, placidly.

“Well, it means that you must go up to her,” the matron continued, in a tone of surprise.

Cytherea felt a burning heat come over her, mingled with a sudden irritation at Mrs. Morris’s hint. But the good sense which had recognised stern necessity prevailed over rebellious independence; the flush passed, and she said, hastily,

“Yes, yes; of course, I must go to her when she pulls the bell—whether I want to or no.”

However, in spite of this painful reminder of her new position in life, Cytherea left the apartment in a mood far different from the gloomy sadness of ten minutes previous. The place felt like home to her now; she did not mind the pettiness of her occupation, because Edward evidently did not mind it; and this was Edward’s own spot. She found time on her way to Miss Aldclyffe’s dressing-room to hurriedly glide out by a side door, and look for a moment at the unconscious sheep bearing the friendly initials. She went up to them to try to touch one of the flock, and felt vexed

that they all stared sceptically at her kind advances and then ran pell-mell down the hill. Then, fearing anyone should discover her childish movements, she slipped indoors again, and ascended the staircase, catching glimpses, as she passed, of silver-buttoned footmen, who flashed about the passages like lightning.

Miss Aldclyffe's dressing-room was an apartment which, on a casual survey, conveyed an impression that it was available for almost any purpose save the adornment of the feminine person. In its hours of perfect order nothing pertaining to the toilet was visible; even the inevitable mirrors with their accessories were arranged in a roomy recess not noticeable from the door, lighted by a window of its own, called the dressing window.

The washing-stand figured as a vast oak chest, carved with grotesque Renaissance ornament. The dressing-table was in appearance something between a high altar and a cabinet piano, the surface being richly worked in the same style of semi-classic decoration, but the

extraordinary outline having been arrived at by Mr. James Sparkman, an ingenious joiner and decorator from the neighbouring town, after months of painful toil in cutting and fitting, under Miss Aldclyffe's immediate eye, the materials being the remains of two or three old cabinets the lady had found in the lumber room. About two-thirds of the floor was carpeted, the remaining portion being laid with parquetry of light and dark woods.

Miss Aldclyffe was standing at the larger window, away from the dressing-niche. She bowed and said pleasantly, "I am glad you have come. We shall get on capitally, I dare say."

Her bonnet was off. Cytherea did not think her so handsome as on the earlier day; the queenliness of her beauty was harder and less warm. But a worse discovery than this was that Miss Aldclyffe, with the usual obliviousness of rich people to their dependents' specialities, seemed to have quite forgotten Cytherea's inexperience, and mechanically

delivered up her body to her handmaid without a thought of details, and with a mild yawn.

Everything went well at first. The dress was removed, stockings and black boots were taken off, and silk stockings and white shoes were put on. Miss Aldclyffe then retired to bathe her hands and face, and Cytherea drew breath. If she could get through this first evening, all would be right. She felt that it was unfortunate that such a crucial test for her powers as a birthday dinner should have been applied on the threshold of her arrival, but *n'importe*.

Miss Aldclyffe was now arrayed in a white dressing-gown, and dropped languidly into an easy chair, pushed up before the glass. The instincts of her sex and her own practice told Cytherea the next movement. She let Miss Aldclyffe's hair fall down about her shoulders, and began to arrange it. It proved to be all real; a satisfaction.

Miss Aldclyffe was musingly looking on the floor, and the operation went on for some

minutes in silence. At length her thoughts seemed to return to the present, and she lifted her eyes to the glass.

“Why, what on earth are you doing with my head?” she exclaimed, with widely opened eyes. At the words she felt the back of Cytherea’s little hand tremble against her neck.

“Perhaps you prefer it done the other fashion, madam?” said the maiden.

“No, no; that’s the fashion right enough, but you must make more show of my hair than that, or I shall have to buy some, which God forbid!”

“It is how I do my own,” said Cytherea, naively, and with a sweetness of tone that would have pleased the most acrimonious under favourable circumstances; but tyranny was in the ascendant with Miss Aldclyffe at this moment, and she was assured of palatable food for her vice by having felt the trembling of Cytherea’s hand.

“Yours, indeed! *Your* hair! come, go on.” Considering that Cytherea possessed at least

five times as much of that valuable auxiliary to woman's beauty as the lady before her, there was at the same time some excuse for Miss Aldclyffe's outburst. She remembered herself, however, and said more quietly, "Now then, Graye By the bye, what do they call you downstairs?"

"Mrs. Graye," said the handmaid.

"Then, tell them not to do any such absurd thing—not but that it is quite according to usage; but you are too young yet."

This dialogue tided Cytherea safely onward through the hairdressing till the flowers and diamonds were to be placed upon the lady's brow. Cytherea began arranging them tastefully, and to the very best of her judgment.

"That won't do," said Miss Aldclyffe, harshly.

"Why?"

"I look too young—an old dressed doll."

"Will that, madam?"

"No. I look a fright—a perfect fright!"

"This way, perhaps?"

“Heavens! Don't worry me so.” She shut her lips like a trap.

Having once worked herself up to the belief that her head-dress was to be a failure that evening, no cleverness of Cytherea's in arranging it could please her. She continued in a smouldering passion during the remainder of the performance, keeping her lips firmly closed, and the muscles of her body rigid. Finally, snatching up her gloves, and taking her handkerchief and fan in her hand, she silently sailed out of the room, without betraying the least consciousness of another woman's presence behind her.

Cytherea's fears that at the undressing this suppressed anger would find a vent, kept her on thorns throughout the evening. She tried to read; she could not. She tried to sew; she could not. She tried to muse; she could not do that connectedly. “If this is the beginning, what will the end be!” she said in a whisper, and felt many misgivings as to the policy of being overhasty in establishing an

independence at the expense of congruity with a cherished past.

§ 3. *Midnight.*

The sole object of this narration being to present in a regular series the several episodes and incidents which directly helped forward the end, and only these, every contiguous scene without this qualification is necessarily passed over, and as one, the Aldclyffe state dinner.

The clock struck twelve. The company had all gone, and Miss Aldclyffe's bell rang loudly and jerkingly.

Cytherea started to her feet at the sound, which broke in upon a fitful sleep that had overtaken her. She had been sitting drearily in her chair waiting minute after minute for the signal, her brain in that state of intentness which takes cognizance of the passage of Time as a real motion—motion without matter—the instants throbbing past in the company of a feverish pulse. She hastened to the room, to

find the lady sitting before the dressing shrine, illuminated on both sides, and looking so queenly in her attitude of absolute repose, that the younger woman felt the awfulest sense of responsibility at her Vandalism in having undertaken to demolish so imposing a pile.

The lady's jewelled ornaments were taken off in silence—some by her own listless hands, some by Cytherea's. Then followed the outer stratum of clothing. The dress being removed, Cytherea took it in her hand and went with it into the bedroom adjoining, intending to hang it in the wardrobe. But on second thoughts, in order that she might not keep Miss Aldclyffe waiting a moment longer than necessary, she flung it down on the first resting-place that came to hand, which happened to be the bed, and re-entered the dressing-room with the noiseless footfall of a kitten. She paused in the middle of the room.

She was unnoticed, and her sudden return had plainly not been expected. During the

short time of Cytherea's absence, Miss Aldclyffe had pulled off a kind of chemisette of Brussels net, drawn high above the throat, which she had worn with her evening dress as a semi-opaque covering to her shoulders, and in its place had put her night-dress round her. Her right hand was lifted to her neck, as if engaged in fastening her night-dress.

But on a second glance Miss Aldclyffe's proceeding was clearer to Cytherea. She was not fastening her night-dress; it had been carelessly thrown round her, and Miss Aldclyffe was really occupied in holding up to her eyes some small object that she was keenly scrutinising. And now on suddenly discovering the presence of Cytherea at the back of the apartment, instead of naturally continuing or concluding her inspection, she desisted hurriedly; the tiny snap of a spring was heard, her hand was removed, and she began adjusting her robes.

Modesty might have directed her hasty action of enwrapping her shoulders, but it was

scarcely likely, considering Miss Aldclyffe's temperament, that she had all her life been used to a maid, Cytherea's youth, and the elder lady's marked treatment of her as if she were a mere child or plaything. The matter was too slight to reason about, and yet upon the whole it seemed that Miss Aldclyffe must have a practical reason for concealing her neck.

With a timid sense of being an intruder Cytherea was about to step back and out of the room; but at the same moment Miss Aldclyffe turned, saw the impulse, and told her companion to stay, looking into her eyes as if she had half an intention to explain something. Cytherea felt certain it was the little mystery of her late movements. The lady withdrew her eyes; Cytherea went to fetch the dressing-gown, and wheeled round again to bring it up to Miss Aldclyffe, who had now partly removed her night-dress to put it on the proper way, and still sat with her back towards Cytherea.

Her neck was again quite open and uncovered, and though hidden from the direct line of Cytherea's vision, she saw it reflected in the glass—the fair white surface and the inimitable combination of curves between throat and bosom which artists adore being brightly lit up by the light burning on either side.

And the lady's prior proceedings were now explained in the simplest manner. In the midst of her breast, like an island in a sea of pearl, reclined an exquisite little gold locket, embellished with arabesque work of blue, red, and white enamel. That was undoubtedly what Miss Aldclyffe had been contemplating and, moreover, not having been put off with her other ornaments, it was to be retained during the night—a slight departure from the custom of ladies which Miss Aldclyffe had at first not cared to exhibit to her new assistant, though now, on further thought, she seemed to have become indifferent on the matter.

“My dressing-gown,” she said, quietly fastening her night-dress as she spoke.

Cytherea came forward with it. Miss Aldclyffe did not turn her head, but looked enquiringly at her maid in the glass.

“You saw what I wear on my neck, I suppose?” she said to Cytherea’s reflected face.

“Yes, madam, I did,” said Cytherea to Miss Aldclyffe’s reflected face.

Miss Aldclyffe again looked at Cytherea’s reflection as if she were on the point of explaining. Again she checked her resolve and said lightly.

“Few of my maids discover that I wear it always. I generally keep it a secret—not that it matters much. But I was careless with you, and seemed to want to tell you. You win me to make confidences that”

She ceased, took Cytherea’s hand in her own, lifted the locket with the other, touched the spring and disclosed a miniature.

“It is a handsome face, is it not?” she whispered, mournfully, and even timidly.

“It is.”

But the sight had gone through Cytherea like an electric shock, and there was an instantaneous awakening of perception in her, so thrilling in its presence as to be well-nigh insupportable. The face in the miniature was the face of her own father—younger and fresher than she had ever known him—but her father!

Was this the woman of his wild and unquenchable early love? And was this the woman who had figured in the gate-man's story as answering the name of Cytherea before her judgment was awake? Surely it was. And if so, here was the tangible outcrop of a romantic and hidden stratum of the past hitherto seen only in her imagination; but as far as her scope allowed, clearly defined therein by reason of its strangeness.

Miss Aldclyffe's eyes and thoughts were so intent upon the miniature that she had not been conscious of Cytherea's start of surprise. She went on speaking in a low and abstracted tone.

"Yes, I lost him." She interrupted her words by a short meditation, and went on

again. "I lost him by excess of honesty as regarded my past. But it was best that it should be so I was led to think rather more than usual of the circumstances to-night because of your name. It is pronounced the same way, though differently spelt."

The only means by which Cytherea's surname could have been spelt to Miss Aldclyffe must have been by Mrs. Morris or Farmer Springrove. She fancied Farmer Springrove would have spelt it properly if Edward was his informant, which made Miss Aldclyffe's remark obscure.

Women make confidences and then regret them.

The impulsive rush of feeling which had led Miss Aldclyffe to indulge in this revelation, trifling as it was, died out immediately her words were beyond recall; and the turmoil, occasioned in her by dwelling upon that chapter of her life, found vent in another kind of emotion—the result of a trivial accident.

Cytherea, after letting down Miss Aldclyffe's hair, adopted some plan with it to which the

lady had not been accustomed. A rapid revolution to irritation ensued. The maiden's mere touch seemed to discharge the pent-up regret of the lady as if she had been a jar of electricity.

"How strangely you treat my hair!" she exclaimed.

A silence.

"I have told you what I never tell my maids as a rule ; of course *nothing* that I say in this room is to be mentioned outside it." She spoke crossly no less than emphatically.

"It shall not be, madam," said Cytherea, agitated and vexed that the woman of her romantic wonderings should be so disagreeable to her.

"Why on earth did I tell you of my love?" she went on.

Cytherea made no answer.

"The lady's vexation with herself, and the accident which had led to the disclosure swelled little by little till it knew no bounds. But what was done could not be undone, and though Cytherea had shown a most winning responsive-

ness, quarrel Miss Aldclyffe must. She recurred to the subject of Cytherea's want of expertness, like a bitter reviewer, who finding the sentiments of a poet unimpeachable, quarrels with his rhymes.

"Never, never before did I serve myself such a trick as this in engaging a maid." She waited for an expostulation: none came. Miss Aldclyffe tried again.

"The idea of my taking a girl without asking her more than three questions, or having a single reference, all because of her good l——, the shape of her face and body! It *was* a fool's trick. There, I am served right—quite right, by being deceived in such a way."

"I didn't deceive you," said Cytherea. The speech was an unfortunate one, and was the very "fuel to maintain its fires" that the other's petulance desired.

"You did," she said, hotly.

"I told you I couldn't promise to be acquainted with every detail of routine just at first."

“ Will you contradict me in this way ! You are telling untruths, I say.”

Cytherea’s lip quivered. “ I would answer that remark if—if—.”

“ If what ? ”

“ If it were a lady’s ! ”

“ You girl of impudence—what do you say ? Leave the room this instant, I tell you.”

“ And I tell you that a person who speaks to a lady as you do to me, is no lady herself ! ”

“ To a lady ? A lady’s maid speaks in this way. The idea ! ”

“ Don’t ‘ lady’s maid ’ me : nobody is my mistress. I won’t have it ! ”

“ Good Heavens ! ”

“ I wouldn’t have come—No—I wouldn’t ! if I had known ! ”

“ What ? ”

“ That you were such an ill tempered unjust woman ! ”

Possest beyond the Muse’s painting, Miss Aldclyffe exclaimed,—

“ A Woman, am I ! I’ll teach you if I am a

Woman!" and lifted her hand as if she would have liked to strike her companion. This stung the maiden into absolute defiance.

"I dare you to touch me!" she cried. "Strike me if you dare, madam! I am not afraid of you—what do you mean by such an action as that!"

Miss Aldclyffe was disconcerted at this unexpected show of spirit, and ashamed of her unladylike impulse now it was put into words. She sank back in the chair. "I was not going to strike you—go to your room—I beg you to go to your room," she repeated in a husky whisper.

Cytherea, red and panting, took up her candlestick and advanced to the table to get a light. Standing close to them the rays from the candles struck sharply on her face. She usually bore a much stronger likeness to her mother than to her father, but now, looking with a grave, reckless, and angered expression of countenance at the kindling wick as she held it slanting into the other flame, her father's

features were distinct in her. It was the first time Miss Aldclyffe had seen her in a passionate mood, and wearing that expression which was invariably its concomitant. It was Miss Aldclyffe's turn to start now; and the remark she made was an instance of that sudden change of tone from high-flown invective to the pettiness of curiosity which so often makes women's quarrels ridiculous. Even Miss Aldclyffe's dignity had not sufficient power to postpone the absorbing desire she now felt to settle the strange suspicion that had entered her head.

"You spell your name the common way, G, R, E, Y, don't you?" she said with assumed indifference.

"No," said Cytherea, poised on the side of her foot, and still looking into the flame.

"Yes, surely? The name was spelt that way on your boxes: I looked and saw it myself.

The enigma of Miss Aldclyffe's mistake was solved. "O was it?" said Cytherea. "Ah I

remember Mrs. Jackson, the lodging-house keeper at Creston, labelled them. We spell our name G, R, A, Y, E."

"What was your father's trade?"

Cytherea thought it would be useless to attempt to conceal facts any longer. "He was not a trade," she said. "He was an architect."

"The idea of your being an architect's daughter!"

"There's nothing to offend you in that I hope?"

"O no."

"Why did you say 'the idea'?"

"Leave that alone. Did he ever visit in Gower Street one Christmas, many years ago?—but you would not know that."

"I have heard him say that Mr. Huntway, a curate somewhere in that part of London, and who died there, was an old college friend of his."

"What is your Christian name?"

"Cytherea."

"No! And is it really? And you knew that face I showed you? Yes, I see you did."

Miss Aldclyffe stopped, and closed her lips impassibly. She was a little agitated.

“Do you want me any longer?” said Cytherea, standing candle in hand and looking quietly in Miss Aldclyffe’s face.

“Well—no: no longer,” said the lady, lingeringly.

“With your permission, I will leave the house to morrow morning, madam.”

“Ah.” Miss Aldclyffe had no notion of what she was saying.

“And I know you will be so good as not to intrude upon me during the short remainder of my stay?”

Saying this Cytherea left the room before her companion had answered. Miss Aldclyffe, then, had recognised her at last, and had been curious about her name from the beginning.

The other members of the household had retired to rest. As Cytherea went along the passage leading to her room her dress rustled against the partition. A door on her left opened, and Mrs. Morris looked out.

“I waited out of bed till you came up,” she said, “it being your first night, in case you should be at a loss for anything. How have you got on with Miss Aldclyffe?”

“Pretty well—though not so well as I could have wished.”

“Has she been scolding?”

“A little.”

“She’s a very odd lady—’tis all one way or the other with her. She’s not bad at heart, but unbearable in close quarters. Those of us who don’t have much to do with her personally, stay on for years and years.”

“Has Miss Aldclyffe’s family always been rich?” said Cytherea.

“O no. The property, with the name, came from her mother’s uncle. Her family is a branch of the old Aldclyffe family on the maternal side. Her mother married a Bradleigh—a mere nobody at that time—and was on that account cut by her relations. But very singularly the other branch of the family died out one by one—three of them, and Miss

Aldclyffe's great uncle then left all his property, including this estate, to Captain Bradleigh and his wife—Miss Aldclyffe's father and mother—on condition that they took the old family name as well. There's all about it in the *Landed Gentry*. 'Tis a thing very often done."

"O, I see. Thank you. Well, now I am going. Good night."

CHAPTER VI.

THE EVENTS OF TWELVE HOURS.

§ 1. *August the ninth. One to two o'clock, a.m.*

CYTHEREA entered her bedroom, and flung herself on the bed, bewildered by a whirl of thought. Only one subject was clear in her mind, and it was that in spite of family discoveries, that day was to be the first and last of her experience as a lady's maid. Starvation itself should not compel her to hold such a humiliating post for another instant. "Ah," she thought, with a sigh, at the martyrdom of her last little fragment of self-conceit, "Owen knows everything better than I."

She jumped up and began making ready for her departure in the morning, the tears streaming down when she grieved and wondered what practical matter on earth she could

turn her hand to next. All these preparations completed, she began to undress, her mind unconsciously drifting away to the contemplation of her late surprises. To look in the glass for an instant at the reflection of her own magnificent resources in face and bosom, and to mark their attractiveness unadorned, was perhaps but the natural action of a young woman who had so lately been chidden whilst passing through the harassing experience of decorating an older beauty of Miss Aldclyffe's temper.

But she directly checked her weakness by sympathising reflections on the hidden troubles which must have thronged the past years of the solitary lady, to keep her, though so rich and courted, in a mood so repellent and gloomy as that in which Cytherea found her ; and then the young girl marvelled again and again, as she had marvelled before, at the strange confluence of circumstances which had brought herself into contact with the one woman in the world whose history was so romantically intertwined with

her own. She almost began to wish she were not obliged to go away and leave the lonely being to loneliness still.

In bed and in the dark, Miss Aldclyffe haunted her mind more persistently than ever. Instead of sleeping, she called up staring visions of the possible past of this queenly lady, her mother's rival. Up the long vista of bygone years she saw, behind all, the young girl's flirtation, little or much, with the cousin, that seemed to have been nipped in the bud, or to have terminated hastily in some way. Then the secret meetings between Miss Aldclyffe and the other woman at the little inn at Hammersmith and other places: the commonplace sobriquet she adopted: her swoon at some painful news, and the very slight knowledge the elder female had of her partner in mystery. Then, more than a year afterwards, the acquaintanceship of her own father with this his first love; the awakening of the passion, his acts of devotion, the unreasoning heat of his rapture, her tacit acceptance of it,

and yet her uneasiness under the delight. Then his declaration amid the evergreens: the utter change produced in her manner thereby, seemingly the result of a rigid determination: and the total concealment of her reason by herself and her parents, whatever it was. Then the lady's course dropped into darkness, and nothing more was visible till she was discovered here at Knapwater, nearly fifty years old, still unmarried and still beautiful, but lonely, embittered, and haughty. Cytherea imagined that her father's image was still warmly cherished in Miss Aldclyffe's heart, and was thankful that she herself had not been betrayed into announcing that she knew many particulars of this page of her father's history, and the chief one, the lady's unaccountable renunciation of him. It would have made her bearing towards the mistress of the mansion more awkward, and would have been no benefit to either.

Thus conjuring up the past, and theorising on the present, she lay restless, changing her

posture from one side to the other and back again. Finally, when courting sleep with all her art, she heard a clock strike two. A minute later, and she fancied she could distinguish a soft rustle in the passage outside her room.

To bury her head in the sheets was her first impulse ; then to uncover it, raise herself on her elbow, and stretch her eyes wide open in the darkness ; her lips being parted with the intentness of her listening. Whatever the noise was, it had ceased for the time.

It began again and came close to her door, lightly touching the panels. Then there was another stillness ; Cytherea made a movement which caused a faint rustling of the bedclothes.

Before she had time to think another thought a light tap was given. Cytherea breathed : the person outside was evidently bent upon finding her awake, and the rustle she had made had encouraged the hope. The maiden's physical condition shifted from one pole to its opposite. The cold sweat of terror

forsook her, and modesty took the alarm. She became hot and red ; her door was not locked.

A distinct woman's whisper came to her through the keyhole : " Cytherea ! "

Only one being in the house knew her Christian name, and that was Miss Aldclyffe. Cytherea stepped out of bed, went to the door, and whispered back, " Yes ? "

" Let me come in, darling. "

The young woman paused in a conflict between judgment and emotion. It was now mistress and maid no longer ; woman and woman only. Yes, she must let her come in, poor thing.

She got a light in an instant, opened the door, and raising her eyes and the candle, saw Miss Aldclyffe standing outside in her dressing-gown.

" Now you see that it is really myself, put out the light, " said the visitor. " I want to stay here with you, Cythie. I came to ask you to come down into my bed, but it is snugger here. But remember that you are

mistress in this room, and that I have no business here, and that you may send me away if you choose. Shall I go?"

"O no; you shan't indeed if you don't want to," said Cythie, generously.

The instant they were in bed Miss Aldclyffe freed herself from the last remnant of restraint. She flung her arms round the young girl, and pressed her gently to her heart.

"Now kiss me," she said.

Cytherea upon the whole, was rather discomposed at this change of treatment; and, discomposed or no, her passions were not so impetuous as Miss Aldclyffe's. She could not bring her soul to her lips for a moment, try how she would.

"Come kiss me," repeated Miss Aldclyffe.

Cytherea gave her a very small one, as soft in touch and in sound as the bursting of a bubble.

"More earnestly than that—come."

She gave another, a little but not much more expressively.

"I don't deserve a more feeling one, I sup-

pose," said Miss Aldclyffe, with an emphasis of sad bitterness in her tone. "I am an ill-tempered woman, you think; half out of my mind. Well, perhaps I am; but I have had grief more than you can think or dream of. But I can't help loving you—your name is the same as mine—isn't it strange?"

Cytherea was inclined to say no, but remained silent.

"Now, don't you think I must love you?" continued the other.

"Yes," said Cytherea, absently. She was still thinking whether duty to Owen and her father, which asked for silence on her knowledge of her father's unfortunate love, or duty to the woman embracing her, which seemed to ask for confidence, ought to predominate. Here was a solution. She would wait till Miss Aldclyffe referred to her acquaintanceship and attachment to Cytherea's father in past times: then she would tell her all she knew: that would be honour.

"Why can't you kiss me as I can kiss you?"

Why can't you!" She impressed upon Cytherea's lips a warm motherly salute, given as if in the outburst of strong feeling, long checked, and yearning for something to love and be loved by in return.

"Do you think badly of me for my behaviour this evening, child? I don't know why I am so foolish as to speak to you in this way. I am a very fool, I believe. Yes. How old are you?"

"Eighteen."

"Eighteen Well, why don't you ask me how old I am?"

"Because I don't want to know."

"Never mind if you don't. I am forty-six; and it gives me greater pleasure to tell you this than it does to you to listen. I have not told my age truly for the last twenty years till now."

"Why haven't you?"

"I have met deceit by deceit, till I am weary of it—weary, weary—and I long to be what I shall never be again—artless and innocent,

like you. But I suppose that you, too, will prove to be not worth a thought, as every new friend does on more intimate knowledge. Come, why don't you talk to me, child? Have you said your prayers?"

"Yes—no! I forgot them to-night."

"I suppose you say them every night as a rule?"

"Yes."

"Why do you do that?"

"Because I always have, and it would seem strange if I were not to. Do you?"

"I? A wicked old sinner like me! No, I never do. I have thought all such matters humbug for years—thought so so long that I should be glad to think otherwise from very weariness; and yet, such is the code of the polite world that I subscribe regularly to Missionary Societies and others of the sort . . . Well, say your prayers, dear,—you won't omit them now you recollect it. I should like to hear you very much. Will you?"

"It seems hardly—"

“It would seem so like old times to me—when I was young, and nearer—far nearer Heaven than I am now. Do, sweet one.”

Cytherea was embarrassed; and her embarrassment arose from the following conjuncture of affairs. Since she had loved Edward Springrove, she had linked his name with her brother Owen's in her nightly supplications to the Almighty. She wished to keep her love for him a secret, and above all a secret from a woman like Miss Aldclyffe; yet her conscience and the honesty of her love would not for an instant allow her to think of omitting his dear name, and so endanger the efficacy of all her previous prayers for his success by an unworthy shame now: it would be wicked of her, she thought, and a grievous wrong to him. Under any worldly circumstances she might have thought the position justified a little finesse, and have skipped him for once; but prayer was too solemn a thing for such trifling.

“I would rather not say them,” she mur-

mured first. It struck her then that this declining altogether was the same cowardice in another dress, and was delivering her poor Edward over to Satan just as unceremoniously as before. "Yes ; I will say my prayers, and you shall hear me," she added, firmly.

She turned her face to the pillow and repeated in low soft tones the simple words she had used from childhood on such occasions. Owen's name was mentioned without faltering, but in the other case, maidenly shyness was too strong even for religion, and that when supported by excellent intentions. At the name of Edward she stammered, and her voice sank to the faintest whisper in spite of her.

"Thank you, dearest," said Miss Aldclyffe. "I have prayed too, I verily believe. You are a good girl, I think." Then the expected question came.

"'Bless Owen,' and who, did you say ?"

There was no help for it now, and out it came. "Owen and Edward," said Cytherea.

“Who are Owen and Edward?”

“Owen is my brother, madam,” faltered the maid.

“Ah, I remember. Who is Edward?”

A silence.

“Your brother, too?” continued Miss Aldclyffe.

“No.”

Miss Aldclyffe reflected a moment. “Don’t you want to tell me who Edward is?” she said at last, in a tone of meaning.

“I don’t mind telling; only”

“You would rather not, I suppose?”

“Yes.”

Miss Aldclyffe shifted her ground. “Were you ever in love?” she inquired, suddenly.

Cytherea was surprised to hear how quickly the voice had altered from tenderness to harshness, vexation, and disappointment.

“Yes—I think I was—once,” she murmured.

“Aha: and were you ever kissed by a man?”

A pause.

“Well, were you?” said Miss Aldclyffe, rather sharply.

“Don’t press me to tell—I can’t—indeed, I won’t, madam.”

Miss Aldclyffe removed her arms from Cytherea’s neck. “’Tis now with you as it is always with all girls,” she said, in jealous and gloomy accents. “You are not, after all, the innocent I took you for. No, no.” She then changed her tone with fitful rapidity. “Cytherea, try to love me more than you love him—do. I love you better than any man can. Do, Cythie; don’t let any man stand between us. Oh, I can’t bear that!” She clasped Cytherea’s neck again.

“I must love him now I have begun,” replied the other.

“Must—yes—must,” said the elder lady, reproachfully. “Yes, women are all alike. I thought I had at last found an artless woman who had not been sullied by a man’s lips, and who had not practised or been practised upon by the arts which ruin all the truth and sweet-

ness and goodness in us. Find a girl, if you can, whose mouth and ears have not been made a regular highway of by some man or another! Leave the admittedly notorious spots—the drawing-rooms of society—and look in the villages—leave the villages and search in the schools—and you can hardly find a girl whose heart has not been *had*—is not an old thing half worn out by some He or another. If men only knew the staleness of the freshest of us! that nine times out of ten the ‘first love’ they think they are winning from a woman is but the hulk of an old wrecked affection, fitted with new sails and re-used. O, Cytherea, can it be that you, too, are like the rest?”

“No, no, no,” urged Cytherea, awed by the storm she had raised in the impetuous woman’s mind. “He only kissed me once—twice, I mean.”

“He might have a thousand times if he had cared to, there’s no doubt about that, whoever his lordship is. You are as bad as I—we are all alike; and I—an old fool—have been

sipping at your mouth as if it were honey, because I fancied no wasting lover knew the spot. But a minute ago, and you seemed to me like a fresh spring meadow—now you seem a dusty highway.”

“O no, no !” Cytherea was not weak enough to shed tears except on extraordinary occasions, but she was fain to begin sobbing now. She wished Miss Aldclyffe would go to her own room, and leave her and her treasured dreams alone. This vehement imperious affection was in one sense soothing, but yet it was not of the kind that Cytherea’s instincts desired. Though it was generous, it seemed somewhat too rank, sensuous, and capricious for endurance.

“Well,” said the lady in continuation, “who is he?”

Her companion was desperately determined not to tell his name: she too much feared a taunt when Miss Aldclyffe’s fiery mood again ruled her tongue.

“Won’t you tell me? not tell me after all the affection I have shown?”

“I will perhaps, another day.”

“Did you wear a hat and white feather in Creston for the week or two previous to your coming here?”

“Yes.”

“Then I have seen you and your sweetheart at a distance! He rowed you round the bay with your brother.”

“Yes.”

“And without your brother—fie! There, there, don't let that little heart beat itself to death: throb, throb: it shakes the bed, you silly thing. I didn't mean that there was any harm in going alone with him. I only saw you from the esplanade, in common with the rest of the people. I often run down to Creston. He was a very good figure: now who was he?”

“I—I won't tell, madam—I cannot indeed!”

“Won't tell—very well, don't. You are very foolish to treasure up his name and image as you do. Why he has had Loves before you,

trust him for that, whoever he is, and you are but a temporary link in a long chain of others like you; who only have your little day as they have had theirs."

"'Tisn't true! 'tisn't true, 'tisn't true!" cried Cytherea in an agony of torture. "He has never loved anybody else, I know—I am sure he hasn't!"

Miss Aldclyffe was as jealous as any man could have been. She continued—

"He sees a beautiful face and thinks he will never forget it, but in a few weeks the feeling passes off and he wonders how he could have cared for anybody so absurdly much."

"No, no, he doesn't—What does he do when he has thought that—come, tell me—tell me!"

"You are as hot as fire, and the throbbing of your heart makes me nervous. I can't tell you if you get in that flustered state."

"Do, do tell—O, it makes me so miserable! but tell—come tell me!"

"Ah—the tables are turned now, dear!" she

continued, in a tone which mingled pity with derision:—

“Love’s passions shall rock thee
As the storms rock the ravens on high,
Bright reason will mock thee
Like the sun from a wintry sky.”

“What does he do next?—Why this is what he does next: ruminates on what he has heard of women’s romantic impulses, and how easily men torture them when they have given way to those feelings, and have resigned everything for their hero. It may be that though he loves you heartily now—that is, as heartily as a man can—and you love him in return, your loves may be impracticable and hopeless and you may be separated for ever. You, as the weary weary years pass by will fade and fade—bright eyes will fade—and you will perhaps then die early—true to him to your latest breath and believing him to be true to the latest breath also; whilst he, in some gay and busy spot far away from your last quiet nook, will have married some dashing lady, and not

purely oblivious of you, will long have ceased to regret you—will chat about you, as you were in long past years—will say, ‘Ah, little Cytherea used to tie her hair like that—poor innocent trusting thing! it was a pleasant useless idle dream—that dream of mine for the maid with the bright eyes and simple, silly, heart; but I was a foolish lad at that time.’ Then he will tell the tale of all your little Wills and Won’ts, and particular ways, and as he speaks, turn to his wife with a placid smile.”

“It is not true! He can’t, he c—can’t be s—so cruel—and you are cruel to me—you are, you are!” She was at last driven to desperation: her natural common sense and shrewdness had seen all through the piece how imaginary her emotions were—she felt herself to be weak and foolish in permitting them to rise; but even then she could not control them: be agonised she must. She was only eighteen, and the long day’s labour, her weariness, her excitement, had completely unnerved her, and worn her out; she was bent

hither and thither by this tyrannical working upon her imagination, as a young rush in the wind. She wept bitterly.

“And now think how much I like you,” resumed Miss Aldclyffe, when Cytherea grew calmer. “*I shall never forget you for anybody else, as men do—never. I will be exactly as a mother to you. Now will you promise to live with me always, and always be taken care of, and never deserted?*”

“I cannot. I will not be anybody’s maid for another day on any consideration.”

“No, no, no. You shan’t be a lady’s maid, You shall be my companion. I will get another maid.”

Companion—that was a new idea. Cytherea could not resist the evidently heartfelt desire of the strange-tempered woman for her presence. But she could not trust to the moment’s impulse.

“I will stay, I think. But do not ask for a final answer to night.”

“Never mind now, then. Put your hair

round your mamma's neck and give me one good long kiss, and I won't talk any more in that way about your lover. After all, some young men are not so fickle as others; but even if he's the ficklest, there is consolation. The love of an inconstant man is ten times more ardent than that of a faithful man—that is, while it lasts."

Cytherea did as she was told, to escape the punishment of further talk; flung the twining tresses of her long, rich hair over Miss Aldclyffe's shoulders as directed, and the two ceased conversing, making themselves up for sleep. Miss Aldclyffe seemed to give herself over to a luxurious sense of content and quiet, as if the maiden at her side afforded her a protection against dangers which had menaced her for years; she was soon sleeping calmly.

§ 2. *Two to five, a.m.*

With Cytherea it was otherwise. Unused to the place and circumstances, she continued

wakeful, ill at ease, and mentally distressed. She withdrew herself from her companion's embrace, turned to the other side, and endeavoured to relieve her busy brain by looking at the window-blind, and noticing the light of the rising moon—now in her last quarter—creep round upon it: it was the light of an old waning moon which had but a few days longer to live.

The sight led her to think again of what had happened under the rays of the same month's moon, a little before its full, the delicious evening scene with Edward; the kiss, and the shortness of those happy moments—maiden imagination bringing about the apotheosis of a *status quo* which had had several unpleasantnesses in its earthly reality.

But sounds were in the ascendant that night. Her ears became aware of a strange and gloomy murmur.

She recognised it: it was the gushing of the waterfall, faint and low, brought from its source to the unwonted distance of the House by a faint breeze which made it distinct and recog-

nisable by reason of the utter absence of all disturbing sounds. The groom's melancholy representation lent to the sound a more dismal effect than it would have had of its own nature. She began to fancy what the waterfall must be like at that hour, under the trees in the ghostly moonlight. Black at the head, and over the surface of the deep cold hole into which it fell; white and frothy at the fall; black and white, like a pall and its border; sad everywhere.

She was in the mood for sounds of every kind now, and strained her ears to catch the faintest, in wayward enmity to her quiet of mind. Another soon came.

The second was quite different from the first—a kind of intermittent whistle it seemed primarily: no, a creak, a metallic creak, ever and anon, like a plough, or a rusty wheelbarrow, or at least a wheel of some kind. Yes, it was a wheel—the water-wheel in the shrubbery by the old manor-house, which the coachman had said would drive him mad.

She determined not to think any more of

these gloomy things ; but now that she had once noticed the sound there was no sealing her ears to it. She could not help timing its creaks, and putting on a dread expectancy just before the end of each half minute that brought them. To imagine the inside of the engine-house, whence these noises proceeded, was now a necessity. No window, but crevices in the door, through which, probably, the moon-beams streamed in the most attenuated and skeleton-like rays, striking sharply upon portions of wet rusty cranks and chains ; a glistening wheel, turning incessantly, labouring in the dark like a captive starving in a dungeon ; and instead of a floor below, gurgling water, which on account of the darkness could only be heard ; water which laboured up dark pipes almost to where she lay.

She shivered. Now she was determined to go to sleep ; there could be nothing else left to be heard or to imagine—it was horrid that her imagination should be so restless. Yet just for an instant before going to sleep she would

think this—suppose another sound *should* come—just suppose it should! Before the thought had well passed through her brain, a third sound came.

The third was a very soft gurgle or rattle—of a strange and abnormal kind—yet a sound she had heard before at some past period of her life—when, she could not recollect. To make it the more disturbing, it seemed to be almost close to her—either close outside the window, close under the floor, or close above the ceiling. The accidental fact of its coming so immediately upon the heels of her supposition, told so powerfully upon her excited nerves, that she jumped up in the bed. The same instant, a little dog in some room near, having probably heard the same noise, set up a low whine. The watchdog in the yard, hearing the moan of his associate, began to howl loudly and distinctly. His melancholy notes were taken up directly afterwards by the dogs in the kennel a long way off, in every variety of wail.

One logical thought alone was able to enter

her flurried brain. The little dog that began the whining must have heard the other two sounds even better than herself. He had taken no notice of them, but he had taken notice of the third. The third, then, was an unusual sound.

It was not like water, it was not like wind, it was not the night-jar, it was not a clock, nor a rat, nor a person snoring.

She crept under the clothes, and flung her arms tightly round Miss Aldclyffe, as if for protection. Cytherea perceived that the lady's late peaceful warmth had given place to a sweat. At the maiden's touch, Miss Aldclyffe awoke with a low scream.

She remembered her position instantly. "Oh such a terrible dream!" she cried, in a hurried whisper, holding to Cytherea in her turn; "and your touch was the end of it. It was dreadful. Time, with his wings, hour-glass, and scythe, coming nearer and nearer to me—grinning and mocking: then he seized me, took a piece of me only. . . . But I can't tell you. I can't bear

to think of it. How those dogs howl! People say it means death."

The return of Miss Aldclyffe to consciousness was sufficient to dispel the wild fancies which the loneliness of the night had woven in Cytherea's mind. She dismissed the third noise as something which in all likelihood could easily be explained, if trouble were taken to inquire into it: large houses had all kinds of strange sounds floating about them. She was ashamed to tell Miss Aldclyffe[#]her terrors.

A silence of five minutes.

"Are you asleep?" said Miss Aldclyffe.

"No," said Cytherea, in a long-drawn whisper.

"How those dogs howl, don't they?"

"Yes. A little dog in the house began it."

"Ah, yes: that was Totsy. He sleeps on the mat outside my father's bedroom door. A nervous creature."

There was a silent interval of nearly half-an-hour. A clock on the landing struck three.

“Are you asleep, Miss Aldclyffe?” whispered Cytherea.

“No,” said Miss Aldclyffe. “How wretched it is not to be able to sleep, isn’t it?”

“Yes,” replied Cytherea, like a docile child.

Another hour passed, and the clock struck four. Miss Aldclyffe was still awake.

“Cytherea,” she said, very softly.

Cytherea made no answer. She was sleeping soundly.

The first glimmer of dawn was now visible. Miss Aldclyffe arose, put on her dressing-robe, and went softly downstairs to her own room.

“I have not told her who I am after all, or found out the particulars of Ambrose’s history,” she murmured. “But her being in love alters everything.”

§ 3. *Half-past seven to ten o’clock, a.m.*

Cytherea awoke, quiet in mind and refreshed. A conclusion to remain at Knapwater was already in possession of her.

Finding Miss Aldclyffe gone, she dressed herself and sat down at the window to write an answer to Edward's letter, and an account of her arrival at Knapwater to Owen. The dismal and heart-breaking pictures that Miss Aldclyffe had placed before her the preceding evening, the later terrors of the night, were now but as shadows of shadows, and she smiled in derision at her own excitability.

But writing Edward's letter was the great consoler, the effect of each word upon him being enacted in her own face as she wrote it. She felt how much she would like to share his trouble—how well she could endure poverty with him—and wondered what his trouble was. But all would be explained at last, she knew.

At the appointed time she went to Miss Aldclyffe's room, intending, with the contradictoriness common in people, to perform with pleasure, as a work of supererogation, what as a duty was simply intolerable.

Miss Aldclyffe was already out of bed. The bright penetrating light of morning made a vast

difference in the elder lady's behaviour to her dependent; the day, which had restored Cytherea's judgment, had effected the same for Miss Aldclyffe. Though practical reasons forbade her regretting that she had secured such a companionable creature to read, talk, or play to her whenever her whim required, she was inwardly vexed at the extent to which she had indulged in the womanly luxury of making confidences and giving way to emotions. Few would have supposed that the calm lady sitting aristocratically at the toilet table, seeming scarcely conscious of Cytherea's presence in the room, even when greeting her, was the passionate creature who had asked for kisses a few hours before.

It is both painful and satisfactory to think how often these antitheses are to be observed in the individual most open to our observation—ourselves. We pass the evening with faces lit up by some flaring illumination or other: we get up the next morning—the fiery jets have all gone out, and nothing confronts us but a few

crinkled pipes and sooty wirework, hardly even recalling the outline of the blazing picture that arrested our eyes before bedtime.

Emotions would be half starved if there were no candlelight. Probably nine-tenths of the gushing letters of indiscreet confidences are written after nine or ten o'clock in the evening, and sent off before day returns to leer invidiously upon them. Few that remain open to catch our glance as we rise in the morning, survive the frigid criticism of dressing time.

The subjects uppermost in the minds of the two women who had thus cooled from their fires, were not the visionary ones of the later hours, but the hard facts of their earlier conversation. After a remark that Cytherea need not assist her in dressing unless she wished to, Miss Aldclyffe said, abruptly,—

“I can tell that young man’s name.” She looked keenly at Cytherea. “It is Edward Springrove, my tenant’s son.”

The inundation of colour upon the younger lady at hearing a name, which to her was a

world, handled as if it were only an atom, told Miss Aldclyffe that she had divined the truth at last.

“ Ah—it is he, is it ? ” she continued. “ Well, I wanted to know for practical reasons. His example shows that I was not so far wrong in my estimate of men after all, though I only generalised, and had no thought of him.” This was perfectly true.

“ What do you mean ? ” said Cytherea, visibly alarmed.

“ Mean ? Why that all the world knows him to be engaged to be married, and that the wedding is soon to take place.” She made the remark bluntly and superciliously, as if to obtain absolution at the hands of her family pride for the weak confidences of the night.

But even the frigidity of Miss Aldclyffe’s morning mood was overcome by the look of sick and blank despair which the carelessly uttered words had produced upon Cytherea’s face. She sank back into a chair, and buried her face in her hands.

“Don’t be so foolish,” said Miss Aldclyffe. “Come, make the best of it. I cannot upset the fact I have told you of, unfortunately. But I believe the match can be broken off.”

“O no, no.”

“Nonsense. I liked him much as a youth, and I like him now. I’ll help you to captivate and chain him down. I have got over my absurd feeling of last night in not wanting you ever to go away from me—of course I could not expect such a thing as that. There, now I have said I’ll help you, and that’s enough. He’s tired of his first sweetheart now that he’s been away from home for a while. The love which no outer attack can frighten away quails before its idol’s own homely ways; ’tis always so Come, finish what you are doing if you are going to, and don’t be a little goose about such a trumpery affair as that.”

“Who—is he engaged to?” Cytherea enquired by a movement of her lips but no sound of her voice. But Miss Aldclyffe did not answer. It mattered not, Cytherea thought.

Another woman—that was enough for her: curiosity was stunned.

She applied herself to the work of dressing, scarcely knowing how. Miss Aldclyffe went on:—

“You were too easily won. I’d have made him or anybody else speak out before he should have kissed my face for his pleasure. But you are one of those precipitantly fond things who are yearning to throw away their hearts upon the first worthless fellow who says Good morning. In the first place, you shouldn’t have loved him so quickly: in the next, if you must have loved him off-hand, you should have concealed it. It tickled his vanity: ‘By Jove, that girl’s in love with me already!’ he thought.”

To hasten away at the end of the toilet, to tell Mrs. Morris—who stood waiting in a little room prepared for her, with tea poured out, bread-and-butter cut into diaphanous slices, and eggs arranged—that she wanted no breakfast: then to shut herself alone in her bedroom, was

her only thought. She was followed thither by the well-intentioned matron with a cup of tea and one piece of bread-and-butter on a tray, cheerfully insisting that she should eat it.

To those who grieve, innocent cheerfulness seems heartless levity. "No, thank you, Mrs Morris," she said, keeping the door closed. Despite the incivility of the action, Cytherea could not bear to let a pleasant person see her face then.

Immediate revocation—even if revocation would be more effective by postponement—is the impulse of young wounded natures. Cytherea went to her blotting-book, took out the long letter so carefully written, so full of gushing remarks and tender hints, and sealed up so neatly with a little seal bearing "Good Faith" as its motto, tore the missive into fifty pieces, and threw them into the grate. It was then the bitterest of anguishes to look upon some of the words she had so lovingly written, and see them existing only in mutilated forms without meaning—to feel that his eye would

never read them, nobody ever know how ardently she had penned them.

Pity for one's self for being wasted is mostly present in these moods of abnegation.

The meaning of all his allusions, his abruptness in telling her of his love ; his constraint at first, then his desperate manner of speaking, was clear. They must have been the last flickering of a conscience not quite dead to all sense of perfidiousness and fickleness. Now he had gone to London : she would be dismissed from his memory, in the same way as Miss Aldclyffe had said. And here she was in Edward's own parish, reminded continually of him by what she saw and heard. The landscape, yesterday so much and so bright to her, was now but as the banquet-hall deserted—all gone but herself.

Miss Aldclyffe had wormed her secret out of her, and would now be continually mocking her for her trusting simplicity in believing him. It was altogether unbearable : she would not stay there.

She went downstairs and found that Miss Aldclyffe had gone into the breakfast-room, but that Captain Aldclyffe, who rose later with increasing infirmities, had not yet made his appearance. Cytherea entered. Miss Aldclyffe was looking out of the window, watching a trail of white smoke along the distant landscape — signifying a passing train. At Cytherea's entry she turned and looked enquiringly.

“I must tell you now,” began Cytherea, in a tremulous voice.

“Well, what?” Miss Aldclyffe said.

“I am not going to stay with you. I must go away—a very long way. I am very sorry, but indeed I can't remain!”

“Pooh—what shall we hear next?” Miss Aldclyffe surveyed Cytherea's face with leisurely criticism. “You are breaking your heart again about that worthless young Springrove. I knew how it would be. It is as Hallam says of Juliet—what little reason you may have possessed originally has all been

whirled away by this love. I shan't take this notice, mind."

"Do let me go?"

Miss Aldclyffe took her new pet's hand, and said with severity, "As to hindering you, if you are determined to go, of course that's absurd. But you are not now in a state of mind fit for deciding upon any such proceeding, and I shall not listen to what you have to say. Now, Cythie, come with me; we'll let this volcano burst and spend itself, and after that we'll see what had better be done." She took Cytherea into her workroom, opened a drawer, and drew forth a roll of linen.

"This is some embroidery I began one day, and now I should like it finished."

She then preceded the maiden upstairs to Cytherea's own room. "There," she said, "now sit down here, go on with this work, and remember one thing—that you are not to leave the room on any pretext whatever for two hours unless I send for you—I insist kindly, dear. Whilst you stitch—you are to

stitch, recollect, and not go mooning out of the window—think over the whole matter, and get cooled; don't let the foolish love-affair prevent your thinking as a woman of the world. If at the end of that time you still say you must leave me, you may. I will have no more to say in the matter. Come, sit down, and promise to sit here the time I name."

To hearts in a despairing mood, compulsion seems a relief; and docility was at all times natural to Cytherea. She promised, and sat down. Miss Aldclyffe shut the door upon her and retreated.

She sewed, stopped to think, shed a tear or two, recollected the articles of the treaty, and sewed again; and at length fell into a reverie which took no account whatever of the lapse of time.

§ 4. *Ten to twelve o'clock, a.m.*

A quarter of an hour might have passed when her thoughts became attracted from the

past to the present by unwonted movements downstairs. She opened the door and listened.

There was hurrying along passages, opening and shutting of doors, trampling in the stable-yard. She went across into another bed-room from which a view of the stable-yard could be obtained, and arrived there just in time to see the figure of the man who had driven her from the station vanishing down the coach-road on a black horse—galloping at the top of the animal's speed.

Another man went off in the direction of the village.

Whatever had occurred, it did not seem to be her duty to inquire or meddle with it, stranger and dependent as she was, unless she were requested to, especially after Miss Aldclyffe's strict charge to her. She sat down again, determined to let no idle curiosity influence her movements.

Her window commanded the front of the house; and the next thing she saw was a clergyman walk up and enter the door.

All was silent again till, a long time after the first man had left, he returned again on the same horse, now matted with sweat and trotting behind a carriage in which sat an elderly gentleman driven by a lad in livery. These came to the house, entered, and all was again the same as before.

The whole household—master, mistress, and servants—appeared to have forgotten the very existence of such a being as Cytherea. She almost wished she had not vowed to have no idle curiosity.

Half an hour later, the carriage drove off with the elderly gentleman, and two or three messengers left the house, speeding in various directions. Rustics in smock-frocks began to hang about the road opposite the house, or lean against trees, looking idly at the windows and chimneys.

A tap came to Cytherea's door. She opened it to a young maid-servant.

“Miss Aldclyffe wishes to see you, ma'am.”
Cytherea hastened down.

Miss Aldclyffe was standing on the hearth-rug, her elbow on the mantel, her hand to her temples, her eyes on the ground; perfectly calm, but very pale.

“Cytherea,” she said, in a whisper, “come here.”

Cytherea went close.

“Something very serious has taken place,” she said again, and then paused, with a tremulous movement of her mouth.

“Yes,” said Cytherea.

“My father. He was found dead in his bed this morning.”

“Dead!” echoed the younger woman. It seemed impossible that the announcement could be true: that knowledge of so great a fact could be contained in a statement so small.

“Yes, dead,” murmured Miss Aldclyffe, solemnly. “He died alone, though within a few feet of me. The room we slept in is exactly over his own.”

Cytherea said, hurriedly, “Do they know at what hour?”

“The doctor says it must have been between two and three o’clock this morning.”

“Then I heard him !”

“Heard him ?”

“Heard him die !”

“You heard him die ? What did you hear ?”

“A sound I had heard once before in my life—at the death-bed of my mother. I could not identify it—though I recognised it. Then the dog howled : you remarked it. I did not think it worth while to tell you what I had heard a little earlier.” She looked agonised.

“It would have been useless,” said Miss Aldclyffe. “All was over by that time.” She addressed herself as much as Cytherea when she continued, “Is it a Providence who sent you here at this juncture that I might not be left entirely alone ?”

Till this instant Miss Aldclyffe had forgotten the reason of Cytherea’s seclusion in her own room. So had Cytherea herself. The fact now recurred to both in one moment.

“Do you still wish to go?” said Miss Aldclyffe, anxiously.

“I don’t want to go now,” Cytherea had remarked simultaneously with the other’s question. She was pondering on the strange likeness which Miss Aldclyffe’s bereavement bore to her own: it had the appearance of being still another call to her not to forsake this woman so linked to her life, for the sake of any trivial vexation.

Miss Aldclyffe held her almost as a lover would have held her, and said musingly,—

“We get more and more into one groove. I now am left fatherless and motherless as you were.” Other ties lay behind in her thoughts, but she did not mention them.

“You loved your father, Cytherea, and wept for him?”

“Yes: I did. Poor papa!”

“I was always at variance with mine, and can’t weep for him now! But you must stay here always and make a better woman of me.”

The compact was thus sealed, and Cytherea,

in spite of the failure of her advertisements was installed as a veritable Companion. And, once more in the history of human endeavour, a position which it was impossible to reach by any direct attempt, was come to by the seeker's swerving from the path, and regarding the original object as one of secondary importance.

CHAPTER VII.

THE EVENTS OF EIGHTEEN DAYS.

§ 1. *August the seventeenth.*

THE time of day was four o'clock in the afternoon. The place was the lady's study or boudoir, Knapwater House. The person was Miss Aldclyffe sitting there alone, clothed in deep mourning.

The funeral of the old Captain had taken place, and his will had been read. It was very concise, and had been executed about five years previous to his death. It was attested by his solicitors, Messrs. Nyttleton and Tayling, of Lincoln's-Inn-Fields. The whole of his estate real and personal, was bequeathed to his daughter Cytherea, for her sole and absolute use, subject only to the payment of a legacy to the rector, their relative, and a few small amounts to the servants.

Miss Aldclyffe had not chosen the easiest chair of her boudoir to sit in, or even a chair of ordinary comfort ; but an uncomfortable, high, narrow-backed, oak-framed and seated chair, which was allowed to remain in the room only on the ground of being a companion in artistic quaintness to an old coffer beside it, and was never used except to stand in to reach for a book from the highest row of shelves. But she had sat erect in this chair for more than an hour, for the reason that she was utterly unconscious of what her actions and bodily feelings were. The chair had stood nearest her path on entering the room, and she had gone to it in a dream.

She sat in the attitude which denotes unflagging, intense, concentrated thought—as if she were cast in bronze. Her feet were together, her body bent a little forward, and quite unsupported by the back of the chair ; her hands on her knees, her eyes fixed intently on the corner of a footstool.

At last she moved and tapped her fingers

upon the table at her side. Her pent-up ideas had finally found some channel to advance in. Motions became more and more frequent as she laboured to carry farther and farther the problem which occupied her brain. She sat back and drew a long breath : she sat sideways and leant her forehead upon her hand. Later still she arose, walked up and down the room— at first abstractedly, with her features as firmly set as ever ; but by degrees her brow relaxed, her footsteps became lighter and more leisurely ; her head rode gracefully and was no longer bowed. She plumed herself like a swan after exertion.

“ Yes,” she said aloud. “ To get *him* here without letting him know that I have any other object than that of getting a useful man—that’s the difficulty—and that I think I can master.”

She rang for the new maid, a placid woman of forty, with a few grey hairs.

“ Ask Miss Graye if she can come to me.”

Cytherea was not far off, and came in.

“Do you know anything about architects and surveyors?” said Miss Aldclyffe, abruptly.

“Know anything?” replied Cytherea poising herself on her toe to consider the compass of the question.

“Yes — know anything,” said Miss Aldclyffe.

“Owen is an architect and surveyor’s clerk,” the maiden said, and thought of somebody else who was likewise.

“Yes: that’s why I asked you. What are the different kinds of work comprised in an architect’s practice? They lay out estates, and superintend the various works done upon them, I should think, among other things?”

“Those are, more properly, a land or building steward’s duties—at least I have always imagined so. Country architects include those things in their practice: city architects don’t.”

“I know that. But a steward’s is an indefinite fast-and-loose profession, it seems to me.

Shouldn't you think that a man who had been brought up as an architect would do for a steward?"

Cytherea had doubts whether an architect pure would do.

The chief pleasure connected with asking an opinion lies in not adopting it. Miss Aldclyffe replied decisively :

"Nonsense ; of course he would. Your brother Owen makes plans for country buildings—such as cottages, stables, homesteads, and so on ?"

"Yes ; he does."

"And superintends the building of them ?"

"Yes ; he will soon."

"And he surveys land ?"

"O yes."

"And he knows about hedges and ditches—how wide they ought to be, boundaries, levelling, planting trees to keep away the winds, measuring timber, houses for ninety-nine years, and such things ?"

"I have never heard him say that ; but I

think Mr. Gradfield does those things. Owen, I am afraid, is inexperienced as yet."

"Yes; your brother is not old enough for such a post yet, of course. And then there are rent days, the audit and winding-up of tradesmen's accounts. I am afraid, Cytherea, you don't know much more about the matter than I do myself. . . . I am going out just now," she continued. "I shall not want you to walk with me to-day. Run away till dinner-time."

Miss Aldclyffe went out of doors, and down the steps to the lawn; then turning to the right, through a shrubbery, she opened a wicket and passed into a neglected and leafy carriage-drive, leading down the hill. This she followed till she reached the point of its greatest depression, which was also the lowest ground in the whole grove.

The trees here were so interlaced, and hung their branches so near the ground, that a whole summer's day was scarcely long enough to change the air pervading the spot from its normal state

of coolness to even a temporary warmth. The unvarying freshness was helped by the nearness of the ground to the level of the springs, and by the presence of a deep, sluggish stream close by, equally well shaded by bushes and a high wall. Following the road, which now ran along at the margin of the stream, she came to an opening in the wall, on the other side of the water, revealing a large rectangular nook from which the stream proceeded, covered with froth, and accompanied by a dull roar. Two more steps, and she was opposite the nook, in full view of the cascade forming its further boundary. Over the top could be seen the bright outer sky in the form of a crescent, caused by the curve of a bridge across the rapids, and the trees above.

Beautiful as was the scene she did not look in that direction. The same standing ground afforded another prospect, straight in the front, less sombre than the water on the right or the trees on the left. The avenue and grove which flanked it abruptly terminated a few yards ahead, where the ground began to rise, and on

the remote edge of the greensward thus laid open, stood all that remained of the original manor-house, to which the dark marginal line of the trees in the avenue formed an adequate and well-fitting frame. It was the picture thus presented that was now interesting Miss Aldclyffe—not artistically or historically, but practically—as regarded its fitness for adaptation to modern requirements.

In front, detached from everything else, rose the most ancient portion of the structure—an old arched gateway, flanked by the bases of two small towers, and nearly covered with creepers, which had clambered over the eaves of the sinking roof, and up the gable to the crest of the Aldclyffe family perched on the apex. Behind this, at a distance of ten or twenty yards, came the only portion of the main building that still existed—an Elizabethan fragment, consisting of as much as could be contained under three gables and a cross roof behind. Against the wall could be seen ragged lines indicating the form of other destroyed gables which had once

joined it there. The mullioned and transomed windows, containing five or six lights, were mostly bricked up to the extent of two or three, and the remaining portion fitted with cottage window frames carelessly inserted, to suit the purpose to which the old place was now applied, it being partitioned out into small rooms downstairs to form cottages for two labourers and their families; the upper portion was arranged as a storehouse for divers kinds of roots and fruit.

The owner of the picturesque spot, after her survey from this point, went up to the walls and walked into the old court, where the paving stones were pushed sideways and upwards by the thrust of the grasses between them. Two or three little children, with their fingers in their mouths, came out to look at her, and then ran in to tell their mothers in loud tones of secrecy that Miss Aldclyffe was coming. Miss Aldclyffe, however, did not come in. She concluded her survey of the exterior by making a complete circuit of the building; then turned

into a nook a short distance off, where round and square timber, a saw-pit, planks, grindstones, heaps of building stone and brick, explained that this spot was the centre of operations for the building work done on the estate.

She paused, and looked around. A man who had seen her from the window of the workshops behind, came out and respectfully lifted his hat to her. It was the first time she had been seen walking outside the house since her father's death.

“Burden, could the Old House be made a decent residence of, without much trouble?” she inquired.

The tradesman considered, and spoke as each consideration completed itself.

“You don't forget, madam, that two-thirds of the place is already pulled down, or gone to ruin?”

“Yes; I know.”

“And that what's left may almost as well be, madam.”

“Why may it?”

“ ’Twas so cut up inside when they made it into cottages, that the whole carcase is full of cracks.”

“ Still by pulling down the inserted partitions, and adding a little outside, it could be made to answer the purpose of an ordinary six or eight-roomed house ? ”

“ Yes, madam.”

“ About what would it cost ? ” was the question which had invariably come next in every communication of this kind, to which the clerk of works had been a party during his whole experience. To his surprise, Miss Aldclyffe did not put it. The man thought her object in altering an old house must have been an unusually absorbing one not to prompt what was so instinctive in owners as hardly to require any prompting at all.

“ Thank you : that’s sufficient, Burden,” she said. “ You will understand that it is not unlikely some alteration may be made here in a short time, with reference to the management of affairs.”

Burden said "Yes," in a complex voice, and looked uneasy.

"During the life of Captain Aldclyffe, with you as the foreman of works, and he himself as his own steward, everything worked well. But now it may be necessary to have a steward, whose management will encroach further upon things which have hitherto been left in your hands than did your late master's. What I mean is, that he will directly and in detail superintend all."

"Then—I shall not be wanted, madam?" he faltered.

"O yes; if you like to stay on as foreman in the yard and workshops only. I should be sorry to lose you. However, you had better consider. I will send for you in a few days."

Leaving him to suspense, and all the ills that came in its train, distracted application to his duties, and an undefined number of sleepless nights, and untasted dinners, Miss Aldclyffe looked at her watch and returned to the House.

She was about to keep an appointment with her solicitor, Mr. Nyttleton, who had been to Creston, and was coming to Knapwater on his way back to London.

§ 2. *August the twentieth.*

On the Saturday subsequent to Mr. Nyttleton's visit to Knapwater House, the subjoined advertisement appeared in the *Field* and the *Builder* newspapers :—

“LAND STEWARD.

“A gentleman of integrity and professional skill is required immediately for the MANAGEMENT of an ESTATE, containing about 800 acres, upon which agricultural improvements and the erection of buildings are contemplated. He must be a man of superior education, unmarried, and not more than thirty years of age. Considerable preference will be shown for one who possesses an artistic as well as a practical knowledge of planning and laying out. The

remuneration will consist of a salary of £220, with the old manor-house as a residence. Address Messrs. Nyttleton and Tayling, solicitors, Lincoln's-Inn-Fields."

A copy of each paper was sent to Miss Aldclyffe on the day of publication. The same evening she told Cytherea that she was advertising for a steward, who would live at the old manor-house, showing her the papers containing the announcement.

What was the drift of that remark ? thought the maiden ; or was it merely made to her in confidential intercourse, as other arrangements were told her daily. Yet it seemed to have more meaning than common. She remembered the conversation about architects and surveyors, and her brother Owen. Miss Aldclyffe knew that his situation was precarious, that he was well educated and practical, and was applying himself heart and soul to the details of the profession and all connected with it. Miss Aldclyffe might be ready to take him if he could

compete successfully with others who would reply. She hazarded a question :—

“Would it be desirable for Owen to answer it?”

“Not at all,” said Miss Aldclyffe, peremptorily.

A flat answer of this kind had ceased to alarm Cytherea. Miss Aldclyffe’s blunt mood was not her worst. Cytherea thought of another man, whose name, in spite of resolves, tears, renunciations and injured pride, lingered in her ears like an old familiar strain. That man was qualified for a stewardship under a king.

“Would it be of any use if Edward Springrove were to answer it?” she said, resolutely enunciating the name.

“None whatever,” replied Miss Aldclyffe, again in the same decided tone.

“You are very unkind to speak in that way.”

“Now don’t pout like a goosie, as you are. I don’t want men like either of them, for, of course, I must look to the good of the estate rather than to that of any individual. The man

I want must have been more specially educated. I have told you that we are going to London next week ; it is mostly on this account.”

Cytherea thus found that she had mistaken the drift of Miss Aldclyffe's peculiar explicitness on the subject of advertising, and wrote to tell her brother that if he saw the notice it would be useless to reply.

§ 3. *August the twenty-fifth.*

Five days after the above-mentioned dialogue took place they went to London, and, with scarcely a minute's pause, to the solicitor's offices in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields.

They alighted opposite one of the characteristic entrances about the place—a gate which was never, and could never be, closed, flanked by lamp-standards carrying no lamp. Rust was the only active agent to be seen there at this time of the day and year. The palings along the front were rusted away at their base to the thinness of wires, and the successive coats of

paint, with which they were overlaid in bygone days, had been completely undermined by the same insidious canker, which lifted off the paint in flakes, leaving the raw surface of the iron on palings, standards, and gate hinges, of a staring blood red.

But once inside the railings the picture changed. The court and offices were a complete contrast to the grand ruin of the outwork which enclosed them. Well-painted respectability extended over, within, and around the doorstep; and in the carefully swept yard not a particle of dust was visible.

Mr. Nyttleton, who had just come up from Margate, where he was staying with his family, was standing at the top of his own staircase as the pair ascended. He politely took them inside.

“Is there a comfortable room in which this young lady can sit during our interview?” said Miss Aldclyffe.

It was rather a favourite habit of hers to make much of Cytherea when they were out,

and snub her for it afterwards when they got home.

“Certainly—Mr. Tayling’s.” Cytherea was shown into an inner room.

Social definitions are all made relatively : an absolute datum is only imagined. The small gentry about Knapwater seemed unpractised to Miss Aldclyffe, Miss Aldclyffe herself seemed unpractised to Mr. Nyttleton’s experienced old eyes.

“Now then,” the lady said, when she was alone with the lawyer ; “what is the result of our advertisement ?”

It was late summer : the estate-agency, building, engineering, and surveying worlds were dull. There were forty-five replies to the advertisement.

Mr. Nyttleton spread them one by one before Miss Aldclyffe. “You will probably like to read some of them yourself, madam ?” he said.

“Yes, certainly,” said she.

“I will not trouble you with those which are from persons manifestly unfit at first sight,” he

continued ; and began selecting from the heap twos and threes which he had marked, collecting others into his hand. "The man we want lies among these, if my judgment doesn't deceive me, and from them it would be advisable to select a certain number to be communicated with."

"I should like to see every one—only just to glance them over—exactly as they came," she said, suavely.

He looked as if he thought this a waste of his time, but dismissing his sentiment unfolded each singly and laid it before her. As he laid them out, it struck him that she studied them quite as rapidly as he could spread them. He slyly glanced up from the outer corner of his eye to hers, and noticed that all she did was look at the name at the bottom of the letter, and then put the enclosure aside without further ceremony. He thought this an odd way of enquiring into the merits of forty-five men who at considerable trouble gave in detail reasons why they believed themselves well qualified for a

certain post. She came to the final one, and put it down with the rest.

Then the lady said that in her opinion it would be best to get as many replies as they possibly could before selecting—"to give us a wider choice. What do you think, Mr. Nyttleton?"

It seemed to him, he said, that a greater number than those they already had would scarcely be necessary, and if they waited for more, there would be this disadvantage attending it, that some of those they now could command would possibly not be available.

"Never mind, we will run that risk," said Miss Aldclyffe. "Let the advertisement be inserted once more, and then we will certainly settle the matter."

Mr. Nyttleton bowed, and seemed to think Miss Aldclyffe, for a single woman, and one who till so very recently had never concerned herself with business of any kind, a very meddling client. But she was rich, and handsome still. "She's a new broom in estate-management as

yet," he thought. "She will soon get tired of this," and he parted from her without a sentiment which could mar his habitual blandness.

The two ladies then proceeded westward. Dismissing the cab in Waterloo Place, they went along Pall Mall on foot, where in place of the usual well-dressed clubbists—rubicund with alcohol—were to be seen in linen pinafores, flocks of house-painters pallid from white lead. When they had reached the Green Park, Cytherea proposed that they should sit down awhile under the young elms at the brow of the hill. This they did—the growl of Piccadilly on their left hand—the monastic seclusion of the Palace on their right: before them, the clock tower of the Houses of Parliament, standing forth with a metallic lustre against a livid Lambeth sky.

Miss Aldclyffe still carried in her hand a copy of the newspaper, and while Cytherea had been interesting herself in the picture around, glanced again at the advertisement.

She heaved a slight sigh, and began to fold it

up again. In the action her eye caught sight of two consecutive advertisements on the cover, one relating to some lecture on Art, and addressed to members of the Society of Architects. The other emanated from the same source, but was addressed to the public, and stated that the exhibition of drawings at the Society's rooms would close at the end of that week.

Her eye lighted up. She sent Cytherea back to the hotel in a cab, then turned round by Piccadilly into Bond Street, and proceeded to the rooms of the Society. The secretary was sitting in the lobby. After making her payment, and looking at a few of the drawings on the walls, in the company of three gentlemen, the only other visitors to the exhibition, she turned back and asked if she might be allowed to see a list of the members. She was a little connected with the architectural world, she said, with a smile, and was interested in some of the names.

“Here it is, madam,” he replied, politely handing her a pamphlet containing the names.

Miss Aldclyffe turned the leaves till she came to the letter M. The name she hoped to find there was there, with the address appended, as was the case with all the rest.

The address was at some chambers in a street not far from Charing Cross. "Chambers" as a residence, had always been assumed by the lady to imply the condition of a bachelor. She murmured two words, "There still."

Another request had yet to be made, but it was of a more noticeable kind than the first, and might compromise the secrecy with which she wished to act throughout this episode. Her object was to get one of the envelopes lying on the secretary's table, stamped with the die of the Society; and in order to get it she was about to ask if she might write a note.

But the secretary's back chanced to be turned, and he now went towards one of the men at the other end of the room, who had called him to ask some question relating to an etching on the wall. Quick as thought, Miss Aldclyffe stood before the table, slipped her

hand behind her, took one of the envelopes and put it in her pocket.

She sauntered round the rooms for two or three minutes longer, then withdrew and returned to her hotel.

Here she cut the Knapwater advertisement from the paper, put it into the envelope she had stolen, embossed with the society's stamp, and directed it in a round clerkly hand to the address she had seen in the list of members' names submitted to her :—

ÆNEAS MANSTON, Esq.,
WYKEHAM CHAMBERS,
SPRING GARDENS.

This ended her first day's work in London.

§ 4. *From August the twenty-sixth to September the first.*

The two Cythereas continued at the Westminster Hotel, Miss Aldclyffe informing her companion that business would detain them in London

another week. The days passed as slowly and drearily as days can pass in a city at that time of the year, the shuttered windows about the squares and terraces confronting their eyes like the white and sightless orbs of a blind man. On Thursday Mr. Nyttleton called, bringing the whole number of replies to the advertisement. Cytherea was present at the interview, by Miss Aldclyffe's request—either from whim or design.

Ten additional letters were the result of the second week's insertion, making fifty-five in all. Miss Aldclyffe looked them over as before. One was signed—

ÆNEAS MANSTON,

133, DURNGATE STREET,

LIVERPOOL.

“Now then, Mr. Nyttleton, will you make a selection, and I will add one or two,” Miss Aldclyffe said.

Mr. Nyttleton scanned the whole heap of letters, testimonials, and references, sorting

them into two heaps. Manston's missive, after a mere glance, was thrown amongst the summarily rejected ones.

Miss Aldclyffe read, or pretended to read after the lawyer. When he had finished, five lay in the group he had selected. "Would you like to add to the number?" he said, turning to the lady.

"No," she said, carelessly. "Well, two or three additional ones rather took my fancy," she added, searching for some in the larger collection.

She drew out three. One was Manston's.

"These eight, then, shall be communicated with," said the lawyer, taking up the eight letters and placing them by themselves.

They stood up. "If I myself, madam, were only concerned personally," he said, in an off-hand way, and holding up a letter singly; "I should choose this man unhesitatingly. He writes honestly, is not afraid to name what he does not consider himself well acquainted with—a rare thing to find in answers to advertise-

ments ; he is well recommended, and possesses some qualities rarely found in combination. Oddly enough, he is not really a steward. He was bred a farmer, studied building affairs, served on an estate for some time, then went with an architect, and is now well qualified as architect, estate agent, and surveyor. That man is sure to have a fine head for a manor like yours." He tapped the letter as he spoke. " Yes, I should choose him without hesitation—speaking personally."

" And I think," she said, artificially, " I should choose this one as a matter of mere personal whim, which, of course, can't be given way to when practical questions have to be considered."

Cytherea, after looking out of the window, and then at the newspapers, had become interested in the proceedings between the clever Miss Aldclyffe and the keen old lawyer, which reminded her of a game at cards. She looked inquiringly at the two letters—one in Miss Aldclyffe's hand, the other in Mr. Nyttleton's.

“What is the name of your man?” said Miss Aldclyffe.

“His name—” said the lawyer, looking down the page; “What is his name—it is Edward Springrove.”

Miss Aldclyffe glanced towards Cytherea, who was getting red and pale by turns. She looked imploringly at Miss Aldclyffe.

“The name of my man,” said Miss Aldclyffe, looking at her letter in turn; “is, I think—yes—Æneas Manston.”

§ 5. *September the third.*

The next morning but one was appointed for the interviews, which were to be at the lawyer’s offices. Mr. Nyttleton and Mr. Tayling were both in town for the day, and the candidates were admitted one by one into a private room. In the window recess was seated Miss Aldclyffe, wearing her veil down.

The lawyer had, in his letters to the selected number, timed each candidate at an interval of

ten or fifteen minutes from those preceding and following. They were shown in as they arrived, and had short conversations with Mr. Nyttleton—terse, and to the point. Miss Aldclyffe neither moved nor spoke during this proceeding; it might have been supposed that she was quite unmindful of it, had it not been for what was revealed by a keen penetration of the veil covering her countenance—the rays from two bright black eyes, directed towards the lawyer and his interlocutor.

Springrove came fifth; Manston seventh. When the examination of all was ended, and the last man had retired, Nyttleton, again as at the former time, blandly asked his client which of the eight she personally preferred. “I still think the fifth we spoke to, Springrove, the man whose letter I pounced upon at first, to be by far the best qualified, in short, most suitable generally.”

“I am sorry to say that I differ from you; I lean to my first notion still—that Mr.—Mr. Manston is most desirable in tone and bearing,

and even specifically, I think he would suit me best in the long run."

Mr. Nyttleton looked out of the window at the whitened wall of the court.

"Of course, madam, your opinion may be perfectly sound and reliable ; a sort of instinct, I know, often leads ladies by a short cut to conclusions truer than those come to by men after laborious round-about calculations, based on long experience. I must say I shouldn't recommend him."

"Why, pray?"

"Well, let us look first at his letter of answer to the advertisement. He didn't reply till the last insertion ; that's one thing. His letter is bold and frank in tone, so bold and frank that the second thought after reading it is that not honesty, but unscrupulousness of conscience dictated it. It is written in an indifferent mood, as if he felt that he was humbugging us in his statement that he was the right man for such an office, that he tried hard to get it only as a matter of form which required that he

should neglect no opportunity that came in his way.”

“You may be right, Mr. Nyttleton, but I don’t quite see the grounds of your reasoning.”

“He has been, as you perceive, almost entirely used to the office duties of a city architect, the experience we don’t want. You want a man whose acquaintance with rural landed properties is more practical and closer—somebody who, if he has not filled exactly such an office before, has lived a country life, knows the ins and outs of country tenancies, building, farming, and so on.”

“He’s by far the most intellectual looking of them all.”

“Yes ; he may be—your opinion, madam, is worth more than mine in that matter. And more than you say, he is a man of parts—his brain-power would soon enable him to master details and fit him for the post, I don’t much doubt that. But to speak clearly” (here his words started off at a jog-trot) “I wouldn’t run the risk of placing the management of an

estate of mine in his hands on any account whatever. There, that's flat and plain, madam."

"But, definitely," she said, with a show of impatience; "what is your reason?"

"He is a voluptuary with activity; which is a very bad form of man—as bad as it is rare."

"Oh. Thank you for your explicit statement, Mr. Nyttleton," said Miss Aldclyffe, starting a little and flushing with displeasure.

Mr. Nyttleton nodded slightly, as a sort of neutral motion, simply signifying a receipt of the information, good or bad.

"And I really think it is hardly worth while to trouble you further in this," continued the lady. "He's quite good enough for a little insignificant place like mine at Knapwater; and I know that I could not get on with one of the others for a single month. We'll try him."

"Certainly, madam," said the lawyer. And Mr. Manston was written to, to the effect that he was the successful competitor.

"Did you see how unmistakably her temper was getting the better of her, that minute you

were in the room?" said Nyttleton to Tayling, when their client had left the house. Nyttleton was a man who surveyed everybody's character in a sunless and shadowless northern light. A culpable slyness, which marked him as a boy, had been moulded by Time, the Improver, into honourable circumspection.

We frequently find that the quality which, conjoined with the simplicity of the child, is vice, is virtue when it pervades the knowledge of the man.

"She was as near as damn-it to boiling over when I added up her man," continued Nyttleton. "His handsome face is his qualification in her eyes. They have met before; I saw that."

"He didn't seem conscious of it," said the junior.

"He didn't. That was rather puzzling to me. But still, if ever a woman's face spoke out plainly that she was in love with a man, hers did that she was with him. Poor old maid, she's almost old enough to be his mother. If that Manston's a schemer he'll marry her, as

sure as I am Nyttleton. Let's hope he's honest, however."

"I don't think she's in love with him," said Tayling. He had seen but little of the pair, and yet he could not reconcile what he had noticed in Miss Aldclyffe's behaviour with the idea that it was the bearing of a woman towards her lover.

"Well, your experience of the fiery phenomenon is more recent than mine," rejoined Nyttleton carelessly. "And you may remember the nature of it best."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE EVENTS OF EIGHTEEN DAYS.

§ 1. *From the third to the nineteenth of September.*

MISS ALDCLYFFE'S tenderness towards Cytherea, between the hours of her irascibility, increased till it became no less than doting fondness. Like Nature in the tropics, with her hurricanes and the subsequent luxuriant vegetation effacing their ravages, Miss Aldclyffe compensated for her outbursts by excess of generosity afterwards. She seemed to be completely won out of herself by close contact with a young woman whose modesty was absolutely unimpaired, and whose artlessness was as perfect as was compatible with the complexity necessary to produce the due charm of womanhood. Cytherea, on her part, perceived with honest satisfac-

tion that her influence for good over Miss Aldclyffe was considerable. Ideas and habits peculiar to the younger, which the elder lady had originally imitated in a mere whim, she grew in course of time to take a positive delight in. Among others were evening and morning prayers, dreaming over out-door scenes, learning a verse from some poem whilst dressing.

Yet try to force her sympathies as much as she would, Cytherea could feel no more than thankful for this, even if she always felt as much as that. The mysterious cloud hanging over the past life of her companion, of which the uncertain light already thrown upon it only seemed to render still darker the unpenetrated remainder, nourished in her a feeling which was scarcely too slight to be called dread. She would have infinitely preferred to be treated distantly, as the mere dependent, by such a changeable nature—like a fountain, always herself, yet always another. That a crime of any deep dye had ever been perpetrated or participated in by her namesake, she would not be-

lieve; but the reckless adventuring of the lady's youth seemed connected with deeds of darkness rather than light.

Sometimes Miss Aldclyffe appeared to be on the point of making some absorbing confidence, but reflection invariably restrained her. Cytherea hoped that such a confidence would come with time, and that she might thus be a means of soothing a mind which had obviously known extreme suffering.

But Miss Aldclyffe's reticence concerning her past was not imitated by Cytherea. Though she never disclosed the one fact of her knowledge that the love-suit between Miss Aldclyffe and her father terminated abnormally, the maiden's natural ingenuousness on subjects not set down for special guard had enabled Miss Aldclyffe to worm from her, fragment by fragment, every detail of her father's history. Cytherea saw how deeply Miss Aldclyffe sympathised—and it compensated her, to some extent, for the hasty resentments of other times.

Thus uncertainly she lived on. It was per-

ceived by the servants of the House, that some secret bond of connexion existed between Miss Aldelyffe and her companion. But they were woman and woman, not woman and man, the facts were ethereal and refined, and so they could not be worked up into a taking story. Whether, as critics dispute, a supernatural machinery be necessary to an epic or no, a carnal plot is decidedly necessary to a scandal.

Another letter had come to her from Edward—very short, but full of entreaty, asking why she would not write just one line—just one line of cold friendship at least? She then allowed herself to think, little by little, whether she had not perhaps been too harsh with him; and at last wondered if he were really much to blame for being engaged to another woman. “Ah, Brain, there is one in me stronger than you!” she said. The young maid now continually pulled out his letter, read it and re-read it, almost crying with pity the while, to think what wretched suspense he must be enduring at her silence, till her heart chid her for her cruelty.

She felt that she must send him a line—one little line—just a wee line to keep him alive, poor thing; sighing like Donna Clara:—

“Ah, were he now before me,
In spite of injured pride,
I fear my eyes would pardon
Before my tongue could chide.”

§ 2. *September the twentieth. Three to four, p.m.*

It was the third week in September, about five weeks after Cytherea's arrival, when Miss Aldclyffe requested her one day to go through the village of Carriford and assist herself in collecting the subscriptions made by some of the inhabitants of the parish to a religious society she patronised. Miss Aldclyffe formed one of what was called a Ladies' Association, each member of which collected tributary streams of shillings from her inferiors, to add to her own pound at the end.

Miss Aldclyffe took particular interest in Cytherea's appearance that afternoon, and the object of her attention was, indeed, gratifying to

look at. The sight of the lithe girl, set off by an airy dress, coquettish jacket, flexible hat, a ray of starlight in each eye and a war of lilies and roses in each cheek, was a palpable pleasure to the mistress of the mansion, yet a pleasure which appeared to partake less of the nature of affectionate satisfaction than of mental gratification.

Eight names were printed in the report as belonging to Miss Aldclyffe's list, with the amount of subscription-money attached to each.

"I will collect the first four, whilst you do the same with the last four," said Miss Aldclyffe.

The names of two tradespeople stood first in Cytherea's share : then came a Miss Hinton : last of all in the printed list was Mr. Springrove the elder. Underneath his name was pencilled, in Miss Aldclyffe's handwriting, "Mr. Manston."

Manston had arrived on the estate, in the capacity of steward, three or four days previously, and occupied the old manor-house, which had been altered and repaired for his reception.

“Call on Mr. Manston,” said the lady, impressively, looking at the name written under Cytherea’s portion of the list.

“But he does not subscribe yet?”

“I know it; but call and leave him a report. Don’t forget it.”

“Say you would be pleased if he would subscribe?”

“Yes—say I should be pleased if he would,” repeated Miss Aldclyffe, smiling. “Good-bye. Don’t hurry in your walk. If you can’t get easily through your task to-day put off some of it till to-morrow.”

Each then started on her rounds: Cytherea going in the first place to the old manor-house. Mr. Manston was not indoors, which was a relief to her. She called then on the two gentleman-farmers’ wives, who soon transacted their business with her, frigidly indifferent to her personality. A person who socially is nothing is thought less of by people who are not much than by those who are a great deal.

She then turned towards Peakhill Cottage,

the residence of Miss Hinton, who lived there happily enough, with an elderly servant and a house-dog as companions. Her father, and last remaining parent, had retired thither four years before this time, after having filled the post of editor to the *Froominster Chronicle* for eighteen or twenty years. There he died soon after, and though comparatively a poor man, he left his daughter sufficiently well provided for as a modest fundholder and claimant of sundry small sums in dividends to maintain herself as mistress at Peakhill.

At Cytherea's knock an inner door was heard to open and close, and footsteps crossed the passage hesitatingly. The next minute Cytherea stood face to face with the lady herself.

Adelaide Hinton was about nine-and-twenty years of age. Her hair was plentiful, like Cytherea's own; her teeth equalled Cytherea's in regularity and whiteness. But she was much paler, and had features too transparent to be in place among household surroundings. Her mouth expressed love less forcibly than Cythe-

rea's, and, as a natural result of her greater maturity, her tread was less elastic, and she was more self-possessed.

She had been a girl of that kind which mothers praise as not forward, by way of contrast, when disparaging those nobler ones with whom loving is an end and not a means. Men of forty, too, said of her, "a good sensible wife for any man, if she cares to marry," the caring to marry being thrown in as the vaguest hypothesis, because she was so practical. Yet it would be singular if, in such cases, the important subject of marriage should be excluded from manipulation by hands that are ready for practical performance in every domestic concern besides.

Cytherea was an acquisition, and the greeting was hearty.

"Good afternoon! O yes—Miss Graye, from Miss Aldclyffe's. I have seen you at church, and I am so glad you have called! Come in. I wonder if I have change enough to pay my subscription." She spoke girlishly.

Adelaide, when in the company of a younger woman, always levelled herself down to that younger woman's age from a sense of justice to herself—as if, though not her own age at common law, it was in equity.

“It doesn't matter. I'll come again.”

“Yes, do at any time; not only on this errand. But you must step in for a minute. Do.”

“I have been wanting to, for several weeks.”

“That's right. Now you must see my house—lonely, isn't it, for a single lady? People said it was odd for a young woman like me to keep on a house; but what did I care? If you knew the pleasure of locking up your own door, with the sensation that you reigned supreme inside it, you would say it was worth the risk of being called odd. Mr. Springrove attends to my gardening, the dog attends to robbers, and whenever there is a snake or toad to kill, Jane does it.”

“How nice. It is better than living in a town.”

“Far better. A town makes a cynic of me.”

The remark recalled, somewhat startlingly, to Cytherea's mind, that Edward had used those very words to herself one evening at Creston.

Miss Hinton opened an interior door and led her visitor into a small drawing-room commanding a view of the country for miles.

The missionary business was soon settled; but the chat continued.

“How lonely it must be here at night,” said Cytherea. “Aren't you afraid?”

“At first, I was slightly. But I got used to the solitude. And you know a sort of common-sense will creep even into timidity. I say to myself sometimes at night, ‘If I were anybody but a harmless woman, not worth the trouble of a worm's ghost to appear to me, I should think that every sound I hear was a spirit.’ But you must see all over my house.”

Cytherea was very interested in seeing.

“I say you *must* do this, and you *must* do

that, as if you were a child," remarked Adelaide. "A privileged friend of mine tells me this use of the imperative comes of being so constantly in nobody's society but my own."

"Ah, yes. I suppose she is right."

Cytherea called the friend "she" by a rule of lady-like practice; for a woman's "friend" is delicately assumed by another friend to be of their own sex in the absence of knowledge to the contrary; just as cats are called shes until they prove themselves hes.

Miss Hinton laughed mysteriously.

"I get a humorous reproof for it now and then, I assure you," she continued.

"'Humorous reproof:' that's not from a woman: who can reprove humorously but a man?" was the groove of Cytherea's thought at the remark. "Your brother reproves you, I expect," said that innocent young lady.

"No," said Miss Hinton, with a candid air. "'Tis only a gentleman I am acquainted with." She looked out of the window.

Women are persistently imitative. No sooner

did a thought flash through Cytherea's mind that the gentleman was a lover than she became a Miss Aldclyffe in a mild form.

"I imagine he's a sweetheart," she said.

Miss Hinton smiled a smile of experience in that line.

Few women, if taxed with having an admirer, are so free from vanity as to deny the impeachment, even if it is utterly untrue. When it does happen to be true, they look pityingly away from the person who is so benighted as to have got no farther than suspecting it.

"There now—Miss Hinton; you are engaged to be married!" said Cytherea, accusingly.

Adelaide nodded her head practically. "Well yes, I am," she said.

The word "engaged" had no sooner passed Cytherea's lips than the sound of it—the mere sound by her own lips—carried her mind to the time and circumstances under which Miss Aldclyffe had used it towards herself. A sickening thought followed—based but on a mere surmise; yet its presence took every

other idea away from Cytherea's mind. Miss Hinton had used Edward's words about towns ; she mentioned Mr. Springrove as attending to her garden. It could not be that Edward was the man ! that Miss Aldclyffe had planned to reveal her rival thus !

“ Are you going to be married soon ? ” she inquired, with a steadiness the result of a sort of fascination, but apparently of indifference.

“ Not very soon—still, soon.”

“ Ah—ha. In less than three months ? ” said Cytherea.

“ Two.”

Now that the subject was well in hand, Adelaide wanted no more prompting. “ You won't tell anybody if I show you something ? ” she said with eager mystery.

“ O no, nobody. But does he live in this parish ? ”

“ No.”

Nothing proved yet.

“ What's his name ? ” said Cytherea, flatly. Her breath and heart had begun their old

tricks, and came and went hotly. Miss Hinton could not see her face.

“What do you think?” said Miss Hinton.

“George?” said Cytherea, with deceitful agony.

“No,” said Adelaide. “But now, you shall see him first; come here;” and she led the way upstairs into her bed-room. There, standing on the dressing-table in a little frame, was the unconscious portrait of Edward Springrove.

“There he is,” Miss Hinton said, and a silence ensued.

“Are you very fond of him?” continued the miserable Cytherea at length.

“Yes, of course I am,” her companion replied, but in the tone of one who lived in Abraham’s bosom all the year, and was therefore untouched by solemn thought at the fact. “He’s my cousin—a native of this village. We were engaged before my father’s death left me so lonely. I was only twenty, and a much greater belle than I am now. We know each

other thoroughly as you may imagine. I give him a little sermonising now and then.

“Why?”

“O it’s only in fun. He’s very naughty sometimes—not really you know—but he will look at any pretty face when he sees it.”

Storing up this statement of his susceptibility as another item to be miserable upon when she had time, “How do you know that?” Cytherea asked, with a swelling heart.

“Well, you know how things do come to women’s ears. He used to live at Creston as an assistant-architect, and I found out that a young giddy thing of a girl, who lives there somewhere, took his fancy for a day or two. But I don’t feel jealous at all—our engagement is so matter-of-fact that neither of us can be jealous. And it was a mere flirtation—she was too silly for him. He’s fond of rowing, and kindly gave her an airing for an evening or two. I’ll warrant they talked the most unmitigated rubbish under the sun—all shallowness and pastime, just as everything is at

watering-places—neither of them caring a bit for the other—she giggling like a goose all the time——”

Concentrated essence of woman pervaded the room rather than air. “She didn’t! and ’twasn’t shallowness!” Cytherea burst out with brimming eyes. “’Twas deep deceit on one side, and entire confidence on the other—yes, it was!” The pent-up emotion had swollen and swollen inside the young thing till the dam could no longer embay it. The instant the words were out she would have given worlds to have been able to recall them.

“Do you know her—or him?” said Miss Hinton, starting with suspicion at the warmth shown.

The two women had now lost their personality quite. There was the same keen brightness of eye, the same movement of the mouth, the same mind in both, as they looked doubtfully and excitedly at each other. As is invariably the case with women where a man they care for is the subject of an excitement

among them, the situation abstracted the differences which distinguished them as individuals, and left only the properties common to them as atoms of a sex.

Cytherea caught at the chance afforded her of not betraying herself. "Yes, I know her," she said.

"Well," said Miss Hinton, "I am really vexed if my speaking so lightly of any friend of yours has hurt your feelings, but——"

"O never mind," Cytherea returned; "It doesn't matter, Miss Hinton. I think I must leave you now. I have to call at other places. Yes—I must go."

Miss Hinton, in a perplexed state of mind, showed her visitor politely down stairs to the door. Here Cytherea bade her a hurried adieu, and flitted down the garden into the lane.

She persevered in her duties with a wayward pleasure in giving herself misery, as was her wont. Mr. Springrove's name was next on the list, and she turned towards his dwelling, the Three Tranters Inn.

§ 3. *Four to five, p.m.*

The cottages along Carriford village street were not so close but that on one side or other of the road was always a hedge of hawthorn or privet, over or through which could be seen gardens or orchards rich with produce. It was about the middle of the early apple-harvest, and the laden trees were shaken at intervals by the gatherers; the soft pattering of the falling crop upon the grassy ground being diversified by the loud rattle of vagrant ones upon a rail, hencoop, basket, or lean-to roof, or upon the rounded and stooping backs of the collectors—mostly children, who would have cried bitterly at receiving such a smart blow from any other quarter, but smilingly assumed it to be but fun in apples.

The Three Tranters Inn, a many-gabled, mediæval building, constructed almost entirely of timber, plaster, and thatch, stood close to the line of the roadside, almost opposite the churchyard, and was connected with a row of cottages

on the left by thatched outbuildings. It was an uncommonly characteristic and handsome specimen of the genuine roadside inn of bygone times; and standing on the great highway to the Southwest of England, (which ran through Carriford,) had in its time been the scene of as much of what is now looked upon as the romantic and genial experience of stage-coach travelling as any halting-place in the country. The railway had absorbed the whole stream of traffic which formerly flowed through the village and along by the ancient door of the inn, reducing the empty-handed landlord, who used only to farm a few fields at the back of the house, to the necessity of eking out his attenuated income by increasing the extent of his agricultural business if he would still maintain his social standing. Next to the general stillness pervading the spot, the long line of outbuildings adjoining the house was the most striking and saddening witness to the passed-away fortunes of the Three Tranters Inn. It was the bulk of the original stabling, and where once the hoofs of

two-score horses had daily rattled over the stony yard, to and from the stalls within, thick grass now grew, whilst the line of roofs—once so straight—over the decayed stalls, had sunk into vast hollows till they seemed like the cheeks of toothless age.

On a green plot at the other end of the building grew two or three large, wide spreading elm trees, from which the sign was suspended—representing the three men called transters (irregular carriers), standing side by side, and exactly alike to a hair's breadth, the grain of the wood and joints of the boards being visible through the thin paint depicting their forms, which were still further disfigured by red stains running downwards from the rusty nails above.

Under the trees now stood a cider-mill and press, and upon the spot sheltered by the boughs were gathered Mr. Springrove himself, his men, the parish clerk, two or three other men, grinders and supernumeraries, a woman with an infant in her arms, a flock of pigeons, and some little boys with straws in their mouths,

endeavouring, whenever the men's backs were turned, to get a sip of the sweet juice issuing from the vat.

Edward Springrove the elder, the landlord, now more particularly a farmer, and for two months in the year a cider-maker, was an employer of labour of the old school, who worked himself among his men. He was now engaged in packing the pomace into horsehair bags with a rammer, and Gad Weedy, his man, was occupied in shovelling up more from a tub at his side. The shovel shone like silver from the action of the juice, and ever and anon, in its motion to and fro, caught the rays of the declining sun and reflected them in bristling stars of light.

Mr. Springrove had been too young a man when the pristine days of the Three Tranters had departed for ever to have much of the host left in him now. He was a poet with a rough skin: one whose sturdiness was more the result of external circumstances than of intrinsic nature. Too kindly constitutioned to be very

provident, he was yet not imprudent. He had a quiet humorousness of disposition, not out of keeping with a frequent melancholy, the general expression of his countenance being one of abstraction. Like Walt Whitman he felt as his years increased,

“ I foresee too much ; it means more than I thought.”

On the present occasion he wore gaiters and a leathern apron, and worked with his shirt sleeves rolled up beyond his elbows, disclosing solid and fleshy rather than muscular arms. They were stained by the cider, and two or three brown apple-pips from the pomace he was handling were to be seen sticking on them here and there among the hairs.

The other prominent figure was that of Richard Crickett, the parish clerk, a kind of Bowdlerized rake, who ate only the quantity of a woman, and had the rheumatism in his left hand. The remainder of the group, brown-faced peasants, wore smock-frocks embroidered on the shoulders with hearts and diamonds, and

were girt round their middle with a strap, another being worn round the right wrist.

“And have you seen the steward, Mr. Springrove?” said the clerk.

“Just a glimpse of him; but ’twas just enough to show me that he’s not here for long.”

“Why m’t that be?”

“He’ll never stand the vagaries of the female figure holden the reins—not he.”

“She d’ pay en well,” said a grinder; “and money ’s money.”

“Ah—’tis : very much so,” the clerk replied.

“Yes, yes, naibour Crickett,” said Springrove, “but she’ll flee in a passion—all the fat will be in the fire—and there’s an end. . . . Yes, she is a one,” continued the farmer, resting, raising his eyes, and reading the features of a distant apple.

“She is,” said Gad, resting too (it is wonderful how prompt a journeyman is in following his master’s initiative to rest) and reflectively regarding the ground in front of him.

“ True : a one is she,” the clerk chimed in, shaking his head ominously.

“ She has such a temper,” said the farmer, “ and is so wilful too. You may as well try to stop a footpath as stop her when she has taken anything into her head. I’d as soon grind little green crabs all day as live wi’ her.”

“ ’Tis a temper she hev, ’tis,” the clerk replied, “ though I be a servant of the church that say it. But she isn’t goen to flee in a passion this time.”

The company waited for the continuation of the speech, as if they knew from experience the exact distance off it lay in the future.

The clerk swallowed nothing as if it were a great deal, and then went on, “ There’s some’at between them : mark my words, naibours—there’s some’at between ’em.”

“ D’ye mean it ? ”

“ I d’ know it. He came last Saturday, didn’t he.”

“ ’A did, truly,” said Gad Weedy, at the same time taking an apple from the hopper of the

mill, eating a piece, and flinging back the remainder to be ground up for cider.

“He went to church a-Sunday,” said the clerk again.

“’A did.”

“And she kept her eye upon en all the service, her face flickeren between red and white, but never stoppen at either.”

Mr. Springrove nodded, and went to the press.

“Well,” said the clerk, you don’t call her the kind o’ woman to make mistakes in just trodden through the weekly service o’ God? Why, as a rule she’s as right as I be myself.”

Mr. Springrove nodded again, and gave a twist to the screw of the press, followed in the movement by Gad at the other side; the two grinders expressing by looks of the greatest concern that, if Miss Aldclyffe were as right at church as the clerk, she must be right indeed.

“Yes, as right in the service o’ God as I be myself,” repeated the clerk, adding length to such a solemn sound, like St. Cecilia. “But last

Sunday, when we were in the tenth commandment, says she, 'Incline our hearts to keep this law,' says she, when twas 'Laws in our hearts we beseech thee,' all the church through. Her eye was upon *him*—she was quite lost—'Hearts to keep this law,' says she; she was no more than a mere shadder at that tenth time—a mere shadder. You mi't ha' mouthed across to her 'Laws in our hearts we beseech thee,' fifty times over—she'd never ha' noticed ye. She's in love wi' the man, that's what she is."

"Then she's a bigger stunpoll than I took her for," said Mr. Springrove. "Why she's old enough to be his mother."

"The row 'ill be between her and that young Curly-wig, you'll see. She won't run the risk of that pretty face beën near."

"Clerk Crickett, I d' fancy you d' know everything about everybody," said Gad.

"Well so's," said the clerk modestly. "I do know a little. It comes to me."

"And I d' know where from."

"Ah."

“That wife o’ thine. She’s an entertainen woman, not to speak disrespectfully.”

“She is : and a winnen one. Look at the husbands she’ve had—God bless her !”

“I wonder you could stand third in that list, Clerk Crickett,” said Mr. Springrove.

“Well, ’t has been a power o’ marvel to myself oftentimes. Yes, matrimony d’ begin ‘Dearly beloved,’ and ends wi’ ‘Amazement,’ as the prayer book says. But what could I do, naighbour Springrove ? ’Twas ordained to be. Well do I remember what your poor lady said to me when I had just married. ‘Ah, Mr. Crickett,’ says she, ‘your wife will soon settle you as she did her other two : here’s a glass o’ rum, for I shan’t see your poor face this time next year.’ I swallowed the rum, called again next year, and said, ‘Mrs. Springrove, you gave me a glass o’ rum last year because I was going to die—here I be alive still, you see.’ ‘Well said, Clerk ! Here’s two glasses for you now then,’ says she. ‘Thank you mem,’ I said, and swallowed the rum. Well, dang my old sides,

next year I thought I'd call again and get three. And call I did. But she wouldn't give me a drop o' the commonest. 'No, clerk,' says she, 'you are too tough for a woman's pity.' . . . Ah, poor soul, 'twas true enough. Here be I that was expected to die alive and hard as a nail, you see, and there's she moulderen in her grave."

"I used to think 'twas your wife's fate not to have a liven husband when I sid 'em die off so," said Gad.

"Fate? Bless thy simplicity, so 'twas her fate; but she struggled to have one, and would, and did. Fate's nothen beside a woman's schemen!"

"I suppose, then, that Fate is a He, like us, and the Lord, and the rest o' em up above there," said Gad, lifting his eyes to the sky.

"Hullo! Here's the young woman comen that we were a-talken about by-now," said a grinder, suddenly interrupting. "She's comen up here, as I be alive!"

The two grinders stood and regarded Cytherea as if she had been a ship tacking into

a harbour, nearly stopping the mill in their new interest.

“Stylish accoutrements about the head and shoulders, to my thinken,” said the clerk. “Sheenen curls, and plenty o’ em.”

“If there’s one kind of pride more excusable than another in a young woman, ’tis beën proud of her hair,” said Mr. Springrove.

“Dear man!—the pride there is only a small piece o’ the whole. I warrant now, though she can show such a figure, she ha’n’t a stick o’ furniture to call her own.”

“Come, clerk Crickett, let the maid be a maid while she is a maid,” said Farmer Springrove, chivalrously.

“O,” replied the servant of the church; “I’ve nothen to say against it—O, no:—

“The chimney-sweeper’s daughter Sue,
As I have heard declare, O,
Although she’s neither sock nor shoe
Will curl and deck her hair, O.’”

Cytherea was rather disconcerted at finding that the gradual cessation of the chopping of the

mill was on her account, and still more when she saw all the cidermakers' eyes fixed upon her except Mr. Springrove's, whose natural delicacy restrained him. She neared the plot of grass, but instead of advancing farther, hesitated on its border.

Mr. Springrove perceived her embarrassment, which was relieved when she saw his old-established figure coming across to her, wiping his hands in his apron.

"I know your errand, Missie," he said, "and am glad to see you and attend to it. I'll step indoors."

"If you are busy I am in no hurry for a minute or two," said Cytherea.

"Then if so be you really wouldn't mind, we'll wring down this last filling to let it drain all night?"

"Not at all. I like to see you."

"We are only just grinden down the early pickthongs and griffins," continued the farmer, in a half-apologetic tone for being caught cider-making by any well-dressed lady. "They rot

as black as a chimney-crook if we keep 'em till the regulars turn in." As he spoke he went back to the press, Cytherea keeping at his elbow. "I'm later than I should have been by rights," he continued, taking up a lever for propelling the screw, and beckoning to the men to come forward. "The truth is, my son Edward had promised to come to-day, and I made preparations ; but instead of him comes a letter : 'London, September the eighteenth, Dear Father,' says he, and went on to tell me he couldn't. It threw me out a bit."

"Of course," said Cytherea.

"He's got a place a b'lieve ?" said the clerk, drawing near.

"No, poor mortal fellow, no. He tried for this one here, you know, but couldn't manage to get it. I don't know the rights o' the matter, but willy-nilly they wouldn't have him for steward. Now mates, form in line."

Springrove, the clerk, the grinders, and Gad, all ranged themselves behind the lever of the screw, and walked round like soldiers wheeling.

“The man that the old quean hev got is a man you can hardly get upon your tongue to gainsay, by the look o’ en,” rejoined Clerk Crickett.

“One o’ them people that can continue to be thought no worse o’ for stealen a horse than another man for looken over hedge at en,” said a grinder.

“Well, he’s all there as steward, and is quite the gentleman—no doubt about that.”

“So would my Ted ha’ been, for the matter o’ that,” the farmer said.

“That’s true : ’a would, sir.”

“I said, I’ll give Ted a good education if it do cost me my eyes, and I would have.”

“Ay, that you would so,” said the chorus of assistants, solemnly.

“But he took to books naturally, and cost very little ; and as a wind-up the women-folk hatched up a match between en and his cousin.”

“When’s the wedden to be, Mr. Springrove?”

“Uncertain—but soon I suppose. Edward, you see, can do anything pretty nearly, and yet

can't get a straightforward liven. I wish sometimes I had kept en here, and let professions go. But he wás such a one for the prent."

He dropped the lever in the hedge, and turned to his visitor.

"Now then, Missie, if you'll come indoors, please."

Gad Weedy looked with a placid criticism at Cytherea as she withdrew with the farmer.

"I could tell by the tongue o' her that she didn't take her degrees in our country," he said, in an undertone.

"The railways have left you lonely here," she observed, when they were indoors.

Save the withered old flies, which were quite tame from the solitude, not a being was in the house. Nobody seemed to have entered it since the last passenger had been called out to mount the last stage coach that had run by.

"Yes, the Inn and I seem almost a pair of fossils," the farmer replied, looking at the room and then at himself.

“O Mr. Springrove,” said Cytherea, suddenly recollecting herself; “I am much obliged to you for recommending me to Miss Aldclyffe.” She began to warm towards the old man; there was in him a gentleness of disposition which reminded her of her own father.

“Recommending? Not at all, Miss. Ted—that’s my son,—Ted said a fellow clerk of his had a sister who wanted to be doing something in the world, and I mentioned it to the house-keeper, that’s all. Ay, I miss my son very much.”

She kept her back to the window that he might not see her rising colour.

“Yes,” he continued, “sometimes I can’t help feelen uneasy about en. You know, he seems not made for a town life exactly: he gets very queer over it sometimes, I think. Perhaps he’ll be better when he’s married to Adelaide.”

A half-impatience feeling arose in her, like that which possesses a sick person when he hears a recently-struck hour struck again by a slow clock. She had lived further on.

“Everything depends upon whether he loves her,” she said, tremulously.

“He used to—he doesn’t show it so much now : but that’s because he’s older. You see, it was several years ago they first walked together as young man and young woman. She’s altered too from what she was when he first courted her.”

“How, sir ?”

“O, she’s more sensible by half. When he used to write to her she’d creep up the lane, and look back over her shoulder, and slide out the letter, and kiss it, and look over one shoulder and t’other again, and read a word and stand in thought looken at the hills and seën none. Then the cuckoo would cry—away the letter would slip, and she’d start a span wi’ fright at the mere bird, and have a red skin before the quickest man among you could say, ‘Blood, rush up.’”

He came forward with the money and dropped it into her hand. His thoughts were still with Edward, and he absently took her

little fingers in his as he said, earnestly and ingenuously,—

“’Tis so seldom I get a gentlewoman to speak to that I can’t help spoken to you, Miss Graye, on my fears for Edward; I sometimes am afraid that he’ll never get on—that he’ll die poor and despised under the worst mental conditions, a keen sense of haven been passed in the race by men whose brains are nothen to his own, all through his seën too far into things—beën discontented with make-shifts—thinken o’ perfection in things, and then sickened that there’s no such thing as perfection. I shan’t be sorry to see him marry, since it may settle him down and do him good . . . Ay, we’ll hope for the best.”

He let go her hand and accompanied her to the door, saying, “If you should care to walk this way and talk to an old man once now and then, it will be a great delight to him, Miss Graye. Good-evenen to ye . . . Ah look! a thunderstorm is brewing—be quick home. Or shall I step up with you?”

“No, thank you, Mr. Springrove. Good evening,” she said in a low voice and hurried away. One thought still possessed her: Edward had trifled with her love.

§ 4. *Five to six, p.m.*

She followed the road into a bower of trees, overhanging it so densely that the pass appeared like a rabbit's burrow, and presently reached a side entrance to the park. The clouds rose more rapidly than the farmer had anticipated: the sheep moved in a trail, and complained incoherently. Livid grey shades, like those of the modern French artists, made a mystery of the remote and dark parts of the vista, and seemed to insist upon a suspension of breath. Before she was half-way across the park the thunder rumbled distinctly.

The direction in which she had to go would take her close by the old manor-house. The air was perfectly still, and between each low rumble of the thunder behind she could hear

the roar of the waterfall before her, and the creak of the engine among the bushes hard by it. Hurrying on, with a growing dread of the gloom and of the approaching storm, she drew near the Old House, now rising before her against the dark foliage and sky in tones of strange whiteness.

On the flight of steps, which descended from a terrace in front to the level of the park, stood a man. He appeared, partly from the relief the position gave to his figure, and partly from fact, to be of towering height. He was dark in outline, and was looking at the sky, with his hands behind him.

It was necessary for Cytherea to pass directly across the line of his front. She felt so reluctant to do this, that she was about to turn under the trees out of the path and enter it again at a point beyond the Old House; but he had seen her, and she came on mechanically, unconsciously averting her face a little, and dropping her glance to the ground.

Her eyes unswervingly lingered along the

path until they fell upon another path branching in a right line from the path she was pursuing. It came from the steps of the Old House. "I am exactly opposite him now," she thought, "and his eyes are going through me."

A clear, masculine voice said, at the same instant,

"Are you afraid?"

She, interpreting his question by her feelings at the moment, assumed himself to be the object of fear, if any. "I don't think I am," she stammered.

He seemed to know that she thought in that sense.

"Of the thunder, I mean," he said; "not of myself."

She must turn to him now. "I think it is going to rain," she remarked for the sake of saying something,

He could not conceal his surprise and admiration of her face and bearing. He said courteously. "It may possibly not rain before

you reach the House, if you are going there?"

"Yes I am."

"May I walk up with you? It is lonely under the trees."

"No." Fearing his courtesy arose from a belief that he was addressing a woman of higher station than was hers, she added, "I am Miss Aldclyffe's companion. I don't mind the loneliness."

"Oh, Miss Aldclyffe's companion. Then will you be kind enough to take a subscription to her? She sent to me this afternoon to ask me to become a subscriber to her Society, and I was out. Of course I'll subscribe if she wishes it. I take a great interest in the Society."

"Miss Aldclyffe will be glad to hear that, I know."

"Yes: let me see—what Society did she say it was? I am afraid I haven't enough money in my pocket, and yet it would be a satisfaction to her to have practical proof of my willingness. I'll get it, and be out in one minute."

He entered the house and was at her side again within the time he had named. "This is it," he said pleasantly.

She held up her hand. The soft tips of his fingers brushed the palm of her glove as he placed the money within it. She wondered why his fingers should have touched her.

"I think after all," he continued, "that the rain is upon us, and will drench you before you reach the House. Yes: see there."

He pointed to a round wet spot as large as a nasturtium leaf, which had suddenly appeared upon the white surface of the step.

"You had better come into the porch. It is not nearly night yet. The clouds make it seem later than it really is."

Heavy drops of rain, followed immediately by a forked flash of lightning and sharp rattling thunder, compelled her, willingly or no, to accept his invitation. She ascended the steps, stood beside him just within the porch, and for the first time obtained a series of short views of his person, as they waited there in silence.

He was an extremely handsome man, well-formed, and well-dressed, of an age which seemed to be two or three years less than thirty.

The most striking point in his appearance was the wonderful, almost preternatural, clearness of his complexion. There was not a blemish or speck of any kind to mar the smoothness of its surface or the beauty of its hue. Next, his forehead was square and broad, his brows straight and firm, his eyes penetrating and clear. By collecting the round of expressions they gave forth, a person who theorised on such matters would have imbibed the notion that their owner was of a nature to kick against the pricks ; the last man in the world to put up with a position because it seemed to be his destiny to do so ; one who took upon himself to resist fate with the vindictive determination of a Theomachist. Eyes and forehead both would have expressed keenness of intellect too severely to be pleasing, had their force not been counteracted by the lines and tone of the lips. These were full and luscious to a sur-

prising degree, possessing a woman-like softness of curve, and a ruby redness so intense, as to testify strongly to much susceptibility of heart where feminine beauty was concerned — a susceptibility that might require all the ballast of brain with which he had previously been credited to confine within reasonable channels.

His manner was elegant : his speech well-finished and unconstrained.

The break in their discourse, which had been caused by the peal of thunder, was unbroken by either for a minute, or two, during which the ears of both seemed to be absently following the low roar of the waterfall as it became gradually rivalled by the increasing rush of rain upon the trees and herbage of the grove. After her short looks at him, Cytherea had turned her head towards the avenue for a while, and now, glancing back again for an instant, she discovered that his eyes were engaged in a steady, though delicate, regard of her face and form.

At this moment, by reason of the narrowness of the porch, their dresses touched, and remained in contact.

His clothes are something exterior to every man ; but to a woman her dress is part of her body. Its motions are all present to her intelligence if not to her eyes ; no man knows how his coat-tails swing. By the slightest hyperbole it may be said that her dress has sensation. Crease but the very Ultima Thule of fringe or flounce, and it hurts her as much as pinching her. Delicate antennæ, or feelers, bristle on every outlying frill. Go to the uppermost : she is there ; tread on the lowest : the fair creature is there almost before you.

Thus the touch of clothes, which was nothing to Manston, sent a thrill through Cytherea, seeing, moreover, that he was of the nature of a mysterious stranger. She looked out again at the storm, but still felt him. At last to escape the sensation she moved away, though by so doing it was necessary to advance a little into the rain.

“Look, the rain is coming into the porch upon you,” he said. “Step inside the door.”

Cytherea hesitated.

“Perfectly safe, I assure you,” he added laughing, and holding the door open. “You shall see what a state of disorganisation I am in—boxes on boxes, furniture, straw, crockery, in every form of transposition. An old woman is in the back quarters somewhere, beginning to put things to rights . . . You know the inside of the house, I dare say?”

“I have never been in.”

“Oh well, come along. Here, you see, they have made a door through; here they have put a partition dividing the old hall into two, one part is now my parlour; there they have put a plaster ceiling, hiding the old chestnut carved roof because it was too high and would have been chilly for me; you see, being the original hall, it was open right up to the top, and here the lord of the manor and his retainers used to meet and be merry by the light from the monstrous fire which shone

out from that monstrous fire-place, now narrowed to a mere nothing for my grate, though you can see the old outline still. I almost wish I could have had it in its original state."

"With more romance and less comfort."

"Yes, exactly. Well, perhaps the wish is not deep-seated. You will see how the things are tumbled in anyhow, packing-cases and all. The only piece of ornamental furniture yet unpacked is this one."

"An organ?"

"Yes, an organ. I made it myself, except the pipes. I opened the case this afternoon to commence soothing myself at once. It is not a very large one, but quite big enough for a private house. You play, I dare say?"

"The piano. I am not at all used to an organ."

"You would soon acquire the touch for an organ, though it would spoil your touch for the piano. Not that that matters a great deal. A piano isn't much as an instrument."

"It is the fashion to say so now. I think it is quite good enough."

“That isn’t altogether a right sentiment about things being good enough.”

“No—no. What I mean is, that the men who despise pianos do it as a rule from their teeth, merely for fashion’s sake, because cleverer men have said it before them—not from the experience of their ears.”

Now Cytherea all at once broke into a blush at the consciousness of a great snub she had been guilty of in her eagerness to explain herself. He charitably expressed by a look that he did not in the least mind her blunder, if it were one ; and this attitude forced him into a position of mental superiority which vexed her.

“I play for my private amusement only,” he said. “I have never learnt scientifically. All I know is what I taught myself.”

The thunder, lightning, and rain had now increased to a terrific force. The clouds, from which darts, forks, zigzags, and balls of fire continually sprang, did not appear to be more than a hundred yards above their heads, and every now and then a flash and a peal made

gaps in the steward's descriptions. He went towards the organ, in the midst of a volley which seemed to shake the aged house from foundations to chimney.

"You are not going to play now, are you?" said Cytherea, uneasily.

"O yes. Why not now?" he said. "You can't go home, and therefore we may as well be amused, if you don't mind sitting on this box. The few chairs I have unpacked are in the other room."

Without waiting to see whether she sat down or not, he turned to the organ and began extemporising a harmony which meandered through every variety of expression of which the instrument was capable. Presently he ceased, and began searching for some music-book.

"What a splendid flash!" he said, as the lightning again shone in through the mullioned window, which, of a proportion to suit the whole extent of the original hall, was much too large for the present room. The thunder pealed again. Cytherea, in spite of herself,

was frightened, not only at the weather, but at the general unearthly weirdness which seemed to surround her there.

“I wish I—the lightning wasn’t so bright. Do you think it will last long?” she said, timidly.

“It can’t last much longer,” he murmured, without turning, running his fingers again over the keys. “But this is nothing,” he continued, suddenly stopping and regarding her. “It seems brighter because of the deep shadow under those trees yonder. Don’t mind it; now look at me—look in my face—now.”

He had faced the window, looking fixedly at the sky with his dark strong eyes. She seemed compelled to do as she was bidden, and looked in the too-delicately beautiful face.

The flash came; but he did not turn or blink, keeping his eyes fixed as firmly as before. “There,” he said, turning to her, “that’s the way to look at lightning.”

“O, it might have blinded you!” she exclaimed.

“Nonsense—not lightning of this sort—I shouldn’t have stared at it if there had been danger. It is only sheet-lightning now. Now, will you have another piece? Something from an oratorio this time?”

“No, thank you—I don’t want to hear it whilst it thunders so.” But he had commenced without heeding her answer, and she stood motionless again, marvelling at the wonderful indifference to all external circumstance which was now evinced by his complete absorption in the music before him.

“Why do you play such saddening chords?” she said, when he next paused.

“H’m—because I like them, I suppose,” he said lightly. “Don’t you like sad impressions sometimes?”

“Yes, sometimes, perhaps.”

“When you are full of trouble.”

“Yes.”

“Well, why shouldn’t I when I am full of trouble?”

“Are you troubled?”

“I am troubled.” He said this thoughtfully and abruptly—so abruptly that she did not push the dialogue further.

He now played more powerfully. Cytherea had never heard music in the completeness of full orchestral power, and the tones of the organ, which reverberated with considerable effect in the comparatively small space of the room, heightened by the elemental strife of light and sound outside, moved her to a degree out of proportion to the actual power of the mere notes, practised as was the hand that produced them. The varying strains—now loud, now soft; simple, complicated, weird, touching, grand, boisterous, subdued; each phase distinct, yet modulating into the next with a graceful and easy flow—shook and bent her to themselves, as a gushing brook shakes and bends a shadow cast across its surface. The power of the music did not show itself so much by attracting her attention to the subject of the piece, as by taking up and developing as its libretto the poem of her own life and soul,

shifting her deeds and intentions from the hands of her judgment, and holding them in its own.

She was swayed into emotional opinions concerning the strange man before her ; new impulses of thought came with new harmonies, and entered into her with a gnawing thrill. A dreadful flash of lightning then, and the thunder close upon it. She found herself involuntarily shrinking up beside him, and looking with parted lips at his face.

He turned his eyes and saw her emotion, which greatly increased the ideal element in her expressive face. She was in the state in which woman's instinct to conceal has lost its power over her impulse to tell ; and he saw it. Bending his handsome face over her till his lips almost touched her ear, he murmured without breaking the harmonies :—

“Do you very much like this piece ?”

“Very much indeed,” she said.

“I could see you were affected by it. I will copy it for you.”

“Thank you much.”

“I will bring it to the House to you to-morrow. Who shall I ask for?”

“O, not for me. Don’t bring it,” she said, hastily. “I shouldn’t like you to.”

“Let me see—to-morrow evening at seven or a few minutes past I shall be passing the waterfall on my way home. I could conveniently give it you there, and I should like you to have it.”

He modulated into the Pastoral Symphony, still looking in her eyes.

“Very well,” she said, to get rid of the look.

The storm had by this time considerably decreased in violence, and in seven or ten minutes the sky partially cleared, the clouds around the western horizon becoming lighted up with the rays of the sinking sun.

Cytherea drew a long breath of relief and prepared to go away. She was full of a distressing sense that her detention in the old manor-house, and the acquaintanceship it had set on foot, was not a thing she wished. It was

such a foolish thing to have been excited and dragged into frankness by the wiles of a stranger.

“Allow me to come with you,” he said, accompanying her to the door, and again showing by his behaviour how powerfully he was impressed with her. His influence over her had vanished with the musical chords, and she turned her back upon him. “May I come?” he repeated.

“No, no. The distance is not three hundred yards—it is really not necessary, thank you,” she said, quietly. And wishing him good evening, without meeting his eyes, she went down the steps, leaving him standing at the door.

“O, how is it that man has so fascinated me!” was all she could think. Her own self, as she had sat spell-bound before him, was all she could see. Her gait was constrained, from the knowledge that his eyes were upon her until she had passed the hollow by the waterfall, and by ascending the rise had become hidden from

his view by the boughs of the overhanging trees.

§ 5. *Six to seven, p.m.*

The wet shining road threw the western glare into her eyes with an invidious lustre which rendered the restlessness of her mood more wearying. Her thoughts flew from idea to idea without asking for the slightest link of connection between one and another. One moment she was full of the wild music and stirring scene with Manston—the next, Edward's image rose before her like a shadowy ghost. Then Manston's black eyes seemed piercing her again, and the reckless voluptuous mouth appeared bending to the curves of his special words. What could be those troubles to which he had alluded? Perhaps Miss Aldclyffe was at the bottom of them. Sad at heart she paced on: her life was bewildering her.

On coming into Miss Aldclyffe's presence, Cytherea told her of the incident, not without

a fear that she would burst into one of her ungovernable fits of temper at learning Cytherea's slight departure from the programme. But, strangely to Cytherea, Miss Aldclyffe looked delighted. The usual cross-examination followed.

"And so you were with him all that time?" said the lady, with assumed severity.

"Yes, I was."

"I did not tell you to call at the Old House twice."

"I didn't call, as I have said. He made me come into the porch."

"What remarks did he make, do you say?"

"That the lightning was not so bad as I thought."

"A very important remark, that. Did he—" she turned her glance full upon the girl, and eyeing her searchingly, said,—

"Did he say anything about *me*?"

"Nothing," said Cytherea, returning her gaze calmly, "except that I was to give you the subscription."

“ You are quite sure ? ”

“ Quite.”

“ I believe you. Did he say anything striking or strange about himself ? ”

“ Only one thing—that he was troubled.”

“ Troubled ! ”

After saying the word, Miss Aldclyffe relapsed into silence. Such behaviour as this had ended, on most previous occasions, by her making a confession, and Cytherea expected one now. But for once she was mistaken, nothing more was said.

When she had returned to her room she sat down and penned a farewell letter to Edward Springrove, as little able as any other excitable and brimming young woman of nineteen, to feel that the wisest and only dignified course at that juncture was to do nothing at all. She told him that, to her painful surprise, she had learnt that his engagement to another woman was a matter of notoriety. She insisted that all honour bade him marry his early love—a woman far better than her unworthy self, who only deserved to be

forgotten, and begged him to remember that he was not to see her face again. She upbraided him for levity and cruelty in meeting her so frequently at Creston, and above all in stealing the kiss from her lips on the last evening of the water excursions. "I never, never can forget it!" she said, and then felt a sensation of having done her duty, ostensibly persuading herself that her reproaches and commands were of such a force that no man to whom they were uttered could ever approach her more.

Yet it was all unconsciously said in words which betrayed a lingering tenderness of love at every unguarded turn. Like Beatrice accusing Dante from the chariot, try as she might to play the superior being who contemned such mere eye-sensuousness, she betrayed at every point a pretty woman's jealousy of a rival, and covertly gave her old lover hints for excusing himself at each fresh indictment.

This done, Cytherea, still in a practical mood, upbraided herself with weakness in allowing a stranger like Mr. Manston to influence her as

he had that evening. What right on earth had he to suggest so suddenly that she might meet him at the waterfall to receive his music? She would have given much to be able to annihilate the ascendancy he had obtained over her during that extraordinary interval of melodious sound. Not being able to endure the notion of his living a minute longer in the belief he was then holding, she took her pen and wrote to him also :—

“KNAPWATER HOUSE,

“*September 20th.*

“I find I cannot meet you at seven o’clock by the waterfall as I promised. The emotion I felt made me forgetful of realities.

“C. GRAYE.”

A great statesman thinks several times, and acts; a young lady acts, and thinks several times. When, a few minutes later, she saw the postman carry off the bag containing one of the letters, and a messenger with the

other, she, for the first time, asked herself the question whether she had acted very wisely in writing to either of the two men who had so influenced her.

END OF VOL. I.





